



GAMES 游戲



Central Conflict	123
GAME SETTINGS	124
Outlaw Game	124
Magistrate Game	125
Court Game	125
Military Game	125
STARTING A GAME	126
Research and Discussion	126
Character Creation	126
Starting The Game	127
ATMOSPHERE	127
Language	127
Fame	128
Relationships	128
Superstition	129
BAD JOSS	129
Acquiring Bad Joss	129
Alleviating Bad Joss	130
Suffering Bad Joss	130
MOTIVATION	131

THIS GAME has deliberately been designed to be rather specific in its coverage. It is set at a particular time, in a particular place, and with player characters in the roles of outlaws, attempting to bring justice to a corrupt world. The game has been designed this way so that it presents specific, accurate details, and so that the systems can be tailored to a particular type of play. As referee, of course, you are by no means limited to this background. This chapter provides advice on how to start and run your game, and how to tailor it to your own requirements.

It also contains notes required by the referee on running certain aspects of the rules.

CENTRAL CONFLICT

There is an argument that says that any game should already have a central conflict written into it. Hence *DeD* came complete with 'alignments', *Call of Cthulhu* featured the desperate attempts of investigators to stop the Lovecraftian horrors from having their way, *Feng Shui* is set against the 'secret war' to control *feng shui* sites, and so on.

It is obvious from observing actual games, however, that such conflicts don't necessarily form the bulk of game activity. Rather, they are a backdrop against which things happen. When such conflicts interfere too much in the game they obstruct players' freedom to act. The most obvious form of 'interference' is in the rules.

There is an important 'central conflict' in the background of Song China. That conflict is between *chao* 廷 (town) and *ye* 野 (country).

In the town, the world is ordered, regulated, mechanistic. Everyone knows their place, and must dress and act accordingly. In this world, the scholar is supreme. Power derives from knowledge and influence.

In the country, the world is chaotic, anarchistic, dangerous and unpredictable. Only the resourceful, and those possessing great personal power, can survive in the wilds. This is the world of the Immortals, of monsters, of outlaws... of heroes.

This distinction is made in the character generation rules, so that every character will have weaknesses to balance their strengths. You are at liberty to ignore it, and make the *whole* of China the kind of barbarian wasteland depicted in most fantasy. But I think you'd be missing a lot if you do.

You might wonder how this kind of central conflict could stimulate adventures. Well, it's the basis of the whole Water Margin legend, and many more legends besides. The outlaw heroes, from a position outside society, are challenging society itself. The conflict is a revolutionary one.

You can make as much or as little of this

revolutionary message as you like. You can also make as much or as little of the ethical overtones. Most readings of the Water Margin legend are fairly conservative and idealistic. Good is on the side of the outlaws. They are upholders of justice against an Establishment which has abandoned it. Although they oppose society, they don't want to bring it down: they just want to renew it.

In Song China, there was a deep social conflict being conducted that mirrors this rift, though which has more ambiguous ethical overtones. It was the conflict *within* the bureaucracy between the reformers and the conservatives. Rather than having a simple conflict between Good and Evil (with capital letters, of course, to show that we're talking about abstract, unconnected ideas), I feel it's more productive to have a set of conflicts along more human lines. These conflicts can be related (in the same way as the town/country, conservative/reformer conflicts are related), and given whatever ethical overtones you want to examine.

Or you can have the Good outlaws fighting the Evil magistrates. It's just that, if we're talking *De&D* terms, I've always had more interest in Law vs Chaos myself.

Certainly the Water Margin heroes also fit squarely within a tradition of Chinese 'knight-errants' who live unconventionally, but spurn the safety and hypocrisy of society in favour of truth, justice, and, to be brutally frank, violence. It's this distinction, rather than any considerations of 'game balance', that forms the basis for the game's differentiation of 'heroes' from 'normal' people.

*The longer the night lasts,
the more dreams we will have*

GAME SETTINGS

The game is based on the assumption that you will be playing an *Outlaw* game, in which player characters are heroes living outside society, striving against corrupt officials and righting wrongs. There are alternatives, however.

