

This is part of a series of strategy articles about various aspects of the game, eventually I will link all of these parts together with a contents post.

For those of you who do not want to spoil anything, I recommend you come back to this thread after a couple of blind playthroughs of the game. For the rest of you, welcome and read on.

I have broken this post up into multiple comments, this allows me to add links direct to various sections and easy navigation.

And before we start, just remember, your may not agree with everything I write here, that's OK just be respectful.

[b]Innovate or Die.[/b]

In this section we will look at, evaluate and understand the innovation deck. Innovations are a key part to the continued success of any good settlement, they provide a range of showdown effects with survival actions, additional survival to make use of said survival actions, endeavour abilities that can be used to provide various benefits and passive abilities that boost your survivors.

For the most part Innovations cost an endeavour plus 1 hide, 1 organ and 1 bone. This is a steep cost as it represents 37.5% of the resources you gain from a level 1 quarry. That high cost alone is one of the core reasons why resource farming is highly recommended, but for the most part, despite this cost it is worth the price.

In addition to the once per year innovation, there are also certain Innovations that you get for alternative costs during various parts of the game, these are either Principles or Innovations gained in story events, Innovations that are built via alternative routes or Weapon innovations.

[b]Always be Innovating[/b]

One maxim that many players live by is 'Always be Innovating.' This is the concept that due to the limited number of times you can innovate (typically once per lantern year) there is a high opportunity cost lost whenever you fail to innovate for a given year.

I do agree with this somewhat, but to a lesser extent than most, I actually advocate skipping innovating early on in the game, but it is a very situational decision to make and one that is not easily taught. The principle of how I approach innovating is this, at certain points in the game, most typically early on or just before certain Nemesis fight (the ones that provide useful benefits for winning or punish you hard for defeat), there is a second risk you should consider. Before pushing the trigger on innovating you should assess what additional gear could be constructed if you did not innovate.

For example, early in the game, an Innovation represents a new building location being constructed, plus a bone sword, a piece of rawhide armour and a monster grease/faecal salve. These are all items that can vastly increase the success rate of your survivors and ensure that they are more likely to return home alive with new resources. A failed hunt is hugely punishing for the development of a settlement, often even more so than skipping on an innovation – not at least in part because a failed hunt means you do not get those lovely reward resources and that often means you do not get to innovate. So if you feel you could lose a hunt, it may be worth using those three resources to increase the chances of success. Of course, as time passes, this need becomes less and less important.

A second example would be when you've drawn a very lopsided spread of specific high value resources, say if you just fought a Gorm and the only hide you have are the Gorm specific resource Stout Hides, you may want to not innovate that year because Stout Hides are the number one bottleneck for building a set of Gorment Armour. For example, if you have managed to get 3x Stout Hide and a Stout Kidney together (which is the cost for the Gorment body/waist combination piece) and you have no other hide I would 100% of the time recommend skipping the innovation and getting the Gorment Suit instead.

As you can see, this is not always intuitive and the feel for it is something you will learn as time passes. So in summary my opinion on Innovating is the less catchy, "Always Innovate unless there is important or hard to get gear you need that will increase your success rate in the showdowns."

[b]What Innovations should I take and when?[/b]

The Innovation deck is an interesting part of the game and there are a couple of key concepts I think you want to internalise before you make your pick. One of these is the fairly obvious 'how good is this innovation for my settlement?' and we will consider that when I assess each innovation separately further down. But there is another pair of key aspects, that if ignored can cause the eventual death of a settlement without players even realising they have done it. They are deck bloating and deck thinning.

The Innovation deck is in truth, a miniature deck drafting game like Ascension or Dominion. Each time you innovate you remove one card from the deck and then sometimes add more to it. That's where the concepts of bloating and thinning come in.

Each card you add to the Innovation deck decreases the odds of drawing a particular card each time you innovate. This means that as time passes, if you add a lot of cards to the deck then you may miss out on getting key cards because you never get to see them. This is deck bloating, and it can be hard to spot because the game is not as clear as it could be about what additional cards each innovation adds to the deck. This is something you will have to learn to assess yourself, and one way of doing this is finding all the cards which will be added to the deck if you pick each innovation and placing them with each innovation you are looking to build. It helps the group make a decision because they can see coming up and not just the immediate effect of a given innovation. Allowing them to also see what else will be added to the deck and in what quantity. Eventually you will internalise the cards each innovation adds and it will become a more natural thing, until then I recommend laying the entire tech tree for an innovation out in order to increase information. If people do not want to be spoiled about what gets added, they should at least be given the information of how many innovations are added, place face down cards to represent this.

