

B a s i c R o l e p l a y i n g

The CELESTIAL 天下三才

Roleplaying in Imperial China

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THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE

ROLEPLAYING IN IMPERIAL CHINA

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*This role-playing game was inspired by Guānyīn's mercy and wisdom.
I hope it will bring enjoyment to countless role-playing gamers.*

天 不
國 勢

ALEPH TAR
GAMES





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INTRODUCTION

Chinese civilisation is the oldest uninterrupted civilisation in the world.

The Chinese date it back to the Shāng (商) dynasty (ca 1550 BC – ca 1046 BC). Archaeological details about the Shāng are scant; what little we know about them was actually written centuries later, and is much more the domain of myth and legend than of proper history. The people of the Shāng dynasty, whose mindset, language, and way of life ultimately evolved into what is now known as ‘Chinese civilisation’, were the contemporaries of New Kingdom Egypt and of the first Assyrian empire – two mighty empires whose religion, language and system of writing nonetheless left practically no legacy beyond Antiquity, and of the Mycenaean civilisation, whose legacy today cannot be possibly compared to Ancient China’s.

Chinese civilisation is unique.

Overview

The Celestial Empire contains setting information for role-playing in Imperial China (618 AD–1911 AD). Although it includes some complementary rules and skills, it is not a game in its own right and was designed to use with Chaosium’s *Basic Roleplaying System* (BRP) for play. Information provided herein compliments that rule set and provides additional optional rules for use with BRP.

The Celestial Empire roleplaying game can be used either to stage a fully-fledged Imperial Chinese campaign, or to add Oriental flavour to an already-existing game. Last but not least, owing to its rich background chapters, *The Celestial Empire* can also be used with any roleplaying game to help flesh out an Imperial Chinese setting.

As written above, *The Celestial Empire* focuses on Imperial China (618–1911), either as a historical setting of heroic adventure as in the *Water Margin*, or as an epic *wǔxiá* action as featured in Hong Kong serialised fiction and in Chinese films such as *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*, or *House of Flying Daggers*.

As per page 87 of BRP, the game master may want to use one of several available power levels for his game. The power level of the campaign will not only be used for character creation, but also for setting the overall flavour and tone of the campaign:

- **Normal:** no magic, no monsters, no *wǔxiá* acrobatics.
- **Heroic:** magic and monsters from

Chinese folklore and myth are available, but *wǔxiá* abilities are not.

- **Epic:** all elements from the *wǔxiá* genre are present (see the sidebar for adding elements from Dragon Lines).

See page 40 for more information on the power level and the setting elements more appropriate to each genre.

Since *The Celestial Empire* has been designed to be a historical (or at least semi-historical) roleplaying game, the game master should also choose a dynastic period of time for his game:

- Táng China 唐朝时代 (618–907)
- Sòng China 宋朝时代 (960–1279)
- Yuán China 元朝时代 (1279–1368)
- Míng China 明朝时代 (1368–1644)
- Qīng China 清朝时代 (1644–1911)

Why ‘The Celestial Empire’

The Celestial Empire (Tiāncháo Dàguó 天朝大國) is an old phrase used in Classical Chinese to describe the Chinese Empire. Classical Chinese is fond of four-character phrases; this one in particular means ‘Heavenly dynasty (天朝)’ – ‘Large country (大國)’ and refers both the size of the country and the fact that the Emperor was considered as having directly been mandated by Heaven. Moreover, the first character in Tiāncháo Dàguó is reminiscence of the very ancient concept of Tiān Xià (天下), a phrase often used in Chinese literature and oral lore. Literally translated, Tiān Xià means ‘under (下) heaven (天)’, and has been used throughout Chinese history to refer to China, her people and her culture, which were considered as being indeed everything under the Sky – the rest being uninteresting barbarian lands and races.

Hence the need for a role-playing game about Imperial China. But it is not a ‘new’ game; its mechanisms come from the time-proven BRP system. Any group of players may start play a mere half-hour after having discovered these rules: ten minutes to get the feeling of the setting, and twenty minutes to create a party of adventurers.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Steve Perrin and Ray Turney for having created the Basic Role-Playing System; Olivier Dubreuil for having introduced me to it; Pete Nash for inspiration; the members of the basicrps.com mailing list and of the basicroleplaying.com forum for their help and their many contributions.

The Celestial Empire vs Dragon Lines

Both The Celestial Empire and Dragon Lines are Oriental flavoured role-games published by Alephtar Games. As explained in this overview, The Celestial Empire is a roleplaying game centred on Chinese history and on Chinese fiction. Dragon Lines, on the other side, is much more oriented towards what a Western audience perceives as Oriental Martial Arts action. The Celestial Empire may be used to render a Dragon Lines game more historical and more cultural; reciprocally, Dragon Lines may be used to add new martial arts styles and manoeuvres to a Celestial Empire game.

A note on Romanisation

In this book, all Chinese words are transcribed into the Latin alphabet using the pinyin Romanisation system, which is the one most commonly used today, both in mainstream and in scholarly publications. English-language readers, however, may be more familiar with the older Wade-Giles Romanisation system, which was the one most commonly used in English-language texts until about 10 years ago. The word 道 ('the way'), for instance, is Romanised *Dào* in pinyin, but *Tao* in Wade-Giles, hence the spellings *Daoism*, *Daoist* used throughout this book in lieu of *Taoism*, *Taoist*, which may be more familiar to the reader. Likewise, the word 氣 ('energy', 'breath') is Romanised *Qì* in pinyin, and *Ch'i* in Wade-Giles, and will always be found under the former spelling throughout this book.

Vocabulary

This book is a game, not a scholarly tome. As such, it will try not to over-use Chinese terms. However, cultural words will be given in Chinese (both in pinyin Romanisation and in Chinese characters) whenever possible, so that interested game masters or players may do further research or add flavour to their games.

Some words, however, will always be given in Chinese, for want of a precise English translation:

Dào (道) is the universal principle that governs the universe and guarantees its unity (see page 34). It has also been variously rendered in English-language literature as the 'flow' of the universe, or even as the universe itself.

Hàn (漢) – Hān is the indigenous name of the Chinese people. In this respect, the terms 'Hān' and 'Chinese' are synonyms. However, as China has evolved with time into a multi-ethnic nation, the word Hān has come to characterise ethnic Chinese only, e.g., a Miáo or a Zhuàng person is a Chinese person, but he or she is not a Hān person. Other phrases used by the Hān to refer to themselves are 'Descendants of the Dragon' and 'the Black-Haired race'.

Qì (氣) – As mentioned above, Dào flows through the universe; this flow, especially inasmuch as it sustains living beings, is called Qì. For a more detailed presentation, see page 33.

Wǔshù (武術) is the name given in China to martial arts – what we erroneously call 'kung fu' in the West. In *The Celestial Empire*, the term *wǔshù* shall in particular be applied to the kind of over-the-top martial arts that are a staple of Chinese literature and film. The super powers from the BRP rule book shall be referred to as *wǔshù* powers in *The Celestial Empire*.

Wǔxiá (武俠) – This has been a key concept in Chinese fiction for the last 100 years or so. The phrase *wǔxiá* stems from the words *wǔ* (武): martial, and *xiá* (俠): knight-errant. It is usually rendered into English as 'martial arts fiction', but this game shall retain the original phrase because it has that implicit meaning of 'chivalry' that lies at the heart of the Chinese novels and movies that have provided key inspiration to the author of *The Celestial Empire*.

Boxed Excerpts

This book is interspersed with boxed excerpts from the works of Herbert Allen Giles' (including his translation of Pú Sōngling's Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio). HA Giles, who was an accomplished sinologist, spent much time in China as a diplomat under the Qing, and his footnotes are actually much more than mere explanations put down on paper for his readers – they are full of insights into Chinese civilisation. In all those excerpts, the names have been changed to pinyin Romanisation for consistency.

Pronunciation

As already stated, this book transcribes Chinese characters and words into the Latin alphabet using the pinyin Romanisation system. This system renders the educated pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese as spoken in Běijīng in the 20th century ('Standard Mandarin'). Actual Chinese pronunciation will change a lot depending on time and place, so players of *The Celestial Empire* needn't be too precise in trying to mimic pinyin pronunciation.

However, in order to avoid blatant pronunciation errors (such as qì pronounced 'kee' or wǔxíng pronounced 'oozing'), a very short pinyin primer follows:

TONES

Tones are of utmost importance in Chinese, as many words differ by tone only, e.g., fū 'husband' vs fù 'wife', or mǎi 'buy' vs mài 'sell'.

Standard Mandarin has only five tones, but older varieties of Chinese or more Southern dialects have many more tones. The five tones of Standard Mandarin are (using *a* as the base vowel):

- First tone, written ā: the voice remains steadily in the high range
- Second tone, written á: the voice starts in the middle range and raises to the same height as *a*
- Third tone, written ǎ: the voice starts in the middle range, drops to the low range, then rises again to the middle range
- Fourth tone, written à: the voice starts in the high range and sharply drops to the low range.
- Fifth tone, written *a*: the vowel is short and lacks a definite range

VOWELS

Vowels as pronounced more or less as written. Important exceptions are:

- ai always pronounced like 'eye' or 'I'
- i pronounced very differently depending on the preceding consonant:
 - After c, s, z: it is mute
 - After ch, r, sh, zh: it is pronounced like a very short 'uh'
 - After all other consonants: always pronounced as 'ee'
- ian always pronounced as 'yen'
- ie always pronounced as 'yeh'
- iu always pronounced as 'yow'
- ou always pronounced as 'ow'
- u always pronounced as 'oo'
- ui always pronounced as 'wey'

CONSONANTS

Consonants are also pronounced more or less as written, except:

c, which is pronounced 'ts'

r [initial r], which is pronounced as the 's' in pleasure – however, a final r is pronounced as in English

zh, which is pronounced like a very dry 'ch'

Then there is a series of consonants that are extremely tricky for speakers of European languages:

j is pronounced like an English 'j' but as if your mouth were full of saliva

q is pronounced like an English 'ch' but as if your mouth were full of saliva

x is pronounced like an English 'sh' but as if your mouth were full of saliva

Some examples:

- Běijīng is pronounced something like 'bey jeeng'
- guǐ is pronounced 'gwey'
- qì is pronounced something like 'chee'
- Qīng is pronounced something like 'cheeng'
- Tiān Xià is pronounced 'tyen shyah'
- wúxíng is pronounced something like 'oo sheeng'
- Zhōngguó is pronounced 'chung gwo'
- Zhōu is pronounced 'chow'

As already written at the beginning of this section, a good reason not to try too hard to pronounce Chinese words the way they are pronounced in Standard Mandarin is because the pronunciation of Chinese characters has varied immensely with time and place.

VARIATION IN TIME

Looking at the examples above, here's how they would have been pronounced in Middle Chinese (the language spoken under the Táng and the Sòng):

- Běijīng would have been pronounced 'pok kyeng'
- guǐ would have been pronounced 'kwuy'
- qì would have been pronounced 'kuy'
- Qīng would have been pronounced 'tseng'
- Tiān Xià would have been pronounced 'ten heh'
- wúxíng would have been pronounced 'ngu heng'
- Zhōngguó would have been pronounced 'tryung kwok'
- Zhōu would have been pronounced 'tsyuw'

VARIATION IN PLACE

Looking at the examples above, here's how they are pronounced in contemporary Cantonese (much farther south than Běijīng):

- Běijīng is pronounced 'bak ging'
- guǐ is pronounced 'gway'
- qì is pronounced 'hey'
- Qīng is pronounced 'tseng'
- Tiān Xià is pronounced 'tin hah'
- wúxíng is pronounced 'ng hang'
- Zhōngguó is pronounced 'zung gwok'
- Zhōu is pronounced 'zow'



THE SETTING



Chinese Society

Before trying to describe the various aspects of Chinese society, we might as well stress its main differences with mediaeval European society, since it is assumed that players of *The Celestial Empire* are Westerners.

The main difference is that whereas the individual is at the centre of Western society, it is the group that lies at the centre of Chinese society. In role-playing terms, this is actually an advantage: whereas setting up an adventuring party is often quite an artificial endeavour in a Western setting (after all, most heroes of Western tales or fiction are individuals), it is on the contrary completely fitting in with the milieu for a Chinese-based role-playing game.

Another difference of note is that the urban vs. rural polarisation of mediaeval European society does not exist in the Chinese milieu; the quarters of a Chinese city look much like rural towns or villages. Big country estates are similar to city palaces. Even the activities of the average Chinese are similar; townfolk would rear some animals in the courtyards of their homes, and village people would become artisans during the winter. Also, important people would move from the city to the countryside, and vice versa, depending on the ups and downs of their career.

Social Interaction

THE FOUR OCCUPATIONS

Despite the huge time span covered by this book, Imperial Chinese society has always been divided into four main classes, known as the 'four occupations', in descending order: 1: the scholar-officials (*shì* 士), 2: the peasant farmers (*nóng* 農), 3: the artisans and craftsmen (*gōng* 工), and 4: the merchants and traders (*shāng* 商).

In the Táng, there is also a small remnant of the aristocratic class from earlier dynastic periods, which is still considered to lay above the scholars' class, but which is quickly losing ground, and which wields prestige rather than real power. From the Sòng Dynasty onward, aristocracy has become a thing of the past.

"There is nothing in China like an aristocracy of birth. Any man may raise himself from the lowest level to the highest; and as long as he and his family keep themselves there, they may be considered aristocratic. Wealth has nothing to do with the question; official rank and literary tastes, separate or combined, these constitute a man's title to the esteem of his fellows. Trade is looked upon as ignoble and debasing; and friendly intercourse between merchants and officials, the two great social divisions, is so rare as to be almost unknown."

H.Giles

Each social class has its own further subdivisions, with scholars in government service having a higher status than unemployed scholars, or with the landholding gentry having a higher status than agricultural labourers, who in turn have a higher status than soldiers (who traditionally come from poor farming families).

Status vs. profession is discussed on page 49.

THE FAMILY AND THE CLAN

Chinese society is patriarchal, and the family is the cornerstone of Chinese social life. The Chinese family is an extended family, which is comprised of, beyond the married couple and their children, the grandparents and any unmarried siblings. Marriages are usually arranged between families from a similar social and economic background (in gaming terms: similar Status).

If there be a want of concord among members of the same family, other men will take advantage of it to injure them.

(Chinese proverb)

"The rule which guides betrothals in China is that "the doors should be opposite" —i.e., that the families of the bride and bridegroom should be of equal position in the social scale. Any unpleasantness about the value of the marriage presents, and so on, is thereby avoided."

H.Giles

Chinese law has provisions for divorce.

A man may marry up to four wives, and can have multiple concubines. Obviously, only wealthy persons can afford multiple wives and concubines. A concubine is like an 'inferior' wife; she is bought rather than married, and may be divorced arbitrarily. A concubine is often treated badly by the full wife or wives.

After the 12th century, the marriage of a widow or of a divorcee, though not forbidden, is socially frowned upon – unless the woman is forced to remarry by poverty.

"The importance of male offspring in Chinese social life is hardly to be expressed in words. To the son is confided the task of worshipping at the ancestral tombs, the care of the ancestral tablets, and the due performance of all rites and ceremonies connected with the departed dead. No Chinaman will die, if he can help it, without leaving a son behind him. If his wife is childless he will buy a concubine; and we are told that a good wife, "who at thirty years of age has not borne a child should forthwith pawn her jewellery and purchase a concubine for her husband; for to be without a son is hard indeed!" Another and a common resource is to adopt a nephew; and sometimes a boy is bought from starving parents, or from a professional kidnapper. Should a little boy die, no matter how young, his parents do not permit even him to be without the good offices of a son. They

adopt some other child on his behalf; and when the latter grows up it becomes his duty to perform the proper ceremonies at his baby father's tomb. Girls do not enjoy the luxury of this sham posterity. They are quietly buried in a hole near the family vault, and their disembodied spirits are left to wander about in the realms below uncared for and unappeased. It must not be inferred, however, from this that the position of woman in China is low, as such is far from being the case. Every mother shares in the ancestral worship, and her name is recorded on the tombstone, side by side with that of her husband. Hence it is that Chinese tombstones are always to the memory either of a father or of a mother, or of both, with occasionally the addition of the grandfather and grandmother, and sometimes even that of the generation preceding."

H.Giles

"Parents in China like to get their sons married as early as possible, in the hope of seeing themselves surrounded by grandsons, and the family name in no danger of extinction. Girls are generally married at from fifteen to seventeen."

H.Giles

A network of extended families sharing a common ancestor (and hence a common surname) makes up a clan. In the countryside, land is always owned by a family or a clan, and never by an individual. In the cities, large estates are similarly shared between the members of a given clan or of a given family.

Beyond its economic role, a Chinese clan also plays a religious role, as ancestor worship is, amongst the various and very diverse Chinese forms of worship, the most important one. Any self-respecting clan maintains an ancestral hall.

Another critical aspect of the relationship of the Chinese individual with his or her kin is the concept of collective punishment. The clan is responsible for the behaviour of its members. In many circumstances, such as political crimes, the law provides for the punishment of the whole clan for a crime committed by only one of its members.

The five relationships (*wǔlún* 五倫) are the Confucian rules of life that govern the bonds between selected pairs of opposites within Chinese society, with benefits and duties at each end of the bond:

- 'Ruler and Subject' (*jūnchén* 君臣): benevolent government vs. obedient subjects
- 'Father and Son' (*fùzǐ* 父子): fatherly kindness vs. filial piety
- 'Older Brother and Younger Brother' (*xiōngdì* 兄弟): wisdom vs. deference
- 'Husband and Wife' (*fūfù* 夫婦): protective husband vs. faithful wife
- 'Friends' (*péngyǒu* 朋友): politeness vs. humility



The three greatest misfortunes in life are, in youth to bury one's father, - at the middle age to lose one's wife, - and, being old, to have no son.

(Chinese proverb)

Among the five relationships, the second one (filial piety) is certainly of paramount importance to Confucianism. Over time, the concept of filial piety has been extended from merely son to father to the 7th generation of one's forebears. Within a given clan, the eldest male 'rules' over his relatives. This is not only a position of authority, but also of responsibility; the eldest male is considered responsible of any wrongdoings by his younger relatives!

"The doctrine of primogeniture is carried so far in China as to put every younger brother in a subordinate position to every elder brother. All property, however, of whatever kind, is equally divided among the sons."

H. Giles

FAMILY NAMES

Chinese surnames are a legacy of the clan names from ancient China.

The most common Chinese surnames are (in alphabetical order, as the actual rank has varied with time):

Surname	Romanisation	English meaning
陳	Chén	(name of an ancient state)
黃	Huáng	Red-haired
李	Lǐ	Plum tree
林	Lín	Forest
劉	Liú	Axe
王	Wáng	King
吳	Wú	(name of an ancient state)
楊	Yáng	Commendation
張	Zhāng	Bowyer
趙	Zhào	(name of an ancient state)
周	Zhōu	(name of an ancient dynasty)

Other common Chinese surnames:

Surname	Romanisation	English meaning
蔡	Cài	(name of an ancient state)
曹	Cáo	Official
鄧	Dèng	(name of an ancient state)
馮	Féng	(surname)
高	Gāo	Ancestor
郭	Guō	Town walls
何	Hé	(surname)
胡	Hú	Barbarian
梁	Liáng	(name of an ancient state)
陸	Lù	(surname)
羅	Luó	(surname)
呂	Lǚ	Offering
馬	Mǎ	(shortened form of Muhammad - this is a common surname amongst Chinese Muslims)
麥	Mài	Wheat
阮	Ruǎn	(name of an ancient state - the most common Vietnamese surname)
余	Shé	(surname)
沈	Shěn	Offering
宋	Sòng	(surname)
蘇	Sū	(surname)
孫	Sūn	Descendant
唐	Táng	(name of an ancient state)
謝	Xiè	Thanks
徐	Xú	Dignified
許	Xǔ	Consent
葉	Yè	Descendant
袁	Yuán	Garments
曾	Zēng	Offering
鄭	Zhèng	(name of an ancient state)
朱	Zhū	(name of an ancient state)

OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

Even outside one's family, a Chinese man keeps the system of relationships from the Chinese family, including respect for the elder, collective responsibility, etc. Chinese organisations may hence be considered as 'parallel' families, co-existing with one's real family, or as 'replacement' families for the rare and odd individuals who live outside the Chinese system of family relationships.

Craftsmen's or traders' apprentices usually stay within the family, since professions are handed down from father to son. Sometimes, a youth might be given as an apprentice outside of his family within a craftsmen's or trader's guild. The latter would find him a master craftsman who would provide him food and lodging.

The following organisations, on the other hand, are almost always outside the family:

- religious organisations
- martial arts schools
- secret societies

A Chinese person from one of the above organisation would take a new identity. See page 90 for a thorough description of Chinese organisations.

YIQI

In Imperial China, *yiqi* (義氣), variously translated into English as 'code of brotherhood', 'personal loyalty', or 'spirit of righteousness', is probably the second most important social bond after the five relationships of Confucianism (see page 7), and certainly the most deeply held personal value for the Chinese. Somehow contradictorily, *yiqi* is at the heart of the teachings of Confucius, yet it may also bring the Chinese individual to act in opposition to what Confucian society would expect from him. The traditional Chinese novel *The Investiture of the Gods* exemplifies the extreme tension between these two apparently contradictory tenets of Confucianism. In the novel, many heroes are torn between their loyalty – as subjects – to evil King Zhòu, and their loyalty – as brothers – to the insurgents. Martial arts fiction makes much use of this dichotomy between 'social' loyalty and 'personal' loyalty, and Celestial Empire GMs are encouraged to do the same.

"Very intimate friends are in the habit of adopting each other as sworn brothers, bound to stand by one another in cases of danger and difficulty, to the last drop of blood. The bond is cemented by an oath, accompanied by such ceremonies as fancy may at the moment dictate."

H. Giles

Sworn brothers consider each other just like blood brothers. In particular, having an affair with the wife of one's sworn brother is a social taboo because it is considered an incestuous relationship.

Jiānghú 江湖 is a phrase which refers to the world of "goodfellows" from the inns, highways, waterways, mountains, woods, and marshes that lie

at the moral margins of Confucian society. Just like Chinese society has been built upon the five relationships of Confucianism, the Rivers and Lakes epitomise *yiqi*. Members of this shadow world do not necessarily break the law; they are just behaving outside the Confucian social norms. Interestingly enough, the Rivers and Lakes are sometimes also at the geographical margins of Imperial China. The heroes of *wúxiá* fiction would often have acquaintances amongst the non-Hàn tribes at the frontier of the Chinese Empire, or they would hide in the remotest parts of the Empire when in trouble with the authorities.

In *Jiānghú*, one would refer to one's friends as 'brothers', and to elders within the Rivers and Lakes' various schools, sects and organisations as 'uncles'.

Within the counter-society of the Rivers and Lakes, the phrase 'Green Forest' (*Lùlín* 綠林) more specifically refers to those elements of the Rivers and Lakes who illegally live by their martial skills, either as highwaymen or as swords-for-hire. These elements like to refer to themselves as 'the gallant fraternity'.

The phrase 'Martial Grove' (*Wǔlín* 武林) refers to the world of martial arts, and more specifically to those martial artists who specialise in a given weapon or in a given style, and who spend their lives challenging other members of the Martial Grove for supremacy in their given field of excellence.

It must be noted that even though martial artists tend to challenge each other frequently, they do not necessarily hold a grudge against someone who has defeated them in an honourable challenge. In *the Water Margin*, for instance, Nine Dragons Shǐ Jīn is a braggart, but when Arms Instructor Wáng Jīn defeats him in a staff contest, Shǐ Jīn immediately recognises him as a superior martial artist, kowtows to him, and asks to become his pupil.

WOMEN

Under the Táng, Imperial China is a moderately patriarchal society. Urban women, in particular, enjoy a degree of freedom that they won't enjoy again until the Republic. The GM may hence allow female PCs for a campaign set in the Táng.

Under later dynasties (from the Sòng onwards), Imperial China is an extremely patriarchal society. Except for the lower class working masses, a woman is not supposed to walk alone outside of her parents' (if she is unmarried) or her husband's (if she is married) homes. When she really must, a woman of the upper class will travel in a veiled sedan-chair.

"Only the most intimate of friends ever see each other's wives."

"Where the women of the family live, no stranger ever penetrates."

"The women's apartments being quite separate from the rest of a Chinese house,

Running a female character

Despite the breach of political correctness, we do not recommend female player characters if you are running a strictly historical campaign. But if someone really wants to play a female PC, your gaming group will find a way around this limit for the sake of fun. If a player insists on having a female PC outside of the professions available to females, a Gamemaster who wishes to be historically accurate might impose the following penalties:

- Halved rate of movement (MOV) because of the character's bound feet;
- Status limited to 15% because people will think that the PC must be a courtesan (or worse!) to allow herself to be seen without an accompanying male.

male visitors consequently know nothing about their inhabitants."

"In passing near to the women's quarters in a friend's house, it is etiquette to cough slightly, that inmates may be warned and withdraw from the doors or windows in time to escape observation."

"The sexes do not dine together. On the occasion of a dinner-party, private or official, the ladies give a separate entertainment to the wives of the various guests in the 'inner' or women's apartments."

H. Giles

"The practice of bound feet is said to have originated about A.D. 970, with Yǎo Niáng [宵娘], the concubine of the pretender Lǐ Yǔ [李煜], who wished to make her feet like the 'new moon'. The Manchu or Tartar ladies never adopted this custom, and therefore the Empresses of modern times have had feet of the natural size; neither is it in force among the Hakkas or among the hill-tribes of China and Formosa and others. The practice was forbidden in 1664 by the Manchu Emperor, Kāngxī [康熙]; but popular feeling was so strong on the subject that four years afterwards the prohibition was withdrawn."

H. Giles

SLAVERY

There is no slavery in Imperial China. There is serfdom and indentured labour, and there are girls sold into prostitution or as concubines, but the Chinese do not practice real slavery, contrary to what many of the neighbouring peoples do, especially in Inner Asia. There are many Chinese tales of brave warriors enslaved by the Barbarians after their defeat in battle, and who manage to flee the barbarian lands and to return to China, a land of free people.

The sharp decline of the Chinese economy at the end of the Qīng brought a surge in poverty, which caused many Chinese (especially young people) to sell themselves.

"Slavery, under a modified form, exists in China at the present day. All parents, having absolute power over their children, are at liberty to sell them as servants or slaves to their wealthier neighbours. This is not an infrequent occurrence in times of distress, the children even going so far as to voluntarily sell themselves, and exposing themselves in some public thoroughfare, with a notice affixed to a kind of arrow on their backs, stating that they are for sale, and the amount required from the purchaser.

The bill of sale is always handed to the

purchaser of a child in China, as a proof that the child is his bona fide property and has not been kidnapped [because] the chief source, however, from which the supply of slaves is kept up is kidnapping.

As to the condition of the slaves themselves, it is by no means an unhappy one. Their master has nominally the power of life and death over them, but no Chinaman would ever dream of availing himself of this dangerous prerogative. They are generally well fed, and fairly well clothed, being rarely beaten, for fear they should run away, and either be lost altogether or entail much expense to secure their capture. The girls do not have their feet compressed; hence they are infinitely more useful than small-footed women; and, on reaching a marriageable age, their masters are bound to provide them with husbands. They live on terms of easy familiarity with the whole household; and, ignorant of the meaning and value of liberty, seem quite contented with a lot which places them beyond the reach of hunger and cold."

H. Giles

"We may here add that the value of male children to those who have no heirs, and of female children to those who want servants, has fostered a regular kidnapping trade, which is carried on with great activity in some parts of China, albeit the penalty on discovery is decapitation."

H. Giles

City Life

As a rule, Imperial Chinese cities are much larger than mediaeval European cities, and have a square grid plan with avenues parallel to the north-south or the east-west axes.

Chinese cities are walled, and are always built in the plains. They usually have four gates. The *yámén* (衙門), lies at the center of the city. It serves as the residence of the city magistrate, the courthouse, the city granaries, the prison, and as barracks for the city garrison. The city is subdivided into quarters that are walled and separated from each other, with gates that close during the night hours, just like the main city gates. Each quarter is specialised in a particular trade or craft and hosts an appropriate market. A curfew is enforced until the beginning of the Míng period. After that time, a night life starts to develop.

Colours

Colour is very important in Chinese society. Many colours have a particular meaning within the Five Phases (*wúxíng*) of the cosmic breath.

The GM and the players shall remember that in Imperial China:

- White is the colour of death and mourning.
- Yellow is the colour of the Emperor. Wearing yellow garments is restricted to members of the imperial family. Yellow is also the colour of Daoist magic; Daoist magical formulae are always written with red ink on yellow paper.
- Green is associated with lower class people and outlaws.
- Blue is associated with Daoist immortals.
- Red is the colour of fortunate events: births, marriages, festivals.
- Saffron is the colour of the Buddhist clergy.
- Black is the colour of formal attire for men.

Taboos

Respecting the taboos of Chinese society is a right step towards an immersive role-playing experience.

Touching a member of the opposite sex is taboo. For this reason, a man will never ask a woman to pass on an object to him; their hands could inadvertently touch. The various taboos surrounding married women have already mentioned on page 9.

It must be noted that these taboos are stronger the closer to the Qīng the GM sets his campaign.

Disastrous events and misfortunes (death, malady, fire, earthquakes, floods, drought...) are never mentioned lest they should actually happen. The word 死 (*sǐ*), which means 'dead', 'death' or 'to die', is particularly taboo, and must be never pronounced. This taboo is so strongly enforced that the number four, which has a similar pronunciation (*sì*), also commands taboo (much like '13' in the United States).

Another common taboo is that the given names of descendants must be different from their ascendants' – quite the contrary of what happens in many Western cultures.

Violence

Contrary to Indo-European cultures, Chinese society embraces social harmony and literary cultivation and detests violence – this opposition is known in Chinese as Culture (*Wén* 文) vs Military (*Wǔ* 武). Like in modern societies, violence is the province of soldiers and of law enforcement officers, and it is always the last resort in any given situation. Under the Táng dynasty, it was made unlawful to carry weapons, even for noblemen. This might be an explanation for the development of unarmed martial arts in China.

The public use of violence will have a character quickly lose status and attract the attention of the local magistrate, who will likely banish the troublesome character to another province. Killing a person without a valid reason (e.g., self-defence) will result in the character's imprisonment, trial for murder, and sentence to death.

Only the shadow world of the Rivers and Lakes sees violence as a valid course of action. But even amongst outlaws, one must abide by the unwritten rules of duelling, and always fight honourably. Devious characters will soon find out that they lose any support in the world of the Rivers and Lakes, and that the outlaws may mete out justice amongst themselves as efficiently as any officially-appointed judge!



CHINESE CULTURE

Agriculture



TECHNIQUES

Many innovations have appeared in China much earlier than in Europe: the seed drill, diverse sources of fertilisers, the choice and improvement of grains, individual planting or transplanting of some varieties of vegetables. Farming practices have also always been superior, like hand weeding. As a result, agricultural yield in Imperial China has been up to ten times what it has been in mediaeval Europe. This explains the very high density of the Chinese population.

PRODUCE & FOOD

The standard Chinese meal is made up of cereal grain (millet in ancient times, rice from the Sòng onwards), which provide the 'bulk' of the meal, accompanied with an impressive variety of green vegetables. Meat is expensive and hence usually scarce on the tables of the Chinese. The most common meats are pork and poultry, because pigs and birds can live on household scraps and waste. Generally speaking, livestock is less important in China than in Europe. Proteins come from nuts and soy-based products like bean curd (*dòufu* 豆腐). North Chinese cuisine also makes use of many wheat-based dishes, like noodles, dumplings, and steamed buns. Soup is served at the end of the meal. People living close to rivers, lakes or the sea eat all sorts of fish and seafood.

Fruit is the only food that is eaten raw.

The Chinese usually have two meals a day: the first at the hour of the Dragon, and the second at the

hour of the Monkey, followed by a light supper (rice congee) just before sleep.

Travellers usually eat at roadside inns, but they can also take dried meat or fish and pickled vegetables as supplies, or they can buy simple meals from street vendors.

The Chinese do not eat dairy products, contrary to the Nomads of Inner Asia, for whom they are the staple of their diet.

The Chinese never have their drinks cold: water and tea are served hot, and wines are always warmed before being consumed. Warm wine accompanies meals, and is usually drunk at the beginning of the meal, much like an *apéritif*. Patrons would often buy their wine before going to have lunch in an inn and would ask the innkeeper to heat it up when they arrive.

"Chinese wine—or, more correctly, spirits—is always taken hot."

H. Giles

List of Chinese drinks:

- **Hot water**
- **Tea** – Tea has always been consumed in China, but the way it has been processed (and hence its taste) has varied dramatically with time: dried and ground into powder that was pressed into bricks under the Táng; steamed leaves under the Sòng; roasted leaves from the Yuán onwards. The degree of oxidation of the leaves has a big influence on the colour and taste of tea. Traditionally, Northerners prefer black tea (more oxidised tea), Southerners green tea (less oxidised tea).
- **Yellow wine (黃酒)** – usually rice wine, but may also be made from millet or wheat.
- **Báijiǔ (白酒)** – a very strong distilled white liquor made from sorghum. It is normally unflavoured, but there are varieties flavoured with herbs, flower essences, berries, peas, rice, tea, and even pork fat! (not for the fainthearted.)
- **Chóujiǔ (稠酒)** – a fermented alcoholic beverage brewed from glutinous rice, popular in North China and in Korea. Its strength is similar to that of yellow wine.
- **Shāojiǔ (燒酒)** – a distilled beverage of Mongol origin, made from rice or from wheat, only available from the Yuán period onwards. Its strength is halfway between that of yellow wine and báijiǔ.
- **Fruit wine** (made from lychees, plums or wolfberries) is popular with women.
- **Beer** has only been available in China after its introduction in North China by the Germans at the end of the 19th century.



- **Koumiss** is a fermented drink made from mare's milk. It is a traditional drink amongst the Nomads of Inner Asia. It has a low level of alcohol (lower than beer) but it can be distilled into a spirit called *arkhi*.

Time Reckoning

CHINESE CALENDAR

The Chinese Calendar is a lunisolar calendar; the duration of a year is based on the cycles of the sun, whereas the duration of a month is based on the phases of the moon. It was devised under the Xià dynasty, and is hence called 'the Xià calendar' (Xiàli 夏曆).

Basic rules of the Chinese Calendar:

- The new year starts when the sun enters Pisces (i.e., between 21 January and 20 February in Western reckoning).
- Each month starts with the dark moon, and lasts 29 or 30 days.
- The year is made up of 12 months. Because of the difference in length between the lunar year and the solar year, a thirteenth month is added every third year. This month is called the 'intercalary month'.
- The Chinese week is made up of ten days.

Contrary to European use (Monday, Tuesday... and January, February...) the days of the weeks and the months do not have a name in China. They are just called by their numerical order, e.g., the 5th day of the 7th month.

Years are not continuously numbered from a given 'year 0' like in the West, but are simply reckoned as years of reign of the current monarch, e.g., the 5th day of the 7th month of the 20th year of Emperor Such-and-such (they are called 'regnal' years). However, each year in the Chinese Calendar is also given a corresponding animal from the Chinese Zodiac and an element from the *wǔxíng*. Since there are 12 animals and 5 elements, this gives 60 unique combinations, hence a 60-year cycle ('sexagenary' cycle), which people more commonly use to reckon years, e.g., the 5th day of the 7th month of the year of the Wood Dragon.

"To the common question, "What is your honourable age?" the reply is frequently, "I was born under the [name of the animal that distinguishes the year of birth];" and the hearer by a short mental calculation can tell at once how old the speaker is, granting, of course, the impossibility of making an error of so much as twelve years."

H. Giles

Table of the sexagenary cycle with names of years:

Year Name	Year Name	Year Name
1 Wood Rat	21 Wood Monkey	41 Wood Dragon
2 Wood Ox	22 Wood Cock	42 Wood Snake
3 Fire Tiger	23 Fire Dog	43 Fire Horse
4 Fire Rabbit	24 Fire Pig	44 Fire Goat
5 Earth Dragon	25 Earth Rat	45 Earth Monkey
6 Earth Snake	26 Earth Ox	46 Earth Cock
7 Metal Horse	27 Metal Tiger	47 Metal Dog
8 Metal Goat	28 Metal Rabbit	48 Metal Pig
9 Water Monkey	29 Water Dragon	49 Water Rat
10 Water Cock	30 Water Snake	50 Water Ox
11 Wood Dog	31 Wood Horse	51 Wood Tiger
12 Wood Pig	32 Wood Goat	52 Wood Rabbit
13 Fire Rat	33 Fire Monkey	53 Fire Dragon
14 Fire Ox	34 Fire Cock	54 Fire Snake
15 Earth Tiger	35 Earth Dog	55 Earth Horse
16 Earth Rabbit	36 Earth Pig	56 Earth Goat
17 Metal Dragon	37 Metal Rat	57 Metal Monkey
18 Metal Snake	38 Metal Ox	58 Metal Cock
19 Water Horse	39 Water Tiger	59 Water Dog
20 Water Goat	40 Water Rabbit	60 Water Pig

FESTIVALS

Chinese New Year/Spring Festival

This festival is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. It marks the beginning of the lunar year, and it falls on different dates each year, between 21 January and 20 February. It is an occasion for relatives and friends to gather. Each year, children impatiently wait for the Spring Festival; they are given new clothes and fireworks to scare away guǐ-monsters and ghosts. Nobody works, all shops are closed, but they have had many customers just before the start of the festival. Everyone buys New Year pictures, which are pasted on each side of the home's main entrance door, again to scare away guǐ-monsters and ghosts.

Lantern Festival

This holiday, which falls on 15th day of the 1st month, closes the Chinese New Year celebrations. On the evening of this holiday, Chinese families stroll about the lantern-lit streets of the cities; neighbourhoods will compete to display the most beautifully adorned lanterns. In Imperial China, girls are not allowed to walk alone outside of their homes, except on the Lantern Festival, so this is also a good day for boys to 'check out' nubile young women.

Tomb Sweeping Day

This holiday falls on the 15th day of the 3rd month of the Chinese calendar, which is usually around 5 April. On this day, the Chinese clean and sweep the graves of their dead relatives, and offer food, beverages, and joss paper accessories (miniature versions of real-world goods made of paper, which are burnt as 'gifts' for the departed) to their ancestors. This holiday originates in the religion of Ancient China and has a tradition stretching back more than 2,500 years.

Dragon Boat Festival

This holiday falls on the 5th day of the 5th month of the Chinese calendar, which is early to mid-June. On this day, the Chinese traditionally have *zòngzi* (粽子), triangular dumplings wrapped in lotus or reed leaves. In the past, *zòngzi* were thrown into the River *Milúo* (汨罗江) to commemorate the suicide of the great poet Qū Yuán (屈原), who drowned himself in the river because he had lost his master's favour by the intrigues of a rival. In South China, dragon boat races are held on that day. It is considered particularly inauspicious to conduct any business on this day.

Hungry Ghost Festival

This holiday falls on 15th day of the 7th month. On the evening of this holiday, the gates between the realm of the dead and the realm of the living are said to remain open. As a consequence, ghosts and spirits, including those of the deceased ancestors, come out from the lower realm to visit the realm of the living, who pay homage to them. Those spirits who do not have any descendants to worship them wander about as 'hungry ghosts' – all Chinese therefore leave out offerings of food for them. People also burn fake paper money to bribe the ghosts to go and haunt someone else's place – just like the Chinese bribe officials to go and annoy someone else.

Mid-Autumn Festival

This holiday falls on 15th day of the 8th month, which corresponds to the autumnal equinox. On the evening of this holiday, the Chinese gather to have mooncakes (pastries with a thick paste filling) whilst watching the full moon and having drinks.

HOURLY MARKING

For improved immersion into Imperial China, the game master is advised to use the Chinese system of hour marking: the Chinese divide each day in 12 "double hours" or "large hours": the first "double hour" begins at 11pm of the previous day, and ends at 1am; the second "double hour" begins at 1am and ends at 3am, etc. The five "double hours" between 7pm and 5am are called night watches, and are further subdivided into five "beats" of the watchman's wooden tom-tom.

Each "double hour" also has an animal name, which follows the same order as the Chinese zodiac:

- 11pm to 1am: hour of the Rat (night time)
- 1am to 3am: hour of the Ox (night time)
- 3am to 5am: hour of the Tiger (night time)
- 5am to 7am: hour of the Rabbit/Hare (day time)
- 7am to 9am: hour of the Dragon (day time)
- 9am to 11am: hour of the Snake (day time)
- 11am to 1pm: hour of the Horse (day time)
- 1pm to 3pm: hour of the Goat/Sheep/Ram (day time)
- 3pm to 5pm: hour of the Monkey (day time)
- 5pm to 7pm: hour of the Cock/Rooster (day time)
- 7pm to 9pm: hour of the Dog (night time)
- 9pm to 11pm: hour of the Pig/Boar (night time)

The hour of the Ox is when ghosts and monsters are supposed to roam the world!

Daily Life

CHINESE HOMES

The traditional Chinese home lies within a rectangular walled, gated area. The gate opens onto a courtyard, which itself gives access to at least three or four two-storey brick buildings. The slope of the roof depends on the climate – roofs are flat in North China and steep in South China.

Chinese windows are wooden frames covered with semi-transparent paper.

The main building is always the one facing south. It is the residence of the family elder. The other buildings are the residences of his unmarried siblings or of his married children. Rich families also have separate buildings for the servants, and a private garden.

In dangerous areas (close to hostile tribes or to sea pirates), Chinese homes are heavily fortified.

Poor homes do not have much furniture; typically, a single *kàng* (a brick bed warmed by a fire underneath, much like in Central and Eastern Europe), a low table (for people sitting directly on the floor), and several mats. Under the *Táng*, moving screens or hanging carpets are used to divide the large rooms into smaller rooms. From the *Sòng* onwards, rooms are separated by solid walls, hence the emphasis on hanging scrolls in Chinese interior decoration.

Rich homes have more furniture, and in particular chairs and higher tables, trunks for clothes, book-cases, sofas, and, in North China, 'barbarian' carpets from Central Asia.

Lighting is provided by oil lamps, and even by ceiling oil lamps from the *Míng* onwards.

"The couches of the North of China are brick beds, heated by a stove underneath, and covered with a mat. Upon one of these is generally a dwarf table and a couple of pillows; and here it is that the Chinaman loves to recline, his wine-kettle, opium-pipe, or tea-pot within reach, and a friend at his side, with whom he may converse far into the night."

H. Giles

CHINESE CLOTHING

The way one may dress is subject to very strict rules in Imperial China. One is always supposed to dress according to one's profession and status, and it is an offence not to dress in accordance with these rules.

Until the *Sòng*, both men and women wear a knee-length tunic tied with a sash over a long skirt. From the *Sòng* on, well-to-do men wear two long robes, a light one and a heavy one. Poorer men and the military wear a short robe over trousers. Women wear a dress similar to the Japanese kimono, whose exact shape and looseness depends on the particular fashion of the days and on the decency rules of a given time period. The fabric of one's clothes is obviously dependent on the wealth level of the

person: silken robes are only for wealthy people; the poor wear hemp and ramie.

Chinese garments have huge sleeves with many pockets inside the sleeves. Chinese people are able to carry even large objects (such as scrolls or metal ingots) in their sleeves.

"The long flowing robe is a sign of respectability which all but the very poorest classes love to affect in public."

H. Giles

Chinese shoes are invariably made of black cloth. In colder areas, people may wear leather shoes in the winter months. Poor people wear straw sandals or wooden clogs (similar to Japanese geta) at all times. Northerners may wear barbarian-inspired boots.

Until the Qīng period, Chinese men wear a hat at all times, which is distinctive of one's profession and social status. The hat covers one's long hair, which is coiled up. It is absolutely unthinkable to walk around bare-headed, and loosening one's hair is considered particularly offensive. Only poor labourers shave their head and wear no hat, but do bind a bandanna round their head or wear a conical straw hat as protection from the sun and rain.

Under the Qīng dynasty, the Chinese are forced to adopt the Manchu queue hairstyle: no hat, and a shaven forehead with a long ponytail. It is a blatant anachronism to depict any Chinese with a ponytail before the 17th century.

Chinese women, on the contrary, never wear a hat, and keep their long hair bunched up in a variety of elaborated hairstyles, secured with a hairpiece. Chinese children also have their hair bunched up, with one bun for boys, and two for girls. Maidservants keep the two-bun hairstyle even when they grow up.

Life in China

GOVERNMENT AND LAWS

The Chinese believe that the Emperor rules 'all under heaven' by divine right – not that they believe that a personal God has granted the monarch the right to rule, like in mediaeval Europe; they simply believe that since Heaven is ruled by the Jade Emperor, the mundane world must also be ruled by an Emperor.

In practice, Imperial China is not really ruled by the Emperor, who keeps himself aloof from day-to-day government affairs and whose court is quite isolated from his subjects, but by two parallel departments: the civil department, and the military department; the former is made up of scholar officials, men who have passed rigorous civil service examinations, and holds sway over the latter. There are two exceptions to this rule:

- under the Yuán dynasty, Imperial China is ruled by the Mongol invaders;

- in frontier provinces, the military commandant usually lords it over the civilian one.

Military commandants usually resent their being placed under the civilian commandant. In *the Water Margin*, there is a good example of this rivalry between the civilian and military commandants of Clear Winds Town. There are also frequent disputes between Judge Dee and his military counterparts throughout the Judge Dee series of novels.

In enacting laws, rigour is indispensable; in executing them, mercy.

(Chinese proverb)

Taxes are commensurate with people's wealth and income, much like in the modern world.

Imperial China is a society where feudalism has been abolished (there were still some remnants under the Táng), and in which the subjects of the Emperor are therefore theoretically equal under the rule of law. This is, alas, only theoretical. In reality, magistrates and police constables are highly corruptible – mostly because they are underpaid and hence need the bribes to make a living.

"All underlings (and we might add overlings) in China being unpaid, it behoves them to make what they can out of the opportunities afforded. In most yámén, the various warrants and such documents are distributed to the runners in turn, who squeeze the victims thus handed over to them. For a small bribe they will go back and report 'Not at home'; for a larger one 'Has absconded', and so on.

Gatekeepers charge a fee on every petition that passes through their hands; gaolers, for a consideration and with proper security, allow their prisoners to be at large until wanted; clerks take bribes to use their influence, honestly or dishonestly, with the magistrate who is to try the case.

All Government officers holding a post, from the highest to the lowest, are entitled to a nominal, and what would be a quite inadequate, salary; but no one ever sees this."

H. Giles

This paragraph was written at the end of the Qīng period, when the situation of the State was at its worst; it was less bleak in earlier times. It makes clear why incorruptible magistrates such as Judge Bǎo and Judge Dí [Judge Dee] have become the stuff



of legend!

Beyond bribes, law enforcement is also a burden for some citizens who must assist the magistrate.

"Anybody is liable to be 'impressed' at any moment for the service of the Government. Boat owners, sedan-chair and coolie proprietors especially dread the frequent and heavy calls that are made upon them for assistance, the remuneration they receive being in all cases insufficient to defray mere working expenses."

H.Giles

Government is very much restricted to urban areas. Daoist and Buddhist monasteries are more or less self-governed, and rural populations seldom see the city officials. As a result, rural folk are subject to the rule of the richest and most powerful families of the area.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Educated people are expected to be polite and formal in all occasions, even within the family circle. A man and his wife, for instance, are expected not to show any affection to each other outside of the sleeping chamber.

The most common form of respect is to clasp one's hands together. One is expected to kowtow in front of an acquaintance. Falling on one's knees before kowtowing is expected in front of persons of higher status, or alternatively as a way to present oneself as lower in status (e.g., before a martial artist of whom one would like to become the pupil).

As a consequence, the Status skill is of paramount importance in any Celestial Empire campaign. The game master is advised to use opposed Status skill rolls to solve most social conflicts. Even in combat, the Status skill will be of primary importance, as leaderless underlings are bound to flee an encounter if they recognise a high Status person.

ECONOMY

Agriculture is the primary economic sector of Imperial China. Most labourers are paid in rice, and in most local markets goods are exchanged or bartered. Silk is also a fairly common unit of exchange.

Many goods, such as salt, alcoholic beverages, tea, and incense, are subject to state monopoly. In some dynastic periods, prostitution has also been a state monopoly.

Although cereal grains are not subject to state monopoly, the government owns reserve granaries and sometimes releases large quantities of grain onto the market to keep prices low.

The state also owns all military contracts, all means of transportation (canals, roads, bridges), and has the absolute authority over any dealings with foreigners. Of course, many of these aspects of Chinese economy are subcontracted to private entrepreneurs.

Work in the fields is celebrated by Confucian morals as being the noblest form of work, and work as a merchant as the most despicable. In spite of this, a scholar would never consider any manual work as befitting someone of his position, and many unemployed literate people prefer a life of destitution to any kind of work. Rich merchants make sure that their sons get an expensive education, in the hope that they pass the imperial examinations and become literate people.

Many workers do not confine themselves to a single job. Peasants, for instance, become artisans during the winter months, when there is no need for manual labour in the fields. If they cannot sell their wares in the country, they move to town, hoping to find customers there. Sometimes, rural folk will stay in the city, not necessarily as craftsmen, but as coolies, servants, peddlars, beggars, street acrobats, or cheap prostitutes (male and female). This rural flight explains the huge population of Chinese cities; the large population explains why urban labour is so cheap.

COINAGE



Chinese coinage has varied dramatically with time. Since *The Celestial Empire* spans several dynasties, it is impossible to give here a detailed description of Chinese coinage. Below are a few generalities about Chinese coinage in Imperial times.

The basic unit is the copper coin, commonly called a cash in English. These coins are round with a square hole in the centre. The hole enables the coins to be strung together in strings of 1,000 (equalling one silver tael in value). Significant sums of money are hence always expressed as strings of cash.

The larger unit of coinage are the silver tael (40g), and the silver sycee (an ingot minted in the shape of a small boat, and weighing between 1 and 50 taels depending on its size). Taels and sycees are exclusively used by wealthy people.

"Chinese silver, called sycee (from the Cantonese sai see, 'fine silk'; because, if pure, it may be drawn out under the application of heat into fine silk threads), is cast in the form

of 'shoes', weighing from one to one hundred ounces. The sharp edges of a 'shoe' of sycee are caused by the mould containing the molten silver being gently shaken until the metal has set, with a view to secure uniform fineness throughout the lump."

H. Giles

From the Sòng until the Míng period, the Chinese (especially merchants and traders) have mostly used paper money. One banknote is worth one string of cash, and is hence nicknamed 'flying cash'. Under the Qīng, because of the increased trade with the Americas, Western silver pieces (Spanish, then Mexican and American) become the standard currency.

ENTERTAINMENT

For the Chinese masses, street entertainment, like street performers, acrobats, story-tellers, puppeteers, martial artists, are the most readily available form of entertainment. Free theatre performances are also paid for by wealthy patrons during religious festivals. Rich people gather by the river or by the lake to paint, compose poems or play music.

"A Chinese student has very little to fall back upon in the way of amusement. He may take a stroll through the town and look in at the shops, or seek out some friend as ennuyé as himself, and while away an hour over a cup of tea and a pipe. Occasionally a number of young men will join together and form a kind of literary club, meeting at certain periods to read essays or poems on subjects previously agreed upon by all."

H. Giles

The best cure for drunkenness is, whilst sober, to observe a drunken man.

(Chinese proverb)

One of the most common forms of entertainment is simply to gather one's friends for a drinking bout, usually after hours. This does not mean that Chinese men are alcoholics – drinking is usually confined to these special occasions.

"The soberest people in the world, amongst whom anything like sottishness is comparatively unknown, think it no disgrace, but rather complimentary, to get pleasantly tipsy on all festive occasions; and people who are physically unable to do so frequently go so far as to hire substitutes to drink for them. Mandarins specially suffer very much from the custom of being obliged to take 'wine' with a large number of guests."

"No Chinese wine-party is complete without more or less amusement of a literary character. Capping verses, composing impromptu odes on persons or places, giving



historical and mythological allusions, are among the ordinary diversions of this kind."

H. Giles

Gambling is also a popular pastime, and Chinese men stake considerable sums on blood sport (cricket fighting, insect fighting, quail fighting) or, under the Qīng dynasty, on gambling games such dominoes, fāntān or mahjong.

"Gambling is the great Chinese vice, far exceeding in its ill effects all that opium has ever done to demoralise the country. Public gaming-houses are strictly forbidden by law, but their existence is winked at by a too venal executive. Fāntān [番攤] is the favourite game. It consists in staking on the remainder of an unknown number of cash, after the heap has been divided by four, namely, whether it will be three, two, one or nothing; with other variations of a more complicated nature."

Literate people do not entertain themselves with mahjong and like games, but with more intellectual games such as go (wéiqí 圍棋) and Chinese chess (xiàngqí 象棋).

Go is the king of games. It is a boardgame played using "stones" (black and white pieces) that must "conquer" territory on a 19×19 grid.

Chinese chess is less prestigious than go, but it is still an intellectual game, very similar to Western chess.

"Go is a most abstruse and complicated game of skill for which the Chinese claim an antiquity of four thousand years, à propos of which, an accomplished American lady wrote as follows:— 'The game seems to me the peer of chess. . . . It is a game for the slow, persistent, astute, multitudinous Chinese; while chess, by the picturesque appearance of the board, the variety and prominent individuality of the men, and the erratic combination of the attack,—is for the Anglo-Saxon'."

H. Giles

Playing cards are a women's pastime, just like playing on a swing.

Pets are not very common, and are usually cats and birds rather than dogs, which are used as watchdogs.

Baths are highly appreciated, but are only available in rich cities. Baths are gender-segregated.

SEX

Sex in Imperial China has been quite repressed. Since Confucianism only contemplates sex between man and wife, extramarital affairs are seen as a direct threat to social stability (but certainly not as a 'sin' as in the West). Despite this conservative view of sex out of marriage, Imperial China does not put any special importance to a woman's virginity before marriage.

