

LU SHANG: WARLORD OF THE DREADED WO



Created by Don Haney

This article details the process I went through in creating a unique character for my Chaos army and an entry for the Inaugural Chicago Golden Demon competition in 2002. In it, I discuss my design process and some of the modeling and painting techniques I used in the creation of this model. Technique and style are only part of the equation when entering into a tough competition like the Golden Demon. The other element is just plain old luck! You never know what your competitors will enter or what the judges will be looking for. I was very fortunate to have brought home an award after competing against previous Golden Demon winners and some of the top miniatures painters in the U.S.

PART 1 - CONCEPT

When the "Hordes of Chaos" army book was released, I began thinking about a new look for the chaos army I had been collecting for many years. I had amassed a fairly good sized army during that time but after seeing the photos in the new book, I decided that I wanted to redo my army in a more distinctive style. For the first time, a map of the Chaos Wastes was included in the background section of the new army book. This was a revelation as it finally showed some of the other areas that could influence or be influenced by Chaos. There was also a brief description of the Kurgan and Hung tribes which seemed very exotic when compared to the more traditional "Norse" Chaos idea.

Looking closely at the map, I noticed that there were several tribes situated very close to the Cathayan city of Weijin. I imagined that because of their proximity to mainland Cathay, these Chaos tribes would have a very strong "Chinese" influence and with a name like the *Dreaded Wo* they would be suitably Chaotic as well! Therefore, my Golden Demon entry and first model for a new-style army would be a Chaos Warlord in the style of Cathay!

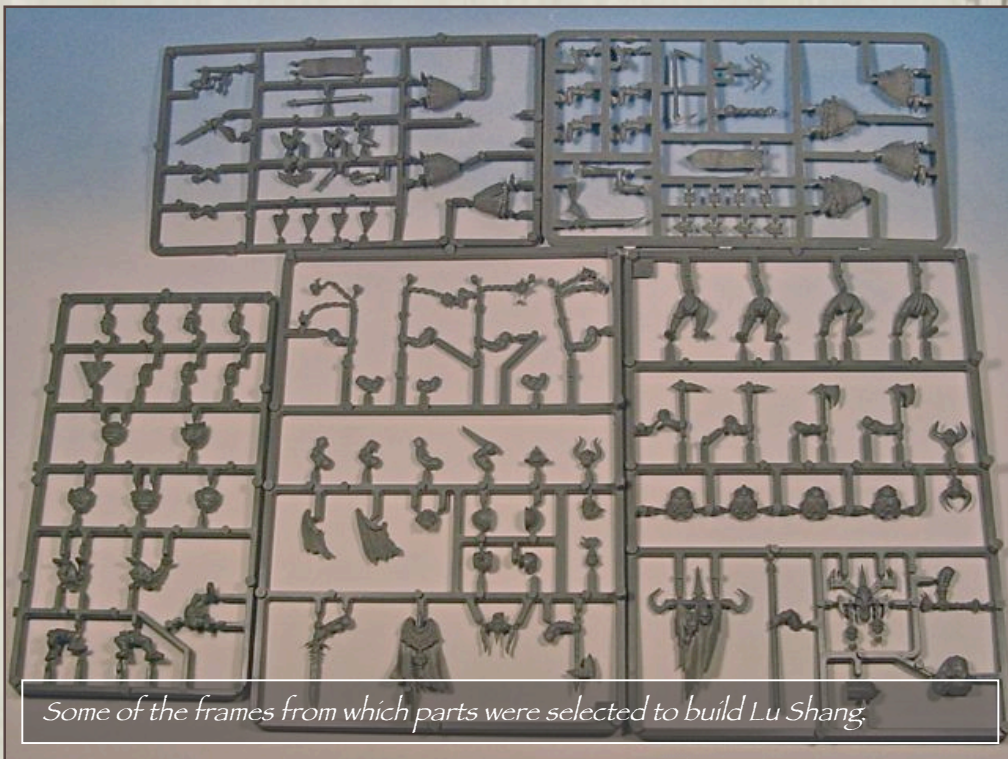
Before I even had an idea of which parts I would be using, I had to decide what style of Cathayan armor and weapons I wanted my warlord to have. I knew it wouldn't be something historically accurate (after all, he *would* be a Chaos Lord) but I wanted the elements to be recognizable in some way as specifically "Chinese" influenced and not "Japanese" or "Samurai" which is

apparently represented by Nippon in the Warhammer world.

