



BLADES OF THE LUNAR KINGDOM

Chinese swords for the world's greatest roleplaying game by

Daniel Kwan

BLADES OF THE LUNAR KINGDOM

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INTRODUCTION

The Land of Blades is a work-in-progress campaign setting for fantasy tabletop roleplaying games inspired by the history of the Chinese Zhou Dynasty. This supplement serves as an introduction to one of the highest arts in the land - bladesmithing. Included are examples of legendary blades that you can use for your fantasy games set in worlds inspired by the ancient Chinese history.

If you are interested in learning more about the creatures that inhabit the Land of Blades, consider checking out my previous work with [Denizens of Mountains & Seas vol. 1 & 2](#). Future supplements will feature factions, nonplayer characters, locations to explore, and more!

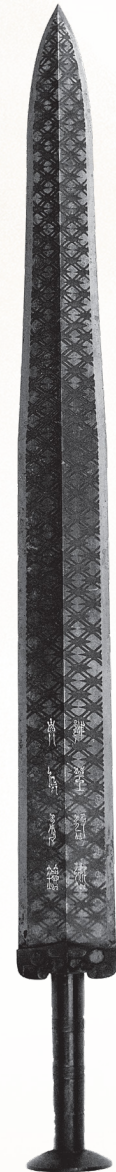
In supporting my work, you are helping me make a product that I've always wanted to see on the tabletop gaming market.

- Daniel

INSPIRATION

The Land of Blades was loosely inspired by Yue - an ancient Chinese state that existed during the Spring and Autumn period (771-475 BCE) and early Warring States era (475-221 BCE) of the Zhou Dynasty. Based in present-day Zhejiang, Shanghai, and Jiangsu, Yue functioned as an autonomous political entity until it became a vassal of the mighty Qin Dynasty. One of the most highly complex resources on this kingdom and its rival Wu is the Yuejue Shu (Historical Texts from the Kingdom of Yue) - a collection of essays covering military science, philosophy, religion, history, architecture, economic thought, and more. Written over 2,000 years ago during the later Han Dynasty, the book consists of sixteen chapters of copious detail on the inner workings of the Yue State and their culture. Interestingly, the Yuejue Shu and archaeological relics like the Sword of Goujian demonstrate that swords held a position of great importance to the culture of the Yue State. In fact, sword legends in early Chinese history developed almost exclusively from the Yue State and its rival, the State of Wu!

The Sword of Goujian (*pictured below*) is believed to have been owned by Goujian, one of the last kings of the Yue State. It is one of the most famous archaeological swords from China. It famously retained a razor sharp and nearly untarnished edge despite being over 2,500 years old! The script on the blade had been partially translated to, "King of Yue; made this sword for [his] personal use."



ON CHINESE SWORDS

In early Chinese history, the emergence of fulllength swords coincides with the advent of mounted warfare. As they became more prominent through time, swords played a role as cavalry weapons alongside bows and dagger-axes/lances, infantry sidearms, and status symbols of officers and nobles. While they exhibit great variation, Chinese swords tend to fall into two categories: straight, double-edged jian and curved, single-edged dao.

JIAN (STRAIGHT SWORD)

While short, edged weapons existed since the time of the Shang (1600-1049 BCE), it wasn't until the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE-256 BCE) that true swords emerged. These straight, double-edged swords (jian) with guard-less grips were improved to formidable weapons with longer, diamond-sectioned blades with broad proportions, disc pommels, and silk-braided hilts. By the time of the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE), jian designs evolved into slender, meter-long blades treated with oxidized chrome to keep them sharp. During the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), steel jian replaced their bronze predecessors. However, they were slenderer, longer, and increasingly ornate in design - suggesting that they were not favoured in battle and instead highly prized objects of artistic merit. After falling out of use in war, jian were worn by citizens and scholars for self-defence, or by nobles as status symbols. In Chinese martial arts, the jian is known as the Gentleman of all Weapons and is the most difficult of the four major weapons to master. Swordplay with the jian is defined by graceful movements - like a bird taking flight.

