

# Empire of the Jade Fist

Roleplaying Game

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## Introduction

Zhou Hian-bia stood still and quiet in the courtyard of the Seven Dragons School, before its carefully-dusted steps. It was early morning in Autumn, and most things were covered in a layer of frost. Zhou wore his best shirt, powder blue, with brown trousers and black boots. His deep-set black eyes focused on the step in front of him. Occasionally a breath of wind would ruffle his wavy black hair, but he stayed motionless, suppressing shivers and trying to meditate. Then the heavy wooden doors of the school opened, and a gray-haired man walked quietly down the steps to face Zhou, regarding him disinterestedly. The man was dressed in a very fine black shirt and slacks, with golden dragons woven into the shirt. Suddenly he launched a furious assault with fists, elbows, knees and kicks on Zhou, who just barely managed to defend himself from the lightning fast attacks. The man drove Zhou back, battering him till red spots appeared on his face. But Zhou fought back, gaining his stride, entering the man's guard and forcing him back toward the steps. The man re-pressed his attack, but almost to his surprise Zhou landed a Dragon Fist! The twin blows sent the man stumbling back, but he quickly recovered, regained his stance, and attacked again, even harder than before, and soon Zhou's defense crumbled and he was laid out on his back, defeated, the man poised above him to deliver a killing blow. But the man froze for several seconds, studying Zhou's composure in defeat, which was absolute. He had done his best and fought honorably.

The man broke into a happy laugh and helped Zhou to his feet. Zhou looked cautiously at Master Hao, who clapped him on the back.

"You fight very well, imagine catching me with my own punch like that. You bring honor to me and Seven Dragons School." Master Hao grinned.

"Master, did I..." Zhou said cautiously.

"Of course you did, Apprentice, or should I say Expert, Zhou," the Master said proudly, clapping him on the back again.

Zhou stood in shock. Fifteen years of training over. He had become an expert in wushu.

"Don't stand there like a dolt. You have a hard life ahead of you. You have passed only the first gate of wushu, and the rest of your life you will be learning and improving. Should you survive," the Master said seriously. But then he grinned again.

“But today is an auspicious and happy day! Come, let us wake the others and tell them, tonight we all get drunk, hey?” Hao said, guiding his still stunned, bruised and *former* apprentice inside.

“You must tell me what you plan to do with yourself now. Travel? Adventure? Found your own school?” Hao asked as they entered. Zhou had no idea, but he finally cracked a smile as the wooden doors closed behind them.

In *Empire of the Jade Fist*, players talk on the role of young experts like Zhou Hian-bia and master the ancient arts of wushu in the mystical land of Zhong-guo, also known as the Empire of the Jade Fist, after the magical artifact owned by the Emperors of Zhong-guo. Zhong-guo is a vast land full of advanced cities, tiny villages, huge farms, dangerous wildernesses, thick forests, parched deserts, forbidding mountains and wide rivers, populated by wushu masters, scholars, monks, merchants, bandits, villains, magical monsters and many simple common folk trying to avoid all of the above. Will you master wushu or die trying?

EJF is a roleplaying game (rpg), and it is assumed that anyone reading this is doing so because they know what a rpg is and want to play one. But a brief recap for those new to the hobby: roleplaying is a form of interactive storytelling, or improvisational theatre, or both, which is governed by rules and uses pen, paper and dice, but really takes place in the players’ imagination. There are two classes of player: the Game Master (GM) and the Players. The GM plays the universe and everything and person in it except for the Player Characters (PCs), who are played by the Players. The GM sets the scene, describes what PCs see, controls beasts and other humans, and adjudicates the rules. The Players describe what their characters do and roll the dice that determine whether or not they succeed if there is any chance of failing. Players create the PCs, which involves determining everything about them, from their appearance to their personalities to their abilities and skills. During the game they take on the personas of these characters, *roleplaying* their actions and reactions, telling the GM and other players what their character does. Together GM and Players create Zhong-guo and all that happens there.

**A Note on Dice:** EJF uses only one type of die, a ten-sided one, available at hobby stores or online, but in two different ways: rolled individually once, twice or more times (1d10, 2d10, xd10), or together as percentile dice (d100), with one die designated as the tens place and the other as the ones, yielding a result between 01 and 00 (100).

## I. The Empire of the Jade Fist

### Geography

Zhong-guo is roughly rectangular in shape, occupying most of a large continent, stretching from East to West and almost North to South. Accordingly, there is a great diversity of terrain and climates within it. However, a few general regions can be described. The majority of the central portion of the Empire consists of grassy plains dotted with low, rolling hills and many small forests. Rivers crisscross these plains, and the climate is usually mild, hot in the summer and cold in the winter, pleasant for most of the year. The soil of this land is also rich, and most of it is farmland for many different kinds of crops, with rice being most prominent. Most of the cities and most of the people of Zhong-guo, including the capital, Imperial City, are in this secure, prosperous region. Other major cities include the western port of Jao-yei, the northern city of Shoulun, the eastern metropolis of Xi-lung, and the southern city of Han-ja. Each is surrounded by smaller cities, villages and farms, and connected to all others by a portion of the Emperor's Road. The Empire is divided into 37 Provinces, each overseen by an Emperor-appointed Governor.

Surrounding this area, however, is much wild and dangerous terrain, some of it only nominally under the control of the Imperial Army and Imperial Governors. Forming the southern border of the Empire is a long chain of tall, jagged mountains known as the Dragon's Jaw, and it is believed to be inhabited to this day by wise, ancient dragons (wise, but not wishing company). Passes through these peaks do exist, but the way is very hard. Starting on the northern face of these mountains is the largest forest in Zhong-guo, the Hai-nin Forest. Dense and believed to be full of horrible creatures and evil magic, only the bravest of warriors venture there. On the other side of the Dragon's Jaw is the land of the Talquim, a theocratic country that has never been on friendly terms with the Empire and is well-known for aiding and abetting the pirates who raid Empire ports.

