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**I**N THE course of the game, characters will attempt various actions. To resolve these actions effectively and dramatically, the character's abilities are used with the core mechanic. In most cases it is obvious which abilities may be used, but there are occasions when a bit of judgement is necessary to decide on the appropriate ability (or abilities) for the task.

There are two important points which should be stressed straight away. Firstly, in working out a character's overall bonus at a task, all appropriate ability bonuses, whether aptitudes or skills, are simply added together (this includes negative bonuses, of course). Secondly, the advice given in the skill descriptions about how abilities can be combined in particular tasks is just that: advice. In the game it is up to the players and referee to negotiate which bonuses can be used when. In most cases it will be obvious, and no negotiation will be necessary.

*When your manor is full of rats, a lame old  
cat is better than the swiftest horse*

## MECHANICS

To find out whether a character succeeded at an action, and how well, all you have to do is follow this basic procedure:

- ◇ The referee decides the *ease* of the task. This is rated on a scale of one to ten, with 10 being extremely easy and 1 being extremely difficult.
- ◇ The player checks to see whether the character has any ability bonuses that assist him in the task. If so, these are added to (or subtracted from) the *ease* to produce a *chance of success*.
- ◇ If the chance of success is over 10, then the player can choose to have an *automatic success*, a *doubles roll* or a *bonus roll*.
- ◇ The player rolls the dice. If the total rolled is greater than the chance of success, the character fails. If it is less than or equal to the chance of success, he succeeds. The *degree of success* is worked out.
- ◇ The referee interprets the degree of success in terms of the game situation.

## EASE

The referee is responsible for making final judgement on how easy any given task is. Many guidelines are given in these rules, but in the end there will be many circumstances where the referee just has to estimate. Exercising judgement in this way is one of the most essential skills of being a referee.

As a general guideline, consider the average easy task to have an ease of 8 or 9. This means that an unskilled character has about a fifty-fifty chance of success. If this seems harsh, remember that this roll of the dice refers to a stressful situation. Where the character can work on a task at leisure the ease will be even higher.

All other tasks' eases are measured relative to this benchmark. Although there are some situations in which a task's ease has a slightly different meaning, for general actions you can use the table below.

10 is the highest possible value of ease for a task. There is no lowest value. Also, although it says 'impossible' in the table below, remember that the impossible happens quite often in adventure fiction!

<i>Ease</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<1	Impossible
1-2	Almost impossible
3-4	Very difficult
5-6	Challenging
7	Relatively easy
8-9	Easy
10	Simple

## ABILITIES

The ease value decided above refers to the ease of the task to the average person. But characters may have strengths or weaknesses which make the task more or less easy. Again, the referee has final say on which abilities may be used in a given task, but it will usually be obvious which are applicable. For example, a character attempting to run away from an enemy may add any bonus for **RUNNING** to the ease of the task.

Referees should make sure that players do not abuse this system. In particular, players may attempt to argue that their characters may use a number of different ability bonuses. A character's **energy** places a limit on the total ability bonuses he can use for a given task, but this may only encourage players to try to use all the bonuses they are allowed. The acid test is whether multiple abilities can be combined in *one*



*Lu Da, wanted for murder, becomes a monk*

*action*. If not, the player will have to make separate dice rolls.

For example, a character tries to pick the lock of a locked door using THIEVERY, and the player then asserts that the character's bonus in STRENGTH can also be used. However, using strength to barge a door is clearly a different thing to picking a lock; separate rolls must be made unless the lock is especially stiff. On the other hand, a bonus in CO-ORDINATION could be added, as it is obviously directly relevant.

Adding the abilities to the ease of the task produces the *chance of success*. In some special circumstances, there may be further modifiers, but they will be explained later.

### NECESSARY ABILITIES

Some actions are just so common that it isn't necessary to have a special ability to have a go at it. Others, however, clearly require a little training, or at least a general familiarity.

If the referee determines that a particular ability is required to perform an action, then any character will suffer a -2 to their chance of success unless:

- ◇ He has a positive bonus in the required ability, or
- ◇ The required ability is one of his occupation's *bonus skills*.

### DICE ROLL

Once you have settled on a chance of success, roll two dice. If the total of the two dice rolled is greater than the chance of success, then the character has failed.

If the total of the dice is less than or equal to the chance of success, the character has succeeded.

You can then go on to find out how well they succeeded. The basic *degree of success* is the higher of the two dice rolled. So if the player rolled a 2 and a 5, for a total of 7, their degree of success would be 5.

If the two dice come up with the same number, this is a *lucky break*. The degree of success is the sum of the two dice. An exception to this is noted in *Over Ten*, below.

Players should beware of double ones. These are called *snake-eyes* and may have unfortunate effects (see below). Because of the bad luck, snake-eyes are an exception to the *lucky break* rule—they have a degree of success of 1.

### OVER TEN

If the chance of success is 11 or over, the player faces a choice. Such a task is so easy that it is well within the abilities of the character. The player may choose to have an *automatic success*. In this case, rather than rolling the dice she can simply place them on the table with one showing a 4 and the other a 3.

On the other hand, the character may extend himself, risking failure against the chance of a much greater degree of success. A player making a *doubles*

*roll* succeeds on anything but a 12 (irrespective of the chance of success). There is no bonus to the degree of success, but she may score *lucky breaks* (see above).

A player making a *bonus roll* succeeds on anything but a roll of double sixes. The number of points by which her chance of success exceeded 10 is *then* added to the higher of the two dice. This will alter both the total roll and the degree of success. It also means that *lucky breaks* are not possible.

Unless otherwise stated, players with chances of success should be assumed to be making bonus rolls.

### INTERPRETATION

The most important part of this system is using it to explain what happens in the game. Thus the referee must use the degree of success to explain what the character actually did. The amount of explanation required will depend on the situation. In some cases it's enough simply to announce that the character was successful—the degree of success doesn't matter too much. If the situation is tense, however, an exciting description of the result adds to the atmosphere and excitement of the game.

This game contains a number of examples that should help give you a feel for the meaning of degrees of success, but just as a general guideline:

<i>Degree of Success</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
1-2	Barely succeeded by a whisker
3-4	Unspectacular success
5-6	Good result
7-8	Superb result
9-10	Exceptional success
11+	Superhuman

You'll notice there is a correlation between ease and success. Both are rated on a very rough 1-10 scale. Once you get a feel for the significance of numbers on these scales, you'll be able to visualise the events of the game better.

### TIMING

One of the trickiest things in a game is keeping track of time. Particularly when the action is happening fast and furious, it can be tough trying to keep track of the fleeting seconds.

Like most role-playing games, *Outlaws* divides action by means of *rounds*. A round is defined as the time taken to perform one discrete action (discreet actions usually take several rounds!).

So if a round is the time taken to perform one action, exactly how long is it? The answer is: as long as you want it to be. In most cases, there is no need to specify a particular length of time for a round. If you need to do so, however, the referee can just choose. A round in a high power level game is likely to be shorter than a round in a normal game.

The problem comes in relating rounds to absolute measures of time. If rescuers are arriving after ten minutes, how many round of fighting will it take? In such cases, it's necessary to be flexible. I envisage a round being anything between half a second and six seconds in length. Nevertheless, it's fair to assume that there will be a number of 'slack' seconds in between rounds, and so the number of rounds in a minute may be as few as five (although equally it could be 60 or more).

Movement rates may also cause problems when certain durations are specified for rounds. It may appear that people are moving either too slow or too fast, if you are too strict. The only way to deal with this is to stick to a one-second duration for a round when you are keeping track of both distance and time. Most of the time, however, it won't matter.

Rounds are used when you are focusing closely on action, and there is a sense of tension and immediacy to what is happening. It would be a mistake to use them too much. Many actions take place over a number of minutes or even hours, and all that really matters is what happens. Switching to rounds should be a signal that the game's pacing is 'shifting up a gear'. If you run in a high gear all the time, you'll damage your engine!

*You cannot build a fine manor  
with a single pole*

## MORE DETAILS

By using the mechanics above, you should be able to deal with most situations that arise. But inevitably, there are some special situations and details that need clearing up.

### ENERGY

People need energy to perform actions. If a character wants to use a positive skill bonus, he must have as many points of **energy** available as the skill bonus he wants to use. If he don't have enough **energy**, he can only use as much skill as he has **energy**.

In most cases, this rule won't cause too much trouble. Characters will usually have sufficient **energy** to use their skills. Where it will particularly apply, however, is in the case of characters who have been hit in fights, or who are suffering from injury, disease or fatigue, or who attempt to combine actions.

If a character has insufficient **energy** to perform an action then he is unable to act effectively. This will

particularly apply in combat. For example, wearing armour requires a certain amount of **energy**. A character who no longer has sufficient **energy** to wear his armour is considered exhausted. He may not use any ability bonuses, and will suffer a -2 modifier to all actions.

**Energy** is also required by characters who have negative skill bonuses. In this case, the absolute value of the bonus is the **energy** required. This reflects the fact that attempting a task at which you are inept requires extra effort.

### COMBINING ACTIONS

If it seems logical, a character may combine two or more actions. However, a skill roll is required for *each action*. The player should choose one action as the *primary action*. She rolls for this action first. Failure indicates that *all* the actions attempted have failed. Success allows the player to roll for the *secondary action*.

The ease of any action after the first is always two less than it would be if the action were a normal or *primary action*. If the character attempts a *tertiary action*, the player may go on to roll for that (at an ease of two less than normal) if successful at the secondary action.



*Sagacious Lu, now a Buddhist monk, gets drunk and attacks a pavilion.*

Characters must have sufficient **energy** available to cover all actions attempted at once.

For characters to combine actions, the intention must be stated *before* any dice are rolled. You can't announce a secondary action *after* you roll the dice. Also, referees should be strict in ensuring that the actions can really be performed at the same time.

## SNAKE-EYES

A roll of double one is snake-eyes. A snake-eyes may be a success, but it carries a penalty. A character succeeding with a snake-eyes will suffer some little misfortune. For example, our intrepid lock picker succeeds with a snake-eyes: the lock springs open but *Snap!* the pick breaks in the lock mechanism. Snake-eyes results shouldn't be *too* deadly. More examples are provided elsewhere in the rules, particularly in the *Combat* chapter. One exception is when rolling against a chance of success of 2. In this case, a successful roll is *not* a snake-eyes, but it does only have a degree of success of 1.

It is usually up to the referee to decide on the results of snake-eyes. The player who rolls a snake-eyes, however, always has the option of making a bad

joss roll instead. This roll will provide the character with some misfortune (explained in the *Games* chapter), but it will also have the effect of reducing the character's stock of bad joss.

Don't forget that even though it's a double, a snake-eyes has a degree of success of only 1.

## OPPOSED ROLLS

If a character is opposed in the task by another character then both must roll. The higher successful result prevails, but the degree of success of the higher is reduced by that of the lower. This may require a little interpretation, especially where the degree of success of the 'loser' is higher than that of the 'winner'. You can get an idea of how this applies by studying the combat system, where the principles are applied in greater detail.

The ease of the task may be set by the referee according to the situation facing each of the opposing characters, or it may be chosen by one of the competing characters (usually the one who 'goes first'). For example, if two characters play a game of chess, the player who makes the first move may select how easy her strategy is going to be. A simple principle in these cases is that *both characters use the same ease value*.

For a simple 'one-shot' conflict, a single roll will suffice, but if the competition is sustained, or comprises several 'bouts', a series of rolls can be used. In this case, opponents will use their degrees of success to reduce some predetermined number, representing the opponent. A simplified version of the combat system can be used to represent this kind of opposed roll. For examples of this in practice, see the descriptions of the various skills, and the explanations of *Disease*, *Poison* and chases.

## MOTIVATION

The referee may allow players to enhance their characters' performance by using points of **motivation**. Characters may gain a bonus to a skill roll by spending **motivation**. The bonus must be bought like a specific skill. To gain a +1 bonus one point of **motivation** is lost. To gain a +2 bonus 3 points are lost and so on. However, the character must have **energy** available to use this bonus from **motivation**.

**Motivation** may also be spent to increase **energy** temporarily. Each point of **motivation** spent gains a bonus of 2 points of **energy** for one action only.

The decision to spend points of motivation in either of these two ways must be made before the dice are rolled. Points of **motivation** used in this way are lost, whether or not the roll is successful.

It is possible for a character to claim motivation, and then use the motivation obtained immediately to improve a roll. This is a good way of accumulating lots of bad joss!

### Example: Helping A Friend

Yang Ming, the Sleepy Dragon, is trying to help a friend of his. He needs the Magistrate's seal in order to put the finishing touches to a document that will allow his friend to avoid being drafted as a member of the local militia. To get the seal, he needs to get into the Magistrate's office while the Magistrate is out, and apply the seal to the document, which is concealed in his sleeve.

There's one obstacle: the Magistrate's personal secretary. Yang decides to try to bluff his way into the office. He tells the secretary that the Magistrate has sent him to pick up a document relating to the case he's working on, a document tied with a black string.