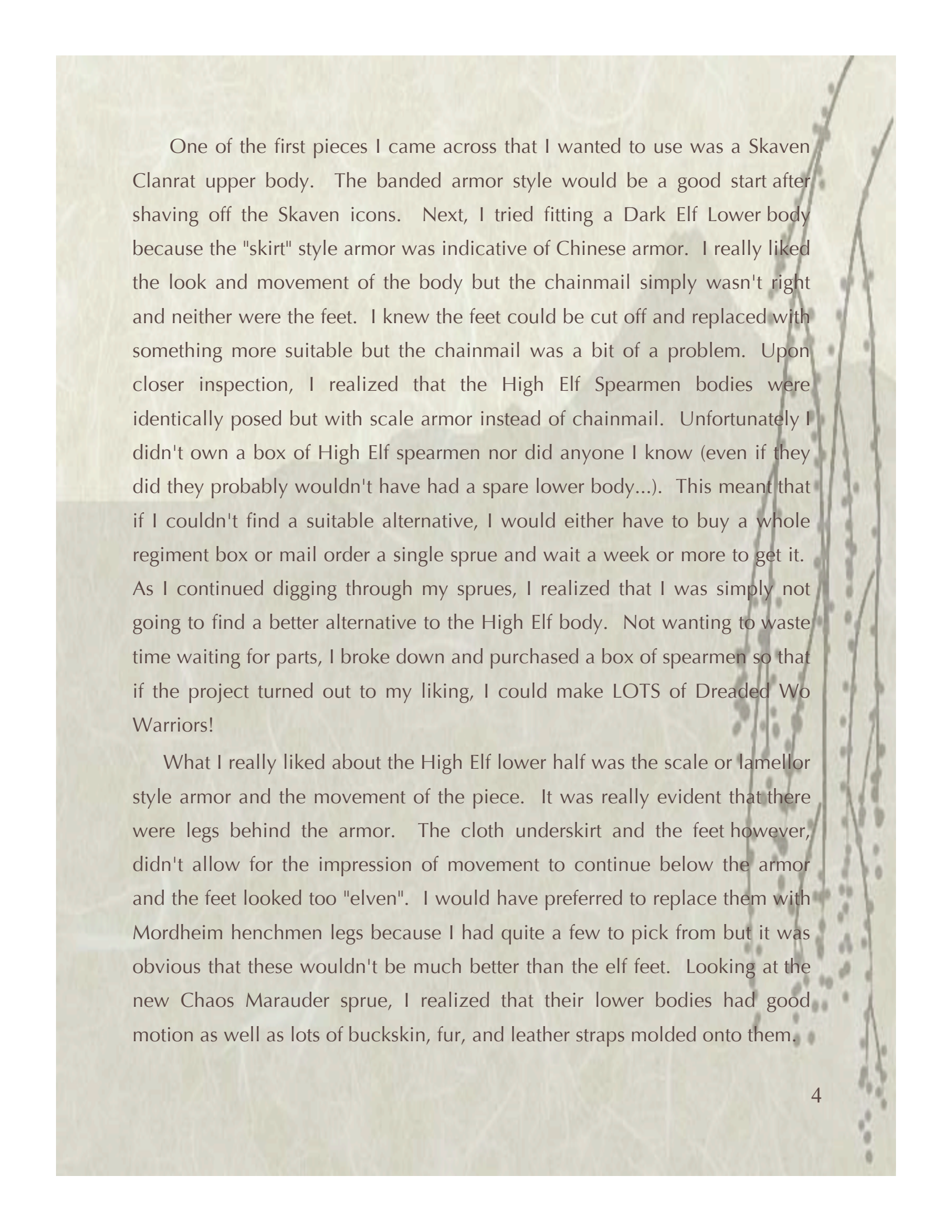
I found an excellent book in the Osprey Men-at-Arms series on one of my many visits to my local game and hobby store called Imperial Chinese Armies (2) 590-1260AD (illustrated by none other than Games Workshop's own Michael Perry). After pouring over this and several other books in the series, I chose what I thought were the most evocative elements of the armor and weapons and set about finding some bitz that would work.