To the north of the Central Plains the terrain is very different but no less inhospitable. To the northwest lies the Quo-shia Desert, an arid scrub land that gives way to high sand dunes, and in the far North is the Cold Lands, a frozen waste inhabited by the Uzgar, a nomadic hunter people, primitive by Empire standards but very numerous and very territorial.

And finally, 100 Ti (1.2 miles) out in the Eastern Ocean lies the archipelago nation of Nakachi, founded many centuries ago by immigrants from the land that became the Empire. Nakachi is ruled by a military king and is usually on friendly terms with the Empire. It is known for its mighty navy and as a place of very advanced weaponry and magic.

### Government

The current Emperor (and sole political power in Zhong-guo) is Xao Bao, Tenth Exalted Emperor of the Jade Fist, of the Lian Dynasty, which has ruled for 214 years. Its rule has been mostly peaceful, thanks in large part to its heavy funding and generous use of the Imperial Army (but not its relative neglect of the Imperial Navy). When a human is appointed Emperor (by some astrological sign interpreted as pointing to them from among the eligible members of the Imperial Family), they are believed to be transformed by the grace of Heaven into a spirit being, and thus can only be seen and spoken to by their family and closest advisors. Despite this detachment, Xao Bao is thought to be a kind and wise ruler with his subject's interests at heart, and his reign has indeed been a prosperous one.

The Emperor and his Family live in the huge, resplendent Golden Palace, at the center of Imperial City. He is advised by a court of Ministers, who head the huge Civil Service of the Empire and oversee its vast bureaucracy and the tests that admit one into its ranks. The emperor is also the nominal head of the Army and Navy, but each has its day to day operations overseen by a host of Generals and Admirals, who are known more for their creativity in inventing colorful titles for themselves than for their strategic leadership. Indeed, the Army is said to have achieved its victories not by skill and cunning, but by its ability to throw endless waves of pike-carrying warriors at the problem. A division of the military serves all over the Empire as the unevenly competent Imperial Guards, a law-enforcement and peacekeeping organization.

The Jade Fist itself is said to be a life-sized fist made of pure jade and mounted on a golden stand. It is also said to radiate with magical energies and be able to smite any enemies of the Emperor with storms of fire from Heaven. Whether this is true or not is unknown, as it has not happened in living memory. The Emperor is also served by an elite and highly competent force of private guards and scholars known as the Ten Sages, each said to be a Grandmaster of a different style of wushu and a powerful wizard besides.

## Economy, Culture and Religion

Most people in Zhong-guo work all day, every day for a living, as farmers, tradespeople, merchants, soldiers, or civil servants, and most stay near where they were born their entire lives. The Imperial currency is called a quan, and one quan will buy you a simple meal at an inn. The goods produced by the farmers, tradespeople, etc., are distributed throughout the Empire by trade caravans that travel between the civilized areas and often need protection from bandits and wild beasts. A special feature of Zhong-guo society is its dependence upon millions of government employed civil servants, who do everything from conduct censuses to oversee the standards and production of rural farms to tax collecting to recording every single item that passes in and out of coastal and river ports. Every province also has a large Imperial Academy for the study of the natural sciences, mystical sciences and the arts, and these educate or employ tens of thousands of students and scholars and still more civil servants to oversee them. The martial arts are a special case, and are taught in thousands of Schools all over the land, and they support the many thousands of men and women who pursue an uneven, but exciting, life as a wushu expert.

Most people, after a day's work on the farm or at their trade, need no more culture than some wine and a good storyteller, and traveling storytellers are very popular throughout Zhong-guo. Another type of popular entertainment is traveling musical/performance troupes, which bring their shows to all large cities and most villages, setting up in the square and offering a very lively show for one quan a head. In the major cities art, literature, magical services, the culinary arts and crime thrive.

There are dozens of faiths practiced across the Empire, but the principal two are the Golden Path and the Way. The Path teaches that the Self is but a bundle of sensations tied together by desires and thoughts, and release and an end to suffering (Enlightenment) can only be gained by banishing all desires and thoughts, either by a life spent in meditation, or by giving alms to the many roaming monks who do the meditating for you (and also frequently master wushu in between sittings). Temples and monasteries of the Path dot Zhong-guo. The Way teaches that Enlightenment is already here now, and all other appearances are only illusion. All striving, even striving to be free from desires and thoughts, is also illusion, and the only thing one can do is live a good and simple life, remembering all is not dual or plural but only One. Many followers of the Way live normal lives until late middle age, when they flee to the wilderness and become hermits, there to contemplate Oneness and frequently master wushu.

## II. Creating a Character

Creating a character in Empire of the Jade Fist has six steps: A) Develop a Character Concept, Personality and Background Story, B) Generate Attributes, C) Calculate Secondary Attributes, D) Choose a Wushu Style and apply training points, E) Choose Other Skills, F) Buy Equipment.

### A) Character Concept, Personality and Background

Roleplaying is the most fun when characters become, as much as possible, real people, and are played as such, with strengths and weakness, quirks, virtues, flaws, unique personalities and life stories that set them in the context of their place and time. So the first step is to figure what kind of person your character is, what their role in their society is, and their biography. Player characters in EJJ are assumed to be young men and women who have recently completed their basic training in wushu and who have thus attained good skills in the martial arts. Other than that, they can be any type of person you want to play: extroverted, introverted, friendly, rude, generous, selfish, foolhardy, cautious, etc, and specialize in any of the ten most common styles of wushu. As such, they also possess great skill their style's favored weapon, and a fantastic mystical skill gained from years of meditation and learning how to channel their Qi. Your PC could be noble champion of the weak and expert in the practical Dog Style, or an elegant and beautiful practitioner of the grace of Crane Style. Decide, and also give your character a name and physical appearance (most people have names which mimic real world Chinese, and characters may have any look you desire, but people in Zhong-guo tend to be of medium height, slender, with olive skin, black hair and dark eyes).

