

# *A Wanderer's Romance*

*A Roleplaying Game By Christopher McDowall*





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*The world began as nothing but ocean. The Origins raised up a million colourful islands, anything larger than a few dozen miles being swallowed by the envious deep. Some of these immaterial beings chose to take a physical form and live in the varied lands they had created, eventually settling into the forms of men and beasts. Our ancestors.*

*The Origins that did not take physical form paid a great cost. They were left unable to affect their world directly, relying upon influencing men with words and knowledge. Their teachings led to our understanding of elemental balance, the formation of the thousand Legendary Styles and the universal code of combat that define our world today.*

*You are a great man or woman. An errant trained in both the noble art of combat and in contests of body and mind. Drifting from one island to another, you have your own philosophy on life and the power to enforce it.*

### Design Notes

Content in these green boxes are design notes, an insight into why I made some of the choices within the writing process. They do not contain any rules content and can be skipped without missing any game content.

## Tasks

Task rolls use two six-sided dice and add the scores of the two Elements being used in the task. If the total is 10 or more the task is considered a success. If matching dice are rolled then the character's Balance is added to the roll. If two parties are both striving for the same goal the one with the highest total will succeed, with ties being broken by Balance. If this is still a tie then a further die is rolled each and repeated until there is a winner. For difficult tasks the target number will be 12 instead of 10 and for exceptional difficulty it will be 14.

Related to tasks are Tests, Contests, Activities and Duels, all of which are detailed in their own sections.

### Immovable Objects vs Unstoppable Forces

In cases such as both combatants having "always acts first in combat" as an ability where there is an unstoppable force/immovable object problem the tie is broken by rolling a single die against each other to see which rule takes priority. This result will stand for the duration of the duel or contest.



# Characters

*Feng-La is capable of much more than cleaning fish. However, every day he spends hours sat at the docks carrying out the job most fishermen wouldn't give a second thought to. Like a machine, his knife artfully carries out his work over and over again, serving the island for no charge other than a tiny hut and a few fish for himself. To him every simple task is an exercise for the soul deeper than most men will ever encounter. For him this is harmony.*

**Elements:** All Elements are assigned a score from 0 upwards. Elements may not drop below 0. Starting characters assign 6 points by rolling 6 dice with 1s being spent on Air, 2s on Earth, 3s on Fire, 4s on Water and points rolled as 5 or 6 being distributed how the player wishes. For example, if the rolls were 1, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 the character would have Air 2, Earth 1, Fire 1 and Water 1 and have a remaining point to spend how they wish.

The GM may allow the player a certain number of rerolls, or allow a reroll in the case of a very unusual result, such as 6 points in one element. Alternatively the GM may wish to allow the player to distribute all points as they wish.

**Air** - Wit, Willpower, Courage and Communication. Inwards to the Mind and Self.

**Earth** - Resilience, Practicality, Sensation and Physicality. Outwards to Flesh and the World.

**Fire** - Passion, Creativity, Leadership and Drive. Hot Blood and Emotion.

**Water** - Control, Grace, Intuition and Instinct. Cool Senses and Logic.

## Why these four Elements and not Chinese Elements?

Although the Chinese Elements of Metal, Fire, Wood, Water and Earth might seem more suited to the flavour of the game the four classical elements were chosen for a number of reasons. These four are less associated with a single culture, being present as Buddhist, Hindu, Tibetan and Japanese Elements in addition to Western cultures. In addition they are more well known by the majority of players and so more easily understood as character traits. A fifth element is commonly present, such as void or ether, but was also excluded from the game and replaced with the concept of Balance.

**Balance:** The character's balance score is equal to the largest number of elements they possess that share the same value. For example, if a character has three elements rated as 2 and one as 0 their Balance would be three. Note that two pairs of matching Elements would still only grant Balance 2.

**Specialities:** Each character begins with two specialities that each generally relate to a single task or situation. Examples include mountain survival, tea preparation, calligraphy and religious knowledge. Whenever the character is carrying out a task related to their speciality they may add two to the total. Specialities never stack and



cannot be related directly to combat, with the exception of Archery. Skills that could be useful in combat situations such as medicine or horse riding are allowed as they do not affect the combat directly. They also gain an additional bonus in Contests, which is detailed later.

**Philosophy:** How does the character view the purpose of life and what core values do they hold?. “Survival of the strongest”, “freedom for all who earn it” and “knowledge leads to enlightenment” are all suitable examples.

**Weapons:** Characters begin with a single weapon and a sidearm if they wish. Available Weapons are Straight Sword, Curved Sword, Axe, Spear, Glaive, Staff and Maul. Typical sidearms are Knife, Darts and Bow.

**Armour:** A Character must choose an Armour Rating between 0 and 3.

**Styles:** Each character begins as either an Initiate in two styles or a Student in one. This includes both combat and magic Styles.

### Other Things to Consider

Although no more information is required to be written down for a character the player should see their character as so much more than the data on their sheet.



*What is the character’s primary drive and motivation?*

*What does the character look and dress like?*

*What is the character’s weapon like?*

Weapons are usually a prized possession and the broad weapon categories given contain a lot of subtypes. For example, a curved sword could look like a scimitar, katana or dao depending on the player’s wishes.

The process of creating characters can be both more enjoyable and give better results when it is carried out as a group. In particular, it helps give the GM and other players a better understanding of the characters.

During playtesting some players were disheartened when they saw their character had very similar or identical Element scores to that of another character, or used the same Style as them. This should not be seen as a problem, rather an opportunity!

If two characters appear very similar on paper the players should use the opportunity to highlight their differences in character. Even if they study the same style their philosophies of it could be different or they could be rivals under the same master.





## A Note on Content

All content in this document such as Styles, Uses for Elements, Special Weapons and Locations are not to be considered complete lists. The GM is encouraged to add his own content to his game as he sees fit and remove any content he does not wish to use.

# Using Elements

Some examples of which elements to use for certain tasks are listed below. For those that are not listed the GM must use their judgement to decide which two Elements should be used and may stray from the suggestions below if they wish. The GM may seek the players' input on which Elements should be used, but the decision is ultimately his.

Acrobatics: Earth + Water

Acting: Air + Fire

Archery: Earth + Water

Athletics: Earth + Fire

Awareness: Air + Water

Calligraphy: Fire + Water

Carpentry: Earth + Fire

Cartography: Air + Water

Climbing: Earth + Fire

Cooking: Air + Earth

Dance: Fire + Water

Drinking: Air + Earth

Deception: Air + Water

Empathy: Air + Water

Endurance: Earth + Fire

Farming: Earth + Water

Fishing: Earth + Water

Gardening: Earth + Water

Geography: Air + Earth

History: Air + Fire

Husbandry: Fire + Water

Horseriding: Earth + Water

Leadership: Air + Fire

Mathematics: Air + Water

Medicine: Air + Earth

Meditation: Fire + Water

Metalworking: Earth + Fire

Mountaineering: Earth + Fire

Music: Fire + Water

Painting: Fire + Water

Persuasion: Air + Fire

Philosophy: Air + Water

Pickpocketing: Air + Water

Poetry: Air + Fire

Resisting Toxins: Air + Earth

Reflexes: Air + Earth

Sailing: Earth + Water

Seduction: Air + Fire

Singing: Fire + Water

Sneaking: Air + Water

Storytelling: Air + Fire

Strategy: Air + Water

Survival: Air + Earth

Tea Ceremony: Air + Water

Wrestling: Earth + Fire





Some effects will tell you that a certain Element cannot be used. In this case it is not added to any rolls where it normally would be and when being compared with others it is always treated as being lower.

**Element Quick Guide**

Air + Earth	Air + Fire	Air + Water	Earth + Fire	Earth + Water	Fire + Water
Cooking	Acting	Awareness	Athletics	Acrobatics	Calligraphy
Drinking	History	Deception	Carpentry	Archery	Dance
Geography	Leadership	Empathy	Climbing	Farming	Husbandry
Medicine	Persuasion	Mathematics	Endurance	Fishing	Meditation
Reflexes	Poetry	Pickpocketing	Metalworking	Gardening	Music
Resisting Toxins	Seduction	Strategy	Mountaineering	Horse Riding	Painting
Survival	Storytelling	Tea Ceremony	Wrestling	Sailing	Singing

Many tasks will have a beneficial effect on the characters’ Element scores if carried out extensively. See Activities.

# Tests

A Test is essentially an unopposed task involving a single character or a group working towards the same goal. A simple test such as cooking a meal will use the task rules as normal. However, group tests will require every character to contribute somehow. Their specific contribution should be suggested by the player and approved by the GM and then they make the test as normal. After every test is complete the GM will compare the number of successes with failures and decide upon the result. As a general guide for a simple task the majority of characters would need to succeed whereas for a very risky task all of the characters may be required to succeed. For example, if sailing a ship over rough seas one character may use their Sailing skill, another could use Navigation or Cartography and a third could use Leadership or Music to boost morale.

The GM may also allow characters to attempt more difficult tasks as part of a group test in order to make up for the failures of others.

An alternative method is for the GM to have a sequence of tasks leading up to a final one that will determine the success or failure of the Test. Failing a task will mean the next task will be made more difficult whereas succeeding will make the following task easier.





# Combat

*Pinmei observed the scholar in his stance. She knew by his reputation that the man would be a worthy opponent but in her mind she was convinced her sword would bring a victory. Yet it was unusual for a scholar with the legendary wisdom of Jen Ma to ask so many questions before a duel. Had she been foolish to answer so plainly?*

*She sprung forward like a panther, sword arcing upwards in a flash. A splash of blood hit her tunic. The scholar slumped to the ground.*

*Such a fast defeat... this was not Jen Ma. This was a trap.*

When it is a character's turn to act in combat they generally have two choices. Attack their opponent or Focus. Focusing is detailed later in the document. To carry out an action such as picking up a weapon the character must forego an attack. Whatever their action the player should describe it appropriately, considering their Style and how it might appear in motion.

Hitting an opponent in combat is the same as any other opposed task. The attacker will use the two Elements of their attacking Style and the defender will use the Elements of their Defensive Style of choice. Everyone knows all the Lesser Styles and a character begins knowing one or more Legendary Styles, which will grant a special bonus. Note that a single attack could represent a number of strikes building up to one that could end the duel. Likewise, it could just as easily represent a single, finishing strike.

Characters take turns to act in order of Balance, from highest score to lowest. Tied Balance values are broken by rolling opposing dice.

Whenever they make an attack or are being attacked each combatant must declare which Style they are using. Only one style may be active at any time. The Attacker declares their Style first, with the Defender announcing theirs in response.

