

Monastic Orders

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Monks come in all varieties. There are those that promote peace and scholarly pursuits, represented by the Monk Scholar O.C.C. (see **Book 2: Old Ones**, p.14 for more information on this O.C.C.), and those of a militant nature who seek to destroy evil, represented by the Warrior Monk O.C.C. (see the Palladium Fantasy Rulebook for more information on this O.C.C.). There are additional monastic orders that promote different ideals. Here I will discuss just a few types of these orders (and provide details on some of the orders) as well as their philosophies. I will be drawing heavily on concepts from the Mystic China sourcebook (for Ninjas & Superspies, but a great resource for Palladium games in general), including Chi (pronounced like “key”), Chi magic (especially in terms of the Wu Shih O.C.C.), and some of the martial artist OCCs.

Mystical Orders

Monks of mystically oriented orders are often seeking enlightenment (and sometimes immortality – though they are viewed as one and the same by most of these monks) through the pursuit of magic and maintaining positive Chi in nature. Enlightenment depends on not only the specific order, but also the individual monk. Achieving this new level of consciousness may involve the research of a variety of rituals used to transcend into the afterlife, the study and perfection of a certain type of mudra (meditation; see Mystic China p. 103 for more information), or through alchemy and life lessons.

Some monks believe enlightenment can be found through solitude, contemplation, and dedication, while others believe that enlightenment can only be achieved through good deeds and the perpetuation of positive Chi. While at the monastery, the monks act as protectors for nearby communities and aid in the defense of the monastery when necessary. The orders do not typically patrol the countryside on a regular basis, instead relying on divination and magic to warn of danger and the need to act. It is unfortunate that some monks interpret the visions in such a way that they believe no action can be taken to aid the innocents and thus stand idly by while entire villages are slaughtered. In the eyes of these monks, however, nothing could have been done to save these people and to act would have wasted the lives of the monks.

Mystical orders promote tranquility and peace, fighting and using war magic only in defense of the innocent and defenseless. The order believes this promotes the flow of positive Chi and allows the sorcerer-monk to continue his/her pursuit.

Militant Orders

Militant orders are the most common and widespread, varying as greatly in philosophy and training as the world itself is diverse -- though a few commonalities do exist. Many believe in the spirits of living things (the foundation of Chi) and the relationship everyone has with the natural world. To this end, most armed monks are taught to fight with wooden staves (though there are some orders that use Tien Tzu or Shan Gieh Kun/Nunchuk – see Mystic China pp.30-35 for descriptions of these and additional oriental-style weapons). Militant orders also teach their members to fight against tyranny, demons, monsters, bandits, and other evils (though some profess that all diplomatic avenues must be explored before turning to violence).

While some orders train monks in martial weaponry, such as the art of stick fighting or, in some cases, bladed weapons, others believe that any type of weapon, martial or otherwise, is considered dishonorable or invoking negative Chi because of the “abuse of nature,” the perceived barbarism of weapons, or perceived weakness. These orders train only in unarmed combat, honing martial techniques through the perfection of hand and foot strikes.

Militant orders focus on defense of the weak, negotiation and mediation, and/or destruction of evil/negative Chi. These are the orders which train the Warrior Monks and are frequently responsible for the defense of surrounding countryside at the request of the kingdom’s or city-state’s ruler. The monks often work closely with the kingdom’s standing army and join adventuring parties who fight against tyrannical despots, marauding bands of monsters, and manipulative demons.

Scholarly Orders

These orders always follow strict codes of pacifism. Their members are forbidden from engaging in any type of combat, ever (even in self-defense). It is an order of this type that is responsible for training the some 600 Monk Scholars who wander the world researching the Old Ones, Minotaurs, and their Disciples (see **Book 2: Old Ones**, p.14, for more information about the Monk Scholars). Another example can be seen in the monks of the Order of Bletherad, who care for and administrate the Library of Bletherad.

Some of these monk scholars tend to be withdrawn and quiet, preferring to observe, while others perceive it as their duty to cure the ills of the world, especially aggression, war, misused magic, and social problems. They will do this through lectures and philosophical discussions about civilization and what is wrong with it. While this might be annoying at times, the monks belonging to scholarly orders are quite intelligent and insightful, able to offer a variety of perspectives on many topics. They are frequently superb negotiators and traders as well as being generally pleasant.

The Order of the Turtledove (Scholarly)

This order is over 1,500 years old and monasteries are found mostly in the Timiro Kingdom and Eastern Territories. Primarily appealing to humans, they comprise a majority (about 80%) of the Order's members. Most Monk Scholars in this order are researching history and the events of the Chaos Wars that defeated the Old Ones and related events that have occurred throughout Palladia's history. This order is the primary source of Monk Scholars (at least as they are described in the Old Ones sourcebook) and performs a great deal of research on Minotaurs, Minotaur society, their relationship to the Old Ones, and their present activities.