Daoism and Tantrism make heavy use of sexual practices, but because of social pressure, they have always remained within the circles of esoteric sects or secret societies. Under the Qīng dynasty, Manchu nobles are rumoured to practise this kind of debauchery, but this rumour may stem from the Chinese misconception of Tantrism (the official religion of the Manchus) – the exact truth is left to the GM.

Until the Yuán dynasty, sex is linked with magic and ghosts in popular imagination, hence the many elements of sexual innuendo that are present in Chinese fantasy. From the Míng onwards, erotic novels become more grounded in reality, and are still today used by Sinologists as a source of information on Chinese life under the Míng and the Qīng.

Homosexuality does not bear any particular negative sexual connotations, but does bear negative social connotations. Female homosexuality is only considered acceptable amongst women living under the same roof (e.g., concubines in a harem) but certainly not, for instance, between two married women. Male homosexuality is deemed acceptable as long as it is not practised too openly – what the Chinese dislike in male homosexuality is mainly the fact that a man may take advantage of another man through it. Daoists condemn male homosexuality as a factor reducing the yáng of man and hence jeopardising his health. There are many historical instances of virile love between Chinese warriors, much like amongst Japanese samurai.

Chinese courtesans are more distinguished than their European counterparts, being required to be

able to perform music and poetry, and not merely sex. It is considered utterly vulgar behaviour to mistreat a courtesan. Courtesans are usually sold by their parents when young, and they live in the brothel that has bought them afterwards. They may save money to buy their freedom, or be bought by a wealthy patron who makes the courtesan his concubine. Brothels are situated in specialised quarters of Chinese cities, with guarded gates and private constables.

DEATH AND BURIAL

The death of an individual will occupy his family for quite a long time. If one's death has happened outside of one's home province, the body must be brought back there – which may take some time. A three-day wake is held, after which an auspicious date is chosen to inter the coffin. A 49 day period of Buddhist prayers must be respected after the death, and seven Buddhist services are conducted, one every seven days. This period of time is known as the Seven Times Seven period. After the last Buddhist service, the funerary tablet is placed on the altar amongst the tablets of the other deceased ancestors. A three-year mourning period follows for the children of the deceased. For the grandchildren, the mourning period is of one year; for the great-grandchildren, of three months.

Every year, on the anniversary date of the death, a 'death anniversary' is observed by all members of the family in honour and remembrance of the deceased.

"A Chinaman loves to be buried alongside of his ancestors, and poor families are often put to great straits to pay this last tribute of respect and affection to the deceased. At all large cities are to be found temporary burial grounds, where the bodies of strangers are deposited until their relatives can come to carry them away. Large freights of dead bodies are annually brought back to China from California, Queensland, and other parts to which the Chinese are in the habit of emigrating, to the great profit of the steamer companies concerned. Coffins are also used as a means of smuggling, respect for the dead being so great that they are only opened under the very strongest suspicion."

H. Giles

POWERS AND FACTIONS (POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS)

The list below is destined for the GM who is looking for faction-based historical adventure ideas in Imperial China.

EUNUCHS AND MANDARINS

From the Míng period onwards, eunuchs start to wield more and more power as they form the core of the Emperors' entourage, and as they manage to develop their own network parallel to but not subject to the official civil service.

PCs might belong to either faction and scheme against the other one, either covertly in city intrigues, or overtly far from the capital.

CIVIL SERVANTS AND THE MILITARY

In all provinces, the civil bureaucracy is doubled by a military bureaucracy – the capital city of a province has both a civil governor and a military governor. The military are subject to the civil servants, but they resent this, and military commanders are often trying to behave as independently as possible from their civilian counterparts. This would usually be a covert rather than an overt resistance.

DAOISTS AND BUDDHISTS

Daoists and Buddhist may vie for the control of the Court (especially under the Táng, less so under the Sòng), for the spiritual influence over wealthy patrons, or even for good lands between two monasteries!

PATRIOTS AND PACIFISTS

At various times, China has been governed by foreign dynasties. In such times, there have been patriots trying to restore a Chinese dynasty, and pacifists accepting the fact that the mandate of heaven had been bestowed upon a foreign dynasty, especially when the latter had become thoroughly Sinicised. These two factions will fight for political motivations, or even for financial or religious motivations. For instance, the Qīng rulers are obsessed with keeping China closed, and a merchant with an interest in foreign trade may fund a faction opposed to Manchu rule. Similarly, the Qīng promote Tibetan Buddhism as the religion of the Imperial family, and Neo-Confucianism as the State orthodoxy: Daoist sects and non-Tibetan Buddhist schools may hence have an interest in helping a faction opposed to Manchu rule.

ONGOING CONFLICTS

The list below is destined for the GM who is looking for more locally-based and less historical-dependent adventure ideas in Imperial China.

MAGISTRATES

AND LOCAL BUREAUCRATS

A magistrate is always appointed outside of his home province, so as to avoid his being emotionally involved in his cases. Similarly, a magistrate rotates his position every three years, so that any relations he may have made locally are reset to zero. Whereas the magistrate and his close retinue would move (as exemplified by Judge Dee moving with his faithful clerk and with the three former criminals in his employ only), the rest of the yámén bureaucracy are local people, who are obviously entangled in the various factions of the city. This is a great potential for adventure ideas if the PCs are the magistrate and his retinue. The locals may start talking in their dialect to avoid being understood by the magistrate and his retinue, or they may make

reference to obscure local customs or cults, which the PCs will have a hard time investigate as they will fall out of their character skills, e.g., if a murder case revolves around an obscure remnant of a shamanistic cult of the past, no clue will be inferred from using the various Knowledge skills – the characters will have to go and explore that abandoned shrine up in the mountain...

NORTHERNERS AND SOUTHERNERS

The cradle of Chinese civilisation is the region between the river Huái and the Yellow River, in the North. From there, and throughout the early dynasties, this civilisation spread southwards, Sinicising the barbarian peoples that lived between this early centre and the seas. Some Northerners up to this day hold the Southerners in contempt because of their supposedly 'less' Chinese origins. The Southerners, on their part, feel that the Northerners have mixed with the barbarians from the North and have thus no claim whatsoever to feel superior to them, who have often resisted more strongly against the northern invaders.

The Northerners despise the Southerners' mercantile ways, preferring military or official careers; the Southerners likewise think of the Northerners as being unproductive: trade might not be a proper occupation, but someone has to do it...

As a result, the conflict between Northerners and Southerners has become a staple of Chinese fiction, be it in religious schools, educated circles, or even amongst Chinese fighting together against a foreign menace! The GM can easily create a party of antagonists for the PCs based on the eternal North-South rivalry.

FAMILY FEUDS

Because of the Confucian base of Chinese society, family feuds in China can be more bitter and last longer than elsewhere. The GM may create long-lasting nemeses if the PCs belong to the same clan by pitting them against a rival family.

HAKKA

The Hakka are a Chinese ethnic group that has migrated from North China to South China between the 10th and the 12th centuries AD, during the various foreign invasions of North China. The Hakka have settled in fortified villages in South China but have kept amongst themselves. As a result, small feuds may erupt from time to time for the possession of good land, or for some real or perceived injustice caused by or undergone by a Hakka person. The Hakka vs 'locals' conflict type is hence an addition of the two previous conflict types.

Just to have the reader realise how bitter this conflict may have been, the so-called Hakka-Cantonese War (between 1855 and 1867) is said to have caused about 1 million dead, with many more displaced people.



MÍNG LOYALISTS

Throughout the Qīng dynastic period, there have been Míng restoration attempts by Míng loyalists. Such attempts invariably bring retribution by the Manchu troops once the revolt is over. As a result, the local population may see Míng loyalists as troublemakers and preventively fight against them so as not to bring the anger of the Qīng troops upon them. This may create interesting adventure ideas, where idealistic Míng loyalist PCs cannot possibly fight against innocent townspeople who want them to go and plot their revolt somewhere else.

Units of Measurement

Imperial Chinese units of measurement have remained quite stable with time (with just a slight increase in time – since taxes were paid in kind, successive dynasties have slightly increased the units of measurement compared with the previous dynasty's!).

Here are the values under the Qīng, with their metric equivalents:

UNITS OF LENGTH

Unit	Value	English name	Metric
1 fēn 分			3.58mm
1 cùn 寸	10 fēn		35.8mm
1 chǐ 尺	10 cùn	Foot	0.358m
1 xún 尋	8 chǐ		2.86m
1 zhàng 丈	10 chǐ		3.58m
1 yīn 引	10 zhàng		35.8m
1 lǐ 里	15 yīn		0.537km

UNITS OF MASS

Unit	Value	English name	Metric
1 fēn 分		Candareen	0.37g
1 qián 錢	10 fēn	Mace	3.7g
1 liǎng 兩	10 qián	Tael	37g
1 jīn 斤	16 liǎng	Catty	0.596kg
1 jūn 鈞	30 jīn		17.9kg
1 dàn 擔	100 jīn	Picul	59.6kg
1 shí 石	4 jūn	Stone	71.5kg

UNITS OF AREA

Unit	Value	Metric
1 fēn 分		67.5m ²
1 mǔ 畝	10 fēn	675m ²
1 qǐng 頃	100 mǔ	6.75ha

(appr. 17 acres)

UNITS OF VOLUME

Unit	Value	Metric
1 gě 合		appr. 1 dl
1 shēng 升	10 gě	appr. 1 litre
1 dòu 斗	10 shēng	appr. 10 litres
1 shí 石	10 dòu	appr. 1 hl

Languages

THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

Despite its name Chinese is more appropriately described as a group of closely related languages, not unlike the Romance or the Slavic languages. The singular name stems from the fact that the Chinese themselves consider the Sinitic languages to be but oral variations of a single written language, which is, however, a misconception, especially in Imperial China where the written language is a relic of the past, much like Latin in mediaeval Europe.

"I have often been asked if Chinese is, or is not, a difficult language to learn. To this question it is quite impossible to give a categorical answer, for the simple reason that Chinese consists of at least two languages, one colloquial and the other written, which for all practical purposes are about as distinct as they well could be.

Colloquial Chinese is a comparatively easy matter. It is, in fact, more easily acquired in the early stages than colloquial French or German. [...] The written or book language, on the other hand, may fairly be regarded as a sufficient study for a lifetime; not because of the peculiar script, which yields when systematically attacked, but because the style of the book language is often so extremely terse as to make it obscure, and sometimes so lavishly ornate that without wide reading it is not easy to follow the figurative phraseology, and historical and mythological allusions, which confront one on every page."

H. Giles

The vernaculars (oral Sinitic languages) used in a given Celestial Empire campaign will obviously depend on the dynastic period in which the GM has set his campaign:

- Under the Táng and the Sòng dynasties, the GM may consider that a single Chinese language is spoken throughout China. However, a person's accent will always give him or her away as a Northerner or as a Southerner.
- Under the Yuán dynasty, the GM should consider that there are two separate languages: Northern Chinese, and Southern Chinese.
- Under the Míng and the Qīng dynasties, the full dialectal diversity known today is present, and must be taken into account by the GM.

Amongst all the vernaculars, the one in use at the Court is thought of as the most refined, and will

be used by civil servants throughout the Empire.

Written Chinese (*wényán* 文言), or Classical Chinese (*gǔwén* 古文), is a dead language exclusively used for written purposes. Its syntax is completely different from that of any form of spoken Chinese since it is based on the language in use at the time of Confucius.

This linguistic difficulty, coupled with the fact that there are thousands of Chinese characters, explains why the mastery of written Chinese necessitates a lifelong dedication, is the sole province of the literate élite, and gives tremendous prestige.

From the Míng period onwards, some popular novels and plays start being written in vernacular Chinese. This form of written Chinese is called *báihuà* (白話) and is considered extremely vulgar by the literate people.

THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM



The Chinese writing system is not alphabetic. However, contrary to a common popular misconception, the Chinese writing system is not 'ideographic' either – Chinese characters do not represent 'ideas', they represent syllables. To a single Chinese character corresponds either a complete one-syllable word, or a single-syllable part of a word. In linguistic terms, Chinese is a logographic system.

Each character is a combination of brush strokes written in a precise order, and which fit in an ideal square. Characters are written in vertical columns, right to left. Literati are not only expected to know how to pen their characters, they are also expected to write beautifully.

Calligraphy being such important an art, it is no wonder that there are several styles of calligraphy, from the most regular to the most abstruse script, and from the most standard character composition to the most archaic.

Chinese characters are at the heart of Chinese civilisation. First and foremost because of the civilisational unity they have provided, and also because of their all-pervasive presence in all aspects of Chinese life: law, religion, trade, money, magic.

The Chinese consider that foreign countries that use Chinese characters are civilised; those that do not are not.

Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine is based on the study of cosmological rather than physiological elements, in particular the ebb and flow of *qì* in the human body, and the *wǔxíng* system of correspondences. Despite its shortcomings, Chinese medicine has been quite successful in curing many ailments, mostly thanks to the Chinese pharmacology and to the centuries of solid empirical observations passed on from physician to physician. This long tradition has originated many medical specialities, and a very efficient system of forensic medicine.

A Chinese physician is supposed to cure maladies before they occur, not once they have happened. This is why rich people usually have a physician in their employ, and there are instances of a physician being dismissed from service despite his having successfully cured an ailment because he let it happen in the first place!

To correct an evil which already exists, is not so well as to foresee and prevent it.

(Chinese proverb)

The *qì* is supposed to flow along invisible meridians that intersect each other. The most immediate applications of this theory are acupuncture and moxibustion. The former cures ailments by placing tiny needles at the intersections, the latter by burning small sticks of mugwort on the patient's skin.

The *wǔxíng* system of correspondences enables the Chinese physician to recommend or forbid certain types of food depending on the patient's symptoms.

Obviously, should a physician realise that a disease is caused by a disease spirit, he should direct his patient to an exorcist.

Warfare

THE CHINESE ARMY

Under the Táng, the outer provinces of China are inhabited by military colonists. These men do not pay any taxes and are not subject to forced unpaid labour, but they are required to fight against local insurgent or foreign invaders as required by the local military governor. In the inner provinces, there is a standing army whose main role is the protection of the provincial capitals. From the Sòng onwards, the difference between outer and inner provinces disappears, and the size of the standing army is increased.

Under the Yuán and the Qīng, the Mongol or Manchu invaders hold special positions in the army (usually as cavalrymen).



OTHER LANGUAGES

This section briefly presents the major languages spoken in China and in the neighbouring areas. For each language, the tables below indicate:

- its linguistic family and group,
- its name (a slash separates two synonymous names; the Chinese name is between brackets),
- its system of writing (and hence the relevant Literacy skill, as written on page 58),
- its dynastic period of existence,
- the skill modifiers that may be applied when a speaker of the language tries to communicate with a speaker of a related language (alternatively, the GM may use the simpler system described on page 24).

LANGUAGES OF THE SINO-TIBETAN FAMILY

Languages of the Chinese group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Northern Chinese	Chinese characters	Táng to Yuán	–30% for Southern Chinese
Southern Chinese	Chinese characters	Táng to Yuán	–30% for Northern Chinese
Northern Mandarin	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–30% for other Mandarin dialects; –55% for other Chinese dialects
Lower Yángzi Mandarin	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–30% for other Mandarin dialects; –55% for other Chinese dialects
North-Western Mandarin	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–30% for other Mandarin dialects; –55% for other Chinese dialects
South-Western Mandarin	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–30% for other Mandarin dialects; –55% for other Chinese dialects
Wú	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–55% for other Chinese dialects
Gàn	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–55% for other Chinese dialects
Xiāng	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–55% for other Chinese dialects
Mǐn	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–55% for other Chinese dialects
Cantonese (Yuè)	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–55% for other Chinese dialects
Hakka (Kèjiā)	Chinese characters	Míng to Qīng	–55% for other Chinese dialects

Languages of the Bái group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Bái	None	All	–65% for Chinese vernaculars

Note: the Bái language is the main language spoken in Dǎi.

Languages of the Tibeto-Burman group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Tangut	Tangut characters	Yuán	None
Tibetan	South Asian	All	–15% for Dzongkha; –35% for Newāri
Dzongkha	South Asian	Qīng	–15% for Tibetan; –35% for Newāri
Newāri	South Asian	Yuán to Qīng	–35% for Dzongkha; –35% for Tibetan
Arakanese	South Asian	All	–20% for Burmese; –50% for Kachin
Burmese	South Asian	All	–20% for Arakanese; –50% for Kachin
Kachin (Jǐngpō)	None	All	–50% for Arakanese; –50% for Burmese
Bodo	None	All	–50% for Naga
Naga	None	All	–50% for Bodo
Lìsù	None	All	–35% for Yí
Yí	Yí syllabic script	All	–35% for Lìsù

Note:

- Tangut characters are extremely complex. It is assumed that no PC may have had any opportunity to learn them.
- the Yí syllabic script is a secret writing only taught to members of the Yí priestly caste.

LANGUAGES OF THE TAI-MIÁO-YÁO FAMILY

Languages of the Tai group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Bùyī	None	All	–20% for Zhuàng; –30% for Lao and Shan; –50% for Dòng and Lí
Lao	None	All	–25% for Shan; –30% for Bùyī and Zhuàng; –50% for Dòng and Lí
Shan (Dǎi)	None	All	–25% for Lao; –30% for Bùyī and Zhuàng; –50% for Dòng and Lí
Zhuàng	Zhuàng characters	All	–20% for Bùyī; –30% for Lao and Shan; –50% for Dòng and Lí
Dòng	None	All	–50% for any other Tai language
Lí	None	All	–50% for any other Tai language

Note: Zhuàng characters are modified Chinese characters adapted to the Zhuàng language.

Languages of the Miáo-Yáo group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Hmong (Miáo)	None	All	–35% for Yáo
Yáo	None	All	–35% for Hmong



LANGUAGES OF THE AUSTRONESIAN FAMILY

Languages of the Austro-Asiatic group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Khmer	South Asian	All	–65% for Vietnamese
Vietnamese	Vietnamese characters	All	–65% for Khmer

Note: Vietnamese characters are modified Chinese characters adapted to the Vietnamese language.

Languages of the Malayo-Polynesian group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Cham	South Asian	All	
Formosan languages	None	All	
Luzon languages	None	All	

LANGUAGES OF THE ALTAIC FAMILY

Languages of the Tungusic group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Jurchen (Nǔzhēn)	Jurchen characters	Yuán to Míng	–65% for Khitan
Manchu	Uyghur	Qīng	

Note: Jurchen characters are extremely complex. It is assumed that no PC may have had any opportunity to learn them.

Languages of the Mongolic group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Tabgach (Tuòbá)	None	Táng	–25% for Yǔwén; –65% for Kipchak and Göktürk
Yǔwén	None	Táng	–25% for Tabgach; –65% for Kipchak and Göktürk
Khitan (Qidān)	Khitan characters	Yuán	–65% for Jurchen
Mongolian	Uyghur	Yuán to Qīng	–15% for Western Mongolic
Western Mongolic	Uyghur	Qīng	–15% for Mongolian

Note: Khitan characters are extremely complex. It is assumed that no PC may have had any opportunity to learn them.

Languages of the Turkic group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Göktürk (Tǔjué)	Orkhon runes	Táng	–15% for Kipchak; –65% for Tabgach and Yǔwén
Kipchak	None	Táng	–15% for Göktürk; –65% for Tabgach and Yǔwén
Kazakh	Arabic	Yuán to Qīng	–15% for Kyrgyz; –35% for Uyghur and Uzbek
Kyrgyz	Arabic	Yuán to Qīng	–15% for Kazakh; –35% for Uyghur and Uzbek
Uyghur	Uyghur, Arabic	All	–25% for Uzbek; –35% for Kazakh and Kyrgyz
Uzbek	Arabic	Yuán to Qīng	–25% for Uyghur; –35% for Kazakh and Kyrgyz

LANGUAGES OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY

Languages of the Tokharian group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
East Tokharian	South Asian	Táng	–30% for West Tokharian; –60% for other Indo-European languages
West Tokharian	South Asian	Táng	–30% for East Tokharian; –60% for other Indo-European languages

Languages of the Indo-Iranian group

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Persian/Tajik	Arabic	All	–30% for Sogdian and other Iranian languages; –60% for other Indo-European languages
Sogdian	Uyghur	Táng	–30% for Persian and other Iranian languages; –60% for other Indo-European languages
other Iranian languages	None	All	–30% for Persian and Sogdian; –60% for other Indo-European languages
Indo-Aryan languages	South Asian	All	–35% for Nepali and Pāli; –60% for other Indo-European languages
Nepali	South Asian	Qīng	–35% for Indo-Aryan languages and Pāli; –60% for other Indo-European languages
Pāli	South Asian	All	–35% for Indo-Aryan languages and Nepali; –60% for other Indo-European languages

Isolated languages

LANGUAGE	WRITING	PERIOD	AFFINITIES AND PENALTIES
Ainu	None	All	
Japanese	Kana	All	
Korean	Korean characters, Korean alphabet	All	

Notes

- In the time periods covered by this role-playing game, kana are only used by the merchant class, or by women. Literati only use Chinese characters.
- Korean characters are modified Chinese characters adapted to the Korean language. They are only used until the Yuán dynastic period.
- The Korean alphabet was invented in 1443. It is used under the Míng and under the Qīng to write the Korean language. However, writing in Korean is considered to be the province of women and uneducated people by the literate people, who only write in Classical Chinese.

WAR

As pointed out on page 11, the Chinese frown upon violence, which is contrary to the Confucian virtues of harmony and cultivation. Contrary to Indo-European societies, where the Warrior protects the Priest and the Labourer, Chinese society places the Scholar (*Wén* 文) above the Warrior (*Wǔ* 武). As a result, war is seen as the last resort, when everything else, diplomacy, marriage, and bribery has failed. Although the Chinese emperors have always considered themselves as overlords of the Nomads of Inner Asia, reality has been less glorious, and the 'gifts sent by the overlord to his lieges' (as the Chinese would have it) were actually a tribute to the redoubtable horsemen of the steppe.

Despite their dislike for war and violence, Chinese scholars have written many treatises on warfare, the most famous being *The Art of War* by Sūnzǐ (孫子), which contain high level analyses of the art of war, and strategic advice based on cunning manoeuvres and feints rather than head-on warfare.

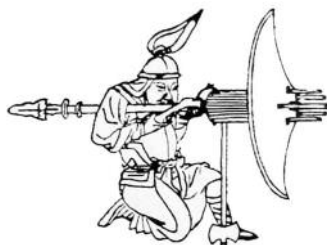
Chinese troops are drilled extensively, and victory results from adherence to the plans of the generals rather than individual bravery.

FIREARMS

It is thought that Daoist alchemists serendipitously discovered black powder under the Táng dynasty. Saltpetre rockets have been used on the field in the years 904-906. However, the earliest mention of the use of black powder to systematically manufacture offensive weapons dates from the *Collection of the Most Important Military Techniques* (*Wǔjīng zōngyào* 武經總要), written in 1044 under the Sòng. This military compendium mentions several different firearms: smoke and incendiary grenades, fire lances, siege engines firing explosive caskets, and even explosive grenades.

From the 12th century AD onwards, siege cannons are routinely used against the Nǚzhēn invaders. In the 13th century, the Mongols make heavy use of iron-cased exploding bombs on the battlefields. All these weapons exploit the smoke-creating or shattering power of firearms. The first weapons to exploit black powder as a propeller are the rocket launchers that the Chinese use against the Mongols in the 13th century.

Despite their massive use on the battlefield, firearms do not revolutionise warfare in East Asia as they do in Europe. Gunpowder remains the exclusive province of battlefield warfare – individual combat will continue to rely on cold weapons until the end of the Qīng.



CHINESE HISTORY

Dynastic Periods

TÁNG CHINA

Táng China 唐朝时代 (618–907), or the life and times of Judge Dee

Suggested reading: the Judge Dee detective novels by Robert van Gulik, *the Journey to the West*

Suggested films: *House of Flying Daggers*, *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*

SÒNG CHINA

Sòng China 宋朝时代 (960–1279), or the life and times of the 108 Outlaws of the Marsh

Suggested reading: *the Water Margin*, *the Plum in the Golden Vase*

Suggested films: *the Water Margin* BBC TV series, *The 14 Amazons*, *Ashes of Time*, *Green Snake*, *Shadowless Sword*

YUÁN CHINA

Yuán China 元朝时代 (1279–1368), or the life and times of Marco Polo

Suggested reading: *il Milione* by Marco Polo, *The Empire of the Steppes* by René Grousset

Suggested films: *Mongol*, *Musa*

MÍNG CHINA

Míng China 明朝时代 (1368–1644), or the life and times of Admiral Zhèng Hé

Suggested reading: 1421: *The Year China Discovered the World* by Gavin Menzies

Suggested films: *Come Drink with Me*, *Dragon Gate Inn*, *Raining in the Mountain*, *A Touch of Zen*, *Musa*, *The Swordsman*

QÍNG CHINA

Qīng China 清朝时代 (1644–1911), or the life and times of the Shàolín monks

Suggested reading: *the Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, most novels by Louis Cha

Suggested films: the *A Chinese Ghost Story* series, *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*, *Fearless*, *The Warlords*, *Martial Arts Of Shaolin*, the *Once Upon a Time in China* series, *Tai Chi Master*, the *Fong Sai-yuk* series, *The Blade*, *The Bride with White Hair*, *The Soong Sisters*, *Seven Swords*

CHINA AND THE NEIGHBOURING LANDS

China

China is a very large country. The People's Republic of China is the third largest country in the world. Obviously, its area does not exactly correspond to the area of Imperial China, but it still gives an idea of the sheer size of that land, especially compared to that of its neighbours, like Korea or Vietnam, which are much smaller.

The huge size of China explains much of her history and of the mindset of her inhabitants. From the very beginning of China's history, the Chinese have considered that China (中國) is the country (國) at the centre (中) of the known world.

This mindset has yielded a concentric worldview, viz:

- **the centre:** China proper, home of Civilisation, the Celestial Empire ruled by a just Emperor mandated by Heaven
- **the first circle around the centre:** non-Chinese territories within China (mostly desert or mountain lands, home of China's ethnic minorities) – land to be cleared, settled, and civilised
- **the second circle around the centre:** tributary states of China (Japan, Korea, Vietnam) that have adopted Chinese customs, literature, and religion
- **the third circle around the centre:** tributary states of China (Burma, Nepal, the Ryūkyū Kingdom, Tibet... the exact list has varied with time) that haven't adopted China's civilised ways
- **beyond the third circle:** hopelessly and utterly savage Barbarians (nomads, jungle-dwellers, primitive islanders; later: European invaders)

"The Four Seas are supposed by the Chinese to bound the habitable portions of the earth, which, by the way, they further believe to be square. In the centre of all is China, extending far and wide in every direction, – the eye of the universe, the Middle Kingdom. Away at a distance from her shores lie a number of small islands, wherein dwell such barbarous nations as the English, French, Dutch, etc."

H. Giles

As explained on page 9, this worldview can sometimes be reversed in *wǔxiá* fiction, in which the heroes would often find allies and succour outside of the Chinese centre – especially when the centre itself has fallen prey to evil invaders like the Manchus.

China proper (also known as Inner China) is the Chinese heartland of the Empire, the land inhabited by Hàn Chinese. Over time, the provinces that make



up China proper have varied considerably. As a result, The Celestial Empire will adopt a simplified geography with large divisions:

Divisions of China proper

1. North China 華北
2. Gānsù 甘肅
3. Sichuān 四川
4. Lower Yángzi 長江下游區
5. South China 華南

Five Great Mountains of Daoism

- Eastern Great Mountain: Mount Tài (泰山)
- Western Great Mountain: Mount Huà (華山)
- Southern Great Mountain: Mount Héng (衡山)
- Northern Great Mountain: Mount Héng (恆山)
- note: same pronunciation as the previous one, but written with a different character*
- Central Great Mountain: Mount Sōng (嵩山)

Four Great Mountains of Buddhism

- Mount Wūtái (五臺山)
- Mount Éméi (峨眉山)
- Mount Jiǔhuá (九華山)
- Mount Pǔtuó (普陀山)



CHRONOLOGY

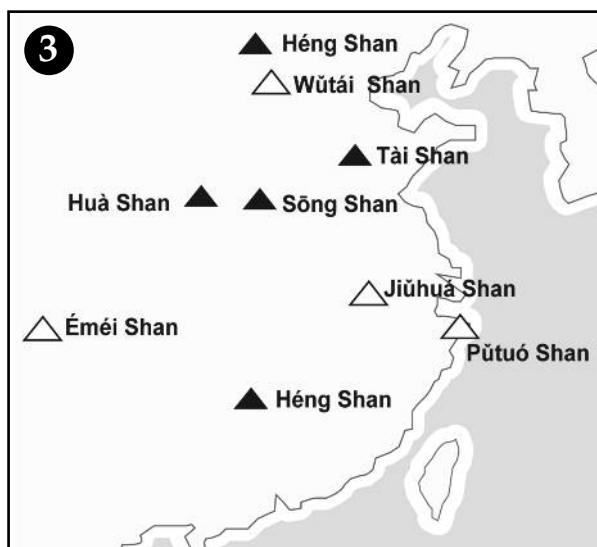
ANCIENT CHINA. FROM PRE-IMPERIAL CHINA TO THE SUÍ DYNASTY

Time Period	Dynastic Period	Highlights	Inventions and Techniques	Martial Arts
3rd millennium to 16th century BC	Xià			
16th century to 11th century BC	Shāng	Divination inscriptions on oracle bones		
11th century to 771 BC	Western Zhōu	Feudal system. Capital city: Hào 鎬 (modern-day Xī'ān)	around 1000 BC: blast furnaces	
770 to 256 BC	Eastern Zhōu	Capital city: Luò 洛 (modern-day Luòyáng)		
722 to 481 BC	Spring and Autumn period	Confucius	Molten iron is used for weapons, coins, ploughshare. Sowing in rows. Hand weeding.	
403 to 256 BC	Warring States period	Mòzǐ, Zhuāngzǐ, Mencius, School of Names, etc. Qū Yuán, first great Chinese poet; his death is traditionally commemorated on Dragon Boat Festival (5th day of the 5th month)	The first defensive walls are built Crossbows First observation of sunspots Compass Cast iron	Mòzǐ forms a group of disciples trained in the techniques of self defence and organises expeditions against oppressive rulers. Moist ethnics have many common elements with knights-errant's.
221 to 207 BC	Qín (first Emperor) Western Hàn	Legalism, School of Naturalists Sīmǎ Qiān (the father of Chinese historiography), Huáng-Lǎo philosophy, Huáinánzǐ, Dǒng Zhòngshū (promotion of Confucianism as the official ideology of the Chinese state), Yáng Xióng (Materialism)	First 'Great Wall of China' Paper Seed drill Crank	
206 BC to 9 AD	Xīn	Liú Xiàng (father), Liú Xīn (son): polymaths		
9 to 23 AD	Eastern Hàn	Wáng Chōng, Zhèng Xuán, Wáng Fú, etc. Introduction of Buddhism in China	Square-pallet chain pump Sismographer Armillary sphere Rudder Water-tight compartments (junks)	First recorded traces of dǎoyīn (breathing exercises practised to cultivate one's qì).
25 to 220 AD	Three Kingdoms period	Wáng Bì Daoist written tradition		The "five-animal method" of the renowned physician Huà Tuó is the ancient precursor of all external Martial Arts Schools.
220 to 265 AD	Western Jin	Guō Xiàng (first and most important revision of Zhuāngzǐ's works) Spread of Buddhism in China Dào'ān (establishes rules for monastic life; creates one of the earliest catalogues of Chinese Buddhist scriptures; founds the Maitreya worship cult)	Stirrup	
265 to 316 AD	Southern and Northern Dynasties period North China: Northern Wèi, Eastern Wèi, Western Wèi, Northern Qí, Northern Zhōu dynasties. South China: Eastern Jin, Qí, Liáng, Chén dynasties. Suí	Flourishing in the arts and culture From 402 on: Indianisation of Buddhism Kumārajīva translates into Chinese many Mahāyāna sūtra Mādhyamika School Huiyuǎn founds the Amitābha worship cult Dàoshēng (his understanding of the Mahāyāna scriptures prepares the ground for the Chán school) Spread of Daoism	Advances in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and cartography	Bodhidharma, a Buddhist monk from southern India, sets the historical bases of Chinese Martial Arts at Shàolín Monastery (beginning of the 6th century).
317 to 589 581 to 618 AD		End of the feudal system; rise of the scholar-officials. Yogācāra School of Buddhism, paroxysm of the Indian influence in Chinese Buddhism.		

CHRONOLOGY

IMPERIAL CHINA. FROM THE TÁNG DYNASTY TO THE END OF IMPERIAL CHINA

Time Period	Dynastic Period	Highlights	Inventions and Techniques	Martial Arts
618 to 907	Táng	It is in this period of time that Buddhism becomes Sinicised: Tiāntái, Huáyán, Pure Land, Chán schools of Buddhism. Confucian renaissance: Hán Yù, Lǐ Áo	The oldest sky atlas Woodblock printing Escapement mechanism (mechanical clock) Black powder	The Shàolín martial arts techniques are perfected; their fame spreads through China
907 to 960	<i>Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms</i> period (era of political upheaval)	951 AD: first printed edition of the Confucian Classics	Saltpetre rockets	The Miǎnquán school originates in the province of Héběi (North China)
960 to 1279	Northern Sòng (960-1127) in North China Liáo (Qidān dynasty: 907-1125) in Manchuria, Mongolia, and parts of northern China proper; also known as the Khitan Empire Southern Sòng (1127-1279) in South China Jīn (Tungusic dynasty: 1115-1234) in Manchuria	Oral tales of the Water Margin, from which the later tales of the "108 bandits" stem. Administrative reforms: Minor reform (Fàn Zhōngyān, Ōuyáng Xiū, Sū Shì), Major reform (Wáng Ānshí). Neo-Confucianism: Shào Yǒng, Zhōu Dūnyí, Zhāng Zǎi, Chéng Hào, Chéng Yí. Zhū Xī (neo-Confucianist, School of Principle), Lù Xiàngshān (opposed to the former, School of Mind)	Firearms Inoculation Movable type Porcelain Pound lock	
1279 to 1368	Yuán (Mongol dynasty)	Xǔ Héng (continues Zhū Xī's work) The Yuán heavily favour Lamaism and Islam – as a counterweight to native Chinese religions.		The Daoist priest Zhāng Sānfēng, who lives as a hermit on Wūdāng Mountain, creates a combat method that advocates the superiority of suppleness over strength, after a dream he's had in which a snake was defeated by a crane. This combat method is the foundation upon which the Tàijíquán and Wūdāng Pàì styles will be built.
1368 to 1644	Míng	Chén Báishā, Lǐ Zhì (syncretism) Wáng Yángmíng (continues Lù Xiàngshān's work) Luó Qīnshùn (continues Zhū Xī's) Liú Zōngzhōu (continues Wáng Yángmíng's). Struggle between the Dōnglín movement and the eunuch faction, with a victory of the latter. Fùshè reform movement: opposition to the eunuchs, then to the Manchu invaders. Jesuits in China (Matteo Ricci).	Zhèng Hé's Ocean Voyages (1405-1433)	Regular relations are established with Okinawa (in Chinese: Chōngshéng). The Shàolín techniques are taught to the Islanders, who will then pass them on to Japan. A warrior, a disciple of the community of Shàolín monks based in Okinawa, creates a fighting style inspired by the movements of the mantis' forelegs after having witnessed a fight to the death between a mantis and a cicada. He then passes his method on to a lineage of Daoists. This is the origin of the Tōngbìquán School.
1644 to 1911	Qīng (Manchu dynasty)	End of the 17th century: Huáng Zōngxī (keeps the spirit of the Fùshè movement alive), Gù Yánwú, Wáng Fūzhī (anti-Manchu patriots), Yán Yuán (associates classical studies with martial arts). 18th century: Dài Zhèn (tries to reform Confucianism by challenging orthodox neo-Confucianism). 19th century: Liú Fēnglù (back to classics); Wèi Yuán, Yán Fù (intellectual discovery of the European West); Kāng Yǒuwéi, Liáng Qīchāo, Tán Sītóng (socialist reformers); Zhāng Bǐnglín (anti-Manchu revolutionary); Liú Shīpéi (Buddhist anarchist)		Míng loyalty fuels the rebellious spirit of many secret societies. Many monasteries, such as Shàolín, become hotbeds of anti-Manchu resistance. In the middle of the 17th century, the Shàolín Monastery is destroyed by the Qīng, but five monks manage to escape and to spread Chinese martial arts in South China. This is the origin of the Nánquán styles. In the 19th century, Tàijíquán, which until that time had remained quite confidential, spreads to all China from its original centres of practice (Hénán and Běijīng). The White Lotus Society and some ministers of the Qīng Court incite Chinese martial artists to revolt against the Western occupants (Boxer rebellion, 1900).



1 China and the Neighbouring Lands

2 China proper

3 Mountains of China

Travel

In China proper, most travel will be over China's many waterways. Imperial China is covered by a network of natural rivers, estuaries, and canals that provide easy communication between all provinces. The canals are strengthened by stonework.

Road travel is not as readily-accessible as river travel. Near major cities, however, the roads are broad, well paved and maintained, with resting places and inns for travellers. Outside urban areas, and especially in the vicinity of mountains, forests, or marshes, road travel is subject to the hazards of banditry. In the wilds, travellers may be attacked by tigers, wolves, or other wild beasts.

China's Peoples

For each major people of the Chinese space, this section provides the following:

- its name (a slash separates two synonymous names; the Chinese name is between brackets),
- its dynastic period of existence,
- the province it inhabits,
- to which ethnic and linguistic group it belongs,
- its native language as well as any other usually practised languages,
- its religion(s),
- its social system,
- any other useful notes.

BÁI

Province: Dàlǐ (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Isolated

Native language: Bái. The élite speaks Chinese.

Religion: Mahāyāna Buddhism

Patriarchy

The Bái engage in farming and raise domestic animals. They have skilfully manipulated their more powerful Burmese, Chinese, and Tibetan neighbours to maintain an independent state until the Yuán dynastic period, when they are conquered by the Mongols.

Some Bái with an urban background may have learnt "civilised" skills.

Under the Táng, there can be Bái non-player characters such as merchants or travelling monks who engage in Mahāyāna Buddhist proselytism throughout China.

BÙYĪ

Provinces: Eastern Tibet, Sichuān (under the Táng and the Sòng); Dàlǐ, Sichuān, Yúnnán (all other dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tai

Native language: Bùyī

Religion: Ancestor worship, animism

Neither matriarchal nor patriarchal society

The Bùyī live off rice-growing and handicraft.

The GM may introduce Bùyī non-player characters such as travelling craftsmen or exorcists (Bùyī exorcists are much sought after because of their skill at chasing away bad spirits using frightful masks).

CHINESE (HÀN)

Provinces: Gānsù, North China, Sichuān, South China (under the Táng and the Sòng); Gānsù, North China, Sichuān, South China, Yúnnán (under the Yuán and the Míng); Gānsù, North China, Sichuān, South China, Yúnnán, Liáo, Hǎinán, Formosa, Dàyuè (under the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Chinese

Native language: the various Chinese vernaculars.

Religion: the "Three Teachings" (from the Táng to the Yuán), then predominantly Chinese folk religion (under the Míng and the Qīng)

Patriarchy

The Chinese have the most advanced society in the geographic area covered by the game. The Chinese civilisation strongly influences the neighbouring cultures, who often spontaneously integrate the Chinese sphere of influence.

DÒNG

Provinces: Dàlǐ, Yúnnán (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tai

Native language: Dòng

Religion: Polytheism, Hīnayāna Buddhism

The Dòng have an aristocratic society and capture slaves among their neighbouring peoples.

The Dòng engage in rice-growing and raise domestic animals.

The GM may introduce Dòng non-player characters such as mercenaries or scouts. Dòng mercenaries don't wear armour. They protect themselves with a wooden shield (use the stats for the round shield), and are armed with a bronze sword or a spear. Scouts are equipped with a bow and an axe.

DZUNGARS/KALMYKS/OIRATS

Provinces: Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Amdo (under the Míng); mostly Dzungaria and Amdo, but also Tarim Basin and Turkestan (under the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Mongolian

Native language: Western Mongolic

Religion: Lamaism. The Dzungars are zealous defenders of the Tibetan Buddhist faith and ceaselessly harass Muslim nomads (who also harass them in return). However, starting from the middle of the 17th century, the Manchu menace forces the Dzungars into a defensive alliance with the Muslim nomads of Inner Asia. Feudal society, with traces of the former clan- and tribe-based society

The Dzungars practise extensive nomadic pastoralism, even in mountainous areas, differently than other Mongolian peoples.

At the end of the 17th century, the Mongols proper [Eastern Mongols] ally themselves to the Manchus and help the latter establish the Qīng Empire. As a reaction, the Western Mongols gather under the Oirats and



found the Dzungar Empire to rival the Qīng. At the end of the 18th century, the Manchus manage to utterly destroy the Dzungar Empire; the surviving Dzungars flee westwards and become known as the Kalmyks. The Qīng then annex Dzungaria and the Tarim Basin to their empire.

Dzungar player and non-player characters will be described in a future Celestial Empire extension dedicated to the nomad peoples of Inner Asia.

HMONG (MIÁO)

Provinces: Sìchuān, Dàlǐ (under the Táng); Dàlǐ, Yúnnán (under the Sòng and the Yuán); Dàlǐ, Yúnnán, Dàyuè (under the Míng); Dàlǐ, Yúnnán, Dàyuè, Lán Xāng (under the Qīng).

Ethnic and linguistic group: Miáo-Yáo

Native language: Hmong

Religion: shamanism

Patriarchal clan-based society

The Hmong are nomadic peasants. They live on high mountain slopes (above 1000m) where they practise slash-and-burn agriculture. Thus, even if the Hmong inhabit a very large area, their numbers are small because they live on poor soil.

The GM may introduce Hmong non-player characters such as pedlars or musicians. It must be noted that the Hmong have always been troublesome to the Chinese authorities, and have only been pacified at the end of the Qīng. The Hmong have been amongst the very first southern barbarians to adopt firearms. At the end of the Qīng, the Hmong make their own rifles.

Only Hmong leaders ride horses.

HUÍ

Provinces: Gānsù, Yúnnán (from the Yuán to the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Chinese

Native language: the various Chinese vernaculars.

The most practising Huí have a good understanding of Classical Arabic. Under the Yuán, most Huí are Chinese-Persian bilingual.

Religion: Sunni Islam

Patriarchy

The Huí are urban dwellers, living not too far from their mosque. They practise a restricted set of activities, mostly linked to trade and business.

Since the only difference between the Huí and the Hàn is religious and not ethnic or linguistic (the

Huí descend from Hàn who have converted to Sunni Islam), the relationship between the Huí and the Chinese government has always been complex, or even tense. Under the Yuán, the Huí are protected by the authorities; under the Qīng, they are often victims of persecution. More generally, the Confucian Chinese élite consider that only the military careers should be open to the non-Confucian Huí, who have thus always provided many soldiers and martial artists. Admiral Zhèng Hé is the most famous of these Huí military men.

The GM may introduce Huí non-player characters such as soldiers, caravan leaders, merchants, innkeepers, leatherworkers.

JAPANESE

Province: Japan (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Isolated

Native language: Japanese. The educated élite write in Chinese.

Religion: mostly Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the countryside, there are vestigial remains of ancient Japanese shamanism and of the primitive native polytheism (worship of the kami, the local deities), which are fully incorporated into folk Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism. After the Meiji Restoration (1867), the new imperial government dissolves many Buddhist schools, and the ancient worship of the kami is promoted as the state religion under the name of Shinto.

Patriarchy

Early on, the Japanese found an advanced state on the Chinese model, which is heavily influenced by Chinese and Korean culture, religion, and political organisation. However, with some very rare exceptions (see below), the Japanese keep clear of the political upheaval on the continent.

Until the Meiji Restoration, Japan is a country that remains practically cut from the rest of the world.

The only occasions of encounters between Japanese non-player characters and Chinese player characters are: the two tentative invasions of Japan by the Mongols under the Yuán (1274 and 1281), the raids on the Chinese coastlines by the Japanese pirates called the Wōkōu under the Míng, and the two ill-fated Japanese invasions of Korea (1592-98).

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan becomes a model for modern-minded Chinese. At the end of the Qīng, many Chinese republicans or revolutionaries live exiled in Japan.

JURCHENS (NŭZHÈN)

Provinces: Central Siberia, Inner Manchuria, Outer Manchuria (from the Sòng to the Míng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tungusic

Native language: Jurchen. A Jurchen non-player character will probably know how to speak Mongolian or Khitan.

The Jurchen language is used as a diplomatic language amongst the nomads of Inner Asia under the Yuán and the Míng.

Religion: shamanism. Some individual Jurchens may have converted to Lamaism under the Yuán.

Clan- and tribe-based society

The Jurchens are semi-nomadic forest hunters.

Depending on the exact time period, the Jurchens are subject to their Mongol or Khitan neighbours, or have founded their own dynasties based on the Chinese model. In this latter case, they quickly become Sinicised.

Jurchen player and non-player characters will be described in a future Celestial Empire extension dedicated to the nomad peoples of Inner Asia.

KHITANS (QìDǎn)

Provinces: Sogdiana, Turkestan, Dzungaria, Tarim Basin, Western Tibet (under the Sòng and the Yuán)



Ethnic and linguistic group: Mongolian

Native language: Khitan. Most Khitan non-player characters know how to speak Jurchen (under the Sòng) or Mongolian (under the Yuán).

Religion: Lamaism mixed with shamanism

Tribe-based society governed by a warrior aristocracy

The Khitans practise extensive nomadic pastoralism.

At the beginning of the Yuán, most of the Khitans, under pressure from the Jīn dynasty of the Jurchen, move westwards and establish the short-lived Kara-Khitan or Western Liáo dynasty, which is destroyed in 1218 by the Mongol Empire. These Khitans are then absorbed by the local Turkic-Iranian peoples and disappear as an independent nation.

Khitan player and non-player characters will be described in a future Celestial Empire extension dedicated to the nomad peoples of Inner Asia.

KOREANS

Province: Korea (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Isolated

Native language: Korean. The educated élite write in Chinese.

Religion: mainly Mahāyāna Buddhism and shamanism (from the Táng to the Yuán), then a kind of folk religion like in China, even though Neo-Confucianism is the state religion and Buddhism is suppressed under the Míng and the Qīng

Patriarchy

Very early in history, the Koreans founded advanced states on the Chinese model, which managed to remain independent despite their Chinese and Japanese neighbours' appetite for conquest. Many inventions believed to be Chinese are actually Korean (e.g., the movable type system for printing).

The GM may introduce Korean non-player characters such as mercenaries (use 2D6+6 for SIZ) or such as Buddhist monks or priests who have come to China to study Buddhist scriptures or to escape state-sponsored persecution.

LAO

Provinces: Shan States, Yúnnán (under the Táng and the Sòng); Yúnnán (under the Yuán); Lan Xang (under the Míng and the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tai

Native language: Lao

Religion: until the Yuán, polytheism and "primitive" animism; from the Míng onwards, Hīnayāna Buddhism

The Lao live in a very egalitarian society; village life is managed by a kind of "council of the elders"

Until the Yuán, the Lao practise rice-growing in the plains by flooding, and in the mountains by slash-and-burn; from the Míng onwards, and after their conversion to Hīnayāna Buddhism, the Lao found fiefdoms and then "civilised" kingdoms.

Under the Qīng, the Lao fall under the Siamese domination, and then under the French protectorate.

The GM may introduce Lao non-player characters under the Táng, the Sòng, and the Yuán, before the great southward migration of the Lao.

LÍ

Provinces: Hǎinán (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tai

Native language: Lí

Religion: "primitive" animism with Daoist influences

Lí society is patriarchal; however, women, even married ones, enjoy a great degree of freedom until their first child

The Lí practise rice-growing in the plains by flooding, and in the mountains by slash-and-burn

The Lí have always tried to resist the Hàn colonisation of Hǎinán Island, opposing strong resistance to the Hàn invaders, especially under the Míng. The Lí are armed with spear and leather target.

LÌSÙ

Provinces: the high mountain slopes between Central Tibet, Yúnnán and Burma (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tibeto-Burman

Native language: Lisù

Religion: ancestor worship, animism

The Lisù live in a consensus society, in which decisions are taken by an assembly gathering the most influent men of each clan

The Lisù raise domestic animals. They also often plunder travelling Chinese merchants who try to trade with Burma, retiring into their inaccessible mountain villages after each plunder. The Lisù are armed with a spear and are protected by leather armour.

MANCHUS

Provinces: mostly Inner and Outer Manchuria, but Manchu nobles or garrison soldiers may be found in any province of the Chinese Empire (under the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tungusic

Native language: Manchu. A Manchu non-player character will know how to speak Northern Mandarin if he's from Inner or Outer Manchuria; he'll perfectly speak the Chinese vernacular of his home province if he's from Inner China. At the end of the Qīng, the Manchus from China proper have become completely Sinicised and don't speak the Manchu language any longer.

Religion: historically shamanism, but the Manchus of Inner China have become converts to Lamaism. Sinicised Manchus adopt the religious practices of the Hàn.

Tribal society (Manchu tribes are called "banners"). Even Sinicised Manchus remember which banner they stem from.

Originally, the Manchus were semi-nomadic forest hunters, but they have gradually adopted the agriculture-based customs and way of life of the surrounding Hàn Chinese. Noble Manchus constitute the military aristocracy of the Qīng Empire.

The Manchus are the direct descendants of the



Jurchens of the Yuán and Míng dynastic periods.

Manchu non-player characters from Inner and Outer Manchuria will be described in a future Celestial Empire extension dedicated to the nomad peoples of Inner Asia. Sinicised Manchus use the standard rules for character generation (use 2D6+6 for SIZ).

MONGOLS

Provinces: Western Siberia, Central Siberia, Buryatia, Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, Gansù, Amdo, North China, South China, Sìchuān, Yúnnán (under the Yuán); Buryatia, Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, Dzungaria, Tarim Basin (under the Míng); Buryatia, Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia (under the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Mongolian

Native language: Mongolian. Under the Yuán, an upper class Mongol usually knows how to speak Chinese or Jurchen.

Religion: shamanism and/or Lamaism, depending on the clan or the tribe. A minority of the clans has adopted Nestorianism.

Clan- and tribe-based society

The Mongols practise extensive nomadic pastoralism.

Slightly before the Yuán dynastic period, the Mongols start conquering the known world... Land after land, almost all of Eurasia comes under their sway. However, rivalry among the tribes weakens the Mongols, and their empire is divided up amongst Genghis Khan's descendants. At the end of the 17th century, the Mongols fall under the suzerainty of the Manchus and help the latter in establishing the Qīng Empire.

Mongol player and non-player characters will be described in a future Celestial Empire extension dedicated to the nomad peoples of Inner Asia.

SHAN (Dǎi)

Provinces: South China (under the Táng); Yúnnán (under the Sòng); Yúnnán, Shan States (under the Yuán); Shan States, Burma (under the Míng and the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tai

Native language: Shan. From the Míng onwards, any upper class Shan non-player character knows how to speak Burmese.

Religion: until the Yuán, polytheism and "primitive" animism; from the Míng onwards, Hīmayāna Buddhism

Feudal society

The Shan practise rice-growing in the plains by flooding, and in the mountains by slash-and-burn; some villages have good craftsmen. Fishing is important for those Shan who live near a lake.

At the beginning of the Míng, Burmanised Shan found the Ava Kingdom in Upper Burma, whereas the rest of the Shan remain under the authorities of petty princes. At the end of the Míng, all Shan come under the sway of the Burmese.

The GM may introduce Shan non-player characters under the Táng, the Sòng, and the Yuán, before the great southward migration of the Shan.

TIBETANS

Province: mostly Ladakh, Cenral Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, but also Southern Amdo and Northern Nepal (all dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tibeto-Burman

Native language: Tibetan, a language that is divided in sometimes mutually unintelligible dialects, which share however a common classical written form. Under the Qīng, the Bhutanese decide to make their own Tibetan dialect into an independent standard language, called Dzongkha.

Religion: ancestor worship and shamanism (under the Táng); Bōn [Tibetan syncretic religion] and Lamaism (from the Sòng onwards)

Depending on the particular provinces and dynastic period, Tibetan society may be feudal, theocratic, or pastoral.

Under the Táng, the Tibetans found a powerful kingdom that vies with the Arabs and the Chinese to control the Silk Road.

From the Yuán onwards, the constant rivalry between the various Buddhist monasteries puts the Tibetans under vassalage of the nomad peoples that have converted to Lamaism and who declare themselves "protectors" of one school or the other of Tibetan Buddhism.

Only Bhutan manages, under the Qīng, to remain independent.

The GM may introduce Tibetan non-player characters (use 2D6+6 for SIZ) such as mercenaries, or such as lamas who are travelling in China to found a monastery or to proselytise for their school.

Some Tibetan tribes may provide redoubtable foot or horse archers, both as opponents and as mercenaries.

YÁO

Provinces: Sìchuān (under the Táng); South China (under the Sòng and the Yuán); Dǎi, South China, Yúnnán (under the Míng); Dǎi, Yúnnán, Lan Xang, Dàyuè, Hǎinán (under the Qīng)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Miáo-Yáo

Native language: Yáo.

Religion: ancestor worship and Máoshān Sect Daoism

The Yáo live in a consensus society, in which decisions are taken by an assembly gathering the most influent men of each clan

The Yáo are nomadic peasants: they live on high mountain slopes (usually above 500 m) where they practise slash-and-burn agriculture. Thus, even if the Yáo inhabit a very large area, their numbers are small because they live on poor soil.

The GM may introduce Yáo non-player characters such as pedlars or joiners. As early as under the Táng dynasty, the Yáo have received a charter from the Chinese authorities stating that they could not be conscripted for public labour. At the end of the Míng, a group of Yáo is sent to Hǎinán Island to pacify the Lí.