## The Code

Each Style also carries a Philosophy that the character must follow in order to progress in their learning. A key set of ideals shared by all styles is known as the Code or Universal Code of Conduct. A major point of the Code is that combat should be between two matched opponents. "Ganging Up" is considered deplorable and as such is nearly unseen. However, a duel between two opponents can begin without warning as soon as one attacks another. Assassins are a notable profession when considering this code, as important individuals are considered duty bound to protect themselves from them and so killing a noble in his sleep is not considered dishonourable in the slightest. In return, assassins will only kill their specific target and leave guards alive whenever possible.



Archers are even expected to abide by this code and the bow, or indeed any other ranged weapon, is typically only used against opponents who have agreed to its use. In most of these cases it will be against a fellow archer. It is seen primarily as a hunter's weapon and most melee fighters see its use against them as an insult to the proper ways of combat.

In addition it is considered appropriate for weaker fighters to surrender to stronger opponents, sheathing their weapons and withdrawing from the fight. Needless bloodshed is seen as a waste and mercy is always encouraged. Infact the ability to forecast defeat at the hands of an opponent and save bloodshed by surrendering is seen as a highly admirable skill.

This code of combat, combined with the island geography of the world has led to a much different type of warfare than in reality. Warbands will rarely be larger than a few dozen elite fighters and upon engaging the enemy they will shout their challenges to chosen opponents and pair off to fight. When one side is sufficiently weakened they will surrender, or else eventually be wiped out and the battle will be lost. Indeed many battles will boil down to a single engagement between the two strongest fighters present, with a warband surrendering upon losing their champion.

### **Universal Code of Combat Summary**

- Combat should be between two equally matched opponents and no others. They should have ample time to appraise eachother before engagement.
- Surrender of the weaker is the ideal resolution to a conflict. Death is regrettable but an accepted risk and rare necessity.
- With power comes the duty to protect oneself.

### **Breaking the Code**

A character that actively breaks this code will reduce their Balance to zero and be unable to progress higher than Initiate in any styles, reverting to Initiate in any styles they already know. They will have to re-learn the proper ways of combat from a Master before they can recover these lost techniques. When they next gain Student level in a style they also regain their lost Balance.

Some typical ways of breaking the Code are:

- Attacking someone already engaged in combat with another.
- Attacking one or more opponents as part of a group, including mass arrow fire.
- Killing an opponent that has openly surrendered.
- Continuing to fight an opponent after they have defeated you.





The following behaviour is usually seen as despicable but is **not** breaking the code.

- Tricking a much weaker opponent into fighting you.
- Attacking an opponent that has refused your challenge.
- Killing an opponent in a duel without the agreement that it is to the death.
- Ordering others to break the code.

## Multiple Attackers

*One after another they fell. Surprisingly, each masked soldier threw themselves at Kuto without fear, despite the pile of hewn bodies that was forming in the narrow doorway. Their blades were as sharp as his but their swings little more skillful than those of a butcher's apprentice. As he cut down each cowardly thug Kuto kept his gaze on Ok-Pun, who stood staring back into him from a safe distance. There the fight would begin.*

If more than one character intentionally chooses to attack the same opponent they will break the Universal Code and immediately (before rolling for the attack) suffer the consequences detailed above. However, each character after the first that attacks on each turn may add 1 to their attack roll. This bonus stacks with each following attacker. Generally a maximum of four attackers can attack the same opponent at once, with this number reduced appropriately if the defender is cornered, in a doorway, or has something to put their back to.

## Contests

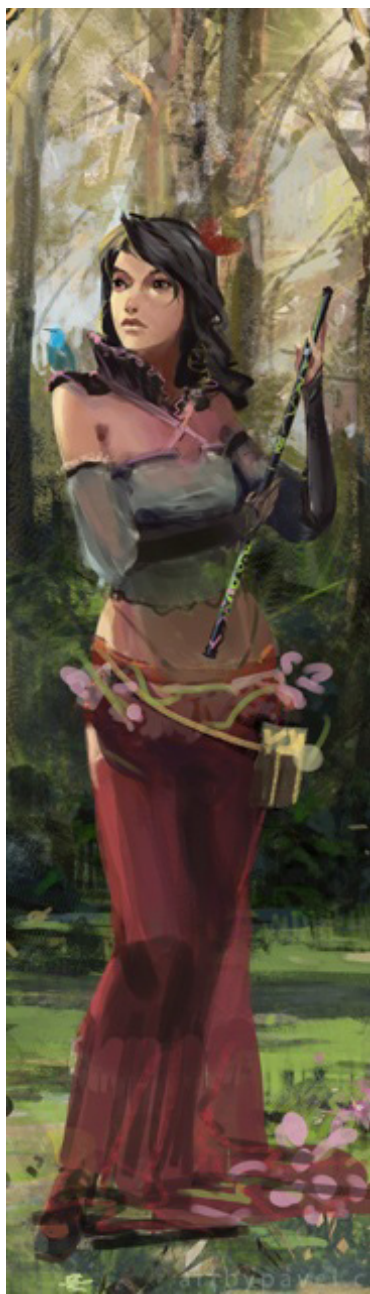
*So it would be down to the two champions to settle the dispute of their islands. Both had met blades countless times but no blood would be shed today. As the Origins from both islands had agreed today they would settle the feud once and for all in a series of contests. The champions knelt on the loose white sand and spread their blank parchments over wooden boards. A thousand lines of ink later there would be a winner.*

Contests such as horse racing, chess games and musical performances are placed equally alongside combat and great men are expected to possess a variety of skills other than duelling. A contest works exactly the same as combat but instead of using the elements of the characters' Styles the elements appropriate to the task are used. One player will still attack while the other defends, and then vice versa. However, when rolling for Damage the character does not subtract their Armour score as normal and instead may subtract the lowest of their Elements associated with the task. If the attacker has an appropriate Speciality for the Contest then their lowest associated Element is added to the Damage roll.

Of course, the effect of results should be modified to suit the task at hand. For example, when playing chess instead of blood being spilt on a Weakened roll it is far more likely that the character has fallen into a weak tacti-



cal position. Most Contests will never result in a character dying and instead the Killed result should be treated as being thoroughly defeated in a humiliating way that is likely to have further impact on the character's life. Certain Contests may have the characters use different Elements for attacking and defending or alternating throughout the contest. For instance, a fishing contest may include a round where the characters use Sailing, followed by one using Fishing, followed by one using Storytelling as they exaggerate their catch.



### Focusing

In place of attacking on their turn in a contest or combat a character may choose to Focus. They forego their attack and are now considered Focused. They may release this focus before any attack or defense roll, to which they will receive +1 to their roll and +1 to resulting Damage rolls. Once released they are no longer Focused. Focus is lost immediately after the action is completed. You cannot stack this bonus by Focusing multiple times. Focus is not carried over to new contests and duels. If for any reason a character cannot Focus, such as being affected by an opponent's ability, they will still use up their attack when they attempt to.

### Damage

A character that is hit in combat must roll a single die and subtract their Armour Value. Some weapons or styles used by the attacker may give a bonus to this damage roll or allow the defender a further bonus. When the final value is determined the following chart is consulted. Results below 1 are ignored.

The GM may decide to make a character take Damage in situations outside of combat, such as falling from a great height.

**1 or 2 - Staggered:** It hurt a lot but no blood is shed. The attacker may make a follow up attack against this character if they wish as they press on their attack while they have the advantage. If multiple Staggered results occur from the same attack, such as from an attacker using Twin Snake Style, they still only gain a single follow up attack.

**3 - Weakened:** Limbs are damaged and blood sprays. All of the character's Elements are reduced by one until he receives appropriate healing or rest, depending on the contest or duel in which they were Weakened. In addition their Armour Level is reduced by 1. This penalty stacks each time the character is weakened.

**4 - Defeated:** The character is totally at the mercy of their opponent, unable to continue to act and decidedly beaten. The attacker may choose to increase this result to Killed if they wish.

**5 or more - Killed:** The character is killed unless the attacker chooses to spare them, treating the result as Defeated.



This is the only point in the game where the character actually wants to roll low. This was a conscious decision for a number of reasons.

- I wanted to add a feeling of dread to being hit. Focusing on praying for a glancing blow (1) rather than a deadly one (6). When players are trying to roll high to avoid the damage it felt more like their character was cheating death somehow.
- I wanted to be able to have players add to Damage rolls they cause as a good thing. Players don't associate gaining the ability to subtract from rolls as a good thing.

Including Defeated and Killed may seem like redundancy but its something I've consciously decided to keep from previous editions. I like creating situations where the player has to halt a killing blow to spare their opponent or, despite already having them defeated, ruthlessly kill them where they stand. Keeping them as two results makes this clearer than combining them into a single "Defeated" result that you can elevate to Killed.

## Armour

Characters may wear Armour if they wish, which will be one of three Armour Ratings. Note that exceptionally tough characters may choose to have their Armour Rating represent their general toughness rather than actual equipment. This is still treated exactly the same as normal armour and is merely for flavour.

Armour Rating 1 represents basic padded armour.

Armour Rating 2 represents typical armour worn by soldiers or guards.

Armour Rating 3 represents heavy armour worn by heavy infantry or ceremonial guards.

Armour above Armour Rating 3 is incredibly rare and difficult to obtain.

A character's Balance suffers a penalty equal to their current Armour Level. Armour can never be reduced below zero.

I wanted armour to be powerful and impressive when used but also not something a lot of characters would use. To get the most out of armour a character has to really choose a Style that uses it to their advantage and ensure they have a high enough Balance not to suffer in its use. The alternative is a heavily armoured character that is actually rather easily defeated by a lighter, more skilled opponent. This feels right to the flavour of the game and achieves my design goals for armour.





## Attacking Styles

*The Student followed his Master across the green plain, fresh from a filling breakfast of smoked pork and bread. They approached a shallow pond where ducks swam. His master's spear lightly tapped the cool water.*

*"The Initiate must be like the pike. Lean. Focused. Hungry for knowledge".*

*With a splash, the master's spear sent a pair of resting ducks into motion, fleeing into the air before landing and waddling into a calmer pond.*

*"The Student must be like the duck. Able to leave the comfort of the water to walk or fly, never staying in one pond for too long."*

*"And what about you, Master?" asked the Student.*

*"The Master? The Master will become like the pig. Content, humble and..." the Master paused and lightly tapped his stomach, smiling "understanding his role to provide for others."*

Attacking Styles can only be used with certain weapons, which are detailed after their name. There are three levels to every style. Initiate, Student and Master. Each style will grant different benefits at each level, which will stack with previous abilities. Lesser Styles do not have levels in this way.

An Initiate has received some basic training in the techniques and philosophies of their style and knows how to apply them to their understanding of basic combat. In duels they appear little more skilled than a fighter trained in the lesser styles.