PART 2 - PLANNING

The figure would be constructed mainly out of plastic bitz with as few metal bitz and sculpted parts as possible. I think it was because I remembered an article in White Dwarf where Aly Morrison constructed a Mordheim Possessed warband completely out of plastic bitz from various regiment sets. This seemed like an interesting challenge so I scrounged around and came up with as many different plastic sprues as I could find and set about looking for parts that I could use. *[Edit: Remember, back in 2002, plastic Warhammer kits were not as common as they are today!]*



Some of the frames from which parts were selected to build Lu Shang.



One of the first pieces I came across that I wanted to use was a Skaven Clanrat upper body. The banded armor style would be a good start after shaving off the Skaven icons. Next, I tried fitting a Dark Elf Lower body because the "skirt" style armor was indicative of Chinese armor. I really liked the look and movement of the body but the chainmail simply wasn't right and neither were the feet. I knew the feet could be cut off and replaced with something more suitable but the chainmail was a bit of a problem. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the High Elf Spearmen bodies were identically posed but with scale armor instead of chainmail. Unfortunately I didn't own a box of High Elf spearmen nor did anyone I know (even if they did they probably wouldn't have had a spare lower body...). This meant that if I couldn't find a suitable alternative, I would either have to buy a whole regiment box or mail order a single sprue and wait a week or more to get it. As I continued digging through my sprues, I realized that I was simply not going to find a better alternative to the High Elf body. Not wanting to waste time waiting for parts, I broke down and purchased a box of spearmen so that if the project turned out to my liking, I could make LOTS of Dreaded Wo Warriors!

What I really liked about the High Elf lower half was the scale or lamellar style armor and the movement of the piece. It was really evident that there were legs behind the armor. The cloth underskirt and the feet however, didn't allow for the impression of movement to continue below the armor and the feet looked too "elven". I would have preferred to replace them with Mordheim henchmen legs because I had quite a few to pick from but it was obvious that these wouldn't be much better than the elf feet. Looking at the new Chaos Marauder sprue, I realized that their lower bodies had good motion as well as lots of buckskin, fur, and leather straps molded onto them.

This would fit in nicely with the eastern style clothing and had the side benefit of adding a little height to the model. I was a bit reluctant to start chopping up my brand new Marauder models without even having put a single one together yet! In the end I decided it would be worth it if the model turned out the way I thought it could.

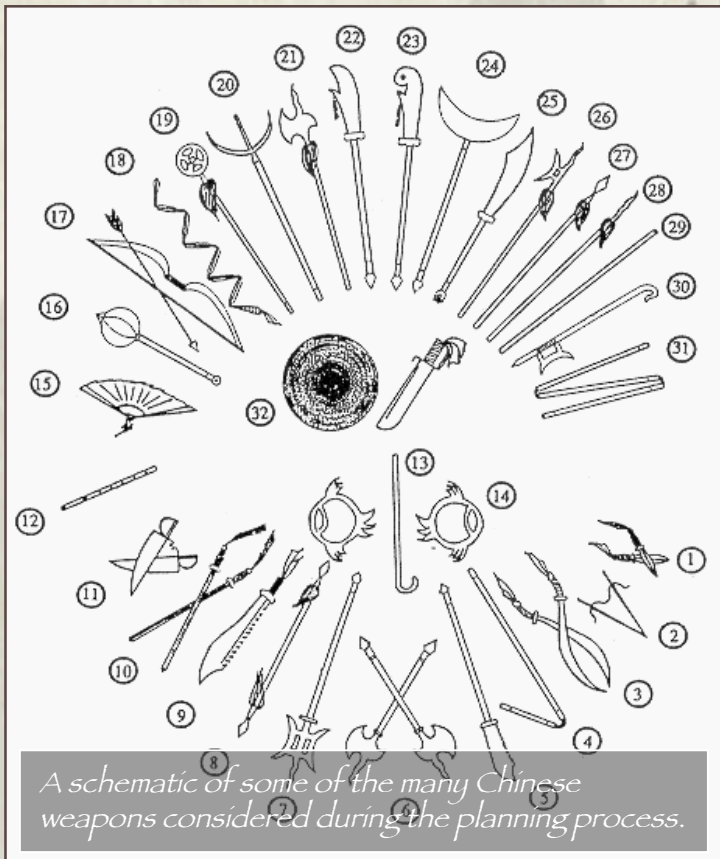
Next was the head. Looking at my sprues, most of the Marauder heads had beards and/or helmets as did the Mordheim henchmen heads. The Elven heads were too delicate and all of the Chaos Warrior heads were helmeted except for one...but it looked too fat. Finally I came across a Marauder head with a topknot and no facial hair. It would be easy to carve off the topknot but there was something not quite right about his nose...it sort of had a "mobster" look to it. But, a little "gray-stuff" (another kind of green-stuff) would solve the problem with the nose and allow me to add a distinctive hair style.

