

DENIZENS OF MOUNTAINS & SEAS

Fantastic Creatures of Ancient China

VOL 2

PREVIEW



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SNAKES IN CHINESE MYTH

From the giant sea serpent Jörmungandr to the gorgon Medusa's hair, snakes are a common symbol in the belief systems and legends of cultures around the world. Their appearance and deadly abilities often associate them with horror and death, while the ability to shed skin and emerge anew regard them as symbols of rebirth. In China, there is no shortage of stories featuring snakes. The myths of *Pangu* and *Nüwa* demonstrate the life-giving belief in snakes, while the *bashe* represents their fearsome side.

Pangu, the mythological creator and first living being, was said to have slumbered at the core an egg representing the universe for eighteen thousand years. When he awoke, *Pangu* emerged and with him came murky (Earth) and clear (heaven or sky) elements representing Yin and Yang. Fearing that they would coalesce, he separated them using an axe, stood between them, and began pushing up the sky.

For another eighteen thousand years, *Pangu* grew and grew as the sky and the earth parted exactly eighteen thousand feet. When this was complete his body, which once looked like a hairy man, resembled a serpent with a dragon's head. When he died, his breath became the winds, clouds, and mist; his voice became thunder; his right eye the moon and left eye the sun; his chest, hands, and feet the mountains and ends of the world; his blood the rivers; his nerves the paths; his muscles the fertile fields; his moustache the stars in the night sky and body hair the flowers, grasses, and trees; his bones, marrow, and teeth became valuable minerals and stones; his sweat became the rain and morning dew.

Humanity did not exist when *Pangu* created Heaven and Earth. That was the work of *Nüwa*, a half-human, half-snake mother goddess and heavenly repairer. After the death of *Pangu*, *Nüwa* used yellow mud and water to mould the first human. Fond of her own work, she crafted more, and they danced naked around her. But the world created by *Pangu* was too vast for the small number of humans she created by hand, so she dipped a string in the mud and trailed it around.

The drops that fell off the string became the humble commoners while those crafted by her hand became the nobility. Satisfied with her work, *Nüwa* taught her creations about marriage and procreation – allowing humanity to grow on their own.

BASHE

In Chinese classical literature, no true snake is more fearsome* than the *Bashe* (or *ba-snake*) - massive green, yellow, black, or red serpents said to grow up to 600 feet long**. Some are known to display different combinations of these four colours. Ba-snakes are known to swallow elephants whole, taking three long years to digest their meal before expelling the bones through their scales.

Hou Yi, the god of archery from Chinese mythology and husband of the lunar goddess *Chang'e*, was said to have killed a *bashe*. He buried its corpse under a large hill, where a temple was later built for people to worship its spirit.

*While the appearance of a *bashe* might cause trouble for the characters of your story, they need not be depicted as “evil” in nature.

**Tales of creatures like the *ba-snake* were likely the result of exaggerated encounters with Burmese pythons (*Python bivittatus*) in Southern China and Southeast Asian.

Descriptors: serpent, greedy, insatiable, powerful, constrictor

Frequency: legendary

Size: gargantuan

Number Appearing: solitary

Movement: 20 ft.

Armour Class: 20

Resistances:

HD/HP: 15/70

Attacks: 1 (bite)

To Hit: +12

Damage: 3d12

Special Attacks: swallow whole, trample

Morale: 10

Treasure Type: G (gut contents contain ~23,000 gp worth of coins, gems, jewelry, and magical items from fallen heroes)

Swallow whole. When a *bashe* rolls a natural 20 on a bite attack, it may swallow a creature of size huge or smaller. When inside the *bashe*, suffer 1d10 bludgeoning damage per round (until the creature dies). Target may attack with bladed weapons at a -5 penalty.

Trample. Due to its massive size, there is a chance 50% chance that a *bashe* might trample nearby creatures when attacking with its bite. +5 to hit (2d8 damage).

Magical Flesh. The raw flesh of these serpents and the elephant bones they digest can be used as powerful catalysts for healing medicines. The skin of a *bashe* will protect the wearer against effects targeting the heart and lungs. If fashioned into a suit of leather armour, the item grants the wearer with immunity to bleeding effects and the ability to survive without air.



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