A Student has studied directly under a Master in their Style and so has learned some truly spectacular techniques. They also develop a deeper understanding of the philosophy behind their style and are able to train others in its teachings.

A Master has achieved true understanding of their Style and can perform combat manoeuvres unimaginable by others. They have defeated an existing Master and may now even establish their own school or adapt the Style into their own.

## A Note on Elements in Combat

When a character cannot use a particular element, such as through an effect of their enemy's combat style or location, it is treated as 0 whenever it would normally be added or subtracted to a roll or another number. However, the value of the element is not changed for the purposes of calculating Balance or comparing it to other scores.





Playtesting revealed that the majority of players would choose to begin with one combat Style at Student level rather than two at Initiate level. This is understandable, as initiate level is easier to achieve in a new style and Student abilities tend to be appealing to a starting character. However, I left the option to begin with two styles in for a number of reasons.

- I wanted characters to be able to begin with a “combo” that arises from using two styles alternately.
- I wanted the possibility for characters to be playable that aren’t dedicated combat students and may have just had some basic training in a couple of styles or some in combat and some in magic

Of course it should be noted that a GM may wish to allow characters in their game to start with more “levels” divided amongst Styles, perhaps even allowing starting characters to be Masters if they want a high-powered game. On the other hand a lengthy campaign could begin with characters knowing no styles and only having a single speciality.

### Lesser Styles

*Weapon Strike* (Any Melee Weapon) - Fire + Water.

*Brawling* (Unarmed) - Earth + Fire.

*Hunter’s Bow* (Bow) - Earth + Water

### Legendary Styles

Note: A list of Styles sorted by Elements used is found at the bottom of this list.

*Elephant Fist* (Unarmed) - Earth + Fire.

The stone crushes the pebble, the boulder crushes the stone. Crush the boulder.

Initiate: Ignore Armour Value penalties to Balance.

Student: Add Fire to Damage Rolls when Earth is higher than the defender’s.

Master: In place of dealing Damage a hit can be used to destroy a single piece of the target’s equipment.

*Harmony Wind* (Unarmed or Staff) - Air + Water.

Movement must be as a song, always suggesting a dozen directions in which the listener might be carried but each note seeming the one true way in hindsight.

Initiate: May be used as a Defensive Style.

Student: When the dice match (on attack or defence) the opponent cannot use their Earth or Fire scores.

Master: Automatically avoids any attacks that do not use Water.

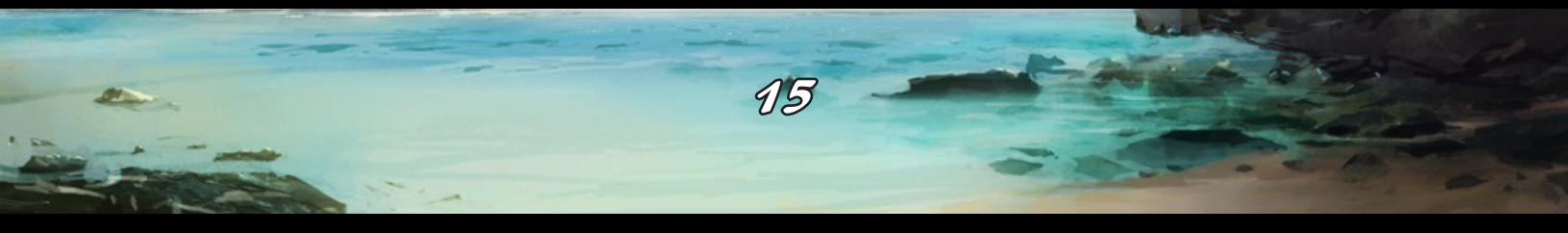
*Twilight Song* (Straight Sword) - Fire + Water

Turn away from deceptive light and embrace the cool sensation of darkness. There the human soul can be heard and its spirit seen.

Initiate: You are always focused in darkness or moonlight.

Student: Opponents cannot use Earth or Air in moonlit or a darkened environment.

Master: Add Water to Damage rolls.





*Warrior's Art* (Unarmed or Curved Sword) - Earth + Fire.

The warrior must be strong of body and of mind in equal parts. Hard of fist and foot and train their instincts to know how to use them.

Initiate: Balance is Doubled whenever dice match.

Student: The value of one die rolled when attacking may be raised by 1.

Master: Double Earth or Fire score when dice match.

*Hawk Talon* (Unarmed) - Earth + Water.

The hawk takes only what it needs and kills only for its own survival.

Initiate: Add Balance to Damage against unarmoured opponents.

Student: May choose to Weaken an opponent instead of rolling for damage normally on a hit.

Master: Ignore any armour.

*Grandfather Crutch* (Staff or Spear) - Air + Earth.

There is elegance in the mind and body that few men are truly aware of. Elegance is born out of simplicity and focus.

Initiate: May be used as a Defensive Style.

Student: +1 to Damage and Attack Rolls when Focused.

Master: On a successful Defence roll the attacker takes damage.

*Gentleman's Tongue* (Straight Sword) - Fire + Water.

A diplomat can kill more men with a word than a sword, but a sword can kill a thousand diplomats.

Initiate: Double Fire when it is higher than the defender's.

Student: Add Water to Damage if dice match.

Master: Roll two dice as normal but increase the lowest to match the highest.

*Cloud Tail* (Spear) - Air + Fire

The cloud must shed water as it floats, leaving soaked lands as it moves to dry.

Initiate: May treat any Damage you cause as Staggered instead of the rolled result.

Student: Ignore Armour when Air score is greater than the opponent's.

Master: Add Air score to Damage.

*General's Cry* (Curved Sword or Glaive) - Air + Fire.

When an army sees its General as a man full of the same anger, lust and fear that fills each of them they will follow him into death. When a soldier sees this in his opponent he will find his own fear doubled.

Initiate: Defenders cannot use Fire.

Student: Add Fire score to Damage.

Master: May treat any Damage you cause as Weakened instead of the rolled result.





*Blinding Sun* (Curved Sword or Axe) - Air + Fire

Be the generous hand that strikes on expectant palms.

Initiate: May be used Defensively.

Student: Whenever your opponent Focuses make an immediate attack.

Master: Add Fire score to Damage.

*Cloud Puncher* (Straight Sword or Unarmed) - Air + Water

From above the greatest challenge appears small.

Initiate: Opponent cannot use their Earth score when you are Focused.

Student: Add your opponent's highest Element score to Attack Rolls.

Master: Add your opponent's highest Element score to Damage Rolls.

*Falling Meteor* (Maul) - Fire + Water.

Be unstoppable in your movements and realise that obstacles are a lie. The shield, the helm and the skull are obstacles like any other.

Initiate: Opponent may not use Earth.

Student: Ignore Armour.

Master: Add Fire to Damage rolls.

*Dutiful Guard* (Spear or Glaive) - Earth + Water.

The faceless guard has saved the life of every noble, emperor and fellow guardsman in the land. Without him there is only death for all.

Initiate: May be used Defensively.

Student: You are always Focused if your opponent has hit you.

Master: Double Water score when attacking an opponent that has hit you.

*Leaping Viper* (Glaive) - Air + Fire

Step softly by the viper, for his reach is long and his bite deadly.

Initiate: Become Focused when you Stagger or Weaken an opponent.

Student: Add Fire to attack rolls when Focused.

Master: Automatically hit a Weakened opponent.

*Seeking Killer* (Spear) - Air + Water.

A war of a million spears can become a war of one with the proper thought.

Initiate: Become focused whenever your Balance is higher than the defender's.

Student: Add Water to Damage rolls when Focused.

Master: Opponents cannot use Earth, Water or Fire to Defend when you are Focused.





*Golden Fist* (Unarmed) - Air + Water.

The ultimate power of the fist is apparent to any who have seen it and unimaginable by all others.

Initiate: Double any bonuses gained from being Focused.

Student: Raise the lowest Attack die to match the highest when Focused.

Master: Double Air score.

*Willow Branch* (Staff) - Earth + Water

A great man must be ever willing to bend and adapt.

Initiate: May be used Defensively.

Student: When used Defensively choose a single ability of the attacker's style to ignore.

Master: Choose a single Element, opponents are unable to use it to attack or defend against you. This may be changed at any moment.

*Downward Current* (Unarmed) - Earth + Fire

If you fight the current you will drown, if you relax you will be crushed. Only the current can succeed.

Initiate: Opponents cannot use Water to defend.

Student: Whenever an opponent is Weakened they are also Staggered, and vice versa.

Master: May always choose to Weaken and Stagger an opponent instead of rolling for damage as normal.

*Stinging Bee* (Knife or Dart) - Fire + Water.

Become small. Become silent. Become insignificant. Now you will become death.

Initiate: Character always acts first.

Student: Each hit causes damage twice.

Master: Each hit causes damage d6 times (minimum of two).

*Leaning Crane* (Curved Sword) - Air + Water

That which cannot be done in a single movement, you are not yet ready to do.

Initiate: Add Balance to attack and damage rolls on your first attack against an opponent.

Student: You are always Focused until you miss an attack.

Master: Double Balance when Focused.

*Valiant Prawn* (Straight Sword or Axe) - Air + Fire

An underestimated attacker delivers an unexpected death.

Initiate: Add Fire to Attack rolls and Damage against a Focused opponent.

Student: Add Air to Attack rolls against a Focused opponent.

Master: Opponents cannot use Water to defend.





*Flock of Doves* (Glaive or Curved Sword) - Air + Fire

The softest diversion can lead to the hardest downfall.

Initiate: May be used Defensively.

Student: Opponent may be Weakened instead of rolling for damage normally.

Master: Always strike first.

*Burrowing Shark* (Unarmed or Axe) - Earth + Fire

Be the shark of the land, feast on the unsuspecting.

Initiate: Add Fire to Damage against any opponents you attack before they attack you.

Student: Always strike first in combat.

Master: May be used defensively and subtract both Earth and Armour from attackers' Damage rolls.

*Thunder Cloud* (Maul) - Earth + Fire.

The wise man and the barbarian share many fears. Where the savage will cower the wise man will seek to explain. This moment of wonder is their undoing.

Initiate: +1 to Attack and Damage Rolls against defenders using Air or Water. +2 against opponents using both.

Student: Add opponent's Air score to Attack rolls.

Master: Ignore any Armour.

*Blooded Stone* (Maul or Unarmed) - Air + Earth

The brutality of a wound can enrage a fighter into victory or shatter their spirit.

Initiate: Ignore the effects of being Weakened.

Student: When you Weaken an opponent double the penalties they receive.

Master: Add Earth to Damage.

*Defiant Way* (Axe or Unarmed) - Earth + Fire

Force your opponent to fight on your land, against your sharpest weapon with their dullest.

Initiate: Choose one Element, your opponent cannot use it.