I tried several different henchmen arms to get a feel for different poses, and to see which direction the model would take. I had several ideas for weapons including swords, half-moon halberds, chain-whips and all manner of exotic Asian weaponry. The weapon would help dictate the pose so I felt it important to narrow my choices before deciding. I really liked the look of the half-moon halberd but in an early attempt to make one, I found it too difficult to get the shape symmetrical. A Chinese sword would be cool but any warrior can have a sword. He needed something special.

Eventually I came across some photos of Wu Shu martial arts competitors and their weapons. This was a great find as it helped not only to choose the weapon I wanted but it also showed some really fantastic martial arts poses.

I decided on giving Lu Shang a "horse-chopper" halberd. I wasn't able to

make use of the extreme leg positions shown in the photos because of the armored skirt, but the arm positions and hand movements were a great source of inspiration. While digging for some different arms I noticed the hand on a Dark Elf Crossbowman. It would be perfect for that classic Kung Fu hand! A friend (who also happened to be a martial arts black belt and a pretty fierce figure converter in his own right), suggested that I pose the horse chopper behind Lu Shang's back to look as if he had just completed a twirling maneuver. I found a straight arm and positioned it correctly. A piece of brass rod inserted into the drilled-out fist allowed me to see how the weapon would look once completed.



A schematic of some of the many Chinese weapons considered during the planning process.



PART 3 - ASSEMBLY

Now that I had the basic parts that I needed, I began the process of cleaning off all the flash and piecing the model together. After cleaning the flash, I washed the plastic pieces in warm soapy water before doing any assembly. In addition to getting rid of the plastic dust from clean-up, this helps get the release agents off which can prevent the glue from adhering the parts properly. I also only ever use adhesives made specifically for plastics as these will chemically "weld" the parts together whereas super-glue just sticks the pieces together. I feel that plastic adhesives make for a much stronger assembly even though they can take a little longer to cure than super glue.



The main pieces used in the construction. The correct right arm had not yet been chosen but the "kung fu" hand from the Dark Elf arm is clearly visible.

The biggest challenge during assembly was the lower legs. I removed the feet and lower skirt from the High Elf body and I did this with a roto-tool and a small steel-cutting bit. Once I got the skirt and feet trimmed off, I decided

to continue cutting up inside to give it more definition. The splits in the front and back were both carved out as well. I left two "stumps" inside the skirt so I could attach the marauder legs which I had cut off just below the knee.



Rough assembly showing the gap at the waist to get the correct height.

The ball-socket on the Skaven upper body was trimmed off and test fit to the lower skirt. It made the body appear too "stubby" so instead of attaching it directly, I drilled holes and put in a spacer of brass rod. This would allow me to fill the gap and sculpt on the necessary details with grey-stuff. It would also allow for a smoother transition between the scale armor and the banded armor. I attached the "Kung Fu" hand to the right arm and then repositioned the weapon hand on the left arm. Then the arms were attached to the body. After allowing the glue to fully cure overnight, I attached the figure to an old paint bottle so that I would have a something to hang onto while sculpting and painting. Since I knew the head would need a lot of work, I kept it separate and attached it to it's own bottle in the same manner as the body.

