SAMPLE

The Guardian's Shadow: Jin

The Genii — The Scripture's Own Species, the Black King of the Heart of the Earth, and the Night's Ruling Nation

Aiden Nightfall

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The Guardian's Shadow

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Introduction

Before a Malay pawang of the old world felled a tree, he greeted the jin who lived in it. Before a fisherman set his stakes at the river-mouth, he greeted the Jin Hitam of the cove and the Jin Puteh of the point. Before the shadow-play began, before the ma'yong theatre opened, before the rice was planted or the mine was sunk or the boat was launched, the specialist stood at the edge of the work and spoke into the air — a greeting, a genealogy, and a request — to beings he had never seen and could name by the dozen. The beings were the Jin: the genii, the scripture's own species, the unseen nation whose homeland is everywhere the human world has an edge.

Every other volume in this series has been about a citizen of that nation — a single figure, one office, one haunting. This volume is about the nation itself. The jin are not one ghost among the catalogue's ghosts; they are the genus under which the tradition filed them all. When Islam arrived in the archipelago and the old spirit-world needed a new address, the jin — a species straight from the Qur'an, created of smokeless fire, free-willed, organised into communities, convertible — became the frame into which the whole older world was re-housed: the earth-gods became jin of the ground, the sky-gods jin of the sun and moon, the sea's beings jin of the water. Skeat, recording the system at the turn of the twentieth century, called the class exactly what it was: "a sort of connecting link between gods and ghosts."

And the tradition's imagination gave this nation everything a nation has: a king — the Black King of the Genii, who dwells in the Heart of the Earth, with a bride and seven strapping sons and a description written in black on black; a rival house — the White Genie, guardian of the Gate of Heaven, from whom no harm was ever recorded; a census — one hundred and ninety genii, or a hundred and ninety-three, the same number as the catalogue's mischiefs; a converted population and an infidel remnant; a colour-code of castes from black through green and blue to white; a bureaucracy of state jin over the royal instruments and the royal weapons; and, most humanly, a trade — for Skeat records that one could buy a jin at Mecca from the Sheikh Jin, the Headman of Genii, at ninety to a hundred dollars a piece.

Over the next ten chapters, this book walks the whole nation: the two cosmogonies that made it, the Black King's court, the White Genie's gate, the powers of the genii of state, the protocols the village lived by, the exorcism cinema and the internet exorcists of the modern day, and the deep science of what the jin have always explained. This is the volume the other sixteen have been pointing at. When you know the jin, you know why there is a catalogue at all.

Chapter 1: What Is Jin? The Genii of Malay Folklore Explained

Begin where the tradition itself begins, because for once the source is not the village but scripture. The jin of Islam — from the Arabic root meaning the hidden, the concealed — are a created species: made, as the Qur'an teaches, "from smokeless fire" as mankind was made of clay; endowed with free will; organised into nations and communities; accountable, in the final accounting, for their choices; and present in the record of revelation from its first pages to its last. A whole chapter of the Qur'an — the seventy- second, Surat al-Jinn — is named for them, and its opening scene is the tradition's own favourite: a band of jinn, hidden in the dark, listening to the Prophet's recitation of the Book — and converting. The jin are, in the strictest sense, the only supernatural beings of this entire series that the village's official religion never denied. The guardian at the tree-line may be folklore; the genii of Mecca are theology.

And within the theology stands the figure the tradition built its whole moral case on: Iblis, the Tempter — "he was of the jinn," the Book says, and disobeyed the command of his Lord, refusing the prostration to Adam out of a pride the scripture never stops prosecuting. The tradition's every story of the rebellious sorcerer, the proud genie, the pact too far (this series met them in the oily man of Volume 15 and the keepers of Volumes 6 to 8) descends from that single refusal: a jinn, created with the freedom to obey, who used the freedom to refuse — and became the devil of a whole world's folklore.

In the Malay-Indonesian world, this imported species became the umbrella over the whole older night. Skeat's definition of the class deserves quoting whole: the jins "form a very extensive class of quite subordinate divinities, godlings, or spirits, whose place in Malay mythology is clearly due, whether directly or indirectly, to Muhammadan influences, but who may be most conveniently treated here as affording a sort of connecting link between gods and ghosts." Every word of that sentence is load-bearing. The class is extensive — a hundred and ninety members and rising. It is subordinate — below the high God, above the restless dead. It is an import — Muhammadan, arriving with the Book. And it connects gods and ghosts: the jin are the hinge of the whole catalogue, the reason a Malay villager of 1900 could hold the old earth-god and the new theology in one system without feeling a seam.

The tradition organised its genii like a court roster. There are the colours — the Jin Hitam (Black Genie), the Jin Puteh (White Genie), and in the great cosmogony the green, the blue, and the yellow jin besides; black for the

earth's depths, white for the sun and the heavens, the colours reading as offices rather than decorations. There are the houses — the Black King's line through his bride Sang Gadin, the White Genie's through his three named children. And there is the strangest census of all, recorded by Skeat with a folklorist's straight face: a subdivision of the genii "into Faithful (Jin Islam) and Infidel (Jin Kafir)" — the jin, like the humans around them, divided by religion; some of the unseen nation being Muslims of the mosque, others pagans of the forest. The village did not find this strange. It found it obvious. The jin were a nation; nations have religions; the rest was bookkeeping.

The class's history should be walked in order, because the order is the meaning. The archipelago's own spirit-world — the mambang of the skies, the jembalang of the soil, the birth-death's vampires, the ancestors' ghosts — is older than the trading age by millennia. The jin arrive with the Book: carried down the straits and up the rivers by the traders and teachers of the Islamic centuries, reaching the peninsula's courts and the coast's ports long before the faith reached every interior's interior. The village's conversion, everywhere in the Malay world, was a generations-long accommodation — the old rites practised beside the new prayers, the pawang's invocations re-addressed, the graves kept at both registers — and the jin were the accommodation's working part: the species that let a family honour the earth-god at the tree-felling and the Qur'an at the Friday prayer, with nothing burned and nothing renounced.

Skeat's judgement that the class's place in the mythology "is clearly due, whether directly or indirectly, to Muhammadan influences" is the observation of a process, not an event: the jin did not conquer the older world. They hired it.

And one sorting-note before the history: the jin are the only entry in this series' catalogue that is plural by definition. The langsuir is a woman; the pocong is a corpse; the hantu air is a being. The jin are a demographic — households, colours, religions, offices, a king, a trade, a census — and the difference in grammar is the difference in everything: the volume ahead is not the biography of a monster but the survey of a country. Readers of the previous sixteen volumes will feel the shift chapter by chapter, and it is the tradition's own: the village spoke of the langsuir in stories and of the jin in records — invocations, price-lists, protocols, censuses — because you do not legislate for a ghost. You legislate for a nation.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io