YÍ

Provinces: the high mountain slopes between Central Tibet, Yúnnán and Burma (all dynastic



periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tibeto-Burman

Native language: Yí

Religion: ancestor worship, animism (with elements of Daoism and shamanism)

Yí priests may cast powerful spells using their sacred syllabaries (it is a kind of magic based on the power of their sacred script).

Feudal society broken down into three castes: nobles, freedmen and slaves. Nobles are of pure Yí ancestry; freedmen are former slaves that have been released from slavery; slaves are captured during the Yí's ferocious raids staged out against the neighbouring plain and valley peoples.

The Yí engage in farming and raise domestic animals.

Just like the Lisù, the Yí retire to their inaccessible mountain villages after each raid.

At the end of the Qīng, thanks to the above-mentioned raids and to illegal opium trade, the Yí manage to buy and stockpile many firearms.

ZHUÀNG

Provinces: South China (under the Táng); South China, Dàlǐ (under the Sòng); South China, Dàlǐ, Northern Dàyuè (all other dynastic periods)

Ethnic and linguistic group: Tái

Native language: Zhuàng. From the Míng onwards, most Zhuàng are Zhuàng-Chinese vernacular bilingual.

Religion: under the Táng and the Sòng, ancestor worship and animism; from the Yuán onwards, same religion as the neighbouring Hàn Chinese. Patriarchal society

The Zhuàng practise rice-growing in the plains by flooding.

The Zhuàng are descendants of the indigenous peoples of South China before it became Sinicised. Under the Táng, the Zhuàng resist to the Chinese progression but, from the Yuán onwards, they loyally serve in the Chinese armies.

CHINESE RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Cosmology

COSMOGONY

Chinese scholars and philosophers came up with the following explanation for the creation of Cosmos: Heaven and the Earth took consistance within a kind of primordial ether whose elements separated from each other – much like the constituents of a fluid when it settles down.

Heaven (*Tiān* 天), thought of as being either a sphere or a dais, is round, whereas the Earth that it covers is square. Columns or mountains situated at the edge of the universe both support Heaven and lead to it. Heaven and the Earth are the two

constituents of a vast organism whose sacred parts are the Sun, the Moon, the stars above it, and the rivers and mountains (and in particular the Five Great Mountains) below it. Heaven, or the supreme divinity inhabiting it, was at first considered as the dynastic ancestor. In the Zhōu, it lost this character (qv the Religion(s) of Ancient China below), yet it remained considered as a male power whose spouse was the Earth. The worldly equivalents of the heavenly couple were the King and the Queen.

Heaven was thought of as having nine stories, or as being actually made up of nine superposed heavens with nine gates; the depths of the Earth would mirror this architecture with their own nine underground levels filled with abysmal waters and called the Yellow Spring (*Huángquán* 黄泉).

Qì

Qì (also ch'í in Wade-Giles, ki in Japanese and Korean, khí in Vietnamese) is one of the key concepts of Chinese cosmology.

The Chinese character used to write the word qì: 氣 shows a lid over steaming rice, thus carrying the idea of an invisible force able to move a heavy object. Since the very beginning of Chinese history, qì has been first and foremost thought of as the driving force behind all movement and all change in the universe. If a man is ill, the explanation is that his qì must not be flowing correctly. If a country is not being governed properly, then the qì of the land must be upset. Conversely, if a man has an excess of qì flowing in him, he is strong, a country with an excess of qì is prosperous.

The Three Qì

There are three kinds of qì:

- Essential qì is received from one's parents and is stored in one's kidneys. It can only decrease with time, since it is the qì that fuels one's existence: basically, once a person has run out of it, they die.
- Digestive qì sustains one's body functions and is received through the food one eats.
- Cosmic qì comes from the air one breathes and is necessary to interact with the world – and to master it (see below).

Each Chinese school of thought had its own peculiar ideas on what kind of influence qì had on men's lives, and what must be done with it.

For Daoism, the only way a man could realise himself, develop his potential, and preserve his equilibrium, was to manage the fusion of his qì with the qì of the universe. This is the sole aim of the many strange Daoist practices: shadow boxing, special diets, having sex without releasing one's semen, wǔshù combat, and inner alchemy.

For Confucianism, the qì of the universe had to be propitiated by strictly observing the Confucian rites, and by reading and studying the Classics. Later on, Neo-Confucianism went so far as to think that



men could model the qì to suit their own needs.

For Buddhism, on the contrary, one's qì and the qì of the universe were one and the same, and the belief that men could have an influence on the qì of the universe was mere illusion. Beyond these schools of thought, one may consider that in actually all Chinese fields of research: medicine, alchemy, geomancy, martial arts, there is but one aim: the mastery of qì.

Myths and Beliefs

At the earliest times of China's history, Chinese thinkers developed certain concepts that are fundamental to Chinese myths and beliefs. These concepts proved so strong and central to the Chinese people that they remained in place irrespective of all the changes that Chinese thought underwent up to today. These fundamental concepts are: *Dào* and *Dé*, *yīn* and *yáng*, the Five Movements.

Dào (道) is the universal guiding force that governs the universe and guarantees its unity; *Dé* (德) is the power through which the universal guiding force manifests itself in the mundane world. For instance, the King (later, the Emperor) is *Dào* incarnate on Earth and is hence entitled to rule All Under Heaven through his *Dé*. The mightier the King's *Dé*, the wiser his rule. *Dào* and *Dé* are moral virtues, yet they have an influence on nature itself: any disorder in the King's rule causes a reaction in Heaven, whose "wrath" manifests itself through ill omens, and then through natural catastrophes; inversely, a virtuous King brings about good omens and the birth of good-natured people. This theory is most manifest in the Chinese concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven'. If a King (later, an Emperor) is not virtuous, his acts will automatically cause his own demise through natural catastrophes and rebellions.

Yīn (陰) and *yáng* (陽) are the two opposite aspects through which *Dào* manifests itself in the world. *Yīn* corresponds to darkness, cold, passivity; *yáng* to light, heat, activity. In the universe, Heaven and the Sun are *yáng*, the Earth and the Moon are *yīn*; at the human level, man is *yáng*, woman *yīn*, the master *yáng*, the servant *yīn*. Most importantly, *yīn* and *yáng* are relative notions, they are meant to render a relationship between two items, and not a clear cut classification. Moreover, this relationship is a dynamic, moving one: as the qì of the universe flows, the *yáng* slowly becomes *yīn*, and the *yīn* slowly becomes *yáng*, since each of these aspects contains the other (as per the well-known Chinese *yīn-yáng* circular symbol).

For the average Chinese, *yīn* and *yáng* do have a sexual connotation, however, they do not have a moral one. *Yīn* and *yáng* don't have anything to do with Good and Evil; they are simply the necessary aspects of *Dào*. Without them, nothing would evolve, nothing would live.

"Broadly speaking, the yīn and the yáng are the two primeval forces from the interaction of which all things have been evolved."

H. Giles

The Five Movements (or Five Phases, or Five Elements – these are all tentative translations for the Chinese phrase *Wǔxíng* 五行) introduce, beyond the *yīn-yáng* dichotomy, a representation of five equally important natural energies. For the layman, they might actually be 'five elements', but for the scholar and the philosopher, they are the five different aspects of *Dào* along the five directions, viz: to the East, Wood (*mù* 木); to the South, Fire (*huǒ* 火); to the West, Metal (*jīn* 金); to the North, Water (*shuǐ* 水); in the Centre, Earth (*tǔ* 土). Each of these elements is itself associated with several notions, amongst which one of the fundamental colours: green for Wood, red for Fire, white for Metal, black for Water, yellow for Earth.

THE HUMAN BODY

The human body contains vital forces, "souls", some *yīn*, and some *yáng*. In particular, we have an ethereal soul or cloudsoul (*hún* 魂), which is linked to the ancestral tablet, which comes from Heaven, and which returns to it after death, and a corporeal soul or whitesoul (*pò* 魄), which is linked to the dead body and the grave, which comes from the Earth, and which returns to it after death.

"Death is regarded as a summons from the authorities of Purgatory; lictors are sent to arrest the doomed man armed with a written warrant similar to those issued on earth from a magistrate's yá mén."

H. Giles

After death (more exactly after the mortuary ritual has been held for the deceased), the cloudsoul becomes an aggregate soul (*shén* 神); Daoists who have strived and managed to accumulate enough vital energy have their *shén* join the lofty abode of the Immortals. As for the whitesoul, some say it resides within the bones of the corpse, and hence in the grave, some others say it goes to the Yellow Spring.

Both the cloudsoul and the whitesoul will dissolve into nothingness after a certain time. This is why ancestors are worshipped only up to the seventh generation: beyond that generation, they are represented by a common spirit tablet for all older ancestors.

The God of the Eastern Mountain (Mount *Tài*: *Tàishān* 泰山) is responsible for the register of the living and the dead.

In case of a violent death or of if the dead really had a task he or she felt must be carried on, or if the mortuary ritual hasn't been properly held for the deceased, the cloudsoul would stay on Earth as a ghost, who would torment the living or coerce them into completing the unfinished task.

Later on, Buddhism was introduced to China

and with it the concept of retribution: the Daoist Hell (Diyù 地獄), which was a simple prison, became a place for punishments. However, the Buddhist Hell, contrary the Western one, is not a place of eternal torment: once one's condemnation is over, the dead is reincarnated and its reincarnation depends on the merits of its past life (the karma 業). Reciprocally, the Buddhist Hell was Sinicised and transformed into a tribunal much more like a real Chinese tribunal than like the original Hell from Indian Buddhism. After death, the whitesoul is brought to this tribunal, where the Judge of the Dead (Lord Yāma: Yánluó 閻羅) gives it its destination:

- the most virtuous whitesouls go the Western Paradise, the abode of Amitābha (Ēmítuófó 阿彌陀佛)
- else, the whitesoul goes to the Southern Paradise, where it might be chosen by the Jade Emperor (Yù Dì 玉帝) and receive an official charge in the Celestial Bureaucracy, or else it may drink the tea of oblivion before being reincarnated through the wheel of karma.
- Evil whitesouls are brought to the ten infernal tribunals, ruled by the ten Yāma Kings (Yánwáng 閻王), the judges of the Nether Region, who decide the kind of punishment to be undergone in the City of Ghosts (Fēngdū 豐都).

"The tea of oblivion is administered by an old beldame, named Mother Mèng, who sits upon the Terrace of Oblivion. 'Whether they swallow much or little it matters not; but sometimes there are perverse devils who altogether refuse to drink. Then beneath their feet sharp blades start up, and a copper tube is forced down their throats, by which means they are compelled to swallow some'."

RELIGIONS

The Religion(s) of Ancient China

Ancient China had three religions, or one religion divided in three quite different aspects. The first aspect was the 'civic religion', which only concerned those very few people living within the city walls, and who had some kind of relationship with the King. This civic religion was mostly centred on the correct rites to be performed so that the world would remain balanced. One huge difference between the religion of ancient China and the religions of ancient Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, or ancient Greece, is that Heaven ceased to be an anthropomorphic power to which men would send their prayers ("depersonalisation" of Heaven) and became a natural power devoid of human feelings. As such, Heaven was not to be prayed to, but was to be

respected. Heaven would not edict rules to be obeyed, but rites that must be properly carried out by its representative on earth: the King.

"First of all, there were the great sacrifices, which were reserved for the Son of Heaven alone. Besides what may be called private sacrifices, the Emperor sacrificed also to the four quarters, and to the mountains and rivers of the empire; while the feudal nobles sacrificed each to his own quarter, and to the mountains and rivers of his own domain. The victim offered by the Emperor on a blazing pile of wood was an ox of one colour, always a young animal; a feudal noble would use any fatted ox; and a petty official a sheep or a pig. When sacrificing to the spirits of the land and of grain, the Son of Heaven used a bull, a ram, and a boar; the feudal nobles only a ram and a boar; and the common people, scallions and eggs in spring, wheat and fish in summer, millet and a sucking-pig in autumn, and unhulled rice and a goose in winter."

"Sacrifices, according to the Book of Rites, should not be frequently repeated. Such frequency is an indication of importunateness; and importunateness is inconsistent with reverence."

H. Giles

The second aspect was the 'agrarian religion', the one for the village folk, centred around the shrine of the God of the Land (Shè 社), materialised by a mound, a tree, or an altar. Each social group, small or large, has its own. It is to the God of the Land that all events affecting the community are told; it is kept updated with the advancement of farm work, and with the opening and closing times of the folk festivals. It is offered the first fruits and other kinds of sacrifices.

Moreover, each large village, or each cluster of related small villages has a "holy place." This is where folk festivals take place, which are the crux of the social and religious life of the village folk. In the autumn, orgies and markets take place; in the spring, young unmarried men are allowed to flirt with young unmarried women. These village fairs are very important because, outside of festivals, men and women are not allowed to meet; it is usually at this time that marriages are contracted.

The third aspect was shamanism, of which little is known because it had disappeared at the time when records started to be written. Shamanic practices can only be guessed at by their survival in some aspects of Daoism, and in many songs and poems, especially from Sichuan.

All these aspects of Chinese religious life were overshadowed by the Three Teachings (see below) around the first century AD. It must be noted that the Three Teachings did not spring out of nowhere. The latter half of the Zhōu dynasty was a time of weakening of the authority of the King. As a



consequence, the philosophical foundations of the past were discredited, and new schools of thought flourished (the so-called Hundred Schools of Thought). Since religion cannot be dissociated from philosophy in China, the arrival of these new schools of thought had a consequence on the religious life of the Chinese. In the Táng, the Three Teachings were clearly holding the upper ground. However, by the 13th century AD, many aspects of the religion(s) of ancient China had resurfaced within the syncretic religion known as 'Chinese folk religion', which also borrows elements from all three major religions.

In parallel of these three aspects of the religion of ancient China, the Chinese have also always practised ancestor veneration. This worship started out as part of the civic religion of ancient China (see above). Once a year, the King would respectfully worship his ancestors. This practice then spread to the nobility, and then down the social ladder to every Chinese. When the religion(s) of ancient China dwindled, ancestor veneration remained strong because it managed to conform to the Three Teachings that subsequently appeared: with Confucianism, it shared the notion of filial piety; with Daoism, the notion that the spirit of the dead might still have an influence among the living; with Buddhism, the notion that the faithful had to pray for their ancestors, so that the latter would benefit from a good reincarnation.

"For the purpose of ancestral worship, which had been practised from the earliest ages, the Emperor had seven shrines, each with its altar representing various forefathers; and at all of these a sacrifice was offered every month. Feudal nobles could have only five sets of these, and the various officials three or fewer, on a descending scale in proportion to their rank. Petty officers and the people generally had no ancestral shrine, but worshipped the shades of their forefathers as best they could in their houses and cottages."

H. Giles

THE THREE TEACHINGS

The Three Teachings (*sānjiào* 三教) is a phrase that refers to the three traditionally recognised religions in China, viz, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. 'Religion' is very much a Western construct; the present-day Chinese word for "religion" (*zōngjiào* 宗教) has only been in use since the end of the 19th century. Also, religious life in China (except for the King or the Emperor) is very much family-oriented and does not require the exclusive adherence of its members.

Confucianism

Confucianism, at least from a religious perspective, started (appr. in the 6th century BC) as a reaction against the agrarian religion of ancient China, its sexual practices and its superstitions. Confucianism is a 'religion' without a clergy, and it refutes the supernatural and the concepts of life after death, Paradise or Hell.

"The highly educated Confucianist rises above the superstition that darkens the lives of his less fortunate fellow countrymen."

H. Giles

The aim of Confucianism is to create a political moral. It advocates the use of rites as a means, within society, to avoid violence and the rule of the strong. It creates a state doctrine that is much more efficient than the mere recourse to punishments and rewards to found a power that is built on something else than simply force. The cardinal virtues of this state Confucianism are devotion to the Country and filial piety.

If it is not a real religion, Confucianism cannot be reduced to a philosophy either, since it does involve a cosmology: Heaven, with its Celestial Bureaucracy, which is an ideal image of what the Earth and its worldly bureaucracy should be, and since it does admit divinatory practices based on the diagrams of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經).

"Ritual principles have three roots. Heaven and Earth are the roots of life. Forebears are the roots of kinship. Lord and teacher are the roots of order... Thus rituals serve Heaven above and Earth below, pay honour to one's forebears, and exalt rulers and teachers, for these are the three roots of ritual principles."

Xúnzi, chapter 19

Confucian moral values are not aristocratic moral values but bourgeois ones; they do not consolidate the privileges held through birth, but those acquired thanks to education and formal behaviour; they do not favour the ardour of the soldier, but the patience of the bureaucrat.

Confucianism is the state religion of China during all the periods of history covered by this role-playing game; and more particularly from the 14th century AD onwards (Neo-Confucianism).

Daoism

Daoism appears during the same period of time as Confucianism (appr. the 6th century BC) but, unlike the latter, heavily draws from the religions of ancient China. Daoism organises and codifies the ancient myths and beliefs, most notably pilgrimages to the Five Great Mountains, the search for immortality, and ecstatic wanderings in the heavenly regions. Whereas Confucianism stresses the role of society, Daoism stresses the role of the individual. Whereas Confucianism stresses the importance of a rational behaviour, Daoism stresses the importance of a mystical and spontaneous behaviour. Whereas Confucianism is all about behaving according to the strict rules of Chinese society, Daoism is about indifference towards them, and about opposition to the ritualism and to the hypocrisy of Confucianism.

According to Daoism, salvation stems from the freedom of the individual, and not from one's adherence to a set of rules. As with many other ancient religions, which are utilitarian rather than

moralistic, Daoism is “beyond Good and Evil.” Moreover, Chinese philosophy, contrary to Western philosophy, does not distinguish between two opposite forces (Good and Evil), but between two complementary forces (yīn and yáng). As a consequence, Daoism has always featured aspects that Western morals would consider as “evil”. The traditional novel *The Investiture of the Gods*, which supposedly takes place under the Shāng, tells the struggle of two Daoist sects, one allied to the protagonists of the novel, and the other to their enemies. The latter sect, the Xié sect, is portrayed as evil by the anonymous Míng-era author of the novel, but nothing proves that the Shāng Chinese would have had the same opinion.

From a cultural point of view, it is Daoism that has codified the notions of yīn-yáng, of Wúxíng, of correlation between the five organs, the five directions, the five elements, etc., mostly to use these notions in Daoist magic rituals.

*“When the Dào is forgotten,
The doctrines of humanity and morality arise.”
Dàodéjīng, chapter 18*

The stress put on a life centred on the individual and attuned to the forces of nature has been variously understood by Daoists:

- some have emphasised meditation and the study of Daoist philosophical texts (mostly the *Dàodéjīng* and the *Zhuāngzǐ*),
- some others have emphasised esoteric rituals, magic, prayers, and the study of sacred texts revealed to the founders of their particular sect within Daoism.

The former practice is called ‘philosophical Daoism’ (*Dàojiā* 道家), the latter ‘religious Daoism’ (*Dàojiào* 道教), although it must be understood that there isn’t a clear-cut barrier between them and that followers of Daoism may freely mix them. In gaming terms, the former is the one preferred by hermits and learned priests, the latter by monks and rank and file priests.

Depending on the period of time and on any given Emperor, Daoism is either encouraged or repressed by central government. This explains why Daoists live in isolated, inaccessible places; to meditate, but also to avoid being involved in politics. If the isolated and slightly crazy Daoist fighting against vampires as in the film *A Chinese Ghost Story* illustrates the typical archetype associated with Daoists, some periods of time (e.g., the end of the Táng) see Daoists deeply involved in the life of the State, which subsidises the building of Daoist monasteries.

Buddhism

The history of Buddhism in China may be roughly divided in three periods: the first four centuries AD are a time of slow assimilation of Buddhism and of its adaptation to a civilisation very

THE CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY

The Celestial Bureaucracy is the pantheon of Chinese mythology and is a common tenet of Confucianism, of Daoism, and of Chinese folk religion.

Just as Heaven is the ideal model of the mundane world, the Celestial Bureaucracy is the ideal model of government. Its ruler is the Jade Emperor (Yù Dì 玉帝), assisted by the four emperors of the cardinal directions:

1. at the south, the Flame Emperor: Yándì (炎帝)
2. at the west, Shǎohào (少昊), Emperor of the Western Heavens
3. at the north, the nameless Northern Emperor (Běidì 北帝)
4. at the east, Tàihào (太昊)

The Five Emperors are also assisted by sixty Heavenly Generals; each of these sixty Heavenly Generals oversees a particular year of the Chinese sexagenary cycle (see page 13).

From the 12th century onwards, the Jade Emperor is flanked by a spouse called the Earthly Sovereign (Dì Huáng 地皇). They rule over innumerable civil servants, each of them being affected to a celestial body, a natural phenomenon, or a craft. There is a god of the planet Jupiter, a god of rain, a god of blacksmiths, etc.

From the Míng onwards, Chinese folk religion starts to particularly emphasise the worship of the Northern Emperor; this worship remains strong until the Qīng. Other important gods from the Celestial Bureaucracy:

God of the Land: each region has its own. Although it has a very low rank in the Celestial Bureaucracy, it is one of the most beloved deities.

God of Wealth, particularly fêted during the New Year celebrations.

God of Happiness, who presides over marriages.

Elder Zhāng Guǒ (張果老). His icon protects children (this is a real historical figure who lived under the Táng, and who was apotheosized).

The Birth-Registry Goddess (Zhùshēng Niángniang 註生娘娘) is worshipped by people who want children.

There is also a whole series of protective deities presiding over all the various aspects of daily life: Kitchen God, God of Wells, Goddess of Latrines...

City gods and town gods: these are the urban counterparts to the God of the Land worshipped in the countryside.

different, by its social and political organisation as well as by its traditions and its conceptions, from the civilisation where this religion was born; between the 5th and the 9th centuries, China is subject to a great Buddhist fervour (this is the time of Buddhism’s successful introduction to Korea and Japan); the following centuries are times of fall and decline for Chinese Buddhism and, from the Mongol conquest onwards, of expansion for Tibetan Buddhism (or Lamaism).

Buddhism was born as a salvation religion in northern India around the 4th century BC. According to the tenets of Brahmanism (which was at the time the main religion in northern India), man is prisoner of the cycle of successive reincarnations of his soul (*samsāra*).

The primitive teachings of the Buddha (‘the Enlightened One’), as written down by his disciples in the *sūtra*, aimed at a way to evolve, through meditation techniques, into an arhat, i.e., a being who has attained *nirvāna* and who has thus managed to escape the cycle of suffering and rebirth: *samsāra*.

This primitive form of Buddhism, called *Hīnayāna*, spread from northern India to South Asia and Southeast Asia. A new form of Buddhism, called



Mahāyāna, appears during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD; it is characterised by a modification in the followers' ideal of perfection: whereas the follower of *Hīnayāna* strives to become an arhat, the follower of *Mahāyāna* strives to become a bodhisattva, i.e., a being who, despite having reached a considerable degree of enlightenment, sacrifices his own salvation for mankind's sake by remaining in this world to help others rather than attaining *nirvāṇa*. This ideal – called the bodhisattva vows, this compassion for suffering sentient beings, emerged under the influence of Hindu devotional practices.

Mahāyāna was brought to China along the Silk Road and the oases of Central Asia, which were under Chinese control until the 8th century. In the beginning, the Chinese thought Buddhism was a bizarre foreign branch of Daoism but, from the 6th century onwards, it appeared as a new religion and appealed to Chinese philosophers. In the Táng, it propagated to the general populace. Buddhism's extraordinary power and wealth brought upon it the jealousy of the Daoists and of the Court, who ordered persecutions from 843 to 845; monasteries and temples were destroyed, the religion was persecuted, and monks and nuns had to give up their Buddhist lives. This marked a fall in the power and wealth of Chinese Buddhism, which never fully recovered from these persecutions, and which would only survive in the syncretism of Chinese folk religion, or in the two schools that had most appealed to lay followers of Buddhism: Chán and Pure Land.

Tiāntái School

This is one of the very first genuinely Chinese *Mahāyāna* schools. The Tiāntái School (Tiāntáizōng 天台宗) teaches that the 'Buddha nature' is already present in all living beings, and that one may become

a bodhisattva in this very life, without having to be reincarnated several times to improve one's karma – contrary to the orthodox teachings of primitive Indian Buddhism. The name of the school stems from the mountain in north-eastern Zhèjiāng (浙江) where it was founded by the monk Zhìyǐ (智顗, 538-597). According to the Tiāntái School, the various *Mahāyāna* sūtra have a very precise order in terms of when they were taught by the Buddha and of whom they target, the ultimate sūtra being the Lotus Sūtra.

The Tiāntái School would not survive the forfeiture of 843-845, but it would have a deep impact on Japanese Buddhism.

Chán Buddhism

According to tradition, the Chán School (Chánzōng 禪宗) was founded by the legendary Indian monk Bodhidharma. Despite this legendary Indian origin, this school is very much Chinese and heavily influenced by Daoist practices. This school famously considers that scriptures and pious acts are unnecessary and are, at the best, ancillary tools in the endeavour of attaining Enlightenment, which is the mere understanding of the Buddha nature within all of us. Some Chán masters emphasise gradual Enlightenment, some others sudden Enlightenment. The former would stress the practice of zuòchán (坐禪 : aimless meditation), the latter the use of gōng'ān (公案 : paradoxical acts or sayings).

Pure Land Buddhism

This typically *Mahāyāna* school holds that Enlightenment is not attainable in this world because people are no longer capable of following the Buddha's original teachings. It hence emphasises the importance of being reborn in the "Pure Land" of Amitābha (Ēmítuófó 阿彌陀佛), the Western Paradise where Enlightenment is guaranteed, and it considers blind faith (salvation will come by listening to Amitābha's teachings in his Western Paradise) as being more important than one's attainments. As such, the tenets of Pure Land Buddhism are quite the opposite of those of Chán Buddhism; yet both somehow converge in not following the teachings of primitive Buddhism, and in having had the most enduring appeal to lay followers.

Followers of Pure Land Buddhism constantly invoke Amitābha's name and hope that they will be reborn in his Paradise.

White Lotus

The syncretic and eschatological sect of the White Lotus (Báiliánjiào 白蓮教) forecasts the imminent advent of Maitreya (Mílè 彌勒), the future Buddha, whose arrival in this world is supposed to bring universal salvation. The White Lotus has been behind many of China's popular rebellions since the end of the Yuán.

CHINESE FOLK RELIGION

In the Yuán, Buddhism and Daoism were openly fighting to gain the favour of the followers of the rival

faith. The success of Buddhism was such that the Daoists' best response was to imitate their rivals' religion, to the extent that the tenets of the two religions became closer and closer. The effect amongst the Chinese populace was that followers of both religions turned away from their respective faith. Buddhism, already in decline, suffered much from this religious crisis, despite nominally remaining the No.1 Chinese religion, and it lost much of its territorial hold. This vacuum was filled by the syncretic Chinese Folk Religion.

By the Sòng, China had very much become a secularised society, which also favoured the spread of a religion without a clergy.

Many folkloric beliefs drawn from the Three Teachings can be found in the syncretic Chinese Folk Religion. However, many others stem from antiquity: worship of the God of the Land (one per village, under the orders of the God of the Land of the provincial capital city), ancestor veneration, and season festivals. Some others have been added over the years, like the worship of apotheosised cultural heroes.

Chinese Folk Religion has no clergy: the religious life of the community, the temples, and the festivals are managed by the community itself (be it a village, a guild, or a clan). Instead of sacred scriptures, this religion relies on theatrical works representing the deeds of historical figures and of folk deities.

The pantheon of Chinese Folk Religion is vast and disorganised because it has incorporated hundreds of gods and goddesses based on local preferences and beliefs, and the names of the deities vary greatly as some of them get out of fashion and are replaced by newer ones! Any deity, even a foreign one, may be absorbed into the folk pantheon as soon as its power becomes manifest. This is how apotheosised historical figures, Indian buddhas and bodhisattvas (amongst whom Guānyīn is the most worshipped), and even sometimes in the 20th century Muhammad and Jesus Christ, were drawn into the folk pantheon.

MANICHÆISM

Manichæism was a major dualist religion that flourished in Asia between the 3rd and the 14th century. In the Táng, Manichæism was a major religion of Inner Asia because it had been adopted as the State religion of the Uyghur Empire. However in 840 the Uyghurs were driven out of present-day Mongolia and, after having settled in Dzungaria and in the Tarim Basin, they renounced Manichæism in favour of local Buddhism and Nestorianism. After having peaked in the 10th century, Manichæism was eventually annihilated and supplanted by the spread of Islam in Central Asia, whereas further east it was replaced with Buddhism.

NESTORIAN CHRISTIANITY

Nestorius (c. 386–c. 451), Archbishop of Constantinople, claimed that it was indecent to consider the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, because she had given birth to the man Jesus, and not

to his divine essence. Nestorius' doctrine was banned from the Byzantine Empire on the grounds of heresy. However, since merchants-missionaries had brought this doctrine with them to China along the Silk Road all the way from Persia, the Nestorian Church became popular in Central Asia, in China, and in India, where it vied with Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Hinduism, and Manichæism.

Nestorianism was particularly active in the 12th century, when there were two archbishops in China (in Xī'ān and in Běijīng), affiliated to the Seat in Baghdād. In 1289, Nestorian Christians were so numerous in China that the government established an agency to monitor them. Nestorianism was particularly popular amongst the Steppe peoples, and Marco Polo mentions several churches built in the oases of Central Asia. Nestorian Christianity is the origin of the legends of Prester John, popular in Europe during the late Middle Ages.

Much like Manichæism, Nestorianism was all but annihilated in the 14th century by the spread of Islam and Buddhism.

TANTRISM AND LAMAISM

Tantrism (Mìjiào 密教) is a late esoteric offshoot of Buddhism that appeared in India under the influence of Hinduism, and which was introduced into China in the second half of the eighth century by the monk Būkōng (不空). Tantrism considers that Enlightenment may be attained through esoteric magical and/or sexual practices. It becomes a fleeting fad at the court of the Táng, then disappears from China, but reaches Tibet where it plays a fundamental role in the formation of Lamaism.

Lamaism was the name given to Tibetan Buddhism by early Western scholars who almost considered it as a different religion from Buddhism proper because of its many substrata (Chán Buddhism, Tantrism, Shamanism, Nestorian Christianity), of its magical and religious rituals, and of its influent monks called lama.

ISLAM

Islam (Qīngzhēnjiào 清真教) has been at home in China for a very long time. Even though Islam has never managed to become a mainstream Chinese religion, it has managed to become the major religion of two groups of peoples: on one hand the Turkic peoples of the Northwest (the Kazakhs of Dzungaria and the Uyghurs of the Tarim Basin), on the other hand the Huí (Chinese converts to Islam) of Gānsù and Yúnnán.

Chinese mosques are pagoda-like, built without a minaret (forbidden by the State), and the call to prayer is made within the mosque itself. The inside of a Chinese mosque is a plain space decorated with Koranic verses, as within any other mosque in the world. The difference is that Chinese mosques must also hold a shrine to the ancestors of the Emperor, because this shrine is compulsory in all Chinese places of worship.

As with all other Western religions, Islam was brought to China along the Silk Road, mostly by

travelling merchants, from the 7th century onwards. Most early Muslims lived in Lánzhōu and in Xī'ān. The Yuán Dynasty, despite choosing Lamaism as the State religion in the 13th century, favoured the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Muslims to help administer China and to counter the demographic and cultural vitality of the Chinese (this is the origin of the Yúnnán Muslims). The “third wave” of Muslim immigration to China corresponds to the expansion of the Naqshbandiya, a Sufi order, in the 17th century, and again along the Silk Road, and towards the cities of Lánzhōu and Xī'ān.

Contrary to the Yuán Dynasty, the Qīng Dynasty was very intolerant vis-à-vis Islam: Muslim pilgrimages were subject to restrictions, and the construction of new mosques was prohibited. Chinese Muslims – who had embraced State-sponsored careers in the Yuán and in the Míng – started feeling estranged from Confucian society, and this social alienation would lead to several Naqshabandi-inspired rebellions during the 19th century. The first rebellion took place in Yúnnán in 1855, and a de facto independent Muslim state was established in Western Yúnnán that would only be reclaimed by the Qīng in 1872. Revolt then spread to Gānsù in 1862, then Shānxī, where it would last until 1876. The last rebellion took place in 1864 in the areas of Turkestan that had fallen under Chinese control in the previous century (Dzungaria and the Tarim Basin). Yaqub Beg (1820-1877), an Uyghur adventurer, managed to become the ruler of the area in 1866 through skilful manipulation of the great powers (Russia, Britain, and China). The Qīng started reasserting their rule in 1876–1877, and the war would go on until 1884, when the Chinese rule became definitive; the area then became a mere Chinese province, called Xīnjiāng (xīn jiāng: new territories).

GENRE

As explained in the introduction, The Celestial Empire has been primarily written to provide a framework for running a historically-accurate roleplaying campaign in Imperial China. But even if the game master follows our guidelines in order to respect Chinese history and culture, he might end up mixing the various genres of Oriental fantasy and fiction, which we do not recommend.

There are indeed a number of defined genres in East Asian fantasy and fiction. Our suggestion is for the game master to try and stick to a given genre for a given campaign. The main suggested genres, with their implication on the rules, are as follows:

- **Historical gaming** – The player characters' adventures are set against a historical background. There aren't any monsters, and there isn't any magic. Martial artists are simply people very skilled in armed and/or unarmed combat, but they are incapable of extraordinary feats. The power level of

the campaign is normal. Example: the Judge Dee novels.

- **Semi-historical gaming** – The player characters are adventuring in an idealised Imperial China as the Chinese imagine it: brave Chinese heroes, cunning foreigners, and lots of anachronisms. The power level of the campaign is normal, but it is OK for the game master not to stick 100% to historical reality (e.g., the bandits of Mount Liáng do exist as portrayed in the novel, and the Shàolín monks do fight against the Manchus as per their legend). Example: the Once Upon a Time in China series of films.

- **Sword fighting.** Despite the general contempt towards fighting men in Chinese society, a campaign could be centred on a group of player characters all having fighting-related professions. Example: in the 2001 Korean film *Musa*, a group of Korean soldiers do daring deeds in order to save a Chinese princess from a much larger force of Mongol warriors. The power level of the campaign is normal, but the fighting skills of the player characters must be boosted up.

- **Chinese fantasy** (folk tales and ghost stories), with themes from supernatural tales such as Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio: magic, monsters, but no incredible martial arts or acrobatics, or only sparingly. For instance, in *A Chinese Ghost Story*, only the swordsmen are capable of incredible feats, all the other humans fight normally. The power level of the campaign is heroic.

- **The so-called Kung fu genre**, with its emphasis on incredible martial arts, but no magic and no monsters. The power level of the campaign is heroic. Example: the Fong Sai Yuk films, or the 2006 Chinese film *Fearless*.

- **Wúxiá.** This is the ultimate epic genre, where obviously the power level of the campaign is epic. Examples: the films *Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*, *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*.

- **Western-like High fantasy**, with nonhuman characters, magic and monsters galore is completely alien to the Chinese tradition of supernatural tales, which usually introduce such elements sparingly and subtly. There is one single novel that we may label as high fantasy: the Míng classic *Journey to the West*, also simply known as *Monkey*. However, this tale is so popular in China that a campaign centred on the quests of a closely-knit group of nonhuman adventurers would be legitimate. The power level of the campaign is epic.

The experienced game master may nonetheless expressly want to mix genres. For instance, a campaign based on or inspired by the film *Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain* would draw from both the Chinese fantasy genre and from the *wúxiá* genre – although such an over the top setting would more appropriately be run using Alephtar Games' *Dragon Lines* supplement.

There are plenty of men in the world, but very few heroes.

(Chinese proverb)



CAMPAIGN GAME

The Celestial Empire was designed as a culture role-playing game, hence the emphasis on non-combat professions and skills. Also, one must bear in mind that the illegitimate use of force was frowned upon by Chinese society. Contrary to mediaeval Europe, where the mounted knight epitomised what was best in European society, both from a secular and a religious point of view, the ideal of Imperial China was the scholar-bureaucrat; soldiers were frowned upon, being often convicts who had been given the choice between harsh labour, imprisonment, exile, or being conscripted into the army.

Another characteristic of Chinese culture is the emphasis on the community, be it one's clan, guild, military unit, bureaucratic office, religious sect, or martial arts school. These communities always function as per the Confucian ideal of the father-son and elder-younger brother relationships. The following paragraphs give a few guidelines in devising a campaign game with The Celestial Empire:

- The player characters are outlaws – this would be a campaign centred on the Rivers and Lakes (see page 9), i.e., the community of outlaws, pedlars, beggars, and hermits, which exists in parallel along 'normal' society, but which has its own laws and code of conduct. In the society of the Rivers and Lakes, violence is an accepted form of behaviour, especially when used to uphold their ideals of loyalty and honour.

- The player characters are members of a martial arts school – the adventures would mainly revolve around challenges with other schools, retrieving lost artefacts, and participating in martial arts tournaments.
- The player characters are a magistrate and his followers. The campaign would start with the magistrate having been freshly appointed to a new prefecture. He would start and unravel the mysteries of his new seat, and to try and solve any cases that the previous magistrate did not manage.
- Military campaign. The player characters are soldiers from a given unit of the Chinese army, stationed in a frontier area, or in a region ripe with outlaw activity.
- Militant campaign. The player characters are members of a religious sect/cult (Buddhist monks, or Daoist swordsmen). They might use violence against supernatural foes, against rival zealots, or against governmental agents.
- The player characters are members of an escort agency (biāojú 镖局). These were professional organisations set up under the Qīng, when travel over vast distances was extremely dangerous because of rebellions, banditry, foreign adventurers, etc. The player characters would provide armed protection for travelling merchants and their goods, and would also provide bodyguard services to protect the wealthy and the powerful.



Optional rules used

The following BRP options are used in the book:

- Aging and Inaction (page 183 of BRP)
- Allegiance (page 315 of BRP)
- Cultural Modifiers (page 38 of BRP)
- Education (page 27 of BRP)
- Literacy (page 67 of BRP)
- Powers – Magic, Sorcery, and several other customised Powers
- Skill Ratings Over 100% (page 175 of BRP)

The following BRP options are highly recommended:

- Encumbrance (page 180 of BRP)
- Increased Personal Skill Points (page 24 of BRP)

Use of the BRP option 'Hit Points per Location' (page 29 of BRP) is suggested. If this option is not used, then the BRP option 'Major Wound Level' (page 208 of BRP) becomes mandatory. The following BRP options may be available, at the game master's discretion:

- Acting Without Skill (page 49 of BRP)
- Choosing Characteristic Values (page 16 of BRP)
- Complementary Skills (page 50 of BRP)
- Freeform Professions (page 41 of BRP), in conjunction with Step Six of character creation (p21 of BRP)
- Higher Starting Characteristics (page 16 of BRP)
- Point-Based Character Creation (page 19 of BRP)
- Skill Category Bonuses (page 31, 48 of BRP)

The following BRP options are not used:

- Fatigue Points (page 32 of BRP)
- Non-Human Characters (page 335 of BRP)
- Sanity (page 32 of BRP)
- Simpler Skill Bonuses (page 31 of BRP)
- Skill Bonuses (page 20 of BRP)
- Total Hit Points (page 30 of BRP)

CHARACTER GENERATION

Character creation shall follow the ten steps laid out in Chapter Two of *Basic Roleplaying*, page 15-45. What follows are precisions, modifications, and options to create a character true in spirit to Chinese literature and lore.

Step Zero Character Gender

The first step in character generation is the choice of the character's gender.

Imperial China, heavily influenced by Confucian values, was a sexist society. As a result, female characters will necessarily have fewer options than their male counterparts. No woman can be a scholar, for instance (fortune-tellers and magistrates are out too), and all military professions are male only. As for clerical professions, a female character may only be a nun [female monk], a shamaness, or a spirit-medium.

To remain true to Chinese literature and lore, a woman who dares so much as to lead an adventurous life should ideally be an assassin-retainer, an outlaw or a knight-errant – women heroines were actually the norm in *wúxiá* film until the late 1960s.

Example

Vivienne absolutely wants to play a female character. Since she loves the 1979 classic *wúxiá* film *Raining in the Mountain*, she decides that her character should be a thief called White Fox. Peter is a big fan of Jet Li's and decides that his character should be a Shàolín monk.

Step One Characteristics

Only Chinese player characters are appropriate to the setting. The game master (GM), however, may allow Mongol characters in a **Yuán China** campaign, or Manchu characters in a **Qīng China** campaign.

In any case, the player characters are rather shorter than neighbouring peoples. The Size (SIZ) characteristic is hence rolled as follows:

- 2D6+4 for male characters
- 2D6+3 for female characters

The other characteristics are rolled as per Chaosium's *Basic Roleplaying* System:

- Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), Power (POW), Dexterity (DEX), and Appearance (APP): 3D6
- Intelligence (INT) and Education (EDU): 2D6+6

As per page 16 of Chaosium's *Basic Roleplaying* System, up to 3 points may be redistributed between the characteristics.

Example

The game master allows the Higher Starting Characteristics option. Vivienne rolls the following for STR, CON, INT, POW, DEX, APP, EDU: 15, 10, 15, 18, 16, 16, 12 (with 2D6+6), and also SIZ 12 (with 2D6+3). Peter rolls the following: 14, 15, 15, 13, 13, 18, 15 (with 2D6+6), and 12 (with 2D6+4).

CAMPAIGN LEVEL TABLE

The Celestial Empire uses the same campaign levels as *Basic Roleplaying* but adds some more customization options, shown in the table below.

	Normal	Heroic	Epic	Superhuman
Age Professional Skill Bonus	20	30	40	50
Professional Skill Pool	EDU x20	EDU x25	EDU x30	EDU x40
Primary Skill Limit	90	100	No limit	No limit
Secondary Skill Limit	75	90	100	No limit
Generic Skill Limit	50	75	90	100
Personal Skill Pool	INT x10	INT x15	INT x20	INT x25

Vivienne and Peter are both allowed to redistribute up to 3 points between the characteristics.

Vivienne's character ends up with the following characteristics:

STR 14, CON 13, SIZ 12, INT 14, POW 18, DEX 16, APP 15, EDU 12.

Peter's character ends up with the following characteristics:

STR 13, CON 16, SIZ 12, INT 15, POW 13, DEX 13, APP 18, EDU 15.

Step Two Powers

Powers in *The Celestial Empire* are related to a character's Profession, so they must be chosen after Step Seven.

Step Three Age

The character's starting age is the larger value between 15 and EDU + 5.

Example

Vivienne's character has EDU 12. Her starting age is 17.

Peter's character has EDU 15. His starting age is 20.

If for any reason you wish to create an older character than usual, please remember to apply the Professional Skill Bonus during Step Seven.

Step Four Characteristic Rolls

Characteristic Rolls are as in standard *Basic Roleplaying*.

Step Five Derived Characteristics

These are computed and written on the character sheet as per the *Basic Roleplaying* rules. Power Points are called Qi points, or simply Qi, in the *Celestial Empire*, but their usage is as described in *Basic Roleplaying*.

Step Six Personality

You can use the Personality Bonus option described in *Basic Roleplaying*,

Step Seven Home Region and Profession

The character's home region will determine his native language, and may also have an influence on some minor details. Unless otherwise decided by the game master, all players must choose a region from within China proper as the home region of their character: North China, Gānsù, Sìchuān, Dàlǐ, Lower Yángzi, or South China.

Under some later dynasties, because of the expansion of the area inhabited by Hàn Chinese, the game master may allow the following extra home regions: Liáo, Yúnnán, Hǎinán Island, or even Formosa or Dàyuè.

Example

The game master decides that his campaign will be set in North China, and that both Vivienne's and Peter's characters are from North China. That is an excellent piece of news for Peter: the Shàolín Monastery is situated in Hénán, in North China!

Your character's skill set and skill values shall depend on his profession.

Example

Vivienne's character is a thief. The relevant profession is Outlaw.

As for Peter, he wants to play a monk. The GM asks him if he is sure of his choice: given the characteristics Peter has rolled, the GM believes a knight-errant would be a better choice, but Peter confirms his initial choice: a Shàolín monk. The relevant profession is Buddhist monk.

If the GM approves, a character may begin with Powers. This will usually be the case for fantasy campaigns. Suggestions for the kind of campaigns that should contemplate the use of Powers may be found on page 40.

Several different kinds of Powers are available in *The Celestial Empire*. The description of each profession indicates what Power is available for it.

The Powers themselves are described in detail on page 72.

Example

The game master approves the use of Powers for beginning characters.

Vivienne's character is a thief ('Outlaw' profession) and has no Powers to begin with.

Peter's character is a Buddhist monk and may start with two Powers: Battle Magic and Buddhist Magic.

As stated on page 74, a beginning practitioner of Battle Magic may know up to four spells, with a beginning skill equal to INT×1. The GM allows

Peter's character to know the two Battle Magic spells listed under his profession: Counter magic and Speak to Mind, both at 15%.

Buddhist Magic (see page 79) requires a Buddhist Allegiance of at least 50 – which is way more than what a beginning character may have. As a result, Peter's character will have to wait a few adventures to learn those Buddhist spells!

Peter also wants his character to be trained in the martial arts of the *Shàolínquán* School. Again, the GM allows Peter to buy powers from the *Shàolínquán* list of powers on page 69.

Each player must have a look at the list of professions below, and choose one for their player character in accordance with the campaign setting. Players should then allot a given amount of skill points, according to the Professional Skill Pool entry found in the Campaign Level Table, among the skills associated with their character's profession. If their character is 26 or older, the given amount is increased by the number provided under the Professional Skill Bonus entry in the Campaign Level Table, once for each 10 years or fraction that the character is older than 25.

Example

The GM wants to run an epic game: Vivienne and Peter should allot $\text{EDU} \times 30$ points among their professional skills.

White Fox is an Outlaw.

Starting skill values are:

Primary skills (limited to 90%):

Dodge ($\text{DEX} \times 2$): 32%

Persuade: 5%

Insight: 5%

Melee weapon (Pole arm): variable – Vivienne chooses the voulge: Base 05

Missile weapon: variable – Vivienne chooses the composite bow: Base 05

Secondary skills (limited to 75%):

Disguise: 5%

Gaming ($\text{INT} + \text{POW}$): 32%

Hide: 10%

Knowledge (Streetwise): 10%

Listen: 25%

Melee weapon: variable – Vivienne chooses the sword: Base 15

Navigate: 10%

Perform (various): 5% – Vivienne chooses Perform (Juggle): White Fox shall pose as a juggler.

Science (Natural History): 10%

Sleight of Hand: 5%

Stealth: 10%

Swim: 25%

Technical Skill (Traps): 0%

Track: 10%

Other skills (limited to 50%):

Healing Lore ($\text{INT} \times 1$): 14%

Status: 15%

Vivienne allots her 360 points as follows:

Primary: Dodge 35, Persuade 0, Insight 30, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 35, Missile weapon (Bow) 35.

Secondary: Disguise 25, Gaming 20, Hide 25, Knowledge (Streetwise) 25, Listen 20, Melee weapon (Sword) 20, Navigate 15, Perform (Juggle) 20, Science (Natural History) 0, Sleight of Hand 5, Stealth 25, Swim 0, Technical Skill (Traps) 0, Track 20.

Other: Healing Lore 0, Status 5.

By adding the base values and Vivienne's points, White Fox ends up with the following skill values:

Primary: Dodge 67%, Persuade 5%, Insight 35%, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 40%, Missile weapon (Bow) 40%.

Secondary: Disguise 30%, Gaming 52%, Hide 35%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 35%, Listen 45%, Melee weapon (Sword) 35%, Navigate 25%, Perform (Juggle) 25%, Science (Natural History) 10%, Sleight of Hand 10%, Stealth 35%, Swim 25%, Technical Skill (Traps) 0%, Track 30%.

Other: Healing Lore 14%, Status 20%.

Wáng is a Buddhist monk.

Starting skill values are:

Primary skills (limited to 90%):

Knowledge (Religion [Buddhism]): 10%

Meditation: 0%

Perform (Sing): 5%

Persuade: 15%

Secondary skills (limited to 75%):

Brawl: 25%

Literacy (Classical Chinese): 0%

Martial Arts: 0%

Melee weapon (Pole arm): variable – Peter chooses the monk's spade: Base 10

Persuade: 5%

Science (Natural History): 10%

Other skills (limited to 50%):

Countermagic: 15%

Healing Lore ($\text{INT} \times 1$): 15%

Speak to Mind: 15%

Status: 35%

Peter allots his 450 points as follows:

Primary: Knowledge (Religion [Buddhism]) 80, Meditation 90, Perform (Sing) 40, Persuade 35.

Secondary: Brawl 20, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 65, Martial Arts (Shàolínquán) 25, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 35, Persuade 20, Science (Natural History) 20.

Other: Countermagic 15, Healing Lore 5, Speak to Mind 0, Status 0.

By adding the base values and Peter's points, Wáng ends up with the following skill values:

Primary: Knowledge (Religion [Buddhism]) 90%, Meditation 90%, Perform (Sing) 45%, Persuade 50%.

Secondary: Brawl 45%, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 65%, Martial Arts (Shàolínquán) 25%, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 45%, Persuade 25%, Science (Natural History) 30%.

Other: Countermagic 30%, Healing Lore 20%, Speak to Mind 15%, Status 35%.



Afterwards each player may allot a further pool of professional skill points, according to the Personal Skill Pool entry in the Campaign Level Table, amongst all the skills he or she wishes.

The skills of a character are capped at character creation: a character cannot have more than 90% in a primary skill, 75% in a secondary skill, 50% in any other skill (including the Powers-related ones) at character creation. The actual limits to skill scores may be higher, according to the Primary, Secondary and Other Skill Limit entries in the Campaign Level Table. This rule supersedes the one on page 24 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

Allegiance scores may be increased using the skill points. No such score, however, may be increased beyond 50%. Status can be increased by 5 points at most. Any character may learn the Healing Lore skill, but a character cannot have more than 50% in it.

Only the magic powers indicated for each profession are available. However, subject to the approval of the GM, any character may learn one or two Battle Magic spells.

Example

White Fox has INT 14, and since this is an epic game, Vivienne may allot a further 280 (INT × 20) points. Vivienne makes the following choices: Climb 10, Healing Lore 30, Jump 20, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 50, Medicine 10, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 25, Missile weapon (Bow) 50, Persuade 40, Spot 10, Swim 10, Technical Skill (Traps) 15.

With the 10 points left, and with the approval of the GM, Vivienne buys the Martial Arts (*Éméiquán*) skill at 10%. Since *Éméiquán* is a Buddhist Martial Arts School, the GM requires Vivienne to change her character's religion from 'Chinese folk religion' to 'Buddhism'.

By adding the above extra points and the skill values from the previous box, White Fox ends up with the following:

Primary: Dodge 67%, Insight 35%, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 65%, Missile weapon (Bow) 90%, Persuade 45%.

Secondary: Disguise 30%, Gaming 52%, Hide 35%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 35%, Listen 45%, Melee weapon (Sword) 35%, Navigate 25%, Perform (Juggle) 25%, Science (Natural History) 10%, Sleight of Hand 10%, Stealth 35%, Swim 35%, Technical Skill (Traps) 15%, Track 30%.

Other: Climb 50%, Healing Lore 44%, Jump 45%, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 50%, Martial Arts (*Éméiquán*) 10%, Medicine 10%, Spot 35%, Status 20%.

Wáng has INT 15, and since this is an epic game, Peter may allot a further 300 (INT × 20) points.

Peter makes the following choices: Brawl 5, Countermagic 20, Healing Lore 30, Knowledge (Region [North China]) 50, Language (Cantonese) 35, Language (Mongolian) 50, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 10, Martial Arts (*Shàolínquán*) 50, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 5, Persuade 35, Science (Natural History) 10.

By adding the above extra points and the skill values from the previous box, Wáng ends up with the following:

Primary: Knowledge (Religion [Buddhism]) 90%, Meditation 90%, Perform (Sing) 45%, Persuade 85%.

Secondary: Brawl 50%, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 75%, Martial Arts (*Shàolínquán*) 75%, Melee weapon (Pole arm) 50%, Science (Natural History) 40%, Persuade 25%.

Other: Countermagic 50%, Healing Lore 50%, Knowledge (Region: North China) 50%, Language (Cantonese) 35%, Language (Mongolian) 50%, Speak to Mind 15%, Status 35%.

Step Eight Distinctive Features

Determine height, weight and any distinctive features as per the normal *Basic Roleplaying* rules.

Step Nine Possessions

The newly created character is entitled to receiving a complete set of clothing appropriate to the character's home region, and the equipment suitable to his profession (subject to the approval of the GM), as well as any cheap or inexpensive items available in his home region (as per p238 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook).

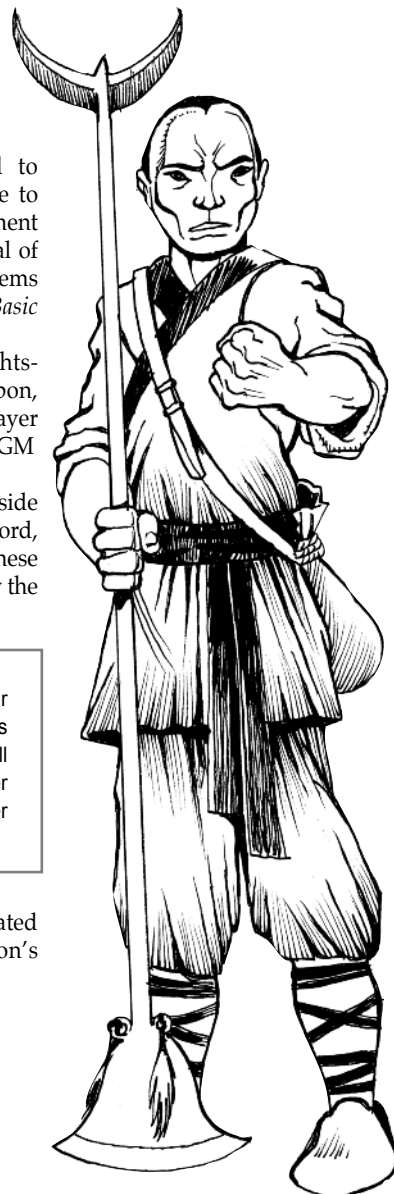
Only assassin-retainers, constables, knights-errant, outlaws, and soldiers receive a weapon, corresponding to their best combat skill. Other player characters do not receive any weapon, or, if the GM approves, a mere wooden staff.