Described below are four types of games, the *Outlaw*, *Magistrate*, *Court* and *Military* games. The latter three require a little modification to the basic game. Obviously there are many possibilities outside these. A game could focus on the claustrophobic setting of a 'flower garden', with players as entertainers, or it could concern merchants establishing trade routes, or a ship's crew exploring distant lands or any one of a myriad possibilities.

Nor should the simplification of game types given below preclude the possibility of combining these games. Players can have multiple characters according to the

particular areas dealt with, and the areas can interact with each other to produce an even more complex setting.

OUTLAW GAME

These rules cover a game based on the same background and activities as *The Water Margin*. However, there are still some areas which can be tailored to suit your requirements.

POWER LEVEL

The power level of the game, mentioned in the *Characters* chapter, has an effect on the extent to which heroes are more powerful than normal people. Like most quantities in this game it is rated from 0 to 10. A standard game should have a power level of 3.

The level of ability of hero characters in a standard game is based on the *Water Margin* novel. In that book, the heroes of Liangshan Po are capable of some remarkable feats. The rules allow exceptional feats such as extraordinary leaps, because they are a part of the background. By choosing a power level of 0, you will play in a 'realistic' game in which heroes have no special advantages over normal people. Even a power level 0 game has some areas which you may feel do not accurately represent the 'real world', but it's close.

On the other hand a high power level game enters the realm of the fabulous. At power level 10 heroes have powers comparable with those sublimities who have attained a semi-divine existence. Hero characters will have high bonuses and **energy**, and be capable of wading through armies of normal characters.

CHARACTER ROLES

The obvious roles for player characters to assume are as outlaw leaders. If the game is close to the original story of the *Water Margin*, these leaders will be heroes.

Being outlaw *leaders*, of course, they must have subordinates. Ordinarily the referee will take responsibility for all these, but there are alternatives.

The first is the idea popularised by *Ars Magica*, and called by its authors *troupe play*. While each player will have an outlaw hero of their own, there will be a number of ordinary outlaws with defined abilities and, to a certain extent, personalities, who can be played by *any* player character. This allows independent action by player character heroes, and gets away from the necessity for all the outlaw leaders to constantly hang around together in a group.

It is also possible for players who don't like the idea of sharing characters with others to have a pair of characters—one a hero outlaw leader, and the other a normal outlaw.

From these basic ideas, referees can even experiment with other methods. For example, to spice up the level of conflict in the game, each player could have two characters, one an outlaw and one a representative of the forces of Law and Order. Game sessions could be resolved

as the confrontations between the two forces, with players choosing one side or other for each session, as appropriate.

In short, although the tradition in role-playing has been one player-one character, there are a number of alternatives with which you can profitably experiment.

WATER MARGIN VERSIONS

This game is designed to simulate the Water Margin based on the original story. Thus a power level of 3 allows the feats described in the book (such as Wu Song killing a tiger). Other versions of the story alter the power level and some of the details.

The Water Margin has inspired numerous rewrites, comic adaptations, reinterpretations and so on. If there is an aspect of Chinese culture that especially interests you, stress that. For example, the famous Shaolin monastery has many legends of how Liangshan Po heroes were among its number, even when this is not borne out by Shi Nai'an's story. Referees who are interested in this area may like to stress the Shaolin aspect: Chan (Zen) Buddhism and the martial arts of Shaolin. Others may be attracted to the mysticism of Taoism, and concentrate instead on that. This was the path taken by David Weir in his novelisation of the TV series (he also set the story about twenty years early so that he could include some Imperial politics). Both options help to tackle the problem of how to unify the player group, which will be discussed later.

Most versions of the Water Margin include magic to some extent, but you may like to omit magical effects from the game, relegating magic to superstition.

MAGISTRATE GAME

Another suitable setting would be one inspired by the Judge Dee books of Robert Van Gulik. While Van Gulik's stories are set in the Tang dynasty, prior to and during the reign of Empress Wu, there was a famous detective magistrate of the Song Dynasty, Judge Bao, about whom several stories have been written. These books would suit a more reflective game in which deduction and manners are more important than military prowess.