Take some time right now to sketch down on paper some details about your character's role, personality and background, as much or as little as you like, but the more you write down the easier the next sections will be.

### B) Generate Attributes

Now that you have a person in mind, you need to flesh out their body, mind and abilities. Characters in EJJ are described most fundamentally by their Attributes (ATs), or their born and/or trained abilities of the body and mind. These are crucially important, as they determine how your character does most things in the game. Think back to your character concept as you read these descriptions and ask yourself which of these is most important for your character to develop.



Strength: Physical strength, how much you can lift and carry and how hard you can hit

Toughness: Physical endurance, durability and resistance

Agility: How fluidly you can move and how good you are with your hands

Reflexes: How fast you can walk, run and move and how fast you react

Wit: Mental speed, brightness, and ability to learn

Spirit: Spiritual/psychological strength, personality

These Attributes are rated on a scale of 2-99, representing levels of development (nature plus nurture), with (on average)

2 being the ability of a new born infant ; 10 being a small child; 20 being an older child; 30 being a teenager; 40 being a young adult; 50 being an average adult; 80 being superior; 99 being peak human

To generate initial scores for your character's attributes, start all values at 50 and use 40 points to raise these scores to levels which represent the character you have imagined. Most wushu fighters want to have good Strength, Toughness and Agility, but Reflexes and Spirit are also crucial. Values may be lowered by up to 10 points, and those points used for other attributes, but no attribute can be raised above 90 or lowered below 40 (at character creation). After this is done, you have the skeleton of your PC. Record these scores and the ones that follow on your character sheet (see back of book).

### C) Calculate Secondary Attributes:

Secondary Attributes (SAs) are abilities gained as a result of natural attributes, extensions or applications of them that show what you can do with your ATs. There are three SAs, calculated as per below.

Body: How much injury or other damage a character can sustain before passing out. Equal to Toughness +  $1/2$  Spirit, rounded up. This number is reduced when you take damage, and if it reaches 0 you are unconscious and may die if you do not receive medical attention immediately.

Speed: You can move, at a sprint,  $\frac{1}{4}$  Reflexes per round, in feet (rounded up). A non-combat turn represents four seconds in the game world. If you have a Reflexes of 50, or average, you can move 13 feet in four seconds.

Qi: Your life force, the spiritual energy that animates you and survives your bodily death, and also the power that is spent when using mystical abilities. Equal to  $\frac{1}{5}$  of Spirit, rounded up. If you have a Spirit of 50, you have 10 points of Qi (but average people have no training in how to use mystical abilities, and thus cannot normally access this power). Qi renews at 1 pt./day, and if it reaches 0 make a Hard Spirit Check or pass out for 1d100 rounds.

#### D) Choose a Wushu Style

In Zhong-guo, almost every one practices the martial arts, or *wushu*, to some degree. Most do so only for self-defense, health, and spiritual enlightenment, but some people make wushu their life's purpose, and spend their lives studying it and fighting against others to prove themselves Masters of it. It is a living, an art form, a way of life. It *is* life. The PCs are assumed to be men and women of this second sort, who have given their lives to the fighting arts. This makes them unusual and powerful people. PCs are also assumed to be young persons who have just completed their basic apprenticeship under a Master of their chosen style and are ready to make a name and a fortune for themselves, prove the strength of their wushu, and bring honor to their teacher and his/her school.

Accordingly, the next step in character creation is to choose a style of wushu to practice and apply its powers to your character. Any character may choose any one form of wushu. All schools of wushu in Zhong-guo teach the same eight offensive techniques and 3 defensive techniques, but with vastly varying emphases (some styles are good at punching, some at grappling, etc.), and each style has a special technique and a mystical ability unique to it. The style you choose determines your starting Skill Rating (SR) in every technique, and then you can apply 20 Training Points (TP) to your offensive and defensive techniques, to show what you or your Master concentrated on in your training. The twenty points cannot be applied to special techniques, weapons specialties, or mystical abilities (these can be improved later), and no more than five TP can be assigned to a single technique. For example, say your style gave you a starting Punch SR of 60. You could decide you want to be an even better puncher and raise it to 65. Each technique in the descriptions below names a different effect, which are herein described:

High Kick: Uses the foot to strike the head or upper body, does regular damage on a successfully rolled, unsuccessfully defended hit (See Strength damage table in Combat Chapter).

Elbow Strike: Uses the elbow to strike the body or head, regular damage plus 1/2, rounded up.

Knee Strike: Uses the knee to strike the body, regular damage plus 1/2, rounded up.

Low Kick: Uses the foot to strike the legs, regular damage plus Tricky Toughness Check or fall Prone (Hard Agility check to regain feet, see Combat chapter).

Sweep: Forces Difficult Toughness check or opponent is in the Prone condition, (Hard Agility check to regain feet).

Weak Point Strike: Strike a weak spot such as the throat, temple, groin, etc. regular damage plus 1/2 and the Dazed condition (see Combat).

Grapple/Joint Lock: A takedown and a lock or hold applied. Cannot move plus 1/2 regular damage per round until a Hard Toughness Check is made (victim is still Prone).

Punch: Uses the hand to strike the head or body, regular damage.

Footwork: The fighter uses quick footwork to dodge/evade attacks. Negates successful attack roll, but takes a -5 penalty on next move.

Jumping/Flipping: The fighter jumps/flips up and/or away from an attack, negates it, but takes a -5 penalty on next move.

Blocking/Parrying: The fighter uses the hard parts of his/her body to block or deflect attacks. Halves damage of successful attack.

