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JADE REGENT

ADVENTURE PATH • PART 4 OF 6

FOREST OF SPIRITS



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“Forest of Spirits” is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 10th-level characters. By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 12th level.

This product makes use of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player’s Guide*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*, *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*, and *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*. These rules can be found online as part of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd.

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JADE REGENT



EVERYWHERE IS DIFFERENT, EVERYONE IS THE SAME

At risk of drawing fire, I confess that I don't see a vast difference between the rogue and ninja, the cavalier and samurai, or the bastard sword and katana. Still, I find the superficial differences between each of these pairs to be super cool, and sometimes I want to be a samurai instead of a cavalier. So I was destined to be a fan of this Jade Regent Adventure Path.

When Fiction Editor James Sutter and I first discussed the novel that became *Master of Devils*, we agreed that showing Tian Xia through the eyes of Radovan and Count Jeggare was a good idea for a couple of reasons. Some readers don't already love Asian fantasy the way I do, so discovering it through the eyes of familiar characters might ease their passage to this land. But even to those of us who adore wuxia or samurai movies (which inspired *Master of Devils* and "Husks," respectively), showing the

collision of West and East is a good reminder that Tian Xia and Avistan are both part of the larger world of Golarion.

James and I weren't the first to come to this conclusion: the creators of the Jade Regent Adventure Path established a similar approach by bringing the heroes from Sandpoint, through the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, across the Crown of the World, and finally to Tian Xia. In this volume, after being harried by strange foes and enticed by foreign plots, the heroes reach the far side of Golarion at last.

They might be surprised by what they find there. So might you.

As those who read my blog already know, I love foreign-language films. At first they appealed to me because they look so different from Hollywood movies. The language, the clothes, the cars (or lack of cars), the architecture, the food, the landscape, the gestures, even the odd figures of

speech that take a second or two to understand—all of these only increase the sense of transportation I feel when watching a movie (or reading a novel, or playing an RPG).

After watching a few films from the same country, I can't help thinking that the people in the movies aren't so different from me after all. No change of language or culture disguises the fact that characters in Chinese movies have the same ambitions and desires as characters in French films. People fall in love in Vietnam pretty much the same way they do in Ireland. The Danes and Scots and Japanese and Moroccans all want revenge when hurt, and know that more retaliation will follow. We're all essentially alike.

Certain films underscore the superficial differences and deep similarities between people of different cultures. None make this point better than remakes of foreign films. Consider *Seven Samurai* (1954). If you've seen one samurai movie, this is probably the one—and that's great, since it's arguably the best ever made. For this masterpiece, Akira Kurosawa drew inspiration from, among other sources, the American Western. While the story of *Seven Samurai* comes from the historical conflict between peasant farmers and masterless samurai fallen to banditry, it could just as easily take place in Mexico—as John Sturges showed in his remake, *The Magnificent Seven* (1960).

Kurosawa also borrowed from Shakespeare, with *Throne of Blood* (1957) adapting *Macbeth* and *Ran* (1985) retelling *King Lear*. Apart from some minor changes to make the story more culturally plausible (Lear's daughters become Ichimonji's sons, for example), the stories remain the same tragedy of paternal foolishness and filial betrayal. Another Kurosawa classic, *Yojimbo* (1961), almost certainly borrowed from Dashiell Hammett's novel *Red Harvest*, although Kurosawa said he drew inspiration from a different Hammett story. Yet for every time Kurosawa borrowed a story from a western source, more films borrow from his *Rashômon* (1950), *Yojimbo*, or *The Hidden Fortress* (1958)—I'm looking at you, *Star Wars*. The style changes from East to West, but the motives of the characters remain the same.

When I meet someone who refuses to watch a subtitled film—"I don't want to read a film" is the usual argument—I usually realize it's pointless to argue. What only a few will admit is that they aren't interested in stories set in foreign lands. What can you say to that? Some simply prefer stories told in a familiar language, concerning folks who act like they do and live in a land that resembles theirs. If only I could tempt them into watching a few foreign movies, I like to think they'd change their minds. The same could be true of our gaming friends who hesitate to play in a "foreign" setting; now you have in your hands the perfect vehicle to tempt them over the Crown of the World. The places are different, but the people are really just the same.

So to any of you reluctant to travel to Tian Xia, welcome to the East! I hope you find it just as strange and familiar as I do.

ON THE COVER

The infamous Jade Regent reveals himself at last on the latest incredible cover by Wayne Reynolds. Although the PCs are not yet destined to face the tyrant who claimed Minkai's throne, they do get their first glimpse of his plans for Minkai in this month's adventure, "Forest of Spirits."

INSPIRATIONS

I've plenty of wuxia (kung fu) movies, books, and comics to recommend at frabjousdave.blogspot.com, but here's a short list of some of the Japanese films that left the strongest impression on me, all of them full of great ideas for running a campaign set in Minkai.

***The Hakkenden aka The Legend of the Dog Warriors*, directed by Takashi Anno and Michael Dobson**

Based on the epic novel by Kyukutei Bakin, himself originally of the samurai caste, this warring-states animated series follows the fated lives of eight warriors all linked to a tragic princess from a previous generation.

***13 Assassins* (2010), directed by Takashi Miike**

Gonzo director Miike recently turned his attentions to samurai, his first such treatment being a remake of the 1963 film of the same name. It's one hell of a film, featuring a sadistic villain and a large team of heroes willing to sacrifice their lives to stop him. The first half is all build-up, but the back half consists of one huge battle including dynamite and, possibly, a demon.

***Dora-Heita* (2000) and *The Sea Is Watching* (2002), co-written by Akira Kurosawa**

While he did not direct these films, these are two of the last screenplays on which Kurosawa worked. The former features a seemingly corrupt magistrate who is actually under cover to clean up a rotten town. The latter can help GMs depict brothels as more than just a result on a random harlot table.

***The Twilight Samurai* (2002), *The Hidden Blade* (2004), and *Love and Honor* (2006), directed by Yôji Yamada**

All three films of this thematically linked trilogy feature noble samurai facing crises of honor and duty. They operate primarily as dramas with convincing details of domestic life and political intrigue, but when the action comes, it will blow your mind. If you watch only one, make it *The Twilight Samurai*.



Dave Gross
Pathfinder Tales Author