

Archetypes



With the advent of the Unchained Monk, access to older Monk archetypes was removed.

While this was, at one point, very limiting, the Unchained Monk has received an ever-expanding set of archetype options.

[BLURB] ADAPTING ARCHETYPES MEANT FOR THE CORE RULEBOOK'S MONK

If your GM is cool with the idea of adapting CRB Monk archetypes for the Unchained Monk, keep in mind that he or she will have to make some calls regarding power level. This is because the old Monk archetypes **are not** meant for the Unchained Monk, so this might be extra tricky. For example - if you adapt an archetype that trades away Diamond Soul at 13th level for the vanilla Monk -- do you trade away the Unchained Monk's 12th or 14th level power? And do you make the feature that would come at 13th level active at 12th or 14th, or keep it at 13th? Another tricky issue is what happens with things that don't have an equivalent - the Monk of the Seven Forms, for example, trades away Maneuver Training, which the Unchained Monk doesn't have and doesn't need due to naturally having full BAB. How would you solve that? There's also tricky issues with modifying other abilities that don't have equal power - for example, the Master of Many Styles trades away Flurry of Blows, but it's not the same to trade it out for a $\frac{3}{4}$ BAB class, than for a full BAB class that can just pick up Two-Weapon Fighting feats. Furthermore, what happens to Style Strikes for archetypes without Flurry of Blows? To add further complications, some archetypes just become too powerful if used with Unchained Monks. [Here is Paizo's Mark Seifter saying they chose to make an archetype unavailable for UnMonks because of power.](#)

The currently valid archetypes for the Unchained Monk are:



BLACK ASP (***) - Breaks even

Source: Ultimate Intrigue

This archetype is interesting as you trade few features with this archetype - and while you don't automatically gain much, you do gain options. It mainly focuses on poison but can gain some cloak and dagger tools. However, do note that the use of poison is limited greatly by available funds and types of opponents, and that this archetype does not gain any way to pad out those deficiencies. The real crowning jewel of the archetype is the optional Forbidden Power Empty Mind, which grants you constant *mind blank*. The prerequisite Powers aren't too exciting unless you are playing a subterfuge campaign, but if you are, they are spectacular.

What you lose: Stunning Fist; Still Mind.

How bad will you miss those features: Not too much. Stunning Fist and poison use are similar in that they are Fortitude targeting effects. Still Mind is sad to lose but free Adder Strike also grants you quick access to the nifty Pinpoint Poisoner for ranged utility.

Build priorities: Get gloves to poison your unarmed strikes without killing yourself. Consider feats that improve poisoning.

Stacks with:

- **Disciple of Wholeness**, which sounds awesome as a combination at first glance - *blur* to avoid being hit and maintain your immunities, Black Asp Venom ki power to have some offensive utility that doesn't rely on many strikes, and who can forget the ability to poison an enemy while being able to save them from said poison? Big problem here is that you lose a

lot of the ki powers you would have used to play with this combination. Can still work though.

- **Invested Regent**, which isn't too bad an idea, since the Regent's self-buffs will allow you to spend your ki points in the utility features this archetype offers.
- **Monk of the Mantis**, but you really don't want to do that because that one is based on Stunning Fist, which you lose. Works from level 9th on when you can pick Stunning Fist as a feat.
- **Sage Counselor**, which is a neat combination for skullduggery, but not particularly synergistic.



BRAZEN DISCIPLE (*) - Breaks even**

Source: Adventurer's Guide

Second archetype based on feinting and counting!

Ok, so this one is not too different from **Sage Counselor**, but it's liminally better. The big bonus of this archetype is that you add your Wisdom to Disguise and Bluff checks, getting you some social ability on a class that otherwise has little. Getting free feints since level 1 is also pretty useful to defeat enemies with high DEX, and being able to make an enemy open to all your party from level 6 onwards, without the expenditure of ki, should be pretty good utility for parties with sneak attackers.

What you lose: Some class skills; bonus feats at 1st and 6th levels; alters list of bonus feats; Still Mind; 12th level Ki Power; Perfect Self.

How bad will you miss those features: You are going to miss having access to the glory of Medusa's Wrath. The ability that replaces Perfect Self makes you

vulnerable to cold, which pretty much sucks too, but that's at 20th level so who cares.

Build priorities: Emphasising Bluff for feinting isn't that hard, but try to keep it high up to be able to feint against non-humanoids, since you get a -4 penalty, or creatures with animal intelligence, which incur a -8 penalty. A Mask of Stony Demeanor is hard to afford early at 8k gp, but probably worth it to surmount these issues while also granting a large bonus to your ability to lie out of combat.

