

Epic Quest: The Cult of the Wheel of Law

Prelude

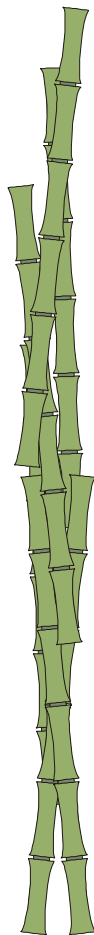
Most sages of the Shattered Empire would agree that the power of the Wheel of Law, a foul puppet master from the Realm Beyond, is clearly on the rise. Its ally, the Red-Gloved Daimyo has taken over large parts of the coast, allowing open worship of the foul beast there. Rumours tell of increased activity by the mind flayers who have worshipped the Wheel from the beginning. Few are prepared however, for the madness of the month to come.

All this trouble started a year ago, when a foolhardy adventurer broke into an ancient temple and stole a strange-looking urn that was sealed with powerful spells. Upon opening the urn, the young wu jen became possessed by an ancient spirit from the shadow plane. Still weak and in the process of regaining its original shape, the Dark Spirit offered its services to the Wheel in return for new magical power.

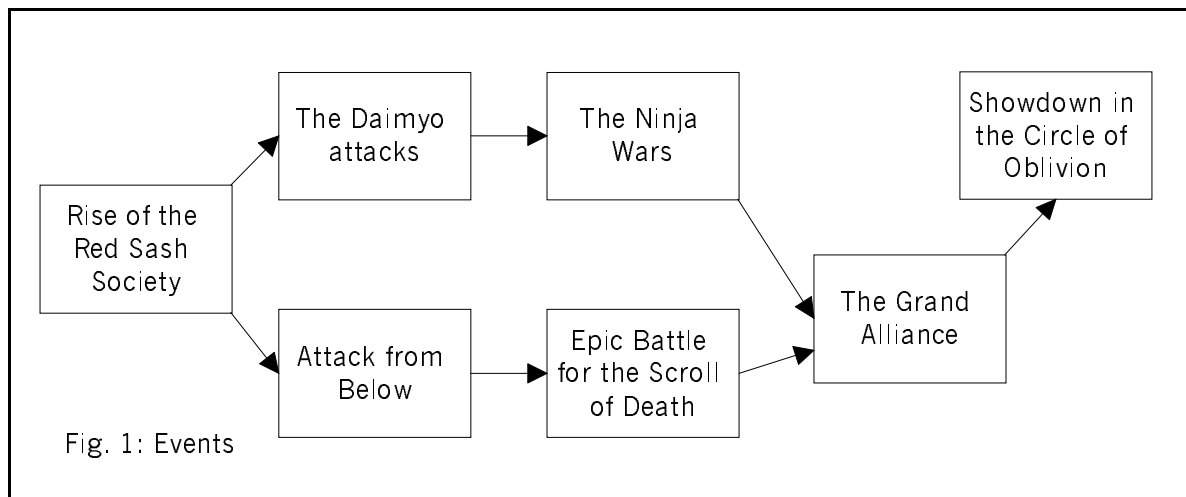
While the link to the real world is weak, the Wheel somehow managed to open a channel to the Dark Spirit and they made a terrible barter; the Spirit would be granted spells by the Wheel and in return

would spread the worship of the foul entity, ultimately opening a tunnel to the realms of madness.

Thus the new high priestess of the Wheel began to recruit hobgoblin and troll tribes in the mountains of the North using them to keep the Northern Lands busy. Meanwhile she also hired the Red Sash Society, a criminal organisation, to assassinate important figures throughout the Shattered Empire.



Currently, the Dark Spirit resides in the Northern Mountains, waiting for her allies in the South to act. She is eager to show herself to the world but has heard a disturbing prophesy about 5 magical scrolls that can stop her. Until she has found out more about the scrolls, the high priestess will not reveal herself to



the world and act through her various proxies.

Stages of Development

Fig. 1 shows the different stages in the epic plot. At some points the PCs are directly involved in the form of adventures, at other times it will be background told to them by other people or witnessed while pursuing other goals.