Specialty Techniques: See style description, skill rating always 60. Strenuous, costs a Qi point.

Weapon Specialty: Skill in the use of this weapon (only blockable with weapon).

Mystical Ability: Superhuman ability gained by discipline and the channeling of one's life force (and the spending of Qi points). Always succeeds.

And now, the ten most common wushu styles of Zhong-guo:

*NOTE: While the fighting styles here are obviously inspired by and based on real-life Chinese martial arts (as is the game itself), they do not even attempt to reproduce the subtlety, complexity, sophistication and beauty of these two-thousand year old art forms, and should not be taken as anything but a tribute to Chinese martial arts, culture and people. This is a fantasy roleplaying game based on medieval China, just as Dungeons and Dragons is fantasy roleplaying game based on medieval Europe.*

## **Tiger Style**

Tiger Style is characterized by its extensive footwork, acrobatic kicks, low, wide stances, and unique fist position (where the thumb is curled in the same manner as the other fingers, rather than wrapped around them).

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 70

Elbow Strike 50

Knee Strike 50

Low Kick 50

Sweep 60

Weak Point Strike 50

Grapple/Joint Lock 60

Punch 60

### Defensive Techniques

Footwork 60

Jumping/Flipping 50

Blocking/Parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Black Tiger Fist: A quick uppercut with a Tiger Fist (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

Tiger Fork (70, 1d10)

### Mystical Ability

Fear of the Tiger (opponent paralyzed with fear 6 rounds, costs 4 Qi)

### **Crane Style**

Crane Style is characterized by deep rooted stances, intricate hand techniques and fighting mostly at close range as if to imitate a pecking bird.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50

Elbow Strike 60

Knee Strike 60

Low Kick 50

Sweep 50

Weak Point Strike 60

Grapple/Joint Lock 50

Punch 70

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50

jumping/flipping 50

blocking/parrying 60

### Specialty Techniques

Flapping Wing Punch: A curled fist lashes out from your side to your opponent's face (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

Staff (70, 1d10)

### Mystical Ability

Flight of the Crane (levitation and movement, 6 rounds, 10 ft./round, costs 5 Qi)

## Leopard Style

Emphasizes speed and angular attack. The leopard does not overwhelm or rely on strength, as does the tiger, but instead relies on speed and outsmarting its opponent.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50  
Elbow Strike 60  
Knee Strike 70  
Low Kick 60  
Sweep 50  
Weak Point Strike 50  
Grapple/Joint Lock 50  
Punch 60

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50  
jumping/flipping 60  
blocking/parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Leopard Punch: Lashes out with a half-opened fist, hits with the ridge formed by folding the fingers at the first joint (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

9 Section Iron chain (70, 1d10)

### Mystical Ability

Speed of the Leopard (2x speed and attacks for 6 rounds, costs 5 Qi)

## Snake Style

Adopts the fluidity of snakes to entwine opponents in defense and strike them from angles they wouldn't expect in offense.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50

Elbow Strike 50

Knee Strike 50

Low Kick 60

Sweep 60

Weak Point Strike 70

Grapple/Joint Lock 60

Punch 50

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 60

jumping/flipping 50

blocking/parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Snake Strike: Fast jab with rigid fingertips (immobilizes for 2 rounds, costs 2 Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

Straight sword (jian) (70, 1d10 + 2)

### Mystical Ability

Shadow Snake (cannot be hit by physical attacks, can move through things, 6 rounds, costs 5 Qi)

## **Dragon Style**

Focuses mainly on powerful, short range attacks, also uses gripping and seizing techniques as well as the extensive use of the forearms both offensively and defensively.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50  
Elbow Strike 60  
Knee Strike 60  
Low Kick 50  
Sweep 50  
Weak Point Strike 50  
Grapple/Joint Lock 60  
Punch 70

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 60  
jumping/flipping 50  
blocking/parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Dragon Fist: Quick two-fisted punch (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi)

### Weapon Specialty

Spear (70, 1d10)

### Mystical Ability

Invincible Dragon (cannot be hurt by anything for 6 rounds, costs 6 Qi)



## Eagle Claw Style

Known for its gripping techniques, system of joint locks, takedowns, pressure point strikes, and aerial leaps.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 60

Elbow Strike 50

Knee Strike 50

Low Kick 50

Sweep 50

Weak Point Strike 60

Grapple/Joint Lock 70

Punch 60

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50

jumping/flipping 60

blocking/parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Flying Kick: The fighter leaps, spins, crashes foot into opponent's head. (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi)

### Weapon Specialty

Double Headed Spear (70, 1d10+ 3)

### Mystical Ability

Eagle Vision (knowledge of where all enemies are, extra defense roll against each, 6 rounds, costs 5 Qi)

## Praying Mantis Style

Involves the use of whip-like/circular motions to deflect direct attacks, which it follows up with precise attacks to the opponent's vital spots. Characteristic fist is a hook made of one to three fingers directing force in a whip-like manner.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50

Elbow Strike 60

Knee Strike 60

Low Kick 50

Sweep 50

Weak Point Strike 60

Grapple/Joint Lock 50

Punch 70

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50

jumping/flipping 50

blocking/parrying 60

### Specialty Techniques

Mantis Hook: Downward-curving mantis fist (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi.)