In respect to deck thinning, this is a lot harder to achieve, but there are certain terminus cards that do not have any linked innovations, so when picked they increase the chances of you getting the cards you want in later years. In essence, if you are struggling to get a certain innovation that you really need, picking less powerful innovations that do not add cards into the deck may be better than picking something that will add more cards in. This is especially true when you're hunting for Inner Lantern and Paint to gain Surge and Dash (two key survival actions that are essential for fighting bigger and badder monsters).

There are also a few rare innovations that provide equilibrium because they only add one card back in when they are chosen. Family is a good example of one of these and it's replacement card is superb.

These are the concepts, but I will support this in the next section where I look at each of the

innovation cards individually, providing a short assessment and other details.

[b]Symposium, an innovator's delight[/b]

Before finishing this section I want to take a moment to also mention Symposium, this innovation allows you to draw 4 innovations each time you innovate rather than the usual 2. This doubles the number of options you get to see each year and that is a huge increase in the chances of getting the innovation(s) you want. As such Symposium is a high priority pick for any settlement at almost any time in their lifespan. I will provide more details about Symposium in it's own separate section, but the general consideration is that Symposium is very beneficial to the long term health of a settlement.

[b]The Value of Each Innovation[/b]

In this section if a word is in Red this means it is a People of the Stars specific innovation. If it is in Orange it is a People of the Sun specific one and if it is in Blue it is specific to People of the Lantern.

I have divided this section into blocks as follows:

1. Starting and Language Root Innovations
2. Paint Branch Innovations
3. Inner Lantern Branch Innovations
4. Hovel Branch Innovations
5. Ammonia Branch Innovations
6. Drums Branch Innovations
7. Symposium Branch Innovations

[b]Weapon Innovations[/b]

I will discuss Weapon Innovations separately when I look at weapon types in a future post. Until now it is just worth noting that Fist and Tooth and Shield give the best benefits for a Settlement over all and that Spear and Axe are the most powerful during showdowns and therefore getting these should be prioritised.

[b]Principles[/b]

Principles will be discussed in their own post in the future. I will update this with a link at that time.

[b]Other Innovations[/b]

You don't have much control over how the "other" Innovations turn up so I don't have much to say about them in general here. I am of the opinion that you rip the Guidepost out of the ground as soon as possible because being able to reset your timeline with Clinging Mists is an option you do not want to lose.

Each section has it's own comment reply in this thread. Making it easier to navigate around the post.

Explanation of the layout:

Cost: How much it costs to make, including if there are alternative ways to get it

Set: What set (Core or Expansion) it comes from

Tech Tier: How many innovations come before it in the tree

Adds to the deck: What innovations it adds afterwards

Effects: A summary of the effects of the innovation

Evaluation: A short section describing my thoughts and opinions on the card.

Rating: A score out of 10.

[b]Starting Innovations[/b]

Language (Blue) and Dragon Speech (Red)

Cost: Free in Year 1

Set: Core Game (Language)/Dragon King (People of the Stars)

Tech Tier: 0

Adds to the Deck: Ammonia, Drums, Hovel, Inner Lantern, Paint, Symposium

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Gain Encourage

Evaluation:

This is your starting innovation and as such there isn't much to say. You get it for free and unless you tear it down to protect resources during a Gorm Climate you're always going to have it.

There is no difference between Language and Dragon Speech initially, but there are some additional innovations that Dragon Speech adds to and removes from the deck later on (Lantern Oven, Family and Clan of Death are all removed for example).

Rating: N/A

Sun Language (Orange)

Cost: Free in Lantern Year 1

Set: Sunstalker

Tech Tier: 0

Adds to the Deck: Ammonia, Drums, Hovel, Paint, Symposium, Hands of the Sun

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Gain Embolden

Evaluation:

The starting innovation for People of the Sun, it is significantly different from the other two, it removes the entire Inner Lantern tree from the game, which means you will not be able to get Shrine, Scarification or Sacrifice. Instead Hands of the Sun is a specific tree that acts as an alternative to Inner Lantern.

Embolden is an interesting alternative to Encourage, especially because the People of the Sun are very prone to being knocked down. However, because you get this language for free and have no choice about the survival ability it gives there isn't much point in evaluating this card further.

