

MUMMY'S MASK



RISE AND FALL OF THE SHORY EMPIRE

"Let me tell you of the ancient Shory and the boldness of a people destined to rule the sky, aeromancers of a bygone age whose magic even the Magaambya has yet to understand. With wind, their cities rose above the clouds, and with lightning, the Shory smote the earth. We still speak their names with reverence today. Yet the Shory didn't just fly—they soared! From the heavens, they rained death upon their enemies, and in their travels, they brought unhindered trade to and from faraway lands. No one has ever reached so high or roamed so far. And yet, the rise of the Shory proved short-lived. In time, their greatest cities fell into fire and ruin. Others simply vanished, never to return. What the earth failed to reclaim, the sky took away."

—Janatimo of Nantambu, Speaker of All the World's Tales

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Among all the human generations that have cast their eyes heavenward—whether to seek the will of the gods or revere the life-sustaining essence of the sun—one civilization on Golarion attained unparalleled heights of understanding and mastery of all the sky offers. The ancient Shory escaped their earthly bonds to live for centuries as an empire in the clouds. Godlike in their knowledge and magical ability, these paragons of central Garund uprooted entire cities, literally rising above the petty strife and conflicts of their neighbors, all while ushering in a new era of exploration and trade.

Shory culture developed through mastery of the power of aeromancy, which the Shory pieced together from the thousand-year-old traditions begun by Old-Mage Jatembe, a legendary figure who helped rebuild humanity after the devastation of Earthfall. The Shory used these secrets to produce countless arcane and mechanical wonders, which gave them a unique advantage over their rivals. Unfortunately, fate proved unkind to the Shory, as a series of misfortunes conspired with their own hubris to destroy their empire after nearly 2 millennia of dominance over the skies of Golarion. The remains of their once-soaring settlements still lie scattered across the Mwangi Expanse and in the far corners of the world, mysterious—and hazardous—to all who discover them.

HISTORY

The Shory people first appeared in central Garund with the merging of nomadic clans from the continent's southern region, all of whom had migrated north into the Kaliasso Jungle, the Mzali plains, and the lower Mwangi Expanse. Originally Garundi in ethnicity, the Shory also intermarried over many centuries with local Mwangi tribes, leading to confusion for scholars attempting to retrace their precise origin. The Shory didn't come to power as a nation until -2556 AR, following a tribal council called by one of the Ten Magic Warriors trained by Old-Mage Jatembe. This masked figure, known only as Black Heron, shared Jatembe's magical traditions with the Shory and encouraged them to unite against the destructive cults of Rovagug rampaging from the south. The Shory applied the early rudiments of aeromancy and elemental magic against these enemies, launching successful raids from the treetops of their jungle home. Not only did mastery of this tactic help insulate northern Garund from the horrors of these demented cults, but it also laid the foundation for the Shory's fascination with flight and their eventual obsession with the tactical advantage and relative safety offered by the skies.

In -2381 AR, the Shory faced a resurgence of Rovagug cults, and suffered through a decade-long war. Unlike in prior conflicts, their enemy allied with the Bekyar tribes and charau-ka followers of Angazhan. The demon lord's apemen in particular proved effective in blunting the Shory's

high-ground advantage among the trees. As attacks on Shory cities and villages grew more frequent and ferocious, the fall of the ancient treetop stronghold of Zetsibe spurred two key events. First, the Shory created *flying platforms*—precursors to the Aeromantic Infandibulum used to eventually raise their cities into the sky—which served as mobile resources, enabling them to extend their air superiority beyond the trees. Second, the Shory established an alliance with the derhii, a winged species of ape-like humanoids destined to become a servant race of the Shory Empire for centuries to come. These developments led to the defeat of a mythic thunder behemoth commanded by Rovagug's cultists—a creature many historians referred to as Djakobu, a lesser spawn of Rovagug. This massive beast wreaked great devastation on the early Shory Empire, razing entire villages and attacking the stability of the land itself, causing minor earthquakes as it passed. The monster's defeat broke the cultists' siege, ending the war and beginning a new age of Shory prosperity and industry.

