

Tsoo

3.1 Overview

The Tsoo replace the Yakuza from the original design. They are still an Asian gang and they should be able to use many of the existing models without too much tweaking. Their defining characteristic is their tattoos, which all follow the same pattern but which are applied in a modular fashion and in three different colors. This should make for easy to see and implement differences between the different types of Tsoo minions. They are a relatively low power group, comprised entirely of humans with weapons and some super powers. They can use both low level technological and magical items.

3.2 History

Ever since The Statesman and his fellow heroes started their war on organized crime in the 1930's, Paragon City has been a tough place to be a gangster. Few gangs have the wherewithal to fight off super powered heroes for long, and even those that do often find themselves confronted by super powered villains trying to muscle in on their territory from the other side. Nevertheless, gangs continue to spring up every year – the unfortunate and inevitable result of repressed social groups whose youth find themselves without any other hope for a better life. These social groups tend to be ethnic minorities, whether it be Italian and Irish mafias that date back to the 19th century or black, Hispanic, and Asian syndicates that have come onto the scene in more recent times. As long as these groups stick to small time crime they tend to avoid drawing heroic attention, but inevitably they make a play for the big time and end up getting beat back down in a hail of costumed fists.

One of the more successful gangs in the last decade was a splinter group from a Hong Kong based triad. The triads confined their activities to the Asian communities in Paragon City and inculcated a culture of silence that kept all but a few local heroes unaware of just how expansive their syndicate was becoming. The triad ran protection rackets and dominated the drug trade in their neighborhoods, and was especially harsh on non-Chinese immigrants. They held the entire community in a fear, and even the local heroes couldn't crack their wall of silence. When they came close they soon found that the triad had a few super powered enforcers on its staff as well. Perhaps the gang would have eventually drawn the ire of some big time heroes, but as it happened the triad came into contact with what turned out to be a much more dangerous foe. Paragon City has had one of the larger and more active Hmong communities in America since the late 1970's. The Hmong are ethnically Chinese people who immigrated to Southeast Asia thousands of years ago, settling in places like Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, many Hmong allied themselves with the United States, serving as local guides and guerilla fighters from the early 60's on through to the end of the war. When North Vietnam won the decades long conflict, they were brutally repressive towards the Hmong, as was the hellish regime in Cambodia. Tens of thousands of Hmong fled their homes, many of them eventually ending up here in the United States and Paragon City.

The Hmong community in Paragon City is more famous for its tight knit social circles and annual dance productions at the Asian Cultural Festival than for its gang activity. Still, almost all of the immigrant Hmong grew up in and around war and soldiers. Many of the men and some of the women have been fighting since they were strong enough to hold a gun or a knife. Like the rest of the Asian community, they originally submitted to the triad's abuses, because it was easier to go along than to fight. But as the Chinese gang became more and more nasty towards non-Chinese Asians, the Hmong, especially the younger men and women born in America, grew restless and resentful. All they needed was a leader to catalyze them.

Tang Tub Ci was born in Laos in 1960. From the age of ten to the end of the Vietnam war he served as a scout and sometimes a demolitions expert and even assassin for the U.S. special forces operating in Laos and Vietnam. The name Tub Ci means, roughly, Bright Son, but the

soldiers took to calling him Tubby because he was so incredibly thin. Tubby quickly became one of the US Army's favorite local operatives. He was utterly fearless and a very quick study. He learned English quickly and by the end of the war was trusted to call in air strikes, carry out assassinations of Viet Cong officers, and even allowed to lead missions. By the time the US withdrew in 1975 he was an astoundingly accomplished soldier. Tub Ci's parents both died during the war, but the 16-year-old Tub Ci managed to make it over to America on his own, lying about his age.

Once here he ended up in Paragon City, where he tried to find other ways to use his talents. He worked a number of menial jobs before the boredom got to him and he started running with some of the local gangs. At the time there were no Asian gangs, so Tub Ci hooked up with an African American gang. His years of working with American soldiers, many of them black, helped him bridge the cultural gap, and his skill with knife and gun made him an undeniable asset. It was during this period, in the mid-to late 80's that the Tubby nickname resurfaced, although it transformed into his current moniker: Tub E Tang. Tub E saw one gang after another fall to pieces once it got big enough to attract costume clad attention. Eventually even the wily Tub E fell into the hands of a do-gooder hero and ended up sentenced to ten years in prison. The Paragon City Correctional Center is a dangerous place, and not just for the criminals. It is a vast melting pot of crime and evil, housing not only your typical lawbreakers, but your super powered ones as well. While the prison is well equipped to handle such prisoners, it can do little to stop their influence and knowledge from passing out into the rest of the population. For the whip smart Tub E, being in prison was like going to graduate school. He learned from the best and picked up more than a few tricks along the way. More importantly he found the time to delve into his own cultural roots, and thanks to a few other, older Hmong inmates found out the true potential that lay within him.