The referee finds this a reasonably plausible story, as this sort of thing often happens. The problem is, will the secretary insist on accompanying Yang into the office? An ease of 6 is decided on, to which Yang adds bonuses in DECEPTION (+1) and WIT (+1). The player tries to claim his INTIMIDATION bonus too, but the referee rules it out, as it doesn't square with deception.

With an overall chance of success of 8, Yang rolls two dice, getting a 5 and a 1. This means he succeeds with a creditable result. He slips into the office, uses the seal on his document, ties it with black string and hurries out, waving it in the face of the secretary on the way!

*The superior man is one whose virtues  
exceed his talents; the base man  
is one whose talents exceed his virtues*

## ABILITIES

Abilities available to characters are described below. There are two types of abilities: aptitudes and skills. It is possible that a character may have both an aptitude and a skill in the same ability. In this case, the two bonuses can usually be added together to produce a single bonus. You should still keep a note of the separate bonuses, as it is important in improving the skill. In the list below, all abilities are specific unless noted as basic.

### PHYSICAL

#### ACROBATICS

A Chinese theatrical performance includes a variety of different forms, possibly the most spectacular of which is acrobatics. The performance of the various flips, rolls and leaps of Chinese drama. It may be used in combat to perform complex manoeuvres. Sample acrobatics with their eases include spin (7), vault (9), roll (10), forward flip (6), back flip (5), cartwheel (8). Characters should also use their GRACE and CO-ORDINATION bonuses, though characters without a specific ACROBATICS bonus will have their chances of success reduced by 2.

#### AMBIDEXTERITY

(Basic skill) Each point of this bonus negates 1 point of the penalty for using the off-hand. A negative bonus indicates a particularly inept off-hand. Characters who are left-handed must have a bonus of +1 in this ability. The maximum value for this bonus, representing full ambidexterity, is +2.



#### CLIMBING

The steeper the slope, the more difficult the climb, the lower the ease. A roll should be made every 10 rounds. Failure requires a second roll at -4 to avoid falling. A successful roll means the character climbs a number of yards equal to the degree of success. Characters should also use their bonus for GRACE.

#### CO-ORDINATION

(Basic skill) Precision of movement of the body. May be used to enhance the chance of success of any task requiring speed and accuracy in movement. It is used for such actions as readying a missile weapon, dodging in combat and so on. Take care not to overuse it, especially in cases where GRACE or STRENGTH might be more appropriate.

#### DANCING

The ability to perform gracefully. Dancing is a performance activity: there is no social dancing except the traditional rites of farmers. Characters should also use their bonuses for GRACE and CO-ORDINATION.

#### DRINKING

Drinking generally produces a penalty to actions of -1 for every 2 cups of wine consumed. However, characters who can hold their drink won't suffer from this penalty. The ease of avoiding the penalty is 10 minus 1 per 2 cups consumed, adding in DRINKING and HEALTH bonuses. The degree of success reduces the penalty to actions. Characters may roll at any time, but once they fail, they can't roll again: they are drunk!

Drinking experts may attempt to gain a benefit from their drunkenness. Once drunk they may make *one* drunkenness roll of ease 4 plus their DRINKING and WILL bonuses. If successful, their penalty from drunkenness is ignored, and they gain a temporary bonus of the degree of success to all their physical or spiritual actions for ten minutes. If unsuccessful, they will pass out.

A drinking contest is handled by rolling to see if you can avoid passing out. Drinkers make a roll for every 2 cups consumed. The first at an ease of 10, but this will go down steadily (depending on the strength of the wine being drunk, but usually by 1 for every two cups of wine). To this roll the characters add their DRINKING bonus, and any bonuses for HEALTH, ENDURANCE and WILL. The first character to fail his roll is unconscious. A character rolling snake-eyes vomits (which usually means losing the match).

#### ENDURANCE

(Basic skill) Fitness, stamina and ability to keep on going. ENDURANCE is used to fight off fatigue. Take care not to confuse it with HEALTH and STRENGTH.

**Example: Fast Draw**

Yang Ming is wandering absentmindedly through the woods one day, when a pair of ne'er-do-wells leap out with swords drawn. 'Hand over your cash, or join your honourable ancestors!' one of them yells.

Yang Ming feigns fear, but quick as a flash whips out his sword and strikes at the bandit who spoke. This requires a roll of ease 7, to which Yang can add his +1 CO-ORDINATION and his +1 FAST DRAW. If he succeeds at this roll, he can also strike in the same round as a secondary action (he has a total bonus of +5 with his sword, and he'll also get a +2 for a surprise attack). He can even let out an intimidatory yell at the same time, but since he has only 10 **energy** and has already used a total of +7 bonuses, he is only able to use +3 out of his possible +4 bonus (+2 INTIMIDATION plus +2 FIGHTING).

Still, I wouldn't bet on him joining his honourable ancestors all that quickly. The continuation of this encounter appears in the *Combat* chapter.

**FAST DRAW**

(Skill only) This skill enables a character to draw a weapon smoothly and very rapidly. It applies to both thrown weapons and melee weapons. The ease of drawing a melee weapon from a belt or back is 7. The character also uses his bonus for CO-ORDINATION. A character may combine a roll for fast draw with a weapon attack in the same round, but the fast draw roll will be the primary roll, and if it fails no attack can be made.

**FIGHTING**

(Aptitude only) A warrior can learn techniques from his martial arts master, but his FIGHTING bonus represents his innate skill at combat, including aggression. It may be used for any type of fighting, with any weapon. This bonus is added to the ease of a combat tactic to determine chance of success (see the *Combat* chapter for further details).

**GRACE**

(Basic skill) Smoothness of movement, including balance and flexibility. GRACE may be used to enhance a performance of DANCING, and is essential in such feats as walking along the top of a narrow wall, or landing properly after leaping.

**HEALTH**

(Basic skill) Resistance to disease, and the body's resources at recovering from fatigue or injury. Take care not to confuse HEALTH with ENDURANCE. The main difference is that ENDURANCE is used to resist physical stresses.

**LEAPING**

Leaps take at least two rounds to complete. One round is spent taking off and another is spent landing. A roll must be made for each: LEAPING and CO-ORDINATION should be added on take-off, while LEAPING and GRACE should be added on landing.

Taking off has an ease of 7, to which up to 2 bonus points may be added: one for each additional round spent running up.

The degree of success plus the character's STRENGTH bonus indicates the maximum distance covered by the leap, but the vertical and horizontal components of the leap use different units. The degree of success may be split between horizontal and vertical, or applied entirely to one or the other (obviously, horizontal leaps always have *some* vertical component, but this can be ignored in practice).

Hero characters may multiply their degree of success by the power level of the game (minimum 1).

The vertical component is measured in feet, while yards are used for the horizontal component. The time spent in the air depends on points of degree of success actually used. For each complete 5 points in excess of 10, the character spends an additional round in mid-air.

The ease of landing from a leap is 8. Failure at this roll indicates that the character has stumbled and fallen upon landing. The LEAPING skill may also be used when falling (see *Falling in Fatigue & Injury*, below) but such a roll need not be made when landing from a leap.

Leaps may be used to gain an advantage in combat. See the *Combat* chapter for details.

There is ample room for complexity in the measuring of vertical and horizontal components, so referees are encouraged to keep it simple, and use discretion in preference to mathematics!

**MARTIAL ARTS**

(Skill only) This skill actually covers a wide variety of skills, all of which must be learned separately. It includes the unarmed martial arts of the fist and kick, and the techniques of weapon use. A skill bonus in a martial art reflects the character's ability to perform the techniques of that art correctly; it may be added to FIGHTING ability in combat.

Martial arts include: Axe (used for axe and hammer), Chain, Dagger (used for dagger and knife), Flail, Halberd (used for halberd and battle-axe), Hook, Lance, Mace (used for club and mace), Spear/Staff, Sword (used for double-edged sword and sabre), Unarmed, Axe and Shield, Mace and Shield, Hook and Shield, Sword and Shield, Twin Axes, Twin Hooks, Twin Maces, Twin Swords. It is also possible to learn unusual combinations such as Axe and Sword, but your chances of finding an instructor are slim. Also be aware that private instruction of martial arts is against the law.

### Example: Leaping

Lin Chong is in town in disguise, when he sees a thug of a constable from the local *yamen* attacking a young girl. The girl is cowering on the ground, and her face reminds Lin of his wife, who took her own life to escape the evil intentions of Young Master Gao. Lin is ten yards distant. Seething with anger, he leaps into action.

The ease of taking off is 7, to which Lin adds his LEAPING +3, and his CO-ORDINATION +1. He doesn't waste time taking a run-up, so makes a bonus roll with a chance of success of 11. He rolls a 4 and a 3, a successful leap, with a degree of success of 5 plus his STRENGTH bonus, making 6. Because he is a hero, in a game with a power level of 3, he then multiplies the degree of success by 3.

With a result of 18, Lin could cover the ten yards travelling 8 feet into the air for a bonus to his strike. However his priority is speed. He opts for a result of 10, travelling 10 yards horizontally. This takes two rounds, and he can strike at the constable as he lands.

Lin will have to make a roll with a chance of success of 11 to see whether he lands safely. He can combine this with a strike at the constable. I don't think the constable has much chance, myself...

There are many styles of unarmed martial arts, but apart from those of the Shaolin monastery none have generic names. Rather they are named after the master who teaches them. On the other hand, moves, kicks and punches are given names.

Further details of the weapons and available tactics are given in the *Combat* chapter, along with a selection of names for martial arts moves.

### MISSILES

Although the MISSILES aptitude may be applied to any form of missile use, including aiming, there are actually four separate MISSILES skills. A separate bonus must be learned for each. The four are BOW (used for the composite and light bows), CROSSBOW (used for light and heavy crossbows) GUNNERY (used for black powder weapons) and THROW, used for thrown weapons. A skill bonus in the first two may be used for both loading and shooting the weapon. A bonus in THROW is used only for the action of throwing. See the *Combat* chapter for further details. Players should be warned that in the Song dynasty, black powder weapons are too cumbersome to be employed as personal weapons.

### NIGHT VISION

(Aptitude only) Each point of NIGHT VISION negates 1 point of the penalty for darkness. A negative bonus *increases* the penalty for darkness.

### PILLOW ARTS

Sophisticated Chinese hate explicit mention of sex and refer to it using complex and imaginative euphemisms. Entertainers are expected to excel at these arts, including the exotically named positions of intercourse, but it is an activity popular with all levels of society. When using the arts of the courtesan and the concubine, a character should use bonuses for PILLOW ARTS, CO-ORDINATION, EMPATHY, ART, ENDURANCE and PRESENCE! The degree of success indicates the pleasure imparted to the partner. The ease of the activity depends on the situation: it is up to the referee to distinguish between the relative merits of the Emperor's lushly appointed bedchamber and the back of a grain wagon on the road to Daming...

### RIDING

(Skill only) The ability to control a horse (or other kind of mount) and manoeuvre on horseback. It should be combined with bonuses in ANIMALS (the aptitude) and GRACE. A character must be successful at riding to remain in the saddle. The ease of riding depends on the speed of the horse:

Stationary/Walk	10
Canter	8
Trot/Gallop	6

In addition, if the horse is startled (perhaps because of injury), these values for ease are reduced by 2.

If the roll is failed, the character starts to fall from horseback. The next round he can try to recover by making another riding roll at -4. This cannot be combined with another action. Failure at *this* roll means the character falls to the ground. A falling roll (see *Falling*, below) may be made at an ease of half the ease of riding given above to avoid suffering damage. Otherwise roll one die of damage for stationary, walk or trot, two dice for cantering and three dice for galloping (**energy** may be used to soak four points of this up as shock).

Movement rates for travel depend on the quality of the mount, and are given in *Movement* below. Characters can increase their fastest rate with their RIDING bonus.

### ROWING

The art of propelling a sampan using an oar or pole. The ease is usually 7, though it will be less if the water is quite choppy. The degree of success of the roll gives the number of feet travelled per round upstream. If travelling downstream, double the number of feet travelled. Characters should add their STRENGTH bonus to this result. When propelling Dragon Boats, the bonuses of the crew can be totalled, and a single roll made for the boat.

Use the *Travel* rules in the *China* chapter for longer distances. The ROWING bonus can be used to increase the fastest rate possible.

## RUNNING

Running on smooth, level ground has an ease of 10. This should be reduced for uneven ground or if there are obstructions. There are two categories of running: sprints and long distance.

For sprints, the character's STRENGTH, CO-ORDINATION and **size** bonuses should be added to his RUNNING ability for the roll. The number of yards covered in one round is equal to twice the degree of success (to a maximum of 10 for normal characters). Characters acquire one point of shock (see the *Fatigue & Injury* section, below) for every complete 3 rounds (plus ENDURANCE bonus) spent sprinting.

For long distances, RUNNING may be used to increase the fastest travelled rate for a character. This is explained in more detail in the rules on *Movement* at the end of this chapter, and in the *Travel* rules of the *China* chapter.

## SHIPCRAFT

The skills required of a sailor on a junk, including rope work, sail making, tacking and steering. It can also be used to increase the fastest speed obtainable from a junk. For more details, see the *Travel* rules of the *China* chapter.