### Weapon Specialty

Sabre (dao) (70,1d10)

### Mystical Ability

Second Wind (restore all Body points lost in this fight, costs 7 Qi)

## Monkey Style

Makes heavy use of various acrobatic movements, most of the attacks are aimed at the knees, groin area, throat or eyes of the opponent and hand strikes are normally either open handed slaps or clawing with a semi-closed fist called the monkey claw.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 60  
Elbow Strike 50  
Knee Strike 50  
Low Kick 60  
Sweep 50  
Weak Point Strike 60  
Grapple/Joint Lock 50  
Punch 60

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50  
jumping/flipping 70  
blocking/parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Handstand Kick: The fighter does a handstand, walks on hands toward opponent and batters him/her with kicks (x2 to damage, costs 1 point of Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

Twin Sticks (70, 1d10)

### Mystical Ability

Monkey's Luck (one attack automatically damages and one defense automatically blocks all damage, costs 5 Qi)

## **Eight Extremities Fist Style**

Known for breaking the opponent's defense forcibly and mounting attacks at high, mid, and low levels of the body. It is most useful in close combat, as it focuses on elbow, knee, shoulder and hip strikes.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50  
Elbow Strike 70  
Knee 60  
Low Kick 50  
Sweep 60  
Weak Point Strike 60  
Grapple/Joint Lock 50  
Punch 50

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50  
jumping/flipping 50  
blocking/parrying 60

### Specialty Techniques

Opening Arms: The fighter opens his opponent's defense with his arms (opponent's next defense roll fails automatically, costs 1 point of Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

Great Sabre (Da Dao) (70, 1d10+ 3)

### Mystical Ability

Blast of Wind (knocks opponent 10 feet, he takes 1d10 damage, costs 5 Qi)

## Dog Style

Specializes in takedowns and ground fighting. This martial art also teaches the Iron Shirt and Iron Palm fighting methods.

### Offensive Techniques

High Kick 50  
Elbow Strike 50  
Knee Strike 50  
Low Kick 60  
Sweep 60  
Weak Point Strike 50  
Grapple/Joint Lock 70  
Punch 60

### Defensive Techniques

footwork 50  
jumping/flipping 60  
blocking/parrying 50

### Specialty Techniques

Iron Palm: Thrusts opens palm straight at opponent (2x damage, costs 1 point Qi).

### Weapon Specialty

Three-Section Staff (70, 1d10+ 2)

### Mystical Ability

Iron Shirt (reduces all damage by five for 6 rounds, costs 4 Qi)

## E) Choose Other Skills

Not even the greatest Grandmaster can resolve all situations with a well-placed punch. Many other skills contribute to a successful wushu career. The other skills given here are checked as you check a wushu skill (by rolling at or under its SR). You may choose a number of skills equal to 1/10 your Wit, rounded up. Skills start with a rating equal to the attribute they modify, and you get ten points to raise them, with no more than 5 points assignable to a skill at character creation.

### Toughness Skills

Climbing: the ability to climb up, around and over anything.

Running: the ability to run long distances without tiring and maneuver while running.

Swimming: the ability to swim, resist currents, hold one's breath, etc.

### Agility Skills

Acrobatics: the ability to jump, flip, roll and land on your feet, other than in a fight.

Thrown/Bow Marksmanship: using bows, spears, and thrown weapons.

Thievery: how to break into places and lift things without being noticed.

Stealth: how to move around inhabited places without being noticed.

### Wit Skills

Medicine: how to diagnose and treat injury and disease.

History: the past of Zhong-guo.

Literature: stories, poetry and drama and how to write them.

Music: how to sing and/or play an instrument.

Hunting: how to track animals without being noticed by them.

### Spirit Skills

Persuade: how to use argument and emotional appeal to get your way.

Intimidate: how to use threats and your physical presence to get your way.

Seduce: how to use your sex appeal to get your way.

### F)Buy Equipment

All characters begin with a room at their former school as a residence, several changes of clothes, any normal personal effects they desire, the weapon of their style's specialty (if they desire it) and 1d100 quan.

#### Other Items:

Rations (1 person 1 week): 10 quans

Survival gear (including tent): 20 quans

Art supplies: 10 quans

Musical instrument: 15 quans

Calligraphy Set: 10 quans

Empty book: 5 quans

Medical supplies(+ 10 to skill check): 15 quans

Bow and 10 arrows (range 100 feet, damage 1d10 + 2): 40 quans

### III. Actions and Conditions

Whenever your character tries to do anything that the GM thinks has a reasonable chance of failure, such as singing for your supper, persuading an inn keeper, or leaping over a canyon, you must make an Action Check. An action check is an attempt to use some ability your character has, be it a attribute or skill, to cause change in or effect the world. Making an action check has the following steps:

1. Decide exactly which ability is being tested by your proposed action. If this is not obvious, ask the GM.
2. Ask the GM if any Difficulty Modifiers (see below) apply to the roll due the situation the player is in making it easier or harder (hitting a Prone bandit v.s. hitting a charging wushu Master in a driving rain). Apply this modifier to your ability (adding or subtracting the number of the modifier).
3. Roll percentile dice. If the number rolled is equal to or lower than your modified ability score, the action is a success. If higher, you fail, in whatever way applicable (missing the bandit, bombing on stage, etc.) Tell the GM your result, including the numbers, and he or she will describe to you exactly what happens.
4. Because something can always go wrong, not matter how good you are, you always fail when you roll 01 and 00, and usually very badly.

When the action you want to do is covered by a skill, and you don't have that skill, the DM increases by at least one level, at the GM's discretion.

#### Difficulty Modifiers

Which applies is judged by Game Master:

- Simple + 20
- Easy + 10
- Average + 0
- Tricky -10
- Hard -20
- Difficult -30
- Nearly Impossible -40



## Conditions and Special Types of Damage

Often in your adventures you will become hot, wet, scared, exhausted, fall off a cliff, etc., and these conditions will affect your chances of success and your chances of living.

### **Burning**

When a character is in constant contact with normal fire or some other hot substance, he/she takes 1d10 of damage per round and cannot do anything but try to stop burning.

### **Falling**

For every ten feet a character falls, he/she takes 1d10 damage.

### **Suffocation/Drowning**

For every round a character cannot get adequate air, he or she must make a Hard Toughness check or lose consciousness and take 3d10 damage per round until air is restored.

