

(Descriptive text taken from the Wikipedia page for the [Xa Loi Pagoda Raids](#))

THE BRIEFING

Saigon, August 20th, 1963, 11:59 PM. Whatever you're doing is interrupted by a secure cable - bearing the familiar green triangle indicating that something horrible is about to happen. Inside:

DIEM GOVT MOVING AGAINST BUDDHISTS

SENSITIVE ARTIFACTS BENEATH XA LOI PAGODA

CONTAIN OR REMOVE

THE LEGEND

Agents versed in Anthropology, Archaeology, History, or Occult will know something about the artifacts mentioned in the briefing:

- The Xá Lợi Pagoda holds many Buddhist artifacts. Chief among them, held in a hidden chamber beneath the main building: a handful of *sarira* - crystalized pearls found in the body of a cremated saint. These mysterious particles are said to hold the crystalized wisdom of the ancients, and can reproduce themselves if stored properly.
- The sarira in the chamber beneath the Pagoda are from the corpse of Angulimala - the Finger Taker. Angulimala was one of the Buddha's disciples, a holy man turned bandit, on a quest to collect a thousand fingers to appease his hateful teacher. He tried to assassinate the Buddha, but was instead converted to the noble eightfold path.
- Those in the presence of the sarira holding Angulimala's wisdom are suffused with the thoughts of violence that dominated the darkest period of the saint's life. Through mindfulness and purging themselves of worldly thoughts, the monks are able to focus their minds and resist the tumultuous assault, achieving the same peace that the saint found upon accepting the teachings of the Buddha.

THE TRUTH

The "sarira" are powerful artifacts of inhuman or alien origin. Their electromagnetic emanations cause dangerous hallucinations in ordinary brains. Through their extreme mental discipline, the monks are able to resist this power, finding inner peace in their presence.

There is always at least one monk observing the stones. This is because when they are left alone, they multiply. In small quantities, this isn't a problem. Large numbers of crystals dramatically increase the strength of the field, and the madness that results.

THE PAGODA

The Buddhists are aware that a raid on the pagodas is imminent. Buddhist relatives of Special Forces and combat police have tipped off the monks, and Buddhists who live near pagodas have observed them move into the region. The pagoda has been locked by the monks in preparation for the attacks, the doors barricaded with furniture and reinforced by nailing planks across them. The monks have told members of the U.S. press corps that the raids are coming, allowing them to be more prepared than the U.S. embassy.

JOURNALISTS - Here in defiance of Diem and Nhu's wishes

STR 11, CON 11, DEX 11, INT 14, POW 11, CHA 14

HP 11, WP 11, SAN 55

Skills: Art (TV, Photo or Print Journalism 60%), Bureaucracy 50%, Criminology 50%, Foreign Languages (Vietnamese 40%) History 40%, HUMINT 40%, Law 40%, Military Science (Land 40%), Persuade 50%, SIGINT 40%

Two of Nhu's senior aides can be seen outside Xá Lợi directing the operation, while Nhu and his wife, Madame Nhu, watch the action from a nearby tank.

If the Agents get there fast enough, they can beat the encirclement of the Pagoda grounds. Otherwise, they'll have to talk their way or sneak past the soldiers. They'll give some leeway to American military advisors, but are hostile to journalists.

The Pagoda is adjacent to the USAID compound, sharing a wall. Government Forces treat the compound like a US Embassy and won't enter unless someone does something truly outrageous, like shoot at them from inside.

If the Agents go in ahead of the ARVN Special Forces, and persuade the monks that they are trying to save the artifacts, they will be shown the hidden chamber.

If the Agents go in with the ARVN Special Forces as part of the raid, they can hopefully locate the secret chamber and get down there before any of the soldiers find it. Otherwise, they'll have to somehow grab the sarira out from under the nose of the grunts.

If the Agents go in after the raid, the sarira have been removed from the underground chamber and carried off to sit in some general's trophy room.

THE HIDDEN CHAMBER

The hidden chamber below the Pagoda is accessible through a hatch behind the Buddha statue at the altar. A staircase leads about one story down below the foundation, into a carved room.

The room is lit by candles and dimly smoldering incense. Its curved stone walls are carved with images of sex and violence. A monk sits in the lotus position, concentrating intently on a chalice set before him. In the chalice are a handful of small stones, resembling crystals or pearls.

Archaeology recognizes the chamber as the work of some ill-studied precursor civilization which once occupied the region. Unnatural or Occult hints at the dark truth behind some of the less-human images on the walls. SIGINT or Science: Physics note that the materials and shape of the room are perfectly designed to block signals.