## SINGING

The quality of a character's voice and ability to carry a tune. Eases of songs are pretty standard: the simple melody hummed by a peasant at work in the fields has an ease of 9 or 10. A complex harmonic arrangement may be as low as 2 or 3.

## SNEAKING

The ability to hide or move undetected. The successful degree of success is applied as a penalty to a potential observer's PERCEPTION roll. Typical eases range from 10 for remaining unobserved in pitch darkness to 2 for sneaking past someone who is awake in broad daylight.

## SOLDIERY

The skills of professional soldiering other than weapon use. Includes weapon maintenance, marching, and a grasp of elementary military tactics. It may also be used to command other soldiers. Thus it includes the ability to inspire loyalty and improve morale. When giving orders to subordinates, bonuses in INTIMIDATION and PRESENCE should be added to the roll to see whether they obey.

## SPORTS

The SPORTS aptitude may be applied to any form of sport, but skills must be acquired in specific sports. The two most notable (and high class) sports during the Song are FOOTBALL and POLO.

A popular sport in medieval China, the aim of football is to keep the ball in the air. The first kicker



*Football—a game for Emperors!*

decides on the ease of the kick he will try. Success indicates that the ball has been struck correctly, and the degree of success shows how well he performed the kick. The next kicker's ease is this degree of success, plus the roll of one die. CO-ORDINATION and GRACE should also be used in playing football.

Polo became popular several hundred years ago during the rule of the northern Toba, who were noted riders. RIDING skill is necessary to play polo, and it may be used to enhance play, as well as CO-ORDINATION and GRACE.

There are other sports, especially regional variations, which tend to be played by the lower classes.

## STRENGTH

(Basic skill) Muscle potential and brute strength. Also gives a guide to the proportion of body mass composed of muscle rather than fat. STRENGTH increases a character's **body** score, and it also increases the amount of damage inflicted in combat and the degree of success of a leaping roll.

## SURGERY

(Skill only) The surgeon's art is to keep mortally wounded characters alive, and to repair injuries. A character's SURGERY bonus may be added to his chance of administering first aid. It may also be used to operate on an injured character. Details are given in the *Fatigue & Injury* section.

## SWIMMING

To a swimming roll you should add STRENGTH and CO-ORDINATION. However, characters without a positive bonus in the SWIMMING ability cannot swim, so they must roll just to stay afloat. Other characters can use the degree of success to make progress.

Ease of a swimming roll depends on the water:

- 10 for flat, still water
- 7 for a moving stream or choppy water
- 5 for a fast-flowing river or stormy sea

A successful roll means the character swims a number of feet equal to his degree of success in one round. Failure indicates the character must try to stay afloat.

Characters trying to stay afloat (whether because they can't swim, or because they failed a swimming roll), should roll against the same ease listed above but with a penalty of -4. Failure at this roll indicates the character starts to sink.

Sinking characters must hold their breath. This requires a roll every fifteen rounds at ease 10 plus the character's SWIMMING and ENDURANCE bonuses, minus the number of complete fifteen-round periods spent underwater. In each 15-round period the character may also attempt to reach the surface. This requires another swimming roll with a penalty of -4.

A character that runs out of breath while underwater starts to drown. Drowning inflicts damage of one die per 15-round period. Characters may use spare **energy** as shock, to reduce this damage, but may not recover **energy** lost to shock while under water. For the purposes of healing, drowning damage is considered flesh wounds.

### THIEVERY

The art of cutting purses and otherwise appropriating possessions from other people. Ease depends on the circumstances: as a general guide, stealing an obvious purse from someone in a crowd has an ease of 9. If the crowd is lacking the ease is 7, while if the purse is not obvious the ease is 4. A bungled roll means the item has not been grabbed.

The victim's ease of noticing a successful theft is 10 minus the degree of success obtained (PERCEPTION bonus may be added to this). The victim's ease of noticing a bungled theft is equal to the roll made by the unfortunate thief.

This skill may be used for other tasks associated with thieves, such as picking locks (ease depends on the quality of the lock), sleight-of-hand or moving an object without causing a noise.

## MENTAL

### ADMINISTRATION

Everyday paperwork requires a high level of application and attention to detail. Bureaucrats and clerks should check to see whether they have made a mistake in this work: failure can have unfortunate consequences. This ability also covers mathematical ability and management of a business. Most merchants do not travel: they own a shop in a town doing such jobs as running a tavern, or a butcher's shop, or any other trade establishment. Use this bonus to handle the running of such a business.



*Crane and Peach: symbols of longevity*

### AGRICULTURE

The skill of growing crops. Includes knowledge of planting times, how to plough, and what techniques may be used to increase yield. Bear in mind that farming in China is a hard business: the level of ease is often very low.

### ALCHEMY

This activity is available to Taoists only. The Taoists are obsessed with the quest for immortality, and alchemy here refers to that search where it is conducted by external means. Usually, Taoists combine external and internal methods, so that ALCHEMY is used in combination with MEDITATION and physical training, as well as benefiting from a MAGIC bonus. Alchemical methods of achieving immortality are often based upon the idea of ingesting cinnabar pills. Alchemists acquire the techniques needed to make chemical compounds and refine poisons (see the *Disease & Poison* section, below).

Methods of obtaining Immortality are not dealt with in this book, so referees who wish to make that the focus of their game will have to improvise, or get in touch with me and badger me for more rules.

### ANIMAL TREATMENT

(Skill only) Veterinary medicine is used to treat animals. It covers diagnosis, preparing simple compounds and operating. The character's aptitude for ANIMALS should be added to this roll.

### CHESS

(Skill only) Chinese chess (*xiangqi*) is a relatively recent game featuring two armies of sixteen units facing each other across a river, the Chu, running across the middle of the board, which divides the warring states of Chu and Han (a reference to the historical situation prior to the establishment of the Han Dynasty). Because of its literary, historical, poetical and philosophical references, it is a useful game socially. To represent the high level of skill involved, the game should be conducted as a simplified version of the combat system: with opponents using their skill each round to attack and

defend. As each player has 16 pieces, players use their attacks to deplete this number.

Go (*weiqi*) is the ancient game pitting black counters against white, on a simple grid. Opponents attempt to encircle enemy counters. As with chess, ability at the game is an important status symbol among bureaucrats and scholars. Like chess, games should be conducted as a simplified form of the combat system, competing for 20 points. It is considered good manners for skilful Go players to allow inexperienced opponents a handicap. In this case, reduce the number of points the inexperienced player needs.

For both Chess and Go, use the CHESSE skill. Characters should also use their REASONING and INTUITION bonuses.

### COMMERCE

The arts of bargaining, haggling and dealing. Merchants should use this skill whenever they are making a deal. Non-merchants may use this in order to try to get a better price. According to the approach taken, it can be combined with various other bonuses, for example EMPATHY, INTIMIDATION or DECEPTION.

### COMPOSITION

The most esteemed of all the arts of a scholar: COMPOSITION covers the art of writing. It includes the drafting of prose essays and the art of producing poems in the accepted forms. The higher the degree of success, the more subtle the composition. A failed



Manager of a successful business

roll indicates that the piece's faults will be recognised by educated readers. This skill is essential in order to acquire the greatest success in the Civil Service examinations.

The two principal forms of poetry are the *shi*, with eight lines per poem each of five or seven syllables; and the more modern *ci* or lyric, which tends to be divided into two verses with lines of variable length.

### CRAFTS

There are many individual crafts, and artisans must specify to which craft a skill bonus applies. An aptitude for CRAFTS, however, may be used for any craft. When constructing an item, the ease is determined by the type of item, while the degree of success indicates the quality obtained: a poor item will usually require a degree of success of 1-3, an average item 4-6, a good item 7-8 and a fine item 9+. Crafts skills may also be used in making repairs.

Crafts include: armour and weapon making, basket weaving, boat building, brewing, building, carpentry, cookery, engraving, fletching, jewellery making, masonry, paper making, pottery, rope making, shoemaking, silversmithing, smithing, tailory, tanning, weaving, wine making.

### DILIGENCE

(Aptitude only) A character's DILIGENCE is particularly used in improving mental or knowledge skills. It reflects the character's dedication to study, and ability to absorb information. It can also be used when researching, as it reflects the efficiency with which the character can glean useful information from a source.

### EVALUATION

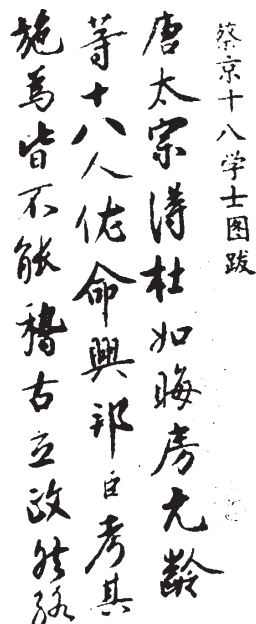
Enables the character to recognise ability in another by observing the person the person. You can only evaluate someone in a skill you possess yourself. A common application of EVALUATION is watching someone fighting. In this case half of the character's MARTIAL ARTS bonus may be added to the chance of success. Basic ease is 7, which assumes that the person is seen fighting for more than 20 combat rounds. Less than this will reduce the ease accordingly (one combat round would yield an ease of 1, for example), and more time might increase the ease, to a maximum of 10. The ease is increased by one if the person is seen fighting against more than one opponent. Success indicates that the ability of the person relative to the viewer can be deduced. Note that you can only evaluate the ability that is actually used: a clever fighter may not use his entire bonus. Also, if the degree of success of the EVALUATION exceeds the character being observed's total ability bonus, the excess may be used *once only* as a situational bonus when fighting that person. It represents having spotted some flaw in the person's fighting technique.

## FISHING

Hunters catch fish from rivers, without using a boat. They may employ a spear, or try a more subtle approach such as tickling, or a rod and line. Other fishermen catch fish from a boat, whether at sea or on a river, usually with the aid of nets. The ease of catch is decided by the referee according to the particular area and the method used. The degree of success is the number of fish caught.

## FORGERY

The ability to forge official documents and other peoples' handwriting. It requires that the character has at least +2 LITERACY, and the character may also employ any skill in CALLIGRAPHY if he is forging calligraphic works. He should add his ART bonus to all rolls. Note that forging letters will also usually require the carving of a seal. For this reason most important people are careful to keep their seals from falling into the wrong hands.



*The handwriting of Prime Minister Cai Jing, forged during the events of the Water Margin*

## GAMBLING

The ability to win money in gambling games. This skill is usually an opposed roll against a number of others. It can be conducted as a simplified form of the combat rules, with the money available to be wagered replacing **body**. It includes skill at gambling games such as double-six and mah-jong. REASONING and INTUITION should also be used in gambling.

## INTUITION

(Aptitude only) A sixth-sense, or unconscious capacity for analysis and decision, which may be used by a character in a wide range of situations. It is particularly useful in enhancing more obvious logical abilities such as PERCEPTION (in spotting an ambush, for example), or CHESS. INTUITION also affects a character's prospects of improving spiritual skills.

## LANGUAGES

(Aptitude only) This natural facility for languages may be applied as a bonus to both native tongue (usually Chinese), dialects and foreign languages. A negative bonus indicates a basic ineptitude at languages, the precise nature of which is up to the player to decide.

## MEDICINE

Includes acupuncture (the art of using needles), massage, or moxibustion (burning cones of moxa) to stimulate the correct points on the patient's channels and collaterals. It is used to relieve pain, treat disease and infection and combat the effects of fatigue and exhaustion. In treating fatigue, half of the doctor's MEDICINE bonus may be added to the recovery roll of the patient he is treating. When treating disease, the ease of the roll is 10 minus the virulence of the disease. Bonuses in PLANT LORE and TALISMANS should be added to the roll. See *Disease & Poison* below, for more details.

## NAVIGATION

The art of guiding a ship correctly, using the stars and a lodestone. Ocean-going vessels travel quite far afield, to the islands of the southern seas, and around the coast to the west.

## PERCEPTION

(Basic skill) The ability to spot things. PERCEPTION covers a wide range of uses, from finding a needle dropped in a haystack (proverbial or otherwise), to noticing a helmet poking out of a tree two hundred yards away. The ease obviously depends on the size of the object, its cover, and the lighting. A player may choose to specify that her character's PERCEPTION bonus applies to a specific sense (such as keen hearing).

## REASONING

(Basic skill) Comprehension and grasp of rational thought processes. A bonus in REASONING may be

### Example: Spotting The Watch

Bai Sheng, the Daylight Rat, is keeping a lookout while his compatriot Flea On The Drum Shi Qian relieves the wicked Governor Liang's mansion of some of its excessive wealth. Liang is away, so that's no problem, but the city watch might turn up. Bai Sheng has to make a PERCEPTION roll of ease 6 to spot them some way off, but luckily he has a +1 bonus, which helps.

If he spots them in time, he and Shi Qian will have to make SNEAKING rolls to remain undetected. Luckily, they are both pretty good at this! If he doesn't spot them in time they'll have a chance of spotting him first.

used to help solve logic puzzles and the like. It also indicates a rational approach to strategy, whether of a real battle or in a game of chess.