Membership

Most members of this order are human, but any are welcome so long as they are willing to take and uphold vows of secrecy regarding their knowledge and pacifism. There are approximately 600 Monk Scholars found on Palladia who can be identified by their plain, brown robes and constant aversion to violence.

The Monastery

Monasteries constructed by the Order are considered sanctuaries, beyond the governance of any of the local lords. While the authorities that allow the scholars to operate in their domain know this, the Order takes precautions when constructing the monastery. The precautions include stone battlements, secret passages, hidden rooms, and escape routes.

Most of their monasteries are built in remote areas and are open air. The remote location allows monks their privacy to study and peruse the often-expansive library. A large central courtyard that contains a garden tended collectively by the occupants is at the center of the monastery. Surrounding the courtyard are several buildings that hold meager living quarters (size of accommodations depends on the monastery, usually enough housing for 20 to 50 monks), an eating area, and meditation chambers.

Philosophies

- Magic was created by the Old Ones and is therefore rooted in evil. Magic is not to be used under any circumstances, no matter how dire. Using magic could eventually awaken the Old Ones, dooming the world.
- Never share the Order's knowledge with anyone. To do so is to die in the eyes of the Order. If a monk breaks the Order's vow of secrecy, he/she is defrocked and his pens and parchments will be burned. The monk will never be allowed within the Order's monasteries and no member of the Order will ever speak a word to the defrocked monk again (see the Monk Scholar O.C.C. for the effects of defrockment).
- Fighting is a social disease. It is the Order's duty to cure the world of aggression, war, the misuse of magic, and similar social problems. A monk who breaks his/her vow of pacifism suffers the same punishment as breaking the vow of secrecy.

Martial Art Forms

The only combat form allowed by the Order is Evasive Combat (see **Old Ones**, p.17 and the Monk Scholar O.C.C. for more information). To learn any other art form is to submit to the evils of aggression and violence, resulting in defrockment.

The Order of the White Tiger (Militant)

A relatively new order, the White Tigers are focused primarily on unarmed combat. The order is comprised entirely of philosophical warriors (see the Wai Chia Wu Shih O.C.C.). White Tiger monasteries can be found in the Land of the South Winds, Timiro Kingdom, Eastern Territories and one in the Western Empire (the Vequerrel Woodlands).

Most (about 70%) of the monasteries work closely with the region's nobles in the defense of the surrounding communities and farms as a good faith gesture (though the Wai Chia Wu Shih loathe working with the local military and avoid it at all costs). The remaining monks defend the monastery and will give aid to anyone within a half-day's walk if requested.

Membership

Any race may become a member of the White Tigers. The only requirement is that they share the same philosophies regarding combat.

The Order's current membership is about 70% human and 20% Elf, with the remaining 10% split among dwarves, wolven, kankoran, and a few other races. Worldwide the Order of the White Tiger has approximately 1200 members who can be identified by the leaping tiger tattoo on the inside of their left wrist.

The Monastery

Monasteries of this Order tend to resemble large dojos. A central garden tended by acolytes and used by members for meditation can be found beyond the foyer. The foyer consists of a small room, with three hallways leading to the other sections of the monaster. The two leading left and right go to living quarters and a common area used for dining. The third, directly across from the entry, goes to the garden. Two more corridors exit the garden area and enter a courtyard used for training and practice and a common library and study area.

Philosophies

- Defend of the defenseless. Those who are unable to defend themselves or are outmatched should always be defended whether this is in the form of a trial (as a lawyer/counsel) or in combat.
- Martial combat is *always* a last resort. All alternative avenues must always be exhausted before combat is entered, even when dealing with Infernals (demons). If a situation can only be resolved through combat, it should be done in its most pure form – unarmed.
- Never use weapons of any kind. To use a weapon in combat, no matter how dire the circumstances, is barbarism. Any monk who breaks this tenet is branded and exiled from the Order.

Martial Art Forms

Members of the Order can study a great many forms because of their unarmed nature. Most choose Fu Chiao Pi (MC), Lee Kwan Choo (MC) , Hsing-I Kung Fu (MC), Shao-Lin Kung Fu (NSS), Snake Style Kung Fu (NSS), Tai-Chi Ch'uan (NSS), and Tien Hsueh Kung Fu (NSS). See Ninjas & Superspies or Mystic China as indicated for details on each art form.