Language Innovations

Paint

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core Game

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Pictograph, Sculpture, Face Painting (3)

Effects: Gain Dash survival action

Evaluation:

Paint is a somewhat frustrating card, the entire art based tree of innovations is not that great, there are a few story specific benefits to certain cards like Pictograph and Sculpture, but overall Paint adds a lot of bloat to your deck, especially because most of the innovations you get from Paint tend to replace themselves when they are chosen (There are a total of 5 descendants of Paint in the

game), so the bloat lasts for a long time. However, this bloat is necessary because Dash is an absolutely vital survival ability that will save countless survivors and turn certain fights from being incredibly difficult into manageable. As such the price you pay in bloat is worth the cost.

Rating: 9/10

Inner Lantern

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core (not present in People of the Sun)

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Shrine, Scarification

Effects: Gain Surge

Evaluation:

Inner Lantern is similar to Paint in that it provides a hugely important survival ability, but then also adds a fair bit of bloat. However, the tech tree for Inner Lantern is a lot shorter than the Paint one and Scarification if chosen provides deck thinning. Inner Lantern is very good and should be a high priority pick for any settlement.

Rating: 10/10

Hovel

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone or Free in Lantern Year 1 from Gorm Event (40% chance)

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Partnership, Family, Bed, Settlement Watch, Bloodline (Red), Shadow Dancing (Orange)

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, +1 Survival when Departing

Evaluation:

As you can see Hovel provides a huge amount of deck bloat when added in, but most of these innovations are terminus ones, Family adds a single innovation back in the deck when it is picked and that one is amazing. Hovel also has two strong effects and because of this it's worth it despite the bloat, especially if you are planning to rush to build Clan of Death and make lots of improved babies.

Rating: 8/10

Ammonia

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone or Free from certain White Lion or Gorm cards

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Bloodletting, Lantern Oven (not in People of the Stars)

Effects: Allows crafting of Leather when combined with the Leather Worker, +1 Survival when Departing

Evaluation:

Ammonia is a key innovation for the transition into the mid part of the game. Without it you cannot build Leather. However, because it can be gained via a White Lion hunt event (with 3+ understanding) or a Gorm Mood it's often not worth prioritising if you are still hunting them. However, if you don't manage to get it for free, you will need to get it if you want access to the most efficient defensive shield in the game and a solid mid-game tank armour set.

Rating: 9/10

Drums

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Forbidden Dance, Song of the Brave

Effects: Endeavour for a chance to gain insanity, survival or remove a disorder

Evaluation:

Drums is a pretty lacklustre innovation and its tech tree is likewise a bit meh, but there are a couple of stand out options, specifically Saga from the core set and Petal Dance from the Flower Knight.

For the most part you get this to try and get Saga, but if the Gorm is present then you really want to get Song of the Brave as soon as possible so you can remove the annoying Gorm Climate from the timeline.

Rating: 9/10 with the Gorm, 7/10 otherwise just because of Saga.

Symposium

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Storytelling, Nightmare Training

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Draw 2 extra cards when innovating

Evaluation:

Symposium is a vital card for the reasons mentioned above, it should be a very high priority due to its ability to improve the quality of every single future innovation. It also adds a small amount of cards, including the excellent Nightmare Training. It's basically a must have innovation unless somehow you never draw it until very late in a campaign.

Rating: 10/10 – but this drops a bit when you get further into the timeline.

Hands of the Sun (Orange)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Sunstalker

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Sauna Shrine, Aquarobics

Effects: Overcharge Survival Ability.

Evaluation:

Overcharge is an interesting ability, but it's not as effective in the early game because you need a fair amount of survival or relevant fighting abilities to make proper use of it. This is the People of the Sun's replacement for Inner Lantern/Surge and it's nowhere near as powerful, an additional activation is much better than having Devastating 1 because Devastating 1 does nothing if you miss.

Rating: 7/10

[b]Paint Innovation Branch[/b]

Face Painting

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Adds to the Deck: None

Tech Tier: 2

Effects: Endeavour to gain insanity or +1 to intimacy

Evaluation:

The main use for Face Painting is to offset the awful problems with Survival of the Fittest. It adds 1 to the intimacy rolls which means that you will not lose the male in the intimacy and have a lower chance of losing the female. People of the Sun have a special Intimacy table and always have Survival of the Fittest for their Birth Principle, so there is an extra benefit there, especially because rolls of 11+ for People of the Sun result in a Child of the Sun being born.

However, this costs a whole Endeavour to activate in the first place, so you want to make sure you will be breeding a decent amount before you use it. This means it combines best with Graves and Tinker Survivors so you can generate a lot of Endeavours to use it efficiently.

Rating: 5/10, 8/10 if you are going Survival of the Fittest, 9/10 for People of the Sun

Pictograph

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Momento Mori

Effects: Allows you to Run Away from Hunts and Showdowns.