### **Fatigue**

Whenever a character has exerted him/herself physically for a long amount of time, in the GM's opinion, he/she must make a Hard Toughness check every ten rounds or take -10 to all actions for every failure until he/she can get adequate rest.

### **Fear**

Whenever the GM decides that the character decides has reason to be scared out of his/her mind, he/she must make a Hard Spirit check or take -10 to all actions.

### **Harsh Environment**

In especially hot, rainy, windy, etc. conditions the character must make a Tricky Toughness check or take a -10 to all actions.

## Disease

Diseases generally have a specific kind of effect or damage, but in general someone suffering from an acute case will take 1d10 damage per week until he/she can make 2 Difficult Toughness checks in a row. Medical treatment can cause these checks become Easy.

## Acid

See the rules for burning.

## Ranks

In Zhong-guo there are four titles denoting an individual's level of achievement in wushu. They are:

Apprentice: A person still undergoing his or her basic training in wushu under a Master of his or her chosen style. Between 5 and 20 years old.

Expert: A person who has completed his or her basic training, and has been judged by his or her Master worthy of representing the school. At least 21 years old.

Master: A wushu practitioner, who may or may not teach, who has attained great skill in wushu (all technique ratings at least 85). Middle-aged.

Grandmaster: A wushu practitioner who has achieved amazing skill in wushu (all technique ratings at least 95). Old.

## IV. Combat

For PCs in Empire of the Jade Fist, combat is a daily occurrence. That's alright though, because they live to test their fighting skills, defend the weak, defend their honor, etc. As a game mechanic, combat is complex, due to the complexity of wushu combat. It's lightning fast and a lot can happen offensively and defensively. However, with some experience the procedure below will become easy.

When combat starts ( an attack, a challenge, what have you), it proceeds in the following steps:

- 1) Determine if either side has surprise (GM's decision, adds + 10 to first attack)
- 2) Determine where every combatant is relative to all the others, in direction and feet. It is very helpful to mark this down with Xs and numbers on a sheet of paper on the playing table. Also note any possible obstacles, cover or difficult conditions/terrain on the field of battle.
- 3) **Roll advantage:** Roll 2d10, add it to the combatants' Reflexes scores. The higher is hereon called the **Winner** (of the Advantage, not necessarily the fight) and the lower the **Loser** (when more than two combatants, they act in order from highest to lowest, with ties re-rolled until a winner emerges).

The **Winner** now has two options. He/she can choose to **Attack**, or **Defend**.

**Attack:** Choose an offensive technique, roll a Attack Check (like an Action Check). If the roll **succeeds**, the Loser can roll a check on a defense technique. If that roll succeeds, see defense skill, but if the Loser fails her defense roll, apply attack action to loser (see its damage and/or effect).

If the Attack roll **fails**, The Loser can make an undefended attack in addition to his normal move.

**Defend:** Choose a defensive technique, roll a Defense check. If the roll **succeeds**, the opponent receives the defense penalty to his attack. If opponent also defends, the fighters clash dramatically but nothing happens, go to loser's part of turn.

If the Defense roll **fails**, the loser can make an undefended attack in addition to his normal move.

Now it is **Loser's** turn, and it proceeds as the above. After the loser uses his available actions, proceed to next Winner's turn, a Combat Turn equals two seconds in the game world. For 2+ attackers on one, +5 to their SRs.

### Damage

How much damage you cause with a successful unarmed attack is determined by your Strength and the particular effects of the technique. Base damage is as follows:

Str 50 to 60 1d10/2

Str 61 to 69 1d10

Str 70 to 80 1d10+2

Str 81 to 90 1d10+3

Str 91 to 99 1d10 +4

### Combat Conditions

Prone: The fighter is knocked flat on his or her back or chest (attacker's choice). -10 to all actions until a Hard Agility check is made.

Dazed: The fighter is still standing but is rattled and groggy. -10 to all actions until Tricky Spirit check to recover.

Wounded: When you get hurt, things get harder. For every 15 points of damage you take, suffer a -5 to your skill.

Damage, Death and Healing: When your character takes damage, it is subtracted from his/her Body score (note wound effects above). When that number reaches 0, your PC is unconscious, Prone on the ground and can do nothing but make a Difficult Toughness check every 10 rounds. If you fail twice in a row, you are dead. After a battle you survive, if you are given no medical attention but the damage stops, you recover 1d10 Body points a week. If you receive basic first aid, you recover 2d10 points a week. If you receive full medical attention, you recover 3d10 points a weeks. You cannot heal to more than your maximum Body score.

## V. Heroes, Villains and Creatures

Possible allies, enemies, and story ideas.

### Xianloun Wian

One of the most renowned Eagle Claw Grandmasters, or indeed wushu practitioners, in all of Zhong-guo, Wian travels widely in the Empire, always on foot, teaching Eagle Claw and defending the honor of the style against any who would challenge it. He will almost always assist EC users in trouble, and rarely shies from a fight of any kind. Now in his late 70s, he is at the height of his power. Wian is of moderate height, thin and wiry, with long white hair, beard and mustache, and unusual piercing blue eyes. Likes to dress in very fine silver clothes and travels without any luggage, expecting to be given all he needs from supporters.

Str 70 Tou 88 Agi 90 Ref 90 Wit 60 Spi 89

High Kick 95 Elbow Strike 95 Knee Strike 95 Low Kick 95 Sweep 95 Weak Point Strike 98 Grapple/Joint Lock 98 Punch 98 Footwork 95 Jumping/Flipping 98 Blocking/Parrying 98 Flying Kick: 95 Weapon: None Eagle Vision (lasts 10 rounds)Body: 133 Qi 18

### Fou Dong

Though he appears to be, and usually is, a simple rice farmer from a small village, Dong is in reality a powerful Dog Style Master. Many years ago Dong traveled the Empire seeking adventure with a group of companions, including his lover Wu Wei. When Wei was killed in a battle with bandits, Dong hunted down and killed every last one of them, and then retired from wushu and adventuring. Mostly retired, that is. Whenever someone or something threatens the village or its people Dong shows that he has forgotten none of his wushu. Now in his 60s, Dong appears frail and unkempt, with long gray hair and black eyes, but his enemies discover that the old man has kept in shape.