Student: You may use this Style with any Weapon. When this matches your opponent's weapon you are always Focused.

Master: Add Air to Damage.

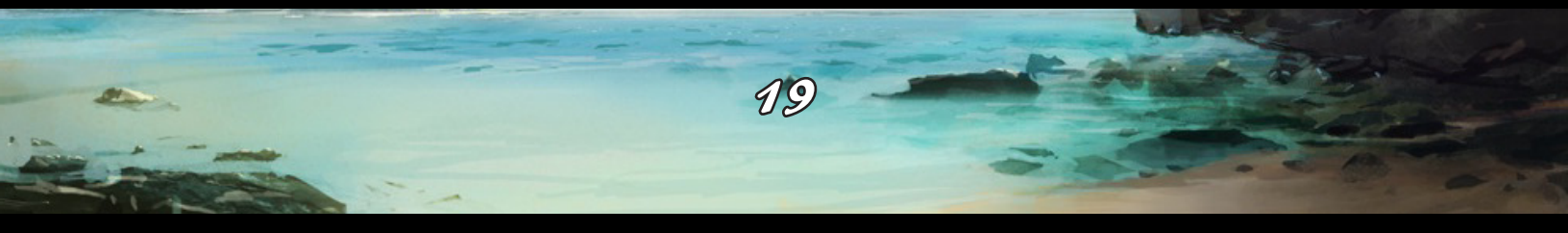
*Raging Fool* (Unarmed) - Air + Fire.

There is order in chaos.

Initiate: Opponents cannot Focus.

Student: Balance is added to attack rolls when the dice do not match but not when they do.

Master: May be used as a Defensive Style. Attackers subtract Balance from their attack roll.





*Thousand Raindrops* (Straight Sword) - Air + Fire.

In the storm even the gnat is struck.

Initiate: Opponents cannot use Air to defend.

Student: Opponents cannot use Fire to defend.

Master: Opponents cannot use Earth or Water to defend.

*Flesh and Blood* (Axe) - Air + Earth

The humblest solutions can tear apart the most complex obstacle.

Initiate: When Dice Match add Earth to your attack roll.

Student: When you Release Focus on an attack you may choose to modify any damage rolls to Staggered if you wish.

Master: Your opponent cannot subtract anything from the Damage roll.

*Jade Lobster* (Curved Sword or Axe) - Earth + Water.

The moment is the most important teaching of the way of the Lobster. Knowing the moment and knowing your power to act is knowing your enemy's death.

Initiate: Add opponent's Fire score to damage rolls.

Student: When the attack dice match ignore Armour.

Master: Treat any opponent's Damage rolls of Weakened or Defeated as Killed.

*Journey's End* (Unarmed or Knife) - Air + Water.

To kill is not to show a lack of respect. Every life ends. The best end at the hands of another. Give death only to the great.

Initiate: Add Balance to attacks when attacking an opponent that has not yet attacked you.

Student: Treat Staggered or Weakened as Defeated.

Master: Ignore any Armour and add Water to Damage Rolls.

*Gibbon Palm* (Unarmed) - Air + Earth.

Softness can shatter hardness as the whisper can cut through the crowd's roar.

Initiate: Air is Doubled until the end of your turn when attack dice match.

Student: When you hit an opponent they may not subtract anything from the damage roll.

Master: May treat any damage roll as Defeated.

*Twin Snake* (Unarmed or Darts) - Air + Water.

When faced with two snakes it is certain you will feel both sets of fangs and never the one.

Initiate: Each hit causes Damage twice at -1 to the Damage Roll.

Student: When dice match add Water to Damage rolls.

Master: Increase the value of the lowest die rolled to match the highest on attacks.





*Shining Beetle* (Straight Sword or Curved Sword) - Air + Earth

Before the beetle opens its case it knows where to fly.

Initiate: May be used defensively.

Student: Add Air to Armour score.

Master: Double Earth when focused.

*Gamblers Hand* (Unarmed or Straight Sword) - Fire + Water

You win some and lose some. In the end these outcomes are no different.

Initiate: Treat any unmodified attack rolls of 7 as if the dice were matching.

Student: When the dice match you may force your opponent to reroll the resulting Damage roll once.

Master: On attacks roll five dice and choose which two to use.

*Boar Herder* (Glaive or Spear) - Earth + Fire

Deliver your lessons at an appropriate distance.

Initiate: Add your opponent's Fire to attack rolls if they are not using a Spear, Glaive or Staff.

Student: You may choose to treat any damage roll as Staggered in addition to the normal result.

Master: May be used defensively. Add opponent's Fire to defence rolls.

*Immaculate Strike* (Staff or Maul) - Earth + Water

One strike to end your troubles.

Initiate: Add Balance to attack rolls when Focused.

Student: Add Earth to damage rolls when Focused.

Master: Double the penalties you cause whenever you Weaken an opponent.

*Starving Hound* (Unarmed) - Earth + Fire

The closer death creeps towards him the more dangerous the beast becomes.

Initiate: You are always Focused against an opponent that has hit you.

Student: Add Fire to damage against an opponent that has hit you.

Master: Ignore the effects of being Weakened or Staggered.

*Blinding Cinder* (Staff or Glaive) - Fire + Water

The tiniest speck of flame can bring the strongest to tears when properly directed.

Initiate: Become Focused whenever you hit an opponent.

Student: Add opponent's Earth score to Attack rolls when Focused.

Master: Add opponent's Fire score to Attack rolls when Focused.





*Closing Fangs* (Unarmed or Straight Sword) - Earth + Water

For the unsuspecting prey the fangs close slowly.

Initiate: If you Weaken an opponent they are also Staggered.

Student: If your Water exceeds your opponents you may choose to treat any Damage roll as Weakened instead of rolling.

Master: Add your opponent's Fire score to Attack Rolls.

*Peaceful Hammer* (Maul) - Air + Earth

When all is destroyed, there is peace.

Initiate: Add Air to Damage against opponents wielding a weapon.

Student: Add opponent's Fire to attack roll.

Master: If your Earth exceeds your opponent's you are always Focused.

*Lion Rampant* (Unarmed) - Earth + Fire

A symbol cannot be defeated.

Initiate: Opponents can never be Focused.

Student: Add Fire to damage rolls.

Master: Opponents cannot use Fire or Water to defend.

*Thundering Tsunami* (Staff or Maul) - Earth + Water

When the earth rumbles, it sends oceans fleeing toward the land.

Initiate: Ignore opponent's Armour.

Student: Add opponent's Water score to Damage rolls.

Master: If you hit your opponent they are Weakened in addition to rolling for Damage normally.

*Abyssal Embrace* (Axe or Maul) - Earth + Water

Calm waters can devour the unwary soul.

Initiate: You are always Focused.

Student: Add your Balance to attack rolls.

Master: Add your opponent's Balance to attack rolls.

*Leviathan's Sting* (Darts or Spear) - Fire + Water

Grasping from the deep, there is no escape from its burning sting.

Initiate: Fire is doubled when dice match.

Student: An opponent you have hit cannot Focus or use their Air score.

Master: Add Fire to damage rolls.





*Dust Storm (Darts) - Air + Earth*

Even sand can become deadly, when borne by the wind.

Initiate: Opponent cannot be Focused.

Student: Opponent cannot use their Air score.

Master: Whenever you hit an opponent you may Weaken them instead of rolling for Damage.

*Glacier Shatter (Straight Sword, Curved Sword, Glaive) - Air + Water*

The strongest metal will shatter in winter's breath.

Initiate: Opponent cannot use their Earth score.

Student: Styles that do not have Fire as one of their two Elements cannot be used to defend against your attacks.

Master: Opponents add their Armour score to damage rolls against them instead of subtracting.

*Shroud of Frost (Staff or Glaive) - Air + Water*

Even the lion moves slowly when ice covers the ground.

Initiate: An opponent you have hit cannot use their Fire score to attack or defend.

Student: Can be used Defensively. You may use your Water score in place of Armour at any time.

Master: When your opponent rolls to defend treat non-matching dice as zero.

*Desert Heat (Spear) - Fire + Water*

The sun weighs heaviest when the air is still.

Initiate: May be used as a Defensive Style.

Student: Whenever an opponent misses you, they must choose an Element with a score higher than zero. This is reduced to zero for the duration of the duel, ignoring location modifiers.

Master: For every Element your opponent has at zero, add one to their Damage rolls.

*Generous Host (Unarmed) - Air + Earth*

A Gracious host knows when to give and when to accept.

Initiate: If your opponent attacked you before you attacked them, double your Balance.

Student: Replace any one of your opponent's Element scores with yours.

Master: After you have both rolled you may swap any of your attacking dice for any of your opponents defending dice.

*Studios Mind (Straight Sword) - Air + Earth*

We learn more from our mistakes than our triumphs.

Initiate: Become Focused whenever you miss an opponent.

Student: If your last attack missed add Air to attack rolls.

Master: Whenever you miss an attack you may take a Lesson Token labeled with the name of your opponent.





*Spirit's Shadow* (Unarmed or Straight Sword) - Fire + Water

Do not take the material things of this world for more than they truly are, a mere illusion of but one reality.

Initiate: You may choose to ignore any effects from your location.

Student: Opponents cannot use Earth to defend.

Master: May be used defensively. Any attacks using Earth cannot hit you.

*Commanding Word* (Axe or Maul) - Air + Fire

One word well placed will change the centuries.

Initiate: Add Fire to Damage when you Release Focus.

Student: The first time you Focus during a duel your opponent is Weakened.

Master: Whenever you Focus your opponent takes Damage.

*Star Tumble* (Axe or Curved Sword) - Earth + Water

Men believe they can predict the stars. Shatter this belief.

Initiate: You may make an attack immediately after Focusing.

Student: You may treat any Damage result as Staggered if you wish.

Master: You may use any two Elements in place of Earth + Water with this Style, as well as any Weapon.

## **Defensive Styles**

Defensive Styles can only be used with the weapons detailed after their name.

### **Lesser Styles**

*Careful Parrying* (Any Weapon or Unarmed) - Fire + Water.

*Swift Dodging* (Any Weapon or Unarmed) - Air + Water.

### **Legendary Styles**

*Iron Tortoise* (Any Weapon or Unarmed) - Air + Earth.

Even the mighty storm knows the mountain will not yield to its hail or thunder.

Initiate: Add Armour rating to Defence Rolls.

Student: Armour Value is never ignored.

Master: Subtract Armour Rating from Damage Rolls twice.