**RHETORIC**

Officials need to be adept at the art of disputation, though this works rather differently to the western version. A Chinese rhetorician must use precedent and the classics in order to formulate his argument. This ability covers the arts of persuasion when applied to members of officialdom. When used for persuasion, PRESENCE bonus should be added to the roll. At the discretion of the referee, bonuses in REASONING and CLASSICS may also be relevant.

**STRATEGY**

The art of warfare on the battlefield. A strategist should be well versed in the techniques described by the legendary Sun Zi among others. This skill includes knowledge of a variety of military formations. It is used to determine the outcome of a battle as described in the *Combat* chapter.

**TRACKING**

The art of recognising and interpreting tracks. The ease of identifying a set of tracks, or following them, depends on how recent they are, and the type of earth in which they are made. If tracking animals, ANIMAL LORE can be added to the roll. It may also be used for tracking human quarry.

**TRAPPING**

The art of catching small game in the wild by setting traps. A hunter will usually make a single roll for a day's trapping, with the ease determined by the amount of game in the area. The degree of success gives an idea of the sort of game caught.

Larger game requires TRACKING and the use of an appropriate weapon to bring down.

**WIT**

(Aptitude only) Sense of humour, and ability to make others laugh. It is up to the player to do her best to live up to this characteristic if she chooses it as a bonus. It may be used to enhance the appeal of stories or poetry, or even used as a tool of persuasion or deception. It is of very little use in the Civil Service Examinations, as most Confucians are too po-faced to enjoy a joke.

**SPIRITUAL**

**ACTING**

In China acting is stylised, incorporating elements of mime and storytelling. This ability allows the character to perform in situations ranging from formal drama to an impromptu street show. EMPATHY, PRESENCE and WILL bonuses should also always be

added to this. In a formal show, a character's GRACE is also relevant.

**ANIMALS**

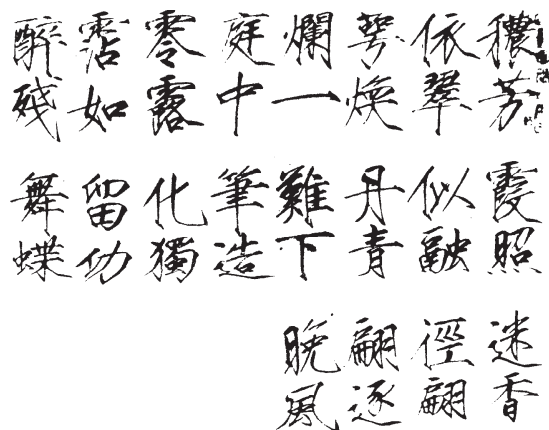
(Aptitude only) A natural empathy for animals. A bonus in this aptitude may be applied to any activity involving animals. This will include both RIDING and ANIMAL TREATMENT for example. It could even be of use in TRAPPING.

**ART**

(Aptitude only) Creative ability, usually visual. Characters with a bonus in this aptitude may use it to enhance their PAINTING, for example, or in the use of imagery in poetry (using COMPOSITION). If this bonus is applied to a craft work it will enhance the artistic appeal of the object being made.

**CALLIGRAPHY**

(Skill only) A character who has at least +2 LITERACY may use this skill to produce works of calligraphy. It requires a good brush, ink stick and ink stone. The character should add their ART bonus to the roll.



*The distinctive calligraphy style of the current Emperor*

**CHANTING**

Chanting the Sutras is an important practice of the Buddhist clergy. It also has a number of beneficial side effects. The holy words of the Sutras are repellent to inimical spirits and ghosts, and if uttered by a monk of sufficient spiritual advancement, the words may repel such spirits and demons. Chanting may also be used as a means of harnessing the power of Buddhist magic. Further details are given in the *Magic* chapter.

**DECEPTION**

The art of the con-trick: how to dupe a person in an informal environment. This includes the fine art of begging. PRESENCE, EMPATHY and WIT bonuses should also be used for this task. Using it in front of a magistrate is an enterprise fraught with peril.

### DISGUISE

Altering physical features, speech and mannerisms to look like somebody else. Impersonating specific people is much more difficult. This skill will also come in useful in pretending to follow a different occupation, or come from a different social class.

### DIVINATION

The use of the *Book of Changes*, Zhuge Liang's Spirit Calculation, *Qian* sticks, or some other method to understand the circumstances surrounding a particular event or person, and to make predictions from this information. Use of Divination, especially along with a knowledge of Astrology and other occult arts, allows the adept to gain knowledge of the future, and even shape it. Details about using divination are given in the *Magic* and *Beliefs* chapters.

### ELEMENTALISM

A deep intuitive understanding of the workings of the natural world. Thus a character with this ability is able to use it to predict the weather, dowsing for water or perform similar feats, without the necessity of casting a spell. Elementalism tends to be favoured by Taoists, though Buddhists may also learn it. It also includes geomancy: the knowledge of land magic. This covers the currents of *qi* flowing beneath the earth, or 'Dragon Veins', as they are known, and the way in which they affect the area. It enables a character to advise on the auspicious placement of buildings or graves. A soundly placed structure will have increased resistance to evil, and more chance of enjoying good fortune. A geomancer may also be able to gain advantageous knowledge about a good place for a battle. Elementalism and geomancy are explained further in the *Magic* and *Beliefs* chapters.

### EMPATHY

(Aptitude only) Natural fellow feeling towards others. EMPATHY may be used to get an idea of another person's feelings or state of mind. It is also useful in activities involving other people, such as acting.

### GRIT

(Basic skill) It is possible to train the mind to resist the shocks and assaults of outrageous fortune. GRIT enables you to resist pain, and to keep holding on to the roof beam even though it's agony.

### ILLUSION

A sorcerer who studies ILLUSION is studying the nature of reality. The Buddha taught that the world we inhabit is all *maya* (illusion), while Lao Zi wrote that 'the Tao is the only reality: all else is opinion'. By practical application of these philosophies, the sorcerer discovers that what we describe as 'reality' is by no means as concrete as we like to believe. The first fruit of this insight is the acquisition of the ability

to detect illusion and magic. ILLUSION tends to be favoured by Buddhists, though Taoists may also learn it. Illusion is explained further in the *Magic* chapter.

### INTIMIDATION

This skill covers the various methods a character might use to attack opponents psychologically, ranging from a war cry to a staring match. A war cry or staring match may be used before combat in order to inhibit one or more opponents from attacking (one roll is used for all of them). The ease is 4, and bonuses in PRESENCE and FIGHTING may be added to the roll, along with any positive difference in *size*. The victim may make a roll to resist at ease 2, adding bonuses in WILL, GRIT and FIGHTING.

The net degree of success (subtracting that of the 'victim' from that of the intimidator) is the number of rounds for which the opponent may not initiate an attack. If you attack the opponent during this time, you don't suffer the -1 situational modifier for attacking a waiting opponent (see the *Combat* chapter), however he can fight as normal.

A war shout can also be used at any time in combat, though use of bonuses requires *energy* just like any other ability. The ease is 4, plus the character's PRESENCE and FIGHTING, while the victim may resist at ease 2, as above. Success deprives the victim of points of *energy* equal to the degree of success as if it were shock damage.

INTIMIDATION may also be used to obtain compliance from others without resorting to violence. In such cases it could be combined with other skills such as RHETORIC, or even INTRIGUE.

It is even possible to for two characters to try to intimidate each other, in which case they can just add up all appropriate bonuses and make one roll each.

### INTRIGUE

Within the central government cliques and factions scheme and plot each other's downfall. At the moment the major causes of dissent are the conservatives vs the reformers, and those in favour of military action against the barbarians vs the appeasers. Highly placed officials, aristocrats and eunuchs have to be able to deal with these conflicts—their lives may sometimes depend on it!

### MAGIC

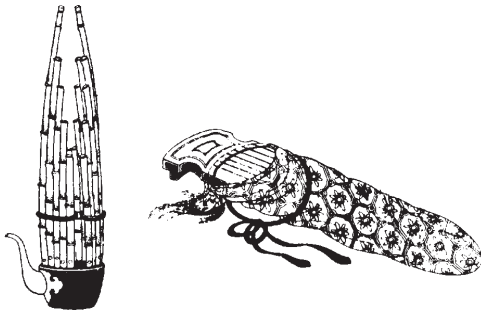
(Aptitude only) A character with a bonus in MAGIC is capable of manipulating and detecting magical energy which lies outside his body. Although in theory any character can cast a spell, characters without MAGIC bonuses are only able to draw magical power from their own *energy*. Characters also use their MAGIC bonus to resist magical attacks and detect the presence of magic and spirits. Characters with a negative MAGIC bonus are particularly vulnerable to the supernatural.

**MEDITATION**

A skill used by the Buddhists to achieve Enlightenment, and by the Taoists to achieve Immortality. It provides a means of controlling and refining the body's **energy**. Characters who meditate for 5 minutes or more may make a roll at ease 5. Half the degree of success may be used as a temporary bonus to **energy**. Unfortunately the bonus only lasts for the same length of time as the character spent meditating. Sorcerers may use MEDITATION as a means of creating magical effects. This is further explained in the *Magic* chapter.

**MUSIC**

Chinese instruments include the two types of flute (vertical and horizontal), the lute (*pipa*), the zither (*qin*), the xylophone, pan pipes and the drum. The aptitude of MUSIC may be applied to any instrument, but the skill must be learned separately for each instrument. As with singing, the ease depends on the sophistication of the musical piece attempted.



*Pan pipes (left) and zither*

**OCCULTISM**

Occultists are attuned to the spirit world. This includes the spirits of humans (whether ghosts or those revered ancestors who have been deified), demons and deities. With this ability, a character is able to detect the presence of spirits, and with a good degree of success, judge their level of power or even their identity. This applies whether the spirit is disguised as a human, or inhabiting some other form such as an object or a natural phenomenon. OCCULTISM is used by both Buddhists and Taoists, although their interpretation of the spirits tends to be a little different. More details about OCCULTISM are given in the *Magic* chapter.

**PAINTING**

(Skill only) The ability to produce pleasing works of art in the accepted styles of Song China. Also, the capacity to recognise well-executed artworks. Like calligraphy, Chinese painting is executed with brush and ink, with paper and silk being the two preferred surfaces. ART bonus must also be added to a painting roll.

**PRESENCE**

(Aptitude only) This may merely represent appearance, but it goes far beyond that. A person with a positive PRESENCE bonus is, quite simply, noticed. For this reason it is of great benefit in such activities as acting or persuading. On the other hand a negative bonus is of more use for a criminal. However, this does mean that if the criminal is caught they won't have such a good chance of defending themselves...

**PUPPETRY**

The art of manipulating marionettes and other types of puppets to put on a display. Includes providing the voices. Puppet shows tend to travel around, perhaps because of their populist nature, and the way they sometimes parody the high and mighty of the land. Bonuses for ART, WIT and CO-ORDINATION should also be added for performances.

**STORYTELLING**

The art of spinning a tale to entertain listeners. There are four basic types of tales told: the first includes the love romances, fairy stories and tales of mystery and war. The second concerns famous Buddhist monks: effectively Buddhism in popular form. The third are historical narratives. One of the most popular of these is the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The fourth type is conundrums. Storytelling often involves subtle denunciations of the corrupt practices of those in power. In telling a story, a character should add his WIT and PRESENCE bonuses.

**WILL**

(Aptitude only) Determination (or lack of it, in the case of negative bonuses) is represented by WILL. It covers mind over matter, the ability to remain conscious, or to resist a persuasive argument or intimidation.

**KNOWLEDGE**

**ANIMAL LORE**

Knowledge of stock-rearing techniques as well as more general knowledge about the peculiarities of the wild and domestic fauna of China. The skill also allows a farmer to guess at the causes and possible remedies for sicknesses and other infirmities in livestock. It may thus be added to ANIMAL TREATMENT when attempting veterinarian medicine. ANIMAL LORE is also useful to a hunter in identifying spoor, lairs and so on: it may be added to TRACKING and TRAPPING rolls.

**ASTROLOGY**

The art of interpreting the heavenly bodies correctly, and calculating their relevance to a particular event or person. Enables the character to work out the birth signs of another character, say whether he is normal



*Paying respects at the family altar*

or a hero, and decide the likely implications of an event for him. It is also of importance in timing activities such as writing Talismans, and may be used as part of a divination. More details are given in the *Magic* and *Beliefs* chapters.

### **CEREMONY**

A bureaucrat must be *au fait* with the Confucian rituals, as everyday activity is regulated according to them. These include holding court and dispensing justice, as well as the rituals involved in administration, and the sacrifices and rites which are conducted at certain temples. Priests must also know the rituals for their religions if they wish to perform them correctly. A certainly amount of ritual is known by all—how to offer respect to ancestors for example—so a bonus in CEREMONY reflects more specialised knowledge. This is a Civil Service examination subject.

### **CHINESE**

Ability to speak the ‘standard’ Chinese language is possessed by all Chinese, but a bonus in this area of knowledge indicates particular depth and sophistication of vocabulary. More details about language are given in the *Language* section, below.