Str 70 Tou 80 Agi 80 Ref 85 Wit 60 Spi 75

High Kick 85 Elbow Strike 85 Knee Strike 85 Low Kick 90 Sweep 90 Weak Point Strike 85 Grapple/Joint Lock 95 Punch 90 Footwork 85 Jumping/Flipping 85 Blocking/Parrying 85 Iron Palm: 95 Weapon: None Iron Shirt (reduces damage by 10)Body:118 Qi: 15

Mistress Zan

The woman known only as Mistress Zan controls a vast criminal network with operations in all of the largest cities of the Empire. Zan's organization, the Cobra Clan, engages in robbery, bribery, extortion, prostitution, drugs, murder and anything else it can find that will turn a profit. Zan herself is a handsome, plump woman in her fifties, always dressed in the most expensive clothes. She is known for being a heartless villain and for her very deadly command of Snake Style. Her signature weapon, used to finish off many a perusing Imperial Guard detective, is the blade fan.

Str 60 Tou 70 Agi 80 Ref 85 Wit 80 Spi 80

High Kick 85 Elbow Strike 85 Knee Strike 85 Low Kick 90 Sweep 90 Weak Point Strike 98 Grapple/Joint Lock 85 Punch 85 Footwork 85 Jumping/Flipping 85 Blocking/Parrying 85 Snake Strike: 90 Weapon: (Blade Fan (1d10 + 2)) Shadow Snake (lasts 10 rounds) Body: 110 Qi 16

Pei Li Yun

A gifted Crane Style expert, Yun is well-known for her many successful battles against male martial artists who for some reason felt they could impress the petite and very pretty Yun by beating her up. It was *they* who were beaten up, sometimes very severely, as Yun has a bad temper. Dressing in white and blue silk, Yun travels Zhong-guo seeking adventure and fame, and also frequently defending any women or children she finds threatened.

Str 65 Tou 65 Agi 80 Ref 85 Wit 60 Spi 70

High Kick 60 Elbow Strike 60 Knee Strike 60 Low Kick 50 Sweep 60 Weak Point Strike 60 Grapple/Joint Lock 50 Punch 80 Footwork 60 Jumping/Flipping 70 Blocking/Parrying 70 Flapping Wing Punch: 75 Weapon: none Flight of the Crane (levitation and movement, 6 rounds, 10 ft./round) Body: 100 Qi 14

Jiang Shi

A jiang shi is a reanimated corpses kill living creatures to absorb their Qi. They look like decaying bodies, with greenish-white skin and long white hair all over their heads. Jiang shi are evil and will always attack until destroyed. Usually found in packs of 1d10 individuals.

All attributes at 30, Body of 40, Punch and Low Kick at 50. Energy Drain: SR 60, sinks claws into opponent, 2d10 damage per round until Hard Strength check to break hold.

Huli jing

Huli jing are fox spirits capable of taking human form, and usually appear as beautiful young women. Will attempt to trick, humiliate or hurt humans, but not cause lasting harm. Usually solitary.

Str 60 Tou 60 Agi 80 Ref 85 Wit 80 Spi 90

High Kick 60 Elbow Strike 60 Knee Strike 60 Low Kick 50 Sweep 60 Weak Point Strike 60 Grapple/Joint Lock 50 Punch 80 Footwork 60 Jumping/Flipping 70 Blocking/Parrying 70 Fox Strike: (2x damage)75 Weapon: none Fox Speed (2x speed and attacks for 6 rounds, costs 5 Qi) Body: 105 Qi 18

Xingtian

Xingtian are 10 ft. tall headless giants that have hideous face on their torsos. Will attack and eat humans. Usually solitary.

Str 95 Tou 95 Agi 50 Ref 40 Wit 30 Spi 40

High Kick 50 Elbow Strike 50 Knee Strike 50 Low Kick 50 Sweep 50 Weak Point Strike 50 Grapple/Joint Lock 50 Punch 50 Footwork 50 Jumping/Flipping 50 Blocking/Parrying 50 Weapon: club (70, 2d10) Body: 130 Qi 8

## VI. Game Mastering Empire of the Jade Fist

### Getting Started

The first thing to do, obviously, is to read this book carefully, and more than once (hey, it's short) and decide you would like to run a EJJ game. Next, share it with friends who might want to play. Once a group (4–6 people) agrees to do so, make sure they read this book carefully, except of course for this chapter. Then take the following steps:

- 1.) Schedule a session for making characters, introducing them to the other players and detailing their personalities and backgrounds (where are they from (feel free to make up cities and villages), who were their Masters, what relationship to they have with their families?) and as a group decide how the PCs know each other and why they would adventure together. What relationships do they have with each other? How well do they get along? Why?
- 2.) In the next session, or in the same one if desired, either run an adventure of your own design or introduce the PCs to the villainy of

### **The White Lotus Gang**

Once the PCs have joined together and begun their travels in search of adventure, they find themselves after not too long in the small southern rice-growing village of Lu. The players have been welcomed by the local inn owner, and very nice old man named Mr. Li, who has offered these obvious heroes a free night's stay in his inn (Mr. Li has an ulterior motive, read on). On afternoon, while the PCs are enjoying some wine on the second floor balcony of the inn's bar they hear some men shouting down below, some things being broken, Mr. Li pleading and a girl's defiant voice. If one or more to the PCs go down the stairs to investigate they will the bar patrons huddling under their tables and a group of men in black clothes standing in front of Mr. Li, one holding him by his shirt and shaking him, demanding he pay up (dramatize this). Trying to get them to stop is Mr. Li's teenage daughter Mei.