Evaluation:

I've read comments from quite a few people thumbing their nose at Pictograph, and on the surface of it I understand why they might do that. Running away from a Hunt means a year with no resources and it's not easy to run away in the first place. However there are a few things it can do that should not be scoffed at. First of all you can flee during the Hunt if the hunt event is one that will kill you when it happens (for example the Harvester if you are holding Noisy gear). Just remember that you can't run away from events on a table if you decide to chance them once you start an Event you have to see it through to the end. Secondly, and this one I feel is huge, you can Run Away from Nemesis encounters that you have sent 4 sacrifices in to die. Instead of automatically losing them you have a chance to get them clear of the fight and potentially survive. It's a better than 30% you'll escape and if you were going to die anyway it doesn't hurt trying. It's a good tool for protecting the population against the more insane Nemesis encounters.

In addition Pictograph has quite a few story based triggers that give benefits.

Rating: 7/10

Momento Mori

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Once per settlement phase Endeavour to gain part of the progress of a dead survivor.

Evaluation:

Like Pictograph Momento Mori has a lot of story based triggers in addition to a relatively weak endeavour ability. It is worth remembering that 50% of the time you can regain the Courage and Understanding of the dead survivor and that is really useful because high courage + understanding are gateways to unlock a lot of potent events. It also has some interesting effects when combined

with the Hunter's Heart from the Manhunter expansion. You mostly want to use this one with Graves.

Rating: 6/10

Sculpture

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Pottery

Effects: + 1 Survival Limit, Story Triggers, +2 Survival when departing for a Nemesis Encounter.

Evaluation:

Sculpture is mostly a stepping stone Innovation. It's certainly a decent enough set of passive bonuses, but it is also worth baring in mind that Sculpture leads to Pottery and Pottery allows you to build the Barber Surgeon. So with the exception of in People of the Sun campaigns (who have an alternate route to Pottery) it is a decent, but not amazing pick.

Rating: 6/10, 3/10 for People of the Sun

Pottery

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Protect resources, build Barber Surgeon

Evaluation:

Pottery's resource protection passive would be better if it wasn't on a third tier Innovation, but because you need to build two other innovations before you unlock Pottery it's not that useful.

Generally in the late game you are less prone to losing resources (unless you hunt Level 3 Antelopes or Phoenixes). So the main use for Pottery is getting the Barber Surgeon constructed, and that gives you access to some great utility items, most notably the Scavenger kit.

Rating: 6/10

[b]Inner Lantern Branch[/b]

Note: The Inner Lantern Branch is removed from the People of the Sun's innovation tree.

Overall I'm not a huge fan of the Inner Lantern branch, it has one very good innovation, one innovation that requires set up to use properly and one that is kind of meh outside of abuse scenarios. The main advantage is this is a very small tech tree so it doesn't bloat the deck much, that's a reasonable price to pay in order to get Surge.

Scarification

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Endeavour to gain courage and a 50% chance of a bonus vs 50% chance of a permanent Injury.

Evaluation:

So, on top of the Courage gain Scarification has a 1/3 chance of giving you the Tough fighting art, which is good, and a 1/6 chance of giving you +1 Luck, which is also really good. But each time you use it you risk losing movement, being blinded or losing your ability to reproduce. There is no way to manipulate this role either, even the fighting art Otherworldly Luck doesn't help. Really I see no reason to build this innovation, while the gamble slightly favours you, the costs are too high imo.

However, there is a way you can improve this and it's Dried Arcanthus. Because your returning survivor does not unequip gear until step 8 they still have it equipped during Step 7: Use Endeavours. This means that Scarification's text changes on 2 of its three negative effects to instead read 'Discard Dried Arcanthus'. Now this isn't ideal, but it is worth remembering because Tough is a great fighting art and Luck is one of the best stats in the game.

Rating: 6/10

Shrine

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Sacrifice

Effects: Endeavour to gain Insanity or Armor.

Evaluation:

70% of the time this Innovation gives you 1 Armour to all locations at the cost of a single endeavour. This is a huge bonus and it can make hunts significantly easier to deal with. It also leads to Sacrifice, which has the potential to break the timeline in a People of the Lantern campaign.

Overall it's a solid, if unexciting, Innovation.

