

Jo-Ga-Oh; Little People of the Iroquois

by Conrad Froehlich (from "Jo-Ga-Oh; Little People of the Iroquois", Dragon Magazine

#61)

FREQUENCY: Very rare

NO. APPEARING: 5-30

ARMOR CLASS: 7

MOVE: 9"

HIT DICE: 1

% IN LAIR: Nil

TREASURE TYPE: Nil

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon

SPECIAL ATTACKS: +4 with bow

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%

INTELLIGENCE: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral

SIZE: S (3' tall)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

Attack/Defense Modes: Nil/nil

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: III/53+1/hp

M-Us: Variable



Among the Iroquois Indians of New York, there exist a number of tales concerning the "little people." These elf-like beings, called Jo-ga-oh, are given power to serve nature with the same authority as the greater spirits. Such nature spirits drive rivers, move through the trees, dance alongside the clouds, alter the land with the season changes, and are concerned with the daily events of the Indians. The Jo-ga-oh are divided into three subgroups: the Gan-da-yah of the fruits and grains, the Ga-hon-ga of the rocks and rivers, and the Oh-do-was (or Oh-dan-was) of the underworld.

The Oh-do-was

The most wise and mysterious of the little people, the under-earth dwellers, are the On-do-was of the darkness. Seldom do men recognize them in the gloom. They hold jurisdiction over the sunless domain beneath the earth, where live the creatures of darkness, and the prisoners that have offended the regions of light.

The On-do-was dwell in a dim world with forests and broad plains, abounding with the types of animals usually found in those environments. Though all who dwell here wish to escape, all are told to be satisfied and live where Fate has placed them. Among the mysterious underground denizens are white buffaloes, who attempt many times to reach the sunlight and gallop with their brown brothers over the plains, but the path up is guarded. At times they try to rush through in a large group, but the Oh-dowas gather their hunters to thin out the unruly herds with arrows. It is said that a red cloud in the heavens is a sign to the Indians that this hunt is on. The people rejoice that the Oh-do-was are watchful and brave in keeping order in the world.

Other captives of the Oh-do-was are venomous reptiles and creatures of death which hide in the deep shadows. Despite the great size of these creatures, it is not often that the Oh-do-was are unable to throw them back from the door to the light world. Sometimes one will escape, whizzing out into the darkness, and spread its poisonous breath across the forests, creating a pestilence that kills all. The other monsters, jealous of the escape, seek areas where springs sprout from the surface and poison the waters. Where a deep root has pushed its way into the underworld in search of water, they tear it with their fangs, which destroys the earth tree. Such happenings are rare, for the Oh-do-was would not willingly allow death to escape to wreak its vengeance on their friends.

At certain times, the Oh-do-was will visit their relations on earth. They will hold festivals in the forests at night and use circles under deep wood trees, where grass refuses to grow, for dances. They enjoy the soft rays of the moon but are blinded by the sun. The animals of the night are wary of these little people, for sometimes offensive intruding creatures are captured and taken to the underworld. The animals cannot expect to be ransomed by the guardians of the light, for no Jo-ga-oh ever questions the actions of another.

The Oh-do-was are armed with either a short bow and dagger (60%) or spear (40%). For every five Oh-do-was in a band there will be one magic-user (roll d6 for level: 1-2 = 4th, 3-5 = 5th, 6 = 6th). For every 15 encountered, there will be an additional magic-user of 8th (roll of 1-4) or 9th (roll of 5-6) level. If there are over 25 in a band, their leader will be a 12th level magic-user. There is a 5% chance per level for each magic-user that the individual will have a usable magic item.

Jo-ga-oh can never be surprised. All of the little people are described as pale yellow in color and are completely dressed during all times of the year. Leggings, breechclout and a cape are worn by males. Females wear knee length skirts to which a large skin cloak is added in bad weather. Different names are given to the little people by other Iroquois tribes. The Onondagas call them Che-kak-eh-hen-wah, "Small People" or "Little Men"; the Mohawks know them as the Yah-yo-nen-us-yoks, "Stone Throwers"; the Tuscaroras call them Ehn-kwa-si-yea, "No Men At All."