Stacks with:

- **Windstep Master**, which is functional, but plays against itself – you want to hit at least twice to Hurricane Punch, yet you also want to forgo attacks to feint. Not too much synergy here, even if the tools are compatible.



DISCIPLE OF WHOLENESS (*) – Very Limited

Source: Healer's Handbook

If your party is missing someone who can protect the party against disease/poison and otherwise doing well in terms of damage, this archetype can be a very niche pick. I do believe divine casters in general can perform this role much better than the Disciple of Wholeness.

The ability to grant full poison/disease immunity to several party members at the cost of 1 ki is not shabby at all. While any other Monk can pick up *remove disease* and *neutralize poison* as Qinggong Powers, they are much more expensive to use (2 ki and 3 ki respectively, compared to 1 ki) and don't grant outright immunity for 24 hours.

The worst part of the archetype is Healing Ki ability, which, if you sink an extra ki power into it to take Wholeness of Body, only heals for 1d8 + class level as a swift action for 2 ki. Compared to a Paladins lay on hands, this is pretty shabby (at level 20th, Paladins heal an average of 35 points per LoH, Disciples of Wholeness heals an average of 24.5 points per 2 ki-boosted Healing Ki). It does work as a swift action though, so you can use it on any allies around you without jeopardizing your Flurry of Blows.

Once you get the ability to use *greater dispel* at the low cost of 1 ki, this allows you to perform some major utility for the party... but as I said before, you'd really need to justify missing out on so many ki powers.

What really hurts is the fact that you cannot use your abilities to render someone immune to disease/poison on yourself though.

What you lose: Ability to spend 1 ki to make an additional unarmed strike; purity of body; 4th, 12th and 14th ki powers; ability to pick diamond body and diamond soul ki powers.

How bad will you miss those features: Missing out on so many ki powers sucks, losing the extra attack will hamper your offensive potential, and losing the ability to pick up diamond soul, one of the strongest ki powers, is tough.

Build priorities: Get AC and bonuses to Fort saves to attempt to keep yourself undamaged to maintain your poison/disease immunities naturally. A Ring of Ki Mastery to make your Wholeness of Body-boosted Healing Ki ability cost only 1 ki per use seems like an amazing idea.

Stacks with:

- **Black Asp**, which sounds awesome as a combination at first glance – *blur* to avoid being hit and maintain your immunities, Black Asp Venom ki power to have some offensive utility that doesn't rely on many strikes, and who can forget the ability to poison an enemy while being able to save them from said poison? Big problem here is that you lose a lot of the ki powers you would have used to play with this combination. Can still work though.
 - **Invested Regent**, which is pretty trashy since Disciple wants bigger commitments into WIS than this archetype allows for.
-



ELEMENTAL MONK (*) – Very Limited

Source: Disciple's Doctrine

Yikes, this one's beyond salvation. Basically, you give up the power of your Bonus Feats and your defensive tools in Purity of Body and Evasion in exchange for early-entry Elemental Fist and the ability to jump between different Elemental Fist-based styles and Janni Style.

This is pretty bad for several reasons – Elemental Fist doesn't do much, particularly without scaling damage; the styles aren't totally bad but they rely on weak DCs for low base damage; and you're giving too much for this.

Unless you were to play a campaign based on the Elemental Planes where you know that you'll face many enemies with elemental vulnerabilities to exploit, I'd give this a hard pass. Even then, a Dragon Style Monk with Elemental Fist might be better.

What you lose: All Bonus Feats; Stunning Fist; Evasion; Purity of Body; 10th-level Ki Power; lawful unarmed strikes; you must be True Neutral.

How bad will you miss those features: Losing Evasion without a good trade in return sucks – even if you get elemental resistances out of the Genie Styles, you never know when a random caster will have both *fireball* and *cone of cold* both prepared. Losing the Bonus Feats for subpar style feats is a bust.

Build priorities: Get a Ring of Evasion when you can. Dragon Ferocity, even if it's incompatible with Genie Styles, is still really good as it provides a mundane, sustained damage output and makes your Elemental Fists bigger regardless of whichever Style you are using.

Stacks with:

- **Perfect Scholar**, which is pretty neutral overall.



INVESTED REGENT (****) – Situationally better

Source: Heroes of the High Court

This archetype can be a straight upgrade since it only really replaces your first bonus feat in exchange for getting spells instead of bonus feats. However, limited stats hamper its potential. All in all, this is a pretty useful archetype that allows you to trade raw power for massive on demand power.