The monk does not react to the Agents, at first. He is focused on keeping his brain clean. The Agents are going to get headaches, and then the hallucinations will start. Maybe the monk will "attack" them while furiously rubbing his genitals. Maybe an ARVN unit will come down the stairs, guns blazing. Monsters that the Agents have previously encountered seep out of the walls. SAN loss comes not only from these frightening visions, but also from realizing that they aren't real.

If the Agents have got this far without learning what the artifacts in the basement are supposed to be, the monk can explain it to them. The problem is, the explanation might not be totally accurate. The hallucinations are already setting in and the Agents will hear something very different from what he actually says.

The visions get worse. 0/1 SAN, then 1/D4, then 1/D6, and so on. If the crystals are left unwatched and start multiplying, the effects are worse and/or more frequent.

THE RAID

Squads of red-bereted Special Forces and truckloads of steel-helmeted combat police in army camouflage uniforms flatten the gates and smash their way into the pagoda at around 00:20. A monk strikes Xá Lợi's brass gong to warn of the attack. Nhu's men are armed with pistols, submachine guns, carbines, shotguns, grenades and tear gas. Monks and nuns who have barricaded themselves behind wooden shields are attacked with rifle butts and bayonets. The sound of the gong is masked by automatic weapons fire, exploding grenades, battering rams, shattering glass and human screaming. The military personnel shout as they attack, as do the occupants, in fear.

The raid takes around two hours because many of the occupants have entrenched themselves inside various rooms in anticipation of the attacks. Doors have to be unhinged to reach them. One monk is thrown from a balcony down to the courtyard, six meters below. Nhu's men vandalize the main altar and confiscate the intact charred heart of Thích Quảng Đức, which had failed to burn during his re-cremation. If the Agents have not already cleaned it out, the Special Forces find the hidden chamber and loot the sarira.

If the Special Forces are exposed to the crystals' effects, things get ugly. They normally won't shoot Americans, except in self defense. But if they think the Americans shot first...

ARVN SOLDIERS - Special Forces masquerading as Army regulars

STR 12, CON 12, DEX 12, INT 12, POW 12, CHA 12

HP 12, WP 12, SAN 60

Skills: Alertness 50%, Athletics 50%, Bureaucracy 30%, Drive 40%, Firearms 40%, First Aid 40%, Military Science (Land) 40%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 30%, Unarmed Combat 50%

Armor: 1 point (helmet)

Attacks: M2 Carbine or M3 Grease Gun (40%, D10 or 10% lethality)

Garand (40%, D12+2, 5 AP)

1911 (40%, D10)

RESOLUTION

If the Agents enlist the aid of a monk, they can set up a new containment elsewhere. The easiest way out is to hop over the wall to the USAID compound. Otherwise, the Agents will have to bail one of the Buddhists out of ARVN custody.

Stuffing the sarira in a lead lined container or faraday cage blocks the effects. However in the absence of direct observation they begin to multiply. If the container is opened, they will spill out, seemingly more than could have fit in the box in the first place.

Agents who want to learn the monks' technique for resisting the hallucinations may spend their Home Scene training with them. To do so, they must renounce attachment, which is the cause of suffering. This costs 1 each of STR, CON, DEX, INT, POW, and CHA, and 1D4 from each Bond. It makes them immune to the effects of the crystals, and may also protect them from other psychic effects in the future.

THE MAJESTIC OPTION

If you use this option, the Agents may notice prior to the raid: an American in shorts and a journalist's vest talking to Ngo Dinh Nhu. The two appear to come to some agreement.

This American is a MAJESTIC Agent. He has heard about a hoard of artifacts in the temple and is here to swipe them. He's working toward the same goals as the Agents, only he's got Nhu's approval. Unless the Agents can also negotiate with Nhu, in which case it becomes a three way argument.

If the Special Forces get the artifacts, they hand them over to MAJESTIC. If the Agents sneak the sarira out, MAJESTIC does their best to track them down and steal them.

YVES, GERALD and DAVIES - MAJESTIC goons here for the same purpose as the Agents

STR 12, CON 12, DEX 12, INT 12, POW 12, CHA 12

HP 12, WP 12, SAN 55

Skills: Alertness 50%, Bureaucracy 40%, Criminology 50%, Disguise 50%, Drive 40%, Firearms 40%, Foreign Language (French 50%, Vietnamese 40%), HUMINT 60%, Persuade 60%, SIGINT 40%, Stealth 50%, Unarmed Combat 50%

Attacks: M2 Carbine or Uzi (40%, D10 or 10% lethality)

1911 (40%, D10)