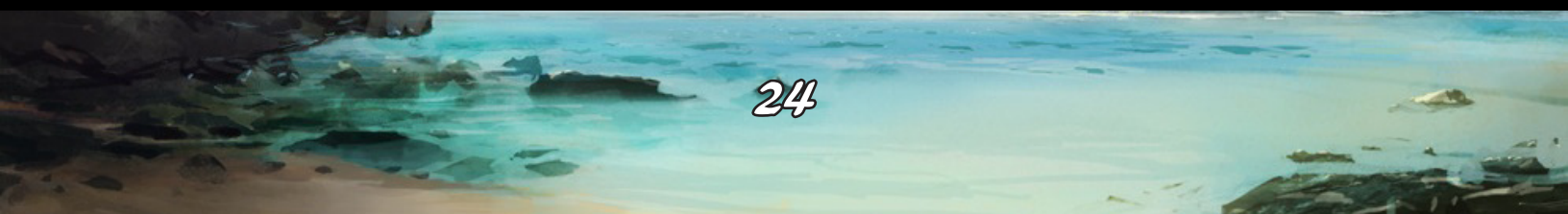
*Divine Step* (Curved Sword or Straight Sword) - Air + Water.

The mightiest beasts must always be trapped before they are killed.

Initiate: When dice match opponent takes damage.

Student: Add Air to Damage against opponents you have not attacked.

Master: Roll three dice and choose two to use.





*Stone Guardian* (Maul or Glaive) - Air + Earth.

The Unbreakable will stand for eternity.

Initiate: May use Earth in place of Armour at any time.

Student: Ignore Damage results of Staggered.

Master: Subtract your Balance score from Damage rolls.

*Scorpion's Nest* (Spear or Glaive) - Earth + Fire.

Few predators will thrust their bodies into a nest full of stings and poison.

Initiate: If either dice show a 6 the attacker is hit.

Student: On a successful defence the attacker is hit. No more than one hit may be caused from a single defence.

Master: Attackers must take a hit whenever they attack.

*Harsh Master* (Maul or Staff) Air + Water

A lesson is best taught with a heavy hand and forgiving mind.

Initiate: Attackers cannot use their Air score unless it exceeds yours.

Student: Any character that misses you while unfocused takes Damage.

Master: Double Air score.

*Storm Brewer* (Any Weapon) - Air + Water.

He who invites the storm will be best prepared to face it.

Initiate: Attackers cannot use their Water score unless it exceeds yours.

Student: Attackers cannot use their Fire score if it exceeds yours.

Master: Subtract opponent's Fire score from Damage Rolls.

*Tiger Skin* (Any Weapon) - Fire + Water.

The predator does not fear the predator.

Initiate: If your Fire score is higher than the attacker they cannot use theirs.

Student: May subtract Fire from Damage Rolls.

Master: Become Focused whenever your opponent hits you.

*Dragonfly's Weave* (Curved Sword, Glaive or Axe) - Fire + Water

The fragile must be untouchable, the slow must be strong. The wise can be both.

Initiate: Whenever an attack misses you, become Focused.

Student: Add Water to Defence rolls when Focused.

Master: May be used as an Attacking Style. Add Fire to attack rolls when Focused.





*Meteor Dance* (Straight Sword or Spear) - Air + Fire

When all around you is destruction you must find your sanctuary in places unseen.

Initiate: Add attacker's Armour Level to defence rolls.

Student: Attackers may not use their Earth score.

Master: Add Air to Armour score.

*Open Claw* (Unarmed) - Air + Water.

An open hand can take what it wishes. A well-trained mind will know what to take.

Initiate: Add Air to rolls when defending against Unarmed opponents.

Student: Attackers may not use their Fire score when attacking.

Master: Attackers may not use their Earth score when attacking.

*Stone Breaker* (Curved Sword, Axe or Maul) - Earth + Fire.

Take the weapon, take the hand, take the arm, give mercy.

Initiate: Attackers may not use their Earth score.

Student: On a successful defence the attacker drops their weapon.

Master: On a successful defence the attacker's weapon is destroyed and unarmed attackers take damage.

*Soul Mirror* (Curved Sword or Straight Sword) - Earth + Water

Your greatest enemy is yourself reflected.

Initiate: Add your opponent's Balance to yours.

Student: Add your opponent's Balance to your Armour level.

Master: Add one of your opponent's Element scores to your matching Element score.

*Upstream Flow* (Unarmed) - Earth + Water

Let the waves crash on you as you move upstream

Initiate: Become Focused whenever your opponent is.

Student: Ignore Staggered results when taking Damage.

Master: Ignore Weakened results when taking Damage.

*Burning Forge* (Unarmed) - Air + Fire

A child will only ever touch a hot stove once.

Initiate: An opponent you have hit or caused damage to cannot use their Earth or Fire scores.

Student: If an attacker hits you they take damage immediately afterwards.

Master: Add Fire to damage rolls.





*Closed Circle* (Any Weapon) - Air + Earth

Permit not a breath of your opponent in nor an ounce of your spirit out.

Initiate: Add Balance to Defence rolls.

Student: None of your Elements, Balance or Armour can ever be reduced or ignored by an opponent's Ability.

Master: Choose one Ability of your opponent's Attacking Style to ignore.

*Last Warning* (Straight Sword or Spear) - Fire + Water

Mercy often comes seconds before Wrath.

Initiate: Become Focused when an attacker misses you.

Student: If an attacker misses you while you are Focused you Release Focus and hit them immediately.

Master: If an attacker hits you they take Damage.

*Sudden Shift* (Any Weapon) - Earth + Water

The river's flow can shift the greatest mountain.

Initiate: Your opponent cannot use their Earth score.

Student: If your enemy hit you on your last turn they cannot use any of their Elements on this attack.

Master: If you did not use this Style on your last defence roll add your Earth score twice.

*Badger's Barricade* (Unarmed) - Earth + Fire

When the passion of defence fails, release the fury of attack.

Initiate: Add Fire to Defence rolls.

Student: If your opponent has hit you, you may use this Style to attack.

Master: Add Fire to Attack rolls.

*Gaping Chasm* (Any Weapon) - Air + Earth

When the earth itself splits, it can divide even the most ardent lovers.

Initiate: Unarmed attackers only roll a single die when attacking you. This means the dice never count as matching.

Student: Attackers using any weapon other than Staff, Spear, Glaive or Darts only roll a single die when attacking you.

Master: On a successful defence your opponent is Weakened.

*Strategic Savant* (Any Weapon) - Air + Fire

The greatest fight is won before the sword is drawn.

Initiate: You may double any bonuses gained from Activities carried out that day.

Student: You may double any bonuses gained from Location.

Master: Your opponent ignores any bonuses gained from their Activities or Location.





*Insistant Denial* (Curved Sword) - Air + Fire

No.

Initiate: If either of your attacker's dice show a 6 the attack misses.

Student: Ignore any Damage rolls against you that show a 6.

Master: If either of your defence dice show a 6 your attacker misses.

*Blood Sharer* (Straight Sword, Curved Sword or Axe) - Earth + Fire

Share every drop your attacker draws from you.

Initiate: Whenever your opponent Weakens you they are Weakened themselves.

Student: You may treat any Staggered results against you as Weakened instead.

Master: When your dice match, remove any penalties from being Weakened.

*Burning Calm* (Unarmed or Staff) - Fire + Water

Inharmony is the greatest threat of all.

Initiate: If your Fire and Water scores match add Balance to your defence rolls.

Student: If your attacker's Fire and Water scores do not match they cannot use either.

Master: When your dice match your attacker takes Damage.

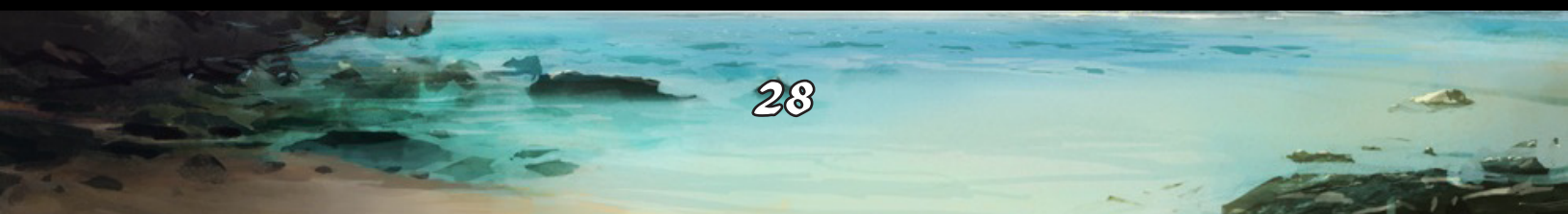
*Empty Vessel* (Spear or Unarmed) - Earth + Water

Leave not a ripple in your wake.

Initiate: If you are not wearing armour add Balance to defence rolls.

Student: Armoured opponents cannot use their Earth or Water scores.

Master: Double your Balance score when unarmoured.





## Style Quick Guide

### Attacking Styles

Air + Earth	Air + Fire	Air + Water	Earth + Fire	Earth + Water	Fire + Water
Grandfather Crutch	Cloud Tail	Harmony Wind	Elephant Fist	Hawk Talon	Twilight Song
Blooded Stone	General's Cry	Cloud Puncher	Warrior's Art	Dutiful Guard	Gentleman's Tongue
Flesh and Blood	Blinding Sun	Seeking Killer	Downward Current	Willow Branch	Falling Meteor
Gibbon Palm	Leaping Viper	Golden Fist	Burrowing Shark	Jade Lobster	Stinging Bee
Shining Beetle	Valiant Prawn	Leaning Crane	Thunder Cloud	Immaculate Strike	Gambler's Hand
Peaceful Hammer	Flock of Doves	Journey's End	Boar Herder	Closing Fangs	Blinding Cinder
Dust Storm	Thousand Raindrops	Twin Snake	Starving Hound	Thundering Tsunami	Leviathan's Sting
Generous Host	Raging Fool	Glacier Shatter	Defiant Way	Abyssal Embrace	Desert Heat
Studious Mind	Commanding Word	Shroud of Frost	Lion Rampant	Star Tumble	Spirit's Shadow

### Defensive Styles

Air + Earth	Air + Fire	Air + Water	Earth + Fire	Earth + Water	Fire + Water
Iron Tortoise	Meteor Dance	Divine Step	Scorpion's Nest	Soul Mirror	Tiger Skin
Stone Guardian	Burning Forge	Harsh Master	Stone Breaker	Upstream Flow	Dragonfly's Weave
Closed Circle	Strategic Savant	Storm Brewer	Badger's Barricade	Sudden Shift	Last Warning
Gaping Chasm	Insistant Denial	Open Claw	Blood Sharer	Empty Vessel	Burning Calm





In designing the levels within each Style I followed a few clear guidelines:

- Initiate level abilities should be simple.
- Student level abilities should build on the Initiate's somehow but not be innately more powerful.
- Master level abilities can break the rules.