The player characters would be connected to the *yamen* of a district or prefecture, probably playing employees. Two distinct possibilities are available: one is that, as in the Judge Dee books, the player characters are the personal entourage of the Magistrate (and one player could play the Magistrate). They are therefore not permanent residents in the town, and part of their job will be dealing with the clerks and constables who are locals. Another alternative would be that the players could be the permanent staff of a *yamen*, or a local ward chief's friends and family, in which case they will have to deal with the foibles of the Magistrate assigned to them.

Activities would mainly include solving criminal cases and keeping law and order. There is scope for combat, negotiation, and even deception and infiltration, for

example, to subdue a troublesome local bandit stronghold.

The central conflict here is pretty obvious: law vs crime, but it allows for a lot of variation and subtlety.

COURT GAME

The upper reaches of the Chinese Bureaucracy, and the Imperial Court, are a hotbed of plots, counterplots, intrigues and cliques. Players who favour a more political game may find this an engaging setting. They could play aristocrats, officials, eunuchs and even high class courtesans, involved in obtaining influence and the good graces of the Emperor.

There are any number of conflicts that will emerge in such a game, and complex power relationships should enable tension to be maintained. In such a game, the political struggle between the conservatives and the reformers will assume even greater proportions. Referees who fancy running this sort of game might benefit from a little research, especially into the career of Wang Anshi. Also, if you can by any chance get to see the Taiwanese television drama based on the life of *Empress Wu*, your efforts will be richly rewarded!

MILITARY GAME

In 1127 the Northern Song Dynasty was overthrown by the nomadic Jin. The Jin conquered the whole of north China, capturing both Hui Zong and Qin Zong, the son in whose favour he had abdicated. The Song Capital was removed to Hangzhou, and warfare between the two states continued sporadically for many years. The great hero of the times was Yue Fei, the general who finally managed to halt the Jin advance, and even roll them back a little. Many of Yue Fei's adventures are similar to events of the Water Margin, and in fact Water Margin heroes or their children play a part in some popular versions of his exploits.

Players who are interested in a military game should find this a perfect setting. It could even follow on from an *Outlaw* game in which the bandits are pardoned, and made generals in the face of the military emergency.

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms is another famous work of Chinese popular literature, dealing with the civil war which followed the collapse of the Han dynasty. For players who are especially interested in the prospect of all-out warfare, this would make a fine setting for a *Military Game*. These rules can be easily adapted to the Three Kingdoms. In the tradition of Chinese literature, you may simply accept the rules wholesale, ignoring historical anachronisms. Or you may wish to go through and remove the more obviously out of place features.

The beginning and the end

reach out hands to each other

STARTING A GAME

Although many aspects of this game are traditionally found in role-playing games, it may be a little exotic for some groups. In particular, the heavy emphasis on Chinese culture may be difficult to grasp at first. For this reason the way in which the game starts can be an essential way of establishing the atmosphere, and easing the players into their roles gently.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Obviously, once you have read the rules, the first thing to do is to decide what kind of a game you want to play. At this stage it is essential for the referee to consult with the players. As written, **Outlaws** is historically based, but with a 'heroic' element (magic, and remarkable abilities) matching that of the original story. Some players, however, may prefer a purely historical campaign with a 'realistic' feel, while others may like an all-out high power flying swordsman style game.

Similarly, the background of the player characters as outlaws may not appeal. The alternatives described in the previous section may be more suitable, but will require more work by the referee, at least until I get round to writing a supplement!

Once you have settled on the basic type of game, you can leap in straight away, or you can do some preliminary research. As referee, you should think about which elements appeal to you, and whether you require more background in certain areas. The players can also do research, guided by the referee. They can be given background material to enable them to get a feel for the culture, people and events of the Water Margin. Ideally, this should be as entertaining as possible: movies, videos and novels provide the best source. Examples are provided in the bibliography, but the best for a standard game will be the *Water Margin* TV show (available on video and laser disc) and the books *The Broken Seals*, *The Tiger Killers* and *Outlaws of the Marsh*.

Before you start the game, it's a good idea for the players and the referee to discuss how they will start. One possibility is for each player to create the character he wants to play, and then to go from there. There are many problems with this, though. How and why do the player characters know each other? What reason have they for associating with one another? There is no convenient dungeon to provide a simple reason for 'adventuring', so you will have to be more creative.