One of those fellow Hmong prisoners was Pha Xiong, another Vietnam War vet who had also fought with the French in the 50's. Pha Xiong proved to be a great mentor for Tub E, teaching him the hidden truths behind the Hmong's traditional animistic religion. Tub E learned to communicate with the spirits of his dead ancestors and to call upon them for strength and guidance. He also learned the deadly, untraditional unarmed combat style that Pha Xiong had pieced together from years of study and practical experience. Tub E and his fellow Hmong learned a great from Pha Xiong, but Tub E himself was always a multiculturalist. He also learned a thing or two from dozens of other experienced inmates, picking up what proved to be a deadly combination of magic, tattoo artistry, money laundering techniques, and tips on fighting costumed heroes.

When Tub E stepped out of prison on parole in 1995 he changed his name back to Tub Ci and set about perfecting the skills he had acquired in prison. As more and more of his jailhouse comrades also got paroled, Tub Ci formed a small coterie of followers. They weren't quite a gang – not yet. They worked together, they trained together, and they learned together, but they knew better than to cross swords with the justice system before they were ready. Tub Ci taught them what he had learned and the group focused on three very special and deadly skills. One they perfected the hand-to-hand combat style Pha Xiong taught them as well as the guerilla warfare and firearms skills Tub Ci had picked up in Vietnam. Two they learned the Hmong traditions of ancestor worship, learning to tap into the ancient resources that flowed through their blood. Three they each received tattoos.

The tattoo process Tub Ci developed in prison incorporates several different traditions and is a testament to the man's rather eclectic education. The tattoos incorporate a special ink composed of rare Chinese herbs and medicines as well as the blood of the wearer's enemies. The style is an eclectic Asian-Celtic fusion incorporating magical symbols from a number of different traditions. The needles used are prepared and blessed using magical techniques from the West Indies. The result is a mystic mélange of melanin enhancing designs that give the wearers special powers and abilities. Preparing the tattoo materials takes many months and

even then only allows for the inking of a small area. Thus over time the group slowly built up their tattoos and thus their preternatural power. By the time the Chinese Triads started muscling in on the local Hmong community, Tub Ci and his friends were ready.

Just as the Triad pressure was becoming unbearable, Tub and company presented themselves to the community as The Tsoo (roughly translated as the Destroyers). They broke up a well known Triad gambling house in a most public and spectacular manner, leaving just enough survivors to make sure word got back to the Triad bosses about who was responsible. Naturally a vicious gang war ensued, with the Triads immediately coming after Tub Ci and the gang with all guns blazing. The Tsoo were ready, having set up a classic ambush for the bull headed triad mooks. The Chinese hit squad died to a man, some without ever knowing what hit them. Word of these two, quick victories quickly got out and new recruits came pouring in from the disaffected Hmong youth. In the war-ravaged economy of modern day Paragon City, many of them were jobless and disaffected. The Tsoo offered them a chance to strike back at the harsh world around them.

The gang war with the Triads ended up being a tougher business than Tub E had originally anticipated. The Chinese were relentless, better armed, and had more men. Their super powered enforcers proved every bit as tough and resilient as the Tsoo's tattooed soldiers. As the Triads called for reinforcements from outside Paragon City, things began to look dire for the Tsoo. Then a miracle happened. Tub Ci insisted that his followers always begin any undertaking with prayers to the ancestors. It was during one of these prayer meetings that they discovered that the tattoos have an additional mystic property – they act as conduits to the spirit world and the Tsoo's ancestors. Ancient warriors and leaders from generations of Hmong crossed over from the spirit world to empower the Tsoo in their hour of need. This was the final boost that pushed the gang over the edge and allowed them to smash the Triads for good.

Tub E and his gang immediately set about taking over all of the rackets and illegal operations the Triads had run for years. The Asian underworld had a new ruling class, and it was the minority Hmong. Like his Chinese predecessors, Tub Ci enforced a strict code of silence on the community so as not to attract unwanted hero attention. Unlike the Chinese, Tub Ci did not discriminate or unduly persecute other ethnic groups. It was only by drawing on both his own cultural traditions and the best teachings of other groups that the Tsoo had managed to become so successful. Tub Ci was not about to change tactics now. He began recruiting non-Hmong members into the gang almost immediately.

