

PAUL MASON

Outlaws Of the Water Margin



Heroic Adventure
Role-playing in
12th Century China

A face-to-face role-playing
game in which you can join
Lin Chong, Hu Sanniang and
the other heroes of
Liangshan Po, fighting for
justice against the cruel
and corrupt Gao Qiu

本書說的是一個有關中國的角色扮演遊戲。
是關於梟雄們的。英雄成爲盜賊，爲了真理和公道打天下。
在中國，每個人都知道宋江，晁蓋和林冲。
那些梁山泊的梟雄，他們的名字將永遠持續。
在這個角色扮演遊戲裏，爾也能成爲一位梟雄。
讓我們入水滸梟雄的世界。



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Outlaws shares a common system with Dave Morris's **Kwaidan**. The two games are compatible and may be combined, allowing Chinese characters to explore Yamato, and vice versa.

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THE STORY BEGINS...

THE IMPERIAL ENVOY Hong Xin was in a bad mood. He had travelled for weeks to get to the monastery on Dragon and Tiger Mountain, there to implore the Celestial Master to go to the Capital and offer prayers to Heaven for relief from the plague. As the priests showed him around the buildings of their monastery, he thought back to the humiliations of yesterday.

'Dress in rough clothes,' they had told him, 'Purify yourself by fasting. Climb alone to the top of the mountain and the Celestial Master may grant you an audience.' All this he had done, braving a tiger and a huge snake on the way (or rather, fainting dead away at the sight of them), only to meet an impertinent flute-twirling youth riding a cow. The boy had shown no respect for the Marshal's status, and had delighted in telling him that the Celestial Master had left for the Capital that very morning, flying on a crane. To add insult to injury, when he had returned down the mountain, footsore and weary, the priests had told him that the boy *was* the Celestial Master.

Hong was brought back from his reverie by the sight of a squat red building, its doors sealed with paper talismans. The sign above the entrance read: 'Hall of the Conquered Fiends.'

'What is this?' he demanded of the priests, his voice sharp with barely suppressed irritation. 'And no more trifling with me. Remember that I am the agent of His Imperial Majesty, Son of Heaven and Absolute Ruler of the Middle Kingdom.'

'We would never dare to treat you disrespectfully,' the Abbot anxiously assured him, going on to explain that a previous Celestial Master had imprisoned many dangerous spirits within the hall, and each of the subsequent nine generations had added a new seal.

'Open it up, then, that I may see these spirits for myself.'

The priests kow-towed and protested that it was too dangerous, but the Envoy insisted. Servants broke



the lock, ripped down the seals and opened the door. As the priests all huddled back, the Envoy strode proudly in.

Inside, a stone tablet rested on the back of a large stone tortoise, partly buried in the rough earth. On the tablet was written: 'Hong Opens This.'

'Look! I was destined for this,' he said, turning to the priests with a mocking laugh. 'Now move this tortoise and we'll see what lies below.'

The priests realised that their protestations were useless. The Envoy was too angry to be dissuaded, and if he thought that they had misled him yesterday then he might even have their license withdrawn. With great effort the tortoise was moved, revealing a stone slab.

'At last,' said the Envoy as the slab was raised. 'Now, where are these fiends, for I see nothing but an empty well.' As he spoke there came a rumbling from far below. Sparks whirled before his eyes and his nostrils filled with the pungent smell of sulphur. With a roar a black cloud shot upwards, piercing the roof, and into the sky like a pillar of darkness. From it fell a hundred or more lights in a dazzling cascade, dispersing in all directions.

Hong Xin returned to the Capital to find that the Celestial Master had already made his offerings and left: the plague soon abated. In releasing the Conquered Fiends, however, he had unleashed something more serious by far. The nine dozen heroes of the Water Margin had been released, fulfilling an ancient prophecy, awaiting only rebirth and the chance to prove themselves. One day, nearly a hundred years after their release, all would be united, and the corrupt rulers of the Empire would quake in fear. But the spirits fell far and wide, and many years passed before they came together at Liangshan Po...