Ideas that you might like to discuss for more

convenient ways to start the game include:

- ◇ The player characters are already established as a small outlaw group.
- ◇ The player characters are all related.
- ◇ The player characters are employed in the same work (they are the staff of a district magistrate, for example, or they are soldiers in the same army unit, or from the same monastery).
- ◇ The player characters all belong to the same organisation, whether it be a Beggar's or Merchant's Guild, a Tea Appreciation club, or a secret society dedicated to overthrowing the dynasty.
- ◇ The player characters all live near each other.
- ◇ The player characters have no connection with each other, but are brought together by some major event at the start of the game (for example, they all happen to be crossing a certain river when their boat is attacked by river pirates).
- ◇ The player characters are actual heroes from the Water Margin, and they meet as described in the story. It is only from the start of the game that events deviate from the story.

These options will affect the freedom players have to create their own characters. Obviously some will affect that freedom more than others. Related characters should be very close in social status, for example. The professions available in an army unit are limited (mainly soldier, but also hunter and physician). Inevitably there will have to be some compromise. It is better to reach agreement at this early stage, to forestall later arguments.

Next, the referee should start to prepare some specific background, related to the manner in which the game will start. He should describe important people and places, and may choose to set up a social or political situation. During this process, he should work with the players to create their characters.

The *China* chapter contains a sample town, which may be used as an opening setting for the game.

CHARACTER CREATION

Although it is possible to simply give the players the rules and say 'go and make a character', it is better if the referee supervises it. This is particularly important if there are some limitations caused by the way in which the game starts. In this case, players may be able to 'trade' with the referee in order to obtain characters they are happy with.

During the creation of a character, players have to think about certain aspects of their character's background. For example, they may have patrons or dependants, owe or be owed favours and so on. These incidents and people should be created in consultation

with the referee, and in some cases the referee may choose to 'game out' certain incidents, or use the rules (as, for example, in the case of a scholar whose player declares that he drank himself into a stupor after passing the bureaucratic examinations: the DRINKING roll is unnecessary, but the player may have to roll to see if her character passed the examinations!).

The key word during this stage is 'flexibility'. If all goes well, the players will be role-playing these characters for quite a while, so there is no point in being unnecessarily harsh. If a player's request about her character is reasonable, then it's better to allow it rather than insisting on a roll of the dice.

The referee should also devote some attention to the question of fame and reputation. The abilities of each player character, and the events of their early life, may lead to them already having a name for themselves. It might also be worth making notes about a character's reputation, if it seems that one is deserved: whether it be for honesty, violence, generosity or whatever. It is possible that characters may start the game with undeserved reputations. As referee, you may like to balance an earlier generosity in character creation with an undeserved reputation.

STARTING THE GAME

Once the characters are ready, it's almost time to start. There are several different ways of conducting the first session, and to a certain extent it will be determined by the choice you've already made about how the player characters meet each other.

A rip-roaring set-piece adventure is a popular choice as the first scenario in a new game. This would suit a variety of the possibilities listed above. For example, the small group of outlaws listed in the first option might find themselves suddenly under attack by a rival band. The family group of the second option may find that a family member has been framed by a corrupt official and will be executed. They must risk becoming outlaws in order to free him and deal with the official. The army unit find themselves cut off behind enemy lines during a border clash with the kingdom of Liao. They must find their way back to China before the northern barbarians catch them. On the way they discover an ancient temple and its mysterious occupant...

The advantage of starting with an action-filled adventure is that it gives the players a chance to get used to the game mechanics. On the other hand, this may be a disadvantage if it means they spend all the time rolling dice and consulting the rules. It may be better to have just a little action, so that players learn gradually how the game works.

A sample adventure, set in Jinfang, the town described in the *China* chapter, is available. This is a rip-roarer involving detection and a large dose of the supernatural.

An alternative to the all-out adventure option is a relaxed 'get-to-know-each-other session'. For players who

prize character interaction, the first session can be a chance for them to get accustomed to their characters by talking with the others. This would especially suit those starting methods in which the player characters don't already know each other. For example, they might be part of a newly formed military unit. Or the travellers crossing the river might have a lot of time to get to know each other before those pirates attack.