Anyone was welcome as long as they obeyed the gang's rules and followed its basic beliefs. For all its ancient teachings and animistic trappings, the gang is still a very modern, very youth oriented group. The members wear the latest fashions, listen to the coolest music, and carry the deadliest firearms they can get their hands on. It's members walk the streets with arrogant swaggers and pistols tucked under their shirts. While there was some groundswell of support when the group first ousted the Triads, most of the city's Asian community now sees them as nothing more than another horde of lawless thugs. The majority of Hmong and other ethnic groups love the law and look forward to a day when all these gangs are gone for good. But Tub Ci and his crew have bigger plans for Paragon City, and they have no intention of disappearing anytime soon.

3.3 Goals

The Tsoo want nothing less than to control all of the drug trade and protection rackets in Paragon City. Tub Ci dreams of starting a Hmong criminal dynasty with all the other gangs and crime syndicates united under the Tsoo's banner. But Tub Ci is nothing if not a realist, and he knows that he might never achieve this goal. Still, there is value in setting one's sight on the highest peak and he means to do everything in his power to get there. It also means that he's in no rush, and is willing to take the time to do it right.

What Tsoo doesn't want is to challenge any of the powerhouse villain groups. He knows better than to fight an enemy he can't possibly beat. Fortunately for Tub Ci, most of the major players have their own twisted agendas that don't necessarily have any impact on the more traditional criminal enterprises that the Tsoo is involved in. Indeed, as often as not the schemes of groups like the Rikti, Nemesis, and the Fifth Column are as detrimental to Tub Ci's operation as they are for the rest of the city. If it wasn't so dangerous, the Tsoo would have no qualms about taking out any of these more dangerous groups.

This doesn't mean that the Tsoo are scared, just prudent. In fact, they're one of the most proactive gangs Paragon City has seen in a long time. The Tsoo's first goal is to wipe out or absorb all of the competition. Anyone selling drugs, running a card game, or working a protection racket had better be paying tax to the Tsoo or they go up on the target list. The Tsoo have totally consolidated several neighborhoods and are working on spreading their iron fist out across the city. They've already begun to send raiding parties into other regions in an effort to expand their holdings.

Among the many challenges that the Tsoo faces in achieving its goals is the fact that they need good soldiers and lots of them. Tub Ci has widely cast his recruiting net wide, but he plans to extend its range even further. Most of the city's disaffected youth have managed to find some outlet for their thuggish instincts by now. With so many seductive villain groups, there's always a door open for someone with hate or anger in their heart. Tub Ci is looking beyond the hopeless and into the homes of the middle class. He has planned a number of different recruiting initiatives designed to bring suburban blood into the gang and extend its reach into hitherto unreachable regions.

In order to draw people into something as dangerous and deadly as the Tsoo, Tub Ci knows that he has to offer them something they both can't get anywhere else and want very badly indeed. The traditional answers have been money and drugs, both of which the Tsoo offers by the handful. Drugs have always been a particularly insidious means of reaching the middle class, but seldom enough to draw large numbers of them into the gangster lifestyle. While the Tsoo continues to do a brisk business in the old favorites (cocaine, heroin, crystal meth, marijuana), Tub Ci has been getting inspiration from his ancestors about some less well-known narcotics.

This new drug is based on an ancient herbal medicine used to give warrior's strength and courage on the eve of battle. Tub Ci's ancestors spoke to him in his dreams, giving him the formula for the potent potion. Tub Ci then took the recipe to his drug chemists and asked them to synthesize it, giving it a little kick in the process. The result is a new street drug called Huam Cheej, which roughly translates from Hmong as Death Rattle or Dying Breath. The drug has been on the streets for a few months now and already has a following. Users know it by a variety of names: HC, Cheej, Cheese, and Rage. This last describes the effects pretty accurately: users get a speed like sense of increased energy and euphoria coupled with a large dose of very aggressive, very angry emotions. The desire to hurt, maim, and kill become very heightened. The drug does not usually cause a loss of control or induce a berserker state, but simply increases aggressiveness ten or twenty fold.

With only the Tsoo able to provide Cheej, more and more addicts are coming into Tub Ci's territory from around the city. The dealers are targeting mainly middle class kids and young people, focusing especially on athletes, club kids, and anyone else engaged in regular physical activity. Once they've been lured into Tsoo territory, Tub Ci's pushers not only sell the drugs, they also seduce them with various entertainments designed to compliment the way an user feels when their on Cheej. Loud, raucous parties are a nightly event in Tsoo territory, usually held in abandoned warehouses or empty lots in bad neighborhoods. These parties offer a heady mix of drugs, flesh, and violence, all tailor made for the Cheej head.