Over the next several years, the Shory enhanced their arcane skill and expanded their influence. The ruling class in each city established a triune of governing sky masters drawn from the arch-wizards trained in aeromancy, and these leaders instituted an ambitious program of magical experimentation with the goal of raising their cities beyond the reach of their enemies—especially the children of Rovagug. Subsequently, the concepts of the Aeromantic Infandibulum were born. After rebuilding significant portions of their homes with lighter-weight metals and glass-like materials, the Shory raised the capital city of Kho into the sky in -2323 AR. Additional cities followed—with each new ascension celebrated as a monumental achievement in the empire's rise to power.

By -2289 AR, all major Shory settlements had relocated to the skies above the Mwangi Expanse. These autonomous havens, able to sail the air currents at will, became the core of citizenship and stature within the empire. The remaining Shory population appealed for admission to these settlements and abandoned their land-based homes to join their brethren in the sky cities. Within the sky cities, the traditions of the Shory rapidly evolved away from their Garundi origins. Clan names fell into disuse as city affiliation took the place of clans, and city names like Kho, Opongwe, Ulduvai, and Yjæ instead became common. Yet when two cities met among the clouds, they still treated with one another in the custom of their ancestral clans—with each city hosting emissaries from the other—leading to an exchange of news, trade, and arcane lore. As the Shory grew more confident during this age, their flying cities roamed farther from one another, seeking out new societies to trade with or subjugate, and new resources to exploit as their empire grew.

These were the days of the Shory's greatest prosperity, but also the beginning of their eventual decline. As they

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WELLS OF ABUNDANCE

The communal magic of the *well of abundance* played a vital role in the day-to-day lives of the Shory. Its effects varied from city to city, but the most common were to provide an arcane power source that any citizen could use to recharge magic items. Healers also frequently used it to cast *detect animals and plants*, *detect poison*, and *deathwatch* as at-will, spell-like abilities. Others could call upon *light*, *mage hand*, or *prestidigitation* to make their lives easier and more refined.



SKY MASTER OF LIGHTNING

effortlessly established trade routes that no land-bound bandit could hope to threaten, they made many enemies. Ancient Osirion and the Tekritanin League clashed repeatedly with more than one visiting sky-city. The appearance of massive floating settlements inspired fear in local inhabitants as often as welcome exchanges of diplomacy. Some Shory also relished their power over others, declaring themselves gods and holding themselves above any “inferior” cultures they encountered—a label that included almost all other societies. This hubris led Shory arcanists to explore planar magic and summon genies and elementals to cater to their every whim. Unfettered by a consistent moral belief system, the Shory also pushed the boundaries of magical experimentation, consorting with mind-altering entities from beyond the Dark Tapestry as well as soul-stealing daemons from Abaddon.

These darker activities contributed to the fall of the Shory Empire, as the aeromancers proved unprepared for the dangers unleashed by such powers. One by one, their flying cities fell into disarray. Old enemies resurfaced, new factions developed contentious goals, and some Shory accepted nefarious patrons, which proved not only their own undoing, but that of their entire city, as well. Between the destruction of Kho in -632 AR and Ulduvai in -507 AR, every major Shory city either plummeted catastrophically to the ground, or—in the case of Yjæ—fled Garund and the Inner Sea in an ill-fated attempt at self-preservation. This marked the end of the Shory empire, as its citizens either died as their homes crashed to the ground or were assimilated into other cultures wherever they found themselves grounded.

SHORY SOCIETY

Prior to their ascension, the first Shory lived in traditional Garundi clans, each led by a war-chieftain who was supported by a council of elders. After mixing with Mwangi tribes in central Garund, these customs expanded to include shamanic advisors, whose divinations granted them considerable influence. Over time, this formative magic took on great importance in Shory society, helping offset the age of barbarism that followed Earthfall. These beliefs expanded further when Old-Mage Jatembe and Black Heron introduced the Shory to entirely new theories of magic, turning them away from shamanism and to the practice of wizardry instead. Most Shory arcanists of this age studied the elemental school of air, and their research gave rise to the field of aeromancy.