Weapon Stats: jian (standard)

Damage: 1d8 slashing or piercing

Weight: 2 lbs

Properties: Finesse

DAO (SABRE)

While they date back to the Shang Dynasty, it wasn't until the onset of the Han Dynasty that single-edged swords (dao) became the dominant military blade. Early dao - which featured a long, straight, single-edge blade with a ring pommel - became the weapon of choice for Chinese cavalry due to their ease of use and superiority as a chopping weapon. By the Tang Dynasty, dao featured their iconic curved blades and hand guards. Conflict drove the innovation in dao design further. Of note was the dadao (great sabre) - a two handed sword similar to the Japanese nodachi. This type of sword was sometimes referred to as the zhanmadao (horse cutting sabre) during the Song Dynasty as it was used by infantry to slash the legs of enemy horses.

The dao is considered the Marshal of all Weapons in Chinese martial arts. Like the attacks of a tiger, saber forms require both power and agility.

Weapon Stats: dao (standard)

Damage: 1d10 slashing

Weight: 3 lbs

Properties: Versatile 2d6

Weapon Stats: zhanmadao (horse cutting sabre)

Damage: 2d10 slashing

Weight: 6 lbs

Properties: Heavy (cannot be wielded by Small creatures; Medium creatures receive disadvantage)

Special: A successful attack has a 50% chance to knock the target prone.



Pictured left to right: 4th-1st century BCE (Eurasian steppes) duan jian (short sword), 4th-3rd century BCE (Eastern Zhou dynasty - Warring States Period) jian, 17th century CE (Ming or Qing dynasty) jian, 8th century CE (Qing dynasty) dao, & 17th century CE (Ming or Qing dynasty) liuye dao (willow leaf sabre).

THE LAND OF BLADES

"Swords are held in high esteem in the culture of the Land of Blades. Their place is so important that swordsmiths hold as much, if not more, respect in legend than heroes of might."

Also known as the Lunar Kingdom, the Land of Blades consists of the region forming the frontier of the seas to the south of the Radiant Lands. It is known as a land steeped in tradition; where the people are hardworking and honest. Forged from centuries of bloody conflict, its name comes from the region's famed blacksmithing traditions and legendary sword masters. For the past 500 years, the region has been under the domain of the Yue Dynasty - a line of kings and queens descended from a legendary swordsman who brought peace to the land. To the people of this land, "Yue" is a name used to describe the dynasty, its territory, and the culture of the region. The coastal region is naturally protected from two sides (north and west) by the White Dragon Peaks and Sundered Spires. Its coastal eastern and southern borders are on the Azure Expanse (a great sea). The landscape of the Land of Blades varies from the verdant fields of the Vermillion Hills to swaths of dangerous, untamed frontier lands in the White Valley.

THE BLADES OF YUE

Swordcraft is held in high esteem in the Kingdom of Yue. It is an art above all others. Of all the bladesmiths to practice their superb craftsmanship for the Kings of Yue, no two are as legendary as Ou Yezi and his apprentice Gan Jiang*. Together and as individuals, they have forged countless swords of legendary quality - imbuing them with god-like abilities and even sentience. Some blades, like Yuchang, were abominations of the art - a failed experimental relic with the power to destabilize entire kingdoms if in the correct hands. Other blades, like Zhanlu, were crafted with such noble intentions that they could only be wielded by someone with a pure heart.

Many adventurers, scholars, and nobles seek Master Ou Yezi and Gan Jiang for guidance

and perhaps even an audience at their forges. Their legendary services, however, come at a great cost. This may range from large sums of gold and jade to hard labour and offerings of rare materials. Commissioning and gifting one of their blades can bestow coveted favours from a lord or even turn the tide of battle.

*In this text, the fictional characters of Ou Yezi and Gan Jiang were inspired by the legendary swordsmiths of the same name that originated in the mythology of the ancient Chinese kingdoms of Yue and Wu.