The most popular events are the nightly no-holds-barred fights. Men and women participate, squaring off against one another and fighting with a Cheej induced fury. The Tsoo's soldiers

take bets on the action and keep an eye out for the best fighters. In addition to the fights there are the Hide and Hunt nights every week. Here anyone can pay to participate in a kind of foxhunt, although instead of foxes the hunters track down human prey wired on Cheej. Weirdly enough, Cheej addled youths actually volunteer to play the "fox." Most of the time they merely receive a fierce beating, but if someone manages to elude capture for the whole night without going to the cops or a hero, they earn tremendous respect in the community. Most of the time they receive an immediate invitation to join the Tsoo as a soldier. Likewise those hunters most adept at catching "foxes" also earn praise from their fellow druggies.

These recruiting techniques are proving quite effective. By making membership in the gang a symbol of physical prowess and status as well as a reliable source of future drugs, Tub Ci has made "Tsoo Clubbing" the new hot trend among the city's youth. The best of these misguided middle class men and women end up serving in the Tsoo while the rest simply provide more fun and funds for the gang. Although recently the local papers have done several pieced on the Tsoo parties, so far the police and heroes view them as mostly harmless. Certainly a bunch of kids getting a little crazy does not compare to the threat posed by alien invaders or super villains. This reaction is just as Tub Ci planned. He keeps the darkest and most dangerous aspects of the parties a secret while he lets less damaging stories of drugs and sex leak out to the press.

Once he's gathered enough trained gangsters under his wing, Tub Ci plans to make the next big move in organized crime. He wants to start gathering political influence by bribing or blackmailing the city's ruling class. Already he has several sons and daughters of influential families in his gang. Unfortunately for him, his recent successes have earned him the attention of the Regulators and so his hero related problems are starting to become more and more serious. Only time will tell if the city's heroes can put a stop to his ruthless expansion.

3.4 Behavior Patterns

The Tsoo follow pretty typical crime syndicate behavior patterns. Their Soldiers are pretty much out on the streets night and day. They like to hang out on corners and in parks or empty lots. From here they sell drugs, watch over the block, and hold court for those paying them protection money. For the most part they won't harass a hero who comes by, as they're seldom looking for trouble. At the same time, the Cheej in their system means they're liable to go off at the drop of a hat, and don't need much of an excuse to start a fight. Rival gangs and other criminals are not welcome under any circumstances and come under immediate fire. Gangs of soldiers usually have a few low ranking Ink Men in their midst, just to watch over them and make sure they behave. The nightly parties, street fights, and hunts draw large crowds of both gang members and civilians. These are wild affairs and not for the faint of heart. All ranks of Tsoo attend the parties and watch over the fights and hunts. Heroes are definitely not welcome, and Ink Men guards are usually stationed around the perimeter to keep outsiders at bay.

The Tsoo also engage in many more proactive undertakings. They seldom trust soldiers to participate in a robbery or other job, so most of the individuals involved are either Ink Men or Enforcers. The Tsoo usually choose quick, smash and grab targets like jewelry and electronics stores as well as banks and check cashing places. Their crimes tend to be pretty straight forward, with obvious goals: get money or take revenge on some rival gang. When not on a job or at a party, the higher ranking Tsoo members spend their time in one of the gang's many hideouts. Most of these are in warehouses and apartment buildings that the gang has either seized or legally purchased. These hideouts are seldom actually very secret, but they always have heavily armed and alert guards. They serve as palaces, courts, and barracks all in one. Local citizens who live under the Tsoo's thumb come to the hideouts to pay protection money, ask for favors, and otherwise pay homage to Tub Ci and his gang.

3.5 Enemies and Allies

The Tsoo do not have many allies in the world, nor do they want them. They've declared open war on all of the other crime syndicates, and they're doing a pretty handy job of winning that war. They obviously need no allies there. Amongst the larger villain groups, they are either regarded as too small time to matter or direct competition to be crushed. The Freakshow in particular view the Tsoo as a threat, and the two gangs clash whenever they come into contact with one another. Since the Freakshow tend to be tougher and more dangerous than the Tsoo, Tub Ci and his gang avoid the cyberpunk thugs, at least for the time being.

The Circle of Thorns took a brief look at their magical tattoos and then dismissed the gang as insignificant. They leave the Tsoo be. The Fifth Column on the other hand despises the gang, as it despises all threats to authority and their fascist ideals. At the same time they see the value such gangs have in destabilizing the corrupt American regime. Thus they let the Tsoo be as long as they don't get in the terrorist group's way. Crey Industries, Nemesis, and the Rikti all ignore the gang, with the occasional exception that Crey has been known to sell them weaponry from time to time, when they can afford it.