It must be kept in mind that, if on the one side heroes from *wǔxiá* fiction live by and for the sword, on the other side many more heroes of Chinese literature are scholars down on their luck – hardly the type of heroes who carry arms.

Example

The GM approves the following equipment for Vivienne and Peter's characters: White Fox receives lock picking equipment, clothes with many small hidden pockets, and a weapon corresponding to her best combat skill; Wáng receives Buddhist prayer beads, an alms bowl, and a walking stick.

The suggested equipment for newly created characters is listed after each profession's description.



Step Ten Name and finishing



The subject of Chinese names is very complex – whole books have been devoted to it. We shall just give a few guidelines here to avoid non-Chinese-sounding names in a Chinese campaign.

The player must first choose a surname for his character, because this is the most important part of the Chinese name, and also because the Chinese would usually address and know each other by their surname.

There is a limited array of surnames to choose from. Sometimes, everyone in a given village share the same surname!

The most frequent Chinese surnames are: Chén, Huáng, Lǐ, Lín, Liú, Wáng, Wú, Yáng, Zhāng, Zhào, and Zhōu. An expanded list of the most frequent Chinese surnames is given on page 8.

Example

We have already seen that Vivienne chose White Fox for her character.

As for Peter, he doesn't really have an idea yet. He chooses Wáng in the list of common surnames. The GM will let him choose a religious name later on.

A character also usually (not always!) has a given name. In China, the surname always precedes the given name, e.g., if the character's given name is Kuàngǔ and his surname is Wǔ, his full name is Wǔ Kuàngǔ. The given name is only used in family circles, and then only with younger relatives: it is rude to address someone who is not one's younger relative by their given name only. Also, the given name may change during one's life:

upon attaining manhood at 20 (or upon attaining womanhood at 15), one may decide to change their given name. Artists and poets also commonly have a pen name in lieu of their original given name.

My family name is Zhāng. I have no given name. I'm called Zhāng the Brave.

(From The Water Margin)

In South China, it is customary for friends to address each other by using the prefix À (阿) followed by the last syllable of the given name, e.g., Wǔ Kuàngǔ will be customarily called À Nǚ by his friends.

In case two player characters should happen to share the same surname, they will be distinguished by a nickname, or by an adjective; this can be Lǎo ("old") for young men or Xiǎo ("little") for girls. As in English, the place of the adjective is before the noun, thus a male character called Wáng and a female character called Guì may be called Lǎo Wáng and Xiǎo Guì by their acquaintances. If two player characters are brothers, they may be called Wáng-the-Elder (Wáng Dà), Wáng-the-Second (Wáng Èr), Wáng-the-Third (Wáng Sān), etc.

A man who is an intimate acquaintance is usually addressed as 'brother', 'uncle' or 'grandpa' (depending on the age difference), without ever mentioning his name; a woman, as 'sister', 'aunt' or 'grandma'. The proper way of addressing a man who is not an intimate friend is by his surname followed by Xiānshēng ("Mr", 先生); a lady, by her surname followed by Niáng ("Mrs", 娘), e.g., Wáng Xiānshēng (Mr Wáng) and Wáng Niáng (Mrs Wáng). If the person holds a title, Xiānshēng is replaced with said title, e.g.:

- Candidate Wáng – to address a scholar who hasn't passed the imperial examinations yet
- Doctor Wáng – to address a physician
- Friar Wáng – to address a travelling Buddhist monk
- Judge Wáng – to address a magistrate
- Lord Wáng or Squire Wáng – to address a rich landowner
- Master Wáng – to address a Daoist monk or a Daoist priest
- Reverend Wáng – to address a Buddhist monk or a Buddhist priest
- Teacher Wáng – to address a scholar

Monks (especially Buddhist monks) abandon their former name to stress the fact that they have begun a new life within the monastic community, which is their new family, and choose a religious name like Pure Soul, Deep Wisdom, etc.

Adventuring characters such as outlaws and knights-errant are known by a bombastic nickname rather than by a proper name. Such a nickname may be created by associating an adjective and a noun from the following lists:

ADJECTIVES

Azure
Black
Blue Faced
Cave
Daylight
Fiery Eyed
Flower Neck
Flying
Forest
Glorious
Golden
Golden Haired
Gorge Leaping
Green
Heavenly
Jade Faced
Jewelled
Marvellous
Night
Nimble
Nine Tailed
One Hundred Victories
Red
Red Haired
Roaring
Sleek
Small
Striking
Tattooed
Two Headed
Ugly
Vermilion
White
White Faced
White Flowered
Wild

NOUNS

Archer
Bachelor
Boxer
Buffalo
Bull
Crane
Crocodile
Dog
Dragon
Fox
General
Ghost
Hawk
Instructor
King
Leopard
Lion
Magician
Mantis
Monkey
Pig
Scholar
Scorpion
Serpent
Sorcerer
Squire
Swordsman
Thunder
Tiger
Tortoise
Unicorn
Whirlwind
Wolf
Xiān
Yaksha
Youth

Extra Step Allegiance and Religion

Imperial China, contrary to mediaeval Europe, has never had a single, state religion. Nor has there ever been a concept of 'heresy' or 'nonconformity' for different approaches to faith within a given religion. Nor has any Chinese religion ever demanded the exclusive adherence of members.

The Chinese Government has always been one of the broadest-minded and the most liberally inclined towards pure religion; it has never persecuted to the merciless and cruel extent once so common all over Europe.

*Edward Harper Parker,
China and Religion, 1905*

As a result, a character in *The Celestial Empire* has access to a variety of religious faiths and philosophical beliefs. Even within a single religious faith, there can be several sects or sub-faiths, which again are not mutually exclusive (unlike, for instance, Protestantism and Roman Catholicism within the Christian faith). The character can thus have allegiance scores towards multiple principles, which we shall call 'religions' for the sake of clarity.

STARTING ALLEGIANCE

For each religion available at the time of the campaign (see below), the player either uses a fixed starting value for the allegiance listed under the character's profession, or rolls:

- 1D6-2 for a common religion
- 1D6-4 for an uncommon religion

Example

The GM decides that the campaign is in the Ming period.

White Fox is an Outlaw: no particular allegiance. Vivienne hence rolls the following: Chinese folk religion: 2-2=0, Buddhism: 4-2=2, Confucianism: 1-2=0, Daoism: 5-2=3, Islam: 4-4=0.

Wáng is a Buddhist monk and has 'Buddhism' as the allegiance listed under his profession, with a fixed starting value of 20 points. Peter then rolls the following: Chinese folk religion: 6-2=4, Confucianism: 2-2=0, Daoism: 4-2=2, Islam: 3-4=0.



EXAMPLES

(ALL FROM CHINESE FICTION)

Black Whirlwind
Cave Crocodile
Jade Faced Fox
Jewelled Unicorn
Marvellous Archer
White Faced Squire

The player must write the religion of the character on the character sheet. The character's religion will depend on the character's allegiance scores, and on the time of the setting. Except for clerical characters, the character's religion is not very important because the Chinese are very tolerant as regards religion (slightly less so in the Táng period).

The choice is dictated as follows: if any of the character's starting allegiance scores is 20 points higher than any other allegiance value, he is

automatically a follower of that particular religion. If none of the character's starting allegiance scores is 20+ higher than the others, then the player may freely choose one of the common religions at the time of the setting, or, subject to the approval of the GM, one of the uncommon or very uncommon ones.

If the GM approves, a character may become a member of a sect [see page 90], either at character creation, or later on during the course of his adventures.

Example

The GM has stated that the campaign is in the Míng period.

Vivienne decides that White Fox, like the vast majority of the Chinese people, practises Chinese folk religion.

Peter quite logically decides that Wáng is a Buddhist.



RELIGION AVAILABILITY TABLE

PERIOD	RELIGIONS AVAILABLE
Táng period	Buddhism (common) Confucianism (common) Daoism (common) Manichæism (uncommon) Nestorianism (uncommon) Judaism (very uncommon)
Sòng period	Buddhism (common) Confucianism (common) Daoism (common) Nestorianism (uncommon) Manichæism (very uncommon) Judaism (very uncommon)
Yuán period	Chinese folk religion (common) Buddhism (common) Confucianism (common) Daoism (common) Lamaism/Esoteric Buddhism/Tantric Buddhism (uncommon) Nestorianism (uncommon) Islam (very uncommon) Judaism (very uncommon)
Míng period	Chinese folk religion (common) Buddhism (common) Confucianism (common) Daoism (common) Islam (uncommon) Judaism (very uncommon) Lamaism/Esoteric Buddhism/Tantric Buddhism (very uncommon)
Qīng period	Chinese folk religion (common) Buddhism (common) Confucianism (common) Daoism (common) Islam (uncommon) Christianity (very uncommon) Lamaism/Esoteric Buddhism/Tantric Buddhism (very uncommon)

LIST OF PROFESSIONS

The following list is by no means exclusive: *The Celestial Empire* is not a class-based role-playing game, and the professions listed in this section are to provide mere guidelines as to what skills the character may have acquired/learned.

It must be noted that Status and Wealth are unrelated in Imperial China; merchants, for instance, are usually the wealthiest people around, yet their social status is very low. Conversely, a Daoist hermit or a scholar without an official position may be completely destitute, but still regarded with deference by most people. Initial status depends on the chosen profession only, as per this section. Players may not add skill points to the Status skill of their character.

Players are also encouraged to use the professions listed below as a starting point to create similar professions, or missing ones. The section below, for instance, does not list 'Physician' as a profession, yet physicians are often encountered characters in Chinese lore and fiction. The main reason is that there really isn't an archetypal Chinese physician; Chinese lore and fiction has travelling physicians, physicians in the employ of rich patrons, and official physicians working for the magistrate of a district. If a player wants his character to be a travelling physician, he may use the 'Outlaw' template and replace two of the primary skills with Healing Lore and Medicine. If a player wants his character to be a sedentary physician, he may use the 'Scholar' template and replace two of the primary skills with Healing Lore and Medicine.

Players who own Alephtar Games' *Dragon Lines* supplement may also easily adapt one of the following professions to *The Celestial Empire*: Acrobat, Captain, Courtier, Craftsfolk, Engineer, Entertainer, Explorer, Gambler, Noble (Táng only), Ox-Man, Sailor, Servant, Tribal Folk, Woodsman.

Assassin-retainer

cikè 刺客

Chinese assassin-retainers (cikè) are armed and trained retainers that the rich and powerful keep in their employ to get rid of enemies. Given the Chinese repugnance for violence, and the danger of losing face if one should be found using such a dishonourable way of settling a dispute, cikè are seldom used for actual assassination, so their duties also include espionage missions or acting as bodyguards. Assassin-retainers are respected and well-treated by their masters, so as to keep them loyal and

motivated, and usually benefit from some respectful 'cover' profession (hence their high status). Cikè are figures from literature but also from ancient Chinese history, as shown by the cinematic epics of Chén Kǎigē: *The Emperor* and *The Assassin* and Zhāng Yímóu: *Hero*. Some tales portray magical and/or feminine assassin-retainers, so this is a profession open for female characters.

Reasons for adventuring: on a spying/assassination mission for his master.

Wealth: Average

Status: 40%

Allegiance: Basic only

Primary skills: Disguise, Hide, Melee Weapon (any), Stealth

Secondary skills: Brawl, Climb, Dodge, Grapple, Jump, Listen, Martial Arts, Missile Weapon (any), Persuade, Sleight of Hand, Spot

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spell: Invisibility.

Equipment: A melee weapon and a missile weapon. Black garb.

Astrologer

yīnyángjiā 陰陽家 or yīnyángshēng 陰陽生

Chinese astrology studies the influence of the heavenly bodies, of the Five Elements, of the three qì, and of the fluctuations of yīn-yáng on people's destinies. Astrologers are hence much sought after to try and predict people's destinies, but are also quite feared because of the occult powers they are supposed to master.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to visit a new master, or a wealthy patron; looking for occult texts

Wealth: Poor to Affluent

Status: 40%

Allegiance: Daoism 10 points

Primary skills: Divination, Insight, Literacy (Classical Chinese), Perform (Sing)

Secondary skills: Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Knowledge (Streetwise), Medicine, Persuade, Spot.

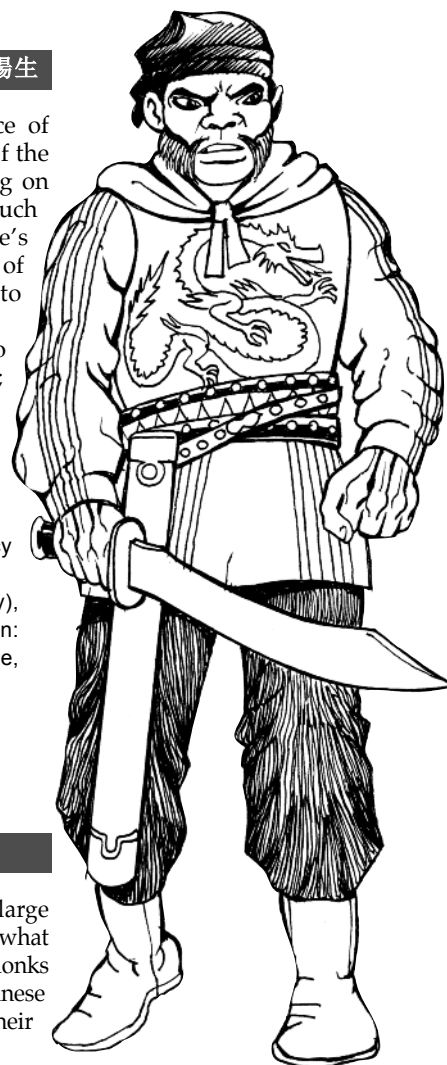
Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Almanac.

Buddhist Monk

héshang 和尚 or shizǐ 釋子

In China, Buddhist monks live in large monasteries ruled by an abbot. Contrary to what happens in other Buddhist countries, where monks are supposed to go on their alms rounds, Chinese monks rarely leave their monastery and grow their



own (vegetarian) food.

Role-playing tip! Whereas, in mediaeval Europe, monks were treated with respect or even deference ("holy men"), Chinese society at large considers Buddhist monks as useless parasites. Many Buddhist monks are from peasant families and do not receive any particular education in their monasteries. Sometimes, very poor families sell a young boy to the monastery where he will toil in the gardens or do the chores as an acolyte. In a country where classical culture is paramount, monastic life doesn't hold any prestige amongst the gentry scholars. Another issue against Buddhist monks is their celibate life, which means that they won't perpetuate their clan: this is very negatively perceived in a society that considers filial piety as the most important virtue.

Reasons for adventuring: Adventuring monks may be on a pilgrimage, or travelling from one monastery to another, maybe looking for a martial arts instructor: monks prefer unarmed combat – and this should be encouraged by the game master in heroic or epic campaigns (*wúshù* combat).

Wealth: Poor to Affluent

Status: 35%

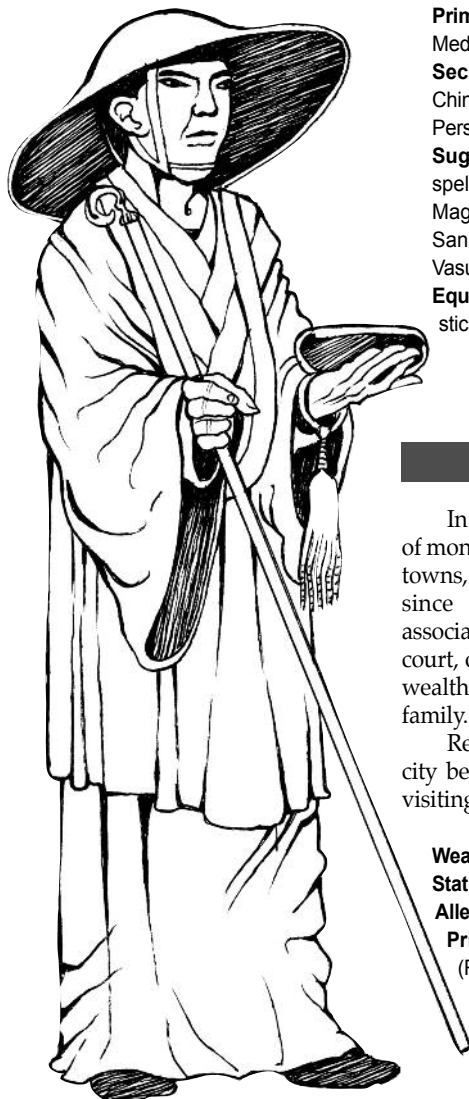
Allegiance: Buddhism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism), Meditation, Perform (Sing), Persuade

Secondary skills: Brawl, Literacy (Classical Chinese), Martial Arts, Melee weapon (Pole arm), Persuade, Science (Natural History)

Suggested Powers: Battle Magic – suggested spells: Countermagic, Speak to Mind; Buddhist Magic – suggested spells: Karmic Retribution, Sangharama's Blessings, Skanda's Sight, Vasudhārā's Bounty of Food.

Equipment: Alms bowl, ordination certificate, walking stick.



Buddhist Priest

sēnglǚ 僧侶

In China, the Buddhist clergy is mostly made up of monks, rather than priests. Priests live in cities and towns, where they are in charge of funerary rites, since Buddhism is the only Chinese religion associated with the afterlife. Some priests live at the court, or within a dedicated chapel in the palace of a wealthy patron and cater for the spiritual needs of his family.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to another city because of a new assignment or a new patron; visiting another Buddhist priest

Wealth: Average to Affluent

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Buddhism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism), Perform (Sing), Persuade

Secondary skills: Insight, Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge

(Politics), Knowledge (Streetwise), Literacy (Classical Chinese)

Suggested Powers: Battle Magic – suggested spells: Control, Countermagic, Heal, Resistance; Buddhist Magic – suggested spells: Chain of Being, Karmic Retribution, Sangharama's Blessings, Skanda's Sight.

Equipment: Buddhist prayer beads, ordination certificate, sūtra. Ceremonial robe.

Constable

yǐngyuán 警員

The police constables assist the magistrate with his investigation work but they must also take care of less interesting tasks such as tidying the office of the magistrate, buying food, and caning prisoners.

This is a very low status profession, yet somewhat higher than the soldier's.

Reasons for adventuring: moving a prisoner to another prefecture where the prisoner is to be executed/tried for another crime/exiled; travelling to another city with his magistrate because of the latter's new assignment; on a mission

Wealth: Average

Status: 20%

Allegiance: Confucianism 10 points

Primary skills: Brawl, Dodge, Insight, Jump, Melee weapon (Pole arm)

Secondary skills: Grapple, Knowledge (Streetwise), Listen, Melee weapon, Missile weapon, Navigate, Persuade, Track.

Suggested Powers: None.

Equipment: A weapon corresponding to the best combat skill. Soft leather armour painted in black and red (Chinese police uniform).

Daoist Hermit

yǐnshì 隱士

A Daoist hermit keeps himself aloof from Chinese society; he tries to apprehend the Dào and to become an Immortal.

Reasons for adventuring: looking for an Immortal; looking for an ancient Daoist tome or artefact

Wealth: Poor

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Daoism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Science (Alchemy), Spot

Secondary skills: Divination, Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge (History), Listen, Literacy (Classical Chinese), Medicine, Necromancy, Science (Natural History)

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spell: Speak to Mind.

Equipment: Gourd. Herbalist kit.

Daoist Monk

xiūdàoshi 修道士

In a secularised society such as Imperial China's, Daoist monks try to live according to the tenets of their religion, usually in a monastery on top of a sacred peak.

Reasons for adventuring: on a pilgrimage; travelling from one monastery to another, possibly looking for a martial arts instructor; seeking tutelage

Wealth: Poor to Affluent

Status: 40%

Allegiance: Daoism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Perform (Sing), Persuade

Secondary skills: Brawl, Literacy (Classical Chinese), Martial Arts, Melee weapon (Pole arm), Necromancy, Science (Natural History)

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spells: Change, Countermagic, Invisibility, Speak to Mind.

Equipment: Alms bowl, ordination certificate, walking stick.

Daoist Priest

dàoshi 道士

Daoist priests are highly literate and serve an élite urban clientèle. Daoist priests are not “priests” as the word is understood in mediaeval Europe, since they do not play a major social role; they are more like the psychoanalysts or the life coaches of today's nouveau riche.

The high status of Daoist priests is due to their being associated to the literati because of their great knowledge of Classical Chinese and of ancient texts.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to another city because of a new assignment or a new patron; visiting another Daoist priest; looking for an ancient Daoist tome or artefact

Wealth: Average to Affluent

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Daoism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Necromancy, Persuade

Secondary skills: Insight, Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Streetwise), Science (Alchemy)

Suggested Powers: Battle Magic – suggested spells: Countermagic, Illusion, Invisibility, Perception, Teleport; Daoist Magic – suggested spells: Chain of Being, Curse of Sorcery, Muddle, Sorcerer's Armour, Sorcerer's Beauty, Sorcerer's Bulwark, Sorcerer's Hammer, Sorcerer's Plasticity, Sorcerer's Razor, Sorcerer's Sharp Flame, Sorcerer's Soul, Sorcerer's Strength, Sorcerer's Suppleness, Sorcerer's Vitality, Sorcerer's Wisdom,

Summon Monster, Undo Sorcery.

Equipment: Daoist classics, ordination certificate. Ceremonial robe.

Every Daoist priest has a wooden ‘magic sword’, which exactly corresponds, in terms of both prestige and power, to the “wizard's staff” of European lore (see page 91 of *Basic Roleplaying*). This ‘magic sword’ functions as a ‘dagger’ if used in combat.

Esoteric Buddhist Monk

mìxíngzhě 密行者

In China, Esoteric Buddhist monks are either linked to Tibetan Buddhism or to indigenous Tantric Buddhist sects. In the former case, they will be seen as consorting with the Mongol or Manchu invaders by the populace. In the latter case, there will be an aura of fear surrounding their bizarre Tantric rituals. In both cases, the average Chinese will give Esoteric Buddhist monks a wide berth.

Reasons for adventuring: on a pilgrimage; travelling from one monastery to another, or even travelling abroad; seeking tutelage

Wealth: Poor to Affluent

Status: 30%

Allegiance: Esoteric Buddhism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Religion: Esoteric Buddhism), Meditation, Necromancy, Perform (Sing)

Secondary skills: Divination, Grapple, Language (Manchu) [in the Qīng only], Language (Mongolian) [in the Yuán only], Literacy (Classical Chinese), Literacy (Uyghur alphabet) [in the Yuán and in the Qīng only], Martial Arts

Suggested Powers: Battle Magic – suggested spells: Countermagic, Speak to Mind; Buddhist Magic – suggested spells: Karmic Retribution, Sangharama's Blessings, Skanda's Sight, Vasudhārā's Bounty of Food.

Equipment: Buddhist prayer beads, ordination certificate, saffron robe.

Roll 1D6 for an additional item from the list below:

1. Blessed bronze mirror (reveals true aspect of any creature that mirrors into it)
2. Blessed incense sticks (burn to gain an additional Fate Point)
3. Blessed prayer flag (guī-monsters cannot come closer than 15m to it when displayed)
4. Blessed sūtra (demonic creatures cannot come closer than 15m to it when displayed)
5. Crown hat (+15% to all Meditation rolls)
6. Vajra-tipped walking stick (inflicts damage equivalent to medium-intensity radiation [see page 230-231 of *Basic Roleplaying*] to any demonic creature in a 15m radius).

Fortune-teller

shùjiā 術家

Fortune-tellers are diviners that use the cryptic hexagrams contained in the Yijing (known as the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* in the West) to see the future. Fortune-tellers have a classic education and follow the tenets of Confucianism. Therefore, their divinatory art, unlike the Astrologer's, is seen as stemming from their great knowledge and wisdom rather than from magic or the occult. Fortune-tellers are thus well-integrated in Chinese society.

"The trade of fortune-teller is one of the most flourishing in China. A large majority of the candidates who are unsuccessful at the public examinations devote their energies in this direction; and in every Chinese city there are regular establishments whither the superstitious people repair to consult the oracle on every imaginable subject;—not to mention hosts of itinerant soothsayers, both in town and country, whose stock-in-trade consists of a trestle-table, pen, ink, and paper, and a few other mysterious implements of their art. The nature of the response, favourable or otherwise, is determined by an inspection of the year, month, day, and hour at which the applicant was born, taken in combination with other particulars referring to the question at issue."

H. Giles

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to visit a new master, or a wealthy patron; looking for a rare edition of the Yijing

Wealth: Average to Affluent

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Confucianism 20 points

Primary skills: Divination, Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Law), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Perform (Sing)

Secondary skills: Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Streetwise), Spot
Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Writing set. Book of Changes (Yijing 易经).

Geomancer

fēngshuǐ xiānshēng 風水先生

Geomancers are practitioners of fēngshuǐ, the art of adjusting the position and the orientation of buildings, tombs, and even fields, in relation to the magnetic compass, to the physical features (mostly water bodies and mountains) of a given site, and to the nearest ley lines (the places where the qì of the earth flows strongest).

"Fēngshuǐ: literally 'wind and water', or that which cannot be seen and that which

cannot be grasped. It is 'a system of geomancy, by the science of which it is possible to determine the desirability of sites, —whether of tombs, houses, or cities, from the configuration of such natural objects as rivers, trees, and hills, and to foretell with certainty the fortunes of any family, community, or individual according to the spot selected; by the art of which it is in the power of the geomancer to counteract evil influences by good ones, to transform straight and noxious outlines into undulating and propitious curves, and rescue whole districts from the devastation of flood or pestilence'."

H. Giles

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to visit a new master, or a wealthy patron; accompanying a party looking for ley lines

Wealth: Affluent

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Daoism 10 points

Primary skills: Geomancy, Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Region: any), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Literacy (Classical Chinese)

Secondary skills: Craft (Carpentry), Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Streetwise), Spot

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spell: Perception.

Equipment: Writing set. Compass and star charts.

Knight-errant

yóuxiá 遊俠

Chinese knights-errant (yóuxiá) are adventurous types travelling China north to south and east to west, characterised by martial skills and heroic selflessness in righting the many wrongs done to the common people. Yóuxiá are figures from legend and folk tales rather than from hard historical fact. Nonetheless, knights-errant are central to the Chinese equivalent of Western fantasy, so almost no *Celestial Empire* campaign can do without them (but this profession is obviously unavailable in historical campaigns).

Reasons for adventuring: adventuring is the character's *raison d'être*

Wealth: Poor to Average

Status: 30%

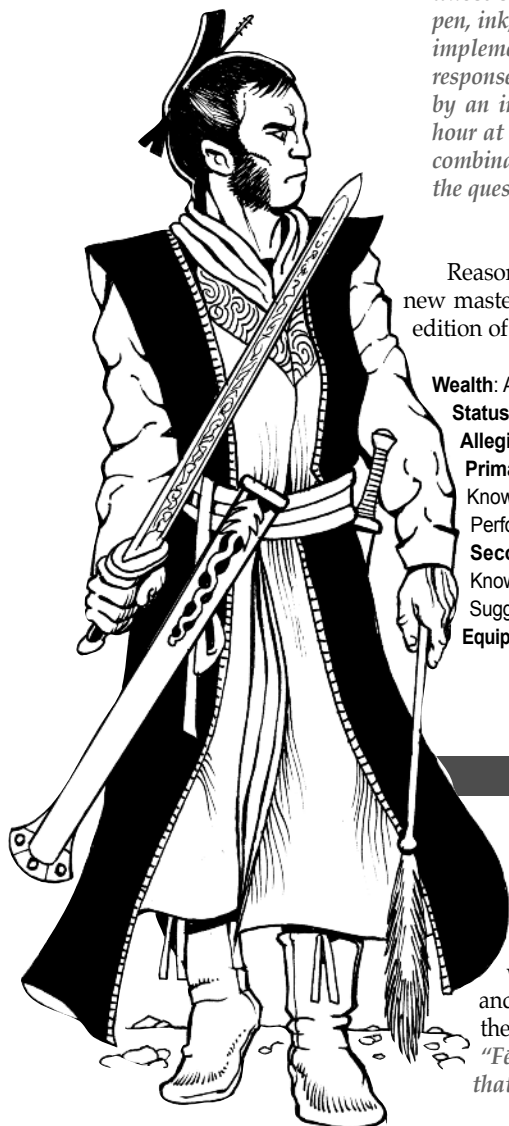
Allegiance: Basic only

Primary skills: Dodge, any two Melee weapon skills, Ride (Horse), Strategy

Secondary skills: Command, Demolition, Insight, Knowledge (Law), Missile Weapon (any), Persuade, Science (Natural History)

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spell: Mobility.

Equipment: A weapon corresponding to the character's best combat skill; then a choice between a second weapon and leather armour (cuirbouilli or hard).



Lay Exorcist

súshī 俗師

Lay exorcists have appeared in the Sòng, to cater for the needs of gentry scholars, who do not want to be seen associating with 'superstitious' Ritual Masters. Lay exorcists have a classic education and follow the tenets of Confucianism; hence their necromantic art, unlike the Ritual Masters', is seen as stemming from their great knowledge and wisdom rather than from magic or the occult. In spite of all this, lay exorcists basically follow the same rituals and study the same Daoist treatises on demonology as Ritual Masters.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to visit a new master; or a wealthy patron; looking for a treatise on demonology

Wealth: Average to Affluent

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Confucianism 10 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Literature), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Necromancy

Secondary skills: Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Knowledge (Streetwise), Spot

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Writing set. Book of Changes (Yijing 易經).

Magistrate

fǎguān 法官

The character is responsible for upholding the rule of law in a small town. If the character is successful, his hierarchy (i.e., the GM) will have him promoted to a larger town or city, and ultimately to a prefectural seat.

The magistrate is assisted in his work by one or several constables, see page 50.

Reasons for adventuring: carrying out a criminal investigation; moving a high-profile prisoner to another prefecture; moving to another city because of a promotion or of a demotion

Wealth: Average

Status: 60%

Allegiance: Confucianism 20 points

Primary skills: Command, Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Literature), Literacy (Classical Chinese)

Secondary skills: Insight, Listen, Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Streetwise), Melee weapon, Persuade, Research, Ride (Horse), Spot

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Writing set. Seal. Black hat, dark robe.

Martial Artist

wúshùjiā 武術家

Martial artists are people who have devoted their life to attaining perfection in their chosen martial arts style. A martial artist may be a teacher running a martial arts school, a hermit striving to attain perfection without being entangled in worldly affairs, or an adventuring type travelling China to challenge other martial artists or to make a living by doing demonstrations in public places.

A martial artist player character must choose a martial arts school he specialises in and spend at least the amount of skill points listed under the Character Point Budget of his school.

Reasons for adventuring: see above

Wealth: Poor to Affluent

Status: 30%

Allegiance: Basic only

Primary skills: Brawl, Dodge, Grapple, Martial Arts

Secondary skills: Command, Etiquette, Insight, Jump, Knowledge (Group: Rivers and Lakes), Knowledge (Region), Knowledge (Religion), Meditation, Perform (Orate), Teach, Throw, any skill listed as a Super Skill under the character's martial arts school

Suggested Power: Any Battle Magic spells taught by the character's school.

Equipment: Martial arts uniform.

Merchant

shāng rén 商人

Merchants are constantly travelling within and without China, buying goods where they are cheaper, and selling them where they are more expensive. Despite their very necessary role in such a huge country, and despite having contributed introducing many outside inventions and cultures to China, merchants are despised and treated with suspicion by the Chinese élites.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to buy and/or sell goods; looking for rare goods; trying a new trading route

Wealth: Wealthy

Status: 30%

Allegiance: Basic only

Primary skills: Bargain, Drive (Carriage or Cart), Knowledge (Politics), Literacy (Classical Chinese)

Secondary skills: Appraise, Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Region), Language (other), Literacy (other), Persuade, Spot

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Abacus. Goods.

Monster Hunter

jiànguǐrén 見鬼人

This is a hereditary profession, as monster hunters pass their secret hunting techniques from father to son. They usually specialise in hunting a few creatures, and keep aloof from worldly affairs like politics or official careers. This profession is obviously unavailable in historical campaigns.

Reasons for adventuring: going hunting

Wealth: Poor to Average

Status: 30%

Allegiance: Daoism 10 points

Primary skills: Hide, Martial Arts, Science (Natural History), Stealth

Secondary skills: Disguise, Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Knowledge (Streetwise), Listen, Melee Weapon (any), Missile Weapon (any), Navigate, Technical Skill (Traps)

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spell: Dispel.

Equipment: Book of talismans, incense.

The book of talismans contains 1D4+2 family-transmitted secret recipes to combat monsters, e.g., “mix dog’s blood and virgin’s urine to create a potion that causes 2D6 damage when splashed onto a tāotiè” – every single secret recipe is to be devised with the game master.

Outlaw

qiángdào 強盜

‘Outlaw’ is an umbrella term for a number of characters who, for one reason or another, live in the margins of Chinese society: beggars, thieves, pirates, sing-song girls, swords for hire...

These characters tend to give law enforcers a wide berth, because they know any magistrate would certainly jail them without food, or even send them into exile or to forced labour at the other end of the Empire! Not all ‘outlaws’ do actually commit reprehensible deeds: the mere fact of roaming in bands and of living outside of the traditional family structure makes them outlaws in the eyes of Confucian society. Despite being outlaws, the characters may gain Status and thus become righteous bandits (yìfēi 義匪), favourably viewed upon by the populace, and even by some upper class citizens!

Reasons for adventuring: robbing rich travellers; attacking merchant caravans or ships; exacting vengeance; carrying out a contract killing

Wealth: Poor to Wealthy

Status: 15%

Allegiance: Basic only

Primary skills: Dodge, Insight, Melee Weapon (Pole arm), Missile Weapon (any)

Secondary skills: Disguise, Gaming, Hide, Knowledge

(Streetwise), Listen, Melee weapon (any), Navigate, Perform (any), Persuade, Science (Natural History), Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Swim, Technical Skill (Traps), Track

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: A weapon corresponding to the character’s best combat skill. Hard leather armour, linen armour, or (for a pirate or a sailor) papier-mâché armour.

Ritual Master

fǎshī 法師

Ritual Masters are low-level Daoist priests specialised in exorcisms. They are far less literate and less sophisticated than ‘proper’ Daoist priests, and attend to the needs of rural or suburban people. Despite their low starting status, some Ritual Masters manage to start their own sect and to become respected patriarchs.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to visit a new master, or a wealthy patron; looking for a treatise on demonology

Wealth: Poor to Affluent

Status: 35%

Allegiance: Daoism 15 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Necromancy, Perform (Sing)

Secondary skills: Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Streetwise), Medicine, Persuade, Spot

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Esoteric paraphernalia (dolls, joss paper, ‘magic sword’). The Ritual Master’s ‘magic sword’ is not like a Daoist’s ‘magic sword’ – it’s just there to impress the patrons.

Scholar

shìrén 士人 or xuézhě 學者

Scholars, or literati, are people who have received a classical education, and who hence occupy the topmost ladder of Chinese society. Scholars as characters may be as diverse as: a mandarin (scholar-official) with the Imperial Court, a simple tax collector (like the main character of the film *A Chinese Ghost Story*), or a country teacher. In any case, and irrespective of any official position held, the prestige of a scholar is high within the heavily Confucian Chinese society.

By learning, the sons of the common people become public ministers; without learning, the sons of public ministers become mingled with the mass of the people.

(Chinese proverb)



A scholar is expected to master the four arts: music, go, calligraphy, and painting.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to another city because of a new official position; visiting another scholar; looking for an ancient text or a collector's item

Wealth: Poor to Wealthy

Status: 50%

Allegiance: Confucianism 20 points

Primary skills: Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Literature), Literacy (Classical Chinese)

Secondary skills: Etiquette, Gaming, Knowledge (Politics), Language (Manchu) [in the Qīng only], Language (Mongolian) [in the Yuán only], Literacy (Uyghur alphabet) [in the Yuán and in the Qīng only], Research, Spot, Teach

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Writing set. The Five Classics (Wūjīng 五經). Dark robe.

Shaman

wūxí 巫覡

Shamans are practitioners of the primitive Asian religions. They are the channel through which communication between man and the spirit world is made possible. In the time periods covered by *The Celestial Empire*, shamans have all but disappeared from Chinese society, and may only be found amongst barbarians (including civilised ones, like the Koreans and the Japanese), or in the most remote and least inhabited parts of China.

Reasons for adventuring: visiting a related clan/tribe; visiting another shaman; looking for a place where communication with the spirit world is easier

Wealth: Destitute to Poor

Status: 25%

Allegiance: Shamanism 20 points

Primary skills: Channel Spirit, Knowledge (Folklore), Meditation, Perform (Sing), Science (Natural History)

Secondary skills: Command, Divination, Insight, Knowledge (Herbalism), Knowledge (Region), Knowledge (Religion: Shamanism), Medicine, Navigate

Suggested Power: Battle Magic – suggested spells: Change, Conjure Elemental, Control, Fanaticism, Heal, Illusion, Invisibility, Protection, Speak to Mind, Ward

Equipment: Shaman's drum, or other music instrument. Herbalist kit.

Soldier

shìbīng 士兵

This is possibly one of the worst-considered professions in China, as Confucianism condemns the use of violence. Also, many soldiers are convicts who have preferred this punishment to death or forced labour. In times of peace, a soldier will more or less become a personal servant to his officer, carrying out the most varied tasks for him: sewing clothes, going shopping, and even growing vegetables!

Reasons for adventuring: warring against the barbarians; suppressing an ethnic or a religious rebellion; fighting bandits

Wealth: Poor

Status: 15%

Allegiance: None

Primary skills: Dodge, Jump, Melee Weapon (Pole arm), Melee Weapon (any), Missile Weapon (any)

Secondary skills: Climb, Firearm, Grapple, Insight, Knowledge (Heraldry), Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Region), Missile weapon (any other), Strategy, Swim, Technical Skill (Siege Engines)

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: A weapon corresponding to the character's best combat skill. A large round shield; if the character is from a northern region, he has a choice between the large round shield and ring armour.

Spirit-medium

tóngjī 童乩 or wūshī 巫師

Spirit-mediums are what shamans evolved into in the Chinese urban civilisation. They are the closest a role to "priest" Chinese folk religion may have.

A spirit-medium is a character endowed with the ability of lending his or her body to a divinity. The souls of the spirit-medium leave their body, which is possessed by the divinity or the spirit that the spirit-medium's patron wants to contact.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling to visit a new teacher, or a wealthy patron; going to a festival or to the inauguration of a joss house

Wealth: Poor to Average

Status: 35%

Allegiance: Chinese folk religion 20 points

Primary skills: Channel Spirit, Insight, Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge (Religion: Chinese folk religion)

Secondary skills: Command, Divination, Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Region), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Medicine, Necromancy, Perform (Sing), Persuade

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Esoteric paraphernalia (candles, dolls, joss paper).



Story-teller

shuōshū xiānshēng 說書先生

Story-tellers are much loved by Chinese audiences. Villagers and townsfolk alike will flock to hear them tell the stories of knights-errant and of folk heroes. Even the gentry scholars will go and attend their shows, trying not to be noticed. Story-tellers will also attend religious festivals and tell the stories of Buddhist bodhisattva, Daoist Immortals, or Chinese folk religion saints, whatever the audience wants to hear.

Reasons for adventuring: travelling from town to town to find a new public to entertain; going to a festival

Wealth: Poor to Average

Status: 35%

Allegiance: Chinese folk religion 20 points

Primary skills: Persuade, Knowledge (Folklore), Knowledge (Religion: Chinese folk religion), Perform (Recite)

Secondary skills: Art (various), Disguise, Fine Manipulation, Insight, Knowledge (Religion), Listen, Perform (various), Persuade

Suggested Power: None.

Equipment: Story-teller's fan.

SKILLS

Modified Skills

Those skills which differ in either name or application from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules are described below.

ARTILLERY

(Base Chance 05%)

This is a single skill in *The Celestial Empire*.

BARGAIN

(Base Chance 20%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

DEMOLITION

(Base Chance 00%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

DISGUISE

(Base Chance 05%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

DRIVE (Carriage or Cart)

(Base Chance 15%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

ETIQUETTE

(Base Chance 05%)

This is a single skill in *The Celestial Empire*.

Modesty is attended with profit: arrogance brings on destruction.

(Chinese proverb)

"If there is one thing more than another, after the possession of the thirteen classics, on which the Chinese specially pride themselves, it is politeness. Even had their literature alone not sufficed to place them far higher in the scale of mental cultivation than the unlettered barbarian, a knowledge of those important forms and ceremonies which regulate daily intercourse between man and man, unknown of course to inhabitants of the outside nations, would have amply justified the graceful and polished Celestial in arrogating to himself the proud position he now occupies with so much satisfaction to himself."

H. Giles

FIREARM

(Base Chance: see page 105)

This is a single skill in *The Celestial Empire*. This skill covers the ability to use *huǒchòng* (in the Sòng and Yuán), cannons (in the Míng), or rifles (in the Qīng).



GAMING

(Base Chance INT+POW)

This skill covers all Chinese games: strategic board games such as Chinese chess (*xiàngqí* 象棋) and go (*wéiqí* 围棋), and also gambling games such as Chinese card games (*yèzi* 葉子) and mahjongg (*májiāng* 麻將).

HEALING LORE

(Base Chance INT×1)

This is the Chinese name for the First Aid skill.

KNOWLEDGE (various)

(Base Chances: see page xxx)

Base chances different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

In making a candle, we seek for light; in studying a book, we seek for reason: light to illuminate a dark chamber; reason, to enlighten man's heart.

(Chinese proverb)

KNOWLEDGE (Group: Rivers and Lakes)

(Base Chance 05%)

This skill represents the knowledge of Jiānghú, the shadow world of secret societies, outlaws, swordsmen, bounty hunters, and knights-errant. This skill covers the ability to recognise their jargon, to know their codes of law and ethics, to communicate with right people, and also to know the rules of Wǔlín (武林), the world of martial artists. In particular, this skill covers the ability to recognise to which school of wǔshù combat a given martial artist pertains. A critical success gives an approximate idea of the levels of the wǔshù powers of the martial artist.

This skill is only available in heroic or epic campaigns.

KNOWLEDGE (Heraldry)

(Base Chance 00%)

Contrary to the Europeans, the Chinese do not use blazons to distinguish noble families or guilds. In *The Celestial Empire*, this skill covers the ability to recognise military flags and unit symbols, and is not widely used.

KNOWLEDGE (Literature)

(Base Chance EDU×1)

This skill covers the knowledge of the Chinese canonical texts, which is paramount in Imperial China: the Imperial examinations are based on this knowledge, and knowledge of the canonical texts and of the language used therein (Classical Chinese) is very useful as a status symbol.

In Imperial China, the concept of “literature” has also a broader meaning than in the modern world: morals, ethics, even music are considered as pertaining to literature.

KNOWLEDGE (Region)

(Base Chance: 00% or 20%)

For Chinese regions the Base Chance is 20%. For foreign regions the Base Chance is 00%.

KNOWLEDGE (Religion)

(Base Chance 10%)

This skill only covers Chinese religions: the ancient agrarian religion, Buddhism, Chinese folk religion, Confucianism, Daoism, Shamanism; i.e., for these religions, the Base Chance is 10%.

For any other religion (i.e., for “foreign” religions), the Base Chance is 00%. If the character wants to be knowledgeable about any one foreign religion, he must allot skill points to one of the following skills:

- **Knowledge** (Religion: Christianity) (00%)
This skill is only available in the Táng, Sòng, or Yuán periods (Nestorianism), or in the Qīng period (Catholicism and Protestantism).
- **Knowledge** (Religion: Islam) (00%)
This skill is only available in the Yuán, Míng, or Qīng periods.
- **Knowledge** (Religion: Judaism) (00%)
This skill is only available in the Táng, Sòng, Yuán, or Míng periods
- **Knowledge** (Religion: Lamaism/Esoteric Buddhism/Tantric Buddhism) (00%)
This skill is only available in the Yuán, Míng, or Qīng period.
- **Knowledge** (Religion: Manichæism) (00%)
This skill is only available in the Táng and Sòng period.

LANGUAGE (other)

(Base Chance 00%)

The section on Languages (page 20) describes the major languages spoken in China and in the neighbouring countries.

Some of these languages are closely related. In gaming terms, for a character speaking a given Language, understanding a Language from the same linguistic group is a Very Difficult action (skill is divided by 4); understanding a Language from the same linguistic family is an Extremely Difficult action (skill is divided by 8). For instance, if a player character knows Zhuàng at 80%, his chance of understanding Lao is 20% and his chance of understanding Hmong is 10%.

Optional rule: the GM may want to use the language-based modifiers given in the section on Languages (see page 22) rather than use the above formula. Using the tables rather than the formula, the very same PC from the previous example, who knows Zhuàng at 80%, may understand Lao at 30% and Hmong at 0%.

To defray the costs of being multilingual (a common occurrence in the Táng and in the Yuán), each skill point used to learn a language skill during character generation counts double (in the Táng and in the Yuán only). For instance, a starting character who spends 25 points of his skill point pool on learning Mongolian would gain a skill of 50%.

LANGUAGE (own)

(Base Chance EDU×5)

All player characters have Chinese as their native language.

In the Míng and Qīng, the various Chinese vernaculars have become so divergent that they must be considered, in gaming terms, as separate and different languages. However, some of these vernaculars are still closely related. In gaming terms, for a character speaking one of the Mandarin vernaculars, understanding another Mandarin vernacular is a Difficult action (skill is halved); for a character speaking one of the Chinese vernaculars, understanding another Chinese vernacular is a Very Difficult action (skill is divided by 4).

Example

The GM decides that White Fox and Wáng both speak Northern Mandarin as their native Language (skill values 60% and 75% respectively). According to the above rule, Wáng would automatically speak Cantonese at 19%. Since Peter has allotted 35 points to this skill, his character ends up with Language (Cantonese) at 54%.

Obviously, one shouldn't roll under their Language skill every time they're talking. That would slow down play, and that would also frustrate the players. The GM and the players are advised to use the Language Fluency Table on page 67 of *Basic Roleplaying*, which gives broad indications of the level of fluency one may expect from their character depending on their Language skill.

More generally, whenever two characters are talking to each other in a given Language, the GM may compute the sum of their Language skills. If the total is larger than 100, the conversation can go on unhindered. If the total is smaller than 100, each speaker must roll under this value to make sure there hasn't been any misunderstanding.

LITERACY

(Base Chance 00%)

In *The Celestial Empire*, Literacy is based on system of writing rather than language: most Asian systems of writing being phonetic and regular (Chinese being the obvious exception), one needn't learn the same system of writing twice for two different languages who share the same system of writing.

For all systems of writing, the Base Chance is 00%. Depending on the known language, the character may allot skill points to one of the following skills:

- **Literacy (Arabic alphabet) (00%)** This skill is only available in the Míng and Qīng. It is used to read/write the Uyghur language, and the various languages of the Muslim peoples.
- **Literacy (South Asian alphabets) (00%)**

This skill is available in all dynastic periods. It is used to read/write South Asian languages, e.g., Newāri, Pāli, and Tibetan.

- **Literacy (Uyghur alphabet) (00%)** This skill is available in all dynastic periods. In the Tāng, it is used to read/write the Sogdian language, as well as most other Central Asian languages. In the Sòng, it is used to read/write the Uyghur language. In the Yuán, it is used to read/write the Mongolian and the Uyghur languages. In the Míng, it is used to read/write the Mongolian language. In the Qīng, it is used to read/write the Manchu and the Mongolian languages.

The various Chinese vernaculars are never written (at least not in formal contexts) – only Classical Chinese is considered as a proper written language.

Example

Lín the Wanderer is a defrocked monk travelling through China and living off minor swindles. He sees a stall with an uncommon character written above it. Lín's Literacy (Classical Chinese) skill is 50%. To ascertain whether Lín knows how to read that character, the GM will request a successful Know roll.

MARTIAL ARTS

(Base Chance 00%)

In the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules, the Martial Arts skill is to be used in conjunction with another combat skill (Brawl, Grapple, Melee Weapon). If the rolled result is less than the skill value of both Martial Arts and the other combat skill, particular damage results apply. This mechanism may be kept for normal or heroic *Celestial Empire* campaigns.

However, for epic or superhuman campaigns, *The Celestial Empire* recommends using the Martial Arts skill in conjunction with the optional *wúshù* combat skills found on page 66. In particular, Martial Arts specialities corresponding to the various schools/styles are added in epic or superhuman campaigns.

PERFORM (SING)

(Base Chance 05%)

This skill covers the ability to sing in tune and without getting out of breath. Singing is central to almost all Chinese religious rituals.

PILOT (Boat)

(Base Chance 00%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

RESEARCH

(Base Chance 00%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

SCIENCE (Alchemy)

(Base Chance 00%)

This is simply the Science (Chemistry) skill renamed. In Imperial China, alchemy is associated with Daoism and the quest for immortality, rather than with the occult and the philosopher's stone as in mediaeval Europe. Since alchemy methods to attain immortality are centred on the consumption of the Red Powder of Immortality, the Science (Alchemy) skill mostly covers the manipulation of chemical substances and of poisons.

SCIENCE (Natural History)

(Base Chance 10%)

This skill may also be used as the basis for wilderness survival.

SHIELD

Since Chinese combatants are taught to fight with a shield, they need not learn a separate skill. Shield use is part of their main weapon skill.

STRATEGY

(Base Chance 00%)

Base chance different from *Basic Roleplaying*.

New Skills

This section describes new skills which are in addition to the list of skills from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules. Skills followed by the dagger sign (†) are supernatural skills, available only in campaigns that include magic, and require the expenditure of Qi points to work.

ARROW CUTTING

(Base Chance 05%)

This skill covers the ability to deflect missiles aimed at the character.

This skill is only available in the Qing.

CHANNEL SPIRIT (†)

(Base Chance 00%)

This skill covers the ability to receive a spirit in one's body. The medium shall name the specific spirit he wants to become possessed by, or transmit messages from. After spending 1 Qi point, and successfully rolling under the skill, the medium goes into a possession trance for 3D6 minutes. A failure means that no contact has been established; a fumble that another spirit than the intended one has possessed the medium – possibly one that will not release the body at the end of the séance.

DIVINATION (†)

(Base Chance 00%)

This skill covers the ability to prophesy the future. After spending 1 Qi point, the diviner performs a divination ritual according to the tenets of his religion (Confucian, Daoist, shamanistic, folk religion) and consulting the appropriate source (almanac, Book of Changes); then the GM rolls against the character's Divination skill (the result of

LITERACY

(Classical Chinese) (00%) Given the extreme complexity of the Chinese writing system (and in particular in Imperial China), this Literacy skill is heavily impacted by the skill rating, as per the table that follows.

SKILL RATING

IMPACT

01 to 15%

The character may recognise and write the most basic and common Chinese characters, such as the ones that appear on merchants' goods or on shopkeepers' stalls. The character would also know how to write his name. Most rural folk would fall in this range.

16 to 30%

The character may recognise and write the most frequently encountered Chinese characters as well as the ones related with his profession. The character also knows how to write his name, and he knows characters from daily life such as "rice", "wheat", "water", "wine", "temple", numbers, etc. Most city folk would fall in this range.

31 to 50%

The character knows the 1,000-1,500 most frequently used Chinese characters. He may read books written in vernacular Chinese, posted bills, and propaganda leaflets by religious sects or secret societies.

51 to 80%

The character knows almost all Chinese characters and knows how to write them in the script style corresponding to the period of time chosen by the GM.

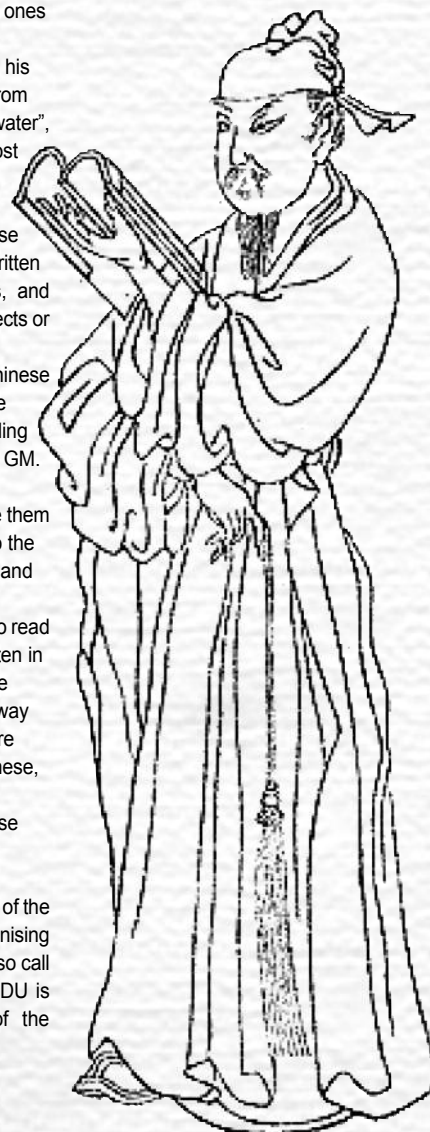
81 to 100%

The character knows all Chinese characters and knows how to write them in the script style corresponding to the period of time chosen by the GM, and according to the rules of Chinese calligraphy. The character may also read Chinese characters that were written in an ancient script style, or that were voluntarily written in an abstruse way (as in Daoist treatises), or that were written in a foreign manner (Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese).

Beyond 100%

The character fully masters Chinese writing and Chinese calligraphy!