### **CLASSICS**

Characters must have a LITERACY bonus of at least +1 in order to be able to read the classics. Includes knowledge of the Book of Documents (*Shu Jing*), the Book of Poetry (*Shi Jing*), the Book of Changes (*Yi Jing*), the Book of Rites (*Li Ji*) and the Spring and Autumn Annals (*Chun Qiu*); the Analects of

Confucius (*Lun Yu*), the Great Learning (*Da Xue*), and the Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhong Yong*). This is a Civil Service examination subject.

### **DIALECTS**

Dialects bind people who come from the same place, and even allow them to converse without an eavesdropper understanding. Regional dialects are learned as if they are foreign languages. Only dialects may be learned: local sub-dialects can only be picked up by natives. More details about dialects are given in the *Language* section, below.

### **FIRST AID**

Knowledge of first aid allows rapid action to staunch bleeding and bind wounds, or to deal with drowning or fire damage. It is explained in more detail in the *Fatigue & Injury* section, below.

### **FOLK LORE**

Knowledge of the oral traditions of the Chinese. Includes legends about monsters and spirits—not all accurate, it has to be said—but possibly of use in a pinch. It may also be used to enhance storytelling.

### **FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Each language must be learned separately. Languages include Japanese, Jin, Korean, Mongol, Qidan, Tangut, Thai, Soghdian, Tibetan, Uigur and Vietnamese. See also the *Language* section, below.

### **GOODS LORE**

Expert knowledge of specific classes of goods. It will ordinarily apply to the particular class of goods the merchant trades in. Examples include tea, silk and other cloths, foodstuffs, metals, ceramics and art items.

### **HISTORY**

According to Confucian dogma, history provides the answer to any question a general, administrator or magistrate might ever ask. The history of China is meticulously kept. However, functional literacy is required to read it, and therefore acquire this knowledge. HISTORY says nothing about the day-to-day life of the people: it is only concerned with the activities of government. It may be used to enhance rhetorical argument. This is a Civil Service examination subject.

### **LAW**

The Chinese legal system is harsh and complex. This specialisation covers knowledge of its intricacies. The most important detail, known by all, is that no one may be sentenced until he has confessed to his crime. Thus torture is frequently employed. This specialisation includes knowledge of the appropriate torture to apply in a given situation. When the bureaucratic system is functioning correctly, there are

limits on a magistrate's power: if he is found to have falsely convicted someone, he shares their fate. More details are given in the *Society* chapter. This is a Civil Service examination subject.

### LEARNING

This includes advanced mathematics, engineering, astronomy and other practical subjects. However it does not include the scientific method, as such a thing is alien to the rigidly empiricist spirit of Confucianism. In order to study these subjects, a scholar requires at least +1 LITERACY.

### LITERACY

The Chinese writing system, an ideographic language, is accessible to anyone, irrespective of native tongue or dialect, but requires that the literate character learn in excess of 5000 *hanzi* (Chinese ideographs). A bonus of +2 or more in literacy may be used to enhance written works, particularly examinations, and a bonus of +1 or greater is necessary for any skill that involves reading.

### MANNERS

The rules of etiquette and polite behaviour, including the art of kow-towing—kneeling to a superior and touching the ground with the head. Failure to observe the correct manners in a formal situation can have disastrous consequences. Chinese manners involve showing modesty, and are explained in a little more detail in the *Beliefs* chapter. MANNERS is often used as an additional bonus to some other activity, such as persuading an official.

### PLANT LORE

Knowledge of herbs, flowers and vegetables. This allows the character to recognise properties that may be useful. It may be used, for example, by doctors to improve their use of MEDICINE. It may also be used to find natural poisons (see the *Disease & Poison* section, below). More details about plants, their elemental affinities and their medicinal effects are provided in the *Beliefs* chapter.

### ROUTES LORE

For most people, this is the knowledge of the best way to get from one place to another, including potential trouble spots to avoid. For a merchant, this will be knowledge of the most important and lucrative trade routes, including information about what goods fetch the best price where.

### RUMOURS

Knowledge of a local area, whether it be a country district or a town. The RUMOURS bonus is fairly specific to a particular area. It covers the topics that people on the street are talking about, famous personages and so on.

### SPELLS

There are a large number of spells, and sorcerers can rarely learn more than half-a-dozen. Full details of spells is provided in the *Magic* chapter. As with normal skills, spells are learned with a bonus, which will determine which effects are possible with a particular spell.

Buddhist spells include: *Blessing, Peace, Retribution, Truth* and *Warding*.

Spells of the element Wood include: *Conquer Earth, Master of Wood, The Net of Fu Xi, Scales of the Dragon* and *Wind of the Blessed*.

Spells of the element Fire include: *Blood of Shen Nong, Conquer Metal, Master of Fire, Spirit Sending* and *Wings of the Phoenix*.

Spells of the element Earth include: *Conquer Water, Master of Earth, Spirit Voice, Strength of the Yellow Earth* and *The Yellow Emperor's Method*.

Spells of the element Metal include: *Conquer Wood, Delusion of the Senses, Master of Metal, Skin of the Tiger* and *Forge of Shao*.

Spells of the element Water include: *Conquer Fire, Eyes of the Snake, Master of Water, Shell of the Tortoise* and *Tongue of the Black Dragon*.

Other spells include: *Binding, Dragon Fire, Dragon Veins, The Five Heavenly Thunderbolts, Gu Poison* and *Portal to the Otherworld*.

### TALISMANS

This bonus may be used to recognise, select and correctly use an appropriate talisman from the immense corpus of available designs. Advanced techniques of printing are used to produce a large number of talismans, available easily to the common people. Without a level of knowledge, however, use of these is rather indiscriminate, and correspondingly ineffective. The TALISMANS bonus enhances the chance of finding a suitable talisman for a particular

### Recognition

Although China is very large, word spreads. If someone is famous, there is a good chance you will have heard of him. This chance is greatly increased in the case of heroes.

The basic ease of having heard of a person is 0. To this should be added his **respect** bonus, and your RUMOURS bonus if it relates to a place in which that person is known. You should also subtract 1 from the chance for every circuit (a large area of China) by which your home is separated from his. If you are both heroes, 5 may be added to the chance.

The referee may also add bonuses to reflect the level of fame which he may have acquired.

The degree of success of the roll indicates the amount of knowledge you have about the person.

task and correctly identifying the way in which it should be used. Note that the skill roll is not made at the time the talisman is selected: the roll is made when the power of the talisman is tested.

The TALISMANS bonus represents the maximum bonus of talisman known by the character. It is possible to specialise in certain talismans. By passing up the chance to use his bonus on all talismans, a character may double the effective bonus on a specific talisman. This may be done with part of the bonus: a character with a bonus of +3 may choose to have a general bonus of +2, and a +4 bonus in one particular talisman (+1 doubled, plus the general +2 bonus).

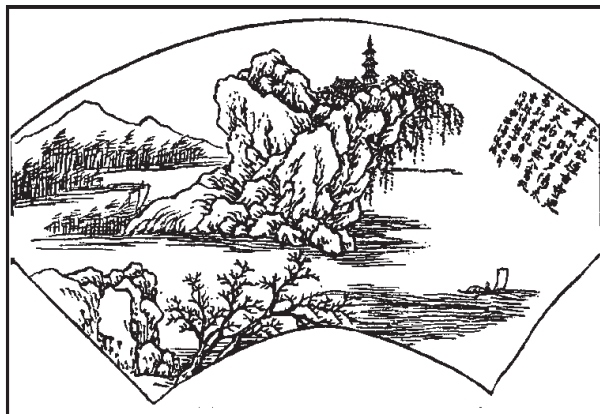
Most talismans are concerned with protecting from the effects of evil spirits or purifying the body. In addition, there are some which assist other activities such as meditation or occultism. Examples are given in the *Magic* chapter.

### TASTE

Song China is teeming with artworks, cuisine, and performances of all kinds. In such an environment, good taste can become a crucial skill in social situations. Most restaurants in the major metropolises are quick to spot a neophyte (someone without a bonus in TASTE). Such a person will receive poor service and probably none-too-impressive food. In some restaurants in the capital, waiters and other diners may even make sport of such a rustic. TASTE is also essential in appreciating artworks, whether they be paintings, porcelain or poetry. It may have practical benefits in enabling a character to select a good gift for use in an influence attempt.

### THEOLOGY

Knowledge of the religious classics, and understanding of their implications. The Taoist religious classic, the *Daocang* collects together the doctrines and cosmology of the religion, which great attention given to immortality, immortals, talismans and the Otherworldly. The Buddhists follow a Chinese version of the *Tripitaka* (the three Indian Buddhist scriptures). The *Jing* corresponds to the



*Mountains and water are popular subjects for artworks*

*Sutras*, the *Lu* to the *Vinaya*, and the *Lun* to the *Abhidharma*. The Chinese Tripitaka also includes the *Za*, miscellaneous works by Chinese authors. More details are given in the *Beliefs* chapter.

### WILDERNESS LORE

The art of survival in the wild. Enables a character to detect adverse changes in weather conditions, find an appropriate place for shelter, construct shelter and many more survival tricks.

*A teacher for one day*

*is a father for life*

## IMPROVING SKILLS

There are two ways to learn skills: self-study and being taught. Self-study is slow, but for someone who can't find a teacher, it's the only option. On the other hand, a teacher will make considerable demands on a character. A teacher is a patron (see the *Characters* chapter) and in Chinese society occupies a place akin to that of the father. A teacher will usually demand total obedience of a student.

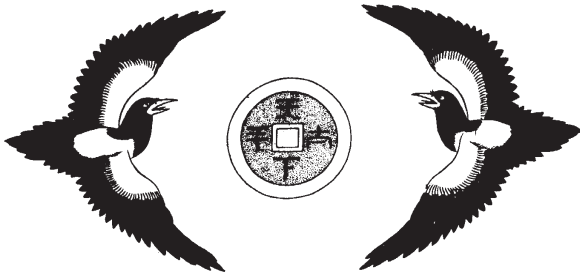
In both cases, the character's personality will have a large effect on his progress. He will also be limited by time. Characters can learn up to three of their occupation's bonus skills at a time, and an additional 2 skills as 'hobbies'.

Both methods of improvement result in characters gaining experience. If this experience is not sufficient to increase the bonus of the skill, note it down by the skill. Then when you acquire experience on another occasion, you can combine it to increase the bonus.

### SELF STUDY

In order to improve a skill you need to acquire experience. One way to do this is to practice regularly. Players should inform the referee which skills their characters are self-studying. They are limited by the total of five skills mentioned above, and they must be able to show that their character has the opportunity to study that skill.

To find out whether your character has improved at a skill, you should make an improvement roll. You can only make one roll for each skill per game year. However, you can make the roll *any time* during the game year. Even in the middle of a fight, you can still make an improvement roll! This reflects the fact that you only really discover you've improved through sudden flashes of insight.



*Two magpies and a coin.  
Magpies are birds of good omen.*

A self study roll has an ease of 4. However, you can apply several bonuses to this.

- ◇ DILIGENCE (for mental or knowledge skills)
- ◇ INTUITION (for spiritual skills)
- ◇ WILL (for physical skills)
- ◇ +1 if the skill is a bonus skill
- ◇ +1 for each point of motivation spent (ie lost).
- ◇ special bonuses derived from using classic books

Half of the degree of success is the amount of experience gained in that skill. Acquiring skills is exactly the same as when you created the character: the cost of a bonus is the value of the bonus. In other words, to raise a +2 bonus to +3 costs 3 experience. Basic skills cost triple.

The remaining half of the degree of success represents indirect benefits of the study. However, because these effects are indirect, you can only get half value: thus only a quarter of the degree of success may be used in this way. Fractions of a half or less count as zero. These may be spent on related skills that are likely to have been improved from studying that skill. For example, practising acrobatics is likely to have a beneficial effect on a character's CO-ORDINATION; studying the classics is considered to help with a character's LITERACY and COMPOSITION skills.

This remaining half can also be spent, if preferred, on motivation, if this seems reasonable. It's possible to spend motivation in acquiring a skill, and then to recover the motivation straight away. Learning is like that.

Players will have to persuade the referee to agree to the possible indirect effects of the skills their characters have successfully studied.

## BEING TAUGHT

In order to be taught a character must first acquire a teacher. This requires the teacher to be a patron (see the Characters chapter); there is no 'casual teaching' in China.

You may then make rolls for improvement at intervals depending on how intensively you are being taught:

- Every month for full time instruction.
- Every 6 months for one lesson per day.
- Every year for one lesson a week.

You are also limited in the number of skills you can learn at any one time. Full time instruction prevents the student from learning any other skills during the period of instruction. Characters having one lesson a day may only self-study 2 bonus skills and one hobby. Characters taking one lesson per week may self-study as normal.

An improvement roll for being taught may be made at any time after the period of instruction.

The ease of the roll is 4, to which may be added the following bonuses:

- ◇ Twice the number of points by which the teacher's skill bonus exceeds your character's.
- ◇ DILIGENCE (for mental or knowledge skills)
- ◇ INTUITION (for spiritual skills)
- ◇ WILL (for physical skills)
- ◇ +1 if the skill is a bonus skill
- ◇ A special bonus of -1 or +1 at the referee's discretion reflecting the teacher's attitude towards the character.