Rating: 8/10

Sacrifice

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Sate the hunger of the Watcher

Evaluation:

Well, this one is pretty much a binary experience. Either you aim to abuse it to push the Watcher

back as far as possible and endlessly hunt until either a Guidepost hits or a Phoenix sends you back in time. Oddly this abuse basically creates an additional 'win' scenario for a settlement. They live in a society of bloodshed and sacrifice, appeasing their sleeping god, but in exchange they are protected forever. If you're not looking to do that it's a useless Innovation that just clutters up your deck.

Rating: 1/10 unless you want to abuse it. Utterly useless for People of the Stars as the Dragon Tyrant cares not for the sacrifice of survivors.

[b]Hovel Innovation Branch[/b]

The Hovel Branch contains a lot of initial bloat, but many of these innovations do not add any extra cards once innovated. Clan of Death and Settlement Watch are the Gems here. However Bloodline and Empire make this branch even more desirable when you are playing People of the Stars.

Partnership

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone. Free in story events for People of the Sun.

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: 2 Endeavours to partner survivors. Some minor benefits for being Partnered, some drawbacks if one partner dies.

Evaluation:

A rather lacklustre Innovation, I recommend ignoring this one for as long as possible. The main benefit it has is you can remove it from the innovation deck and help with thinning. It's a slightly worse than average innovation. If you really want to play with it I recommend playing People of the Sun and focusing on Purifying as much as possible.

Rating: 4/10

Family

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Clan of Death

Effects: Departing Survivors get +1 Survival. Pass down weapon proficiencies to newborns.

Evaluation:

This one is insurance against the loss of your best fighters. It hurts a great deal to lose a Fist and Tooth specialist and Family is one of the few ways to protect against this. As it is a passive effect when performing intimacy the cost of the innovation is lower than it could have been. It's OK, but you don't want it too early on. Also the rounding down of the inherited weapon proficiency sucks.

Rating: 6/10

Clan of Death

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Newborns get +1 Accuracy, Strength and Evasion

Evaluation:

This is the cream of the crop for the Hovel Innovation Branch and along with Saga (Drums Branch) it is one of the premium innovations as it makes your newborns significantly stronger and that makes bouncing back from deaths a lot easier to handle. You want to rush for this whenever you can. I don't really have much more to say about it, it's good, it's permanent buffs for every newborn, you want it.

Rating: 10/10

Bed

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Endeavour to cure certain severe injuries.

Evaluation:

There is nothing worse than having severe injuries cripple your survivors to the point where they can't fight effectively any more. Bed helps with this as one of the few ways to fix certain ones. This unique utility, combined with the extra survival limit and also the bonuses to Intimacy make it a good innovation to have, it's just not flashy.

Rating: 7/10

Settlement Watch

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Manhunter

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: +2 Survival for Nemesis encounters or special showdowns. Endeavour to gain Fighting Arts or Strength.

Evaluation:

This Innovation loses a lot of its power if you have Saga, the trick with Settlement Watch is to use it to train up 0 or 1 hunt exp survivors and make sure they have a fighting art before they age for the first time. Otherwise you can really only use it to help bolster those Survivors who have not gained a fighting art. Yes there is a 30% of gaining 1 strength, but strength is really the weakest of the various stats and it's not worth spending an endeavour on this.

Rating: 7/10 before Saga, 5/10 afterwards.

Bloodline (Red)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Dragon King

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Empire

Effects: Allows newborn survivors to inherit certain dragon traits.

Evaluation:

One of the key parts of becoming good in a People of Stars campaign is careful growth of your Dragon traits. Bloodline works as insurance against death (similar to Family, which it replaces) but it's even more powerful. You want this as soon as possible in order to start passing on your dragon traits and proficiencies to the next generation.

Rating: 10/10

Empire (Red)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Dragon King

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Newborns get +1 Strength and Pristine

Evaluation:

Pristine is a phenomenal ability, and a Dragon Trait. Having this Innovation also means you can work on passing down Oracle's Eye or Iridescent Hide to a newborn. That speeds your journey towards gaining a constellation a great deal. It's a must have.

Rating: 10/10

[b]Ammonia Innovation Branch[/b]

A relatively weak innovation branch early on, Ammonia contains multiple cards which can be gained via events and other methods. However many of the cards are vital not because of their strength, but because they enable excellent pieces of kit.

Bloodletting

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Resistance to the Plague event. Potentially cure disorders or some waist injuries in exchange for a resource.

Evaluation:

The main use for bloodletting is to stop Plague devastating your settlement. However the Endeavour ability has a 30% chance of curing a disorder, Warped Pelvis or Intestinal Prolapse with no negative downsides apart from stopping your survivor gaining survival (in which case you take a different one out). It's essentially a decent deck thinning event and an average innovation.