In addition to this my priority within each Style was creating a specific feeling to it. I wanted the players to be able to picture how it might look in motion and be excited about using it in play. This was more important to me than ensuring that every Style was balanced with each other and that no gamebreaking combinations existed.

## Locations

*The waterfall beat down on the lake mercilessly. From inside the cavern it sounded like a dozen falls and bathed the air in stoney echoes. On the cold, dark stone there was a low wooden table covered in ivory tiles. Each tile's marking held great meaning to anyone familiar with the game and the opponents' eyes flashed around the board in an attempt to absorb it all. The barrage of sound seemed to at once overload the mind and utterly clear it of distractions.*

Location has a huge affect on combat and contests. Here are some locations and the effects they have on the characters. The most common effect is to either increase or decrease an Element's score by one for all characters present. Note that this will often affect a character's Balance score as a side-effect.

*Uneven Ground:* The character with the higher Air + Fire total gains +2 to Attack rolls as they claim the high ground.

*Bubbling River:* +1 Water.

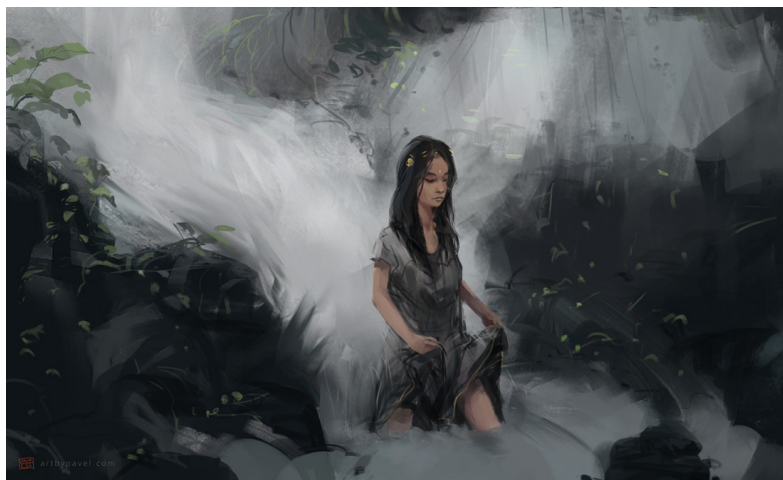
*Windswept Plains:* +1 Earth.


*Dark Cave:* +1 Water, -1 Air.

*Total Darkness:* Earth and Air may not be used.

*Duelling Stage:* +1 to each character's strongest Element (if tied choose one)

*Snowpeaked Mountaintop:* +1 Air, -1 Fire.





*Soothing Garden: -1 Fire, +1 Balance.*

*Ice Sheet: -1 Fire.*

*Meditation Chamber: +1 Balance.*

*Void Shrine: Reduce all Elements to match the lowest for each character.*

*Raging Volcano: +1 Fire, -1 Balance.*

*Lilly Pond: +1 Water and Balance.*

Environment should be considered for every contest, as a further tactical consideration for the participants.

## Activities

*Kuto sloped his body close to his steed as they picked up speed. Patches of tall grass shot by in a teal blur as the Red Rider cut through the wind. His muscles felt like iron, his mind focused and his soul prepared for the battle ahead.*

Carrying out extended, productive sessions of certain activities may give characters a temporary +1 Bonus to one Element score used (player's choice), which will last for the rest of the day. Suitable activities include gardening, poetry, music and calligraphy but any activity that the player can justify as enhancing one of their elements may be used. Only one of these bonuses may be active at a given time. Each of these activities may only be attempted once each day for the purposes of enhancing elements and at least an hour should be spent carrying out the Activity.

If a difficult task is carried out (target number 12) this bonus may be shared with one other character present. For a very difficult task (target number 14) the bonus may apply to all characters present. The element improved may differ from that of the character performing the activity as long as it is still one of the two Elements used. The Difficulty of the Activity must be decided on before making the roll.

Certain types of Tea and Food may also give a similar bonus. Generally these will be difficult to find and prepare (requiring a separate activity). Someone skilled in preparation must succeed at a difficult task (target number 12) to provide themselves and the other characters partaking with a bonus to any one Element and a Penalty to another. This bonus will last for the rest of the day and may stack with effects from Activities.

## Lesson Tokens

A character may gain a Lesson Token whenever they win or lose a contest or duel with another character. The token will be labeled with the name of the character they have defeated or were defeated by. They may never have more than one Lesson Token and taking a new one will replace the existing token. A character may choose



not to take a new token if they wish to keep their current one.

The token may be spent at any point to reroll a single roll, as long as the character marked on the token is present. Upon seeing the result of this new roll the character may choose to ignore it if they wish, keeping the previous result. The roll may be for a Test, Contest, Attack Roll, Defence Roll or Damage roll when hit. It may not be used to reroll Damage rolls you cause.

While spending the token the player is encouraged to describe the lesson they have learned from the contest in which they gained the token, and how it applies to the current situation.



## Learning

*The young man reached and slowly pushed a tile a few inches forward, quietly clicking as it tapped another. The teacher smiled. She knew that she had lost, but through her student's success she felt true Mastery.*

Characters may learn a new Style by training with a character that is at least a Student in the Style. Typically a full day of studying and training is required, after which the character will become an Initiate in the Style provided they can successfully carry out a sequence of movements using the Style. This is a normal test using the associated Elements of the style.





To become a Student in a Style requires studying under a Master. These are difficult to find and will typically set challenges before the character is deemed worthy of learning the new technique. The challenges will always include learning a new Speciality under the teachings of the Master, which may at first seem unrelated to the style. They must then pass a difficult test using the associated Elements of the style, which can be attempted once a day under supervision of the Master.

Only by defeating a Master in a duel can a Student become a Master themselves. Of course this also requires the Master to have deemed the Student as being ready.

New Specialities may be gained much in the same way as a Style, by training with someone possessing the Speciality and passing a test at the end of the day.

Element scores are only rarely permanently changed for a character. When a character becomes a Master of a Style they may increase one of the associated Elements of that Style by one. If the Mastery of this Style is lost through any means the Element score is also reduced back to its old value.

## Superior Weapons

Certain weapons are designed to be able to fill the roles of two other weapons. For example, a Halberd can count as both an Glaive or a Spear and as such can use Styles as either. These superior weapons are not available to a newly created character and they must be found on their journey or created specifically for them. Creating a Superior Weapon is a very difficult (target number 14) task. Some example Superior Weapons follow.

*Halberd*: Glaive or Spear.

*Flanged Maul*: Axe or Maul.

*Double-Weighted Staff*: Staff or Maul.



# Legendary Weapons

*Bright Shimmer may have appeared to anyone else as a highly polished and somewhat ornate shortsword, but as soon as your hand lifts it the true nature of the weapon is clear. Forged by the legendary Master Go-Ang as his final work there are no blades that can match it in the hands of a skilled swordsman.*

Legendary Weapons are incredibly rare and getting hold of one is no easy feat. Holding onto one may be even harder. Each weapon will carry with it a certain Ability. At the start of each turn a character using a suitable style for the weapon may replace a single Ability from the Style with that from the weapon. They may choose to ignore this and use it as a normal weapon. Weapons can be used with both attacking and defensive styles but only Legendary styles. Note that a character must declare whether or not they are using the weapon's Ability at the start of each round (whether attacking or defending). For example, they may not use a Style's Ability at the start of an attacking round and then switch to the weapon's Ability for the attack itself.

*Bright Shimmer* (Straight Sword): If your Balance is higher than your opponent double your Air score.

*The Kanama Blade* (Curved Sword): Roll three dice and choose which two to use.

*Sun's Hand* (Axe): Add Air or Fire to attack/defence rolls.

*Slaughter's Fist* (Maul): If your opponent is Weakened double your Fire score.

*Crab Breaker* (Maul): If you hit an opponent destroy their Armour.

*Traveller's Companion* (Staff): Double your Balance.

*Sky Piercer* (Spear): Opponent cannot use their Air score.

*Eternal Guardian* (Glaive): Style may be used as an Attacking and Defensive style.





# Creating Styles

A character may create a new combat Style when they are a Master of at least two Styles. The new Style must be based upon an existing style but can swap up to two of its abilities for abilities of an equal level from any other Style the character is a Master in. For example, a character that is a Master of Jade Lobster Style may wish to create a new style by swapping its Initiate Ability for that of Harmony Wind Style as long as he is also a master in that style. The new style uses the elements and weapons of the style it is based upon, in this case Jade Lobster, and is given a new name.

To successfully create the style the Master must spend all day working on it.

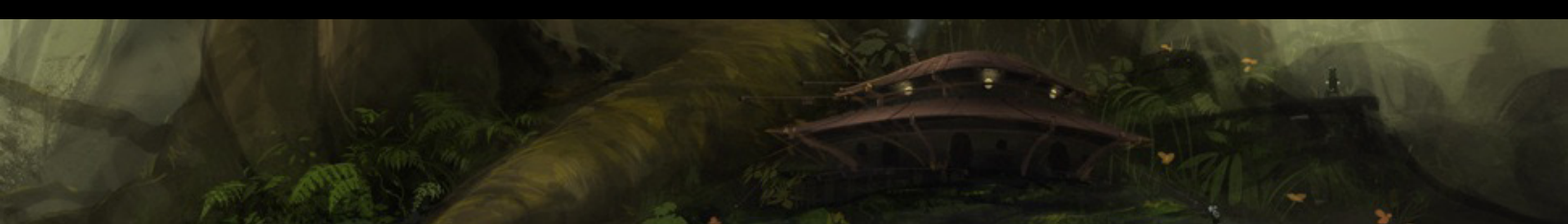
# Magic

When designing how magic would fit into the game I had a few key rules in mind.

- Magic should never replace skill in combat or specialities, but should be useful to duels and contests indirectly.
- Starting characters should have access to magic.
- Magic should further the focus on preparation and cooperation and encourage setting and character development.
- No direct Element manipulation. Fire magic is not the ability to throw fireballs or give a +1 Fire buff.
- Be consistent with the other mechanics of the game.

In addition I wanted magic to be subtle, especially for mere initiates, while wanting to keep the theme of allowing Masters to have exceptional abilities.

Individuals can study the art of magic, sorcery or witchcraft, the name depending on who you ask. Likewise, a practitioner may consider themselves a scholar, shaman, priest or many other things. What is constant is that magic is always linked to a single Element. A character can only attempt to use magic linked to that Element if they are trained in that form of magic. In this way types of Magic are just like Styles and should be listed alongside them on a character's information. They are learned in exactly the same way as combat Styles and a character may be created with them just as any other Style. However, when becoming a Master of a magic style there is no duel with an existing master. Instead they will be required to pass a very difficult set of tests dependant on the Master and the style. Masters tend to be cautious of sharing this power, so the test should be a significant challenge and test of character.