With the basic assembly complete, I began the process of filling gaps and sculpting on the extra details. Before I did any sculpting I filled most of the smaller gaps with a little sprue solution which I made by dissolving small bits of sprue in a bottle of liquid plastic cement. I began sculpting by adding fur to the leggings with gray-stuff. Next I filled in the midsection gap between the waist and the chest. I tried to get the area as smooth as possible as this would be a base from which I would be sculpting on the additional details later. I test-fit the head onto the body and determined that the neck area needed bulking up so I put on a blob of putty for a collar and contoured it so that the head would sit properly.



Final sculpted bits and copper wire details.

Once the first round of putty had dried, I went back to the midsection and added three layers of lamellor plates to extend the armor up to chest. The waist still looked a little narrow at this point so I twisted together a couple of

strands of fine copper wire and looped it around the body to make a belt to add some definition to this area. I also decided to add more character to the boots so I gave them a bit of



Details of the "Horse Chopper" halberd.

an upturned point right on the front. The blade for the horse chopper was made by carving a piece of thick plasticard and sticking it onto the brass rod. I wrapped the section just under the blade with more copper wire and added a small fur decoration from the Kroot accessories sprue. Then I drilled a hole in the bottom of a spike from the Chaos Warriors sprue to attach to the end of the weapon, but didn't glue it. This would allow me to slide the handle through the hole in the hand after the figure had been fully

painted and attach the spike later. Finally, I attached the shoulder plates and the cape. This is a bit of a departure from the way many people assemble their models as they prefer to paint the parts



Attachment of the cape and position of the halberd.

as they go, and assemble everything at the end. I prefer to assemble my models as much as possible before I paint in order to assure that the pieces bond securely (glue doesn't stick to paint very well) and the paint job isn't ruined by some dribbled adhesive. With the body done, I could now turn my attention to the head and face.



Details of the cut-out skirt.



Details of the boots.

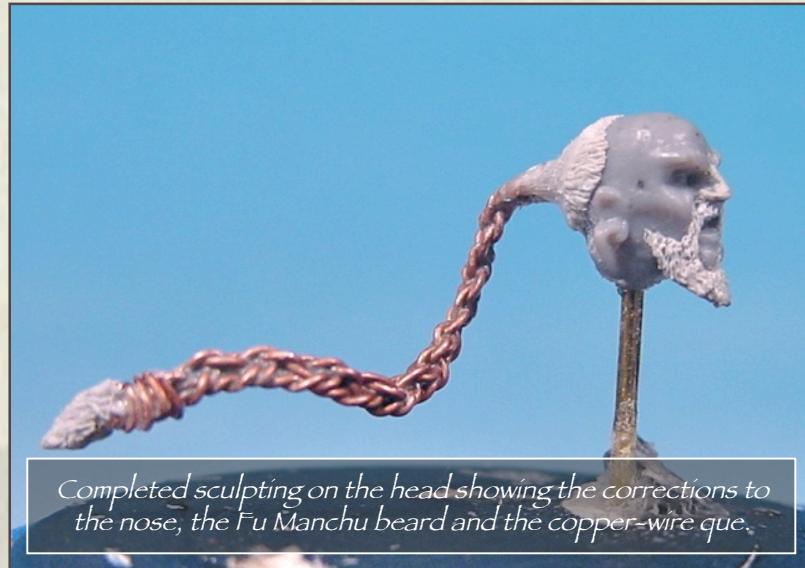
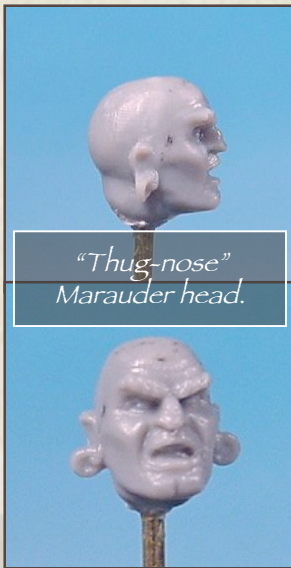
PART 4 - FACE AND HAIR

Most of the illustrations I had looked at showed topknot styles very similar to that of Japanese Samurai although more ornately decorated with golden plates and hair pins. Since I wanted this character to be very distinctive, I didn't think this would clearly define his origins at a glance. Even though the Shaolin "que" hairstyle was from a much later time period, I felt that it was more easily associated with Chinese culture and so I opted for that in order to convey very clearly that this character was Cathayan and not Nipponese. An additional bonus would be that I could further emphasize the sense of movement in the miniature depending on how I positioned it.