The Order of the Rising Sun (Militant)

An exclusively Eastern phenomenon, members are trained as demon hunters, wandering poets and advisors, and protectors. The order trains warrior monks in the arts of stick fighting (Warrior Monk

O.C.C.), philosophical militarism (Chun Tzu O.C.C.), and demon hunting (Fu Yao Da Chia O.C.C.). While Warrior Monks sometimes battle in the name of a deity to combat evil in all its forms, Chun Tzu may be a military officer who wishes to better themselves as leaders and fight for the nobility. Fu Yao Da Chia are brash warriors who hunt demons for the sheer thrill of doing so (though they also believe the demons are evil to the core).

The Order of the Rising Sun regularly patrols the countryside to prevent incursions by non-humans, a significant problem in the Eastern Territories and Timiro Kingdom.

Many of the Order's monks are sent into the world to hunt and destroy demons or to fight injustices. Chun Tzu most often continue in the ranks of the kingdom's military, quickly rising through the ranks and leading armies (though the Chun Tzu tend to work only with those nobles they consider honorable). Warrior Monks (the standard O.C.C. from the Palladium Fantasy rulebook) tend toward worldly nomads, moving through communities and aiding when necessary. The demon hunters quickly make a name for themselves as they seek out challenges in ridding Palladia of demons and devils.

Membership

As with the other orders, Rising Sun Monks vary in race depending on geographic region (mostly due to surrounding communities' prejudicial nature). The Order's membership is split equally between humans and non-humans.

Of the non-humans, Elves make up approximately 40%, Wolfen and Kankoran 20%, Dwarves 20%, and other (some kobolds, a few orcs, ogres, and trolls, and a smattering of other races) 20%. Worldwide the Order of the Rising Sun boasts an enormous 2500 members, all of which can be identified by the tattoo of the "directed focus" symbol (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG**, p.130 for an illustration) on their right forearm (just below the elbow).

The Monastery

Most monasteries resemble large stone keeps. They are all located in easily defensible areas, such as hilltops or mountain valleys. More than one is built atop an old Dwarven stronghold. All have battlements and hidden murder holes from which to fire arrows and stab at invaders with long spears. In the event of a siege, stores are kept with enough supplies for up to six months. Should the gates be breached, secret passages and escape routes are constructed.

Philosophies

- Defend the defenseless. Those who are unable to defend themselves must be protected. This can be done in the form of legal counsel or in combat.
- Lead by example. If in a position of authority, earn the respect of your subordinates. To be respected is to be loved.
- Live in harmony with all things. Perpetuate the flow of positive Chi and stem the flow of negative Chi. By destroying evil creatures (especially demons, but any evil creature is included in this teaching) the flow of negative Chi is stopped allowing positive Chi to plant its seed.
- Undermine tyranny and evil. Fight against tyrannical nobles and evil infernals (demons) wherever they are encountered.

Martial Art Forms

The primary martial art forms learned by Rising Sun monks (though any are possible) are Gui Long (MC), the Art of Stick Fighting (Warrior Monk O.C.C.), Liang Hsiung Kung Fu (MC), and Shan Tung Kung Fu (MC). See the description in either *Ninjas & Superspies* or *Mystic China* for more details about each form.

The Order of An L'ei (Mystical)

The Order of An L'ei (or the Order of Tranquil Thunder) is a group seeking enlightenment and immortality through magic and a virtually lost form of alchemy. Steadfastly opposed to the Order of the Turtledove's view of magic, the Order trains monks in the Way of the Wu Shih (Chi magic).

The first lessons include how to block influence by negative Chi and promote the flow of positive Chi, followed by philosophy lessons, martial techniques, and finally the study of Chi magic fundamentals and spells. An L'ei monks participate in the defense of the monastery, surrounding communities, and caravans in the area throughout their training period (approximately ten years).

Upon completion of their training, the monk is sent on their first Life Journey. During this time, the monk will wander the world, aiding those in need, and acting as advisors to nobles and merchants, at the same time searching for the necessary components for the first-time refined elixir of immortality. The Life Journey is also a way for the monk to reinforce positive Chi in as many places as possible by promoting peace and goodwill.

Each time a Life Journey is completed, the An L'ei monk returns to their monastery and begins concocting the first elixir and beginning the next level of research. Upon completion, they embark on another Life Journey. This cycle continues nine times (resulting in a ninth time refined Elixir of Immortality; see *Mystic China* p.127 for more information on this type of immortality). Upon each return to the monastery, each monk is screened by an elder for signs of negative Chi (brought on by negative/hurtful actions – this can only be done at the monk's originating monastery because only these elders know of the monk's original state). If any is detected, the monk is forever turned away from the Order. After completing their final Life Journey and creating the ninth time refined Elixir, the monk will again wander the world seeing all there is to see (this nomadic lifestyle is said to continue until some final Armageddon, the timetable of which is unknown even to the monks themselves).

