

Asian Bestiary, Volume I

Book Line:	Fantasy Hero	SKU:	509
Book Type:	Monsters & Beasts	Formats:	Softcover, PDF
Author:	Michael Surbrook	Released:	February, 2006
Cost:	24.99\$	ISBN:	1-58366-063-1
Page Count:	141	Hero Designer:	Yes (SKY: 738)
Common Abbreviations:	ABI, AB1	Print Status:	In Print

The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

If you've ever needed an strange beast or wanted to run a campaign set in Asia then this is your book. There are almost one hundred full write ups plus numerous variants and notes on even more creatures in Volume 1 Alone.

Volume 1 covers seven major countries in Asia: China (which takes up almost half the book), India, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Thailand, and Vietnam. None of the creatures in this book are simply made up and given Asian flare, they are all taken directly from the myths and folklore of Asia.

Not only does each creature come with a full Hero System write-up, but a complete description of their ecology plus various tidbits of the stories that these creatures originated in. If a creature's name varies from region to region they are also detailed in the write-up, along with any variations that myths and legends had for these monsters.

And don't think it's a big book of monsters to fight, every sort of creature from Legend is here, benevolent spirits, peaceful beings and variations on normal creatures that Asian stories have given rise to; such as the Creatures Of The Himmaman Forest many of which are normal animals with a slight twist.

Another upside you don't often see, each Country contains a small section on the Religions within the country and how they have had an effect on the local legends and lore. Putting many creatures into some perspective for that region.

The bibliography in the back of the book is also amazing. Volume 1 contains the entire bibliography for both Volume 1 and 2, is thorough and could lead off into interesting reading on its own.

The Downside:

There's not a lot I can say about the Asian Bestiary that's negative. it would have been nice to have both volumes in one book, but that might have made the cost a bit prohibitive for many.

If anything it would have been nice to get More of the actual folklore and stories behind each creature.

There is one notable thing missing from this book that exists in most Hero releases: there are no Plot Hooks in the book, small one or two paragraph suggestions on how to include any given element in

your game. While many of the write ups have a suggestion or two, none are as extensive as the Plot Hooks given in many Hero Books. To be fair, this kind of thing isn't present in this type of book normally, but it would have been cool to have regardless.

The Otherside:

This book is an excellent source of Asia folklore for any game, not just Hero. Conversions would naturally be required to get the creatures statted out in your preferred system. But even without converting the stats the write ups contain enough information to give any game an authentic Asian touch.

All in all, The Asian Bestiary is one of the best monster books I've seen for any system at any point in time. Thoroughly researched, well done and cleanly organized, any game library would be improved with this book.

For more Asian creatures see Volume 2.

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Last update: **2007/03/26 08:45**