Rating: 7/10

Lantern Oven

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone or Via a Story Event. Not present for People of the Stars

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Cooking, Scrap Smelting

Effects: Provides Heat and +1 Survival for departing

Evaluation:

Rating: 9/10 for People of the Lantern, but you should never build this and instead get it via the timeline. I'm not convinced on it's usefulness for People of the Sun.

Cooking

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Enables the Cooking story event.

Evaluation:

Oh Cooking, what a mess you are. The entire problem with Cooking is there is no clear answer as to how many people can eat a given dish. If it's just one single survivor then it's over costed for the benefit (generally a cooking recipe needs a bug net + 2 or 3 hunts). But it doesn't seem right that it feeds everyone in the settlement (and the text implies that it feeds just one person). This problem could have been solved with clearer text, but honestly it's a mess either way.

One other issue is that the stupid Spidicules disables most of the dishes because it chases away the Screaming Antelope by replacing it. This is why many of us just introduce the Spidicules a bit later in the campaign instead of losing the Antelope.

It is worth noting that Cooking gets more powerful when used in combination with salt (from the Sunstalker expansion). However, I am of the opinion that each dish should have had several servings, because this is not worth the effort for one person most of the time.

Rating: 4/10 – this may change when/if Poots reviews Cooking for 1.4. If it could work on say 3 or 4 survivors I'd give it a 7/10.

Scrap Smelting

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Innovate to smelt scrap into Iron. Endeavour to build the Blacksmith.

Evaluation:

This is your gateway to Iron gear, both by providing a way to convert the scrap you collect into Iron and also by letting you build the Blacksmith. As the Blacksmith contains access to Lantern Armour it becomes an essential for any campaign looking to get through the big hunts late game. It's just a great innovation, and even better it can be built without spending your innovation for the year.

Rating: Do not build this from the deck. Build it via the Weapon Crafter. If done this way it is 10/10 for Lantern and Stars, 6/10 for Sun.

[b]Drums Innovation Branch[/b]

Drums essentially adds between 2 and 4 innovations to your deck once you start using it. The stand out star is the Tier 3 Innovation Saga, but Petal Spiral (Flower Knight) is a kind of a great innovation as well.

Song of the Brave

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Helps against Overwhelming Darkness, Sings Angry Babys to sleep.

Evaluation:

With the Gorm in the game this is the way you get rid of Gorm Climate, by singing a lullaby to the stupid baby faced mammoths and driving them away (probably to go have a nap). That stops them baby raging all over your resources repeatedly and makes for an easier life. Without the Gorm this is just an absolute menace because it disables your ability to save resources from one year to the next without risk and therefore makes building rare items much harder.

Rating: 10/10 if using the Gorm, 5/10 otherwise

Forbidden Dance

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Heart Flute, Petal Spiral (Flower Knight), Choreia (Spidicules)

Effects:

Evaluation:

The more expansions you add to this game, the worse this innovation becomes, with the Flower Knight and Spidicules expansions included it is the single worst offender for bloat in the entire game. In addition it has a frankly awful Endeavor ability, you'd have to be crazy or unbelievably rich to spend 7 resources just to get +1 Evasion. I would only innovate this if I really wanted the stuff behind it.

Rating: 2/10

Heart Flute

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Create extra Nemesis fights.

Evaluation:

If you are super, super rock hard and have great gear that can handle level 3 nemesis then the Heart Flute is a decent item. You want to be sure to handle level 3s because the flute has a 40% chance of creating a nemesis encounter next year that will remove your hunt and increase the difficulty of all future nemeses. This item is also poorly worded, it implies that with a 6+ you could pull Watchers or Dragon Tyrants to fight – that is clearly not the intent of the item, but it's another example of rules quality control needing a bit more tightening in the game.

If you risk using this you can set things up to farm butchers for the Foresaker Mask/Cleavers. But the best use for it is to summon back Manhunters in order to get your hands on unique gear you may have missed. If you are playing the Green Knight expansion this is one way to get the Hunter's

Heart and Lion Knight Claw if you screwed up the first time you fought the relevant nemesis.

In the sacrifice endless settlement game this provides a way to keep fighting nemeses past lantern year 25.

Rating: 5/10 (7/.10 with Green Knight expansion in)

Petal Spiral

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Flower Knight

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Endeavour to gain Sword Proficiency. Passive gives everyone access to Sword Proficiency at 0-1 hunt exp.