MASTER OU YEZI

Known as the Bladegiver, Master Ou Yezi is the most renowned swordsmith in the Land of Blades. He is famous for forging the blades *Zhanlu*, *Juque*, *Chunjun* and *Longquan*.

Appearance: Simple clothing, a well-kept beard and long hair tied in a topknot.

Voice: Low and mumbling. Ou Yezi doesn't say much.

Morality: His allegiance is only to his art.

Motivations: Driven to forge a blade so perfect that the gods would take notice.

Secrets: Ou Yezi has forged a sword so beautiful that he dares not remove it from its sheath.

GAN JIANG

Gan Jiang is Ou Yezi's apprentice. Alongside his wife Mo Ye, they forge fine swords for the Yue Dynasty military while his master forges artistic blades for the nobility.

Appearance: Simple clothing, clean shaven, and bald.

Voice: Gravelly.

Morality: Will do anything in his power to advance his knowledge.

Motivations: To craft a blade worthy of legend. He tires of making military swords.

Secrets: A lord from a foreign land has offered Gan Jiang the title of Master in exchange for Ou Yezi's techniques.

ZHANLU, THE NOBLE SHADOW

Wondrous Item (jian), Artifact (requires attunement by a creature of good alignment)

"Even if you were to give all the gold in the entire capital, and every pearl and piece of jade to be found in your streams, you would still not be able to obtain a treasure such as this."

Zhanlu, the Noble Shadow, is a long, unembellished jian that radiates benevolence and kindness. Forged from five of the kingdom's finest metals (gold, silver, copper, lead, and iron) and imbued with the essence of positive natural energies from the sun, the blade strikes with the essence of fire, can be commanded to shine like the sun, transmits qi*, and detests the unprincipled. Like the perceptible eyes of the gods, the sword has watched over the behaviour of emperors, empresses, and lesser nobles for generations. If the wielder displays moral integrity, then brandishing it is said to summon the power of the gods.

*Qi is a vital energy that is found in all living entities. It is the foundational principle in Chinese martial arts and traditional medicine.

QUALITIES

Aura of Nobility. Wearing the sword grants the wielder the ability to assess the benevolence and intent of others. The owner of Zhanlu receives advantage on Insight checks against Humanoids.

Sentience - Judgemental Blade. Anyone can wield Zhanlu so long as they are pure of heart (any good alignment). It has an Intelligence of 14, a Wisdom of 16, and a Charisma of 15. It has hearing and darkvision out to a range of 120 feet and communicates telepathically and through transmitted emotions.

Personality - Noble Intentions. If the wielder of Zhanlu has wicked intentions or performs despicable acts, the sword will depart; turning to shadowy smoke and reassembling in the hands of a worthy successor.

Blazing Soul. As long as the wielder is wearing Zhanlu, they are immune to non-magical fire, resistant to magical fire, and have blindsight (they can see the soul of any living being within 30 feet).

COMBAT EFFECTS

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical sword. It has the following additional properties:

Flames of the Noble Shadow. As a bonus action, you may utter the command phrase ("*Noble Shadow, bring truth to my vision!*") to wreath the blade in black flames that cannot be extinguished through non-magical means. These flames do not generate any light, but are as hot as the sun, dealing an additional 2d6 fire damage with each successful attack.

Upon a successful attack, the target is set ablaze with magical black fire, taking persistent 6 (1d10) damage (does not stack) at the end of each turn. If a target affected by this effect is reduced to 0 hit points, they are turned to ash along with all of their non-magical items. Only effects that extinguish magical fire can remove persistent damage caused by the flames of the Noble Shadow.

Spellcasting. So long as the wielder carries Zhanlu, they gain the ability to cast the following spells (save DC 18) once per long rest: *Zone of Truth*, *Darkness*, *Fire Shield*, *Protection from Evil and Good*, *Sunburst*, and *Wall of Fire*.

YUCHANG, BLADE OF THE HIDDEN RIVER

Wondrous Item (dagger), Artifact
(requires attunement)

“The blade *Yúcháng* is disobedient and unprincipled; it obeys no one.”