Magic differs from combat styles in that at each level the wielder will be able to use a range of abilities, even creating their own using the examples given as a guide. A character will detail what exactly they want their spell to do before they attempt to cast it. In this way Magic is very broad in its abilities and presents users with the chance to be flexible in how they use it.

Casting a spell is just like any other test but only one Element is added to the roll, with Balance added in place of a second Element. Balance is still added to the roll again if the two dice match. Using magic usually requires particular ingredients or materials and a certain amount of time, even if the result is a failure. Characters will have a level of mastery over a style of magic in the same way as combat Styles. This determines what abilities they can gain from their magic and the ease with which they can do so.

An ability of an equal level to your mastery of the magic style will be difficult (Target 12) to achieve and takes about an hour.

An ability one level below (such as Initiate to a Student) will be normal difficulty (Target 10) and takes about a minute.

An ability two levels below (Initiate to a Master) requires no roll and takes no time at all.

## Magic Styles

Note that the abilities of each style of magic listed below are merely a guide. The players and GM may agree on other abilities being suitable for a style as long as they are in fitting with the style. Each style should be broad in its abilities and a character is free to add their own specific flavour to the abilities.

Individual example abilities are separated by fullstops.

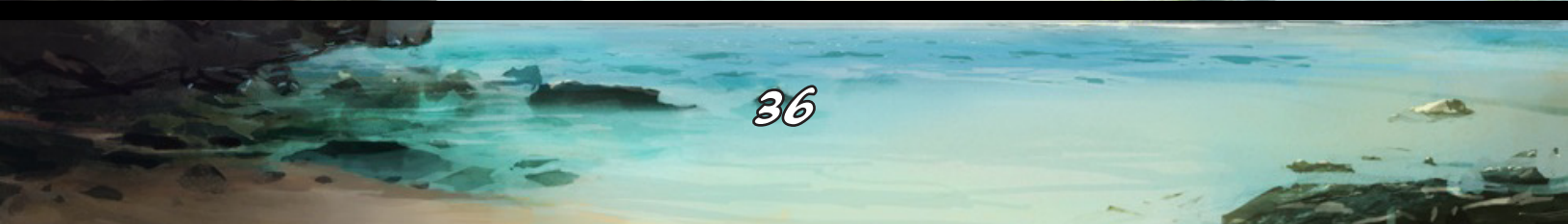
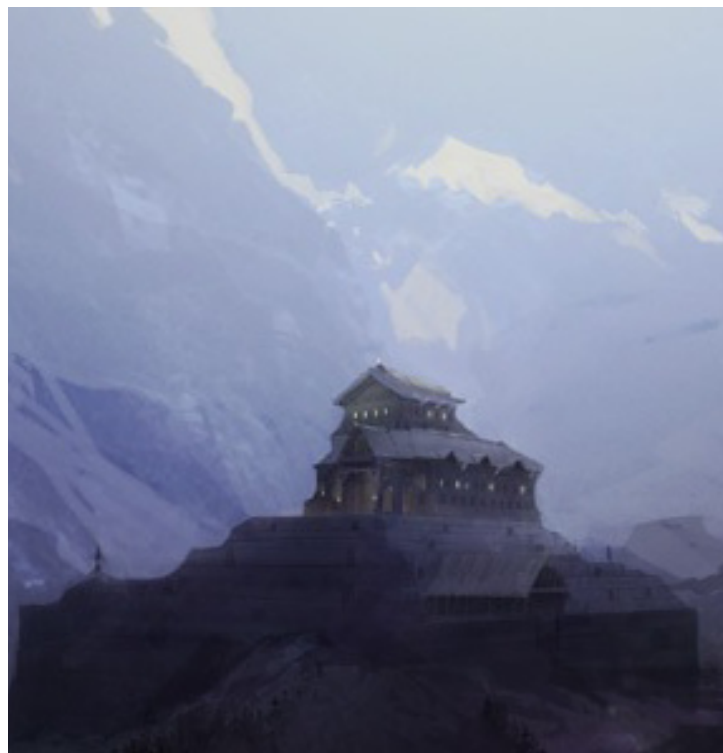
### *Air Magic*

This magic uses the power of the mind and soul, drawing from inner power and channeling it outwards.

Initiate: Convey a simple message to another on the same island. Ignore the effects of hunger, thirst or tiredness.

Student: Become temporarily immune to even intense pain while concentration is maintained. Temporarily share senses and memories with another on the same island.

Master: Shed physical body and become immaterial in the same way as an Origin. Absorb another willing mind into your own.





### *Earth Magic*

This magic deals with the physical and draws upon the energies of the world.

Initiate: Restore a sick or diseased person to health. Feed a large group with a tiny amount of food and water. Preserve a body or food.

Student: Encourage rapid growth or decay in a forest. Create an intense physical sensation or paralysis in another. Move on water or glide through the air along with another.

Master: Achieve immortality from disease and aging. Return a preserved body to life. Slowly raise or lower an island.

### *Fire Magic*

This magic draws upon the desires and emotions of the caster and those around him.

Initiate: Push an individual's emotions in a certain direction temporarily. Become drawn towards something you desire.

Student: Force a strong emotion onto someone for a significant duration. Create solid trust or mistrust in yourself or another. Cause an object or person you desire to make its way towards you by some means.

Master: Command complete obedience in another. Return yourself to life after death.

### *Water Magic*

This magic is subtle in its ways, sensing and shifting things while being barely detectable, requiring complete concentration to wield.

Initiate: Gain a brief glimpse at another place. Dull the senses of another for a short time.

Student: Temporarily change form, shifting to another location on the same island. Gain a brief glimpse at the future or past or detailed view of a distant place.

Master: Become completely and permanently aware of everything happening on a single island, particularly any source of danger. Shift an island slowly in a single direction. Gain detailed views of the future or past.

## *Wandering Bands*

The game may be centered around a single character or a band. One to three characters is the ideal range. Working together can have many benefits for characters. Their larger range of abilities means they are more suited to handle challenges where one character might find his own specialities and styles are unsuitable. Even when the actual challenge is left to another player their allies can support them through Activities in preparation, teaching them new Styles and by identifying Styles used by opponents if they are permitted to give advice during a duel. Members of a band should consider their relationship with the rest of the members. Mutual respect and rivalry in equal parts can be a particularly good glue to hold the group together.

A band of characters travelling together will often have a leader. This leader must treat their position with re-





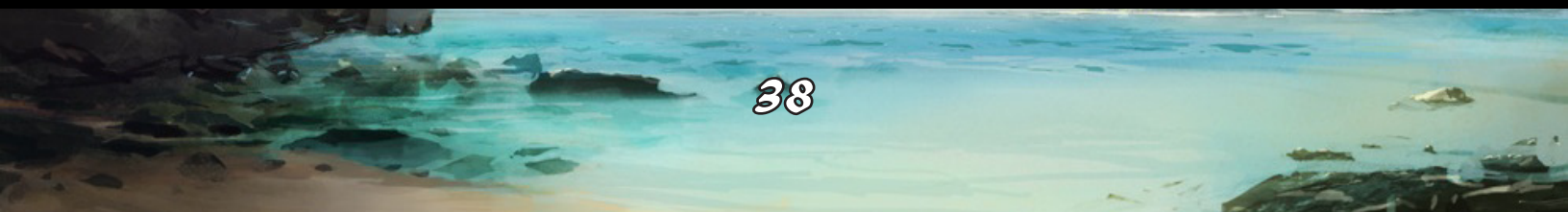
spect or else their band will fall apart. The leader will ultimately decide upon the direction of the band, taking input from the other members. The leader may be challenged on any of his decisions, facing a contest or duel with the challenger. If the leader is defeated they must hand their authority to the challenger. This will almost always be a duel, unless there is a contest that both leader and challenger agree upon. A newly formed band will always use duels as a means of determining their leader, unless there is a unanimous agreement on who should fill the role.




*The Origins are the ancient, immortal spirits responsible for the creation of the world, lifting countless islands out of the timeless ocean. Thousands of years ago a small number of these beings chose to live for eternity within the world they had created. They took new forms, the very first men and beasts from which all life is descended. The price of a physical form was mortality.*

*Those that chose to remain as Origins kept their immortality but were no longer able to touch the world they created, now little more than ghosts.*

*These surviving Origins still interfere in the ways of the world, using man and beast as tools to*





*carry out their own desires. Their greatest strengths now lie in their ability to see all and live forever, having great influence over the men they choose to contact. Some men use the teachings of the Origins to regain glimpses of their former power through magic. Most of the Legendary Styles trace their creation to the teachings of one of the Origins.*

*The Origins can take any visible form appropriate to their personality but may choose to take no visible form at all. They cannot visit the parts of the world covered by the ocean, but can make themselves present on any land.*


## Telling the Story

Creating an effective story as the game is played is the responsibility of both the players and the GM. A Wanderer's Romance is not a game of lots of rolling, instead the dice are used as part of the description of what is happening. For example, Activities require only a single roll but should still be seen as a significant section of the plot. They provide perfect opportunities for characters to interact, perhaps even flashing back to their pasts.

Being as we begin the game knowing little about a character from looking at their character sheet it is important to both move characters forward and reflect upon their past. Unveiling your character's history a piece at a time in this way can be much more interesting than describing their life story at the start of the game. These flashbacks themselves can include duels and contests just as easily as the present time.

*The Ocean is older than the Origins and was their greatest challenge in creating their world. Anything large enough to resemble a continent was swallowed by the jealous ocean and as such the largest islands in a world scattered with them stand no more than a few dozen miles wide.*

*Despite this, hugely varied life and terrain is spread across the chain of islands. One could be packed with red jungles and rolling hills of blue grass, the next dominated by arid desert or a clear, jade lagoon. Islands resembling little more than huge mountains stand abruptly out of the sea, riddled with caves and tunnels. City islands surround their coast with stone walls and watchtowers and the envious ocean sends storms, tidal waves and terrible beasts in an attempt to reclaim them. The ocean itself is awash with variety from neon coral seas to glistening diamond surf to black, daunting depths. Kelp forests tint stretches of ocean green and brown, hiding more than plantlife, while cracked ice sheets spread out for miles.*



*Shipping lanes connect each tiny island with its neighbours and piracy is a common hazard. However, even the pirates abide by the universal code of combat and will allow captains to defend their ships in single combat. It is a common belief amongst seamen that the sailing is a matter of tricking the ocean, not alerting it to the crossing, and for this reason ships are rarely larger than light, single-mast vessels. Those that are built larger have a history of meeting early ends beneath sudden storms and colossal waves.*

*There are thought to be over a thousand islands, many of them overseen by an individual Origin or home to a single Legendary Style, many completely isolated. As of yet no force has been able to unify more than a few islands under a single empire, although many emperors aspire to it.*

## Running the Game

The game requires one player to take on the role of Gamemaster or GM, who will describe the environments and characters the players' characters encounter as well as making any rolls for the non-player characters. Most importantly they will help guide the players in the cooperative story that's being created.