Evaluation:

Petal Spiral is one of the better innovations in the Dancing Branch of the Drums tree. While Sword Mastery is not one of the best masteries in the game getting access to it early for a new survivor is nothing to scoff at. However once you have Saga this passive of course becomes useless. This would be an issue, except beating the Flower Knight adds Petal Spiral to your Innovation deck directly, helping reduce the bloat you'd get from forbidden dance by giving you the chance to innovate it early.

Overall Petal Spiral is a better version of Nightmare training, but it is only for swords and sword mastery is kind of weak.

Rating: 6/10

Choreia

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Spidicules

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: 2 Endeavors to gain a fighting art at the risk of death for a male. Requirement for Green Knight Armour

Evaluation:

Both fighting arts (Harvestman and Death Touch) are very good, however this is a costly innovation to activate. While Harvestman doesn't have that much cost involved in getting it the more powerful Death Touch requires the death of the male, as such you can't ever risk using an experienced male in the dance.

Rating: 5/10

[b]Symposium Innovation Branch[/b]

The Symposium branch gets most of its power from Symposium itself. With just the core game the innovations that come afterwards are a bit lacklustre, with the exception of Nightmare Training that is. Nightmare Training is your ticket to weapon mastery in the mid game and the sheer power of it in combination with Symposium's own natural power makes the branch very potent.

When you add the expansions in you get access to Round Stone Training and the War Room. This pushes the Symposium Branch even further up the power ranks.

Storytelling

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Records

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Spend 2 Endeavours to try and trigger the White Speaker event, the other results on the table kind of suck.

Evaluation:

Let's just say it, the White Speaker story event sucks hard. It's close to trash tier. I've looked at it again and again and even though the White Speaker event gives you three choices. With the promo sticker that includes the rules intended to be added to 1.4 the event is a bit better, but overall this Innovation is +1 Survival Limit, 2 Endeavours for a 30% chance of triggering Story of the Young Hero. Story of the Goblin is garbage tier and story of the Foresaker would be good except the positive results are too rare. Mostly this is here for the passive.

Rating: 5/10, 6/10 with the promo sticker/gear patch.

Records

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Chance of copying someone's fighting art or resetting your age track for two Endeavours.

Evaluation:

You always want to bare in mind that this can be smashed up by the Hooded Stranger when you build it. In addition it has a high cost to activate and a high risk that can only really be mitigated by sacrifice. I don't much like Records outside of crazy New Game++ timelines and I feel there are better things you could be spending your endeavours on.

You can also create some really stupid scenarios with regards to waking up the Watcher very early if you roll correctly.

Rating: 4/10

Nightmare Training

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Core

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: War Room (Manhunter), Round Stone Training (Dung Beetle Knight), Arena (People of the Stars) otherwise None.

Effects: Spend Survivor + an Endeavour to gain weapon proficiency, strength or accuracy.

Evaluation:

This is a safe way you build up a survivor to gain a weapon mastery. It's hugely survival intensive, and you want a minimum of 4 or 6 survival before you use it, but handled correctly it is a great way to reach mastery fast – and you want masteries, especially Shield, Fist & Tooth, Bow, Spear and

Axe. It is worth noting that with Otherworldly Luck this location is super safe to use.

Rating: 8/10

War Room

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Manhunter

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, stops quarries escaping the hunt track, allows for rerolls on hunt events (screw you mudslide and harvester!) making the long hunts safer, potentially prevents survivors moving backwards on the hunt board.

Evaluation:

This is just all good, you don't really need this early on, but it is a powerhouse innovation later when you are pretty happy with the size of your settlement and want to just concentrate on difficult hunts. Losing out on a Level 3 Hunt is galling, so having this level of protection before you go do it is massive.

Rating: 9/10, 10/10 for People of the Sun who really want to hunt level 3 Lions, Phoenixes and Antelopes to build their campaign specific gear.

Round Stone Training

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Dung Beetle Knight

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Gain fighting arts for an Endeavour and a resource.

Evaluation:

This is another one you don't build a lot of the time, you get it via a story event if you include the Dung Beetle Knight in your timeline (and why wouldn't you, he's great.) It's a really good innovation that has a minor risk combined with huge benefits. It's just another top notch way of improving survivors with little risk.

Rating: 9/10.

Arena (Red)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Dragon King (People of the Stars only)

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Spend Iron and risk dying to gain a dragon trait, accuracy or secret fighting art.

Evaluation:

The cost on this one is high, the risk is likewise high (20% chance of death), this is not something I'm in a rush to use but you do want to gain the Dragon stuff from it at least once in a campaign (and then breed it onto others). However, it's a Tier 3 Innovation and that's a lot of effort to unlock. There are better things to be doing with your Iron most of the time, at least late, late part of the game that is.