THE RULES

When you start the game it is likely that there will be occasional mistakes. There may be parts of the rules which are ambiguous, and you only realise what the true rule is after using the wrong one for a while (I know, I've done this with countless games!). To allow for this, I suggest you establish from the start, that whatever rules are used cannot be changed retroactively. If you find that you've been using the rules wrong, then *from that point on* use the correct rules. Nothing that has happened up to that point can be changed, however. If you get the players to agree to this at the beginning, you can forestall arguments!

When you paint a portrait of a dragon

you paint only a portrait of its skin

ATMOSPHERE

The aim of **Outlaws** is to recreate a Chinese setting. Your players should believe in the China their characters are living in. Different players will have different expectations. Some will have a deep knowledge of China, derived perhaps from having lived there, or having studied it, or a misspent youth watching kung fu movies. Others will know little more than the names of their favourite dishes from the local take-away. So how do you go about creating a feeling of Chinese culture?

LANGUAGE

The first way in which you can encourage players to leave their 20th century identities behind is through language. The old Chinese language was quite ornate, full of flowery language and terms of respect. It reflected a society in which relationships were usually vertical. All relationships were modelled on the most important relationships: those within the family.

Thus, most players should try to get used to being a little more tactful than the average Westerner. There are exceptions to every rule, of course: in the Water Margin Li Kui is rarely hindered by any trace of tact, or indeed civilised behaviour of any kind. But even he expresses a

deep respect for Song Jiang, and obeys him—if he can master his emotions for long enough. Li Kui refers to Song Jiang as Elder Brother, and this expresses a key element of the language. With the family being of such central importance, its influence permeates every cranny of society. Friends refer to each other using terms derived from the family. Players should be encouraged to use the terms Elder Brother/Sister and Younger Brother/Sister to address other players. If the characters' age difference is large, or if it is not so much a friendship as an acquaintance, then perhaps the terms Uncle and Nephew are used. Nevertheless such family terms are an important way of establishing the Chinese atmosphere.

Chinese politeness requires on the one hand that a speaker show humility when talking of himself or his household, and on the other hand that he be very protective of his reputation (his 'face'). To cause someone else to lose face is a serious business. But to boast loudly is unlikely to generate much respect.

Again, there are exceptions. A boxer at a local fair is unlikely to drum up much interest if he proclaims himself to be a 'merely competent' fighter. For more elevated persons, boasting without boasting becomes a sophisticated skill. Most of the generals who are sent by the Imperial Court to catch the outlaws of Liangshan Po proclaim that although they have little skill, thanks to the Emperor's patronage they will easily be able to suppress the bandits. Having been captured by the outlaws and offered a seat among the chieftains, they go through a similar story until, after protesting humbly, they accept their new position.

FAME

One of the consequences of being a hero is that you attract fame. This may or may not be a good thing, depending on your point of view.

Fame is not just **respect**. However, a character who gains a lot of **respect** will inevitably acquire some fame. Fame is fickle, however, and rarely under the control of the individual.

Fame is also relative. It depends on location, status and job. In the Eastern Capital, Bianliang, it is rather difficult to be famous unless you are exceptionally talented, rich or privileged. Out in the provinces, however, it can be easy to be a big fish in a little pool.

In the Water Margin, there is a stratum of society called the 'Brotherhood of Heroes' (more literally, the 'Rivers and Lakes Fraternity'). These are people who value chivalry and martial valour. They span the whole of society, from arms instructors of the Emperor's own guard, to outlaws eking out a meagre existence in the wilds. Those who belong to the Brotherhood of Heroes usually acquire a reputation, and even if this does not spread among the common people, it will become known to other heroes. This kind of fame can be a great asset. Powerful patrons such as Chai Jin and Chao Gai will shelter and render great assistance to such heroes, no

matter the gravity of the exigencies they face. On the other hand, a reputation for treachery can be a considerable liability.