As shown, the skill value yields an approximate idea of the capabilities of the player character in using or recognising Chinese characters. When in doubt, the GM may also call for a Know roll rather than a Literacy roll, since EDU is supposed to reflect the character's mastery of the Chinese system of writing (amongst other things).





ALPHABETICAL SKILL LIST

For ease of reference, an alphabetised list of all available skills in The Celestial Empire follows. Each entry lists the skill name, its base chance, as well as any useful notes. To keep this rule set as close as possible to the original *Basic Roleplaying*, most skill names are exactly the same as in *Basic Roleplaying*. The base chance percentages have been changed from those in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook to reflect, when necessary, Chinese cultural bias. The Status skill does not have a base chance; its initial value depends on the character's profession.

NAME	BASE CHANCE	CATEGORY†	NOTES
Appraise	15%	Mental	BRP page 50
Arrow Cutting	05%	Manipulation	**
Art (various)	05%	Manipulation	BRP page 50
Artillery	05%	Combat	BRP page 52 *
Bargain	20%	Communication	BRP page 52 *
Brawl	25%	Combat	BRP page 52
Channel Spirit	00%	Mental	**
Climb	40%	Physical	BRP page 52
Command	05%	Communication	BRP page 53
Craft (various)	05%	Manipulation	BRP page 54
Demolition	00%	Manipulation	BRP page 54 *
Disguise	05%	Communication	BRP page 55 *
Divination	00%	Mental	**
Dodge	DEX×2	Physical	BRP page 55
Drive (Carriage or Cart)	15%	Physical	BRP page 55 *
Etiquette	05%	Communication	BRP page 56 *
Fine Manipulation	05%	Manipulation	BRP page 57
Firearm	per weapon	Combat	BRP page 58 *
Gaming	INT+POW	Mental	BRP page 60 *
Geomancy	00%	Mental	**
Grapple	25%	Combat	BRP page 60
Healing Lore	INT×1	Mental	BRP page 58 *
Hide	10%	Physical	BRP page 62
Insight	05%	Perception	BRP page 63
Jump	25%	Physical	BRP page 63
Knowledge (various)	00%	Mental	BRP page 64 *
Knowledge (Art History)	10%	Mental	BRP page 64
Knowledge (Folklore)	05%	Mental	BRP page 64
Knowledge (Group: Rivers and Lakes)	05%	Mental	BRP page 64 *
Knowledge (Heraldry)	00%	Mental	BRP page 64 *
Knowledge (History)	20%	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Knowledge (Law)	10%	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Knowledge (Literature)	EDU×1	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Knowledge (Politics)	20%	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Knowledge (Region)	00% or 20%	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Knowledge (Religion)	00% or 10%	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Knowledge (Streetwise)	10%	Mental	BRP page 65 *
Language (other)	00%	Communication	BRP page 66 *
Language (own)	EDU×5	Communication	BRP page 66 *

NAME	BASE CHANCE	CATEGORY†	NOTES
Listen	25%	Perception	BRP page 67
Literacy (various)	00%	Mental	BRP page 67 *
Martial Arts (various)	00%	Combat	BRP page 68 *
Medicine	00%	Mental	BRP page 69
Meditation	00%	Mental	**
Melee weapon (various)	per weapon	Combat	BRP page 69
Missile weapon (various)	per weapon	Combat	BRP page 70
Navigate	10%	Perception	BRP page 70
Necromancy	00%	Mental	**
Perform (various)	05%	Communication	BRP page 71
Perform (Sing)	05%	Communication	BRP page 71 *
Persuade	15%	Communication	BRP page 71
Pilot (Boats)	00%	Physical	BRP page 72 *
Research	00%	Perception	BRP page 74 *
Ride (various)	05%	Physical	BRP page 75
Science (Alchemy)	00%	Mental	BRP page 76 *
Science (Natural History)	10%	Mental	BRP page 77 *
Sense	10%	Perception	BRP page 77
Sleeve Combat	00%	Combat	**
Sleight of Hand	05%	Manipulation	BRP page 78
Spot	25%	Perception	BRP page 78
Status	per profession	Communication	BRP page 79
Stealth	10%	Physical	BRP page 80
Strategy	00%	Mental	BRP page 80 *
Swim	25%	Physical	BRP page 81
Teach	10%	Communication	BRP page 82
Technical Skill (various)	00%	Mental	BRP page 82
Throw	25%	Physical	BRP page 83
Track	10%	Perception	BRP page 83

† If the Skill Category Bonuses option is used.

* This skill differs in name, application or base chance from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules

** This skill is in addition to the list of skills from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules



足蹬弩施放图



the roll must remain hidden from the player since he has no idea whether the attempt to prophesy the future was successful or not).

The diviner's prediction takes the form of a cryptic sentence of up to seven words, or of a mystical vision... A role-playing game being mostly based on random dice rolls, it will obviously take much ingenuity on the GM's side to have the prophesied result happen or fail to occur within the course of his game!

"The [divination] method is this. A customer takes his seat in front of the table and consults the wooden tablet on which is engraved a scale of prices. In case he merely wants an answer on a given subject, he puts his question and receives the reply at once on a slip of paper. But if he desires to have his fortune told, he dictates the year, month, day, and hour of his birth, which are written down by the sage in the particular characters used by the Chinese to express times and seasons. From the combinations of these and a careful estimate of the proportions in which the five elements—gold, wood, water, fire, and earth—make their appearance, certain results are deduced upon which details may be grafted according to the fancy of the fortune-teller."

H. Giles

Alternatively, the GM may reveal one 'truth' about the character's future per successful skill roll. This 'truth' may then be used much like Fate Points whenever the circumstances allow.

Example

White Fox asks an astrologer to predict her future. The astrologer predicts the following 'truth': you shall follow the black falcon. Later on, White Fox gets lost in the mountains while trying to avoid the fort guarding the pass. The GM agrees that White Fox can find her way through the mountains by using her 'truth' and following a black falcon.

If the GM owns a copy of the Book of Changes (usually titled 'I Ching' in English-speaking countries), he can use actual sentences from that book when rolling for an Divination prediction.

GEOMANCY (+) (Base Chance 00%)

This skill covers the ability to feel the flow of the cosmic qì, and to arrange objects or to orientate places in accordance with this flow. This costs 1 Qi point.

"Fēng is the Chinese word for wind and Shuǐ for water; consequently, Fēngshuǐ is wind-water; the first half of which, wind, cannot be comprehended, the latter half, water, cannot be grasped. It may be defined as a system of geomancy, by the science of which it is

possible to determine the desirability of sites whether of tombs, houses, or cities, from the configuration of such natural objects as rivers, trees, and hills, and to foretell with certainty the fortunes of any family, community, or individual, according to the spot selected; by the art of which it is in the power of the geomancer to counteract evil influences by good ones, to transform straight and noxious outlines into undulating and propitious curves, rescue whole districts from the devastations of flood or pestilence, and 'scatter plenty o'er a smiling land' which might otherwise have known the blight of poverty and the pangs of want. To perform such miracles it is merely necessary to build pagodas at certain spots and of the proper height, to pile up a heap of stones, or round off the peak of some hill to which nature's rude hand has imparted a square and inharmonious aspect. It is the business of the geomancer to discover such sites, to say if a given locality is or is not all that could be desired on this head, sometimes to correct errors which ignorant quacks have committed, or rectify inaccuracies which have escaped the notice even of the most celebrated among the fraternity. There may be too many trees, so that some must be cut down; or there may be too few, and it becomes necessary to plant more. Water-courses may not flow in proper curves; hills may be too high, too low, and of baleful shapes, or their relative positions one with another may be radically bad. Any one of these causes may be sufficient in the eyes of a disciple of Fēngshuǐ to account for the sudden outbreak of a plague, the gradual or rapid decay of a once flourishing town. The Fēngshuǐ of a house influences not only the pecuniary fortunes of its inmates, but determines their general happiness and longevity."

H. Giles

This skill also covers the ability to detect Dragon Lines (see page 85), in a range of 100 meters per expended Qi point.

MEDITATION (Base Chance 00%)

This skill covers the ability to quiet one's mind and to distance oneself from worldly attachments. The Meditation skill must be practised daily to have any effect.

The GM may introduce beneficial aspects in conjunction with the regular practice of the Meditation skill, as per the following suggestions:

- The character may retry failed Mental skill rolls.
- The character may sense people or beings allied with the 'corrupt' allegiance opposed to one's own allegiance (i.e., a Daoist monk may





sense a heterodox character; a Buddhist or Esoteric Buddhist monk may sense a character in the Māra path).

- The character's Qi points are replenished at double the normal rate.
- Potency of maladies, poisons, etc. affecting the character is halved.

NECROMANCY (+)

(Base Chance 00%)

This skill covers the ability to summon and control the dead, and to perform exorcisms.

Ghosts feature prominently in Chinese literature, and many stories revolve around the need to placate an irate ghost or to help it find eternal peace.

In gaming terms, a necromancer may expend 1D6 Qi points and roll successfully against the Necromancy skill to recall the cloudsoul of a corpse. Each question costs the summoner a further 1D6 Qi points and another roll (performed by the GM) against the Necromancy skill to obtain the correct answer. The dead are no more willing to answer a stranger's questions than a living person is, so their answers may be quite cryptic or allusive.

It costs 3D6 Qi points and a successful roll against the Necromancy skill to summon a guī-monster – without any assurance that the latter won't attack its summoner! Each such use of the Necromancy skill:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – to a maximum of 75%

Necromancy can also be used in a more benevolent manner to perform exorcisms. Exorcising a ghost or a spirit requires a successful roll against the Necromancy skill, followed by beating the ghost or the spirit in a POW vs. POW roll on the Resistance Table.

SLEEVE COMBAT

(Base Chance 00%)

This skill covers the ability to fight with a rope, a ribbon, or even with one's sleeves. This skill is usually only taught amongst women. For damage inflicted by this kind of attack, please refer to page 107.

ALLEGIANCES

The list of available allegiances at character creation is given on page 48.

There are two additional 'corrupt' allegiances that may come into play during the course of a *Celestial Empire* campaign: Heterodoxy and the Māra path. A character may earn allegiance points in a 'corrupt' allegiance by casting certain spells or by joining certain religious sects.

The complete list of available *Celestial Empire* allegiances is thus as follows:

Buddhism
Chinese folk religion
Confucianism
Daoism
Esoteric Buddhism
Heterodoxy
Islam
Judaism
Manichæism
the Māra path
Nestorianism
Qīng-dynasty Christianity
Shamanism

Benefits to allegiance are in the form of divine intervention, to be adapted by the game master to the situation at the time of the invocation (as per page 317 of *Basic Roleplaying*): e.g., extra hit points when the character is fighting for his faith, extra Qi points that the character needs to cast a spell to protect people sharing his religion, a skill bonus for a judge faithful to Confucian virtues...

Acknowledging Allegiance

At character creation, a 20+ allegiance score automatically allies the character with a given religion. However, during the course of a campaign, a character must intentionally become allied with a given allegiance, as per page 316 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

Exception: one always automatically becomes allied with the Māra path – a person does never choose whether he or she becomes deluded!

Acts Contrary to the Allegiance

When an allied player character acts contrary to the tenets of his religion, he must roll above his allegiance score. If the roll is a failure, the allied character loses a variable amount of allegiance points. Some sample 'contrary acts' are given below, depending on the character's religion, along with the relevant loss of allegiance points:



Acts Contrary to Buddhism

Breaking a vow: celibacy, seclusion, vegetarianism (-2 points per broken rule, for ordained Buddhists only)
 Intoxication (-1 point)
 Killing, incl. animals (-2 points for killing without a reason, -1 point for killing out of necessity)
 Lustful behaviour (-1 point)
 Telling lies (-1 point)
 Theft (-1 point)
 Torture (-1 point)

Acts Contrary to Chinese Folk Religion

Becoming possessed by a demonic creature, a ghost, a spirit, or a gui-monster (-2 points)
 Not taking care of one's ancestral tablet (-2 points)
 Not showing respect towards one's ancestors (-1 point)
 Not sacrificing at festivals (-1 point per missed festival)
 Not paying the annual visit to the shrine of one's God of the Land/God of Village/God of Town (-2 points per missed visit)

Acts Contrary to Confucianism

Behaving contrary to etiquette (-1 point)
 Dabbling in magic or in the occult (-1 point)
 Losing face (-2 points)
 Not being patriotic (-1 point)
 Not taking care of one's ancestral tablet (-2 points)
 Not showing respect towards one's ancestors (-1 point)
 Not showing respect towards one's elders or teachers (-1 point)
 Not showing respect towards one's husband (-1 point, for women only)
 Not showing respect towards one's ruler (-1 point)

Not gathering with one's lineage for the spring and autumn sacrifices (-2 points per missed festival)

Acts Contrary to Daoism

Being arrogant (-1 point)
 Being foolhardy (-1 point)
 Excessive sexual indulgence (-1 point, for men only)
 Excessive sexual indulgence, without ejaculation control (-2 points, for men only)
 Intoxication (-1 point)
 Not consulting an astrologer to select an auspicious date before an important endeavour (-1 point)
 Not consulting a geomancer before planning a building (-1 point)
 Not consulting a geomancer for the position of a grave (-2 points)
 Not taking care of one's ancestral tablet (-1 point)

Acts Contrary to Esoteric Buddhism

Intoxication (-1 point)
 Killing (-2 points for killing without a reason, -1 point for killing out of necessity)
 Lustful behaviour (-1 point)
 Lying (-1 point)
 Not practising one's mantra (-1 point)
 Stealing (-1 point)
 Torturing (-1 point)
 Violate the commitment to one's guru (-3 points)

Acts Contrary to Heterodoxy

Excessive sexual indulgence without ejaculation control (-1 point, for men only)
 Not showing respect towards one's elders or teachers (-1 point)

Acts Contrary to Islam

Adultery (-1 point for men, -2 points for women)
 Blasphemy (-2 points)
 Consumption of harām food: alcohol, pork, non-halāl meat... (-2 points)
 Idolatry, i.e., the worship of heathen gods (-4 points)
 Not fasting during the month of Ramadān (-2 points)
 Not paying one's tithes (-2 points)
 Not praying at the established times of day (-1 point)
 Sacrilege: e.g., wearing one's shoes in a mosque (-2 points)

Acts Contrary to Judaism

Adultery (-1 point for men, -2 points for women)
 Blasphemy (-2 points)
 Consumption of non-kosher food (-2 points)
 Idolatry, i.e., the worship of heathen gods (-4 points)
 Marrying a Gentile (-2 points)
 Murder (-1 point)
 Non observance of Shabbāt or of the Jewish holidays (-2 points)
 Not dressing modestly (-2 points, for women only)
 Sex with a menstruating woman (-1 point)
 Theft (-1 point)

Acts Contrary to Manichæism

Adultery (-1 point)
 Not fasting during the prescribed periods of time (-2 points)

points)

Not showing respect towards monks (-1 point)

Murder (-1 point)

Theft (-1 point)

Acts Contrary to the Māra Path

There aren't any specific acts contrary to the Māra path, which is the path of delusion and temptation. Whenever a character gains 1 allegiance point in either Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism, he automatically loses 1 allegiance point in the Māra path.

Acts Contrary to Nestorianism

Adultery (-1 point for men, -2 points for women)

Blasphemy (-2 points)

Idolatry, i.e., the worship of heathen gods (-4 points)

Murder (-1 point)

Not praying at the established times of week (-1 point per week)

Not showing respect towards monks (-1 point)

Theft (-1 point)

Acts Contrary

to Qīng-Dynasty Christianity

Adultery (-1 point for men, -2 points for women)

Blasphemy (-2 points)

Idolatry, i.e., the worship of heathen gods (-4 points)

Not praying at the established times of week (-1 point per week)

Not showing respect towards missionaries (-1 point)

Acts Contrary to Shamanism

Not observing the tribe's taboos (-2 points)

Not showing respect towards the shaman (-2 points)

Please note that all of the above losses are cumulative: e.g., if a character does not take care of his ancestral tablet, he loses 2 Chinese folk religion allegiance points, 2 Confucianism allegiance points, and 1 Daoism allegiance point.

Lost allegiance points may be regained through:

- probation or discipline (for monks only – variable)
- rituals of purification (+2 points per week)
- a pilgrimage to a holy place (+6 points per pilgrimage)
- anything else the game master may devise

Apotheosis

As per page 318 of *Basic Roleplaying*, a player character reaching a total of 100+ in an allegiance score, and who is allied to that particular allegiance, may become a servant of that force. Accepting apotheosis confers the benefits described below, depending on the allegiance:

Buddhist Apotheosis

The character becomes a Noble One. Dharmapāla such as Jīngāng lìshì or Shīzi (see page 126) instantly recognise him and assist him. The player character may cast the spell Summon Dharmapāla once per day at no Qi point cost; also, this spell does not count against the maximum number of spells that the character can memorise.

Chinese Folk Religion Apotheosis

The character becomes a Local Hero. The game master shall decide the appropriate village or city quarter where the populace will establish a joss house dedicated to the Hero. Every inhabitant of the village or city quarter will instantly recognise and assist the player character.

Christian Apotheosis

The character becomes a Holy Man. He is immediately given a high position in the hierarchy of his church (e.g., a bishopric if Nestorian or Catholic).

Confucian Apotheosis

The character becomes a Confucian Gentleman. The player may double the skill ratings of any three scholarly skills.

Daoist or Heterodox Apotheosis

The character becomes a Human Immortal. The player character stops aging, and he doesn't suffer from disease any longer. However, he can still be slain by weapons or other violent attacks.

Esoteric Buddhist Apotheosis

The character becomes a Wisdom King. He magically receives a diamond club (jīngāng chǔ, damage as per the Buddhist spell) that he must use to rid the world of the enemies of Buddhism.

Jewish Apotheosis

The character becomes a Jewish Sage. The player may double the skill ratings of any three scholarly skills.

Manichæan Apotheosis

The character becomes a Holy Messenger. Any Manichæan PC or NPC will instantly recognise and assist the player character.

Muslim Apotheosis

The character becomes a Walī. No guǐ-monster may come nearer than 100 metres to the player character.

Shamanistic Apotheosis

The character becomes a True Immortal. The player character stops ageing, and he doesn't suffer from disease any longer. If slain by a weapon or another violent attack, the body of the character is destroyed, but the player may keep the disembodied spirit as player character.



CHINESE MARTIAL ARTS

MARTIAL ARTS with exaggerated feats of acrobatics, strength, or stamina, are one of the main staples of wuxia film and literature. As such, they cannot be ignored by *The Celestial Empire*.

Obviously, game masters running a historical or a semi-historical campaign will skip this chapter. All others may want to incorporate this chapter to their Imperial Chinese setting.

Buddhism essentially started as a kind of reform movement within Brahmanism. The former thus kept some traits of the latter, amongst which vajramusti, a martial art practised by the upper castes during some religious festivals. In the 6th century AD, the Indian monk Bodhidharma made his way northwards to China via the Silk Road to teach Buddhism. Bodhidharma was a practitioner of vajramusti.

The influence of Indian-born vajramusti on the indigenous techniques of qi control (dǎoyīn) and of the “five agents fighting style” (wǔxíng quán) gave birth to wǔshù, Chinese martial arts, which are best known in the West under the erroneous term of ‘kung fu’ (gōngfu), which simply means “perfect technique” and which may hence be applied to any skill (i.e. medicine, calligraphy) and not necessarily only to wǔshù.

In gaming terms, wǔshù feats are rendered through the Super Powers mechanisms detailed on page 140 to page 168 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, with the adaptations to Imperial China presented below.



Super Power Origins

Despite being supernatural in appearance, wǔshù powers originate in intense physical and mental training through membership of a Martial Arts School (see below) and under the guidance of a martial arts master (shīfu).

“The debt of gratitude between pupil and teacher is second only to that existing between child and parent.”

H.Giles

Starting Budget

As is the case for Super Powers, the players can buy their powers using Character Points. However, contrary to what is written on page 141 of *Basic Roleplaying*, *Celestial Empire* characters do not compute their Character Points based on their characteristics, but based on the skill value of their Martial Arts School skill at character creation. The number of Character Points that may be devoted to buying wǔshù powers is equal to the value of the character’s Martial Arts School skill at character creation divided by 5. These Character Points are then used to buy super powers from the list corresponding to the Martial Arts School they are members of, see page 69.

Example

White Fox has the Martial Arts (Éméiquán) skill at 10%. Vivienne can spend $(10 \div 5 = 2)$ 2 Character Points in wǔshù powers from the Éméiquán School; she buys Defence (cost: 1) times 2. White Fox ends up with two levels of the Defence wǔshù power.

Wáng has the Martial Arts (Shàolínquán) skill at 75%. Peter can spend $(75 \div 5 = 15)$ 15 Character Points in wǔshù powers from the Shàolínquán School; he buys Defence (cost: 1) times 3, Extra Energy (cost: 1) times 2, Heroic Strength (cost: 2) times 1, Super Skill (Brawl) (cost: 2) times 2, Super Skill (Jump) (cost: 2) times 1, and Super Skill (Melee Weapon [Pole Arm]) (cost: 2) times 1.

Wáng ends up with the following wǔshù powers: Defence at level 3, Extra Energy at level 2, Heroic Strength at level 1, Super Skill (Brawl) at level 2, Super Skill (Jump) at level 1, and Super Skill (Melee Weapon: Pole Arm) at level 1.

Character Failings & Power Modifiers

The *Celestial Empire* does not use Character Failings and Power Modifiers.



Allocating Super Power Levels

Player characters may only buy levels from powers listed under the Martial Arts School they are members of.

Later on in the course of *Celestial Empire* gaming sessions, characters may learn *wǔshù* powers out of their Martial Arts School listing through magic, membership of an organisation, or special reward by the GM.

Improving Super Powers

Super power improvement methods are described on page 144 of *Basic Roleplaying*. However, *Celestial Empire* player characters may only improve their *wǔshù* powers by one of the following methods:

- Training
- Character Point Budget Awards

Improvement through Training should be the preferred method, especially within a Martial Arts School, where trainers are available.

Character Point Budget Awards should be used in conjunction with the award suggestions presented on page 42.

Types of Energy

The *Celestial Empire* only contemplates kinetic energy.

List of wǔshù powers

An alphabetised list of all available *wǔshù* powers in *The Celestial Empire* follows. Each entry lists the power name, its Character Point Cost, as well as any useful notes. To keep this rule set as close as possible to the original *Basic Roleplaying* rules, most power names are exactly the same as in the core rulebook.

Name	Character Point Cost	Notes
Blind Fighting	5	**
Death Touch	3 per level	**
Defence	1 per level	BRP page 151 *
Extra Energy	1 per 10 points	BRP page 157 *
Heroic Strength	2 per level	**
Leap	1 per level	BRP page 159
Paralysing Touch	3 per level	**
Silencing Touch	1 per level	**
Stoicism	5	**
Super Movement	5 per type	BRP page 163 *
Super Skill	2 per level	BRP page 165 *
Super Speed	10 per level	BRP page 166 *
Swoon Touch	3 per level	**
Unarmed Combat	10 per level	BRP page 167 *

* This power differs in application or in cost from the core rules.

** This power is in addition to the list of powers from the core rules.

Modified Powers

Those powers which differ in application from the core BRP rules are described below.

DEFENCE

This power is not 'always on'. This power costs 1 Qi point per use.

EXTRA ENERGY

The extra Qi points provided by this *wǔshù* power can only be used in the context of *wǔshù* powers; they cannot be used to cast spells, etc.

This power is limited to a maximum of 2 levels per character.

SUPER MOVEMENT

The only two types of Super Movement available in *The Celestial Empire* are Lightfoot and Wall Walking.

SUPER SKILL

In *The Celestial Empire*, the only skills that may be improved through Super Skill are the following ones: Arrow cutting, Brawl, Climb, Dodge,



Grapple, Jump, Melee weapon, Missile weapon, Sleeve combat.

This power costs 1 Qi point per use.

UNARMED COMBAT

This power is not 'always on'. This power costs 1 Qi point per use.

New Powers

This section describes new powers which are in addition to the list of powers from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules.

BLIND FIGHTING

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 15; Qi Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to fight without any penalty in darkness, or against an invisible opponent.

DEATH TOUCH

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 3 per level; Qi Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to inflict damage to one's opponent through a series of strikes localised on the opponent's pressure points. The inflicted damage depends on the level:

Level 1 – 1D4 damage

Level 2 – 1D6 damage

Level 3 – 1D8 damage

Level 4 – 1D10 damage

HEROIC STRENGTH

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 2 per level; Qi Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to knock back

the opponent one metre per level, or to break 3 SIZ point of a wall or of a piece of furniture.

PARALYSING TOUCH

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 3 per level; Qi Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to paralyse one's opponent through a series of strikes localised on the opponent's pressure points. The opponent remains paralysed for five combat rounds per level.

SILENCING TOUCH

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 1 per level; Power Point Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to render one's opponent mute through a series of strikes localised on the opponent's pressure points. The opponent remains mute for five combat rounds per level.

STOICISM

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 5; Power Point Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to ignore pain in combat. In gaming terms, the character ignores any unconsciousness stemming from a major wound.

SWOON TOUCH

(Base Range: Self; Duration: Varies; Character Point Cost: 3 per level; Power Point Cost: 1 per combat round)

This power represents the ability to render one's opponent unconscious through a series of strikes localised on the opponent's pressure points. The opponent stays unconscious for one combat round per level.

MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOLS

As explained above, Martial Arts Schools are central to which *wǔshù* powers a *Celestial Empire* character may learn, practise, and use during combat. The fighting style taught by a given school bears the name of the school, thus 'Éméiquán' refers to both the Martial Arts School of Mount Éméi and to its fighting style.

Some schools only exist at some periods of time. This is indicated under the name of the school below.

Some schools only teach students allied to a given allegiance; this is also indicated under the name of the school.

The style (internal vs external) of each school is indicated under the name of the school. Internal means that the *wǔshù* powers of said school are fuelled by the flow of *yīn* energy; external means that the *wǔshù* powers of said school are fuelled by the flow of *yáng* energy.

Major Martial Arts Schools

The following schools are all accessible to player characters:

ÉMÉIQUÁN (Mount Éméi boxing)

Period of time: all

Allegiance: Buddhism

Style: external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic strength, Super Movement (Wall Walking), Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Missile weapon), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spells: Change, Heal, Speak to Mind

MIÁNQUÁN (Cotton fist)

Period of time: Yuán to Qīng

Allegiance: none

Style: internal (yīn)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Stoicism, Super Movement (Lightfoot), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

NÁNQUÁN (Southern boxing)

Period of time: Qīng

Allegiance: none

Style: external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

QÍNNÁ (Catching and locking)

Period of time: all

Allegiance: Daoism

Style: internal (yīn)

Powers: Death Touch, Extra Energy, Paralysing Touch, Silencing Touch, Super Skill (Dodge), Swoon Touch

Other Powers taught: none

SHÀOLÍNQUÁN (Shàolín boxing)

Period of time: all

Allegiance: Buddhism

Style: external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

USE OF POWERS

Wúshù powers are never used automatically. Their use is subject to a successful roll under the Martial Arts (School) skill, to the expenditure of the relevant power point(s), and sometimes to another successful roll. The table below lists all the conditions for each power.

This wúshù power...	...needs success under...	...and costs
Blind Fighting	Martial Arts (School) one combat skill	1 Qi/round
Death Touch	Martial Arts (School) one unarmed combat skill	1 Qi/round
Defence	Martial Arts (School)	1 Qi/round
Heroic Strength	Martial Arts (School) one combat skill	1 Qi/round
Leap	Martial Arts (School) Jump	1 Qi/round
Paralysing Touch	Martial Arts (School) one unarmed combat skill	1 Qi/round
Silencing Touch	Martial Arts (School) one unarmed combat skill	1 Qi/round
Stoicism	Martial Arts (School)	1 Qi/round
Super Movement	Martial Arts (School)	1 Qi/round
Super Skill	Martial Arts (School) relevant skill	1 Qi/round
Super Speed	Martial Arts (School) relevant skill of the extra action	1 Qi/round
Swoon Touch	Martial Arts (School) one unarmed combat skill	1 Qi/round
Unarmed Combat	Martial Arts (School) relevant skill of the other action	1 Qi/round

Of course, a character may always elect to simply roll under both the Martial Arts skill and another combat skill (Brawl, Grapple, Melee Weapon – as long as it's listed under the character's Martial Arts School), without adding any Qi expenditure. In this case, no wúshù power is used but, if the rolled result is less than the skill value of both Martial Arts and the other combat skill, particular damage results apply as per page 68 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

Example

Lín the Wanderer still remembers some of his wúshù training at the Shàolín Monastery. He is being attacked by a thug who is a member of a corrupt secret society but he does not want to spend any Qi, should he need them later on. Since Brawl is listed under 'Shàolínquán' below, Lín may simply try and roll under both Martial Arts (Shàolínquán) and Brawl for extra damage.

Later on, Lín has to fight against the leader of the secret society. This time, Lín knows the fight is going to be tough, so he uses 1 Qi/rnd for Super Skill (Brawl) and adds 60% (level 3) to his Brawl skill score, to maximise his chances to inflict extra damage.



SHÀOLÍN-WŪXÍNG-BĀFĀ-QUÁN*(Shàolín eight laws of five animals boxing)**Period of time:* Qīng*Allegiance:* Buddhism*Style:* external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Leap, Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none**TÀIJÍQUÁN (Supreme ultimate boxing)***Period of time:* Yuán to Qīng*Allegiance:* Daoism*Style:* internal (yīn)

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Leap, Stoicism, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Movement (Lightfoot), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spells: Change, Heal, Protection

TÔNGBÌQUÁN (Forearm boxing)*Period of time:* Míng to Qīng*Allegiance:* Daoism*Style:* external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spells: Change, Protection

WŪDĀNG PÀI (School of Mount Wūdāng)*Period of time:* Yuán to Qīng*Allegiance:* Daoism*Style:* internal (yīn)

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Stoicism, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Skill (Missile weapon), Super Skill (Sleeve combat), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none**Minor Martial Arts Schools**

The previous section has listed the major martial arts school of Imperial China. Obviously, there are many more martial arts schools. Some of them teach slightly different styles, which are mere variations of the main ones; some others teach exactly the same *wúshù* powers as the main schools, only the name changes; yet some others have their own original styles. These schools are for non-player characters (NPCs) only, either because teaching is restricted to family members, or to members of a given religious sect, etc. The game master may use the styles below to create NPCs that may surprise the player characters and provide a welcome challenge.

BĀFĀQUÁN (Eight laws boxing)*Period of time:* Yuán to Qīng*Allegiance:* Chán Buddhism*Style:* internal (yīn)

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Stoicism, Super Movement (Lightfoot), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none**BĀGUÀQUÁN (Eight trigrams boxing)***Period of time:* Qīng*Allegiance:* Daoism*Style:* internal (yīn)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spell: Befuddle

The fighting tactics of this school is to let the opponent get fatigued by dodging all his strikes, and to then befuddle him.

BÁIHÈQUÁN (White crane boxing)*Period of time:* Qīng*Allegiance:* none*Style:* internal (yīn)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Teleport, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

This style is mostly practised by female martial artists; also mostly in South China (Fújiàn province) and on Okinawa Island.

CÀILÍFÓQUÁN (Càilífó boxing)*Period of time:* Qīng*Allegiance:* none*Style:* external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

This style is mostly practised in South China (Guǎngdōng province) by members of anti-Manchuist secret societies.

ZHĀQUÁN (Zhā boxing)*Period of time:* Qīng*Allegiance:* Islam*Style:* external (yáng)

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Leap, Super Movement (Lightfoot), Super Movement (Wall Walking), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Jump), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

This school was created by the Turkic hero Zhā Mǐ'ěr (1568-1644), who taught it to the Huí people (Chinese Muslims).

ÉMÉI-WŪHŮ-QUÁN*(Mount Éméi five tigers boxing)**Period of time: Qīng**Allegiance: Buddhism**Style: external (yáng)*

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Movement (Lightfoot), Super Movement (Wall Walking), Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Missile weapon), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spells: Change, Heal, Speak to Mind

The techniques of this school stem from Éméiquán's, with an emphasis on strength and stability. This style traces its roots in South China; rumour has it it was created by the fugitive monks of Shàolín after the destruction of their monastery by the Manchus.

HÈQUÁN (Crane boxing)*Period of time: Qīng**Allegiance: Esoteric Buddhism**Style: external (yáng)*

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Super Skill (Arrow cutting), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

This is a style originating from Tibet, and which was spread to North China and Manchuria under the Qīng.

MÌZǒNGQUÁN (Tantric boxing)*Period of time: Yuán to Qīng**Allegiance: Esoteric Buddhism**Style: external (yáng)*

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Super Movement (Lightfoot), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Dodge), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Buddhist Magic – spells: Diamond Club, Mantra of Avalokiteshvara, Mantra of Bhaisajyaguru, Third Eye

This is a very mysterious style, as its transmission has been restricted to Esoteric Buddhist secret societies.

SHUĀIJIǎO OR XIÀNGPŪ (Wrestling)*Period of time: all**Allegiance: none**Style: internal (yīn)**Powers: Super Skill (Grapple)**Special effects:*

- The character may use his Grapple skill to Dodge, if the former is higher than the latter.
- The character may use his Grapple skill to inflict 2D3 damage to the opponent.

Other Powers taught: none

This style is much better known in the West under its Japanese name (sumō). Although we have translated it as “wrestling”, it combines grappling and striking.

TÀIJÍSHÀN (Supreme ultimate fan)*Period of time: Míng to Qīng**Allegiance: Daoism**Style: internal (yīn)*

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Leap, Stoicism, Super Movement (Lightfoot), Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Teleport, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spells: Heal, Protection

Skill	Base	Dmg	Special	Hands	HP	SIz/Enc
Fan	15%	1D8+db	Bleed/Crush	1H/2H	20	0.25

Originally an offshoot of Tàijíquán, this school has specialised in fighting with a steel fan (shàn), a lethal weapon easy to conceal:

TIĒBŪSHĀN (Iron shirt)*Period of time: all**Allegiance: none**Style: internal (yīn)*

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Leap, Stoicism, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: Battle Magic – spells: Heal, Protection

This school teaches its practitioners how to harden one's body, and in particular one's hands.

YǒNGCHŪN (Eternal spring)*Period of time: Míng to Qīng**Allegiance: none**Style: external (yáng)*

Powers: Defence, Extra Energy, Heroic Strength, Skill (Brawl), Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Skill (Grapple), Skill (Jump), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

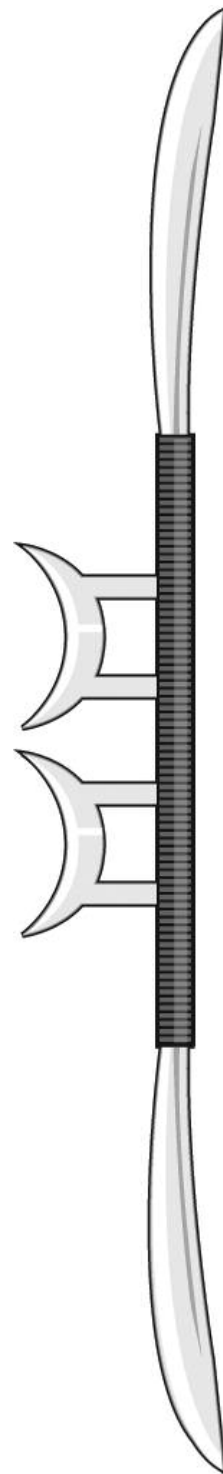
This school was established by the Buddhist nun Wǔ Méi. In the Qīng, this martial arts style spread amongst anti-Manchuist militants in South China. This style is much better known in the West under its Cantonese name (Wing Chun).

XÍNGYÌQUÁN (Body and soul boxing)*Period of time: Sòng to Qīng**Allegiance: Daoism**Style: internal (yīn)*

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Stoicism, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Grapple), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Speed, Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

Legend has it that this school was created by the renowned Sòng dynasty general Yuè Fēi (1103-1142). Its fighting techniques are only taught to members of the military.



CHINESE MAGIC



IN A 'CULTURAL' ROLE-PLAYING GAME such as *The Celestial Empire*, it will ultimately be the game master's decision to decide whether magic should be present at all, slightly and subtly present, or massively available. Obviously, the genre of the campaign the game master wishes to run should help him make his decision (see page 40).

The following assumes that the game master has allowed the use of magic in his campaign.

CHINESE MAGICAL TRADITIONS

In Asia, magic and religion are inseparable. This is why the simplistic "cleric vs magician" dichotomy of many high fantasy role-games is meaningless in *The Celestial Empire*. A magician draws his magic from religious inspiration, and reciprocally any member of a religious order can rely on the magic tradition linked to his religion.

Chinese magic is thus related to four main traditions:

1. SHAMANISTIC MAGIC
2. BATTLE MAGIC
3. DAOIST MAGIC
4. BUDDHIST MAGIC

Shamanistic Magic

Shamanistic magic is the kind of magic that was practised by the Chinese of ancient times, or that is still practised in dynastic times by the non-Chinese peoples living in the most remote provinces of the Empire.

Shamanistic magic manipulated the fundamental forces of untamed nature, the spirits, the animal humours; it was governed by the complex relations between the shamans and the ancient gods (shénlíng), and between the shamans and the ancestral spirits.

Battle Magic

The original name of this magical tradition was *fāngshù*, a term for which there is no translation but that could vaguely be rendered by "art of the method". *Fāngshù* was practised by an order of magicians called *fāngshi* who were followers of the extremely ritualised religion of the Warring States period, a religion that stood at the junction of ancient Chinese religion and early Daoism.

Fāngshù was based on the manipulation of *yīnyáng* and of the Five Phases (*wǔxíng*) of the cosmic breath.

In the Warring States period, *fāngshì* were travelling from kingdom to kingdom as ‘magicians for hire’; *fāngshù* spells thus became scattered and studied across all China. Since *fāngshì* took part in all the major battles of that period, *fāngshù* came to be known as “battle magic”.

As a consequence, most of the common spells are battle magic spells.

To each *fāngshù* spell corresponds a particular Chinese character; this correspondence was established by the *fāngshì* in the Warring States period. To be able to cast a battle magic spell, the magician must visualise the relevant Chinese character whilst spending the required *Qì* points. This is why magicians have the Chinese characters corresponding to the spells they know engraved on their weapon or on their walking stick, or even have them tattooed on their hands. If a magician can’t visualise the Chinese character corresponding to the spell they’re about to cast, they must “draw” it with their finger in the air in front of them, which will lower the character’s DEX rank by 1 per level of the spell.

Daoist Magic

As explained in the chapter about religion (see page 90), practitioners of Daoism may be divided between those who emphasise mysticism and life as a hermit, and those who emphasise magic and alchemy. The latter are the ones who developed Daoist magic, which is based on the manipulation of language and of script, on symbolic gestures, on esoteric signs, and on the creation and use of magic items (swords, terracotta items, potions).

To each Daoist spell corresponds either a particular gesture, or an esoteric sign, or the manipulation of a given item. Moreover, this correspondence may vary depending on the particular school or teacher of magic. The GM and the player must decide this correspondence together for each Daoist spell known by the player character. To be able to cast a Daoist spell, the magician must make the relevant gesture or visualise the relevant esoteric sign whilst spending the required *Qì* points.

Buddhist Magic

Buddhist magic is practised by the Buddhist clergy, but also by particularly devoted laymen.

Buddhist spells are directly received from the bodhisattva, who thus help other Buddhists to reach spiritual enlightenment.

Generally speaking, followers of Hīnayāna Buddhism do not practise magic, and followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism only when needed to fight the forces of evil. However, for followers of Mijiāo

Buddhism, magic is truly at the centre of their religious practice.

To each Buddhist spell correspond a verse from a sūtra and a particular hand gesture called a *mudrā*. To be able to cast a Buddhist spell, the magician must recite the relevant verse and form the relevant *mudrā* with his hand whilst spending the required power points. Instead of forming the relevant *mudrā* with their hand, followers of Mijiāo may visualise the relevant mandala.

CREATING A CHINESE MAGICIAN

Creating a Shaman

The Celestial Empire has been written for a period of time in which the ancient Chinese religion has been replaced by the Three Teachings and by Chinese folk religion, even in the countryside.

Shamans are but a remnant from the old times, and wield much less power than they used to. The shaman profession in the character creation has hence been designed as being quite limited in power.

If the GM wants to run a campaign set in a more ancient period of time, or if he wants the player characters to meet non-Chinese peoples from remote provinces who still practise shamanism, such as the Bùyī, the Dòng or the Miáo, he should increase the power level of the shamans.

Here are a few suggestions of the kind of powers such shamans may wield:

- Appease a hungry ghost
- Command a guǐ-monster
- Communicate with the cloudsoul of a deceased person
- Control or create a *jiāngshī*
- Perform exorcisms
- Recall the cloudsoul of a deceased person to use his skills

The POW of these ‘beefed up’ shamans can reach extremely high values, as their POW gain should not be capped.

More generally, if they are to play a major role in his campaigns, the GM should devise his own system for shamans or use the rules for Shamanism detailed in other *Basic Roleplaying* supplements.

Fully-fledged shamanism rules might be published in a future *Celestial Empire* supplement.

Creating a Practitioner of Battle Magic

If the GM approves, any *Celestial Empire* character may use Battle Magic. Battle Magic follows the rules for Magic as written in the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules:

- Each Battle Magic spell is a different skill
- A starting magician may know up to four Battle Magic spells, with a beginning skill value equal to INT×1

The following differences with the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules apply:

- Practitioners of Battle Magic don't have a familiar
- Practitioners of Battle Magic don't have a wizard's staff
- Practitioners of Battle Magic don't have a grimoire and are effectively limited to half their INT in the number of Battle Magic spells they may learn.

New spells (beyond the ones known at character creation) may only be gained by apprenticeship with a teacher. During their adventures, player characters might also learn new spells through contact with supernatural creatures, or by finding occult scrolls.

Optionally, the GM may want to restrict access to Battle Magic to those characters whose POW characteristic is greater than or equal to 13.

Creating a Practitioner of Daoist Magic

To be able to use Daoist Magic, the player character must have an allegiance score for Daoism or Heterodoxy of at least 50, and be allied to that allegiance (i.e., that allegiance must be at least 20 points greater than any other, and the character must have chosen to acknowledge the allegiance). The character must also have a Literacy (Classical Chinese) skill of at least 50%. Daoist Magic follows the rules for Sorcery as written in the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules:

- The POW characteristic of the character must be 16 or higher
- A starting magician may know up to half of his INT (rounded up) in levels of Daoist Magic spells
- The starting magician has a set of occult Daoist scrolls equivalent in all aspects to the sorcerer's grimoire from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules
- A practitioner of Daoist Magic may only cast memorised spells

The following differences with the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules apply:

- Practitioners of Daoist Magic may have a familiar as per page 90 of *Basic Roleplaying*
- Practitioners of Daoist Magic may have a wizard's staff made for them as per page 91 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

Creating a Practitioner of Buddhist Magic

To be able to use Buddhist Magic, the player character must have an allegiance score for Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism of at least 50, and be allied to that allegiance (i.e., that allegiance must be at least 20 points greater than any other, and the character must have chosen to acknowledge the allegiance). Buddhist Magic uses the standard *Basic Roleplaying* Sorcery rules with the following modifications:

- The POW characteristic of the character must be greater than or equal to 13
- The character's Allegiance/5 (rounded down) substitutes for INT in the Sorcery rules, and the character is granted up to 1/10th of his Allegiance (rounded up) in levels of Buddhist Magic spells [e.g. Allegiance 76 divided by 10 and rounded up yields 8]
- Buddhist Magic spells cannot be written down on scrolls or in books – if a character wishes to “dismiss” one spell and acquire another he must go to a Buddhist temple and meditate (represented by a successful roll under the Meditation skill.) After this retreat, the spell to be suppressed is no longer available to the character and the spell to be acquired is.

A practitioner of Esoteric Buddhist Magic may have a *khatvanga* made for him. It is a long, club-like staff engraved with three skulls and crowned with a trident. It functions in every aspect as a wizard's staff as per page 91 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

Yīn, Yáng, and Qì Points

Qì points stemming from mortal creatures or from the qì of the earth are *yáng*; power points stemming from supernatural creatures or from human sacrifices are *yīn*.

Trying to eliminate (e.g., Dispel spell) or to contrast (e.g., Countermagic spell) the effects of a spell that is fuelled with *yáng* power points only through a spell that is fuelled with *yīn* power points only (or the other way round) gives a bonus of +20% on the resistance roll.

Note: Qì points that are directly received from the Buddha (see page 85) are neither *yīn* nor *yáng*.

CHINESE SPELLS

Any Chinese character may go to a master magician to learn Common Battle Magic spells. Access to a master magician can be more or less difficult, depending on the character's profession: a priest or a monk has access to teachers within his religious order; laymen must seek out someone who knows the spell that interests them and then convince him to teach it to them.

Uncommon Battle Magic spells are best kept for non-player characters, as lost scrolls found in 'treasure hoards,' or rewards given by a powerful sponsor.

Daoist and Buddhist spells (page 77 and 79) are the domain of those magicians who have devoted their whole life to apprenticeship within a unique magical tradition.

The names of the spells mostly follow the pattern set in Chaosium's *Basic Roleplaying System*. Players are encouraged to invent more bombastic names when using the spells, e.g., rather than saying "I cast a Light spell", the character should announce "I invoke upon us the numinous light of the Celestial marshals".

Common Spells

The spells described in this section are the ones most commonly taught by Chinese master magicians.

BEFUDDLE

If successfully cast, this spell confuses the target, who loses any notion of friend/foe, of spatial directions, and of any events in the immediate past. The affected target will not act, but merely stare at whatever is happening. If attacked, the target will parry and dodge at full value. This confusion will go away at the beginning of the next combat round.

This spell is considered gǔ sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each level of the Befuddle spell learned:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

CHANGE

See the Change spell on page 94 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

CONJURE ELEMENTAL

The Conjure Elemental spell on page 94 of the BRP rulebook lists the following four 'traditional elemental types': Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. This is obviously based on the Greek interpretation of elements. If the spell were to be based on the Chinese interpretation of elements, there would be five

available elemental types – however, since 'elementals' never appear in Chinese lore, we shall consider that these are mere 'monsters' that the sorcerer may conjure. Based on Chinese lore, only air and water elemental types are available in *The Celestial Empire*.

Each spell level will conjure 3 SIZ points.

CONTROL

See the Control spell on page 95 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

COUNTERMAGIC

See the Countermagic spell on page 96 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

DIMINISH

See the Diminish spell on page 96 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

This spell is considered gǔ sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each level of the Diminish spell known:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

ENHANCE

See the Enhance spell on page 97 of the BRP rulebook.

FANATICISM

If successfully cast, this spell renders the target fanatic. The latter's combat skill values are increased by half again; e.g., a character's Melee weapon (Sword) 30% skill will become Melee weapon (Sword) 45%. The spell also prevents the target from parrying or casting protective spells. The target's Dodge skill is halved (round up).

The spell affects one person per level.

A Demoralise spell will cancel a Fanaticism spell, leaving the target with a normal behaviour.

This spell is considered gǔ sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each level of the Fanaticism spell known:

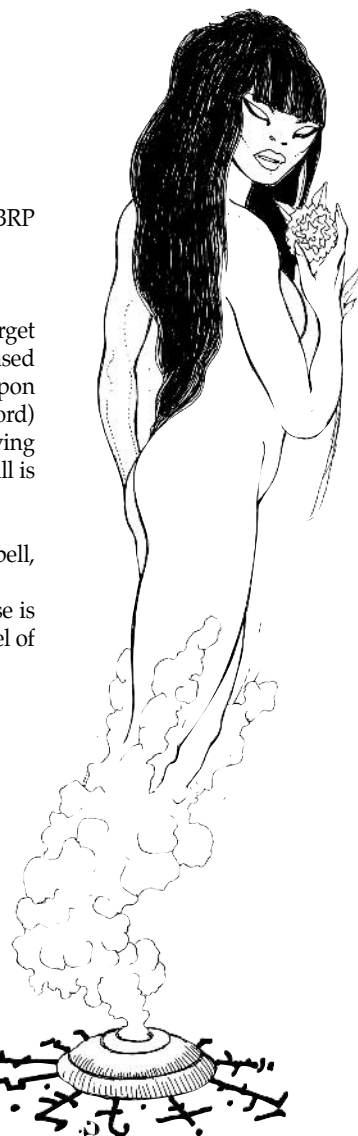
- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

HEAL

See the Heal spell on page 98 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

ILLUSION

See the Illusion spell on page 98 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.



INVISIBILITY

See the Invisibility spell on page 98 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

PERCEPTION

See the Perception spell on p99 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

PROTECTION

See the Protection spell on page 99 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

RESISTANCE

See the Resistance spell on page 100 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SPEAK TO MIND

See the Speak to Mind spell on p100 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

TELEPORT

See the Teleport spell on page 100 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

VISION

See the Vision spell on page 101 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

WARD

See the Ward spell on page 102 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

Battle Magic Spells

The *fāngshù* tradition is also a 'lost' tradition. However, the *fāngshù* spells have not been lost. On the contrary, the most widely available of those spells have become the common Battle Magic spells, to which almost everybody has access. The less well-known ones might be found by player characters as 'treasure scrolls' during their adventures.

The following spells are the ones that only privileged magicians may have had access to.

LIST OF UNCOMMON BATTLE MAGIC SPELLS**BLAST**

See the Blast spell on page 94 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

DARK

See the Dark spell on page 96 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

DEMORALISE

If successfully cast, this spell renders the target demoralised. The target loses faith in his skills and, more generally, in anything involving his active participation. The target may parry, dodge, or cast protective spells, but his attack skills are halved (round up), and he may not use offensive magic. Attacking a Demoralised foe will not affect the spell.

A Fanaticism spell will cancel a Demoralise spell, leaving the target with a normal behaviour.

This spell is considered *gǔ* sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each level of the Demoralise spell known:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

DISPEL

See the Dispel spell on page 96 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

DULL

See the Dull spell on page 97 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

FARSEE

The target may see as if with a 10x power telescope. The target may switch this 'farsight' on and off at will for a total time of up to 4 hours instead of the usual duration for Battle Magic spells.

FIRE

See the Fire spell on page 97 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.



**FROST**

See the Frost spell on page 97 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

LIGHT

See the Light spell on page 99 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

LIGHTNING

See the Lightning spell on page 99 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SEAL

See the Seal spell on page 100 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SHARPEN

See the Sharpen spell on page 100 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

UNSEAL

See the Unseal spell on page 101 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

WALL

See the Wall spell on page 101 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

WOUNDING

See the Wounding spell on page 102 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

Daoist Magic Spells

These spells stem from the *Dàojiào* tradition, which is almost as ancient as the previous ones. The original aim of the practitioner of this tradition was to reach the state of transcendent (*zhēnrén*). However, ambitious magicians quickly realised the power that the manipulation of the *Dào* brought to practitioners of this tradition. As a result, Daoist Magic is now popular with those magicians who have decided to use their arcane arts for personal gain.

The following spells are defined as follows:

Name the common name of the spell, generally indicative of function

Range either Self (caster only), Touch (caster or anyone or anything he can touch physically), Sight (anything in the caster's line of sight), or some other definition

Qi Point Cost the power point cost of a given spell is either a fixed value, or a range (like 1-4) for variable spells

Duration unless otherwise specified, a given spell has a duration equal to the magician's POW in combat rounds

Effect(s) of the spell.

LIST OF DAOIST MAGIC SPELLS

BOUNTY OF THE SEA

See the Bounty of the Sea spell on page 128 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

BRAZIER OF POWER

See the Brazier of Power spell on page 128 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

The game master and the player may want to replace the brazier with an item more suited to an Imperial Chinese setting, such as a tripodal bronze cauldron, a zhōng bell, a gong, an incense holder.

CHAIN OF BEING

See the Chain of Being spell on page 130 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

CURSE OF SORCERY

See the *Curse of Sorcery* spell on page 130 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

This spell is considered gǔ sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each use of the Curse of Sorcery spell:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

DETECT TRUTH

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 1

This spell allows the magician to tell whether anyone within a 5-metre radius is lying.

FEAR

Range: 100 metres

Qi Cost: 1

If successfully cast, this spell instantaneously causes the target to flee in the opposite direction of the caster's for the duration of the spell. If the target encounters any obstacle during his flight, he will try to go around or across it in a rational way. If the target is blocked during his flight, he will try a desperate action to continue fleeing, like trying to jump across a wide chasm. Only one target may be affected at a time.

FLAMES OF THE SUN

See the Flames of the Sun spell on page 131 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

FURY

See the *Fury* spell on page 131 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

This spell is considered gǔ sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each use of the Fury spell:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1



(by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)

- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

GIFT OF THE EARTH

See the Gift of the Earth spell on page 131 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

HARMONISE

Range: 100 metres

Qi Cost: 2

If successfully cast, this spell causes the target to do exactly what the caster does. It works only on creatures that have a similar shape as the caster (e.g., human-shaped creatures if the caster is human). Only one target may be Harmonised at a time.

This spell is considered *gǔ* sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each use of the Harmonise spell:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

LIKEN SHAPE

See the Liken Shape spell on page 131 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

MIDNIGHT

See the Midnight spell on page 132 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

MOONRISE

See the Moonrise spell on page 132 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

MUDDLE

See the Muddle spell on page 132 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

This spell is considered *gǔ* sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each use of the Muddle spell:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

SLEEP

Range: 100 metres

Qi Cost: 1

Duration: See below

If successfully cast, this spell causes the target to instantaneously fall in a deep, natural-looking sleep from which he can only be awakened by strenuous effort until a time equal to 20–CON hours (with a

minimum of 1 hour).