I began making the que by twisting together two strands of fine copper wire about 4 inches long. I made two more sets of these and then braided all three of them together until I had a piece that looked like braided hair. Switching my focus back to the head itself, I added a patch of hair onto the back with more gray stuff as the front and top of the head were usually shaved clean in this hairstyle. Once the putty was dry, I drilled a small hole, super glued one end of the braid into the hole and then unified the joint with more gray stuff. I thought that the braid itself looked a little too much like just braided wire, so I gave the whole thing a quick coat of liquid plastic to fill it out a little.

As for the facial hair, I was leaning toward giving him a long Mandarin style mustache but decided that this might look too similar to the mustaches

on the Kislevite Horse Archers. Instead I gave him a “Fu Manchu” beard.
This was applied using the gray putty once again.



Once all the putty was dry on both the head and the body sections, I did a light scraping on all the surfaces with a sharp blade to smooth them and eliminate any fingerprints or imperfections that might show up once I started applying paint. I also took this opportunity to sharpen up any rounded edges on the details. In my experience, scraping green or grey-stuff is a better alternative to sanding it as the rubbery consistency of the dried putty usually doesn't respond well to sandpaper. I also didn't want to destroy any of the surrounding detail on the plastic parts with too much sanding. Once I was done scraping, I gave both sections a quick rinse under the faucet to remove any dust and set them aside to dry. I was now ready to apply a primer coat and begin painting.



PART 5 - PAINTING

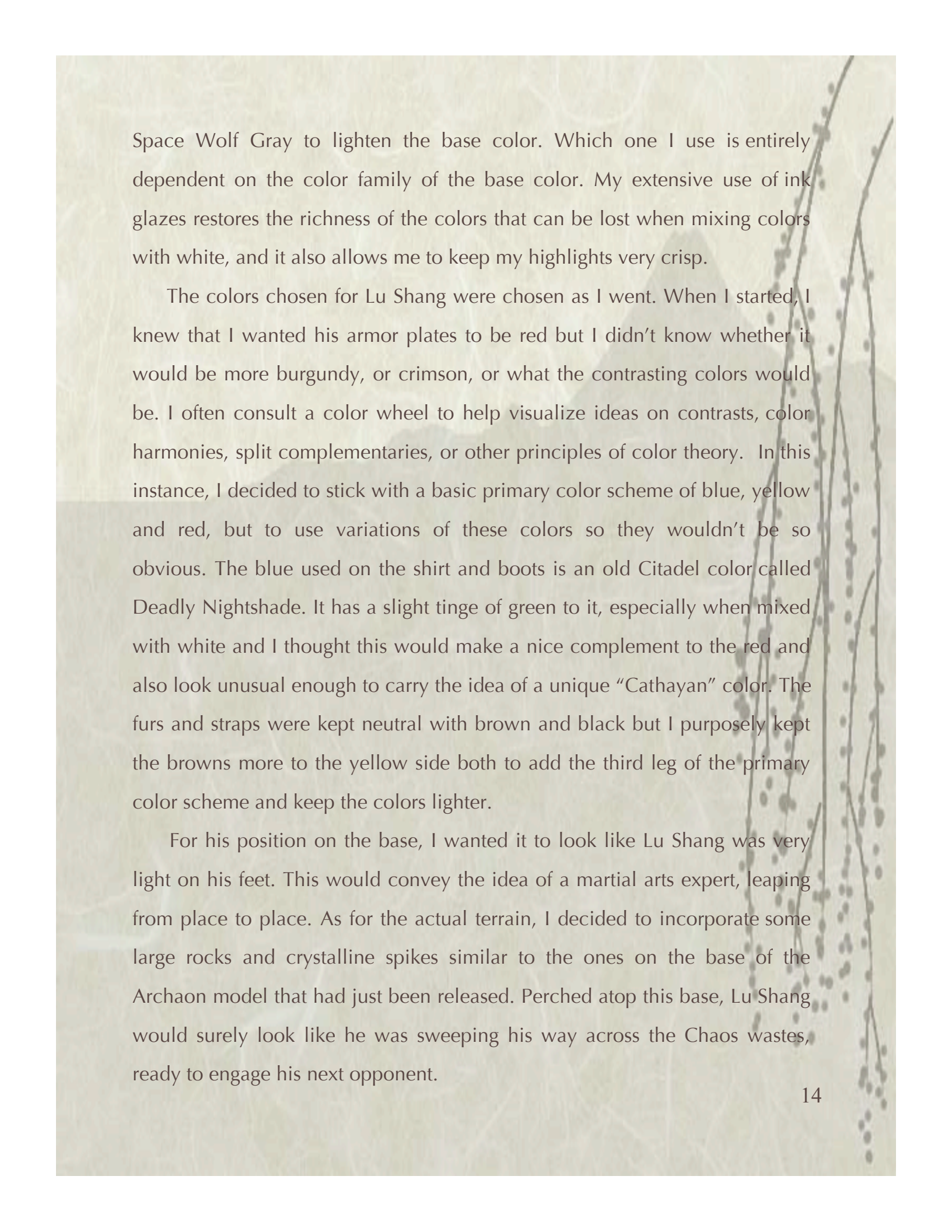
For this project, my deadlines were getting very tight so I didn't have the opportunity to take photos of the painting process. However, what I will do is briefly discuss my general approach to painting the miniature and share some ideas on how to display a competition entry.