Rise of the Red Sash Society

Just as the rumours of the war in the North arrive at the heartlands, a wave of assassinations will start throughout the empire. Some will blame the Black Order, others their neighbours. Distrust will reach high levels and strangers are not welcome anywhere. After a while the Red Sash Society will be identified as the enemy and hunted ruthlessly, especially by the Black order which suffered much losses from the false accusation. The Society will go into hiding and remain inert for a while with everybody assuming they have been eliminated.

It is during this time that the Dark Spirit finds out about the scrolls that will harm her and sends out her closest allies to recover them. Since the Jade Emperor has heard about these scrolls long ago, he probably has a few of them already.



The most powerful and important scroll of all - the Death Scroll - however, remains undiscovered.

Effect on the PCs: The characters are likely to hear about the assassinations and possibly be hired to protect people who have survived an attempt on their lives to guard them or to find the culprits. They might also be suspects if one of their enemies dies.

The Daimyo Attacks

After the powers that be become aware of the Red Sash, the samurai will start mustering peasants, mercenaries and foul magic in the form of undead. Undead "death samurai" will lead these units of shambling zombies and every border skirmish will increase their numbers. Slowly, the disorganised villages of the lawless lands will fall to the power of the Daimyo.

Of course this worries both the Blademaster and Purple Ascetic but they cannot overcome their differences to form an alliance. However, agents of the Jade Emperor are busy secretly supporting local warlords as well as manipulating the other states into an alliance.

Meanwhile the Daimyo becomes more and more aggressive even though her

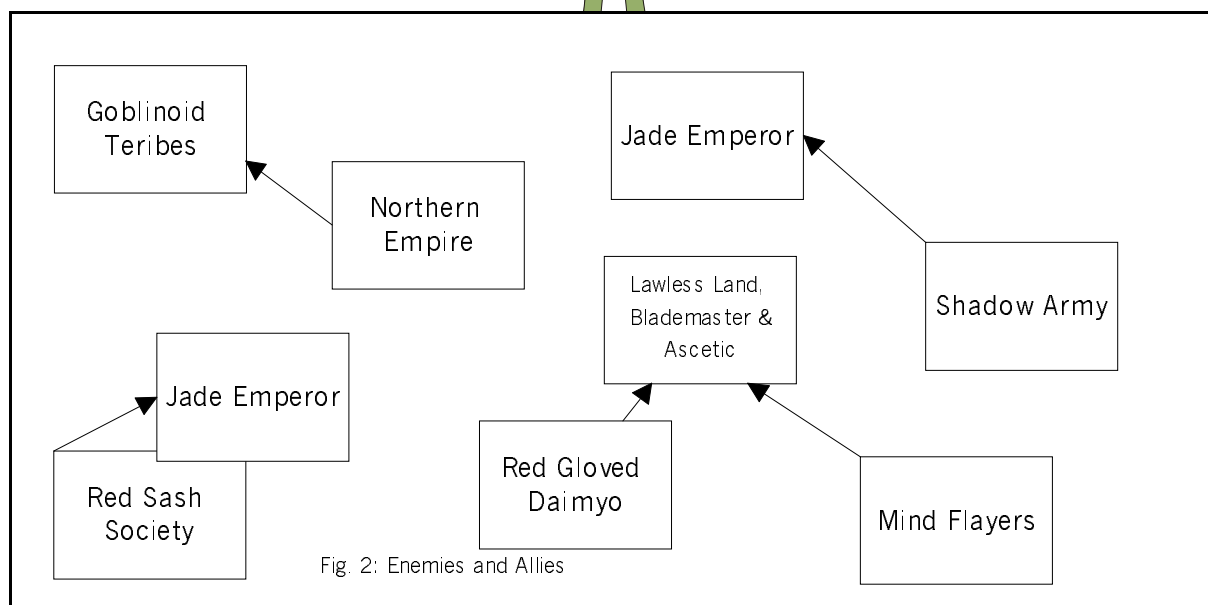


Fig. 2: Enemies and Allies

generals urge her to avoid an over-expansion. Rumours of ghastly rituals drive fear into the hearts of the independent villages.

Attack from Below

While the coastal lands are assaulted by Daimyo, the war in the Nezumi network rages on. More and more mercenaries pour in to fight the threat from below as it becomes known that the Mind Flayers are behind the attacks. However, their assaults are not very successful and they are finally driven back after many sacrifices. The Nezumi pledge their forces against the Daimyo's.

