

The Tomb of Zephyria, the Tempest Jade Maiden

The notes you receive from the Axou on the location of the tomb of Zephyria are concise, even curt, but what they lack in poetry and niceties is made up for by the incisive and exact details that they provide. The notes don't make clear the hows or whys of the Axou possessing this information in the first place – but for whatever reason, they have precise information on the fate of this pre-Imperial Urizen figure.

The notes begin with a clipped summary of who Zephyria was in her lifetime, the most salient points being thus:

- She was of Urizen birth, though her home Spire is unknown. She was a contemporary of the famous *Damakan*, although a generation or two younger. Early in her life, she fell into the company of a figure who was apparently very famous at the time, if the notes are accurate – *Sulemeine Bin-Tazal*. The latter was a woman from beyond Urizen, although her precise origin was unknown to Axou record-takers of the time. Sulemeine became known, in her latter years, as the '*Paragon of Blades*'.
- Sulemeine's followers became known as the *Sword Scholars*, a sect of ruthless, pragmatic warrior-priests preaching a creed of cold logic, cold steel, and merciless self-improvement. They conflicted repeatedly with Highborn missionaries and priests. Axou records note that the Sword Scholars did not reject the early teachings of the Way that the Highborn promulgated, and indeed broadly seem to have shared the underlying tenets – but took exception to what they saw as the imperfections of the Highborn approach. This resulted in lethal clashes that the Highborn preachers seem to have been poorly prepared for.
- Zephyria rose to prominence over a decade as a favoured disciple of the Paragon of Blades. Following Sulemeine's death, the Sword Scholars suffered severe fragmenting and loss of direction, with several splinter sects forming. Zephyria led the most powerful and influential of these, the *Disciples of the Tempest Jade Maiden*.
- Zephyria gained her moniker due to several reputed factors – her apparent skill as an artisan and alleged creation of several schema of destructive weapons; her devastating mastery of the sword arts, preferring to battle with a blade in each hand and said to possess such strength she could shatter the weapons of her enemies; and her use of the material in her teachings, pointing to the splintering nature of the material as a metaphor of how violence and conflict tests the material of the individual and reveals their fault lines as well as their strengths.
- Zephyria laid siege to *Damakan's Forge* with her significant military forces after the fabled weaponsmith's death, demanding the spire hand over Damakan's final two creations – a pair of blades said to hold a hidden secret of the sword arts. She was able to acquire one of the pair, a weapon called the *Labyrinth Sword*, said to have an edge so sharp it could slice the soul in two. She used this sword to kill a number of priests of the Way who failed her tests of intellectual rigour in their approach to their faith.
- Zephyria died in her later years not from violence but from poisoning. The killing was said to have been conducted by rival Sentinels tired of the Sword Scholars' military prominence and ruthless violence. Axou record-keepers note that the reported symptoms of the death did not match any of the better-known poisons of the time, so the exact tool used for the murder remains unknown.

As for the tomb itself, the notes are pleasingly precise in their location:

- The tomb lies in *Ravion*, in *Morrow*, on the mountainside of *Irulan Peak*. Cross-referenced against modern maps, Irulan Peak is close to where the Caves of the Claw lie today. The entrance to the tomb is almost certainly collapsed or concealed as it has not been noted on any recent surveys of the region conducted during the work on the Caves of the Claw to ready them for mana production.
- The Labyrinth Sword was reputedly placed in her tomb with her.
- The Disciples appear to have treated the location outside the tomb as a shrine of sorts for a number of decades, but the Axou have no records of the tomb past that time.
- The tomb itself is extensively trapped. Axou records show that the builders installed pressure plate triggers, dart and bolt launchers, and potentially other more vicious deterrents for would-be thieves. They also note the use of large amounts of poisonous metals and fluids used in the construction of the tomb's decorations.
- However, the records indicate these traps and defences were almost entirely mechanical or passive in nature; there was apparently very little, if any, magic used in their creation. Whether these will have withstood the test of time will depend on the quality of the materials they were created with.