Rating: 7/10

Shadow Dancing (Orange)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Sunstalker (People of the Sun Only)

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: Endeavour after a death to gain fighting arts.

Evaluation:

This is a great one to combine with Graves, it's an endeavour ability with no downside whatsoever. Either you gain insanity + a random fighting art or you gain the Sneak Attack fighting Art. The only problem is it requires a death during the previous hunt or showdown to activate, so you're not that in control of when it happens. There are not any special strategies to use with this, apart from using it to push out a useless fighting art.

Rating: 7/10 with Graves, 5/10 with Cannibalize.

Gorm Innovation Branch

The Gorm Innovation Branch only starts after you've first successfully hunted a Gorm, so you are in control of when it adds to the bloat of the deck. In addition the entire line only ever adds one card to the deck size and you can endeavour out each potion with a Gorm Brain + Strange Resource. In fact, most of the time that is how you'd prefer to gain these innovations, most of them are not worth spending your single innovation on.

The main benefit for these is the gradually increasing amount of dice you get to roll on the Gormchymist chart, eventually unlocking the ability to produce Gormite and make Black Swords. Most of the Endeavor abilities suck.

Nigredo

Cost: Free after beating the Gorm for the first time. Must be rebuilt normally if lost later on.

Set: Gorm

Tech Tier: 0

Adds to the Deck: Albedo

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, +1D10 on the Gormchymist, Endeavour for a 70% chance to convert 3 bone into a dense bone.

Evaluation:

The passives on Nigredo are very good, but the endeavor ability is a lot more useful than you'd think. Dense bones are used in a lot of the best Gorm gear (Riot Mace and Gaxes for example) and though it is costly, sometimes this is exactly what you need when Gorm Climate is threatening to steal your Pure Bulb and Stout Kidney from you. In addition, because you get this +1 Survival Limit for free it's just a phenomenal item.

Rating: 8/10 (can't say no to free!)

Albedo

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone or Endeavor, Gorm Brain, Strange Resource

Set: Gorm

Tech Tier: 1

Adds to the Deck: Citrinitas

Effects: +1D10 on the Gormchymist, 2 Endeavors to gain a Gorm Brain for 4 organs or remove a negative attribute modifier.

Evaluation:

I don't much like this Innovation, it's pretty weak for the cost/risk vs. reward. 4 organs to make a Gorm Brain is too much in my opinion. You can potentially make a Gorm Brain for 2 Organs via the Gormchymist, it's unlikely, but possible.

Rating: 3/10

Citrinitas

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone or Endeavor, Gorm Brain, Strange Resource

Set: Gorm

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: Rubedo

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, +1D10 on the Gormchymist, 3 Endeavors to potentially remove a single broken severe injury on returning survivors at a risk of -1 permanent evasion

Evaluation:

This one is better than Albedo, but only because of the passives. I cannot see myself using the triple Endeavor ability even with otherworldly luck. The downside is too much. Apart from the desire to make better potions/Gormite this one is pretty meh.

Rating: 4/10

Rubedo

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone or Endeavor, Gorm Brain, Strange Resource

Set: Gorm

Tech Tier: 3

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: 4 Endeavors to gain 1 courage or invert all attribute modifiers.

Evaluation:

Another terrible endeavor ability, I don't really know what to say about this one. You mostly build it for the final +1D10 towards Gormite and the deck thinning.

Rating: 3/10

Hands of the Sun Innovation Branch (Orange)

Aquarobics (Orange)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Sunstalker

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: +1 Survival Limit, Endeavour to gain Legendary Lungs (30% chance).

Evaluation:

Eh, I could take or leave this one. Legendary Lungs is a decent secret fighting art, but there is a 10% chance you die immediately when using this Endeavour and you can end up having to spend survival over and over until you drown. This is the kind of thing you use when you have a huge population and have untrained spares to risk.

Rating: 4/10

Sauna Shrine (Orange)

Cost: Endeavour, Hide, Organ, Bone

Set: Sunstalker

Tech Tier: 2

Adds to the Deck: None

Effects: +10 Survival for Nemesis Encounters. Spend 1 Organ to gain insanity or +2 Strength Tokens and 1 Armour. Also enables the Sun Sealing Endeavour on the sacred pool.

Evaluation: This almost a better version of the Shrine, yes it requires an Organ to activate, but it also has better effects and enables Sun Sealing as well. It's not something you want to get really early on, but it is a power house in the mid to late part of a timeline.

Rating: 8/10