The archetype provides the Unchained Monk with amazing self-buffs – including the backbreaking *divine power* and *divine vessel* spells. Furthermore, some of the spells you can cast are pretty good party utility if nobody else can fill that role – such as *gaseous form* to scout, *tongues* to socialize or *remove disease* and *restoration* to patch the party up.

The bonuses to saves are pretty neat.

The main disadvantages to this archetype are as follows – firstly, being focused on Charisma means you got to dump Intelligence, which means having fewer skills to play with. Furthermore, you will never have the breadth of stats to really fatten your CHA and exploit your investiture points to make them last for too long.

Check the Feature Choices section for Vested Power reviews.

What you lose: Your first Bonus Feat, giving up other Bonus Feats is optional.

How bad will you miss those features: You will miss Dodge early on to pad out AC in the early game. You don't really have to miss out on other bonus feats though.

Build priorities: Get the **Cunning** feat or just enough CHA to qualify for **Peerless Courtier** feat and to get some skill ranks to compensate for the shity INT you'll have. Consider **Extra Investiture Points**. Choosing **Extra Vested Power** to take the spells rather than actually spending a Bonus Feat will allow you to keep access to goodies like Medusa's Wrath.

Stacks with:

- **Black Asp**, which isn't too bad an idea, since your self-buffs will allow you to spend your ki points in the utility features the Black Asp offers.
- **Disciple of Wholeness**, which is pretty trashy since Disciple wants bigger commitments into WIS than this archetype allows for.
- **Perfect Scholar**, which stretches your stat commitments too thin (but would be awesome if you had 18 in all stats).
- **Windstep Master**, with no particular pros or cons.



MONK OF THE MANTIS (*) – Breaks even**

Source: Dirty Tactics Toolbox

This archetype focuses on gaining Sneak Attacks and extra riders to your Stunning Fist. It's nice, but I think it takes away too much cool stuff to be worth it unless you have an ally that can help you ensure those Sneak Attacks are triggered, and debuffers in your party that can help you land your Stunning Fists by lowering enemy Fortitude saves. Very cooperative altogether. I'd recommend it for Weapon + Unarmed mixing builds since they are free to get Mantis Style without jeopardizing damage output. The biggest limiting feature is probably the fact that you can only Sneak Attack during a Flurry.

What you lose: Bonus Feats from 2nd level onwards; 6th, 10th, 12th level Ki Powers.

How bad will you miss those features: You will. The extra damage is nice, but you lose out on the possibility of getting quick, prerequisite-free access to Medusa's Wrath, and you limit your Ki Power abilities. You make it harder to qualify for feats like Jabbing Style too.

Build priorities: Get Dragon Style/Ferocity (unarmed), Ascetic Style/Form (weapon) or Mantis Style (weapon + unarmed), try to pick up Spin Kick at some point. Make sure you have a flanking buddy to get the Sneak Attacks. If you don't go Mantis Style, Stunning Fist Adept is a nice option, as is perhaps considering intimidating your enemy to lower their saves.

Stacks with:

- **Black Asp**, but you really don't want to do that because you'd lose Stunning Fist, which is your build focus. Works from level 9th on when you can pick Stunning Fist as a feat.
 - **Windstep Master**, which I guess is debatable whether they stack or not in the first place, but by and large, you don't want to give up Stunning Fist with an archetype which spends a lot of resources improving Stunning Fist.
 - **Perfect Scholar**, which would be AMAZING since that archetype can ensure that the enhanced Stunning Fists land... but it's actually quite lackluster because you don't get any Ki Powers until 8th level. If you have a pocket caster that can ensure you get *barkskin* every day, or if you are going with a weapon build that can use an *amulet of natural armor*, then it might be worth to consider this.
-



(Yes, that's Neil DeGrasse Tyson)

PERFECT SCHOLAR (****) – Situationally Better

Source: Inner Sea Intrigue

This is actually a pretty great archetype since it provides very handy utility. One of the main issues with the base Monk is lack of useful skills for the party - and this makes up for it in spades.

But the real gain here is Learn from Failure. This ability allows you to get a nontrivial attack bonus (+8 at level 20) after failing to hit. Remember how the Monk is very, very likely to miss with its attacks due to no accuracy bonuses?

Now this is particularly amazing because if you ever miss one of your high BAB attacks, you can use this ability to make sure you'll hit - and making sure you hit allows you to safely announce Stunning Fists or Style Strikes, knowing fully well that you are very unlikely to waste the attack on a miss. This fixes one of the most grievous issues of Monks and makes this archetype quite valuable. The rest is gravy.