SORCERER'S ARMOUR

See the Sorcerer's Armour spell on page 133 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S BEAUTY

See the Sorcerer's Beauty spell on page 133 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S BULWARK

See the Sorcerer's Bulwark spell on page 133 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S HAMMER

See the Sorcerer's Hammer spell on page 134 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S PLASTICITY

See the Sorcerer's Plasticity spell on page 134 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S RAZOR

See the Sorcerer's Razor spell on page 135 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S SHARP FLAME

See the Sorcerer's Sharp Flame spell on page 135 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S SOUL

See the Sorcerer's Soul spell on page 136 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S SPEED

See the Sorcerer's Speed spell on page 136 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S STRENGTH

See the Sorcerer's Strength spell on page 136 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S SUPPLENESS

See the Sorcerer's Suppleness spell on page 136 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S TALONS

See the Sorcerer's Talons spell on page 137 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S VITALITY

See the Sorcerer's Vitality spell on page 137 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SORCERER'S WISDOM

See the Sorcerer's Wisdom spell on page 137 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SUMMON DEMON

See the Summon Demon spell on page 137 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. In *The Celestial Empire*, this spell will enable the magician to summon an *émó* (see page 116).

SUMMON MONSTER (1-4)**Range:** Self, Sight**Qi Cost:** 1 per level

Each level of this spell enables the magician to summon 1D6 SIZ of creatures and to control them. Each combat round, the magician must roll his POW vs. each creature's POW in a resistance roll to keep control of the creature. Failure of the roll means that the creature is dismissed

UNBREAKABLE BONDS

See the *Unbreakable Bonds* spell on page 139 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

This spell is considered *gū* sorcery, and its use is frowned upon by respectable magicians. Each use of the *Unbreakable Bonds* spell:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

**UNDO SORCERY (1-4)****Range:** Touch

Each level of Undo Sorcery cast on another spell or spell-affected item can negate 1 level of Bounty of the Sea, Flames of the Sun, Fury, Gift of the Earth, Liken Shape, Midnight, Moonrise, Muddle, Skanda's Sight, Unbreakable Bonds, Vajrapāni's Defence, or Wings of the Sky. If the levels of Undo Sorcery are lower than the spell it is cast upon, the levels of Undo Sorcery are subtracted from the on-going spell, weakening it but otherwise allowing it to remain in effect.

WINGS OF THE SKY

See the *Wings of the Sky* spell on page 139 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

Buddhist Magic Spells

As explained in the chapter devoted to Chinese religions, the fundamental difference between *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna* Buddhism is that a practitioner of the latter strives to become a *bodhisattva*, i.e., an enlightened being who prefers to remain in the mundane world to help other beings attain enlightenment whereas a practitioner of the former strives to become an *arhat*, i.e., an enlightened being who leaves the mundane world by dissolving into *nirvāna*. Granting spells to Buddhist practitioners is one of the means adopted by *bodhisattva* to help mankind. Any given Buddhist Magic spell involves reciting a verse from a *Sūtra* dedicated to the particular *bodhisattva* whose help is being sought and forming the *mudrā* corresponding to said spell. The spell caster must hence be able to recite the *Sūtra* with a clear voice and to freely move his hands for the spell to have an effect.

As for practitioners of *Mijiao* (also known as Tantric Buddhism), they emphasise the utterance of *Sūtra* excerpts called *mantra* whose literal meaning is less important than their phonetical value, which is imbued with magical power. They also replace *mudrā* with magical drawings called *mandala*. A *mandala* may be prepared in advance and re-utilised.

The following spells are defined as follows:

Name the common name of the spell, generally indicative of function

Level: this is indicated in brackets

Range either Self (caster only), Touch (caster or anyone or anything he can touch physically), Sight (anything in the caster's line of sight), or some other definition

Qi Cost: the power point cost of a given spell is always equal to its level

Duration unless otherwise specified, a given spell has a duration equal to the magician's POW in combat rounds

Effect(s) of the spell.

LIST OF BUDDHIST MAGIC SPELLS

BODHIDHARMA'S LOFTINESS (1)

Range: Self, Touch

Qi Cost: 1



The target moves in a very lofty way, and may even walk on water, or on thin tree limbs or bamboos without breaking them, etc., and obviously without leaving any trace.

DIAMOND CLUB (2)

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 2

This spell transforms the weapon of the caster into a *jīngāng chǔ*. This blessed weapon inflicts 1D6+3 damage. Any creature hit by this weapon immediately undergoes the effects of the Karmic Retribution spell.

DIAMOND DAGGER (2)

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 2

This spell transforms a three-sided dagger into a *kīla*. This blessed weapon inflicts 1D4+3 damage. Any supernatural creature impaled by this weapon is immediately held in place and can't move any longer until the spell expires.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

GLOSSOLALIA (1-5)

Range: Self, Sight

Qi Cost: 1 per level

The target may speak any one unknown language with a skill value of 20% per level.

KARMIC RETRIBUTION (1)

Range: Self, Sight

Qi Cost: 1

Duration: Instantaneous

The target of the spell must be within earshot of the magician, as he must hear the verse recited by the spell caster. The Karmic Retribution spell immediately causes the target to roll under his Buddhist or Esoteric Buddhist allegiance (whichever is higher). If the roll is a success, nothing happens. If the roll is a failure, the target suffers immediate retribution for the bad karma he has accumulated. The effects of the spell depend on the difference between the target's (failed) roll and the value of his allegiance, as per the following table:

Difference Effects

01-50	The target loses 25% of his power points
51-70	The target loses 25% of his hit points
71-90	The target loses 50% of his hit points
91-100	The cloudsoul of the target is summoned to Chinese Hell. Here, a functionary of one of the Yama Kings of the Underworld reads a list of the target's crimes in the mundane world, and then the cloudsoul suffers the appropriate torment. This whole process takes 5 combat rounds, during which the target is unconscious; however, after waking up, the target will feel as if he had just undergone several hours of torment, and he will most likely seek a place where he can rest and recover from this traumatic experience.

LIFT (1-7)

Range: 100 metres

Qi Cost: 1 per level

Duration: 15 minutes

See the Lift spell on page 99 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook for a description of the effects of this spell.

MANDALA (1)

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 1

This spell allows the caster to create a mandala, either as a painting on silk or on paper, or as sandpainting. The caster may then store up power points in the mandala as if it were a focus (see page 83).

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

MAÑJUSHRĪ'S ELOQUENCE (1-6)

Range: Self, Sight

Qi Cost: 1 per level

The Persuade skill value of the target is increased by +10% per level.

MANTRA OF AVALOKITESHVARA (1-4)

Range: Touch

Qi Cost: 1 per level

Each level of the spell decreases by 2 any damage inflicted on the target by demonic creatures, and reduces by 10% all values of the skills of demonic creatures as long as the skills are directed against the target or may affect the caster.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

MANTRA OF BHAISAJYAGURU (1-3)

Range: Touch

Qi Cost: 1 per level

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell can cure a person from any mundane or supernatural malady, be it disease, poisoning, or wounds.

The cost is 1 power point per hit point, characteristic point, etc. that must be recovered, or per POT of the poison or venom the spell must work against.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

MANTRA OF TĀRĀ (3)

Range: Self

Qì Cost: 3

Duration: As long as the magician remains concentrated

As long as the magician remains concentrated and is able to chant the mantra of *Tāra*, *Asura*, *nāga*, *preta*, *rākshasa* and *yaksha* will not attack him.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

RESURRECTION (3)

Range: Touch

Qì Cost: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Only very pious followers of the Buddhist faith may cast this spell (allegiance score at least 75). This spell allows the caster to resurrect a person that has died a non-supernatural death only.

The spell must be cast before the *hún* and the *pò* have left the *xíng*. A spirit-medium must assist the caster by successfully channelling the dead person's spirit. The caster must then successfully persuade the spirit to get back into its body.

After the resurrection, the target of the spell is very feeble, and must undergo 2D6 days of absolute rest to be fit again.

SANGHARAMA'S BLESSINGS (1-4)

Range: Touch

Qì Cost: 1 per level

Duration: 1 combat round

This spell calls Sangharama's blessings upon a target. For the duration of the spell, any skill roll by the target receives a bonus of 5% per spell level.

SKANDA'S SIGHT (3)

Range: Self, Sight

Qì Cost: 3

This is the Buddhist name for the Witch Sight spell. Except for the name, it is identical to the Witch Sight spell on page 139 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

SUMMON DHARMAPĀLA (3-6)

Range: Self, Sight

Qì Cost: see below

This spell enables the magician to summon a *dharmapāla*, a creature that defends the Dharma (Buddhist faith). The power of this creature depends on the level of the spell:

- at level 3 the magician summons a *Shitzi*
- at level 4 the magician summons a *Yaksha*
- at level 5 the magician summons a *Naga*

- at level 6 the magician summons a *Jīngāng lishi*. The *dharmapāla* disappears upon expiration of the spell.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

SWORD OF WISDOM (2)

Range: Touch

Qì Cost: 2

This spell inflicts damage that depends on the target's Buddhist or Esoteric Buddhist allegiance (use the highest value):

Target's Allegiance	Inflicted Damage
0-20	1D10
21-40	1D8
41-60	1D6
61-80	1D4
81+	no damage inflicted

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

THIRD EYE (1)

Range: Self, Sight

Qì Cost: 1

This spell enables the caster:

- to see any invisible or disguised demonic creature, and
- to detect if any demonic powers are active (including spells and magic items). This spell cannot detect instantaneous spells.

During the duration of the spell, the third eye (*ūrṇā*) appears on the forehead of the caster.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

VAJRAPĀNI'S DEFENCE (1-4)

Range: Self

This is the Buddhist name for the Refutation spell. Except for the name, it is identical to the Refutation spell on page 133 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

This is a Tantric spell: only a character allied to Esoteric Buddhism, and whose allegiance score is at least 65, may cast this spell.

VASUDHĀRĀ'S BOUNTY OF FOOD (1)

Range: Self

Qì Cost: 1

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell causes a 1.5 metre bush to instantly grow in front of the magician. The bush is covered with magical fruits that can provide a person with water and food for a whole day. As soon as the last fruit is picked, the bush withers and dies.



OPTIONAL RULES

Beginning Skills for Battle Magic

The rules (see *Basic Roleplaying* page 92, and *The Celestial Empire* page 70) state that a starting magician has a beginning skill equal to $\text{INT} \times 1$ for each of the spells he's been taught.

Optionally, for *Celestial Empire* campaigns in which magic is expected to play a central role, the game master may allow starting magicians a beginning skill equal to $\text{INT} \times 3$ for common spells, and a beginning skill equal to $\text{INT} \times 2$ for uncommon spells.

Number of Starting Battle Magic Spells

The rules (see *Basic Roleplaying* page 92, and *The Celestial Empire* page 79) state that a starting magician is taught four spells.

Optionally, for *Celestial Empire* campaigns in which magic is expected to play a central role, the game master may allow starting magicians more than four spells. However, a practitioner of Battle Magic is still limited to half his INT in the number of Battle Magic spells he may learn.

Spell Durations

Some spell durations are given in combat rounds, some others in minutes. Remember, the *Basic Roleplaying* rules state that a minute equals 5 combat rounds.

The game master may want his players to keep track of all spell durations in combat rounds on the character sheets – in which case the Lift spell, for instance, will be noted down as having a Duration of 75 combat rounds.

RITUAL MAGIC

A spell may be defined as a short intrusion of the supernatural in the mundane world. Ritual Magic is aimed at introducing a long-lasting modification of the fabric of the mundane world, or a massive intrusion of the supernatural for a short time. To be effective, Ritual Magic requires the involvement of several people rather than of one single magician. These people may be several magicians, one magician and his congregation, or one magician and one or more vessels, depending on the particular situation or spell. In any case, there will always be a leading magician who knows the Ritual Magic spell to be cast.

To start the ceremony, the leading magician performs a religious service, which can be rather long and require a particular place, number of attendants, accompanying musicians, material, etc., to be determined by the GM, or listed under the description of the specific Ritual Magic spell. For some very special rituals (e.g., summon a powerful *Dharmapala*), the GM may decide that a unique ingredient is necessary. This can spawn a whole adventure just to get hold of the item.

To determine whether the ritual is inspiring enough for the congregation, the magician must make a roll under his Perform (Sing) skill. In case of success, then each person who is taking part in the ritual and has a relevant Allegiance score of one or more, including the officiant, can provide a single Power Point to be used to cast the Ritual Magic spell at the end of the ceremony. Whether the Perform (Sing) roll is successful or not, the magician cannot attempt another Ritual Magic spell for another 10-day period of time.

Ritual Magic spells should be designed by the GM for particular purposes in his campaign, e.g., to banish a *hànbá* from the region it is plaguing, or to force an evil shapeshifter that has been impersonating a member of a household to reveal its true nature.

SAMPLE RITUAL MAGIC SPELLS

RITUAL OF DETECTION

Duration of the ritual: 1D3+3 hours

Materials: A Tantric sūtra, which must remain on display during the ceremony; a mirror or a basin

Particulars: Ceremony must take place at the patient's home

Power point cost: 10

Vessels: the magician and the patient

Used by the magician to know what category of demon is affecting his patient. At the end of the ceremony, the patient is asked to exhale on the mirror or basin. If the Perform (Sing) roll has been successful, the patient can see the being that is affecting him and describe it to the magician. In gaming terms, the magician knows what category of demon is affecting his patient, and has a broad idea of the demon's POW.

RITUAL OF METAMORPHOSIS

Duration of the ritual: 1D6+6 hours

Materials: Expensive incense, which must keep burning during the whole duration of the ceremony

Particulars: Ceremony must take place at the patient's home

Power point cost: 16

Vessels: the Ritual Master and the patient

Used by Ritual Masters to cure demonic harassment. The Ritual Master metamorphoses himself into his spirit-general. The point of the metamorphosis is that the Ritual Master can now command 1D6 spirit soldiers under the spirit general's control. This transformation also induces a possession trance in the Ritual Master's patient, who





identifies, through possession this time, with his demon. Spirit combat [as per 'ghostly combat' on page 343 of *Basic Roleplaying*] ensues between the Ritual Master – as his spirit general helped by the spirit soldiers – and the demon. If the Ritual Master defeats the demon, the demonic harassment by this particular demon ceases forever. If the demon defeats the Ritual Master, the latter must undergo a ritual of purification in a Daoist holy place before he may try again.

RITUAL OF SEIZURE

Duration of the ritual: 1D4+4 hours

Materials: A mouthful of holy water

Particulars: Can be triggered at a later time

Power point cost: 12

Vessels: the magician

Used by the magician to fight a spirit/demonic being. At the end of the ceremony, the magician inhales the qi produced by the congregation, and mixes it with a mouthful of holy water. Whenever the magician spits out the water onto a possessed patient or a demonic creature, he gets the equivalent of a free spirit attack [as per 'ghostly combat' on page 343 of *Basic Roleplaying*] against his opponent, and then he gets a choice between stopping the combat there and pursuing it.

«HIGH LEVEL» MAGIC

The Celestial Empire has been written with Míng and Qīng period novels (*Water Margin* by Shī Nà'ān, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* by Pú Sōnglǐng) and Hong Kong action films (*A Chinese Ghost Story* series) as narrative models. In these novels and in these films, magic is not exaggeratedly powerful. In *A Chinese Ghost Story*, for instance, the tree demon played by Liú Zhàomíng uses quite lousy magic, and the Daoist priest systematically overwhelms it.

Only stories set in a distant past, such as Xǔ Zhōnglín's *Investiture of the Gods*, or in an Indian milieu, such as Buddhist tales, feature very powerful magic. The nature and effects of this magic are left to the Game Master, who can use other *Basic Roleplaying* supplements as sources of inspiration.

MAGIC ITEMS

Focus

Foci are magic items that store up power points and that enable a magician to draw upon that reserve of power points rather than use up his own. A focus may have any shape and aspect. The creation of a focus is explained under the *Brazier of Power* spell entry on page 128 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

Note: A focus may never contain both *yīn* and *yáng* power points.

Talisman

Talismans are devices created to protect the person who carries them: a talisman will work as soon as it is carried by a person, even if one is not aware of its powers. Talismans come in many shapes: vermillion ink drawings, jade pendants, metal brooches, engraved gems.

A talisman's protection is only valid against *one* particular type of threat, such as: steel, heat, or demons, and is expressed in protection points (which function just like armour points). The more precise the protection, the more it is efficient. For instance, a talisman that protects against melee weapons may provide 3 protection points, whereas a talisman that protects against swords may provide 6 protection points. One can even imagine a talisman that would only protect against one specific sword, and that would provide 12 protection points.

Amulet

An amulet is a talisman that protects against magic. Instead of protection points, it confers a bonus on the Resistance Table.

Magic Incense

Incense has always played a major role in Chinese religion. The fact that incense burns with a pleasant fragrance and that it slowly becomes immaterial has made it a symbol of communication between Earth and Heaven, and thus a vessel for magical purposes.

Various kinds of magic incense have different effects, much like talismans or amulets, or they could be necessary ingredients for Ritual Magic, or they can be used to ward off guǐ-monsters.

Icon

Icons are pictorial representations of Chinese divinities that have been ritually blessed or enchanted by several monks and/or priests during a ceremony. Icons are usually stored in Chinese temples, and are not meant to be carried. Rich households may also display icons in a private chapel. Each icon is unique and the GM is encouraged to devise a specific magical power for the icon, such as:

- a bonus of +5% to all skill rolls for allied characters that can see the icon
- extra Qi provided by the icon to be used to cast spells only
- extra Qi provided by the icon to be used in the context of wǔshù powers only
- a permanent barrier to guǐ-monsters and/or demons

Esoteric Manual

Manuals of Esoteric Martial Arts feature prominently in Chinese *wǔxiá* fiction. After having been thoroughly read and studied, such a manual confers bonus levels to a given range of martial arts powers.

Example

White Fox finds the Secret Scroll of the Golden Serpent in a long-forgotten tomb in the Taklamakan Desert.

The GM states that she must devote 3 weeks to reading and studying it. After that time has elapsed, the GM states that White Fox must successfully roll under her Literacy (Classical Chinese) skill to fully benefit from the esoteric martial arts knowledge inscribed in the Scroll: +3 levels to Leap, and +2 levels to Super Speed.

Monster Trap

Monster traps feature prominently in Chinese fantasy tales. Each monster trap is unique and has possibly been passed from generation to generation of monster hunters.

Níng, a young scholar, has married Xiǎoqiàn, a spectre who was a slave to a demoness. Knowing that the demoness would ultimately find the couple, a sympathetic Daoist gave them a sword-case that would act as a monster trap for the demoness: "At night they sat up and watched, Xiǎoqiàn warning Níng not to go to sleep; and suddenly something fell down flop like a bird. Xiǎoqiàn in a fright got behind the curtain; but Níng looked at the thing, and found it was an imp of darkness, with glaring eyes and a bloody mouth, coming straight to the door. Stealthily creeping up, it made a grab at the sword-case, and seemed about to tear it in pieces, when bang!—the sword-case became as big as a wardrobe, and from it a devil protruded part of his body and dragged the imp in. Nothing more was heard, and the sword-case resumed its original size. Níng was greatly alarmed, but Xiǎoqiàn came out rejoicing, and said, "There's an end of my troubles." In the sword-case they found only a few quarts of clear water; nothing else."

(Pú Sōnglíng:

Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio: Tale No.XVI, The Magic Sword, translation by H Giles, 1916).

DRAGON LINES

Dragon lines (*lóngmài*) are ley lines that run invisible under the earth, carrying the *qì* of the earth.

In some of these ley lines, *yáng qì* flows strongest. In gaming terms, a magician standing at the vertical of a *yáng* ley line only needs half the necessary power points to cast a spell, the other half being provided by the *qì* of the earth.

In some others, *yīn qì* flows strongest. In gaming terms, each hour spent by a character at the vertical of a *yīn* ley line:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score of the character by 2 (by 5 if the character is allied with Buddhism)
- increases the Heterodoxy allegiance score of the character by 2 (by 5 if the character is allied with Daoism) – capped at 75%

Only a geomancer may detect *lóngmài*.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

A magician cannot spend more than whatever power points he has available at a given time in mind and in his foci. Ruthless magicians who want to overcome this limitation may resort to human sacrifice.

At the time of the human sacrifice, the hit points of the victim are transformed into *yīn* power points that may be used without limitation (by the magician who has practised the sacrifice only) in the round immediately following the sacrifice. There are several instances where the game master may consider that a murder is a 'sacrifice', such as when the victim is drugged, unconscious, stunned, or bound.

The magician immediately has his Buddhism allegiance score reduced by 5 (by 10 if the character is allied with Buddhism). Moreover, the whitesoul of the victim becomes a hungry ghost (see page 111), which will seek to harm the person who caused its death.

INTERVENTION OF THE BUDDHA

This is an optional rule designed to provide a way for a Buddhist magician, to overcome the limitation on the number of power points he may have left.

A practising Buddhist magician (i.e., whose Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism allegiance score is larger than 65) may appeal for the intervention of the Buddha to cast a spell for which he doesn't have enough *Qì*. The player must clearly state the appeal to the game master, and then roll under 1D100.

- If the result is equal to or smaller than his POW, the spell is directly cast with the Buddha's power – however, the player character definitively loses the amount of POW characteristic points equal to the player's 1D100 roll.
- If the result is equal to the magician's POW, the character dies, but his soul immediately rejoins the Buddha in paradise.
- If the result is larger than the magician's POW, nothing happens.

DEMONIC MAGIC SPELLS

The following spells are the ones cast by demonic creatures, most notably those that are related to *Māra*, the king of demons, whose aim it is to tempt the Buddhist faithful and to divert them from the *Dharma*.

Demonic creatures cannot regenerate power points when they are in the mundane world. This is why they use their magical powers sparingly. It is also the reason why they resort to human sacrifices.

As for *lóngmài*, the effect on demonic creatures is the opposite as for mortal magicians; demonic creatures only need half the necessary power points when at the vertical of *yīn* ley lines.

Demonic Magic spells work like Sorcery spells, and are defined as follows:

Name the common name of the spell, generally indicative of function

Range either Self (caster only), Touch (caster or anyone or anything he can touch physically), Sight (anything in the caster's line of sight), or some other definition

Qì Cost the power point cost of a given spell is either a fixed value, or a range (like 1-4) for variable spells

Duration unless otherwise specified, a given spell has a duration equal to the demon's POW in combat rounds

Effect(s) of the spell.

Note

Should a mortal magician be able to learn any of these spells, he incurs the following effects whenever he should cast any of these spells:

Each level of a Demonic Magic spell cast:

- reduces the Buddhism allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism)
- increases the *Māra* path allegiance score by 1 (by 2 if used by a character allied with Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism) – capped at 75%



LIST OF DEMONIC MAGIC SPELLS

BLIGHT

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 6

Duration: Instantaneous

The demonic creature may cast this spell on itself. The spell will cause a one-season drought to affect an area of 1km² centred on the caster (if the caster moves, the drought will move with it).

DEMONIC RESURRECTION

Range: Touch

Qi Cost: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell allows the caster to resurrect a demon slain in the mundane world.

DEMONIC SKILL

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 1

This spell enables a demonic creature to replicate a human skill that it has observed, with the same skill value. The spell does not apply to magic skills.

For instance, if a demonic creature has observed someone using the Literacy (Classical Chinese) skill, and if the person has this skill at 75%, then the demonic creature may use the Literacy (Classical Chinese) skill at 75% for the duration of the spell.

DESICCATION

Range: Touch

Qi Cost: 2

Duration: Instantaneous

When this spell is cast, the demonic creature must overcome the target with a successful POW vs. POW resistance roll. If successful, the target loses 3 CON characteristic points by losing body water.

DOPPELGÄNGER

Range: Self

Qi Cost: see below

This spell allows the caster to assume the visual aspect of another creature. As with the Liken Shape spell on page 131 of the Basic Roleplaying rulebook, the caster retains its original SIZ as well as any applicable characteristics.

Depending on the number of Qi points invested in the spell, the demonic creature may assume the aspect:

- 1 Qi: of another demonic creature
- 2 Qi: of a human being, but not of a particular person
- 4 Qi: of a human being, including a particular person

Skanda's Sight will not reveal the Doppelgänger spell; only the Third Eye spell will.

SUMMON DEMON (HUÒMÓ)

Range: Self

Qi Cost: 3

Duration: one week

This spell allows the caster to summon a huòmó, a demon that feeds upon the libido of its victims; the summoned demon will appear as an impossibly beautiful woman (a succubus) or as an impossibly handsome man (an incubus). See the description of the huòmó on page 18.

ISLAMIC MAGIC

Islamic Magic Spells

The following spells are the ones that may be used by Muslim player characters or NPCs, most notably those that are related to the Naqshbandi Sufi order.

Even though the Koran and radical Muslims disapprove of the use of magic, Sufi orders and Muslim mystics practise white magic, and use the verses of some particular sura to ward off black magic. Alchemy is also considered true science, as worthy of interest as mathematics, mostly in Persia and in Sogdiana.

Central Asian Islam is strongly influenced by pre-islamic (mostly shamanic and Zoroastrian) beliefs. Many hereditary mullah lineages stem from previous shamanic lineages. As for Sufis, many of their practices have been influenced by Indian Tantrism. It hence appears that it would be mistaken to consider Central Asian Islam as a religious practice unrelated to the other local religions. The game master may even have Islamic and shamanic magic, or even Tantric magic, co-exist within partially Islamised communities.

On the other hand, Islamic magic is not influenced by *lóngmài* or by the laws of *wúxíng*, which only apply to areas subject to Chinese culture.

To be able to use Islamic Magic, the player character must have an allegiance score for Islam of at least 50, and be allied to that allegiance (i.e., that allegiance must be at least 20 points greater than any other, and the character must have chosen to acknowledge the allegiance). The character must also have a Literacy (Arabic alphabet) skill of at least 50%. Islamic Magic uses the standard *Basic Roleplaying* Sorcery rules with the following modifications:

- The POW characteristic of the character must be greater than or equal to 13
- The character's Allegiance/5 (rounded down) substitutes for INT in the Sorcery rules, and the character is granted up to 1/10th of his Allegiance (rounded up) in levels of Islamic Magic spells [e.g. Allegiance 76 divided by 10 and rounded up yields 8]
- The starting magician has a set of Islamic

magic scrolls equivalent in all aspects to the sorcerer's grimoire from the core *Basic Roleplaying* rules

- A practitioner of Islamic Magic may only cast memorised spells

Islamic Magic spells are defined as follows:

Name the common name of the spell, generally indicative of function

Range either Self (caster only), Touch (caster or anyone or anything he can touch physically), Sight (anything in the caster's line of sight), or some other definition

Qi Cost: the power point cost of a given spell is either a fixed value, or a range (like 1-4) for variable spells

Duration unless otherwise specified, a given spell has a duration equal to the magician's POW in combat rounds

Effect(s) of the spell.

LIST OF ISLAMIC MAGIC SPELLS

ĀYĀT AL-HIFZ (3)

Range: 100 metres

Qi Cost: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell allows the caster to negate the effects of a Control spell (the Control spell is called "Bewitchment" by Muslims).

BARAKAH (1-4)

Range: Touch

Qi Cost: 1 per level

Duration: 1 combat round

This spell calls God's blessings upon a target. As a result, during the duration of the spell, any skill roll by the target receives a bonus of 5% per spell level.

The magician must clearly chant the phrase *barakah 'llahu fik*, "God bless you", for the spell to have an effect.

DHIKR (3)

Range: 30 metres

Qi Cost: 3

Duration: As long as the magician remains concentrated

This spell allows the caster to ward off *gũ* sorcery. As long as the magician remains concentrated and is able to chant the phrase *lā ilāh illa'llāh*, "there is no other God but God", the caster and any other Muslim character within the range of the spell are immune to *gũ* sorcery spells.

TA'AWWUDH (3)

Range: 30 metres

Qi Cost: 3

Duration: As long as the magician remains concentrated

This spell allows the caster to ward off *gũ*-monsters. As long as the magician remains concentrated and is able to chant the phrase *a'ūdhu*

illāh, "I seek refuge in God", no *gũ*-monster may enter the range of the spell.

UNDO EVIL EYE (4)

Range: Touch

Qi Cost: 4

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell allows the caster to negate the effects of a *Curse of Sorcery* spell (the *Curse of Sorcery* spell is called "Evil Eye" by Muslims).

Islamic Necromancy

(Base Chance 00%)

Unlike Chinese Necromancy, Islamic Necromancy may only be used to perform exorcisms. Exorcising a ghost or a spirit requires a successful roll against the Islamic Necromancy skill, followed by beating the ghost or the spirit in a POW vs POW roll on the Resistance Table.

During the performance of the exorcism, the Muslim exorcist must loudly read verses from a Koran that has never been touched by heathen hands.

Koranic Amulets (*tamâ'im*)

These amulets are oft used in Central Asia. They are made up of a Koranic verse written on paper (usually the Throne verse, *Āyāt al-kursī*) and sewn inside a tiny leather pouch.

Their efficiency is left to the appreciation of the game master, but here are a few examples:

- Luck roll bonus
- Power point bonus
- Replicate spell
- Resistance table bonus against ghosts/spirits

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages to the tombs of *awliya'* (plural of *walī* – a *walī* is the master of an Islamic order or a person having led a pious and exemplary life) are very popular among Central Asian Muslims. The pilgrim that has returned from such a pilgrimage benefits from a level-1 Barakah spell bestowed by the holy man for a duration of 1D6+2 weeks.

Zâwiya

A *zâwiya* is either the sanctuary made up by the tomb of a *walī*, or the small fort in which the members of a Sufi order gather with their sheikh. The *zâwiya* and its enclosure are placed under the permanent protection of a Ta'awwudh spell.



MASTER SPELL LIST

NAME	TRADITION	RANGE	COST	DURATION	FREQUENCY	NOTES
Āyāt al-hifz	Islamic	100m	3	Instantaneous		
Barakah	Islamic	Touch	1/lvl	1 round		
Befuddle	Battle	100m	1	POW rounds	Common	疊
Blast	Battle	100m	3/lvl	Instantaneous	Uncommon	
Blight	Demonic	Self	6	Instantaneous		疊
Bodhidharma's Loftiness	Buddhist	Self, Touch	1	POW rounds		
Bounty of the Sea	Daoist	Sight	4	POW rounds		
Brazier of Power	Daoist	Touch	4	Permanent		
Chain of Being	Daoist	Touch, Sight, etc.	4	POW rounds		
Change	Battle	30m	1/lvl	15 min	Common	
Conjure Elemental	Battle	12m	1/lvl	10 rounds	Common	
Control	Battle	100m	3	10 rounds	Common	
Countermagic	Battle	100m	1/lvl	5 min	Common	
Curse of Sorcery	Daoist	Touch	4	POW rounds		疊
Dark	Battle	100m	1/lvl	15 min	Uncommon	
Demonic Resurrection	Demonic	Touch	3	Instantaneous		疊
Demonic Skill	Demonic	Self	1	POW rounds		疊
Demoralise	Battle	100m	1	POW rounds	Uncommon	
Desiccation	Demonic	Touch	2	Instantaneous		疊
Detect Truth	Daoist	Self	1	POW rounds		
Dhikr	Islamic	30m	3	©		
Diamond Club	Buddhist	Self	2	POW rounds		密
Diamond Dagger	Buddhist	Self	2	POW rounds		密
Diminish	Battle	Touch	1/lvl	15 min	Common	疊
Dispel	Battle	100m	1/lvl	Instantaneous	Uncommon	
Doppelgänger	Demonic	Self	1 to 4	POW rounds		疊
Dull	Battle	100m	1/lvl	15 min	Uncommon	
Enhance	Battle	Touch	1/lvl	15 min	Common	
Fanaticism	Battle	100m	1/lvl	POW rounds	Common	疊
Farsee	Battle	Touch	1	4 hrs	Uncommon	
Fear	Daoist	100m	1	POW rounds		
Fire	Battle	100m	3/lvl	Instantaneous	Uncommon	
Flames of the Sun	Daoist	Sight	4	POW rounds		
Frost	Battle	100m	3/lvl	Instantaneous	Uncommon	
Fury	Daoist	Touch	1	POW rounds		疊
Gift of the Earth	Daoist	Sight	4	POW rounds		
Glossolalia	Buddhist	Self, Sight	1/lvl	POW rounds		
Harmonise	Daoist	100m	2	POW rounds		
Heal	Battle	Touch	3/lvl	Instantaneous	Common	
Illusion	Battle	30m	1/lvl	15 min	Common	
Invisibility	Battle	Touch	1/lvl	15 min	Common	
Karmic Retribution	Buddhist	Self, Sight	1	Instantaneous		
Lift	Buddhist	100m	1/lvl	15 min		
Light	Battle	100m	1/lvl	15 min	Uncommon	
Lightning	Battle	60m	3/lvl	Instantaneous	Uncommon	
Liken Shape	Daoist	Touch	4	POW rounds		
Mandala	Buddhist	Self	1	Permanent		密
Mañjushrī's Eloquence	Buddhist	Self, Sight	1	POW rounds		
Mantra of Avalokiteshvara	Buddhist	Touch	1/lvl	POW rounds		密
Mantra of Bhaisajyaguru	Buddhist	Touch	1/lvl	Instantaneous		密
Mantra of Tārā	Buddhist	Self	3	©		密
Midnight	Daoist	Sight	1	POW rounds		

MASTER SPELL LIST

NAME	TRADITION	RANGE	COST	DURATION	FREQUENCY	NOTES
Moonrise	Daoist	Touch	1	POW rounds		
Muddle	Daoist	Sight	1	POW rounds		蟲
Perception	Battle	60m	1/VI	Instantaneous	Common	
Protection	Battle	100m	1/VI	15 min	Common	
Resistance	Battle	Touch	1/VI	15 min	Common	
Resurrection	Buddhist	Touch	3	Instantaneous		佛
Sangharama's Blessings	Buddhist	Touch	1/VI	1 round		
Seal	Battle	Touch	1/VI	15 min	Uncommon	
Sharpen	Battle	100m	1/VI	15 min	Uncommon	
Skanda's Sight	Buddhist	Self, Sight	3	POW rounds		
Sleep	Daoist	100m	1/VI	see spell description		
Sorcerer's Armour	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Beauty	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Bulwark	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Hammer	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Plasticity	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Razor	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Sharp Flame	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Soul	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Speed	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Strength	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Suppleness	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Talons	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Vitality	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sorcerer's Wisdom	Daoist	Touch, Sight, etc.	1/VI	POW rounds		
Speak to Mind	Battle	100m	1/VI	10 rounds	Common	
Summon Demon	Daoist	Self, Sight	1	POW rounds		
Summon Demon (Huómó)	Demonic	Self	3	1 week		蟲
Summon Dharmapāla	Buddhist	Self, Sight	3 to 6	POW rounds		密
Summon Monster	Daoist	Self, Sight	1/VI	POW rounds		
Sword of Wisdom	Buddhist	Touch	2	POW rounds		密
Ta'awwudh	Islamic	30m	3	©		
Teleport	Battle	1km	1/VI	Instantaneous	Common	
Third Eye	Buddhist	Self, Sight	1	POW rounds		密
Unbreakable Bonds	Daoist	Touch	3	POW rounds		蟲
Undo Evil Eye	Islamic	Touch	4	Instantaneous		
Undo Sorcery	Daoist	Touch	1/VI	POW rounds		
Unseal	Battle	Touch	1/VI	Instantaneous	Uncommon	
Vajrapāni's Defence	Buddhist	Self	1/VI	POW rounds		密
Vasudhārā's Bounty of Food	Buddhist	Self	1	Instantaneous		
Vision	Battle	100/10m	1/VI	10 rounds	Common	
Wall	Battle	12m	1/VI	15 min	Uncommon	
Ward	Battle	Touch	3/VI	Permanent	Common	
Wings of the Sky	Daoist	Sight	4	POW rounds		
Wounding	Battle	Touch	3/VI	Instantaneous	Uncommon	

Key

© Duration: As long as the magician remains concentrated.

蟲 Gǔ sorcery (an evil magic tradition from ancient times); some gǔ sorcery spells are still used in Imperial China but their use affects the allegiance score of the caster. See the individual spell descriptions for details.

密 Tantric magic; the use of these spells is restricted to some casters. See the individual spell descriptions for details.

佛 Only very pious followers of the Buddhist faith may cast this spell (allegiance score at least 75).

SECTS AND ORGANISATIONS

RELIGIOUS SECTS are a fundamental element of Imperial Chinese society, especially from the point of view of the game master who wants to run a heroic or an epic campaign.

Imperial China is a secularised society, and actually almost a non-religious one when compared with mediaeval Europe. A character attracted by religion finally has little choice but to become a member of a religious sect. Under the Qīng, when the Manchu emperors have any “suspect” religious movement closely scrutinised by government agents, many of these religious sects turn into secret societies.

The Celestial Empire being a game that tries to cover most of Imperial Chinese history, this chapter will concentrate on those sects that have been active for most of Imperial Chinese history. The game master is encouraged to create his own esoteric or radical secret societies, depending on the needs of his campaign.

To become a member of a sect, a character must fulfil some criteria, as per the sect descriptions below.

When the character becomes a member of a given sect, he gains the advantages listed below in the section devoted to his sect, but he must also make

a vow of chastity (except for the Way of Complete Orthodoxy, for the Supreme Oneness Doctrine, and for the Xié Sect). The character then chooses himself (or is appointed) a teacher amongst the elders of the sect, and he usually develops a *fūzǐ* relationship with his teacher.

The GM should only introduce sects for player characters in campaigns set in a religious milieu (like retrieving lost artefacts, or hunting demons) or in a political/religious environment (where the characters are involved in repelling foreign religions, or in the rivalry between Buddhists and Daoists). Sects for non-player characters, on the other hand, are a staple of any campaign set in Imperial China.

BUDDHIST SECTS

Early Chán

Period of time

Táng to Sòng

DESCRIPTION

The establishment of Chán is traditionally credited to the Indian monk Bodhidharma, but Chán Buddhism is very deeply engrained in Chinese thought, and has absorbed Daoist traditions such as eremitism, meditation, emphasis on the relationship between the master and the disciple, and the words of the patriarchs rather than the *sūtra*. After the Sòng period, the sect becomes divided in many rival schools and declines.

MEMBERS

Chán Buddhism accepts lay members as well as monks. Monks live in Chán monasteries, which lay members visit for spiritual guidance and for religious retreats.

REQUISITES

Lay Members

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Not a member of Pure Land, or of another religion.

Monks

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Respect these three vows: chastity, eremitism, vegetarianism.





- Perform (Sing) at 90% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion) not greater than 60% for any other religion than Buddhism.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Lay Members

- Lay members are taught Skanda's Sight spell.
- Lay members are taught the Stoicism *wúshù* power (which may be used irrespective of which martial arts school the character belongs to).
- Between two adventures (see page 104), the character may increase the following skills: Knowledge (Politics), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Meditation, Perform (Sing) by 1% per month of retreat.

Monks

- Monks are taught the following spells: Bodhidharma's Loftiness, Glossolalia, Lift, Mañjushrī's Eloquence, and Skanda's Sight.
- Monks are taught the Meditation skill.
- Monks are taught the Stoicism *wúshù* power (which may be used irrespective of which martial arts school the character belongs to).
- Between two adventures (see page 104), the character may increase the following skills: Knowledge (Politics), Literacy (Classical Chinese), Perform (Sing) by 1%, and Meditation by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

- Division in rival schools.
- Rivalry with the Pure Land sect.
- The Knowledge (Religion) skill is limited to 60% for any other religion than Buddhism.

Late Chán

Period of time

Míng and Qīng

DESCRIPTION

Chán Buddhism is revived in the Míng period in South China. Late Chán is an iconoclastic religion, aimed at sudden enlightenment, to be achieved through paradoxes, meditation on absurd questions (*gōng'ān*), unexpected answers, shouts, and sometimes even blows and knocks.

MEMBERS

Chán Buddhism accepts lay members as well as monks. Monks live in Chán monasteries, which lay members visit for spiritual guidance and for religious retreats.

REQUISITES

Lay Members

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Must be from South China.
- Not a member of Pure Land, or of another religion.

Monks

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Must be from South China.
- Respect these three vows: chastity, eremitism, vegetarianism.
- Perform (Sing) at 75% at least.
- Must be a member of the *Shàolínquán* Martial Arts School.
- Knowledge (Religion) not greater than 60% for any other religion than Buddhism.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Lay Members

- Lay members are taught Skanda's Sight spell.
- Lay members have access to all the *wúshù* powers pertaining to the *Shàolínquán* Martial Arts School.
- Between two adventures (see page 104), the character may increase the following skills: Literacy (Classical Chinese), Meditation, Perform (Sing) by 1% per month of retreat.

Monks

- Monks are taught the following spells: Lift, Mañjushrī's Eloquence, and Skanda's Sight.
- Monks are taught the Meditation skill.
- Monks have access to all the *wúshù* powers pertaining to the *Shàolínquán* Martial Arts School.
- Between two adventures (see page 104), the character may increase the following skills: Literacy (Classical Chinese), Perform (Sing) by 1% per month of retreat, and the Meditation skill by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

- Rivalry with the Pure Land sect.
- The Knowledge (Religion) skill is limited to 60% for any other religion than Buddhism.

Early Tantric Buddhism

Period of time

Táng

DESCRIPTION

Tantric Buddhism (also known as Mìjiāo Buddhism or as 'the Secret School') is a Chinese sect with heavy Indian influences. Tantric Buddhism emphasises the ritual, magical and esoteric aspects of Buddhism. It is Mìjiāo Buddhism that developed Buddhist magic in the first place, as well as the heavy use of mantra and mandala.

MEMBERS

Mìjiāo Buddhism accepts lay members as well as priests. Priests live in Mìjiāo temples, which are located in cities rather than in isolated places as is the other Buddhist sects' wont. Lay members visit the temples to study the doctrine of the sect.



REQUISITES

Lay Members

- The POW characteristic must be greater than or equal to 13.
- Not a member of another sect.

Priests

- The POW characteristic must be greater than or equal to 15.
- Language (Sanskrit) at 45% at least.
- Literacy (South Asian alphabets) at 45% at least.
- Persuade at 75% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Lay Members

- Lay members are taught the Control spell and, if the GM approves, the following Tantric spells: Diamond Club, Mantra of Avalokiteshvara, and Third Eye.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the following skills: Language (Sanskrit) and Literacy (South Asian alphabets) by 1% per fortnight of study.

Priests

- Priests are taught the Control and Lift spells and, if the GM approves, the following Tantric spells: Diamond Club, Mandala, Mantra of Avalokiteshvara, Mantra of Bhaisajyaguru, Mantra of Tārā, Summon Dharmapāla and Third Eye.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the following skills: Language (Sanskrit) and Literacy (South Asian alphabets) by 1% per week of study.

OBLIGATIONS

This sect is much in favour with the court of the Táng and with the nobility: the character will have a hard time finding any time for adventuring!

Pure Land Buddhism

Period of time

All

DESCRIPTION

This sect believes that faith and prayers, and above all chanting Amitābha Buddha's name, allow its members to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha's paradise. This sect attracts many lay members by the simplicity of its practices: vowing to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha's paradise (his Pure Land) and devotion to Amitābha Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light.

MEMBERS

Pure Land Buddhism accepts lay members as well as monks. Monks live in Pure Land monasteries, which lay members visit to acquire merit for birth in the Pure Land.

REQUISITES

Lay Members

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Not a lay member of Chán Buddhism, or of another religion.

Monks

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Respect these two vows: chastity and vegetarianism.
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 90% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Lay Members

- Lay members are taught the Resistance spell.
- The character may use the Resistance spell even if his POW is less than 13.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the following skills: Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) and Literacy (Classical Chinese) by 1% per month of retreat.

Monks

- Monks are taught the Resistance spell.
- The character may use the Resistance spell even if his POW is less than 13.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the following skills: Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) and Literacy (Classical Chinese) by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

- Once the character has become a member of the Pure Land sect, he must always keep his Buddhism allegiance score greater than or equal to 50.
- Rivalry with Chán Buddhism.

Tiāntái School

Period of time

All

DESCRIPTION AND MEMBERS

The followers of this sect are mostly monks. This sect emphasises scriptural study and practice, and strives to overcome the differences between the teachings of the various Buddhist schools. Although it is a sect that targets Buddhist scholars, it also has a vast esoteric canon centred on the use of mantra.

REQUISITES

- Perform (Sing) at 60% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 70% at least.
- Meditation at 45% at least.
- Persuade at 60% at least.

BENEFITS

- Lay Members are taught the Resistance spell. Monks are taught the following spells: Glossolalia and Resistance.
- If the GM approves, the character may have access to Tantric spells.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the following skills: Language (Sanskrit), Literacy (South Asian alphabets), Perform (Sing) by 1%, and Meditation by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

Combat skills are limited to 50% (if the character had any combat skill greater than 50%, it is reduced to 50%).

Huáyán School

Period of time

Táng

DESCRIPTION AND MEMBERS

The followers of this sect are mostly monks. This sect emphasises the study of the Sanskrit Flower Garland Sūtra and targets scholars and nobles.

This is a minor sect that should be restricted to NPCs: it has never been very widespread in China and hence there is little chance the PCs may have been introduced to it.

REQUISITES

- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 70% at least.
- Persuade at 60% at least.

BENEFITS

The spell Glossolalia.

OBLIGATIONS

Combat skills are limited to 50%.

Late Tantric Buddhism

Period of time

Yuán to Qīng

DESCRIPTION

Under the Yuán, Tantric Buddhism starts to be felt as a foreign religion by the Chinese. Its name also changes from *Mijiāo* Buddhism (see page 91) to *Mizǒng* Buddhism.

The reason *Mizǒng* Buddhism increasingly becomes felt as a foreign religion is the Mongols' emphasis on Tibetan Lamaism rather than on native doctrine. The Mongols also have many Lamaist temples built in China. Under the Míng, *Mizǒng* Buddhism almost completely disappears from China proper, but it returns under the Qīng because the Manchus, just like the Mongols, make Lamaism their ethnic religion.



Just like the *Mijiāo* sect, the *Mizǒng* sect emphasises Buddhist magic and the use of *mantra* and *mandala*.

MEMBERS

Tantric Buddhism accepts lay members as well as monks and priests. Monks and priests live in *Mizǒng* temples, which are located in cities rather than in isolated places as is the other Buddhist sects' wont. Lay members visit the temples to receive the teachings of the lamas. Lamas are monks and priests with supernatural powers who are considered as reincarnate monks and priests from the past or even as bodhisattva who have chosen to be reborn in this world in order to enlighten others.

This is a minor sect that should be restricted to NPCs as it mostly targets people from ethnic minorities (Mongols, Tibetans).

REQUISITES**Lay Members**

- Allied with Esoteric Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- The POW characteristic must be greater than or equal to 13.

Monks and priests

- Allied with Esoteric Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- The POW characteristic must be greater than or equal to 15.
- Language (Tibetan) at 60% at least.
- Literacy (South Asian alphabets) at 60% at least.
- Persuade at 75% at least.

**BENEFITS****Lay Members**

- Lay members are taught the Control, Diamond Club, Illusion, Mantra of Avalokiteshvara, and Third Eye spells.
- Lay members are taught the Super Speed *wúshù* power (which may be used irrespective of which martial arts school the character belongs to).
- Lay members are taught all the powers pertaining to the *Mizōngquán* Martial Arts School.

Monks and priests

- Monks and priests are taught the Control, Diamond Club, Illusion, Lift, Mandala, Mantra of Avalokiteshvara, Mantra of Bhaisajyaguru, Mantra of Tārā, Summon Dharmapāla, and Third Eye spells.
- Monks and priests are taught the Super Speed *wúshù* power (which may be used irrespective of which martial arts school the character belongs to).
- Monks and priests are taught all the powers pertaining to the *Mizōngquán* Martial Arts School.

OBLIGATIONS

- Obligation to defend a lama in any circumstances.
- Obligation to obey a lama in any circumstances.

SYNCRETIC BUDDHIST SECTS

White Lotus Society

Period of time
Yuán to Qīng

DESCRIPTION

The White Lotus Society is a syncretistic, soteriological, and mystical grassroots movement. The White Lotus Society promises personal salvation to its followers (either through rebirth in Amitābha Buddha's paradise, or through the advent of Maitreya), who are taught to despise life in the material world, dark and hopeless – clearly a Manichæan influence. The White Lotus Society practices a special kind of divination called *fújī* (spirit-writing or automatic writing in English).

Under the Qīng, the White Lotus Society becomes an anti-Manchu secret society; it causes a large rebellion in North China around the turn of the 19th century, and it takes part in other rebellions around the turn of the 20th century.

MEMBERS

The White Lotus Society appeals to the downtrodden rural populace, most notably to women and to poor peasants.

REQUISITES

- Must be sponsored by someone who is already a member of the sect.
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 45% at least.

BENEFITS

- Divination skill +10%.
- Members are taught the Stoicism *wúshù* power (which may be used irrespective of which martial arts school the character belongs to).
- Members are taught all the powers pertaining to the *Éméiquán* Martial Arts School.

OBLIGATIONS

- The White Lotus Society is a banned sect: its members risk being arrested if they are discovered.
- Strict vegetarianism.

Luó Sect

Period of time
Míng to Qīng

DESCRIPTION AND MEMBERS

Luó Mèngfóng (羅夢鴻, 1442-1527), a charismatic former soldier, spent most of his life teaching northwest of Běijīng and attracting large crowds from all social classes. Patriarch Luó professed a very wide syncretism, encompassing Pure Land Buddhism, Daoism, and Manichæism, and worshipping the Eternal Venerable Mother (a new goddess 'invented' by Patriarch Luó).

Rather than a real sect, the Luó sect is a gathering of hermits and martial artists sharing Patriarch Luó's doctrine.

REQUISITES

- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 90% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 80% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Manichæism) at 40% at least.
- Must be a member of a Martial Arts School.

BENEFITS

- Members are taught Skanda's Sight spell.
- Members are taught one single *wúshù* power chosen by the GM (which may be used irrespective of which martial arts school the character belongs to).

OBLIGATIONS

Eremitism.



DAOIST SECTS

Máoshān Sect

Period of time

Táng to Sòng

DESCRIPTION

The Máoshān Sect (茅山派) takes its name from Mount Máo in the Lower Yángzi region. Mount Máo is one of the Ten Grotto-Heavens, and three Daoist brothers had a revelation there under the Western Hàn. This sect has been established to foster philosophical Daoism (Dàojiā 道家) and the study of Daoist scriptures. However, the Máoshān Sect does not prevent its members from practising alchemy or ecstatic meditation: on the contrary, the quest for the elixir of life is one of the major endeavours of many members of the sect, at least under the Táng.

MEMBERS

The Máoshān Sect accepts hermits and monks, and those Daoist priests that favour the quest for the state of zhēnrén over their more mundane clerical duties. The Máoshān Sect also accepts women who, quite unexpectedly, become Daoist nuns (Chinese nuns are usually Buddhist).

REQUISITES

Monks and Priests

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Science (Alchemy) at 60% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion [Daoism]) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 90% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

Hermits

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Science (Alchemy) at 75% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 75% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 60% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Monks and Priests

- Monks and priests are taught the Divination and the Science (Alchemy) skills.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the following skills:
Healing Lore and Medicine by 1%, and Literacy (Classical Chinese) and Science (Alchemy) by 2% per month of retreat.

Hermits

- May learn the Harmonise, Perception, Sleep, and Teleport spells.
- Monks and priests are taught the Meditation and the Science (Alchemy) skills.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the Healing Lore skill by 1%, and Medicine and Science (Alchemy) by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

Members of the Máoshān Sect are addicted to cinnabar, hemp or any other concoction supposed to elongate the life of the consumer: the character must regularly absorb said substance. For each week without consumption of the substance, the player must roll under his Stamina; in case of failure, the player character incurs a definitive loss of 1 CON characteristic point.

Supreme Clarity School

Period of time

Táng to Yuán

DESCRIPTION

The Supreme Clarity School (上清), whose doctrine is influenced by the ancient shamanic beliefs of the aboriginal peoples of the South, is the main Daoist school of South China until the northern-inspired Way of Complete Orthodoxy rises to prominence under the Yuán.

MEMBERS

The Supreme Clarity School accepts hermits and monks.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Must be from South China.
- Knowledge (Folklore) at 45% at least.
- Perform (Sing) at 60% at least.



- Science (Natural History) at 45% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

- Members may learn the Fury spell.
- Members are taught the Divination and the Meditation skills.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the Meditation skill by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

Eremitism.

Way of Five Bushels of Rice

Period of time

Táng

DESCRIPTION

The Way of Five Bushels of Rice (五斗米道) is the main Daoist sect under the Tang. This sect is organised as a fully-fledged Church, with its Patriarch, who is a descendent of Zhāng Dàolǐng, the founder of the sect, and its Celestial Masters, a hierarchy of very powerful priests. This sect is also the main vehicle of religious Daoism (Dàojiào).

Depending on the state of the relationship between the Imperial Court and the Way of Five Bushels of Rice, the status of the sect varies between 'almost considered as the State religion' and 'underground sectarian movement' (e.g., at the time of the Yellow Turban Rebellion under the Hàn). Globally, thanks to its organised structure, the Way of Five Bushels of Rice holds a strong influence both on the Imperial Court and on the populace.

MEMBERS

The Way of Five Bushels of Rice accepts both male and female lay members, from all social classes, as well as Daoist priests.

REQUISITES

Lay Members

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 35.
- Must be from Sichuān or North China.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 60% at least.
- Melee weapon at 45% at least.
- Not a lay member of the School of Numinous Treasure, or of another religion.

Priests

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Must be from Sichuān or North China.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 90% at least.
- Persuade at 75% at least.
- Science (Alchemy) at 60% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Lay Members

- Lay members are taught all the powers pertaining to the Qínna Martial Arts School.
- If the sect allows, a lay member may marry another lay member.
- The character receives food and shelter for free in the Generosity Halls run by the sect along the major roads, where rice and meat are placed to feed travellers.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the Science (Natural History) skill by 1% per month of retreat.

