

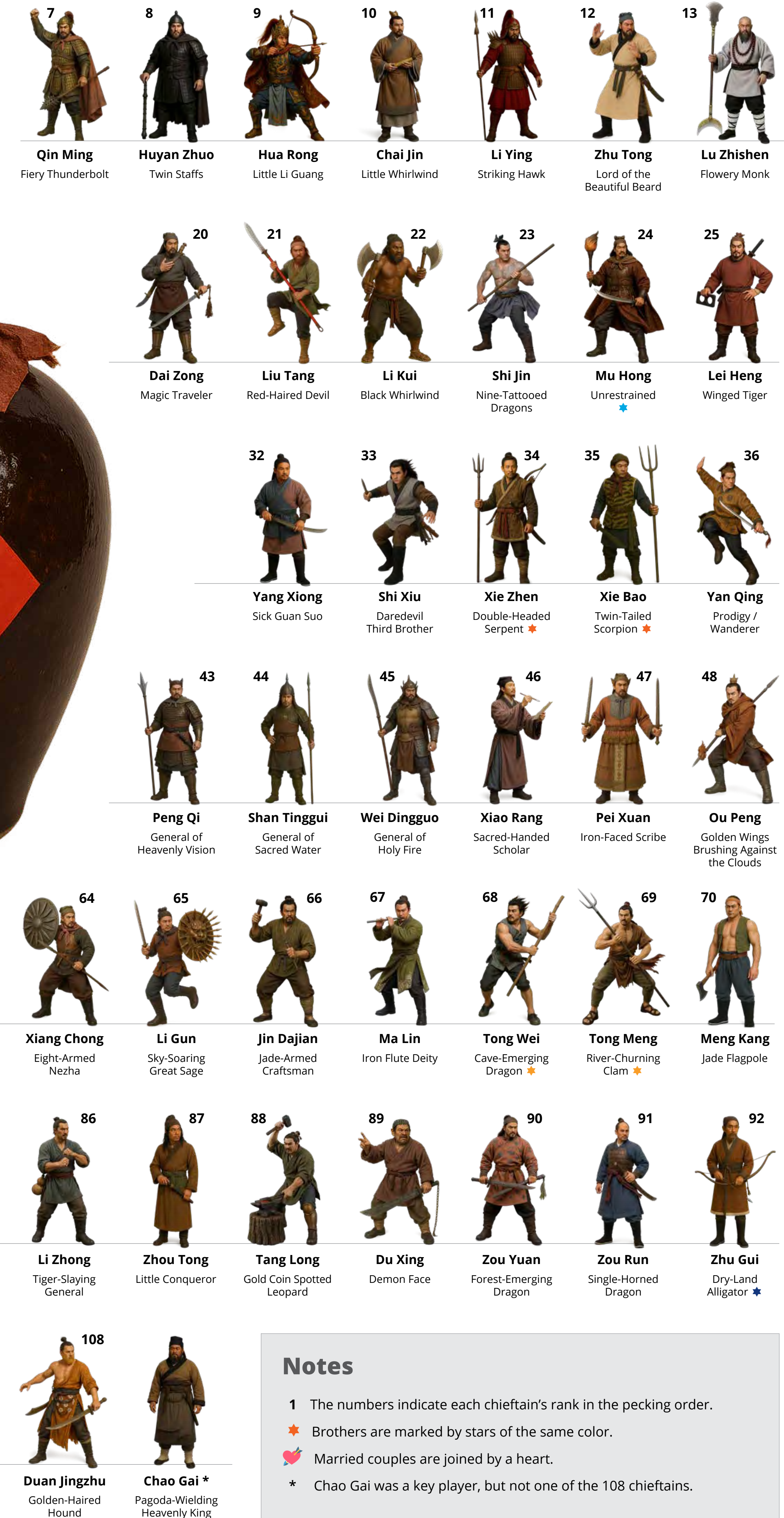
# The Water Margin

*The Water Margin* — also titled *Outlaws of the Marsh* or *All Men Are Brothers* in some English translations — is considered one of the four great classical Chinese novels. It was believed to have been first published sometime in the 14th century, making it one of the earliest Chinese novels to be written in the vernacular. There are disagreements about authorship, but the book is commonly attributed to Ming Dynasty scholar and official Shi Nai'an (1296–1372).

Set in the late Northern Song Dynasty in the 12th century, the novel follows the adventures of a group of outlaws and vigilantes. The book unspools multiple threads focusing on individual characters' journeys into banditry before all the threads converge on Mount Liang. Along the way, the reader is treated to a vivid depiction of life across all levels of society.

The novel is best known for its cast of 108 bandit chieftains. They each have their own intriguing backstory, special skills, and colorful nickname, but are united by a shared sense of justice, a bias for (usually violent) action, and a love for great quantities of grain alcohol.

Design and content by John Zhu • Images generated with AI



**Notes**

- 1 The numbers indicate each chieftain's rank in the pecking order.
- ★ Brothers are marked by stars of the same color.
- ♥ Married couples are joined by a heart.
- \* Chao Gai was a key player, but not one of the 108 chieftains.