What you lose: Perform and Intimidate as class skills; Still Mind; 4th level Ki Power; Tongue of the Sun and the Moon; Perfect Self.

How bad will you miss those features: Still Mind is a sore miss for sure. The 4th level Ki Power delays when you'll get *barkskin*, but I'd say you have an extra Ki Power to spare on this. The rest of the things you miss, not really much of a loss. Trading two Charisma (yuck) based skills for all Knowledges and Linguistics is pretty damn boss.

Build priorities: Same as a regular Monk, but if you can spare any points on INT, that wouldn't be terrible. One feat stands out above the rest though - **Deific Obedience (Irori)**. This one feat can provide a +4 bonus to all Knowledge

skills, which is already quite good, but also several spell-like abilities, and closer to the late game, powerful activatable skills. Quite the bang for the buck.

Stacks with:

- **Elemental Monk**, which is pretty neutral overall, but Elemental Monk stinks.
- **Invested Regent**, which stretches your stat commitments too thin (but would be awesome if you had 18 in all stats).
- **Monk of the Mantis**, which would be AMAZING since this archetype can ensure that the enhanced Stunning Fists land... but it's actually quite lackluster because you don't get any Ki Powers until 8th level. If you have a pocket caster that can ensure you get *barkskin* every day, or if you are going with a weapon build that can use an *amulet of natural armor*, then it might be worth to consider this.



SAGE COUNSELOR (*) – Limited**

Source: Ultimate Intrigue

Disregard the name. This archetype is all about feints. It gains a toolkit to be good at feints - including quick feinting and Greater Feint baked in, which means you can allow your whole team to pile on a flat-footed enemy – but it gets everything later than the **Brazen Disciple** archetype, and losing more valuable stuff overall, like extra ki unarmed attacks or Perception as a class skill.

One upside it has over Brazen Disciple is that you get free Combat Expertise, and it also allows you to ignore the 13 INT requirement for feats that need

Combat Expertise - this means that unlike the rest of the Monks, you can consider feat-lines like Slayer's Feint, Outslug Style, Moonlit Stalker, and what not.

Remember: many enemies are immune to feints, while very few enemies are immune to getting punched in the nose. If you know you'll mostly fight humanoids, I'd give this more consideration.

What you lose: Ability to perform an extra attack by spending a ki point; Ki Power gained at 4th level; Bonus Feats up to and including level 10th; Climb, Escape Artist and Perception as class skills.

How bad will you miss those features: What smarts the most in my opinion is the loss of the ability to perform extra attacks by spending ki points. Losing Perception as a class skill is a bummer too. The first few bonus feats you can live without. Losing the 10th level one means you need to wait until 14th level to get Medusa's Wrath.

Build priorities: Personally, I think Outslug Style is very interesting as a possibility here. Free Combat Expertise removes the most harmful part of the equation. But do race for that Medusa's Wrath, as it will more than compensate for your lack of free ki attacks. I'm sure there's a Kobold Style build with maneuvers somewhere here though...

Stacks with:

- **Black Asp**, which is a neat combination for skullduggery, but not particularly synergistic.



SCALED FIST (*) – Breaks even**

Source: Legacy of Dragons

So much sweetness in this archetype. Let's start with the fact that it changes your attribute priorities towards **Charisma**, replacing Wisdom. Now, this sounds like a bummer when you first think about it, because that means unprotected your Will saves. But there are several things to consider:

- Your out-of-combat utility skyrockets. Monks aren't the best at out-of-combat roles, so being the party face suddenly gives you a lot of options.
- You become primed to take the Dangerously Curious trait to obtain Use Magic Device as a class skill, and start exploiting useful wands like Mage's Armor from the get-go.
- The Steadfast Personality feat can cover your defenses on the most dangerous types of Will saves.

Now, with that covered... oh, boy, this archetype is nice. The key feature of it, besides the CHA-focus, is the fact that you get to add some seriously good feats to your Bonus Feat list - including Dragon Style, which is always welcome, and Shatter Defenses, which can prime up targets for Medusa's Wrath quite easily.

The rest of the features are usable, just gravy. Plus, you can use your elemental powers to get electric damage and pretend you are a Sith.

What you lose: Wisdom focus; Still Mind; 4th and 12th ki powers. Alters Bonus Feats.