OUTLAWS of the Water Margin is a game about China. It is a game about adventure, the battle against injustice, the actions of heroes. It takes place during the Song Dynasty, in the early years of the 12th century, a time of transition and upheaval. A succession of corrupt administrators had bled the farmers dry, extorting money for personal gain. The Emperor was sealed behind an impenetrable fence of eunuchs and bureaucrats, and spent his days in the pursuit of hedonism—he was not even aware that his subjects suffered. In such days, even honest folk were driven to rebellion. Thus the outlaws of Liangshan Po came together: heroes all, disgusted by the corruption and betrayal of the nation.

The story is an old Chinese folk tale, based on fact. It was first set down on paper, so they say, by Shi Nai'an during the Ming Dynasty, after the Han Chinese had wrested control of their nation back from the Mongols. The legends on which it was based had spread during the occupation.

In many ways it is the Chinese equivalent of Robin Hood—a popular story of the common peoples' struggle against oppressors. The difference is that rather than a band of Merry Men, only a few of whom we learn about, in the Water Margin there are 108 heroes, all named and described, and said to be the spirits reborn of other, earlier heroes. In this game, you can become one of the heroes. If you survive with your honour intact and many fine deeds to your name, then it will appear on the Heavenly Tablet which lists all 108 of the reborn heroes. When all are finally brought together, a sign from the sky leads the outlaws to the tablet, showing that their cause is just, for Heaven is with them.

The game is designed to capture the excitement of the Chinese original, the *Water Margin* television series, and the films set in similar periods such as *A Chinese Ghost Story*. These represent the modern expression of a traditional Chinese form of popular fiction: full of energy, action, magic and life. **Outlaws**

brings you flashing swordplay, prodigious leaps, crafty sorcerers and cunning con-men—all washed down with plenty of rice wine. Drama is more important than following the rules to the letter. Creating a good story is more important than winning.

THE RULE SYSTEMS

This game employs a core rule, in order to make the game faster and easier to play. The core rule is the most important part of the Outlaws rules. Once you understand how it works, the rest of the game should be easy to pick up.

The core rule is a way of deciding whether a character succeeds in performing some action. The character's basic chance of success at the action is represented by a number, called its *ease*. The character may have *abilities* which may be added to this number, to improve the *chance of success*. The core rule describes how to use dice to find out whether the character succeeds, and if so, how successfully.

The basic system works as follows: roll two dice, and add them together. If the number rolled is greater than the chance of success, the character has failed to perform the action. If the total number rolled is less than or equal to the chance of success, the character has succeeded at the action.

When a character is successful, look at the dice rolled. The higher die rolled is called the *degree of success*. It shows how well the task was performed. The referee uses the result to decide what happens.

Examples of this procedure can be found throughout the game, especially in the *Action* chapter.

LEARNING THE RULES

Although the basic system used in this game is very simple (you've just read it, in fact) there is a lot of extra material to digest on top of it. This is to provide additional detail, in the hope that this will create extra

atmosphere. If the additional rules just hold up the game and result in page-flipping, then they're not achieving their purpose, and are probably better ignored.

It's best to start very simple. Don't attempt to use all the rules from the beginning. This is especially true of the combat system, which has a lot of 'extras'.

There are a lot of terms used with particular meanings in this game. If you run in to one of these and don't understand it, your first port of call should be the *Glossary*. If that doesn't help you, try the index, and if that fails, drop me a line insisting that I correct this fault in the 2nd edition, and send you a free copy.

LANGUAGE

In this game Chinese words and names are occasionally used. These have been consistently spelled in the standard romanisation system *pinyin*, which matches the correct pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese more closely than older systems.

Readers familiar with the *Water Margin* from older sources may find some of the names a little different: for example, Gao Qiu (formerly Kao Ch'iu) and Lin Chong (formerly Lin Chung). The diacritics showing the tones have been omitted, however.