Soon, the sharing of arcane knowledge became a major part of Shory society. The oral traditions of their past helped ensure the proliferation of magic, and their wars with Rovagug’s followers led to new experimentation with electricity-, sonic-, and cold-based spells. Leadership of the clans also changed, with new chieftains chosen based on merit and arcane skill rather than brute strength. In each city, a triune of aeromancer wizards known as the

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sky masters displaced the war-chieftains, recasting their former leaders as sky captains charged with overseeing their city's aeromantic corps in battle. The aeromancers counterbalanced one another in political decision-making, growing in influence until they each controlled their own factions. Each faction was charged with governing a single district and its activity in the daily operation of that cities. A sky master of air looked after the sailing and navigation of the flying cities, as well as the forecasting and influence of the weather. A sky master of lightning led the electro-thaumantic engineers charged with the city's upkeep, as well as the siege crews who wielded *lightning binders* to defend the city. Lastly, a sky master of invention focused on research and experimentation, elevating Shory culture with new breakthroughs in magic and technology, and with the manufacture and mass-production of lesser goods to sell to the other cultures they encountered.

Other notable positions in Shory society included the high lord mercantile in charge of trade, taxation, and resource acquisition, as well as the philosopher-kings assigned to record, catalog, and teach the ways of magic. This latter role also held dominion over the self-renewing, mystic matrices that enabled every Shory citizen to call upon the lacework of magical energy permeating the entire city. First created by Philosopher-King Axuma in the capital of Kho, this communal repository was called a *well of abundance*, and it fed many of the city's constructs and other arcane marvels, while also fulfilling the needs of those who tapped into it to perform minor acts of everyday magic such as *endure elements*, *create water*, and various healing effects to speed recovery from wounds and provide resistance to disease.

Shory society also expanded to include a variety of second-class citizens and servants. Chief among them were the derhii—the intelligent, flying ape-folk who served as guardians, scouts, and incredibly loyal soldiers, though genies, fey, elementals, and unique constructs awakened by the *well of abundance* also played key roles in helping the cities function. Relationships with some of these creatures led to changes in the Shory bloodline, adding a new layer to their arcane culture. Mighty sorcerers began to displace the wizards devoted to aeromancy, and in the empire's waning days, almost all aeromancers augmented their power with the blood of djinn, sylphs, and other elemental influences. This commingling had a lasting effect on their art, lore, and anti-religious views, which culminated in a golden age of magical innovation unrealized by virtually all other magical societies in Golarion's history.

SHORY TECHNOLOGY

For nearly 2 millennia, the Shory focused on flight and attaining mastery of the skies, but their arcane interests ranged as far afield as their flying cities. While aeromancy undoubtedly gave rise to their greatest technological

AEROMANTIC INFANDBULUM

No technology had a more profound impact on Shory society than that which enabled them to lift their cities into the sky. Knowledge of it has faded with their empire's collapse, though many seek to unravel its secrets again. Aeromantic Infandibulum depended on four elements. The first was the roiling heart of energy created by electro-thaumaturgy invested in a *staff of rightful rule* and interred somewhere in the center of the city. The second was the *great rudder*—a set of massive sails with enchanted ropes used to steer the city once it levitated into the sky. The third was a *bag of winds*—the source of an inexhaustible supply of elemental air acting as a controllable propulsion system. And the final component was the *infandibulum key*—a black, glass-like seal worn as an armband or torc by the sky master of air. It was this final element that bound the Aeromantic Infandibulum to the runes marking areas to be ripped from the ground and held aloft.



achievements, they also explored all manner of conjuring, extraplanar, and even soul-warping magic. Their lust for extrapolating on the teachings of Old-Mage Jatembe knew no boundaries, enabling them to push innovation farther than most magical societies of their time.

In the beginning, Shory research into elemental principles bore fruit in unexpected ways, allowing them to enhance their floating cities with self-sustaining magic borne of marids and djinn. Ever-replenishing sources of pure elemental water replaced the cisterns once fed by rainwater. Each Aeromantic Infandibulum relied heavily on elemental air from a *bag of winds* to fill the giant sails of its flying city, propelling it through the skies. Hanging gardens likewise benefited from an influx of fey nature magic. Hypocaust heating vents fueled by electro-thaumantic collectors countered the high-altitude chill, creating a comfortable living environment for guests and citizens alike. The Shory learned to bend crystalline glass and skymetal to their will, shaping their lofty aeries into towering spires and solariums connected by transparent walkways that gave the impression of walking on air to anyone passing between them. They also experimented with sonic magic, creating enchanting melodies from the air rushing through stone whistlers and wind chimes. The even developed traps and offensive weaponry that relied on the potent, deafening reverberations of thunder.