Fame is represented in part by a character's **respect** attribute. The referee should also make the players aware of its importance in social terms. Just as their characters' names will spread through the Empire as their deeds become known, other famous people will come to their notice. The referee should periodically update the players on who the people they meet are talking about: sometimes it may be the player characters, but mostly it will be other people. Thus the referee can sow the seeds for future adventures, and provide the player characters with an expanding network of contacts.

RELATIONSHIPS

The clearest way to convey the atmosphere of Song China is through the relationships between characters. In many role-playing games, the player characters are rootless individuals, with no particular connection to the world around them. In China, such a person is not only unusual, but faces a distinct disadvantage.

The first thing to remember, and something that bears repeating, is that relationships between people in Song China are, almost without exception, vertical. When two people meet, one of them will be of higher status than the other. Far from making people uncomfortable, as this sort of situation often does in the modern West, it is a source of comfort. A character in this game is far more likely to made uncomfortable by meeting somebody whose status is unclear, and who seems to be treating them as an equal. Such behaviour flies in the face of social order.

The heroes of the Water Margin are no exceptions to this. They may be idealists in pursuit of a dream of social justice, but they preserve unquestioned their vertical relationships. The list of the outlaws presented in the *Extras* chapter is not any old order: it is the strict order of rank maintained at Liangshan Po. The order may be changed, of course, but such changes are formally considered and approved.

What, then, of soldiers who appear to be the same rank? Or ordinary townsfolk meeting in the street? Simply for peace of mind, such people will informally adopt upper and lower roles. The default criterion, if no obvious social status or rank differentiates a couple, is age.

As I've mentioned elsewhere, if two people meet and agree to have a meal somewhere, one will have to adopt the role of host, and the other of guest. It is considered polite to haggle over these roles, with maximum humility, before accepting one's place. To do otherwise, or to presume on an undeserved superiority, would be the cause of a loss of face.

CONNECTIONS

The importance of the above comes into sharp focus when you consider that of all the resources a hero has,

connections may be the most important. Players may dispense with patrons and dependants, and ignore favours owed and owing. To do so is to isolate their characters from society and cut themselves off from a powerful potential support network.

Starting with the family, China consists of groups, whose members feel a social obligation to assist each other. To be dependent on another person is no source of shame—in a vertical society it is inevitable. Since many individuals belong to more than one group, their network of dependencies may become quite complex.

These networks may be used by players to achieve the goals of their characters. They may also be used by the referee to create stories by making demands on the player characters. The extent to which such relationships are enacted in a role-playing session is up to you, of course. If you like, you can just describe matters in the third person: ‘Your father has told you that you must take a letter to your uncle, who lives in Weizhou.’ Or the referee can take advantage of these relationships to role-play a wide variety of non-player characters.

SUPERSTITION

Another tricky one. There’s no doubt that Song China is a very superstitious society. At the same time there are plenty of rational people living there, and a fair number of these are roundly dismissive of the supernatural. Since most modern players tend not to be superstitious, I have provided some rules support for superstition in the form of the bad joss system (see the next section). Players of rational characters are at liberty to explain away bad joss in rationalistic terms (they are still subject to the rules, however!). The rules are there to create the world that most Song Chinese passionately believe to be the one they inhabit.

You can go beyond the bad joss rules in encouraging superstition. Players may be surprised to find this aspect rewarding, after a while. I’ve noticed that many role-players do actually get a little superstitious, especially about dice, and this trait should be encouraged in this game. For example, encourage players to explain their preferences for certain dice in terms of elemental associations.

The difficulty here is that superstition should not be confused with ‘referee whim’. That is why the bad joss system includes so many elements to divorce the result from the referee’s decisions. If you are to create a genuine feeling of superstition among the player characters, then they should be encouraged to feel that the forces that shape the universe lie *within* the game. It is Heaven, or the attentions of a malignant spirit, which caused that recent run of bad luck, not the intervention of a curmudgeonly referee.

*If you have never done anything bad,
you shouldn’t be worrying about
the devils knocking on your door*

BAD JOSS

Bad joss is a game mechanic designed to encourage players to adopt the superstitious attitude common among the people of the Song Dynasty. At the same time, it provides a means of curbing players’ tendencies to be too greedy in using the rules to grab power for themselves, and it may even provide plot developments.