As with self-study, half the degree of success may be used as experience in the skill being taught. The other half is divided by two (round up) and applied to other skills specified by the teacher (ie the referee).

## COMBINATIONS

What do you do when a character studies full-time for a month but spends the rest of the year self-studying: how many skills in all can he study. In these cases it's up to the referee to decide. One month can be allowed to pass unnoticed, but two reduce the number of self-study rolls.

Also bear in mind that the teacher, not the student, usually decides the pace of instruction. Teachers will rarely put up with students who pop up for a month's instruction every now and then.

As a general principle, though, self-study should always suffer compared to instruction. In games in which player characters acquire huge stocks of **motivation** this is especially important.

## SPECIAL TRAINING

It is possible for characters to learn even more rapidly than described above. This may happen when the teacher is exceptional, and the character concentrates exclusively on one skill, or when supernatural methods are involved. In such cases, at the referee's discretion, the period of study required to make an improvement roll may be reduced.

In these cases, a roll should be made against the character's **motivation** score (adding bonuses for WILL and DILIGENCE, and ENDURANCE for physical skills) to see whether he managed to see through the special training regime. If he does, the amount of time taken to qualify for an improvement roll may be reduced to two weeks or even one week. For example, a character who is trained intensively by an Immortal may qualify for an improvement roll after only two weeks.

### Example: Yang Ming Learns

A corrupt magistrate is assigned to Dongping, and soon takes a dislike to the Sleepy Dragon. Yang refuses to torture a suspect he knows to be innocent, and on this pretext the magistrate demotes him. Shortly afterwards he is arrested on a trumped-up charge. Luckily, he had prepared for this eventuality, and escapes custody, fleeing north. Meeting up with Gu, the ne'er-do-well who owes him a favour, he obtains an introduction to the bandits of Black River.

In order to be admitted to their group, he has to fight one of the leaders (you can read about that in the *Combat* chapter). Just to spoil the suspense, though, I'll tell you straight away that he wins, and becomes a bandit.

During the next few months, he has to self-study, as he has no formal teacher. He can study FIGHTING, MISSILES and WILDERNESS LORE as he is an outlaw. He also devotes some time to his MARTIAL ARTS skill in the sword, and frequent bouts with the other bandits enable him to work on DRINKING. He has acquired 10 points of motivation thanks to the events of the last few months. He decides to spend half of this on FIGHTING and the rest on MISSILES and MARTIAL ARTS.

His chances of success, and results are as follows:

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Result</i>
FIGHTING	4 +1 +5	Success with a degree of success of 4: 2 points of experience. 1 point indirect benefit on CO-ORDINATION.
MISSILES	4 +1 +3	Success with a degree of success of 4: 2 points of experience; enough to raise MISSILES to+2
WILDERNESS LORE	4 +1	Failed roll!
MARTIAL ARTS	4 +2	Success with degree of success of 2: 1 point of experience
DRINKING	4	Failed roll!

## BECOMING A HERO

It is possible for a normal character to become a hero at the discretion of the referee, who may 'bestow' Hero status on a normal character who performs some exceptional feat, or who is affected by some powerful magic, divine patronage, etc. The character will not gain extra **body**, **energy** or abilities upon becoming a hero. He will be treated as a hero in those few rules which differentiate. He will also suffer the disadvantage of becoming exiled from society. Becoming a hero isn't all it's cracked up to be.

*A scholar discusses books;*

*a butcher discusses pigs*

## LANGUAGE

There are many different dialects in China, not to mention the assorted languages of the barbarians on the borders. There is also the Chinese writing system, an ideographic language accessible to anyone, irrespective of native tongue, but requiring that the literate character learn in excess of 5000 hanzi (Chinese ideographs).

## CHINESE

For the purposes of this game, we assume that, unless otherwise stated, all conversations are being held in the 'ordinary' language of China. The skill of CHINESE refers to ability in this language. However, as all Chinese characters are assumed to be able to speak this, no bonus is required. A bonus in CHINESE reflects the sophistication of a character's speech, use of metaphorical language, and so on.

All characters will also be able to converse in their 'native tongues', which will be regional dialects. Rather than listing the names of the dialects, it is simpler to base them on the political regions of the country. Thus each character's regional dialect will be that of the circuit in which he was born. He may use this dialect with any other native of that region.

Members of the Imperial Family and the class of Officials have their own dialect in addition to a regional dialect: Mandarin Chinese. Indeed, members of the Imperial Family do not speak 'ordinary' Chinese at all unless they learn it as a skill, and may therefore only converse naturally in Mandarin or their regional dialect (usually Kaifeng).

Anyone attempting to understand a regional dialect or Mandarin may attempt to do so with an ease of 9. This ease assumes the listener has a bonus in

the DIALECT. If not, the usual penalty of 2 to the ease is applied. To the basic ease you should also add bonuses in LANGUAGES, INTUITION and EMPATHY. A listener who doesn't have a bonus in the dialect suffers an additional penalty if he comes from a circuit which doesn't border on the circuit in which the dialect is used: 1 for each circuit by which the listener's home is separated from that of the dialect being spoken.

### SUB-DIALECTS

Even within regional dialects there are differences according to the particular set of villages from which a person comes. This is represented by the sub-dialect, which is based on the region surrounding a prefecture in which a character was born. Unlike dialects, sub-dialects may not be learned as skills. Officials and members of the Imperial Family do not know regional sub-dialects.

Two characters from the same prefectural area may speak to each other in their sub-dialect. The chance of someone listening to the conversation understanding it depends on whether he is a native of the circuit or not. If he is, then the ease of understanding is 7, to which bonuses in LANGUAGES, INTUITION and EMPATHY should be added. If he is not he will have to make a roll of ease 3 to which bonuses in LANGUAGES, INTUITION, EMPATHY and the regional DIALECT should be added.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Characters who have the opportunity to talk to barbarians may learn their languages. This will normally be limited to traders, sailors and wanderers, though others may have an opportunity if they live in a port, or a border town. A bonus of +1 represents basic fluency in a foreign language. To acquire a greater level of comprehension a higher bonus is necessary. Understanding someone whose language you don't speak is very difficult: ease 2.

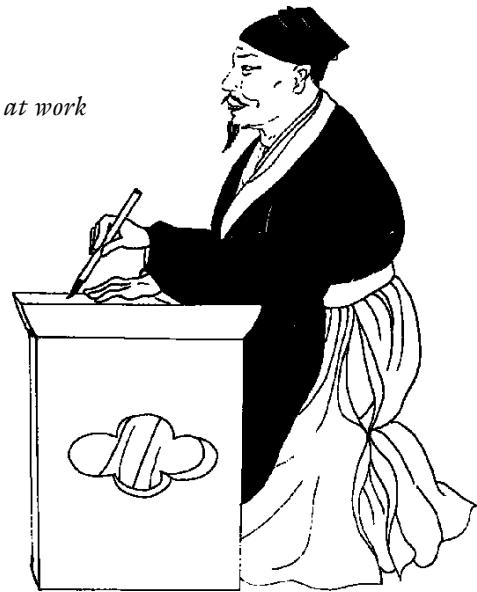
### LITERACY

Literacy is a requirement for performing many actions, and for many occupations. A character with no bonus in LITERACY is considered to be illiterate, though they should be able to recognise the most basic of ideographs, well-known names and the like. A character with +1 LITERACY can read, but is not really capable of writing.

Note that spoken language and dialect are irrelevant to literacy. Two literate characters will be able to communicate with each other in writing even if they cannot understand each others' conversation.

In these rules LITERACY refers to the Chinese system of writing. Although the nomads of Xi Xia have developed their own script (an imitation of Chinese) it is almost entirely unknown within China.

*Clerk at work*



*To keep up a fast comes from within;  
to break a fast comes from without*

## MOTIVATION

As explained in the *Characters* chapter, player characters have motivations, which they can use in various ways, including the improvement of skills. Motivation can be obtained in the course of the game as described below. Its use is, however, entirely optional, and should never be used as a limitation on player choice.

### CLAIMING MOTIVATION

At appropriate points in an adventure, players may declare that they are going to claim motivation for their characters, based on the events that have happened. The principle of claiming motivation is that the *players* decide on the psychology of their characters. Although the list of motivations in the *Characters* chapter provides some idea of circumstances in which a character can claim motivation, these are only suggestions. It is up to the players to decide how events shape the psychology of their characters.

To claim motivation, the player rolls against an ease value of 7. If unsuccessful, there is no effect. If successful, half the degree of success is added to that motivation, and the remainder noted by the referee as bad joss (explained further in the *Beliefs* and *Games* chapters).

Once claimed, **motivation** can be used immediately.

## BAD JOSS ROLLS

The disadvantage with claiming **motivation** is that it brings *bad joss* upon the character. Bad joss makes unpleasant things happen to the character, so it is wise not to get too much of it. In particular, it's best to try to get rid of it whenever possible. Bad joss may be averted with talismans, blessings and other religious devotions, or by suffering its effects.

You can suffer the effects of bad joss by telling the referee that she can use up to a certain number of your bad joss points. At a certain point, when you make a roll, the referee will tell you that you are suffering a penalty. You'll lose the bad joss points, suffering -2 to your roll for each point lost.

Or, when you roll a *snake-eyes* you can choose to make a bad joss roll. This may make something nasty happen to your character (such as catching a disease) but if something bad does happen it should get rid of some of the character's bad joss.

The bad joss table is given in the *Games* chapter. Although you won't necessarily know how much bad joss your character has (unless you get a Buddhist monk to find out for you), you can see the table when you roll. If the referee tells you that you have succeeded in the roll, you will see what bad effect you suffer. That way it's more or less above board, and you can be reasonably sure



*Sagacious Lu prevents a forced marriage by impersonating the bride and beating up the groom*

that it's not the referee who has it in for you, but the spirits!

## RECEIVING MOTIVATION

Referees may give single points of motivation to characters in special circumstances. If she feels that a particular event is sure to have a positive effect on a character's attitude, taking into account his particular motivation or motivations, a special award may be made. Motivation received in this way brings with it no bad joss.

Players are free to refuse points of **motivation** given them in this way.

## USING MOTIVATION

Motivation may be spent to improve the chance of improving skills, as described above. If the referee chooses to use the optional rule, points of **motivation** may also be spent to improve ability rolls.

Certain motivations may also be used in other game circumstances, and players may opt to use motivations to drive game mechanics if they feel that it assists them in making decisions about their characters' actions.

For example, Buddhist motivations of Mercy, Enlightenment and Purity are used by monks when chanting, and by Buddhist sorcerers in channelling magical energy. Characters with motivations of Desire or Greed may choose to make a roll, with their motivation as the ease, to see if they succumb to their craving.

Although role-playing is preferable, motivations may be used to resolve character dilemmas. A character with the motivation of Filial Piety who discovers that his father is a traitor will suffer a terrible dilemma. A player who cannot cope with this dilemma without assistance may like to roll with an ease of his accumulated stock of **motivation** to see whether devotion to his father outweighs conscience.

*A barrelful of tears*

*is no cure for a bruise*

## FATIGUE & INJURY

Characters may become tired for a number of reasons, including travelling, casting spells and over-exertion. Each point of shock or fatigue suffered by a character is a point of **energy** which he cannot use until he has recovered from his shock or fatigue. Fatigue is really nature's way of reminding characters to get a decent

night's sleep on a comfortable bed, and not to push themselves too hard!

Damage may be sustained to the **body** from a number of sources. In addition to the obvious one of being struck by some dogshead's sword, you can also be injured by falling, coming into contact with fire, being prevented from breathing, or suffering from disease.

## SHOCK

Shock damage is mainly suffered in combat, and is explained in more detail in the *Combat* chapter. It can also be suffered in more mundane ways, however, such as falling, or sprinting (as explained under the description of the *RUNNING* ability, earlier).

Shock is a very temporary sort of fatigue, and can normally be recovered in a few rounds.

## FATIGUE

Characters can travel for a whole day at a slow pace without suffering from fatigue. If they push the pace, however, they will suffer. Travelling at a fast rate means you lose 1 fatigue per 3 hours or part thereof. Travelling at the fastest pace means you lose 1 fatigue per hour.

A day's total fatigue can be reduced by *STRENGTH* and *ENDURANCE* bonuses, but it will be increased by the following:

- ◇ 1 fatigue if the character's sleep last night was interrupted
- ◇ 1 if the character slept rough last night
- ◇ 2 if the character has eaten inadequately
- ◇ any other factors the referee may consider appropriate, deriving from weather conditions, stress, encumbrance, actions undertaken by the character etc.

### OTHER SOURCES OF FATIGUE

Characters may acquire fatigue directly in other ways:

- ◇ Casting spells using the body's innate **energy** causes fatigue. This is explained in the *Magic* chapter.
- ◇ Diseases and poisons may cause a character to suffer from fatigue, as explained in the *Disease & Poison* section, below.
- ◇ Hard work may involve fatigue. The referee should determine the fatigue cost (it is easiest to compare it to travelling in order to work out appropriate values).
- ◇ A character acquires one point of fatigue if his **energy** score is reduced to zero by suffering shock damage in combat.