One of the more defining characteristics of Shory technology was the distinctive Auran runes used to mark their creations. Each device manufactured by their industrious magesmiths carried markings in the now-extinct Shory language, and many of these runes bore

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special effects known only to the creators of the device. Some allowed the Shory to scry more effectively on those who carried them, letting them spy on other cultures and magical societies that drew their interest. Others insidious devices acted as mnemonic siphons, quietly copying and infusing themselves with the magic of those who carried them. This often resulted in such creations gaining sentience and spellcasting abilities, becoming intelligent magic items capable of returning and sharing the arcane knowledge they had acquired with their Shory creators.

Similar runes also marked many areas and objects within the Shory's flying citadels, as well as the ice-like hailstone golems that defended them, allowing such constructs and objects to animate by drawing upon the *well of abundance* permeating the city. They also marked the anchoring points for the channeled power of the Aeromantic Infandibulum, serving to bind the city together as it rose from the earth into the sky. Some locations in the Mwangi Expanse and central Garund still bear signs of these markings, never activated by a sky engine before the Shory abandoned them.

FALL OF THE SHORY

The decline of the Shory Empire spanned many decades, and no single event caused its downfall. Instead, as the Shory's flying cities developed their own autonomous societies and political interests, they wandered farther afield and entered into ill-advised conflicts without adequate support from one another. Some cities even engaged in civil wars with one another, fighting over valuable resources, trade routes, or arcane secrets coveted by their leaders. Dark magic also became more prevalent, leading more than one flying fortress to fall from within.

The loss of the empire had a ripple effect on the surrounding cultures of the age. Trade goods and resources once transported across many miles with ease by the Shory became more rare, changing interwoven economies and financial fortunes almost overnight. Other societies benefited from the Shory collapse, either coming to power thanks to treasures gathered from sky city crash sites or by filling the power vacuum left by the Shory's decline and fall. While each city experienced its own unique misfortune, the following represent the most important developments.

Kho: This pinnacle of Shory culture found itself mysteriously assaulted in –632 AR by the Spawn of Rovagug known as the Tarrasque. While this beast emerged from the Pit of Gormuz in faraway Casmaron, it sought the ancient enemies of the Rough Beast and headed directly for the Mwangi Expanse, leaving a swath of destruction in its wake. Some Shory records discovered by an investigation of the crash claim the Tarrasque leapt upon Kho from the highest peak of the Barrier Mountains. Others indicate a Rovagug-worshipping saboteur infiltrated the city and summoned the beast there.

Opongwe: Smallest of the Shory cities, little-known Opongwe escaped fate far longer than its sisters, but also proved less capable of defending itself against the powers arrayed against it. An ancient blue dragon named Maufestalene assaulted the city over the southern deserts of Thuvia in –598 AR. Opongwe's citizens abandoned the fortress as Maufestalene tore it apart, fleeing upon *flying platforms*. When they returned, only the Aeromantic Infandibulum remained in the sky, hanging above the mountains of Thuvia like an afternoon star. The refugees of Opongwe established a floating shantytown around it by lashing together their *flying platforms*—which were constantly recharged by the Aeromantic Infandibulum—but in that harsh environment, they were unable to acquire the resources to rebuild.

Ulduvai: Last of the Shory cities to fall, this fortress fell prey to arcanists seeking power from beyond the stars in a misguided effort to restore their empire's prominence. Their ill-fated attempt summoned a nightmare servant of Azathoth instead, robbing the entire population of its sanity in a handful of days. Ulduvai soon crashed upon Mirrshock Glacier beyond the eastern Mwangi Expanse in –507 AR, leaving behind only insane, undead abominations to represent the once glorious Shory who lived there.