In the latter phase of this conflict the Jade Emperor also comes under attack by skirmishing bands of shadow creatures that seemingly appear out of nowhere and strike mostly civilian targets in an effort to disrupt the already fragile morale in this cruel magocracy.

The Ninja Wars

As the troops of the Daimyo reach the province of the Blademaster, the Red Sash Society strikes again, poisoning wells and burning fields in the lands of Blademaster, the Jade Emperor, and the monastery state of the Purple Ascetic.

They are countered however, by the Witch Hunters of the Jade Emperor, the Black Order monks, and secretive ninja cults whose existence was unknown up to this point. The Ninja war is fought mostly in the back alleys of the major cities.

The Epic Battle for the Scroll of Death

While the ninja war rages, the Dark Spirit finally finds out where the last scroll is stored - deep beneath the city of Naga-Noth! The samurai and the mind flayers prepare fleets to search the city thoroughly. When the Jade Emperor finds out about this, he hires ships from all over the world for an epic sea battle.



Finally, the scroll is recovered by a small strike team.

The Grand Alliance

With the scroll recovered, the Jade Emperor finally manages to forge a grand alliance between all major warlords. While resentments still exist, the alliance is able to defeat the troops of the Dark Spirit at all fronts. When the last of the enemies flees the Empire, a grand victory celebration is started. After three days of feasting the terrible news arrives...

Showdown at the Circle of Oblivion

While the plans of military conquest had a momentary setback, the Dark Spirit was still able to create a grand artifact - the Circle of Oblivion - and is willing to sacrifice 1000 virgins to open the portal to the Realms Beyond. Only the PCs and the 5 scrolls can stop this ritual while the armies of both sides clash in epic battle.

Adventure Opportunities

- **Scroll Quests:** The Jade Emperor is very interested in recovering the scrolls and will pay handsomely for them. However, some of these quests might be wild goose chases.
- **Scouting:** With a grand war brewing, many forces are eager to find out more about who opposes them. This might be a good opportunity to find out about the Dark Spirit and the connections between all these dreadful events.

Important Villains

- The 6 elemental masters: the Dark Spirit has hired 5 elemental masters to look for the scrolls and capture them if possible. The 6th master is a powerful wu jen, who not only masters all the elements but is also a

powerful necromancer. His job is it to destroy the Death Tome.

- The Creators: 2 mind flayers who have specialised in the production of new powerful monsters. The creators are co-ordinating the attacks in the Nezumi Network.
- The Spirit General: a powerful incorporeal spirit, the ghost of a long dead general who controls other undead and aids the Red Daimyo.
- The Black Samurai: a powerful black-guard/samurai who is sent out to kill the PCs once they oppose the plot of the Dark Spirit



Player Handouts/News for the Different Stages

Rise of the Red Sash Society

The Murder of Judge Feng Long Sang

This news item will reach the PCs shortly after adventure OA 7.

Judge Feng Long Sang the master of the wandering judges of Fu - an organization dedicated to justice and independent of any warlord was killed by assassins likely belonging to the Black Order, a secret society that wishes to reinstall an Emperor and reunite the Golden Empire. His followers are currently looking for the culprit but there is little trace of him.

Border Troops of the Northern Empire Recalled

This news is known only by those who come from the North, possibly foreigners who were sent away and left towards the South. This news reaches the PCs as well after OA 7.

While they are not admitting it to foreigners, the troops of the Southern border of the Northern Empire have been largely recalled for some unknown purpose. This is especially odd since tensions within the Empire are on the rise. Foreigners are being expelled and apparently martial law has been declared.

Tension between the Blade Master and the Monkey General

This news will reach the PCs with a bit of delay after OA7, possibly in the form of some seedy recruiter that is looking for troops for the Blademaster.

A powerful shapechanger in the service of the Blademaster has started leading raids into the land of the Monkey General apparently to avenge the assassination of his brother. The general has responded by putting a hefty reward on his head. It is not unlikely that a war will break out between the two, especially after a high priest of the monkey god was somehow poisoned by a human slave.

Black Order Lynchings

This news reaches the PCs bit by bit, they might even witness one of the lynchings.

Many people feel that the Black Order is responsible for the assassinations and several ninja-monks of this order have already been lynched. The Black Order has retaliated and people are more and more convinced that they are guilty. The Followers of Fu are out in full force and look for the Black Order everywhere.