Pronouncing words written in *pinyin* is relatively easy, though several letters have distinctive pronunciations:

- h* voiced a little, like the Spanish *j* in 'Julio'
- zh* pronounced like *s* in 'pleasure'
- y* the consonant form of the vowel *i*. This means that *yi* is pronounced 'Ee'
- q* pronounced *ch* as in 'chicken'
- x* pronounced *sh*.
- z* pronounced *ds* as in 'adds'
- c* pronounced *ts* as in 'He waits for the dawn.'
- a* pronounced as in 'hard'
- e* pronounced as in 'the' or 'hurt'
- ü* pronounced pretty much as in German. If you can't manage that, then just pronounce it *oo*

Chinese ideographs (*hanzi*) have also been used occasionally. Each *hanzi* represents an idea—a word or word element—and will usually have a single pronunciation associated with it. The logic underlying the design of *hanzi* is too complex for me to go into here. Suffice it to say that while simple *hanzi* tend to be visual representations of objects or ideas (for example 木, meaning 'tree, wood' and 三 meaning 'three'), compound *hanzi* are often formed with one component providing a clue as to the meaning, while the other suggests a pronunciation.

I've tried to keep the number of *hanzi* down, and it is by no means necessary to be able to read even the

most basic ones (the five elements, for example).

Including them is important to establish the atmosphere, and a little research into them can add a lot to the game—and can be fascinating in its own right.

WHAT IS CHINESE?

You will find one deliberate inaccuracy in the coverage of language in this game: the suggestion that there is a 'standard' Chinese language, understood by everyone. In fact, the only universal form of Chinese is written.

In modern China, a large proportion of the population understands Mandarin Chinese, as it has been propagated as a standard language by the government. This certainly wasn't true in the past: Mandarin (which was far more complex than it is now) was, as the name suggests, the language of the bureaucracy. Ordinary people would speak different languages, some of which were related, others of which were as dissimilar as French and German.

I decided to have a 'standard' spoken Chinese to make play easier. At the same time, I wanted to allow for the plot possibilities of characters from different regions having different languages, so I introduced them to the game as 'regional dialects'. Referees with no interest in this can easily ignore the dialects, while those who care about historical accuracy can disregard the 'standard' Chinese, relying only on the dialects.

GENDER

China was a sexist society. However in this book I have made an effort to avoid unnecessary sexism. I am aided in this by the fact that the invidious practice of footbinding had only just started in the Song Dynasty. It can therefore be ignored without compromising historical accuracy.

Female pronouns are used to indicate *players* or the *referee*. Male pronouns are used to indicate *characters* in cases when those characters could be either male or female.

UNITS

This game uses Imperial measures. If you want to be very authentic, you can substitute the equivalent Song Dynasty Chinese measures as follows:

Chinese Measure		Imperial Equivalent
尺	<i>chi</i>	1 foot
步	<i>bu</i>	5 feet
里	<i>li</i>	1800 feet (1/3 mile)
升	<i>sheng</i>	1.5 pints
斗	<i>dou</i>	15 pints
兩	<i>liang</i>	1 ounce
斤	<i>jin</i>	1 pound
畝	<i>mu</i>	0.1 acre/675 square yards

OUTLAYS

OF THE WATER MARGIN

水滸梟雄

Name

姓名

Social Class

階級

Provenance

本籍

Family

家族

Occupation

職業

Position

職位

Wealth

財富

Patrons

恩人

Dependants

依賴者

Favours

恩請

Age

歲

Gender

性

Size

身

Energy

氣

Body

體

Appearance

貌

Hand

手

Personal Qualities

Motivation(s)

動機

Respect

尊敬

Astrological Sign

干支

Abilities

能量

Aptitude

Skill

Total

Skill Type

Experience

Possessions

持有

Notes

短信