As referee, the way you use the bad joss rules will have an important effect on the game. It is easy to use rules such as these as a means of ‘getting at’ the players, using bad joss as a stick with which to beat them. This is a bit of a waste. As referee, you already have plenty of sticks. Instead you should try to use the bad joss rules impartially, so that the players view them as a part of the world rather than your whim. You should also make the most of the plot possibilities generated by the bad joss rules (explained below). In this way, while the characters will find their bad joss very uncomfortable, the players may find it adds a lot to the game.

ACQUIRING BAD JOSS

You should keep track of the running total of bad joss for each character. There are a number of ways in which player characters can acquire bad joss:

- ✧ When they claim points of motivation (explained in the *Action* chapter).
- ✧ When they fall under the influence of a baleful spirit (explained in the *Beliefs* chapter). This includes curses inflicted by sorcerers (explained in the *Magic* chapter).
- ✧ When they live in a place which has bad feng shui, or their ancestors suffer from bad feng shui (explained in the *Beliefs* chapter)
- ✧ When they linger in a place in which something terrible has happened: especially a suicide or drowning.
- ✧ When they break an oath: the player should roll one die and subtract one to find the number of points of bad joss acquired.

In most cases the number of points of bad joss acquired is specifically determined in the rules. In other cases the quantity is left to the referee’s discretion. You should be careful to be impartial in these latter cases.

ALLEVIATING BAD JOSS

There are several ways of resisting bad joss, or reducing the accumulated total. The usual way in which a character's bad joss total is reduced is by suffering its effects through penalties to rolls, or bad joss rolls. This is explained in the next section.

It is possible to resist bad joss in other ways. Protection from bad joss may be gained by using Talismans or a Buddhist blessing (as explained in the *Magic* chapter). Some intercept bad joss when it is acquired, others reduce the stock of bad joss already acquired. The Buddhist spell of *Retribution* also enables a character to be purged of their bad joss, though this may be at the cost of **energy** and possibly **body**.

Bad joss may also be purged by a purification ritual. Both Taoism and Buddhism have rituals of purification. These differ slightly in details, but are broadly similar. They involve abstinence from drink, sex and certain types of food (meat in the case of Buddhists, grain for Taoists) over a period of at least a week. During the period of purification the character must remain completely untainted by bad joss, and spend each day observing religious rituals. Knowing the rituals requires a successful roll of ease 7 plus THEOLOGY and religious CEREMONY (both are required). A priest may be employed to do this.

At the end of each week the character rolls with an ease of the degree of success of the ritual roll. The degree of success is the number of points of bad joss removed by the ritual.

A pilgrimage to a holy mountain, combined with the purification ritual, will add a bonus of +3 to the purification roll.

Buddhist and Taoist priests may be reluctant to perform such rituals for the benefit of a character who is obviously bent on evil.

SUFFERING BAD JOSS

Characters suffer from the effects of bad joss in several ways. The two most common are penalties to rolls, and *bad joss rolls*.

PENALTIES TO ROLLS

Players worried about the consequences of a bad joss roll may try to keep their bad joss down by allowing the referee to use their bad joss against them. They should tell the referee how many points of bad joss they are willing to see used against them. *At any time* after this, when the player makes a roll, the referee may then announce that she is spending all or part of their bad joss. Each point of bad joss expended in this way counts as a –2 modifier to the player's roll. In addition, the roll will *always* be treated as a doubles roll, and if Snake Eyes are rolled, the player *must* make a bad joss roll.

The player may, at any time, withdraw permission for the referee to use part, or all, of their bad joss in this way. The referee doesn't *have* to use the bad joss straight away, and may therefore end up not using any at all.

BAD JOSS ROLLS

Players must make *bad joss rolls* if their characters are subject to a Buddhist *Retribution* +1 spell, or the attentions of certain rather *outré* monsters. They must also make at least one voluntary delayed bad joss roll every year, although the player may choose when to make the roll. They may also make an immediate bad joss roll as a result of a Snake-Eyes roll (this doesn't count as a voluntary roll).