How bad will you miss those features: Still Mind and Wisdom focus were your Will save's best friends. A tough loss but nothing that you won't be able to overcome. However, this belies the weakest point of the Scaled Fist... you really have no "true" dump stat, as Intelligence, the closest you have to one, is actually not bad. **This is where it hurts.**

Build priorities: Honestly, this has a ton of ways to go - but whichever way you go, you are going to want **Steadfast Personality** to boost your Will saves. Unlike other Monk builds, obviously, this build wants **Charisma** and not Wisdom, but don't dump Wis. Using Bonus Feats to pick up feats to help you pick up Dragon Style while using your actual feats to specialize on something hilarious like Eldritch Heritage (Imperious or Rakshaza) is an option; or you

could pick up Boar Style or Dragon Style with your real feats and use your Bonus Feats to help you get Shatter Defenses at level 9 so you can follow it up with Medusa's Wrath at level 10, and build a deadly intimidation build.

To compensate for dumping INT, the **Cunning** or **Peerless Courtier** feats can give you fully ranked skills.

Another fun possibility is exploiting Osyluth Guile. Osyluth Guile grants your Charisma bonus as a **dodge bonus**, so it stacks with your Charisma-to-AC since that is an **untyped bonus**. You'd need to find some way to reduce the penalty for fighting defensively though... Crane Style is an option, since you have Elemental damage to increase your output.

Stacks with: No other archetype.



SERPENT-FIRE ADEPT (*) - Very Limited

Source: Occult Origins

This archetype focuses on enabling and empowering Chakra opening options. I'd want this to be good, but I've ran the numbers and it's near impossible to ensure that you'll be able to open your higher chakras reliably unless you have stupidly high stats, like really stupidly high stats. Chakra opening is cool and all, but it's just not quite totally viable anyway even with this archetype, though it makes it less painful.

Some of the features are quite painful too due to limited uses. A shame, but oh well.

What you lose: Changes Class Skills; removes all Bonus Feats; Stunning Fist; 4th and 8th level Ki Powers.

How bad will you miss those features: A whole damn lot, mostly missing the Bonus Feats.

Build priorities: Get stupid high Will saves or Fortitude saves in any way possible, devoting as many resources to it. Otherwise, just be a Monk.

Stacks with: No other archetype.



WINDSTEP MASTER (***) - Breaks even

Source: Elemental Master's Handbook

This archetype is short and sweet, but packs a lot of power if you know how to use it well. Replacing Stunning Fist with Hurricane Punch is really good at first glance, removing an ability that would not always do its job. That being said, I do think that Stunning Fist can be cultivated to be a really good tool with the proper set-up (*ki intensifying* weapons or Spin Kick), and Hurricane Punch cannot do what Stunning Fist does.

That all being said, this archetype makes Hurricane Punch fantastic – you get extra base movement with it if you are successful, so you don't need to ace the CMB check to get results, and you get to ignore size restrictions as you level up.

Now, I haven't talked about the major draw of the archetype – Swift Ki. This feature, once activated, will allow you to hover for its duration. This is a pretty fun and versatile effect, but the main issue I see with it is that it seems that you can only gain air by spending move actions, and that it wouldn't simply allow you to, say, use the movement of your Flying Kick to move vertically. Even if you need to sink move actions into it, you can exploit this to gain sweet higher ground bonuses against land-based enemies or chase down flying foes.

The big problem I see with the archetype is that it eats up your swift actions to Hurricane Punch, which prevents you from doing Ki Pool extra attacks or activating several Ki Powers. Given that the boosts to Hurricane Punch only apply specifically when using this feat, you can't even, say, get Quick Bull-Rush and benefit from them while still holding onto your swift actions.

Overall, it's not a bad archetype, but limited.

What you lose: Stunning Fist; 4th level Ki Power.

How bad will you miss those features: Losing Stunning Fist is not too bad, but having to focus on bull-rushing removes your ability to invest well on grappling to compensate for the loss of your tool that doomed casters. The 4th level Ki Power you can live without.

One thing that you lose from this archetype is the ability to quickly qualify for Dragon Style, which is a bit of a bummer.

Build priorities: Strength is more important because you want high bull rush CMB. For feats, you probably want **Improved Bull Rush** and **Greater Bull Rush**.

Tribal Scars (Greattusk) is another way to pad your total CMB. A pair of **Gauntlets of the Skilled Maneuver** and a **Ring of the Adept Maneuvers** are a good way to get big boosts to bull rush CMB.

Stacks with:

- **Brazen Disciple**, which is functional, but plays against itself – you want to hit at least twice to Hurricane Punch, yet you also want to forgo attacks to feint. Not too much synergy here, even if the tools are compatible.
- **Invested Regent**, with no particular pros or cons.
- **Monk of the Mantis**, which I guess is debatable whether they stack or not in the first place, but by and large, you don't want to give up Stunning Fist with an archetype which spends a lot of resources improving Stunning Fist.