## INJURY

Damage may be suffered in many different ways, most of which are explained below. It is important to keep track of the kind of damage suffered. Some kinds of damage can be reduced by expending points of **energy** in the form of *shock* (this is explained in greater detail in the *Combat* chapter).

Different kinds of injury suffered to **body** heal at different rates. See also the section below on *Disease & Poison*.

### WOUNDS

Wounds are suffered in combat, and are explained in greater detail in the *Combat* chapter. Part of the wound damage suffered may be converted to shock, reducing **energy** rather than **body**. The number of points of damage which can be converted to shock depends on the weapon used to inflict the injury, and values for different weapons are given in the *Combat* chapter.

The remainder of the wound damage reduces the character's **body**. The number of points of **body** lost in one go determines the seriousness of the wound:

- ◇ A flesh wound is a wound of up to a fifth of the character's normal total **body**. A flesh wound is painful, but it does not affect the character's abilities.
- ◇ A bad wound is a wound of more than a fifth, but up to a half of the character's normal total body. A bad wound deprives the character of the use of one point of **energy** until the wound is healed. The player must also make a roll of ease 6 (adding bonuses for *GRIT* and *WILL*) for the character to remain conscious. If the roll is failed, the number rolled indicates the number of rounds which pass before she can roll again. See the section on *Recovering Consciousness*, below.
- ◇ A serious wound is a wound of more than a half of the character's normal total **body**. A serious wound deprives the character of two points of **energy** until the wound is healed. The player must also make a roll of ease 4 (adding bonuses for *GRIT* and *WILL*) for the character to remain conscious. If the roll is failed, the number rolled indicates the number of rounds which pass before she can roll again. See the section on *Recovering Consciousness*, below.
- ◇ A fatal wound is a wound of the character's entire **body** points in one go. Such a wound results in instant death. If you need the gory details, the referee, or the player whose character inflicted the blow, may describe exactly how she managed an instant kill.

The table below shows how many points you need to receive to suffer a flesh, bad, serious or fatal wound.

body	flesh	bad	serious	fatal
5	1	2	3-4	5+
6	1	2-3	4-5	6+
7	1	2-3	4-6	7+
8	1-2	3-4	5-7	8+
9	1-2	3-4	5-8	9+
10	1-2	3-5	6-9	10+
11	1-2	3-5	6-10	11+
12	1-2	3-6	7-11	12+
13	1-3	4-6	7-12	13+
14	1-3	4-7	8-13	14+
15	1-3	4-7	8-14	15+
16	1-3	4-8	9-15	16+
17	1-3	4-8	9-16	17+
18	1-4	5-9	10-17	18+
19	1-4	5-9	10-18	19+
20	1-4	5-10	11-19	20+

For bad and serious wounds it may be necessary to decide on the precise nature and location of the wound, as it may have an effect on the abilities of the character. This can be decided by the referee or the player.

### FALLING

Falling characters may make a roll of ease 8 plus LEAPING and GRACE bonuses. Situational modifiers may also be added if there is something to help break the fall: a tree, a rock face, a shop awning, a hapless bystander or whatever.

The degree of success is the number of feet a character can fall without suffering injury. As with leaping, heroes with a GRACE or LEAPING bonus may multiply their degree of success by the power level of the game.

Damage suffered from a fall in excess of this distance depends on the surface on to which the character falls.

- ◇ For a fall on to a hard surface such as stone, roll one die per additional 2 yards fallen to determine damage suffered.
- ◇ For a fall on to a softer surface such as earth, roll one die per additional 4 yards fallen.
- ◇ For an even softer surface such as water, roll one die per additional 5 yards fallen.

Up to four points of falling damage may be taken off **energy** as shock damage. The remainder should be taken off **body** as wounds. The seriousness of the wounds is determined as for wound damage, above.

### FIRE DAMAGE

A character who suffers fire damage may use his **energy** score to absorb up to 2 points as shock. Any excess, however, is subtracted from his **body** points, and counts as a bad wound for the purposes of healing.

Fire damage in general is highly variable. As a rough guide, having a blazing torch thrust in your face would cause one die of damage.

### BLACK POWDER

The explosive properties of black powder have been known in China for many years, and are exploited in the construction of rockets, fireworks and even crude cannon.

Black powder is a very volatile substance, however, and players should realise that if they try to take advantage of it and use it in a modern, technological way they are, quite literally, playing with fire.

The use of black powder in gunnery is covered in the *Battles* section of *Combat*. Gunnery is covered by the MISSILES skill. Black powder is not really suitable for use in personal combat. It is far too unreliable to make grenades, although a character with an appropriate CRAFT skill may be able to manufacture enhanced fireworks, which will provide a bang, a flash, and perhaps some smoke.

Damage from black powder explosions is treated as fire damage, and is rolled on six-sided dice. To reflect the fact that the damage is caused by explosion, however, black powder wounds are serious.

### DROWNING

Characters sinking in water must hold their breath. This requires a roll every fifteen seconds at ease 10 plus the character's SWIMMING and ENDURANCE bonuses, minus the number of complete fifteen-second periods spent underwater. In each 15-second period the character may also attempt to reach the surface. This requires another swimming roll with a penalty of -4.

A character that runs out of breath while underwater starts to drown. Drowning inflicts damage of one die per 15 second period. 1 point of this will be lost to **energy** in the form of shock, and players may opt to absorb more in the form of shock, but may not recover **energy** while under water. Once **energy** is reduced to 0 the character is unconscious, and all damage is suffered to **body**. For the purposes of healing, drowning damage is rather exceptional: if the character's **body** score is positive (or once it has been raised to a positive amount by first aid), all **body** damage lost is converted to fatigue.

### RECOVERY & HEALING

All the different kinds of damage the body can suffer recover in different ways. As you would expect, a

character can recover from being winded very rapidly. Bruising takes longer, and cuts take even longer. Almost all healing is done by the body itself, but it may be helped by medical attention, as well as by occult means.

### RECOVERING FROM SHOCK

Shock damage can be recovered very rapidly. Every round a character rests he can recover one point of **energy** lost to shock (plus HEALTH bonus).

In addition, one point of **energy** can be recovered during combat on any round in which a character does not combine actions, makes a desperate defence, and gets a higher roll than his opponent.

### RECOVERING FROM FATIGUE

To recover from fatigue, a character requires rest. A full night's sleep of 7 hours or more in comfortable surroundings, after a decent meal, will enable him to recover fatigue of 3 plus his HEALTH bonus.

For shorter periods make a roll after each period of rest (or sleep). The ease of recovery is 3, to which you should add the character's HEALTH bonus and +1 for each complete hour of sleep. You may also add half of the MEDICINE bonus of a doctor who provides treatment for fatigue.

Half the degree of success of this roll may be used to reduce the character's current fatigue.

Note that there are other methods of recovering from fatigue, such the imbibing of certain special cordials (Spring Wine or the Elixir of Life), magic, talismans and herbal preparations.

### FIRST AID

The result of *one* first aid roll may be applied to an injured character within five minutes of him receiving the injuries. The ease of applying first aid to injuries is 7. Characters without a bonus in SURGERY or FIRST AID will suffer a penalty of 2. A bandage and perhaps some herbal salve are required for first aid. If these have to be improvised, reduce the ease by 1.

To this ease the character's SURGERY bonus, and any knowledge of FIRST AID may be added. Half the degree of success represents the *healing* which may be used to restore points of **body**. However, different types of wound heal slightly differently. This is explained in the next section.

### RECOVERING CONSCIOUSNESS

When a character is knocked unconscious, he will remain unconscious for a number of rounds equal to the number rolled in the failed attempt to remain conscious. After this time you can roll again. This time the ease is the number of **body** points he has remaining, to which you should add his WILL bonus, and a bonus of +2 if someone is trying to bring him round by shaking him, pouring water over his head or the like. Success at this roll indicates that the character

comes round; failure that he will remain unconscious for a number of minutes equal to the failed roll.

After this period has passed, roll again, at the same level of ease. Failure this time indicates that the character remains unconscious but can roll again every hour for as many hours as the character has **body** points remaining. From then on you can make a roll to regain consciousness every day. The ease is the number of remaining points of **body**, plus bonuses for WILL and HEALTH, and half the MEDICINE bonus of an attending physician.

### BODY RECOVERY

An injured character may recover **body** through natural healing, possibly assisted by the attentions of a doctor. Every week the character may make a roll to recover from his injuries.

The ease of this roll depends on the worst injury received: 7 for flesh wounds, 6 for bad wounds and 5 for serious wounds. To it the character may add his HEALTH bonus, and if attended by a doctor, the SURGERY bonus (in the case of injury) and half the MEDICINE bonus of the doctor. If the roll is failed, no points are gained and an additional point of flesh wounds is suffered.

The success of the roll is the amount of *healing* received. This may be applied to wounds as the player prefers. Different types of wounds require different amounts of healing. Flesh wounds are the easiest. For each point of healing, one flesh wound is healed.

Bad wounds are more difficult. The first point of a bad wound requires one point of healing. The second point requires 2, the third 3 and so on (just like buying a specific skill). In spending points of healing to recover **body**, though, you should start with the most expensive point (for a 3 point wound, start by expending 3 points of healing) and work down. This makes the book-keeping easier.

Serious wounds are the most difficult to heal. The first point requires 2 points of healing, the second 4 points, the third 6 and so on. As with bad wounds, these points should be healed in reverse order, starting with the most expensive.

A roll of snake-eyes in a healing roll by a person who has suffered a serious injury means that the character has suffered permanent injury: a permanent loss of 1 point of **body** along with some disability (see the next section).

### DISABILITIES

You should wait until a character has fully healed to determine disabilities. Total the number of **body** points *permanently* lost. This is the disability which the character will suffer. Disabilities are applied to abilities, and are determined by the referee. Three points of disability are required for the loss of a basic ability. The referee should attempt to make the disability appropriate to the injury received.

### SCARRING

A character who suffers a bad or serious wound will have a permanent scar (and possibly a disability, if a snake-eyes roll was made in recovery by a character who suffered a serious wound; see above). The player may determine the location and nature of this scar.

### DEATH'S DOOR

A character who receives a fatal wound dies instantly. A character whose **body** is reduced to 0 or less by any other kind of wound, or form of damage, is considered to be mortally injured. He will immediately collapse and may not perform any actions (though he may speak if he is conscious).

When a character's **body** is reduced to 0 or less the character's body souls, the *po*, can no longer animate the body for any length of time. However these don't shoot out of a body the instant the **body** is reduced to zero. They normally take a little time to prepare for their journey onward, and this may be a lifesaver. If the character's **body** can somehow be restored to 1 or more before the *po* leave the body, then the character will live.

To find out how many hours the character's souls will linger, the referee should roll against ease 10, adding *all* the character's basic ability bonuses. The degree of success is the number of hours of life remaining. During this period the character may receive one last roll for medical treatment. Failure to raise the body score above 0 means that the character is dead.



The famous doctor Hua To operates on Guan Yü, hero of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms

*Medicine cures everyone*

*not fated to die*

## DISEASE & POISON

There are a huge number of illnesses, all with different characteristics. In this game, disease is simplified. Referees are encouraged to embellish the rules description, to provide diseases with symptoms.

The most common cause of illness for the player characters will be accumulated bad joss. It is also possible to acquire diseases through poor environmental conditions. See the *China* chapter for more details of the latter, and the *Games* chapter to learn how too much bad joss leads to disease.

### MEDICAL THEORY

The common understanding of disease is based on the principles of harmony and balance. The human body is regulated by the five elements, and yin and yang, and harmony must be maintained between these for perfect health. If there is an imbalance, disease will result. The imbalance may be physical (caused by a poor diet, for example) or spiritual (inflicted by spirits).

The most common causes of disease are identified as the six excesses and the seven moods. The six excesses represent environmental conditions; they are wind, cold, heat, dampness, dryness and fire. The seven moods represent emotional imbalance; they are joy, anger, anxiety, obsession, sorrow, horror and fear.

Treating illness requires the balance to be restored. There are many methods that may be used to achieve this: acupuncture, moxibustion, massage, talismans and, most common of all, herbal compounds.

### CATCHING A DISEASE

A character will usually be subject to a chance of catching a disease in the following circumstances: when his player makes a bad joss roll, or if he finds himself in poor environmental conditions (bad weather, sleeping rough, among other diseased persons, etc), or making do with an inadequate diet. Bad joss rolls are explained in the *Games* chapter, while environmental conditions are discussed in the *China* chapter, in the Travelling and Food sections.

When a character catches a disease, it is important to know the disease's virulence, and its duration (in weeks). An average disease has a virulence of 4 or 5, and lasts for 2 or 3 weeks. While this may seem a long time, it represents the full course of the disease,

perhaps including an asymptomatic period. For certain diseases, the duration may represent a period in which recurrent attacks are suffered.

## PATHOLOGY

A character afflicted by disease will suffer damage which may reduce his **body** and **energy** scores. The virulence of the disease is the basic number of points of **energy** lost by the character to fatigue every day, and the number of points of **body** lost every week.

The character's HEALTH bonus is subtracted from the virulence of the disease. In addition, the number of points of **body** and **energy** lost to disease may be reduced by medical treatment (see below).