Yuchang is a short blade with a shape and pattern that resembles the scaled belly of a fish. It is a beautiful, yet cursed, weapon imbued with the aspect of disloyalty. It was once gifted to a rival lord to destabilize his land holdings and rid him of heirs. Yuchang exists in opposition of the blade Zhanlu, the Noble Shadow.

QUALITIES

Sentience - Aura of Disloyalty. Yuchang is chaotic evil in alignment and very few can resist its sinister needs. The blade has been known to even corrupt vassals into using it to kill their lords. It has an Intelligence of 13, a Wisdom of 15, and a Charisma of 17. It has hearing and darkvision out to a range of 120 feet and communicates telepathically through intrusive thoughts.

Personality - Thirst for Qi. The Blade of the Hidden River demands that the wielder must kill so that it can consume the qi. At least once per long rest, Yuchang must be used to take a life in order to satiate its desires. If it doesn't, its wielder must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be compelled (*Dominant Person* spell) to take a life.

COMBAT EFFECTS

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical dagger. It has the following additional properties:

Assassin's Blade. Yuchang is said to cleave through iron like it was mud. It is so sharp that it produces nearly imperceptible wounds. Attacks with this weapon ignore resistance to slashing damage and score critical hits on rolls of 18-20.

Critical hits with Yuchang also add 1 level of exhaustion upon the target.

JUQUE, THE GREAT DESTROYER

Weapon (dao), Artifact (requires attunement)

“One of the finest weapons of the south - a symbol of fierce offence and impenetrable defence ...”

Despite its name, Juque is one of the finest offensive and defensive weapons known to the people of Yue. While it looks like a broad dao constructed of dark iron, Juque is unbreakable. It can strike stone without shattering and pierce stone without bending. In fact, since its creation, it has not been resharpened due to its durability.

QUALITIES

Legendary Durability. Juque cannot be broken or altered by conventional and magical means of destruction unless its magical energies are suppressed via *Antimagic Field*.

Supernatural Invulnerability. The wielder of Juque is granted immunity to non-magical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

COMBAT EFFECTS

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical sword. It has the following additional properties:

Unbreakable Stance. As a bonus action, you may enter a defensive stance for a number of rounds per long rest equal to your Constitution modifier + proficiency bonus. While in this stance, you become like iron and gain 2d10 temporary HP, +2 to AC, and advantage on Strength, Constitution, and Wisdom saving throws. While in this stance, you are unable to willingly take move, disengage, dodge, or dash actions. You may end the stance as a free action.

Sundering Strike. In place of a melee attack, you can attempt to destroy an item held or worn by a target. This single attack is rolled against the objects AC and excess damage that exceeds the damage threshold of the item is subtracted from its HP. Any damage dealt by Juque to any object is doubled and critical hits always destroy the target item if it is Large or smaller.

You may perform this action a number of times per long rest equal to your proficiency bonus.

Quick references for sundering objects:

- ◆ Item AC Key: adamantine (23), mithril (21), iron or steel (19), stone (17), wood or bone (15), crystalline materials (13), and fibrous materials (11).
- ◆ Arms & Armour HP Key: tiny (5), small (10), medium (18), and large (27)

Weapon Damage Thresholds (stackable):

- ◆ *Adamantine & Mithril.* 8 damage - resistant to slashing, piercing, and bludgeoning damage from nonmagic weapons that are not Adamantine or mithril.
- ◆ *Enchanted Weapons & Armour.* +1 damage threshold for each incremental enchantment bonus. For example, +1 weapons have a damage threshold of 8 (+2 weapons would have 9) and are resistant to slashing, piercing, and bludgeoning damage from nonmagic weapons that are not made of adamantine or mithril.

CHUNJUN, THE PURE SEVEN-STAR SWORD

Weapon (jian), Artifact (requires attunement)

"Then the rain god bathed the blade with heavenly waters, creating a weapon born of mortal and immortal hands."