Priests

- May learn the Detect Truth and Fear spells.
- Priests are taught all the powers pertaining to the Qínna Martial Arts School.
- Priests receive an amulet that protects against Karmic Retribution: +30% when rolling under the Buddhist or Esoteric Buddhist allegiance.
- The character receives food and shelter for free in the charity inns run by the sect along the major roads.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), the character may increase the Science (Natural History) skill by 1% and the Science (Alchemy) skill by 2% per month of retreat.

OBLIGATIONS

- Must live in the phalansteries of the sect.
- Cannot work or interact with Buddhists or with members of the School of Numinous Treasure.

Quánzhēn School

Period of time

Sòng to Qīng

DESCRIPTION

The Quánzhēn Sect (全真) was founded in the 12th century, at a time of great turmoil. This sect emphasises the intellectual and ascetic aspects of Daoism: *wúwéi*, meditation, and the study of the Daoist scriptures.

MEMBERS

Mostly monks, or scholar-officials who want to "take a break" from running the country.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Must be from Sichuān or North China.
- Knowledge (Literature) at 30% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 45% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Members may learn Buddhist magic during their retreats (religious syncretism). The Buddhist spells that may be learnt are the following ones: Lift, Sangharama's Blessings, Skanda's Sight, and Vasudhārā's Bounty of Food.

OBLIGATIONS

- Must fight the deviances of popular Daoism.
- Must live in the phalansteries of the sect.

Note: This sect has had an offspring in South China called Nánzōng (Southern Lineage 南宗), whose audience is much more restricted (alchemists), and which does not provide phalansteries to its members.

Great Dào Doctrine

Period of time

Sòng to Yuán

DESCRIPTION

The sect of the Great Dào Doctrine (大道教) was founded in North China in the 12th century, at a time of great turmoil, by a Daoist who had met an Immortal. This sect emphasises the ethical and moral aspects of Daoism, as well as the traditional Chinese values of loyalty, filial piety, etc.

MEMBERS

Mostly lower class people.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Destitute members are fed and given shelter by fellow members of the sect.

OBLIGATIONS

- Must not drink.
- Must live an honest and simple life.

Note: This sect declines after the Yuán; its religious members integrate the Quánzhēn School.

Way of Complete Orthodoxy

Period of time

Yuán to Qīng

DESCRIPTION

The Way of Complete Orthodoxy (正一道) was founded in the 13th century, at a time of great turmoil. This sect emphasises the use of talismans, exorcisms, and the rituals of spirit communication, i.e., all the elements of folk Daoism.

**MEMBERS**

The Way of Complete Orthodoxy accepts Astrologers, Daoist priests, and Ritual Masters.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Must be from South China.
- Knowledge (Folklore) at 45% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 75% at least.
- Persuade at 75% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

- Priests may learn the Detect Truth and Fear spells.
- Members are taught the Divination skill.
- If the character goes on a pilgrimage to Dragon Tiger Mountain (Lóngǔ Shān, the mansion of the patriarch of the sect), he will be healed of any malady.

OBLIGATIONS

Absolute obedience to the patriarch of the sect, the Tiānshī (Celestial Master).

Supreme Oneness Doctrine

Period of time

Sòng to Yuán

DESCRIPTION

The sect of the Supreme Oneness Doctrine (太一道) was founded in North China in the 12th century, at a time of great turmoil. This sect emphasises the worship of Daoist deities and the practice of exorcism.



Much like the Way of Complete Orthodoxy, the members of this sect make much use of all the elements of folk Daoism, but based on what is written in its secret books.

MEMBERS

The Supreme Oneness Doctrine recruits Astrologers, Daoist priests, and Ritual Masters.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Must be from North China.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 75% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 45% at least.
- Persuade at 75% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

- Priests may learn the Detect Truth and Fear spells.
- Members are taught the Divination skill.
- Under the Yuán, this sect enjoys the patronage of the Mongol invaders.

OBLIGATIONS

Must help destitute members of the sect for free.

Chóngxuán School

Period of time

Táng

DESCRIPTION AND MEMBERS

The Chóngxuán School (崇玄派) only recruits monks and scholars. This sect emphasises the study of the Daoist scripture, in particular of the *Dàodé jīng*. This sect is heavily influenced by the early Táng religious syncretism of Daoism and Chán Buddhism.

The GM should not allow player characters to join this very minor sect.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Daoism. Allegiance score at least 50.
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 45% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 70% at least.
- Meditation at 60% at least.

BENEFITS

Members are taught the Science (Alchemy) skill.

OBLIGATIONS

Combat skills are limited to 50%.

Xié Sect

Period of time

All

DESCRIPTION AND MEMBERS

Daoism both as a philosophy and as a religion emphasises spontaneity over formality, indifference towards morality, and opposition to the ritualism and the hypocrisy of official Confucianism. Salvation is obtained through liberty, and not through one's observance of moral tenets.

Like many other ancient religions, which were utilitarian rather than moralising, Daoism is "beyond good and evil": Chinese philosophy, does not make a distinction between two opposing forces (Good and Evil), but between two complementary forces (*yīn* and *yáng*). As a consequence, from its very beginning, Daoism has included some elements that Western morals would have considered as "evil". In the Míng novel *The Investiture of the Gods*, which is supposed to relate historical events of the 11th century BC, two Daoist sects compete for supremacy: one allied with the heroes of the novel, and the other opposed to them. The latter sect, the Xié sect (邪教), is portrayed in the novel as an 'evil' sect; however, this may stem from the Buddhist point of view of the author, and nothing proves that people in the 11th century BC would have had the same opinion. Be that as it may, Daoist individuals more interested in personal power than in salvation have existed throughout Chinese history. These individuals enlist in the Xié sect.

REQUISITES

- Allied with Heterodoxy. Allegiance score at least 45.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 60% at least.

BENEFITS

- May learn *gǔ* sorcery spells.
- Intervention of the Welkin Lords. If the player character should be in dire need of help (a situation left to the appreciation of the game master), he might receive the aid of the Welkin Lords (Heterodox Immortals). The player must clearly state the appeal to the game master, and then roll under 1D100. If the result is equal to or smaller than his POW, an *yǐnrén* appears to assist the character within 2D10 minutes. To 'pay' for this service, the player character must sacrifice 1 POW characteristic point to the Welkin Lords at the time of his next retreat on an island of the Welkin Lords; the POW point is definitely lost.

OBLIGATIONS

- Despised/feared by Chinese society: all Communication skill rolls are considered as Difficult tasks.



- Cannot consort with orthodox Daoists.
- Must travel to the islands of the Welkin Lords – Golden Turtle Island, Nine Dragon Island, or White Deer Island; which are mythical islands somewhere in the East Sea, the holy places of Heterodoxy – to learn spells and improve their skills.

SYNCRETIC DAOIST SECTS

Pristine Water Tradition

Period of time
All

DESCRIPTION AND MEMBERS

This syncretistic sect stems from a branch of the Way of Five Bushels of Rice; its members burn incense and pray before a jar of “Pristine Water” supposed to contain the Dào and to be able to heal the sick.

REQUISITES

- Must be sponsored by someone who is already a member of the sect.
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 45% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 90% at least.
- Must not practise magic (if the character has any magic skills or knows any spells, he loses them all).

BENEFITS

- Members are taught all the powers pertaining to the Shàolínquán Martial Arts School.

OBLIGATIONS

- Cannot use magic.
- Cannot use firearms.

School of Numinous Treasure

Period of time
Táng to Sòng

DESCRIPTION

The School of Numinous Treasure (*Língbǎo pài* 靈寶派) is an important Daoist sect that combines Buddhist and Daoist practices. This sect emphasises the worship of the Queen Mother of the West (*Xī Wángmǔ* 西王母), of the Phoenix (*Fènghuáng* 鳳凰), which is her sacred bird, and of the Immortals of Kūnlún (*Kūnlún Xiān* 崑崙仙).

The School of Numinous Treasure claims that the Buddha is but a reincarnation of Lǎozǐ, and that this is supported by the “Classic on Converting the

Barbarians” (*Huàhújīng*), a Daoist book that tells how Lǎozǐ has gone to India to convert the Barbarians after his westward departure from China (the book is actually a forgery from around the late 4th or early 5th century AD).

Although the doctrine of the sect is mostly Daoist by its concept of practising magic and through its belief in attaining immortality, the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism appears in its emphasis on the salvation of all beings and not only the members of the sect.

MEMBERS

The members of this sect are either Daoist monks, or laymen who work to cater for the needs of the monks. Língbǎo monasteries are organised on the model of Buddhist monasteries.

REQUISITES

Lay Members

- Must be from South China.
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 30% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 60% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 60% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

Monks

- Must be from South China.
- Must abide by Daoist discipline (daily gymnastics, Daoist diet).
- Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism) at 45% at least.
- Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) at 90% at least.
- Literacy (Classical Chinese) at 60% at least.
- Meditation at 60% at least.
- Perform (Sing) at 75% at least.
- Not a member of another sect.

BENEFITS

Lay Members

- Lay members are taught the Perception spell.
- Between two adventures (see page 105) lay members may increase the Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) and Literacy (Classical Chinese) skills by 1% per month of retreat.

Monks

- Monks are taught the following spells: Mañjushrī’s Eloquence, Midnight, Moonrise, Resistance, Vasudhārā’s Bounty of Food, and other Daoist spells if the GM allows.
- Monks receive an amulet that protects against Illusion: +15% when trying to detect the falsehood of an Illusion.
- Between two adventures (see page 105), monks may increase the Knowledge (Religion: Buddhism), Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) and Literacy (Classical Chinese)

skills by 2% per month of retreat.

- Intervention of the Immortals. If the player character should be in dire need of help (a situation left to the appreciation of the game master), he might receive the aid of the Immortals of Kūnlún. The player must clearly state the appeal to the game master, and then roll under 1D100. If the result is equal to or smaller than his POW, an yǔrén appears to assist the character within 2D10 minutes. To 'pay' for this service, the player character must sacrifice 1 POW characteristic point to the Immortals at the time of his next retreat in a monastery; the POW point is definitely lost.

OBLIGATIONS

- Allied with Buddhism. Allegiance score at least 30.

CHINESE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Religious sects are not the only associations that may be of interest to player characters. The Chinese, especially under the Qing, belong to a wide network of organisations called *shètuan* that are in charge of all aspects of Chinese life.

ACADEMIES

In Imperial China, Academies (more exactly: *shūyuàn* 書院, 'Academies of Classical Learning') are private institutions, intellectual clubs whose members are Confucian scholars. Located in the countryside, far away from cities or towns, Academies provide a quiet environment devoted to the study of a particular field of interest and of specialisation.

Since Imperial China is ruled by an Emperor who has received the 'Mandate of Heaven', open political dissent is contrary to Confucian beliefs. Academies hence often also act as discreet political clubs whose members may vent their political ideas without fear of reprisal (unless some governmental agent is listening...).

REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN

- At least 45% in Literacy (Classical Chinese) and at least 75% in one of the following knowledge skills: Knowledge (Art History), Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Linguistics), Knowledge (Literature), Knowledge (Philosophy), Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Region: any).
- Must be of the same political persuasion as the Academy (e.g., in favour or against

Neo-Confucianism, in favour or against Manchu rule).

- Must be allied with Confucianism.

BENEFITS

- +25% to the character's Research roll in any one field in which the Academy is specialised (linguistics, music, poetry, politics...) when using the library of the Academy
- May increase the Knowledge skill corresponding to the area of knowledge in which the Academy is specialised above 100%
- Succour from fellow members of the Academy

OBLIGATIONS

- Never act contrary to the political persuasion of the Academy
- Assist a fellow member of the Academy should the latter experience any political trouble
- Never participate in such a lowly endeavour as adventuring (except if some old scrolls are to be recovered!)

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Chambers of Commerce (*huìguǎn* 會館) are the Chinese equivalent of European guilds. A member may join a caravan set up by the Chamber of Commerce rather than travel by himself – roads are dangerous. *Huìguǎn* also provide information on tariffs, taxes, goods scarcity, etc.

"In every large Chinese city are to be found several spacious buildings which are generally reckoned among the sights of the place, and are known by foreigners under the name of guilds. Foreign merchants regard them with a certain amount of awe, for they are often made to feel keenly enough the influence which these institutions exert over every branch of trade. They come into being in the following manner. If traders from any given province muster in sufficient numbers at any of the great centres of commerce, they club together and form a guild. A general subscription is first levied, land is bought, and the necessary building is erected. Regulations are then drawn up, and the tariff on goods is fixed, from which the institution is to derive its future revenue. For all the staples of trade there are usually separate guilds, mixed establishments being comparatively rare. It is the business of the members as a body to see that each individual contributes according to the amount of merchandise which passes through his hands,

and the books of suspected defaulters are often examined at a moment's notice and without previous warning. The guild protects its constituents from commercial frauds by threatening the accused with legal proceedings which an individual plaintiff would never have dared to suggest; and the threat is no vain one when a mandarin, however tyrannical and rapacious, finds himself opposed by a body of united and resolute men. On the other hand, these guilds deal fairly enough with their own members, and not only refuse to support a bad case, but insist on just and equitable dealings with the outside world. To them are frequently referred questions involving nice points of law or custom, and one of the chief functions of a guild is that of a court of arbitration. In addition to this they fix the market rates of all kinds of produce, and woe be to anyone who dares to undersell or otherwise disobey the injunctions of the guild."

H Giles' Chinese Sketches, 1876:



REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN

- At least 75% in Appraise and in Bargain.
- At least 60% in Knowledge (Region: the region where the Chamber of Commerce is located).
- At least 60% in the language of the region where the Chamber of Commerce is located.
- At least 50% in Persuade.
- At least 25% in Status.

BENEFITS

- May take part in caravans
- May receive shelter at affiliates
- Always has the latest economic and travel information as regards the region where the Chamber of Commerce is located (Knowledge rolls become Easy)

OBLIGATIONS

- Never steal
- Never sell goods below a fixed minimum price set by the Chamber of Commerce
- Contribute to the costs of running the Chamber of Commerce

CLAN ASSOCIATIONS

Clan Associations are voluntary organisations that gather Chinese people who share the same kinship/ancestry/lineage. They are usually established by the richest family or families, and all their kin are invited to join. As always, these associations provide succour but also obligations; for instance, the Clan Association founded by a high-ranked Confucian scholar-official may require that its members profess Confucianism as their

religion, effectively barring its members from joining a Martial Arts School.

REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN

- Must have been invited to join by one's kin.

BENEFITS

- Varies dramatically. Typically, one may get a chance to learn a skill or a spell from one's relative that one might not have otherwise had access to.
- Financial support from richer relatives.

OBLIGATIONS

- Varies dramatically, from simply avoiding causing any loss of face to one's clan to being restricted in one's choices in terms of allegiance, profession, trade, etc.

DISTRICT & DIALECT ASSOCIATIONS

These associations (called *gōngsuǒ* 公所) function much like clan associations, but on a larger scale, and far from one's home region. District and Dialect Associations gather people from the same district/province in another region. Once a year, the *gōngsuǒ* organises a festival to which everyone from the same province are invited.

Travellers from the same district/dialect may get room and board at the Association's Hall.

REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN

- At least 75% in the language of the region whence the character originates.
- At least 60% in Knowledge (Region: the region whence the character originates).
- At least 60% in Persuade.
- At least 35% in Status.

BENEFITS

- Varies dramatically. Typically, one may get a chance to learn a skill or a spell from one's associate that one might not have otherwise had access to.
- Financial support from richer associates.

OBLIGATIONS

- Varies dramatically, from simply avoiding causing any loss of face to one's associates to being restricted in one's choices in terms of allegiance, profession, trade, etc.

SECRET SOCIETIES

Secret societies, especially in the Qīng, provide an almost endless source of scenario ideas.

Secret societies have existed in Imperial China since the first centuries AD. They have alternatively or concurrently consisted in rebel groups, political factions, and/or out-of-favour voluntary organisations. Secret societies are very widespread; although many have magical and religious aspects that make them interesting in gaming terms, some of them are similar to Western trade unions, crime syndicates, or Masonic lodges. Game-wise, the most interesting ones are the ones that branched off from the two main secret societies: the White Lotus Society (*Báiliánjiào*, see page 94) and the criminal Triad Society (*Sānhéhuì*) – which actually started as an anti-Manchu patriotic society, as shown in the 2005 Hong Kong film *Election*.

Members of secret societies are able to recognise each other through a peculiar tattoo or through a particular way of introducing oneself, of serving tea, or even of using one's chopsticks!

"The most curious of all secret societies are the so-called 'Golden Orchid' societies, the members of which are young girls, who have sworn never to enter into the matrimonial state."

H Giles'

STREET NEIGHBOURHOODS

These associations gather people from the same street or neighbourhood: in large cities, each street or small neighbourhood have their voluntary organisation to run the life of the neighbourhood in a semi-autonomous way. The elders would complain to the magistrate of the city in case of problems, and the constables would 'sub-contract' police work to the neighbourhood militia. These organisations manage the local temple, around which much of the neighbourhood life revolves.

"The beadles are chosen by the officials from among the respectable and substantial of the people to preside over a small area and be responsible for the general good behaviour of its inhabitants. The post is one of honour and occasional emolument, since all petitions presented to the authorities, all mortgages, transfers of land, etc., should bear the beadle's seal or signature in evidence of their bona-fide character. On the other hand, the beadle is punished by fine, and sometimes bamboosed, if robberies are too frequent within his jurisdiction, or if he fails to secure the person of any malefactor particularly wanted by his superior officers. And other causes may combine to make the post a dangerous one; but no one is allowed to refuse acceptance of it point-blank."

"The elaborate gilding and woodwork of an ordinary Chinese temple form a very serious item in the expense of restoration. Public subscriptions are usually the means employed for raising sufficient funds, the names of subscribers and amount given by each being published in some conspicuous position."

H Giles

REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN

- Must have a permanent address in the street/neighbourhood
- Must be male and self-sufficient
- At least 20% in Status.
- Except for people with low Status, everyone is supposed to join the Street neighbourhood of the area where they live.

BENEFITS

- Succour from the neighbours in case of a catastrophe (fire, flood): victims of the disaster typically find accommodation in





the homes of neighbours whose homes were not hit,

- Mutual aid benefits: common granary, common pharmacy, relief funds, free loans, funeral and burial services...
- Neighbourhood watch scheme
- Chinese language school for the children

OBLIGATIONS

- Social interactions must go through the elders
- Must devote part of one's income to the mutual aid benefits
- Must take part in the activities of the town watch/of the neighbourhood militia from time to time
- Must devote part of one's time when not adventuring, based on one's skills: e.g., a retired scholar may teach children, a Daoist priest may choose auspicious days for street festivals, etc.

In gaming terms, the wealth of a character who is a member of a street neighbourhood is measured against the wealth of his neighbourhood.

FICTIONAL ORGANISATIONS

There are countless non-historical organisations described in wǔxiá fiction. The GM may want to add some to his campaign from his favourite wǔxiá novel, or he may even create his own based on the examples below. A fictional organisation may pertain to any of the models described in this section, or may even be an escort agency (*biāojiú* 镖局), a martial arts school, or a religious sect.

EXAMPLES

OF FICTIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Huàshǎn Pài

("School of Mount Huà")

This fictional organisation features prominently in the works of Jin Yong: along with the Shàolín and Wūdāng schools, it is one of the prominent martial arts schools of the Rivers and Lakes.

Period of time: Sòng to Qīng

Allegiance: Daoism

Style: internal (*yin*)

Powers: Blind Fighting, Defence, Extra Energy, Stoicism, Super Skill (Brawl), Super Skill (Climb), Super Skill (Dodge), Super Skill (Jump), Super Skill (Melee weapon), Super Skill (Missile weapon), Super Skill (Sleeve combat), Unarmed Combat

Other Powers taught: none

This martial arts school is an offspring of the syncretic Quánzhēn sect. As a result, its members may learn the Buddhist spells Lift, Sangharama's Blessings, and Skanda's Sight on top of their martial skills.

The Beggars' Sect

Gài Bang 丐幫

This fictional organisation is ubiquitous in Hong Kong fiction, be it novels or films; in the Judge Dee novels, it is also a key element of the underworld of each major city in which Judge Dee is appointed.

The Beggars' sect is typical of the Chinese *Jiānghú*: its members do live unlawfully, and against the tenets of Confucianism, but they adhere to the chivalric code of conduct of the Rivers and Lakes, and they defend China against the Mongol invaders at the end of the Sòng.

The beggars are taught a special martial art that makes use of their staff, and its members may take advantage of the sect's huge network of informants.

"Beggars in China accomplish their purpose more effectually by beating a gong in the shop where they ask for alms so loudly as to prevent the shopkeeper from hearing his customers speak; or they vary the performance by swinging about some dead animal tied to the end of a stick. Mendicity not being prohibited in China, there results a system of blackmail payable by every householder to a beggars' guild, and this frees them from the visits of the beggars of their own particular district; many, however, do not subscribe, but take their chance in the struggle as to who will tire out the other first, the shopkeeper, who has all to lose, being careful to stop short of anything like manual violence, which would forthwith bring down upon him the myrmidons of the law, and subject him to innumerable 'squeezes'."

H Giles

Ancient Tomb Sect

Gǔmù Pài 古墓派

This fictional sect of heterodox Daoists is also from Jin Yong's works. Its name stems from the 'ancient tomb' (actually a huge subterranean complex) that the sect has built to store supplies and weapons in preparation for a war against the Nǚzhēn invaders. After the sect's failure in stopping the invaders, its members withdraw in the subterranean complex, thereby gaining the moniker 'the Living Dead'.

As befits a fictional *wǔxiá* organisation, the Ancient Tomb Sect owns an Esoteric Manual called the Jade Maiden's Heart Scripture.

EQUIPMENT

PRICES
AND WEALTH LEVELS

On the one hand, *The Celestial Empire* is not a game of economic management, and, on the other hand, Chinese monetary units as well as goods prices have varied so dramatically in time and in space that it wouldn't make any historical sense to present any "price tables" here: before 1948, China always lacked a centralised and unified monetary system.

As a consequence, we shall consider that the player characters always own the equipment corresponding to their profession, and that they are wealthy enough to eat thrice a day.

When the man of a naturally good propensity has much wealth, it injures his advancement in wisdom; when the worthless man has much wealth, it increases his faults.

(Chinese proverb)

For everything else, we shall use the Wealth Level system from the *Chaosium Basic Roleplaying System*. Please refer to the sections 'Wealth Levels' on page 37, 'Money' on page 237, and 'Purchasing Equipment' on page 239 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

PROTECTIONS

Armour

Chinese fighters usually do not wear metallic armour, with the exception of military commanders. This is mostly due to two factors: the cost of metallic armour, and the climatic conditions in China. Moreover, wearing armour within the limits of a city warrants the immediate attention of the city's militia.

Generally, a Chinese combatant will wear many layers of clothing or *papier-mâché* armour filled with cotton, which are particularly efficient against missile weapons – including bullets, as observed by both American and European travellers during the many rebellions of 19th century China.

The Celestial Empire uses fixed values for armour points.



Bīngqì

Chinese soldiers and martial artists traditionally train in the use of eighteen weapons. These weapons are collectively known as *bīngqì* (兵器).

These weapons cannot be carried in a city without a permit delivered by the magistrate of the city. In the countryside, surveillance is less strict, but the bearing of any other arms than a bow or a spear (hunting weapons) will arouse the suspicions of the authorities.

Other Weapons

The diversity of Chinese weapons is quite astounding. Besides the 'eighteen weapons' of *bīngqì*, there are many other weapons available for combatant characters. The quarterstaff is the main weapon used in *wǔshù* training; it has the distinct advantage of being carried without authorisation as it can be easily mistaken for a mere walking staff. Improvised weapons also obviously function as concealed weapons: clubs, stones, tools.

There are yet other much rarer and stranger weapons available, especially amongst martial artists. Many are described in the *Dragon Lines* supplement, like the dagger axe, the flying claws, or the meteor hammer. Check them out!

Firearms

Only soldiers and pirates can possibly be equipped with firearms.

Firearms are considered weapons for times of war only – using firearms in personal combat is considered utterly tasteless. Whoever uses a firearm in times of peace incurs a penalty of 5% to his Status.

Treasure

Sometimes, over the course of their adventuring career, player characters may stumble upon valuable treasures: jewels, rolls of silk, gold or silver ingots, or vases. In those cases, and because *The Celestial Empire* is not a game of economic management, the game master may want to opt for one or several of the following solutions:

- Player characters have "sponsors" (the prefect of a province for a magistrate or a mandarin, his colonel for a soldier, his abbot for a monk, etc.) to whom they must return any treasures they may find, which explains how they always have a minimum equipment, food and lodging.
- Unless they are from the ancient past, these valuable items logically have a rightful owner from whom they were stolen. Unscrupulous player characters may want to sell these items on the black market, where they are worth

less than their real value – just enough to go up one wealth level on the Wealth Level system from page 37 of Chaosium's *Basic Roleplaying System*, for a limited amount of time (as decided by the game master).

- The player characters may trade in their treasure at various organisations such as secret societies, temples, or martial arts schools, for new skills or spells (as decided by the game master), or for training sessions that enable them to increase some of their skills (in this latter case, +5% is a reasonable value). In any case, treasure shall never enable a player character to progress beyond 75% in any of his skills – only experience may bring a skill beyond that value.

Metals and Equipment

SHOCK BETWEEN TWO WEAPONS

Whenever there is a violent shock between two weapons (e.g., a critical parry), the weapons may break. All Celestial Empire weapons have the same HP as the standard weapons in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. In *The Celestial Empire*, the additional rule is simply that a weapon made of a 'better' material can't be broken by a weapon made of a 'lesser' material.

The 'quality order' for the various materials is as follows:

Weapon Material	Quality
Bone	Least quality
Gold, Silver	...
Bronze	...
Iron	...
"Barbarian" Steel ¹	...
"Civilised" Steel ²	...
Enchanted Steel ³	...
Jīngāng ⁴	Best quality

ARMOUR

The quality of metal has also an effect on the protection of a given piece of armour.

The armour points from the table on page 92 assume a piece of armour made with Chinese steel. Armour points for armour made of different materials shall be computed using the following modifiers:

Armour Material	Multiplier
Gold, silver	0.5
Bronze	0.6
Iron	0.7
"Barbarian" steel	0.8
"Civilised" steel	1
Enchanted steel	1.25

Obviously these modifiers only apply to metal armour. After the modifier has been applied, the AP are rounded to the nearest integer.



1) Steel of Arabian, Persian, Scythian or Turkic manufacture

2) Steel of Chinese, Korean or Japanese manufacture

3) Steel that has been enchanted by an Immortal

4) Adamantine metal used by supernatural beings of the Buddhist pantheon

ARMOUR

ARMOUR	AP	BURDEN / ENC	SKILL MODIFIERS	FITS SIZ	TIME	LOC.	VALUE
Helmet, Light*	+1	None / 1.5	15% penalty to perception skills	±1	1	Head	Inexpensive
Helmet, Heavy†	+2	Light / 2.5	50% penalty to perception skills	±0	1	Head	Expensive
Clothing, Heavy*	1	None / 2.5	None	±2	1	All	Cheap
Leather, Soft*	1	Light / 3.5	None	±2	2	All	Inexpensive
Asbestos Tunic**	1(6 vs fire)	None / 3.0	None	±2	1	All	Average
Linen Armour**	2	Light / 4.0	5% penalty to physical skills	±1	2	All	Inexpensive
Leather, Hard*	2	Moderate / 5.0	10% penalty to physical skills	±1	2	All	Average
Papier-mâché Hauberk**	2(4 vs missiles)	Light / 4.0	5% penalty to physical skills	±1	2	All but head	Inexpensive
Leather, Cuirboulit*	3	Light / 5.0	10% penalty to physical skills	±0	2	All	Expensive
Brigandine**	4	Light / 10.0	10% penalty to physical skills	±0	2	All	Expensive
Ring Armour†	5	Light / 10.0	10% penalty to physical skills	±1	2	All but head	Expensive
Scale Armour†	6	Moderate / 20.0	15% penalty to physical skills	±1	2	All but head	Average
Lamellar Armour†	6	Moderate / 18.0	15% penalty to physical skills	±1	2	All but head	Expensive
Chain Mail*	7	Moderate / 20.0	20% penalty to physical skills	-2	3	All	Expensive
Cord and Plaque Armour**†	7	Moderate / 18.0	20% penalty to physical skills	-2	3	All but head	Expensive

Notes:

* same as in the Basic Roleplaying rulebook

** new Celestial Empire armour

† only northern Chinese and nomadic Barbarians

‡ Scale, Cord and Plaque: up to Song only; Lamellar: from Yuan on only

BINGQI SHIELDS

NAME	SKILL	DAMAGE	(SPECIAL)	APIHP	STRDEX	BURDEN	LOCATIONS	ENC	VALUE	SR
Long Shield	†	1D4+db	(Knockback)	26	12/8	Cumbersome	Abdomen, Arm, Chest, Head	7.0	Expensive	3
Large round shield	†	1D4+db	(Knockback)	22	11/9	Moderate	Abdomen, Arm, Chest	5.0	Expensive	3
Round shield	†	1D4+db	(Knockback)	20	9/9	Moderate	Arm, Chest	4.0	Expensive	2
Target shield	†	1D2+db	(Knockback)	15	5/7	Light	Arm, Chest	3.0	Average	3

† since Chinese combatants are taught to fight with a shield, they needn't learn a separate skill. Shield use is part of their main weapon skill.

BINGQI MISSILE WEAPONS

WEAPON	SKILL	(BASE)	DAMAGE	(SPECIAL)	ATTK	(RANGE)	HP	(STR/DEX)	MALFUNC	CHINESE NAME	VALUE	SIZ	ENC	RF
Bow	Bow	(05)	1D6+2+1/2db	(Impaling)	1	(90)	10	(11/9)	N/A	gōng 弓	Cheap	0.5	0.5	1/SR
Crossbow	Crossbow	(25)	2D6	(Impaling)	1/2	(50)	14	(11/7)	95-00	nǚ 弩	Expensive	5.0	0.5	1/2MR
Javelin	Javelin	(15)	1D6+1+1/2db	(Impaling)	1	(25)	10	(9/9)	N/A	biāoqiāng 標槍	Cheap	1.5	1.5	1/SR
Rope dart	Rope dart	(10)	1D6+1+1/2db	(Impaling or entangling)	1	(10)	5	(7/13)	N/A	shéngbiāo 繩標	Inexpensive	3.0	2.0	1/CR

BINGQI MELEE WEAPONS

WEAPON	SKILL (BASE)	DAMAGE (SPECIAL)	ATTK (RANGE)	HP (STR/DEX)	HANDS (PARRY)	CHINESE NAME	VALUE	SIZE/NC	SR
Axe	Axe (15)	1D6+1+db (bleeding)	1 (Medium)	20 (8/7)	1H (Yes)	fǔ 斧	Expensive	1.0	2
Chain whip	Flail (10)	1D6+2+db (crushing)	1 (Medium)	12 (9/8)	1H (Yes)	ruǎnbǎn 軟鞭	Expensive	2.0	2
Chain sword	Flail (10)	1D6+2+db (crushing)	1 (Medium)	7 (7/6)	1H (Yes)	tiébǎn 鐵鞭	Expensive	2.0	2
Glaive	Pole arm (05)	2D6+1+db	1 (Long)	15 (7/11)	2H (Yes)	chángdāo 長刀 or tiáodāo 薙刀	Expensive	2.0	1
Halberd	Pole arm (15)	3D6+db (bleeding)	1 (Long)	25 (13/9)	2H (Yes)	jī 戟	Expensive	3.0	1
Lance	Spear (15)	1D12+db (impaling)	1 (Long)	15 (9/8)	1H (Yes)	shuò 槊	Expensive	3.5	0
Mace	Mace (25)	1D6+2+db (crushing)	1 (Medium)	20 (7/7)	1H (Yes)	jiàn 劍	Expensive	1.0	2
Monk's spade	Pole arm (10)	3D6+db (bleeding)	1 (Long)	20 (10/14)	2H (Yes)	yuèyáochān 月牙鏟	Expensive	3.0	1
Moon blade	Pole arm (15)	3D6+db (bleeding)	1 (Long)	25 (13/9)	2H (Yes)	guāndāo 關刀	Expensive	3.0	1
Partisan	Pole arm (10)	2D6+1+db (bleeding)	1 (Long)	15 (7/11)	2H (Yes)	guǎiqiāng 拐槍	Expensive	2.0	1
Pike	Pole arm (15)	2D6+db (bleeding)	1 (Long)	15 (11/7)	2H (Yes)	wú 鐏	Expensive	3.5	0
Ranseur	Pole arm (15)	1D6+2+db (bleeding)	1 (Long)	20 (11/11)	2H (Yes)	pǔdāo 朴刀	Expensive	2.5	1
Sabre	Sword (15)	1D8+1+db (bleeding)	1 (Medium)	20 (9/7)	1H (Yes)	dàdāo 大刀	Expensive	1.5	2
Spear	Spear (15)	1D8+1+db (impaling)	1 (Long)	15 (9/8)	1H (Yes)	qiāng 槍	Cheap	2.0	1
Sword	Sword (15)	1D8+db (bleeding)	1 (Medium)	15 (7/9)	1H (Yes)	jiàn 劍	Expensive	1.5	2
Tiger fork	Pole arm (15)	2D6+db (impaling)	1 (Long)	18 (9/7)	1H or 2H (Yes)	cháqiāng 叉槍	Expensive	2.0	2
Willow leaf sabre	Sword (15)	1D8+1+db (bleeding)	1 (Medium)	19 (8/8)	1H (Yes)	liǔyèdāo 柳葉刀	Expensive	1.5	2

Note: The willow leaf sabre is only available under the Ming and under the Qing.

OTHER WEAPONS

WEAPON	SKILL (BASE)	DAMAGE (SPECIAL)	ATTK (RANGE)	HP (STR/DEX)	HANDS (PARRY)	VALUE	SIZE/NC	SR
Cane	Staff (15)	1D6+db (crushing)	1 (Medium)	15 (7/9)	1H (Yes)	Cheap	0.5	3
Club	Club (25)	1D6+db (crushing)	1 (Medium)	15 (7/7)	1H (Yes)	N/A	1.0	2
Composite bow	Bow (05)	1D8+1+1/2db (impaling)	1 (120)	12 (13/9)	2H (No)	Expensive	0.5	1/SR
Knife	Dagger (25)	1D3+db (impaling)	1 (Short)	15 (4/4)	1H (Yes)	Cheap	0.2	3
Knife (thrown)	Throw (25)	1D3+1/2db (impaling)	1/SR (10)	15 (7/11)	1H (No)	Cheap	0.2	1/SR
Quarterstaff	Staff (25)	1D8+db (crushing)	1 (All)	20 (9/9)	2H (Yes)	Cheap	1.5	1
Repeating crossbow	Crossbow (25)	1D6+2 (impaling)	1 (60)	12 (9/7)	2H (No)	Expensive	7.5/0.5	1/SR
Sleeve	(also rope, ribbon...)	Sleeve combat (00)	1D3+1/2db (entangling)	3 (4/11)	1H (No)	N/A	0.1	0
Stone (thrown)	Throw (25)	1D3+1/2db (crushing)	1/SR (20)	N/A (5/5)	1H (No)	N/A	0.05	1/SR

Note: The repeating crossbow has ammo of 12 and takes 5 combat rounds to reload entirely.

FIREARMS

FIREARM	PERIOD OF TIME	SKILL (BASE)	DAMAGE (SPECIAL)	ATTK (RANGE)	HP	(STR/DEX)	MALFUN	VALUE	SIZE/NC	RF	NOTES
Fire tube	Yuán	Firearm (15)	1D6+3 (N/A)	1/7 (15)	12	(9/7)	95-00	Restricted	2.0	1/7CR	Individual firearm
Fire lance	Yuán	Firearm (15)	1D6+3 (N/A)	1/7 (15)	20	(10/14)	95-00	Restricted	3.0	1/7CR	Individual firearm once load fired, may be used as a monk's spade
Cannon	Ming	Artillery (05)	3 to 5D6 (crushing)	1/5 (8,000)	36	(N/A)	99-00	Restricted	44	1/5CR	needs a crew of three
Fire arrow launcher	Ming	Artillery (05)	1D8+1 (impaling)	1/5 (100)	24	(N/A)	99-00	Restricted	30	1/5CR	needs a crew of four does not need reloading until all arrows have been fired
Rifle, musket	Qing	Firearm (25)	1D10+4 (impaling)	1/4 (60)	12	(9/5)	95-00	Restricted	3.5	1/2CR	individual weapon

CREATURES

THIS CHAPTER includes many creatures suited for an East Asian campaign. It must be noted, however, that Chinese fantasy is more 'subtle' than its Western counterpart, and that fantasy creatures usually appear disguised, in human form, or in dream-like encounters.

Stats for humanoid creatures include Allegiance scores, and a Morale rating under either of these forms:

Mook: the creature follows the rules for 'mooks' if it is not led by a leader

Average: the creature does not follow the rules for 'mooks', but it may not act as a leader either.

Leader: this creature always fights as a leader, and may also act as a leader for other humanoid creatures

NATURAL CREATURES

Many natural creatures are already described in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. With the exception of the dinosaurs, the gorilla and the lion, they are all suited to an East Asian setting.

The statistics for the female gorilla (page 336 of *Basic Roleplaying*) may be used for Asian apes.

Additional Asian animals are described below.

BACTRIAN CAMEL

This hardy domesticated camel is reared by the nomadic peoples of Inner Asia, from Bactria to Inner Mongolia. The Bactrian camel is the only beast of burden able to survive the harsh climate of the region.

STR 4D6+18 (32) Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON 2D6+6 (13) Hit Points: 23
SIZ 4D6+9 (23) Move: 10
INT 4
POW 3D6 (10-11)
DEX 3D6 (10-11)

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Kick	15%	1D6+db	crush
Bite	30%	1D6	bleed

Armour: 4

Skills: Sense 30%, Survive without water 85%.

BOVID

Many bovids are native to Asia: grey oxen, water buffaloes, yaks, and domestic cattle. The latter often play the role that horses do in Europe (draught, dray, transport), because horses are rare and expensive in China.

Bovids are peaceful animals, but it is dangerous to approach them.

STR 4D6+24 (38) Damage Bonus: +4D6
CON 2D6+9 (16) Hit Points: 27
SIZ 4D6+24 (38) Move: 12
INT 4
POW 3D6 (10-11)
DEX 2D6 (7)

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Charge	35%	1D6+db	crushing
Butt	35%	1D6+½db	impaling
Trample	75%	2D6+db	crushing

Armour: 4.

Skills: Hide 30%, Sense 65%.

DEER

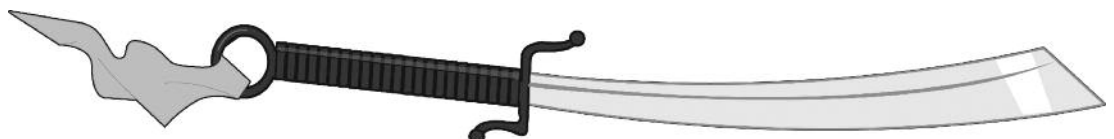
In Asia, deer are found in all milieus; forests, plains, mountains, and marshes. Deer are easily frightened, and flee rather than fight. Asian deer are smaller than their European counterpart. Males often do not have any antlers.

STR 2D6+6 (13) Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON 3D6 (10-11) Hit Points: 13
SIZ 2D6+8 (15) Move: 12
INT 4
POW 3D6 (10-11)
DEX 3D6+6 (16-17)

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Kick	25%	1D4+db	crushing
Butt	30%	1D6+db	crushing

Armour: 1.

Skills: Hide 65%, Jump 90%, Listen 50%, Stealth 65%, Swim 65%.



HORSE

In China, Horses are rare and much sought after. Only very rich people may afford the cost of keeping horses. On the other hand, horses are commonplace amongst the nomads of Inner Asia. The finest horses are from the Fergana Valley in Sogdiana.

PANTHER

Panthers live in the rainforest of Southeast Asia. Panthers are lone hunters.

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	3D6 (10-11)	Hit Points: 12
SIZ	3D6+2 (12-13)	Move: 12
INT	5	
POW	3D6 (10-11)	
DEX	2D6+12 (19)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	40%	1D8+db	bleeding
Claw	60%	1D6+db	bleeding
Rake	80%	2D6+db	bleeding

Armour: 1

Skills: Climb 70%, Dodge 75%, Hide 95%, Jump 70%, Listen 70%, Sense 70%, Stealth 95%, Swim 70%, Track 70%.

Note: A panther can make one claw attack and one bite attack each combat round. If both attacks hit, the panther hangs on for the next round, continuing to bite. Instead of clawing, it will attempt to rake with its hind claws.

TIGER

At the time of The Celestial Empire, tigers are quite common in Asia and are found all the way from Siberia through Southeast Asia to South Asia. Siberian Tigers (i.e. those encountered in Siberia, Manchuria, and Korea) are much larger than their southern counterparts – the upper values of the characteristic averages must be used. The Chinese hunt the tiger because many of its body parts are used as ingredients in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Tigers feature prominently in Chinese folklore. It is widely believed that man-eating tigers are accompanied by a slave spirit called a *chāng* (see page 110). It is also widely believed that a 500-year old tiger turns white and becomes a sentient creature.

MONSTROUS PLANTS

There are many monsters that are partly or fully plants in Chinese lore. This section will only describe monsters that are fully vegetal in nature. Other monsters (such as tree demons) will be dealt with separately.

SHUǏMǎNG

"The shuǐmǎng is a poisonous herb. It is a creeper, like the bean, and has a similar red flower. Those who eat of it die, and become shuǐmǎng devils, tradition asserting that such devils are unable to be born again unless they can find someone else who has also eaten of this poison to take their place."

Pú Sōnglíng,

Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio,
Tale No.XVII, The Shuǐmǎng Plant

The shuǐmǎng flower looks delicious and nutritious, to lure people into eating it. If eaten, the flower acts as a POT 15 mortal poison. After his or her death, the victim becomes a shuǐmǎng ghost, which will itself try to lure someone into eating the flower.

STR	-	Damage Bonus: None
CON	-	Hit Points: None
SIZ	-	Move: 6
INT	as victim	
POW	as victim	
DEX	-	

Armour: None.

Skills: Stealth 90%.

Notes: The shuǐmǎng ghost attacks with a kind of ghostly combat (see page 343 of *Basic Roleplaying*), consisting of a POW vs POW resistance roll. If the shuǐmǎng ghost overcomes the target's POW, the latter feels an irresistible urge to eat the shuǐmǎng flower. If the character can overcome the shuǐmǎng ghost, the latter cannot attack this particular target again within the next hour.

If the target is under the effect of a Countermagic spell, the shuǐmǎng ghost must overcome the Countermagic spell first as if the shuǐmǎng ghost were a level 2 spell. A level 2 Undo Sorcery spell keeps the shuǐmǎng ghost at a distance for 2D6 hours.

A shuǐmǎng ghost is invulnerable to any other weapons and spells than the ones described above. Once the attack of a shuǐmǎng ghost against a given opponent is successful, the shuǐmǎng ghost maintains its concentration until the victim has eaten the flower. When this has happened, and if the victim dies of poisoning, the shuǐmǎng ghost is freed, and the spirit of its victim takes its place by the shuǐmǎng plant.

In a given combat round, the ghostly combat of the shuǐmǎng ghost always takes precedence with regards to any other form of combat.

The shuǐmǎng is a real-world toxic plant, also known under the name of Japanese star anise.

GUI-MONSTERS



Gui-monsters are fantasy creatures from Chinese folk tales and ghost stories. They somehow exist in both the mundane world and the spirit world. These creatures are not necessarily malevolent; folk tales and ghost stories often show that whatever evil actions they do actually stem from their uneasiness in being in two worlds at once. Some gui-monsters may even act in a benign way and help humans, like for instance the three genii (Crab, Snake, and Frog) from Pú Sōnglíng's *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, Tale No. XXVII, *The Three Genii*, who provide the bachelor protagonist with the themes set for the examination he's about to pass; thanks to their help, he comes out at the top of the list.

Gui-monsters are generally invisible or disguised as normal animals or humans; however, a mirror will always reveal the true aspect of a gui-monster. Similarly, a gui-monster can't come closer than 30 metres to a blessed Buddhist item: a *sūtra*, a *mandala*, a relic... (the item must be clearly on display though).

CHĀNG

A chāng is the spirit of a person that has been eaten by a tiger. Since the person has not received a proper burial, the chāng becomes the slave of the tiger that has eaten it. In order to be freed, the chāng must find another human victim to replace it by the tiger.

STR	-	Damage Bonus:	None
CON	-	Hit Points:	None
SIZ	-	Move:	6
INT	as victim		
POW	as victim		
DEX	-		

Armour: None.

Skills: Stealth 90%.

A chāng attacks with a kind of ghostly combat (see page 343 of *Basic Roleplaying*), consisting of a POW vs POW resistance roll. If the chāng overcomes the target's POW, the latter feels an irresistible urge to go into the tiger's den. If the character can overcome the chāng, the latter cannot attack this particular target again within the next hour.

If the target is under the effect of a Countermagic spell, the chāng must overcome the Countermagic spell first as if the chāng were a level 2 spell. A level 2 Undo Sorcery spell keeps the chāng at a distance for 2D6 hours.

A chāng is invulnerable to any other weapons and spells than the ones described above. Once the attack of a chāng against a given opponent is successful, the chāng maintains its concentration until the victim is devoured by the tiger. When this has happened, the spirit of the chāng is freed, and the spirit of its victim takes its place by the tiger.

In a given combat round, the ghostly combat of the chāng always takes precedence with regards to any other form of combat.

DISEASE SPIRIT

In non-historical campaigns, there are two kinds of diseases: natural diseases, due to a germ or a virus, and spiritual diseases, due to disease spirits.

(Note: the Medicine skill may only be used to treat natural diseases)

A disease spirit is characterised by:

- its POW, which is its only characteristic,
- the disease it carries (see page 221 of *Basic Roleplaying*).

A disease spirit attacks as per the rules for ghostly combat (see page 343 of *Basic Roleplaying*). A disease spirit that has reduced its opponent to 0 Qi points possesses him or her; the victim immediately loses a characteristic point in the affected characteristic (STR for atrophy, CON for the chills, etc.). The severity of the disease depends on the ratio between the POW of the character and the POW of the spirit (see the table below).



POW of the spirit

< ½ POW of the victim
 ≥ ½ POW of the victim
 ≥ POW of the victim
 ≥ 2×POW of the victim

Severity of the disease

Mild (Loss every week)
 Acute (Loss each day)
 Severe (Loss each hour)
 Terminal (Loss each minute)

Further characteristic point losses are computed as per page 221 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

Disease spirits are found in unhealthy places such as marshes, battlefields, *yin* places, or may be invoked by evil shamans.

HUNGRY GHOST

According to the Chinese, human beings are made up of a body (*xíng*), of a cloudsoul (*hún*), and of a whitesoul (*pò*). The cloudsoul governs the intellectual functions of the body; the whitesoul the biological ones. After one's death, the cloudsoul departs to its ancestors, whereas the whitesoul returns to the earth.

However, in some peculiar circumstances of an individual's death (drowning, hanging, or more generally any violent death), the *pò* may become demented by the violence inflicted upon it; it then stays in the world of the living as a "hungry ghost", generally linked to the very place where it met its death (river, scaffold).

STR	-		Damage Bonus: None
CON	-		Hit Points: None
SIZ	-		Qi: 13
INT	3D6	(10-11)	Move: 5
POW	2D6+6	(13)	
DEX	-		

Armour: None.

Skills: Hide 100%, Stealth 100%.

Attacks: A hungry ghost attacks with a kind of ghostly combat (see page 343 of *Basic Roleplaying*), consisting of a POW vs POW resistance roll. If the hungry ghost overcomes the target's POW, the latter falls into unconsciousness and must make a Stamina roll. If the Stamina roll is a failure, the victim dies; otherwise, it stays unconscious until a CON×1 roll is successfully made. If the character can overcome the hungry ghost, the latter cannot attack this particular target again within the next 24 hours.

If the target is under the effect of a Countermagic spell, the hungry ghost must overcome the Countermagic spell first as if the hungry ghost were a level 1 spell. A hungry ghost may be banished by a Dispel spell as per page 97 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

A hungry ghost is invulnerable to any other weapons and spells than the ones described above.

Once a hungry ghost has attacked a character, it will keep on attacking each round until its opponent is unconscious, dead, accepts to follow the hungry ghost's injunctions, or has defeated it with his or her POW.

In a given combat round, the ghostly combat of the hungry ghost always takes precedence with regards to any other form of combat.

NATURE GUI

Nature *gui* are associated with mountains, trees, lakes, rivers... they are the expression of a specific locale or natural feature, much like Greek nymphs.

Nature *gui* are invisible and have but one characteristic: POW 2D6+12. Their presence manifests itself through a sorcery elemental spell associated with their nature (e.g. Bounty of the Sea), and they may communicate with mortals using the Speak to Mind spell. Nature *gui* do not normally interfere with mortals' affairs, except in very unusual situations.

The GM should create unique nature *gui* for specific locales.

SPIRIT GENERAL

Spirit generals may command spirit soldiers from the spirit world. Spirit generals have been harnessed by the various practitioners of spirit-related magic to serve them. Once a practitioner of spirit-related magic has been in contact with a given spirit general, he'll always be in contact with the same spirit general upon future contacts with the spirit world.

A spirit general is only characterised by its POW, usually in the 2D6+6 range.

SPIRIT SOLDIER

Spirit soldiers are dynastic time remnants of the shamanistic spirits of yore. They serve under spirit generals.

They are only characterised by their POW, usually in the 1D6+6 range.

STIFF CORPSE

Some hungry ghosts have a particularly violent or unfair death. These hungry ghosts, burning with hatred and fuelled by resentment, become very powerful; at the time of their death, the *pò* destroys the *hún* and possesses the *xíng*. Such a creature is called a *jiāngshī* ("stiff corpse").

Jiāngshī are the zombies of Chinese folklore. Their body is dead (hence the stiffness), and they only move through the will of their *pò*. As a result, they are not particularly bright, but their cruelty renders them extremely dangerous. The body being stiff, *jiāngshī* move by hopping around or by flying (but the latter is power points-consuming).

Characteristics: use the character's characteristics before his death, except INT and DEX, which are reduced by 3. Each round of "flying" costs the *jiāngshī* 1 power point.

Attacks: a *jiāngshī* attacks by hopping onto its opponent (+5% to the attack roll of the *jiāngshī* and -5% to the parry roll of the victim per metre thus hopped).

A *jiāngshī* always fights (both attack and parry) bare handed, using its Claw skill at DEX×5%,



damage: 1D6+db (bleeding)

Note: A jiāngshī is impervious to pain. Some translators have rendered jiāngshī into English as 'hopping vampire'.

SWAN MAIDEN

These are young maidens that may shapeshift to swan form thanks to their magic robe made of swan feathers. The swan maiden must remove her robe to bathe. If it is stolen at that moment, she must remain in human form. There are several kinds of bird maidens. In China, swan maidens are the most frequent ones, but there also are crane maidens, peahen maidens, and pheasant maidens.

VIXEN SPIRIT



Some Chinese foxes are actually *guǐ* endowed with the power of shapeshifting into human form (essentially like a Liken Shape spell, but without the SIZ limitation). However, the disguised vixen spirit always keeps a telltale sign giving away its true nature: e.g., a tuft of red hair where a tail should grow.

Vixen spirits (*yāohú* 妖狐) are not always evil. In many Chinese tales, they are shown as mischievous creatures, much like the household elves of European lore. There are also abundant tales of love stories between bachelor scholars and fox maidens. Such unions are rumoured to produce particularly talented offspring.

HUMAN FORM

STR	2D6+6	(13)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6	(13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6	(13)	Qi: 11
INT	2D6+6	(13)	Move: 8
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	2D6+6	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	25%	per weapon+db	

FOX FORM

STR	as human / 3	(5)	Damage Bonus: -1D4
CON	as human	(13)	Hit Points: 9
SIZ	as human / 3	(5)	Qi: 11
INT	as human	(13)	Move: 12
POW	as human	(10-11)	
DEX	as human	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	30%	1D6+½db	bleeding

Armour: none natural, but it may wear human-made armour.
Skills: Dodge 60%, Hide 60%, Listen 75%, Sense 60%, Spot 60%, Stealth 60%, Track 75%.

Note: The older the vixen spirit, the more powerful it is. For each 100 years of age, add 1D3 to POW, and add 5% to Sense.

GHOULS AND GOBLINS

Yāoguài (妖怪, literally 'malevolent strangeness') is a generic term for all the supernatural creatures from Chinese tales that have a demonic twist. The phrase has been variously rendered into English, e.g., 'ghouls and goblins' in some early 20th century texts.

BÀNYĀO

The *bànyāo* is the offspring of a demonic animal (see below) and a human woman. The *bànyāo* may be either male or female. He or she looks perfectly human, but keeps a telltale sign giving away his or her origin: pointed ears, fair eyes, red hair, a forked tongue, or very small horns, which the *bànyāo* will try to hide at all costs. Some *bànyāo* are born sequential hermaphrodites: when the Moon is *yīn* [new moon], they appear female; when the Moon is *yáng* [full moon], male; such individuals may have a hard time fitting into Chinese gender roles.

Bànyāo do not have any particular power, except that they are themselves immune to the demonic animals' power, and that they never catch human diseases.

A *bànyāo* may or may not be evil. Evil *bànyāo* will look for a demonic master (like a *mìngmó*) to serve.

BÈI



Bèi look like diminutive chīmèi with atrophied legs and very long arms. Contrary to their distant cousins, they cannot walk and spend most of their time high in the canopies of mountain forests, swinging from branch to branch. In times of need, they set up raiding parties riding on the back of demonic wolves (see below), attacking chīmèi or human villages.