A disease will continue for its duration in weeks. Note that the duration of a disease may also be reduced by treatment (see below).

**Energy** and **body** lost to disease may be recovered as explained above, in the section on *Fatigue & Injury*. No matter how many points of **body** are lost, disease damage is treated as flesh wounds for the purposes of healing.

## MEDICAL TREATMENT

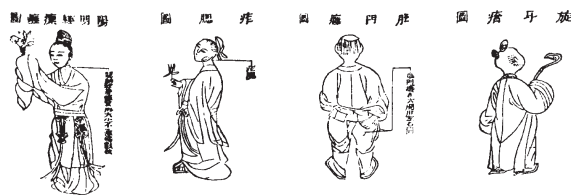
Diseases may be combated in various ways. The most obvious is treatment by a doctor. However, there are also forms of magic, and protective talismans which may be of use.

A doctor treating a disease may make a roll every week. The ease of the roll is 10 minus the virulence of the disease. The doctor may add bonuses in MEDICINE, PLANT LORE and TALISMANS to the roll. Half the degree of success of this roll is subtracted from the number of **body** points suffered by the diseased person. The same number minus 2

### Example: Diseases in the Water Margin

When we first meet Wu Song, the Tiger Slayer, he is staying with Chai Jin and suffering from malaria. The shivering fits are bad enough to prevent him from travelling. This is not an especially serious kind of marsh fever: it has a virulence of 3 and a duration of 4. Wu Song is able to recover enough **body** per week to offset that lost to disease, and the loss of 3 points of **energy** to fatigue isn't that serious, but if he were to travel it would be a different story.

Later in the story, Song Jiang gets an ulcerous carbuncle on his back that lays him low. His whole body aches, and he suffers from a fever. It is so serious that for a while it appears he is done for, and only the ministrations of An Daoquan save him. This carbuncle has a virulence of 7 and a duration of 8.



Pictures from a medical book

(minimum 0) is subtracted from the number of **energy** points lost to fatigue.

If a doctor treating a disease gets a degree of success of greater than the virulence of the disease, then the duration of the disease is reduced by a week.

Characters who cannot obtain treatment by a doctor may obtain medicine from a pharmacist. In such cases it is up to the referee to determine how effective the pharmacist is at supplying the right medicine. Assuming the right medicine is supplied, it will usually have the effect of reducing the **body** lost by 1.

The spell *The Yellow Emperor's Method* may also be used to combat disease, but may not be combined with the treatment described above. It is explained in the *Magic* chapter.

The talismans *Five-Colour Talisman* and *Obliterator of Disease* may also be used in treating disease, but cannot be combined with the above methods.

## SYMPTOMS

Whether or not he suffers any **body** or **energy** damage as a result of a disease, a character suffering from a disease will display symptoms. These are up to the referee to provide: they may be the obvious cold symptoms of chills, sneezing, coughing, fever and the like, or more exotic manifestations such as black boils, yellow skin or a foul smell.

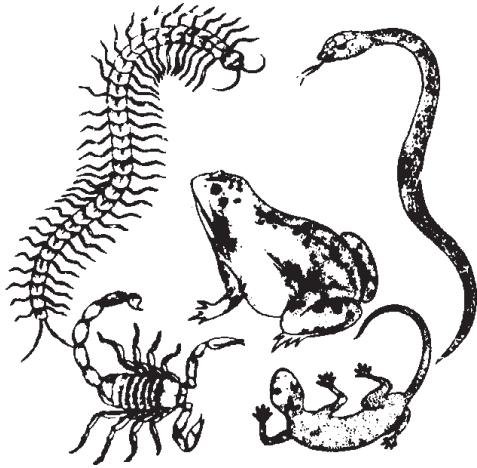
Characters who do suffer from disease damage will usually suffer additional effects in the form of symptoms. These are up to the referee to decide, and should depend on the severity of the disease. In addition to the above-mentioned symptoms, more serious diseases may result in temporary blindness or deafness, amnesia, paralysis, and violent reactions to certain types of foods. A single disease will usually only cause one of these effects, so referees should resist the temptation to pile up woes for player characters.

## POISONS

A fantastic variety of poisons are available to the unscrupulous. Using poison is by no means an honourable way of dealing with an enemy, but for all that it is effective and therefore popular. Most poisons are designed to be ingested orally, though some can

be smeared on weapons (these latter rarely have a virulence of more than 5, however).

As there are so many poisons available, it is up to the referee to decide on the characteristics of any particular poison. As a general guideline, the following rules can be used: a poison is rated for virulence and rapidity. The former is akin to the virulence of a disease; it refers to the poison's potency. The rapidity of a poison determines how quickly it takes effect: it is measured in rounds, minutes, hours or days. It shows how long the character has after ingesting the poison before he suffers damage from it.



*The Five Noxious Creatures*

### SUFFERING FROM POISONS

After a character ingests a poison, there will ordinarily follow a period of time during which the poison will spread through his body. During this period, the character may become aware that he has ingested poison, and may suffer symptoms associated with the poison. This may provide an opportunity to obtain an antidote.

The rapidity of the poison indicates how long the poison takes to spread through the body. After this period, the character will suffer damage according to the poison's virulence. Note that most naturally occurring poisons will have rapidities measured in hours or even days.

When the poison takes effect, roll against its virulence. From this roll should be subtracted twice the victim's HEALTH bonus. Any protection from talismans or magic may also be subtracted. Finally, if the character has previously suffered the effects of this point, 2 should be subtracted from the roll.

If the poison's roll is failed, then the character suffers only a loss of fatigue equal to half the virulence of the disease, less the character's HEALTH and ENDURANCE bonuses.

If the poison's roll succeeds, then the character suffers damage to **body** of the degree of success of the roll. Fatigue equal to the virulence of the disease is also lost. Note that a character whose **energy** is

reduced to 0 in this way is unconscious.

Some poisons vary in their effects: they may have modifiers which affect the amount of **body** or **energy** damage they inflict. A number of poisons cause no **body** damage at all, but simply cause fatigue.

### MAKING POISONS

Characters may attempt to buy poisons though this is, of course, a risky endeavour. Alternatively they may attempt to obtain poisons of their own. The appropriate plants and ingredients are not that easy to find, but with a little skill can be discovered.

The basic ease of finding a suitable poison in the countryside is 2, to which the character's PLANT LORE and WILDERNESS LORE bonuses should be added. The degree of success of the roll is the virulence of the poison found.

Most natural poisons are relatively slow acting, and will therefore have a rapidity of several hours. The referee is at liberty to decide on the rapidity of the poison found. There are some rapid acting poisons to be found in the wilds, but anything less than an hour is very rare indeed. Most fast-acting poisons are relatively weak (the bite of a centipede, for example: very rapid indeed, and incredibly painful, but rarely fatal to a healthy person).

Characters with ALCHEMY skill may attempt to refine natural poisons in order to increase or modify their effect. The ease is 4, with bonuses in ALCHEMY and PLANT LORE being added to the roll. The degree of success is added to the virulence of the poison. Only one roll may be made to refine a poison.

The most effective way of making poisons is to employ the magic spell of *Gu Poison*, which enables fearsomely deadly poisons to be created. Such activities are, however, strictly illegal.

### ANTIDOTES

Finding antidotes to poisons is done in a similar way to finding a poison, as described above. In order to find an antidote, the poison must be identified (ease 4 plus PLANT LORE, ALCHEMY and MEDICINE). The degree of success of this roll is the ease of finding an antidote (plus PLANT LORE and WILDERNESS LORE), and half the degree of success of the roll to find a poison is subtracted from the poison's roll. As with poisons, antidotes may be refined using alchemy to enhance their effects. The problem here is that this takes at least half an hour.

The easiest way to obtain an antidote for a poison is at the same time the poison is made. In this case, the antidote is refined from the poison itself, and so the ease of making an antidote is 10 plus ALCHEMY.

*You can't sew without a needle  
and you can't row a boat without water*

## OTHER SITUATIONS

Most situations which arise will be covered by the rules given for the various bonuses, or in one of the other chapters. There are a few which require further explanation here, however.

### BUYING THINGS

Purchases are handled very like other forms of action, with the necessary 'ability' being the character's **wealth** bonus. COMMERCE may also be used to improve chances of buying something. The whole business is simplified by the fact that a character need not roll to see if he can afford any item with a price of less than his **wealth** bonus. For more expensive items, the character will have to roll, with an ease of 7 minus the price of the item. Failure at this roll means the character doesn't have enough money on him. Success means he has enough, but a degree of success of less than the price of the item means that it'll hurt: the character suffers a month's penalties to purchases of the difference between the price and the degree of success.

More information about mediums of exchange, costs of items, and detailed rules about buying things are provided in the *Society* chapter.

### COMBAT & MAGIC

Combat is such a life-or-death activity that detailed rules are provided for it in the next chapter. It is, of course, possible to resolve combats quickly and simply using the rules already presented, if preferred.

Similarly, a complex system is provided for resolving magic. The complexity of this system is to compensate for the fact that, unlike most activities, we don't have a very clear idea of how magic works. As with combat, you can resolve magic quite simply and impressionistically if you prefer. To be honest, that's what I envisage you doing once players have got a clear idea of the way that Chinese magic works.

### PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

This being a role-playing game, it is anticipated that the majority of personal interaction will be role-played. There are occasions, however, when it becomes necessary to introduce a little abstraction. A player isn't her character, and the latter may have skills of

persuasion and influence which can only be represented by means of the rules.

It would clearly be unfair to demand that a player playing someone with a +2 PRESENCE bonus 'acted' her character's charismatic appeal, while another player with a +2 STRENGTH character was never called upon to do more than heft a plate of Chinese buns.

Adjusting the game 'reality' to match the abilities of the characters is therefore a challenge facing the referee, who should ensure that players with characters specialising in social and personal skills are treated fairly.

In the *Society* chapter there are rules governing attempts to influence people, as well as more details about **respect** and its uses. These should give ideas as to how social skills can be used.

### LIFTING, CARRYING AND THROWING

Rather than go into the nitty gritty of how many pounds a character can lift or carry, this game abstracts the matter. What really counts is the effect. If the character is trying to lift something light, then there's no need for a roll. If the character is trying to lift something heavy, then you have to decide how easy it is to lift such a thing, and use the standard rules. Bearing in mind that Lu Da uproots a tree, and



*Lin Chong is trapped in White Tiger Sanctum carrying a sword*

Wu Song picks up a stone weighing over 600 pounds and tosses it about like it was nothing, it is probably best to treat lifting, and other feats of strength, the same way leaps are: the result is multiplied by the power level of the game for heroes.

With carrying, what matters is how encumbered a character is, and the referee can express this in how many points of fatigue are suffered in excess of the norm. While STRENGTH is used alone for lifting, ENDURANCE is also crucial to carrying.

When throwing things, STRENGTH will help to make them fly far, while CO-ORDINATION, PERCEPTION and MISSILES decide whether or not they hit a target.

## MOVEMENT

There are two kinds of movement to consider. The first is short term movement, which applies when you are dealing with characters' actions in a short time scale. The second is travelling, which is measured in days. These two types of movement use slightly different rules.

### SHORT TERM MOVEMENT

The skill descriptions of ROWING, RUNNING and SWIMMING gave details of how to work out how far a character moved in a round. For convenience, average values for common forms of movement are provided below.

Type	Per round
Cart	2 yards
Horse: walk	2 yards
Horse: trot	4 yards
Horse: canter	10 yards
Horse: gallop	15 yards
Palanquin	1.5 yards
Sampan	0.5 yards
Sprint	6 yards
Swim	1 yard
Walk	2 yards

The figures given for horses are based on an average horse. A poor horse (or donkey) is not capable of cantering or galloping while carrying a rider. Good horses canter at 11 yards and gallop at 17, while fine horses canter at 12 yards and gallop at 20.

Movement in combat is different: if combined with a combat roll it must be done as a secondary action. It is only possible to move if the character gets a higher combat roll than his opponent, and the moving roll is at ease 6 (including the penalty for being a secondary action) plus GRACE and FIGHTING. The degree of success is the number of feet moved.

### TRAVEL

The *China* chapter provides rules covering longer distance travelling. You have a choice of three speeds: *slow*, which won't cost you fatigue, *fast* which will be tiring, but can be kept up by a reasonably fit person all day, and *fastest*, which will rapidly exhaust all but the very fittest of characters. The distance you go at these speeds will depend on the method of transport, and possibly your ability bonuses.

### CHASES

When one character is chasing another, it isn't always necessary to be precise about the distances travelled. Instead you can just assign a number to represent the initial separation of the two characters, and conduct the chase as an opposed roll. The degree of success of the pursuing character will reduce the separation number, while that of the pursued character will increase it.

The same system can be applied for pursuits involving running and swimming, and even riding. In the latter case, if the horses are equal in class, the opposed roll should be between the riders' RIDING skills. Poor steeds subtract 2 from the RIDING roll, good steeds add 2, and fine steeds add 4.

As rolling every round will get boring, it's better to roll every twelve seconds, or even every minute. That way, if you really need to know the distance travelled, you can find it by simply multiplying the distance moved in one round by 12 or 60.



Boatman in sampan