Chunjun is the most beautiful blade to have ever been made for a member of the Yue dynasty court. Crafted from seven fallen stars and bathed by the waters of heaven by the god of rain, Chunjun is as lustrous as an ice crystal. Nearly matching the purity of mountain spring water, the blade resembles a slender icicle, with seven glowing stars that float around the sword when it is drawn.

QUALITIES

Heavenly Clarity. When worn, the wielder is immune to mind influencing effects.

COMBAT EFFECTS

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical sword. It has the following additional properties:

Imperceivable Blade. Unless it is bathed in blood, the blade of Chunjun is very difficult to see in combat. The wielder of Chunjun receives +5 to attack rolls until they successfully deal damage to an enemy with Chunjun during combat. Once it has dealt damage, the crystalline blade becomes ruby red and does not provide this bonus until the blade is carefully cleaned (requires a short rest).

Luminous Burst (seven times per long rest).

As a bonus action, you may send one of the seven stars in the blade surging forward as a ranged spell attack (using Wisdom) that deals 3d8 damage (range 30 feet).

Spellcasting. So long as the wielder carries Chunjun, they gain the ability to cast the following cantrips: *Light*, *Dancing Lights*, & *Minor Illusion*. They also gain the ability to cast the following spells (save DC 15) once per long rest: *Invisibility*, *See Invisibility*, *Blink*, *Counterspell*, and *Hypnotic Pattern*.

LONGQUAN, DRAGON SPRING

Weapon (zhanmadao), Artifact (requires attunement)

"Beware Lóngquān, the executioner's blade forged in the fires of judgment."

A mighty curved blade wielded by a noble executioner known as "The Merciful Dragon" who was made famous for their ability to strike so swiftly that the condemned felt no pain. The blade has since passed through many hands. While the merciful intent of its original wielder has dulled with age, its ability to kill has only improved.

COMBAT EFFECTS

The sword's power increases based on the wielder's righteousness (good or evil). Chaotic characters gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical sword. Neutral and lawful characters receive +2 and +3 bonuses respectively. It has the following additional properties:

Executioner's Edge. As an attack action, you focus your energy into a single powerful strike. You make a single attack roll with advantage. If the attack hits, it is an automatic critical hit. Furthermore, the target must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 15). If the target fails the saving throw, they are stunned. This ability can be used a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus. All uses are regained after a long rest.

Qi Drain. As an action, you can channel the power of Longquan to drain the soul of a creature within 10 feet of you. The creature must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 15). On a failed save, it takes 4d6 necrotic damage and you gain temporary hit points equal to half the damage dealt. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and you do not gain temporary hit points. This ability can be used a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus per long rest.

Spellcasting. The wielder of Longquan can cast spells the following spells (save DC 16) once per long rest: *Hold Person*, *Fear*, *Death Ward*, *Dominate Person*, and *Circle of Death*.

SHENGXIE, VICTOR OVER EVIL

Wondrous Item (any sword), Very rare (requires attunement)

"Shengxie has led the generals of the Yue dynasty to countless victories over the wicked."

Shengxie was forged by the apprentice swordsmith Gan Jiang for the commander of the famed Moon Dragon Corps. The sword has claimed the lives of countless beasts and fearsome bandit lords, making the wielder a shining beacon on the battlefield.

QUALITIES

Wicked Ward. The sword can sense the presence of evil creatures and will vibrate in their presence, alerting the wielder to their presence. Evil creatures cannot wield this sword.

COMBAT EFFECTS

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical sword. It has the following additional properties:

Radiant Blade. When the wielder of this sword hits a creature with an evil alignment, the sword deals an extra 1d6 radiant damage.

Victory Cry. As a bonus action, you utter the battle cry "Let my light guide you!" to grant all allies within 30 feet an inspiration die (d8) to apply to a roll of their choice within the next 10 minutes.

Banishing Strike. On a critical hit against an evil creature, Shengxie will attempt to banish the target to their own realm (per *Banishment* cast at 4th level; Charisma save DC 15). When Shengxie banishes a creature, it allows the wielder to spend a number of Hit Dice equal to their proficiency bonus to regain hit points (per the rules for short rests).

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