A *bad joss roll* is a roll with an ease of the character's bad joss score. It is always made as a bonus roll. Referees should not inform players of their bad joss totals, but should show them the table. Decide what type of bad joss effects the character will suffer: immediate or delayed, then roll. The referee then says whether the roll is a success or failure (a roll of 12 is always a failure; a roll of 2 is always a success).

A failed roll means that the character suffers no untoward effects, and loses no points of bad joss.

If the roll is successful, compare the *actual roll* to the table below to see what misfortune is suffered. Half the degree of success of the successful roll is the number of points of bad joss lost by the character.

Since the degree of success for given rolls varies, the degree of success can also be used as a guide to the severity of certain results.

Many of the results from the tables will need to be explained by game events. Thus the tables may actually provide stimuli for the game. In the case of the delayed results, referees can take a little time in applying the results, if it is necessary to ensure that the results make sense.

MOTIVATION

[How to use motivation in the game mechanics]

Motivation is something to be used to make the game more interesting. While it exists partly to assist characters in improving their skills, its main purpose is so that players can express their characters' personalities clearly.

Zhuang Zi, the famous Taoist philosopher, relayed some comments by Daozhi, a famous bandit of the time of

Confucius:

'One of Daozhi's followers once asked him: "Does the bandit have a Way?" Daozhi replied: "How could he get anywhere if he did not have a Way? Making shrewd guesses as to how much booty is stashed away in the room is sageliness; being the first one in is bravery; being the last one out is righteousness; knowing whether the job can be pulled off or not is wisdom; dividing up the loot fairly is benevolence. No one in the world ever succeeded in becoming a great bandit if he did not have all five!.'

Immediate bad joss

Roll	Effect
2	Roll on the <i>Delayed Bad Joss</i> table, with an ease of 11.
3	Suffer an embarrassing, but otherwise harmless accident. For example, receive an unwelcome 'present' from a bird perched above one's head, step in something unpleasant, have someone notice that clothes are incorrectly adjusted or inappropriate to the situation, or feel a sudden urge to visit the toilet. Depending on the situation this <i>may</i> cause a loss of a point of <i>face</i> through embarrassment
4-5	Bitten by an animal or reptile, or stung by an insect. Immediate loss of concentration, and a penalty of half the degree of success to actions for the next 10 minutes.
6	Discover that a possession has been lost or stolen. The degree of success gives an idea of how precious the possession is.
7-8	Immediate health effect. Nature depends on the degree of success, but a 2 would be hiccups, while a 6 or higher would be a debilitating headache. Half the degree of success reduces energy (it's lost to fatigue).
9	Discover the loss of all ready cash. Nothing can be bought until the character returns to a source of their wealth bonus.
10	Suffer accident. Trip and fall, drop weapon or otherwise get hurt. Player can decide what happens, but in any case suffer damage to body of half the degree of success.
11	Suffer heart attack or, if outdoors in a storm, struck by lightning. Immediate collapse, and the loss of the degree of success in body .

Delayed bad joss

Roll	Effect
2	Roll on the Immediate Bad Joss table, with an ease of 11.
3	Lose <i>face</i> of half the degree of success.
4	Falsely accused. This may be an accusation of criminal action, or treachery, disloyalty or any other undesirable behaviour. Or it may be blackmail, or political, professional or financial pressure, as appropriate.
5	Lose the knack. The character's highest specialisation should be halved for a number of weeks equal to the degree of success.
6	Lose motivation. The character loses motivation equal to the degree of success. If the character doesn't have enough motivation to lose, he suffers a penalty of -1 to all actions for a number of weeks equal to the motivation unaccounted for.
7-8	Contract a disease. The virulence of a cold or disease is half the degree of success. The duration is the lower of the two dice rolled, or 8 in the event of a roll of double 4. Environmental conditions modify the virulence: If the character is insufficiently fed +1, if starving +2. If the character is sleeping rough +1, if affected by bad weather +2.
9	Lose 1 point of position bonus (or if a hero, lose a point of respect).
10	Lose 1 point of wealth bonus
11	Become afflicted with an excess of Yin Energy. Those who associate with the character will feel uncomfortable, and will suffer the loss of a point of bad joss for every day spent in the character's company. This effect lasts until cured by a purification ritual, or for a number of weeks equal to the degree of success.