STR	2D6	(7)	Damage Bonus: -1D6
CON	3D6	(10-11)	Hit Points: 7
SIZ	1D3+2	(4)	Qi: 10
INT	1D6+6	(9-10)	Move: 2 (10 in trees)
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	3D6+3	(13-14)	
APP	2D6+3	(10)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	40%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bow	40%	1D6+1+½db	impale
Shield	40%	1D4+db	knockback

Armour: None

Allegiance: Heterodoxy 1D4+4

Morale: Mook. Magicians (see below) act as Leaders.

Skills: Climb 90%, Dodge 70%, Healing Lore 25%, Hide 65%, Jump 40%, Listen 70%, Ride (Demonic wolf) 20%, Spot 50%, Stealth 65%, Swim 40%, Track 70%.

Spells: Those few bèi with an INT greater than 12 know the following Battle Magic spells: Heal, Protection, Speak to Mind, with a skill value of 35%. The best magician of each clan (its witchdoctor) benefits from a Brazier of Power-like spell.

CHĪMÈI

Chīmèi are humanoid creatures living in inaccessible places such as mountains and forests. Despite being yāoguài, they have quite human-like interests and think of themselves as highly civilised people. Chīmèi look like whatever humans are living in their vicinity, but have long, protruding eye teeth. They aren't particularly evil, but they love eating human flesh and will go to any length to get hold of it. Chīmèi are well-versed



in Daoist magic, and some of their villages hold incredible collections of occult grimoires.

STR	2D6+6	(13)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6	(13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6	(13)	Move: 10
INT	2D6+6	(13)	
POW	2D6+6	(13)	
DEX	3D6	(10-11)	
APP	2D6+6	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	50%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bow	30%	1D6+1+½db	impale

Armour: none natural, but chīmèi may wear armour stolen from their human victims.

Allegiance: Heterodoxy 5D4+45

Morale: Average.

Skills: Climb 50%, Dodge 55%, Gaming 40%, Hide 50%, Jump 50%, Knowledge (Folklore) 20%, Listen 75%, Literacy (Classical Chinese) (100+INT×2)%, Science (Natural History) 20%, Spot 60%, Stealth 50%, Swim 50%, Track 75%.

Spells: Each chīmèi knows INT/3 Daoist spells to be chosen among the following: Curse of Sorcery, Fear, Harmonise, Midnight, Moonrise, Muddle, Sleep, any Sorcery Characteristic Spell, any Sorcery Combat Spell, Summon Demon, Unbreakable Bonds, Undo Sorcery.

Note: some translators have rendered chīmèi into English as 'hobgoblin'.

DEMONIC ANIMAL

A demonic animal (*yāojīng* 妖精) looks like any ordinary animal (except for its INT 2D6+6); however, it can transform at night time into a handsome young man or a beautiful girl. Under that form, it tries to have sexual intercourse with human beings to steal their qi.

In gaming terms, for each night spent with a demonic animal, the victim definitively loses 1 POW characteristic point, which is gained by the demonic animal. When the victim's POW reaches 0, the *yāojīng* finds itself another prey. The POW thus lost by the victim may only be regained if the *yāojīng* is killed or exorcised.

STR	2D6+6	(13)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6	(13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6	(13)	Qi: 10
INT	1D6+3	(6-7)	Move: 8
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	3D6	(10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	50%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bite	30%	1D6+db	bleeding

Armour: none, but it may wear a piece of armour stolen in a tomb or from a victim.

Skills: Dodge 20%, Hide 50%, Spot 50%, Stealth 50%, Track 50%.

DEMONIC WOLF

Demonic wolves are a species of evil wolves living in symbiosis with bèi, serving as mounts for the latter; a demonic wolf may take a bèi upon its back, on the condition that the SIZ of the bèi is smaller than both the SIZ and the STR of the wolf.

STR	2D6+12	(19)	Damage Bonus: +1D6
CON	2D6+5	(12)	Hit Points: 14
SIZ	2D6+8	(15)	Qi: 10
INT	1D6+4	(7-8)	Move: 9
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	2D6+6	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	55%	1D10+½db	bleeding

Armour: 2.

Skills: Dodge 50%, Jump 65%, Sense 80%, Stealth 40%, Swim 65%, Track 80%.

Note: If the demonic wolf charges, it may try to run over its opponent just before rolling its Bite attack. This consists of a STR of the wolf vs STR/SIZ of the opponent (whichever is higher) resistance roll. If the demonic wolf overcomes the target's STR/SIZ, its opponent must make a successful Agility roll to avoid falling to the ground.

GHOUL

Ghouls (*wǎngliáng*) are *yāoguài* created by the accumulation of *yīn* energy in the vicinity of a place with many dead (like a battlefield, a graveyard, or a scaffold). A replete ghouls looks like a normal human being with evil eyes and clawed hands; a starving ghouls looks like a lean and weak zombie.

Ghouls feed on the brains and livers from dead bodies. If human corpses are lacking, ghouls may attack passers-by to obtain their much-needed food... In gaming terms, a ghouls loses 1 POW characteristic point per day that it hasn't eaten human flesh, and it becomes a hungry ghost when its POW reaches 0.

Ghouls do not have a normal metabolism; in particular, they lack a circulatory system. Weapons with a 'bleeding' or 'impaling' effect merely inflict 1 damage point per hit. Poisons do not affect them at all.

TÀOTIÈ



Tàotiè are ever-hungry demonic creatures that look like flying voracious heads without a body (legend has it they've eaten it!). For reasons unknown and lost in China's mythological past, tàotiè are bitter enemies of hàn bá. Tàotiè are also rumoured to be allies with the Miáo ethnic minority.

Because of the small size of the tàotiè, their opponents suffer a special penalty to all combat skills (melee as well as missile weapon skills, see below).

STR	2D6	(7)	Damage Bonus -1D4
CON	3D6	(10-11)	Hit Points: Special
SIZ	2D4	(5)	Qi: 10
INT	3D6	(10-11)	Move: 12 (flying)
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	2D6+6	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	35%	1D4 + STR loss	bleeding

Armour: 0.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 90%, Sense 90%, Spot 50%, Stealth 90%.

Spells: Befuddle 80%, Diminish 80%, Enhance 80%, Illusion 80%, Protection 80%.

Each time a victim is wounded by a tàotiè, it loses 1D6 Strength. Lost STR characteristic points are not transferred to the tàotiè's. At 0 STR, the victim

dies and becomes a hungry ghost.

The Hit Points of a *tāotiè* are computed as if the *tāotiè*'s entire body were present and had a *SIZ* of 6D4. The head has 1/3rd of the total hit points as per page 20 of *Basic Roleplaying*; the Hit Points of the 'head' location are the actual total hit points of the *tāotiè*. However, as only one location is actually present, all attacks against the *tāotiè* are considered Difficult.

VAMPIRE

Chinese vampires are hungry ghosts who have fallen under the sway of a demon. The latter has transmitted them enough *yīn* energy to enable them to recover their body, to animate it, and to prevent it from decaying. As a counterpart, vampires are extremely vulnerable to daylight (*yáng* energy), which inflicts the vampire 1D6 damage per combat round.

Vampires need drinking the blood of the living to maintain the control on their body. In gaming terms, a vampire loses 1 STR characteristic point per night that it hasn't drunk any human blood, and it becomes a hungry ghost again at 0 STR.

Use the characteristics of the character before his death, except his STR, which is doubled.

Allegiance: Heterodoxy 5D6+30

Morale: Average.

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Claw	DEX×5%	2D4+db	bleeding
Tongue	50%	1D6	STR drain

A vampire fights either with its Claw skill or with its tongue, that it may project up to 3 metres from itself — but that will give it away as a vampire! The drained STR points are added to the vampire's (up to a maximum value of 42), and removed from the victim's (blood drain). At 0 STR, the victim dies and becomes a vampire under the control of the one who killed him or her.

Wǎngliǎng

Wǎngliǎng are humanoid creatures that live in trees, in the forests of East Asia and in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Much like *èmó* and *hànbá*, wǎngliǎng torment mortals for the sheer pleasure of it. Some wǎngliǎng are servants of Māra and use their spells to try and sway the Buddhist faithful into abandoning the Dharma. Wǎngliǎng look like *xiān* with grotesque bat-like ears. This is why wǎngliǎng always wear a cap, a hat, a helmet, or a turban to hide their misshapen ears.

Each wǎngliǎng is attached to a given grove and cannot go more than 1D6 *lǐ* from its grove. If, for any reason, the wǎngliǎng must go farther than its limit from its grove, it loses 1 POW characteristic point per day. Lost points are regained, at the rate of 1 per day, when the wǎngliǎng is back in its grove.



STR	2D6+6	(13)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6	(13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6	(13)	Qi: 13
INT	3D6	(10-11)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6	(13)	
DEX	3D6	(10-11)	
APP	2D6+6	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	90%	per weapon+db	per weapon

Armour: none natural but wǎngliǎng may wear human armour.

Allegiance: Roll 1D100: 1-40: Heterodoxy 5D6+30, 41-60: Heterodoxy 3D6+20, 61-00: Māra path 5D6+30.

Morale: Mook.

Skills: Climb 75%, Dodge 55%, Hide (in wood/jungle) 90%, (elsewhere) 50%, Jump 75%, Listen 80%, Spot 60%, Stealth (in wood/jungle) 90%, (elsewhere) 50%, Swim 60%.
Spells: Control 95%, Countermagic 95%, Illusion 95%, Speak to Mind 95%. Wǎngliǎng who serve Māra also know the following demonic spells: Demonic skill, Doppelgänger, Summon demon (*huómó*).

Note: some translators have rendered wǎngliǎng into English as 'goblin'.

XIAO

Xiao look like diminutive chīmèi. Unlike chīmèi, they do not live in settlements, but are constantly on the move, roaming the woods and the mountains of China, and coming close to human or chīmèi villages only to steal tools and clothes. Much like chīmèi, xiao love eating human flesh but would only attack lone travellers because they are too cowardly to attack humans travelling in a group.

STR	2D6	(7)	Damage Bonus: -1D6
CON	3D6	(10-11)	Hit Points: 8
SIZ	1D3+3	(5)	Move: 8
INT	1D6+6	(9-10)	
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	2D6+6	(13)	
APP	2D6+6	(13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	40%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bow	40%	1D6+1+½db	impale
Shield	40%	1D4+db	knockback

Armour: 0.

Allegiance: Heterodoxy 2D6+10

Morale: Mook. Magicians (see below) act as Leaders.

Skills: Climb 45%, Dodge 65%, Gaming 55%, Healing Lore 25%, Hide 60%, Jump 45%, Knowledge (Folklore) 40%, Knowledge (Region [home region]) 30%, Listen 70%, Science (Natural History) 50%, Spot 50%, Stealth 60%, Swim 55%, Track 70%.

Spells: Those very few xiao with an INT equal to 12 know the following Battle Magic spells: Heal, Protection, Speak to Mind, with a skill value of 35%. The best magician of each clan (its witchdoctor) benefits from a Brazier of Power-like spell.

YU

Yù (魃) are demonic tortoises that may belch forth poisonous gas at will (POT 20). Combat-wise, and except for their poison, yù are negligible opponents.

DEMONS

Contrary to what may be the case in other mythologies (Mesopotamian, Abrahamic, Persian, Vedic) demons from Chinese literature and film do not benefit from any elaborate background. They usually simply appear to wreak havoc in the world of mortals, without rhyme or reason.

Some demons are linked to a particular locale, where there is an excess of *yin* energy, or where there has traditionally been a source of evil. Some others freely roam the mundane world until an exorcist, a holy man or a monster hunter gets rid of them. Some others yet are intruders from an alien dimension and have been summoned by a mad cultist or a ruthless sorcerer.

Almost by definition then, every Chinese demon (*yāomó* 妖魔) is unique. However, based on existing Chinese fantasy tales and films, two main categories may be outlined: *è mó* (惡魔) and *mìng mó* (命魔). There are, however, other kinds of demons found in Chinese tales. Two of them (*hànbá* 旱魃 and *huò mó* 惑魔) are detailed below.

ÈMÓ



Èmó are the 'basic' demons of Chinese film, like the ones shambling around in the abandoned temple in *A Chinese Ghost Story*. These demons are not very mobile, not very bright, and not too dangerous, but they usually make up in numbers what they lack in sheer strength. Èmó are extremely variable in terms of aspect, but they are always disgusting, gross and goeey.

STR	2D6+6	(13)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6	(13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6	(13)	Qi: 10
INT	3D6-3	(7-8)	Move: 10
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	3D6	(10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Claw	50%	1D4+db	bleeding
Bite	35%	1D3+½db	bleeding
Grapple	50%	special	

Armour: 2.

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 65%, Hide 50%, Listen 75%, Spot 60%, Stealth 50%.

Note: An è mó can make two claw attacks in a

combat round. If both are successful, it will attempt to grapple and bite on the next combat round. An èmó's ichor is highly corrosive. Whenever an opponent strikes the demon with a bleeding or slashing weapon, there is a 25% chance he gets splattered with ichor for 1D6+1 points of acid damage (see page 211 of *Basic Roleplaying*); the damage is repeated every round until washed away.

Èmó are extremely sensitive to *yáng* energy, and in particular to bright daylight. The latter inflicts them damage equivalent to fatal-intensity radiation (see page 230-231 of *Basic Roleplaying*). An èmó killed by sunlight becomes a mass of innocuous bubbling goo, i.e., the corrosive power of its ichor disappears.

An èmó may also have a demonic feature from the table below:

1D20	Demonic Feature
01	+6 to current armour
02	STR +10
03	SIZ +10
04	POW +10
05	DEX +10
06	Pincer-like hands, +1D6 to claw damage.
07	Wings. Move: 10 (12 flying).
08	Flaming hands, +2D6 to claw damage. Immune to any fire-based damage (except sunlight).
09	Magic: knows Summon Demon spell.
10	Immune to spells.
11	Immune to non-enchanted weapons.
12	Magic: knows Control spell at 70%.
13	Chameleon-like skin, -40% to opponents' Spot skill.
14	Cat paws, +40% to Stealth skill.
15	Bat ears, +25% to Listen skill.
16	Eagle eyes, +30% to Spot skill.
17	Scorpion sting. Attack: 50%, damage: 1D6+poison (POT 3D6) if the attack gets past the opponent's armour.
18	Magic: knows Invisibility spell at 100%.
19	Magic: knows Befuddle spell at 100%.
20	Two demonic features – roll twice on the table.

MINGMÓ

Mingmó are major demonic foes, rare and unique. They are mighty opponents worthy of the attention of heroes, and the GM should carefully design every single mingmó in his campaign to make it a unique and memorable foe, possibly the player characters' main antagonist in a given story arc. Mingmó possess the ability to metamorphose in a variety of forms (usually one is human and the other one is monstrous). Examples of mingmó are:

- The tree demon in *A Chinese Ghost Story* spawned by the abundant *yīn* available in that particular area of the forest, and fed by the *qì* of the victims of its ghostly maid servants.



- The phoney high priest in *A Chinese Ghost Story II*, which is able to transform into a giant centipede.

HUMAN FORM

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D6
CON	3D6+6 (16-17)	Hit Points: 17 (but see below)
SIZ	2D6+6 (16-17)	Qi: 10
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10
POW	3D6 (10-11)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	150%	per weapon+db	per weapon

Armour: 4 (although the skin appears normal to human eyes, it is actually demon hide; a blessed mirror will reveal it).

Skills: Climb 90%, Dodge 75%, Hide 50%, Listen 75%, Spot 75%, Stealth 50%.

A mingmó will also usually know a number of *gǔ* sorcery spells.

The human form of the mingmó appears to have but 17 hit points, even though its monstrous form has more, which are the demon's real total hit points. If a blow appears to kill the human form of the demon but is not enough to kill its monstrous form, the mingmó disappears in a puff of grey smoke, only to return 24hrs later when it has sustained itself.

MONSTROUS FORM

To be designed by the GM for each unique mingmó.

The **SIZ** should be in the 3D6+12 (22-23) range.

Mingmó are extremely sensitive to *yáng* energy, and in particular to bright daylight. The latter inflicts them damage equivalent to fatal-intensity radiation (see page 230-231 of *Basic Roleplaying*). A demon killed by sunlight disappears in a puff of green smoke.

Note: A mingmó in monstrous form may also have chaotic features from the table on page 353 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

HÀNBÁ

The hàn bá is a demon with the power of bringing drought over a given region. Like all other yāomó, hàn bá torment mortals for sheer pleasure. A hàn bá does not have a set form, but it'll usually wander around the land under the guise of an old balding crone. Despite being a tough opponent in its own right, a hàn bá will always use magic and will only fight if cornered.

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6 (13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6 (13)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 8
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Claw	50%	1D6+db	bleeding

Armour: None.

Skills: Dodge 55%, Hide 90%, Sense 80%, Spot 60%, Stealth 90%.

Martial Arts Powers: Super Speed (level 3)

Spells: (Battle Magic) Countermagic 40%, Illusion 80%, Protection 40%; (Demonic Magic) Blight, Desiccation.

HUÒMÓ

Huòmó are demonic creatures that take the form of a woman to seduce men (or the form of a man to seduce women) and to have sexual intercourse with their victim, much like the incubus and the succubus of European mythology.

STR	2D6+6 (13)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6 (13)	Hit Points: 13
SIZ	2D6+6 (13)	Qi: 10
INT	3D6-3 (7-8)	Move: 10
POW	3D6 (10-11)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	
APP	3D6+12 (22-23)	

Attacks:

A huòmó will not fight, even if cornered, but will always try to convince someone to protect it.

Armour: 2.

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 65%, Hide 50%, Listen 75%, Spot 60%, Stealth 50%.

Whenever the huòmó stares into someone's eyes, it may roll its APP on the Resistance Table against the target's POW. If the demon has rolled successfully, the target is charmed and will do anything possible to stay in the company of the huòmó, and will even resort to violence if anybody tries to stop him or her from doing so.

For every hour spent in company of the huòmó, the charmed person has his or her Buddhism allegiance score reduced by 5.

For every night spent in company of the huòmó,

the charmed person permanently loses 1 CON characteristic point.

Huòmó are extremely sensitive to yáng energy, and in particular to bright daylight. The latter inflicts them damage equivalent to fatal-intensity radiation (see page 230-231 of *Basic Roleplaying*). A huòmó killed by sunlight dries up incredibly fast and becomes a kind of very dry and dark corpse.

FANTASY CREATURES

DEVOURING TREE



The devouring tree is a carnivorous tree that lives in the forests and jungles of Southeast Asia, hidden amongst normal trees. The branches of a devouring tree are mobile, but the tree itself cannot move. Devouring trees capture their prey by releasing narcotic pollen. Any creature inhaling the pollen feels an irrepressible urge to rest at the foot of the tree. Once asleep, the creature is entangled by the moving roots of the devouring tree, which draws it closer to the trunk. The trunk then reveals a gaping maw full of wooden fangs, and the tree swallows its victim.

STR	4D6+12 (26)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	3D6+18 (28-29)	Hit Points: 43
SIZ	6D6+36 (57)	Qi: 10
INT	-	Move: 0
POW	3D6 (10-11)	
DEX	1D6 (3-4)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Entangle	25%	2D6+db	bleeding
Branch	25%	1D6	crushing

Armour: 10.

Skills: Hide 100%, Sense 70%, Stealth 100%.

Note: The pollen of the devouring tree has a POT equal to half its CON. It does not cause any damage; however, if the victim fails his or her CON vs POT roll, he or she falls asleep in two minutes. Any creature that stays close to the tree must roll against the POT of the pollen every ten rounds. Once the victim has fallen asleep, the devouring tree automatically draws him or her towards its maw. Unless he or she rolls under POW×1, the victim remains asleep and does not notice the wooden fangs closing on him or her.

The devouring tree may also attack using its branches. It may either flay its opponent, causing a mere 1D6 of damage (no damage bonus), or get hold of a victim through a successful branch attack followed by a successful STR vs STR roll. The combat round after the one in which it has seized a victim, the devouring tree may bite him or her upon a successful STR vs STR roll.

A devouring tree is entitled to two attacks per combat round, which it may use to either seize or flay. Biting a victim does not count against the two attacks, but a devouring tree may only bite one victim per combat round.

Because of its nature and shape, the damage bonus of the devouring tree is based on STR×2 rather than STR+SIZ.

Hǎimǎ

Hǎimǎ (Hippocamps or Sea-horses) are a race of amphibious scaly horses with webbed hooves. They live in the seas and in the oceans and serve as mounts for marine divinities.

Characteristics and attacks:

Like 'Horse', except that Move is 12 (12 swimming)

MONKEY

In many Chinese tales, monkeys are sentient beings and lead almost human-like lives: they cook, they dress, they speak, and they sometimes even pray the Buddha. Their kingdom lies somewhere between China and India, hidden in the mountains.

Some Chinese heroes have accomplished their quests with the aid of such monkeys, like for instance the monk Xuánzàng accompanied by the monkey Sūn Wùkōng in the famous Míng period classic Journey to the West.

In case of danger, these monkeys may fight with a spear, or throw stones with incredible accuracy. In a *wǔxiú* campaign, monkey heroes may know martial arts and be trained in the powers of the Shàolín-wǔxíng-bǎfǎ-quán School.

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	3D6 (10-11)	Hit Points: 11
SIZ	3D6 (10-11)	Qi: 13
INT	3D6 (10-11)	Move: 8
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	
APP	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Thr. Rock	90%	1D2+½db	crushing
Spear	35%	1D6+1+db	impaling
Brawl	50%	1D3+db	crushing
Grapple	20%	see page 60 of <i>Basic Roleplaying</i>	

Armour: 1.

Allegiance: Roll 1D100: 1-30: Buddhism 1D6-4, 31-60: Buddhism 1D6-2, 61-90: Buddhism 2D6+3, 91-00: Esoteric Buddhism 2D6+3.

Morale: Mook.

Skills: Arrow cutting 30%, Climb 50%, Dodge 50%, Hide 25%, Jump 40%, Listen 35%, Spot 25%, Stealth 25%, Survive in the mountains 35%, Swim 30%, Track 35%.

Martial Arts Powers: Heroic Strength (level 2), Leap at level 2 efficiency, Super Speed at level 3 efficiency.

SHARK MAN

Shark men are shapeshifters that live in the waters of the Formosa Strait. Even when they are in human form, they cannot conceal their wide mouth, full of sharp teeth. This is why they only mix with the human population of the Chinese ports after nightfall.

HUMAN FORM

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D4
CON	2D6+6 (13)	Hit Points: 12
SIZ	3D6 (10-11)	Qi: 13
INT	3D6 (10-11)	Move: 10 (10 swimming)
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	
APP	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	25%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bite	50%	1D10+½db	bleeding

Armour: 5.

Allegiance: Roll 1D100: 1-50: Daoism 1D6-2, 51-100: Heterodoxy 1D6-2.

Morale: Mook.

Skills: Dodge 25%, Hide 50%, Stealth 50%, Swim 90%.

SHARK FORM

STR	as human ×2 (33)	Move: 10 (swimming)
CON	as human +6 (19)	Hit Points: 18
SIZ	as human	Qi: 13
INT	as human	Damage Bonus: +2D6
POW	as human	
DEX	as human	
APP	as human	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	50%	1D10+db	bleeding
Fin slash	30%	1D8+½db	

Armour: 5.

Note: In a given combat round, a shark man in animal form must choose between its Bite attack and its Fin slash attack. The Fin slash attack may simultaneously affect two opponents, if the targets are close enough.

TIĀNMǎ

Tiānmǎ (Celestial horses, or Wind horses) are a race of winged horses (the wings are on the hooves of the horse, rather than on its back as for the Pegasus of Greek mythology). Tiānmǎ live in the same remote abodes as Daoist Immortals (*xiān*) and often serve as mounts for the latter.

Characteristics and attacks:

Like 'Horse', except that Move is 12 (12 flying)

TǔXÍNG

Tǔxíng are a race of Daoist dwarves from the Kūnlún Mountains, mentioned in the novel *The Investiture of the Gods*. They have the power of travelling underground.

Tǔxíng have a very strong liking for beautiful young human girls. This weakness is often used against them by their enemies.

STR	2D6+6	(13)	Damage Bonus: none
CON	2D6+9	(16)	Hit Points: 12
SIZ	1D6+4	(7-8)	Qi: 10
INT	2D6+6	(13)	Move: 6
POW	3D6	(10-11)	
DEX	3D6	(10-11)	
APP	3D6	(10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Spear	50%	1D6+1+db	impaling
Brawl	50%	1D3+db	crushing
Grapple	45%		see page 60 of BRP (entangle)

Armour: 0.

Allegiance: Roll 1D100: 1-70: Daoism 5D6+20, 71-100: Heterodoxy 5D6+20.

Morale: Average.

Skills: Dodge 40%, Knowledge (Region [own]) 35%, Knowledge (Religion [Daoism]) 40%, Listen 45%, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 90%, Spot 45%, Swim 05%.

Spells: (Battle Magic) – Travel underground (each Qi point spent allows the tǔxíng to travel 2 lǐ underground) 90%. (Daoist Magic) – as per the rules.

HEAVENLY CREATURES

Bǐ'ĀN

Bǐ'ān (狻猊) are a race of heavenly tigers which, despite not having any wings, are capable of flying. Bǐ'ān live in the same remote abodes as Daoist Immortals (*xiān*) and serve as guardians or as mounts for them.

Characteristics and attacks:

Like 'Tiger', except that Move is 12 (12 flying)

DRAGON



In Chinese mythology and folklore, the dragon (*lóng* 龍) is a divine creature. A given dragon is linked to a particular point within the body of water placed under its jurisdiction, where it has its underwater palace, filled with servants and wondrous magical items. It is normally pointless to provide any "stats" for such a powerful being, which cannot be fought by mortals. Should the characters ever meet a dragon (in the Celestial bureaucracy, dragons look after water, rainfall, and floods), they'd better use their Persuade skills! If the GM and the players have embarked on a Monty Haul campaign where fighting a dragon is not seen as an absurd endeavour, you may use the statistics on page 341 of *Basic Roleplaying* as a starting point. Here are a few more suggestions:

- A Chinese dragon has INT and POW 40, and access to Daoist Magic spells commensurate with its INT and POW.

- A Chinese dragon is protected by a very thick skin, which provides 10 points of armour protection.
- A Chinese dragon does not have a breath weapon, but it manipulates the weather as if it had the Weather Control power (page 168 of Basic Roleplaying) at level 20, at no power cost within a 3km radius of its palace, and at normal cost beyond that radius.
- A Chinese dragon does not have wings, but it may float freely in the air by rendering its body vaporious, and then move it around by controlling the wind.
- A Chinese dragon has the ability to shapeshift into human form, at no Qi cost. This human form is unique and is always the same (i.e., the dragon cannot use this ability to shapeshift into a known person like a doppelgänger).
- In Chinese mythology, the dragon is the king of all insects; as a result, it may direct all insects within sight against anybody foolish enough to attack it.

All dragons are male. They may mate with human or xiān females. Their offspring is either a male dragon or a female of the same species as the mother. Marrying the daughter of a dragon immediately confers +25 to both a character's Status and Daoist Allegiance.

HIPPOGRIF

The Chinese hippogriff (*zhēngníng* 狰獬) is a heavenly creature that often serves as a mount for the Immortals. It looks more or less like a European hippogriff, but with the head of a unicorn, with eagle claws, and with five snake tails.

Characteristics and attacks:

Use the 'Griffin' from page 355 of *Basic Roleplaying* with the following modification:

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	25%	1D3+½db	bleeding

PHOENIX

Much like the Chinese dragon, the Chinese phoenix (*fēnghuáng* 鳳凰) is a divine creature. Whereas the Chinese dragon is always male, the Chinese phoenix is always female. Whereas the dragon looks after water, rainfall, and floods, the phoenix looks after the winds.

The Chinese phoenix serves the Queen Mother of the West (*Xī Wángmǔ* 西王母).

Again, it should be pointless to provide stats for the Chinese phoenix. However, should the need arise, the GM may use the stats of a SIZ 40 air elemental (page 355 of *Basic Roleplaying*) for the Chinese phoenix.

PLAIN GIRL



The Plain Girl (*Sùnnǚ* 素女) is a fairy from the mythology of South China. She is a kind of water nymph, linked to a specific creek or watering hole (the kind of body of water that is too small to have a guardian dragon). Despite being linked to water, the Plain Girl serves the Queen Mother of the West.

The Plain Girl wears peasant-like clothes, no make-up, but looks incredibly beautiful. She will do her best to help virtuous characters whilst trying to remain unrecognised (see below).

STR	2D6+2	(9)	Damage Bonus: None
CON	3D6	(10-11)	Hit Points: 10-11
SIZ	2D6+3	(10)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6	(13)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6	(13)	
DEX	3D6+3	(13-14)	
APP	3D6+12	(22-23)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Brawl	50%	1D3+db	crushing
Stick	25%	1D6+db	crushing

Armour: None.

Allegiance: Chinese Folk Religion 35, Confucianism 20, Daoism 50, Heterodoxy 50.

Morale: Average.

Skills: Hide 60%, Listen 75%, Spot 60%, Stealth 60%, Swim 120%.

If she meets a party of characters who look like they need help, the Plain Girl will automatically detect the one with the highest allegiance score in Daoism or Heterodoxy. She will then attempt to seduce him by staring into his eyes and rolling her APP on the Resistance Table against the target's POW. If the Plain Girl has rolled successfully, the target is charmed and will do anything possible to stay in her company, and will even resort to violence if anybody tries to stop him from doing so. If the Plain Girl has failed, she will try to seduce the character with the second highest Daoist allegiance score, etc.

Through sexual intercourse with the Plain Girl, the target will recover any lost characteristic points, power points, and hit points.



SUĀNNÍ

Amongst all the sub-species of Chinese dragon, suānní are the ones most closely resembling European dragons. They breathe fire rather than manipulate the weather like other Chinese dragons.

Whereas Chinese dragons are attached to the Celestial Bureaucracy, and thus to Confucianism and Daoism, suānní are attached to Buddhism as Dharmapāla (defenders of the Buddhist faith).

Characteristics and attacks:

Use the stats for the 'Dragon' from page 341 of *Basic Roleplaying*, with the following modifications:

INT 2D6+6 (13)

Spells: a suānní knows 10 levels of Buddhist Magic spells

UNICORN



Chinese unicorns (qílín) are deer-like creatures with but one antler set in the middle of the forehead, and actually much larger than deer. They live in the same remote abodes as Daoist Immortals (xiān) and sometimes serve as mounts for the latter.

STR 3D6+12(22-23) Damage Bonus: +2D6

CON 2D6+6 (13) Hit Points: 19

SIZ 2D6+18 (25) Qi: 19

INT 2D6+6 (13) Move: 12 (12 flying)

POW 2D6+12 (19),

DEX 2D6+6 (13).

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Kick	25%	1D8+db	crushing
Horn	60%	1D10+db	impaling

Armour: none

Skills: Dodge 35%, Hide 60%, Insight 55%, Jump 45%, Listen 75%, Sense 70%, Spot 75%, Stealth 50%, Track 75%.

Spells: Heal 400%, Perception 200%.

XIĀN

Xiān are transcendent immortal beings from Daoist mythology, usually simply called 'Immortals' in English. They sometimes play a role similar to that of angels, and sometimes similar to that of elves or faeries. The main difference between the Chinese conception and the European one is that, according to Chinese mythology, a mere mortal may become a xiān, by following the tenets of Daoism, practising longevity techniques, and absorbing the elixir of life, whereas in European folklore one cannot become an angel or an elf!

Xiān look like ordinary humans with smooth skin and a fair, ever young complexion. Xiān live in extremely remote and inaccessible places (uncharted islands, mountains, forests), only eat peaches, and fly on the back of cranes. Xiān keep aloof from human affairs; ancient legends, however, do mention potent talismans crafted by the xiān to aid the heroes in their endeavours and their quests.

STR	2D6+2 (9)	Damage Bonus: -
CON	3D6 (10-11)	Hit Points: 12
SIZ	3D6+2 (12-13)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6 (13),	
DEX	2D6+6 (13),	
APP	2D6+6 (13).	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	50%	per weapon	per weapon
Bow	30%	1d6+1+ ½db	impaling

Armour: 0.

Allegiance: Roll 1D100: 1-75: Daoism 100, 76-100: Heterodoxy 100.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Climb 65%, Dodge 45%, Hide 75%, Jump 20%, Knowledge (Art History) 90%, Knowledge (History) 90%, Knowledge (Law) 75%, Knowledge (Literature) 75%, Knowledge (Religion: Daoism) 90%, Listen 75%, Literacy (Classical Chinese) 90%, Necromancy 45%, Ride (Crane) 70%, Science (Alchemy) 90%, Sense 60%, Spot 75%, Stealth 75%, Swim 35%, Track 75%.

Martial Arts Power: Leap (level 5)

Spells: Each xiān knows INT/3 Battle Magic spells with a skill value of INT×3%, to be chosen among the following: Befuddle, Countermagic, Diminish, Enhance, Illusion, Invisibility, Perception, Teleport. Each xiān also knows INT/3 Daoist spells to be chosen among the following: Chain of Being, Curse of Sorcery, Sorcerer's Armour, Sorcerer's Bulwark, Sorcerer's Hammer, Sorcerer's Razor, Sorcerer's Sharp Flame, Sorcerer's Talons, Summon Monster, Undo Sorcery.

Xièzhì

Xièzhì have the head of a deer and the body of an ibex; they thus somehow look like unicorns with... two horns. They live in the land of the Immortals (xiān), of which they are the magistrates, thanks to their Detect Truth spell.

Their body is covered with long and thick fur.

STR	3D6+12(22-23)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	2D6+6 (13)	Hit Points: 19
SIZ	4D6+11 (25)	Qi: 19
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 15
POW	2D6+12 (19)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Kick	25%	1D8+db	crushing
Horn	60%	1D10+db	impaling

Armour: 1

Skills: Jump 45%, Necromancy 300%, Sense 75%, Spot 75%.

Spell: Detect Truth.

YŮRÉN

Yŭrén are winged xiān. Their body is covered with feathers.

Characteristics and attacks:

Like xiān, except that Move is 10 (15 flying)



CREATURES FROM INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

Buddhism brought Indian mythology to China. Some of the creatures from Indian mythology are attached to Māra, the deity of love, sin, and death, who sends these creatures to tempt or torment the faithful.

Indian mythological creatures are much stronger than their Chinese counterparts.

ASURA

Asura are potent creatures from Vedic mythology: demonic and titanic spirits that are opposed to the Deva (the Indian gods). In Buddhism, Asura are less generally evil than in Vedism, and have a more ambiguous status, as creatures of great power but generally unable to use their power wisely.

Asura live deep in mountain caverns, in the underworld, and in the nether regions where the Asura architect-magician Maya has built them huge cities. Asura also live in the sea that surrounds Mount Sumeru, where they are attached to Varuna, and in the sky above Mount Sumeru, where they inhabit three flying metal fortresses whence they attack the abodes of the Deva.

Asura are mighty warriors, able to uproot trees or to toss mountaintops onto their enemies. They are expert in the ways of magic and may shapeshift at will. They can also become invisible.

Characteristics:

STR	20D6 (70)	Damage Bonus: +8D6
CON	18D6 (63)	Hit Points: 67
SIZ	20D6 (70)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 50
POW	2D6+6 (13).	
DEX	2D6+9 (16).	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	90%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bow	98%	1d6+1+ ½db	impaling

Armour: 3.

Allegiance: Buddhism 1D6×5, Hinduism 1D10×5, Esoteric Buddhism 1D8×5, Māra path 1D6×5.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Demolition 65%, Dodge 30%, Listen 65%, Navigate 90%, Spot 60%, Track 65%.

Martial Arts Power: Super Speed (level 9).

Spells: Befuddle 90%, Change 100% (special: cast on oneself only costs 1 Qi point), Countermagic 90%, Illusion 90%, Invisibility 100% (special: cast on oneself only costs 1 Qi point).

Buddhist Cosmology

According to Buddhist cosmology, Mount Sumeru (Xūmí Shān 須彌山), the great world axis mountain, is the centre of the world. The ocean caves and rock cavities that host the titanic and intelligent Asura may be found below it. Burning with jealousy and ambition, the Asura ceaselessly battle the Deva of the sky-realm to take their place there, but always end up being vanquished.

The four first levels of Mount Sumeru are the abodes of the Nāga and of several other minor spiritual beings who inhabit the first three levels: rākshasa, yaksha, etc. The top level of Mount Sumeru is the abode of the Four Divine Kings. Above this level is the sky-realm of the Deva, which are themselves below the Four Formless Heavens.

FIEND

Fiends (*mótóu*) are the rank-and-file demons of Māra's kingdom. They look like tall muscular humans with ugly animal heads.

STR	4D6+9 (23)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	3D6+6 (16-17)	Hit Points: 20
SIZ	4D6+9 (23)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+1 (8)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Claw	60%	1D4+db	bleeding
Bite	70%	1D3+½db+poison	bleeding
Grapple	100%	special	

Armour: 2.

Allegiance: Esoteric Buddhism 1D4×5, Māra path 1D10×5.

Morale: Average.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 50%, Listen 70%, Spot 55%, Stealth 50%, Track 25%.

A *mótóu* can make two claw attacks in a combat round. If both are successful, it will attempt to grapple and bite on the next combat round. Its bite injects a POT 16 poison that takes effect on the sixth round after the attack.

FIEND-KING

Fiend-kings (*mówáng*) rule over several fiends within Māra's kingdom. They look like fiends with elaborate mandarin-like garments showing their rank.

STR	4D6+9 (23)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	3D6+6 (16-17)	Hit Points: 20
SIZ	4D6+9 (23)	Qi: 26
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10
POW	4D6+12 (26)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	120%,	per weapon+db	per weapon

Armour: 3.

Allegiance: Esoteric Buddhism 10, Māra path 80.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 50%, Listen 70%, Spot 55%, Stealth 50%, Track 25%.

Spells: Befuddle 90%, Fanaticism 90%, Invisibility 75%, Perception 90%, Protection 90%, Vision 60%.

Note: Lord Yāma's infernal tribunal lictors are also fiend-kings.

GANDHARVA

In Indian mythology, *gandharva* are musician spirits, which look part human, part animal (mostly horse or bird). *Gandharva* are not necessarily hostile to mortals; however they are known to fall in love with human girls and to kidnap them.

Gandharva live in the most remote and arid mountains, because they do not need nourishment. Their ruler is the Great King Dhrtarāshtra, Guardian of the East.

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	3D6 (10-11)	Hit Points: 18
SIZ	4D6+12 (26)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10 (15 flying)
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	3D6 (10-11)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Sword	200%	1d8+1+db	bleeding

Armour: 1.

Allegiance: Buddhism 1D6×5, Hinduism 1D10×5, Esoteric Buddhism 1D8×5, Māra path 1D4×5.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Art (Music) 90%, Craft (Musical instrument) 90%, Dodge 55%, Jump 45%, Listen 90%, Science (Natural history) 30%, Swim 45%, Track 90%.

Martial Arts Power: Super Speed (level 6)

JINGĀNG LÌSHÌ

Jīngāng lìshì, also known in English as Adamantine Stalwarts or Adjutant Emissaries, are potent Dharmapāla (defenders of the Buddhist faith). They look like impossibly muscular, half-naked human warriors with a wrathful face, armed with magical adamantine clubs called *jīngāng chǔ*.

STR	6D6 (21)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	4D6 (14)	Hit Points: 18
SIZ	6D6 (21)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
<i>Jīngāng chǔ</i>	200%	2D6+6+db	crushing

Armour: 4.

Allegiance: Buddhism 1D8×5, Esoteric Buddhism 1D10×5.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Climb 90%, Dodge 65%, Jump 90%, Listen 90%, Swim 90%, Track 90%.

Note: any creature hit by the *jīngāng chǔ* immediately undergoes the effects of a Karmic Retribution spell.

NĀGA



Nāga are part human, part serpent mythological creatures related to asura. They live in the 'snake world', which is a portion of the underworld filled with magnificent palaces, mansions, towers, and gardens. Nāga also live in the human world, but they stay aloof from humans, residing in inaccessible mountain caverns.

Nāga are handsome and bejewelled, which explains the popular speculation that they guard incredible treasures. In Esoteric Buddhism, nāga are the guardians of hidden scriptures.

STR	4D6+10 (24)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	3D6+6 (16-17)	Hit Points: 20
SIZ	4D6+10 (24)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	50%	per weapon+db	per weapon
Bite	25%	1D6 + poison (POT 20)	bleeding

Armour: 3.

Allegiance: Buddhism 1D6×5, Hinduism 1D10×5, Esoteric Buddhism 1D8×5, Māra path 1D6×5.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 60%, Listen 60%, Stealth 60%, Track 60%.

Notes: A nāga may use its skills in the dark with no penalty.

The poison of a nāga takes effect on the third round after the bite.

PRETA

The spirits of the dead are judged by Lord Yāma; depending on their karma, they are reincarnated in one of several paths of rebirth, or they must spend some time in the Buddhist Hell (which in that sense is more like a purgatory). Yet some spirits of the dead are deemed so abominable that they are not allowed to stay in Hell and are sentenced to a wandering afterlife of insatiable hunger and thirst in the lands of mortals. These wandering spirits are called preta (in Chinese: *èguī*). Preta look like emaciated humans with huge stomachs and very narrow throats.

Preta undergo an extreme degree of suffering. Their state may be improved by offerings and prayers.

Characteristics and attacks:

Like 'Hungry Ghost', except that POW is 3D6+6 (16-17).



RĀKSHASA

The infernal tribunal may sentence the spirit of a particularly wicked person to be reborn as a rākshasa, a demonic man-eating ogre. Much like Chinese demons, rākshasa harass and torment the faithful.

STR	4D6+9 (23)	Damage Bonus: +2D6
CON	3D6+6 (16-17)	Hit Points: 20
SIZ	4D6+9 (23)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 10
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	
APP	2D6+6 (13)	



Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Long spear	45%	1d10+1+db	impaling
Claw	50%	1D6+db	bleeding

Armour: 2.

Allegiance: Hinduism 1D6×5, Esoteric Buddhism 1D4×5, Māra path 1D8×5.

Morale: Leader.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 45%, Listen 30%, Stealth 45%, Track 30%.

Spells: Change 200%, Illusion 200%.

SHIZI

Shīzi, variously known as Foo lions, Guardian lions, or Snow lions, make up the first category of Dharmapāla (defenders of the Buddhist faith). Shīzi are attached to Guānyīn.

A shīzi is always carrying a stone ball in its forelegs. This stone ball is constantly emitting the mantra of Avalokiteshvara: "om mani padme hum"; any Buddhist creature in a radius of 60 metres centred on the stone ball receives the full effects of the mantra of Avalokiteshvara spell (see page 80).

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D6
CON	3D6+3 (13-14)	Hit Points: 15
SIZ	3D6+6 (16-17)	Qi: 13
INT	2D6+6 (13)	Move: 12
POW	2D6+6 (13)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	90%	1D10+1½db	bleeding
Claw	140%	1D8+db	bleeding
Ripping	180%	2D8+db	bleeding

Armour: 2.

Skills: Climb 50%, Dodge 65%, Hide 75%, Jump 50%, Listen 50%, Stealth 75%, Track 50%.

Martial Arts Power: Super Speed at level 9 efficiency.

Spells: Change 90%, Illusion 90%, Protection 90%.

Note: A shīzi can make one claw attack and one bite attack each combat round. If both attacks hit, the shīzi hangs on for the next round, continuing to bite. Instead of clawing, it will attempt to rake with its hind claws.

The milk of a Snow lioness may cure any natural malady.

YAKSHA

In Indian mythology, yaksha are nature spirits, and they are not necessarily hostile to mortals.

They guard hidden treasures, underground or deep in uninhabited woods. The most famous yaksha is Kubera, who rules a mountain kingdom called Alaka.

Yaksha may magically alter their aspect at will, and even become invisible to mortals. Moreover, they may open a portal with their own dimension to hide themselves or an object.

STR	3D6+6 (16-17)	Damage Bonus: +1D6
CON	3D6+6 (16-17)	Hit Points: 17
SIZ	3D6+6 (16-17)	Move: 15 (15 flying)
INT	2D6+6 (13)	
POW	3D6+6 (16-17)	
DEX	2D6+6 (13)	

Attack	Skill	Damage	Special
Claw	DEX×5%	1D6+db	bleeding

Allegiance: Buddhism 1D6×5, Hinduism 1D10×5, Esoteric Buddhism 1D8×5, Māra path 1D6×5.

Morale: Leader.

Armour: 1.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 90%, Listen 90%, Stealth 90%, Track 90%.

Martial Arts Power: Super Speed (level 4)

Spells: Illusion 80%. Also Cosmic portal at will for 1 Qi point (see above).

Note: A yaksha always fights (both attack and parry) bare handed, using its Claw skill at DEX×5%. Some translators have rendered yaksha into English as 'ogre'.



HIT LOCATIONS

For those GMs using the optional hit location system for specifying where attacks land on opponents' bodies, the Basic Roleplaying rule book provides tables for humanoids on page 190, and tables for non-human creatures on page 368 and 369. Here are the relevant hit location tables for Celestial Empire non-human creatures.

Asura
Use Humanoid.

Bactrian Camel
Use Four-Legged.

Bànyāo
Use Humanoid.

Bèi

1D20	Hit Location	Hit Point Value
1-3	Right leg	1/3 total hit points
4-6	Left leg	1/3 total hit points
7-9	Abdomen	1/3 total hit points
10-11	Chest	4/10 total hit points
12-14	Right arm	1/4 total hit points
15-17	Left arm	1/4 total hit points
18-20	Head	1/3 total hit points

Bì'ān
Use Four-Legged.

Bovid
Use Four-Legged.

Chīmèi
Use Humanoid.

Deer
Use Four-Legged.

Demonic Wolf
Use Four-Legged.

Devouring Tree

1D20	Hit Location	Hit Point Value
1-4	Roots	1/6 total hit points
5-14	Trunk	= total hit points
15-20	Branches	1/6 total hit points

Èmó
Generally use Humanoid on page 368 of BRP, except if it has one of the following demonic features:

07: Wings, then use Winged Humanoid on page 369 of BRP.

17: Scorpion Sting, then use Two-Legged with Tail on page 369 of BRP.

Fiend
Use Humanoid.

Fiend-king
Use Humanoid.

Gandharva
Gandharva are part human, part animal, and come in many shapes. The least uncommon are the ones that are part human, part bird, and part human, part horse. The former look like winged humanoids and the latter look like centaurs.

Gandharva (bird-like)
Use Winged Humanoid.

Gandharva (horse-like)
Use Four-Legged Humanoid.

Ghoul
Use Humanoid.

Hǎimǎ
Use Four-Legged.

Hànbá
Use Humanoid.

Hippogriff
Use Winged Four-Legged.

Huómó
Use Humanoid.

Jīngāng lishì
Use Humanoid.

Monkey
Use Humanoid.

Nāga

1D20	Hit Location	Hit Point Value
1-6	Tail	1/3 total hit points
7-9	Abdomen	1/3 total hit points
10-12	Chest	4/10 total hit points
13-15	Right arm	1/4 total hit points
16-18	Left arm	1/4 total hit points
19-20	Head	1/3 total hit points

Panther
Use Four-Legged.

Plain Girl
Use Humanoid.

Rākshasa
Use Humanoid.

Shark man (in human form)
Use Humanoid.

Shark man (in shark form)

1D20	Hit Location	Hit Point Value
1-3	Tail	1/3 total hit points
4-8	Hindbody	4/10 total hit points
9-13	Forebody	1/2 total hit points
14	Right fin	1/4 total hit points
15	Left fin	1/4 total hit points
16-20	Head	1/3 total hit points

Shīzi
Use Four-Legged.

Stiff Corpse
Use Humanoid.

Suānní
Use Four-Legged with Tail.

Swan Maiden
Use Humanoid.

Tiānmǎ
Use Four-Legged.

Tǔxíng
Use Humanoid.

Unicorn
Use Four-Legged.

Vampire
Use Humanoid.

Vixen Spirit (in human form)
Use Humanoid.

Vixen Spirit (in fox form)
Use Four-Legged.

Wǎngliǎng
Use Humanoid.

Xiān
Use Humanoid.

Xiāo
Use Humanoid.

Xièzhì
Use Four-Legged.

Yaksha
Use Humanoid.

Yǔrén
Use Winged Humanoid.



APPENDIX: OTHER BRP GAMES

THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE lends itself well to crossovers with other Oriental role-playing games based on Chaosium's *Basic Roleplaying*. Here are a few guidelines.

Dragon Lines

The *Dragon Lines* supplement for *Basic Roleplaying* is an obvious companion volume to *The Celestial Empire*. The *Celestial Empire* may be used to render a *Dragon Lines* game more historical and more cultural; reciprocally, *Dragon Lines* may be used to enrich any *Celestial Empire* game.

Sections of *Dragon Lines* of interest to *The Celestial Empire* players and GMs are the following ones:

FROM CHAPTER TWO, CHARACTERS

After all, even in an historical role-game, heroes are supposed to be different. The GM may assign each player a table to roll from once to add a special background to their characters, from among the following ones:

- Upbringing (page 6) – with the following modifications: item No.8 On Holy Ground gives the PC the power to detect proximity of a temple within his CON in li; item No.9 Haunted gives the PC the power to detect proximity of a gui within his POW in metres.
- Significant Events of Childhood (page 6) – with the following modifications: item No.7 Reliquary gives the PC access to a talisman/amulet; item No.8 Illness gives the PC the following power: having survived that particular disease, the PC is now immune to it.
- Significant Events of Adulthood-Normal (page 7) – with the following modifications: item No.7 Reliquary gives the PC access to a talisman/amulet; item No.8 Illness gives the PC the following power: having survived that particular disease, the PC is now immune to it.

FROM CHAPTER FOUR, DRAGON LINES

In *The Celestial Empire*, dragon lines are of two types: yin dragon lines, and yang dragon lines. The GM may take inspiration from chapter Four of *Dragon Lines* to add

variety to the dragon lines in his campaign by introducing water, air, etc. dragon lines. This should simply add colour and have but a limited influence over the game, as per the side bar on page 52 of *Dragon Lines*.

FROM CHAPTER SIX, THE FIVE NOBLE PATHS

The GM may use the rules on page 69-71 of *Dragon Lines* as additions or variants to the standard *Celestial Empire* Allegiance rules.

FROM CHAPTER SEVEN, THE DRAGON EMPIRE

The GM may use the organisations on pages 77-80 of *Dragon Lines* as additions or variants to the standard *Celestial Empire* Sects and Organisations.

CHAPTER NINE, MATERIAL ATTACHMENTS

This whole chapter may make a useful addition to any combat-oriented *Celestial Empire* campaign.

APPENDIX, THE I-CHING

This appendix may be used to supplement the Divination skill described on page 59 of *The Celestial Empire*.

If the GM is to freely mix *Dragon Lines* and *The Celestial Empire* in his games, he should be aware of the following equivalences between the two games:

- DL page 7: Giant and Ogre: no real equivalent in TCE
- DL page 8: Kitsune: equivalent to Vixen Spirit from TCE
- DL page 9: Ghost: equivalent to Hungry Ghost from TCE
- DL page 9: Spirit-Blooded: equivalent to Bānyāo from TCE
- DL page 10: Dynastic Chin: equivalent to China in TCE
- DL page 10: Gao-Li: equivalent to Korea in TCE
- DL page 11: Nippon: equivalent to Japan in TCE
- DL page 64: The Celestial Bureaucracy: equivalent to Confucianism in TCE
- DL page 64: The Path to Enlightenment: equivalent to Buddhism/Esoteric Buddhism in TCE
- DL page 65: The Way: equivalent to

Daoism in TCE

- DL page 66: The Yama Kings: no exact equivalent in TCE, may be considered as a particular instance of Chinese Folk Religion
- DL page 67: Corruption: there are actually two equivalents in TCE, Heterodoxy (corruption of Daoism), and the Māra path (corruption of Buddhism/Esoteric Buddhism)
- DL page 75: Foreign Devils: equivalent to Europeans in TCE
- DL page 92: The Wastelands: equivalent to Inner Asia (desertic parts) in TCE
- DL page 92: The Southland Jungles: equivalent to Southeast Asia in TCE
- DL page 93: The Wind Plateaus: equivalent to Tibet in TCE
- DL page 94: The Pastures: equivalent to Inner Asia (grassy parts) in TCE

Secrets of Japan

Secrets of Japan, available from Chaosium, is a large Call of Cthulhu supplement intended to help keepers set a campaign in present-day Japan. Despite the difference in time and location, *Secrets of Japan* may be used as a companion volume to *The Celestial Empire* for a cross-over Call of Cthulhu/*The Celestial Empire* game based on the esoteric elements of 'degenerate Buddhism' and 'dark Taoism'. Also, many skills, occupations, monsters, and spells may be adapted to Imperial China to enrich a *Celestial Empire* campaign.

Strange Aeons II

Strange Aeons II, available from Chaosium, is a collection of one-shot Call of Cthulhu scenarios set in unusual times and places. The very first scenario is a culturally and historically accurate scenario set in Táng China, which I suggest should be actually run within a *Celestial Empire* Táng campaign rather than as a one-shot Call of Cthulhu game, so as to have the occult and final element of the scenario even more surprising than it is already meant to be (we all know how paranoid and difficult to surprise *Call of Cthulhu* players are...).

B a s i c R o l e p l a y i n g

The CELESTIAL 天下 EMPIRE

Roleplaying in Imperial China



The Celestial Empire is an old phrase used in Classical Chinese to describe the Chinese Empire. In the original Chinese writing, the phrase literally reads «Heavenly dynasty» – «Large country», which renders both the size of the country and the fact that the emperor was considered as having directly been mandated by Heaven.

This book is thus a historically accurate roleplaying game about Imperial China. Yet history-based does not mean boring: depending on the game master's inspiration, *The Celestial Empire* may capture the exotic bewilderment of *The Journey to the West*, the virile excitement of *The Water Margin*, the investigative astuteness of *Judge Dee*, or the kinetic fantasy from Hong Kong fiction!



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