I almost always use a white spray primer on my miniatures as I prefer a cleaner, brighter look to my colors. Also, I think it is much easier to paint black over a white basecoat for those times when it is necessary to have a dark basecoat. Unless the vast majority of the model is going to be very dark colors or armor, I stick with white basecoat.

I typically aim for a more naturalistic style on my miniatures. Usually, my colors are shaded and separated by mixing a darker shade of the same color or one of its component colors. I use a lot of inks as glazes rather than in the traditional method of basecoating-inkwashing-highlighting. I never use black as a shading component for any color other than gray. As for highlighting, I primarily use Skull White, Bleached Bone or



This image clearly shows the bright colors achieved using my highlighting technique and ink glazes.



Space Wolf Gray to lighten the base color. Which one I use is entirely dependent on the color family of the base color. My extensive use of ink glazes restores the richness of the colors that can be lost when mixing colors with white, and it also allows me to keep my highlights very crisp.

The colors chosen for Lu Shang were chosen as I went. When I started, I knew that I wanted his armor plates to be red but I didn't know whether it would be more burgundy, or crimson, or what the contrasting colors would be. I often consult a color wheel to help visualize ideas on contrasts, color harmonies, split complementaries, or other principles of color theory. In this instance, I decided to stick with a basic primary color scheme of blue, yellow and red, but to use variations of these colors so they wouldn't be so obvious. The blue used on the shirt and boots is an old Citadel color called Deadly Nightshade. It has a slight tinge of green to it, especially when mixed with white and I thought this would make a nice complement to the red and also look unusual enough to carry the idea of a unique "Cathayan" color. The furs and straps were kept neutral with brown and black but I purposely kept the browns more to the yellow side both to add the third leg of the primary color scheme and keep the colors lighter.

For his position on the base, I wanted it to look like Lu Shang was very light on his feet. This would convey the idea of a martial arts expert, leaping from place to place. As for the actual terrain, I decided to incorporate some large rocks and crystalline spikes similar to the ones on the base of the Archaon model that had just been released. Perched atop this base, Lu Shang would surely look like he was sweeping his way across the Chaos wastes, ready to engage his next opponent.

PART 6 - PAINTING FOR COMPETITION

Unless you paint every model in your army to competition level, it's unlikely that even your very best "gaming" figure will get noticed in competition when other artists have spent enormous amounts of time preparing something special.