Membership

The Order of An L'ei teachings are far more intensive than other monastic orders. Because of this, only those of strong will and stamina are able to graduate beyond mere initiates.

Approximately 30% of its membership is comprised of humans, 30% Changelings, 20% Wolfen, and 20% other races. Worldwide the Order consists of approximately 250 members who are identified by the symbol for "magic knowledge" tattooed on the palm of their hand (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG**, p. 130 for an illustration).

The Monastery

An L'ei monasteries frequently resemble pyramids. Due to the design (along with the mystical nature of its members), the monasteries are typically built along ley lines (though never at nexus points). This increases the defenses of the monastery and allows members to recuperate quickly or draw energy for use in their alchemical creations. A foyer connects to the monastery's library, monk's living quarters, and a common dining area. Several laboratories are hidden in catacombs deep beneath the monastery, sometimes in ancient underground complexes.

Philosophies

- Weave magic with honor. When a Chi spell is cast, the intention behind the spell should always be honorable. A few examples are aiding a peasant, defending a traveler against bandits, and seeking knowledge toward enlightenment.
- Seek enlightenment wisely. Most members of this order work through a series of Life Journeys (the first life journey may only last a few months, subsequent Journeys are likely to last much longer) that eventually result in the ingredients required for the next refinement of the Elixir of Immortality (usually a Chin I or Chiu Chen Yu Li Tan alchemical elixir).
- Aid the flow of positive Chi. One purpose of the Life Journeys is to perpetuate the flow of positive Chi in as many places as possible. Negative actions during a Life Journey can only result in banishment from the Order as it prevents the flow of positive Chi.
- Speak not of the Order. As with the Order of the Turtledove, An L'ei monks are forced to take a vow of secrecy regarding the alchemy and the resulting immortality. Revealing the secrets signs the monk's death warrant and the death warrant of those he/she told. The elders cannot permit such a secret to become known (armies would be crashing through the monastery walls).

Martial Art Forms

An L'ei monks are taught the form of Tai-Chi Ch'uan (see Ninjas & Superspies, for a complete description of the martial art) in addition to their instructions of Chi magic.

Mystic China Conversion Notes

In general, everything should switch over quite easily. The primary difference will be with O.C.C.s and their skill sets and uses. Martial Arts may also require some changes. First, the O.C.C.s:

- **Chun Tzu O.C.C.:** A philosopher martial artist seeking perfection. They have no aversion to weapons of any kind, only seeking to protect innocents and defenseless. Select skills as per the mercenary warrior (substitute another weapon proficiency for W.P. Shield). Equipment is selected as per the Warrior Monk, however a different weapon may be selected in place of the staff.
- **Fu Yao Da Chia O.C.C.:** This is listed as the Demon Hunter O.C.C. in Mystic China. Select skills as per the warrior monk. Select equipment as per the Warrior Monk, but replace the staff with the Lion Head Sword described in Mystic China (p. 34).
- **Jian Shih O.C.C.:** Though I didn't specifically mention it above, this is very appropriate for any militant order. Select skills as per the Soldier. Select equipment as per the Warrior Monk, replacing the staff with one of the following: Lion Head Sword (Shi-Zi Jen), Chiang Chiang, Gen (Sai), Giau Tzu Jen, or Wu Grou Jen. See the weapons listed on pp.30-35 of Mystic China for more information.
- **Wai Chia Wu Shih O.C.C.:** Select skills as per the Ranger. Select equipment as per the Warrior Monk, forfeiting the staff.
- **Wu Shih O.C.C.:** Select skills as per the Monk Scholar. Select equipment as per the Warrior Monk, replacing the staff with a weapon of choice.

Martial Arts are selected as usual for O.C.C.s and can be selected by standard Palladium O.C.C.s at a cost of one skill beyond the cost of Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (i.e. if Hand to Hand: Martial Arts costs two O.C.C. Related skills, selecting a martial art from Mystic China or Ninjas & Superspies costs three O.C.C. Related skills). Anytime a martial art form is taken, the character forfeits the "two-for-being-alive" rule of melee attacks (i.e. the character does not receive two melee actions/attacks just for being a character).

Chi is selected as normal for most Palladium Fantasy characters. Witches Chi is considered to be negative Chi. Witches, Warlocks, and Shamans receive a +10 bonus to their base Chi and Mind Mages have 50% added to their P.E. (1.5 x P.E.) as starting Chi.