Yjæ: Fearing their declining influence in the aftermath of Kho's destruction, the leaders of this swift-flying citadel convinced its citizens to abandon Garund in the interests of self-preservation and strike out for unexplored territories, distancing themselves from ancient enemies. While they succeeded in crossing the Obari Ocean, an accident occurred while they were navigating around the Wall of Heaven in Tian Xia, causing irreparable damage, stranding the city above the deserts of Shaguang, and leaving it mired in a conflict with invading oni and the denizens of Leng.

REMNANTS OF THE SHORY

While the Shory Empire and its flying cities have long since faded into memory, remnants of their ancient technology and traditions persist even today. Students of the Magaambya in Nantambu diligently research the potential of aeromancy in an effort to duplicate its most common spells and effects. Alchemists and entrepreneurs in Alkenstar have also applied principles of electro-thaumaturgy to some of their designs. Adventurers still occasionally bring forth still-functioning relics from the ruins of Shory crash-sites to be reverse-engineered by master magesmiths in an effort to reproduce such marvels.

BRACELETS OF DEFIANT WIND		PRICE 9,000 GP
SLOT wrists	CL 10th	WEIGHT —
AURA moderate conjuration and evocation [air]		

These azure-and-white marbled bracelets feel smooth and perpetually cool to the touch. When worn, they activate once

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per day as an immediate action to safeguard against sudden airborne attacks and effects by automatically surrounding their wearer in a cylinder of pure wind and elemental air. This effect functions simultaneously as both *air bubble* and *wind wall*, protecting against missile weapons, gases, and most gaseous breath weapons. It also activates underwater if the wearer begins to drown. Once activated, the effect lasts for 10 rounds.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	4,500 GP
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Craft Wondrous Item, *air bubble*^{UC}, *contingency*, *wind wall*

FLYING PLATFORM		PRICE 38,000 GP
SLOT none	CL 12th	WEIGHT 80 lbs.
AURA strong transmutation		

This sturdy, 10-foot-by-10-foot mithral platform bears five shifting, white runes of Auran incantations related to clouds and swift travel. It functions identically to a *carpet of flying*, except it requires periodic recharging to maintain power. The device can hold up to 5 charges, depleting them at a rate of 1 charge for every hour or partial hour of continuous use. The charges can be restored by casting *overland flight* onto the runes, which restores 1 charge per casting.

When in operation, a *flying platform* also reduces the effect of rushing wind upon those standing on it, producing an *alter winds* effect to decrease the wind's intensity by one step. A *flying platform* can normally carry 800 pounds at a speed of 40 feet, but it can carry up to twice this amount with a reduced speed of 30 feet. A *flying platform* can hover without need for a Fly check, and grants a +5 bonus on any other Fly checks made to operate it. It has hardness 10 and 60 hit points.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS	19,000 GP
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Craft Wondrous Item, *alter winds*^{APG}, *overland flight*

STAFF OF RIGHTFUL RULE		MINOR ARTIFACT
SLOT none	CL 15th	WEIGHT 5 lbs.
AURA strong abjuration		

This staff is a single piece of mithral carved with lines and small dots and encrusted with blue and violet gemstones at either end. The runes marking it are a mixture of Auran and Infernal terms, intertwined. The staff delivers a *shocking grasp* (CL 15th) to any creature other than the staff's owner that holds it, and no chaotic creature can become its owner. Asserting ownership requires a successful DC 20 Use Magic Device or Charisma check made while holding the staff. Once a creature becomes the staff's owner, it remains so until another creature asserts ownership.

A *staff of rightful rule* has 10 charges when it is created. In addition to the normal method of recharging staves, spent charges from a *staff of rightful rule* can be restored by casting *dictum* into the staff. Each casting restores 1 charge, but the staff may never hold more than 10 charges at any one time.

The staff allows use of the following spells:

- *Feather fall* (0 charges; functions even if all charges are expended)
- *Shocking grasp* (1 charge)
- *Chain lightning* (2 charges)
- *Dispel chaos* (3 charges)

DESTRUCTION

A *staff of rightful rule* may be destroyed by a *word of chaos* targeted at the staff. The caster of the spell must succeed at a DC 30 caster level check to destroy the staff. If the caster fails this check, the staff deals 10d6 points of damage to him.



SKY MASTER OF AIR