### The Islands

A game will take place on one or more islands. As each of them are tiny in comparison to continents it is possible that islands would be isolated for centuries and the unusual nature of the world means strikingly different climates can exist right next to each other. The GM should carefully consider how to make islands contain things that the player wants but obstacles in their way. This could include something as simple as natives refusing to let the characters leave without defeating their champion or could include more complex goals such as gaining political power or maintaining their principles when faced with a morally debatable choice.

Although small, the GM should not hold back in making islands exciting places. Hundreds of Emperors and Kings lay claim to their islands and have fantastic courts. A Kingdom a few miles wide is a Kingdom regardless and although the distances are small the scale of the stories can still feel vast. The main considerations when making an island are.

- What are the key geographical features of the island?
- How many people live here and how do they support themselves?
- Who are the notable people on the island and why would the characters want to meet them?
- What makes this island unique and memorable?



## Challenges

Most stories will contain at least one challenge between two characters. However, they need not be as straightforward as a one-on-one duel or contest. As well as considering the location of the contest and preparation activities the contest itself can be varied in a number of ways.

- Duels may be to “touch” using training weapons that do not deal damage with a character usually requiring three hits to win.
- Duels may be to first blood or even to death. Surrender is always an option, however.
- A group of champions may be selected, each fighting an opponent from the other group and counting victories towards an overall score to determine the winning group. An example might be a tournament of six different events, with the first being worth one point, the second being worth two points and so on, with the first to score 10 points winning.
- A best of three contest might consist of the first round being selected by the challenger, the second by the champion and the third always being a duel. Winning rounds might instead allow benefits for the final duel. For example, the winner of the first round might select the location and the second round winner choose the weapons to be used.
- The duelling location might be an entire island, with hunting down the enemy being part of the contest.
- A duel may have a number of rounds where the characters fight but do not deliver harmful blows, simply feeling out each other’s Abilities and allowing a last chance for bloodless surrender.
- Typically a duel will allow a character to wield a single weapon and perhaps a sidearm. However, certain duels might even force the character to use a particular type of weapon.
- Competitors may be set a sequence of tests, often of increasing difficulty, with success in each test giving points towards a total score. At the end of the tests the competitor with the highest score will be the winner.

# Sample Characters

*Jen Ma the Scholar*

Air: 3

Earth: 1

Fire: 1

Water: 1

Balance: 3

Specialities: Geography, Storytelling.

Philosophy: Only by seeing all can we understand all.

Weapon: Staff

Armour: 0

Styles: Harmony Wind Student.

*Kuto Hira the Red Rider*

Air: 2

Earth: 1

Fire: 1

Water: 2

Balance: 2

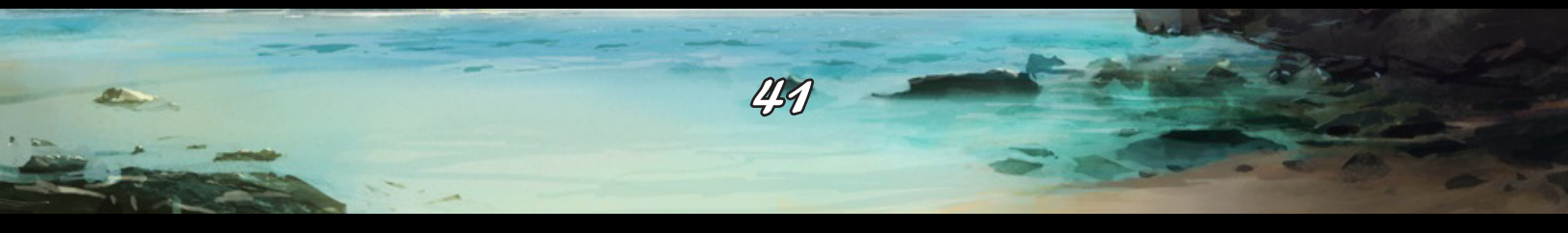
Specialities: Strategy, Horseriding.

Philosophy: The big fish in the small pond can only feed for so long.

Weapons: Curved Sword.

Armour: 2

Styles: Storm Brewer Student, Divine Step Student.





*Kalma the Shrine Maiden*

Air: 3  
Earth: 1  
Fire: 1  
Water: 1  
Balance: 3  
Specialities: History, Medicine.  
Philosophy: Justice is for the Worthy.  
Weapon: Staff  
Armour: 0  
Styles: Harsh Master Student.

*Milu the Diplomat*

Air: 2  
Earth: 1  
Fire: 2  
Water: 1  
Balance: 2  
Specialities: Persuasion, Etiquette.  
Philosophy: The traditions of the old courts must be preserved so that order can be maintained in the world.  
Weapons: Curved Sword.  
Armour: 1  
Styles: General's Cry Initiate, Harmony Wind Initiate.

*Panther Pinmei*

Air: 2  
Earth: 0  
Fire: 2  
Water: 2  
Balance: 3  
Specialities: Philosophy, Persuasion.  
Philosophy: Above all peace must be brought to the lives of all and suffering reflected onto those who seek to distribute it.  
Weapons: Straight Sword.  
Armour: 0  
Styles: Cloud Puncher Student.

*Lector Kuzu*

Air: 1  
Earth: 2  
Fire: 0  
Water: 3  
Balance: 1  
Specialities: Gardening, Tea Ceremony.  
Philosophy: Perfect Order is the only true path to harmony.  
Weapons: Curved Sword.  
Armour: 0  
Styles: Jade Lobster Student.

*Feng La the Fish Cleaner*

Air: 3  
Earth: 2  
Fire: 0  
Water: 1  
Balance: 1  
Specialities: Cooking, Sailing.  
Philosophy: Simple pleasures are those that define life and complications only lead to stress.  
Weapons: Spear.  
Armour: 2  
Styles: Cloud Tail Initiate, Iron Tortoise Initiate

*Raf Kana the Gibbon Palm Master*

Air: 3  
Earth: 2  
Fire: 0  
Water: 2  
Balance: 2  
Specialities: Acrobatics, Medicine, Gardening, Fruit Growing.  
Philosophy: Small moments of action must be separated by months of stillness.  
Weapons: None  
Armour: 0  
Styles: Gibbon Palm Master, Open Claw Student, Hawk Talon Student, Harmony Way Initiate.



# Mythical Creatures

Creatures function in the same way as normal characters but will have their own Style that cannot normally be imitated by characters. Creatures know all the Lesser Styles. Some creatures may not possess a Balance score at all in which case it is treated as 0 and never modified.

The usual code of combat doesn't apply when fighting these creatures, as characters are expected to team up to fight them.

## *Great Deep Serpent*

As the rushing tides flow so does the serpent, serving the jealous deep.

Air: 1

Earth: 2

Fire: 1

Water: 4

Crushing Flow (Attack) - Water + Earth.

Add Water to Damage.

Parting Hide (Defence)

Use Water in place of Armour when taking Damage.

## *Eternal Sunbird*

The sun sends not only warmth and light but occasional wrath.

Air: 3

Earth: 1

Fire: 4

Water: 0

Rain of Fire (Attack) - Fire + Air.

Attack any number of Targets.

Searing Feathers (Defence) - Fire + Air.

Anyone who hits you must take damage.

## *Colossal Mountainman*

The one being in the world that could make the name feel like an understatement.

Air: 1

Earth: 6

Fire: 0

Water: 1

Armour: 3

Ground Pound (Attack) - Earth + Fire

Make one attack that up to four targets must defend against.

Unbreakable (Defence) - Earth + Air

Roll two Damage dice when hit and take the lowest. If they match they are both ignored.

## *The Unquestionable Eye*

The formless eye watches, knowing all but telling carefully.

Air: 6

Earth: 0

Fire: 2

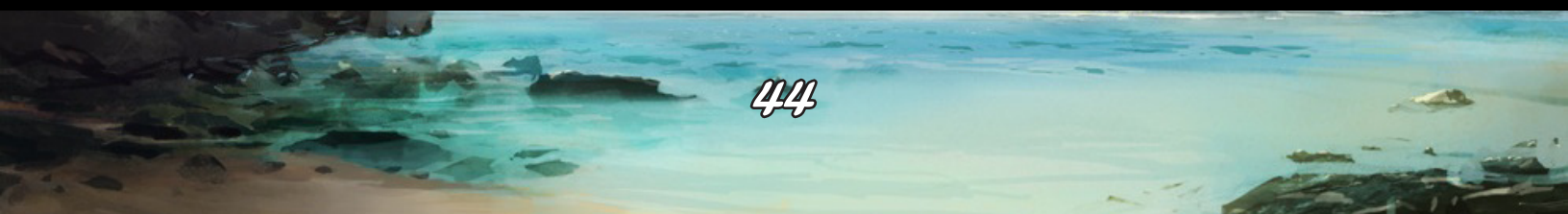
Water: 2

Flay Mind (Attack) - Air + Fire

Add Fire to Damage.

Formless Being (Defence) - Air + Fire

Use Air in place of Armour when taking Damage.



*The world began as nothing but ocean. The Origins raised up a million colourful islands, anything larger than a few dozen miles being swallowed by the envious deep. Some of these immaterial beings chose to take a physical form and live in the varied lands they had created, eventually settling into the forms of men and beasts. Our ancestors.*

*The Origins that did not take physical form paid a great cost. They were left unable to affect their world directly, relying upon influencing men with words and knowledge. Their teachings led to our understanding of elemental balance, the formation of the thousand Legendary Styles and the universal code of combat that define our world today.*

*You are a great man or woman. An errant trained in both the noble art of combat and in contests of body and mind. Drifting from one island to another, you have your own philosophy on life and the power to enforce it.*

## *A Wanderer's Romance*

A Wanderer's Romance is a game of martial art duels and tea-making contests set in a world of unnatural islands on an endless sea. It draws on its Wuxia influences but focuses on a character driven game with scope for incredible environments and a true sense of exploration.

Features of the game include:

- A fast, simple and easy to learn system for task resolution that spreads consistently across duels, contests, activities and group tests.
- Dozens of combat styles for characters to learn as well as countless other types of contest they can specialise in.
- A setting outline designed for maximum creative freedom. Every group's world will be different but will share in similar themes.
- Multiple ways to support your allies from teaching them lessons in defeat and energizing them through activities to training them in combat styles and preparing tea and food that will balance their elemental forces.



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