The easiest way to take your painting up a few levels for competition is to take the time to do things that you wouldn't ordinarily do on your other figures. For example, for the armored skirt of Lu Shang, the normal method of painting it would have been to drybrush successive layers of color. In this case however, the drybrushing technique was far too mundane so instead I picked out each plate individually with several highlights to ensure that I had

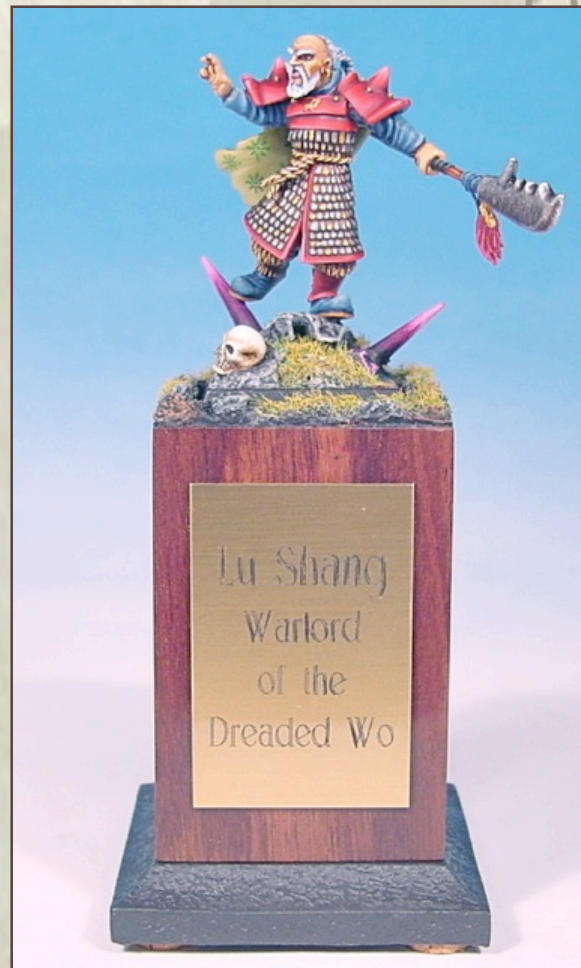
the maximum level of definition on the armor. Since I was already painting each plate individually, it was no extra trouble to paint a few scales with a different color (gold in this case) to add some visual interest and tie the mail skirt in with the yellows on the rest of the figure. This kind of extra effort can take your painting to new levels and should help you get noticed by the contest judges.



Individual highlighting on each scale is evident in this image as are the scales picked out in gold to add visual interest to the model.

Another tip is to make certain that your figure is based appropriately. Sprinkling some sand on a slotta base and painting it green may be great for your gaming figs but something more should be considered for any figure you enter into competition. Try adding some battle debris or different kinds of terrain to the base. The base can easily indicate a geographic location such as a desert or frozen wasteland. This makes the figure more interesting to look at and differentiates it from other figures.

For the Golden Demons, always make certain that your figure is mounted on a legal size base for the game it is from. Putting your single figure on a 50x50 monster base enables you to go nuts with scenery but technically it is not legal for play nor is it legal for entry into the Golden Demons. If you truly feel that a larger base is needed, make a display base that the gaming base fits into. Alternatively, you could mount the figure on a pedestal base like the one pictured here. This is how I



presented the model for the Golden Demons and there were a few other entries displayed in a similar fashion. I don't think there is any distinct advantage to presenting this way but I think most would agree, it sure looks a lot nicer. After the competition was over, I heard one of the judges explaining to another contestant that they never give

extra points for fancy bases. So, having a nice base may not help, but it apparently doesn't hurt either and it might even attract a little extra attention. It also allows you to identify the figure with a name, location or title.

As for this particular project, there are a few things I would have done a little differently, but overall I was pleased with the way it turned out. Even had I not won anything, I still would have ended up with a very distinctive character model to energize my ideas for a new-look Chaos army or at the very least a special unit or two. Winning a Golden Demon award was an extra bonus that I was hoping for but really didn't anticipate happening due to the stiff level of competition and the need for some luck in the judging. Anyone who's seen me roll dice during a Warhammer battle knows just how little luck I actually have, so I feel very fortunate to have done well in the contest!



Don Haney is a two-time Golden Demon winner and has taught numerous miniatures painting classes and workshops. Currently "semi-retired" from the hobby in order to experience the joys of raising a 4-year-old daughter, he hopes to someday make his triumphant return for another run at the Golden Demon competition.

This article originally appeared as a weekly online series at the Air Traffic Kites and Games website following the 2002 Chicago Golden Demon competition. In October of 2009, it was revised and reformatted exclusively as a downloadable PDF for the Border Town Burning website.