If the players try to intervene, the men, obviously thugs, will turn to face the PCs and tell them to mind their own business or else. The head thug will then menace Mr. Li again, at which point the Head will viciously backhand her,



sending her down. The PCs should attack at this point, but if they delay the Head will perceive their weakness and tell his assembled thugs to attack.

There are twice as many thugs as PCs, not counting the Head Thug, who will stay out of the fight unless forced. The thugs are trained in wushu but without any particular style and not very well. Give them a 50 in all attributes and 40 in all offensive and defensive techniques, no special moves, no weapons, no mystical abilities and a Body of 50. They are just dumb muscle, but they will attack relentlessly until knocked out, using team up whenever possible. The first level or the bar consists of a few tables and chair, but should not block combat or provide much cover, as some of them have been overturned or broken by the thugs.

If the PCs vanquish the thugs, the Head Thug will flee, getting lost in the village. Mr. Li will thank the PCs vociferously, but then, looking around, notice that Mei is gone. A servant will reveal that she took her father's old sword and went after the Head. Mr. Li will nearly faint, but beg PCs to find her and bring her back before she is killed by the White Lotus Gang. If asked Mr. Li will explain that the White Lotus Gang moved into the village from a neighboring one last year, and since then have been engaging in all sorts of foul crimes, including beatings, rapes and charging protection money from merchants and farmers. All appeals to the Imperial Guards have been ignored.

Should the PCs agree to save Mei and/or deal with the WLG he will summon up his courage and offer to lead them, though he can be persuaded not to (Hard Persuade check). If he comes along, PCs will have to defend him as well (but don't tell them this immediately). If he does not come along, he will give them general directions. Either Li or the directions will soon lead the PCs out of the village, past the rice fields, and to the edge of a dark wood. Just before they enter it, however, at the end of dusty road, the Henchmen will emerge and challenge the PCs. The Henchmen will announce that they are of the White Lotus, and tell the PCs they made a grave mistake in invoking the anger of their Master, and now must die. There are as many Henchmen as PCs, and you can generate them by giving them a 60 in all attributes and taking the basic skill ratings in any of the styles you want as their techniques, without modifying them with Training Points and without weapons, but possessing special techniques, and mystical abilities as given and Body and Qi as fits their attributes. Make

them of varying appearances, tall, short, fat, etc., but all are dressed in black and have sinister expressions.

The Henchmen will immediately attack, one to a PC, and fight viciously until knocked out. They will also go after Mr. Li if he is there (give him a 40 in all attributes and techniques, as his Dog Style is old and unpracticed). Should the PCs handle the Henchmen, they will be lead by Li or their directions into the wood, which is dense and difficult to get through. Eventually however they will discover a wooden fort which is the strong hold of the White Lotus Gang. They will find the gate open and the courtyard seemingly abandoned, but as they attempt to cross it to find Mei, they will be quickly encircled by numerous thugs. The thugs will begin to run into attack the PCs, but a strong voice will call them off and they will freeze. A tall, mustachioed man in fine black suit will enter the circle. This is the White Lotus Master, and he will inform the PCs that if they have stopped his thugs and gotten through his Henchmen their wushu must be very strong indeed, and he is eager for a challenge, though they probably stand no chance against the power of his White Lotus Style! The Master attacks!

The Master is indeed a full Master of a rare style known as White Lotus, and should be a stiff challenge for the PCs, all by himself.

### **White Lotus Master**

Str 75 Tou 80 Agi 70 Ref 75 Wit 65 Spi 75

High Kick 85 Elbow Strike 85 Knee Strike 85 Low Kick 90 Sweep 90 Weak Point Strike 90 Grapple/Joint Lock 90 Punch 90 Footwork 90 Jumping/Flipping 85 Blocking/Parrying 85 Body: 118 Qi 15

Special Technique: Spinning Lotus Kick (can effect up to three opponents at once with the same roll and same damage, damage x2, costs 2 Qi)

Weapon: none

Mystical Ability: White Lotus Fire (surrounds the user in a shimmering ball of white energy, shoots out rays of light which hit automatically for 1d10 damage, can only be used once a fight, the Master will use it only when reduced to half his Body score)

Should the PCs defeat their Master, the thugs will flee in terror. They can tie the Master up and turn him into the Imperial Guard for a reward of 500 quans, should they be able to find the IG. The PCs will find Mei tied up in a small room, and return her to the Mr. Li or the village for his undying gratitude and free room and board forever.

If the PCs are defeated by the thugs, they are humiliated and must leave the village. No Experience Points (see below).

If the PCs are defeated by the Henchmen they will wake up naked in a ditch, robbed of all their possessions. One Experience Point each.

If the PCs are defeated by the Master, they will wake up in the White Lotus dungeon, but can fight their way out and face him again. Two Experience Points each.

If the PCs beat the Master and return Mr. Li and Mei safely, three experience points each.

Also, give any Players who distinguished themselves with good roleplaying a bonus 1-2 Experience Points.

### Ideas for Further Adventure

\* One of the PCs' Masters is found dead, and he/she enlists the others to help him/her find revenge

\* PCs are recruited to enter the Emperor's Tournament

\* PCs are recruited to stop the assassination of an Imperial Governor by Talquim assassins.

\* Revenge of the White Lotus: the Master escapes, and comes looking for the PCs

\* PCs must infiltrate a Golden Path monastery to find and stop an evil monk who is summoning demons to destroy Zhong-guo

\* PCs attempt to found their own School, but are challenged by a rival School

Improvement: When Players impress you with their roleplaying, or are particularly successful in their missions, you can reward them after the adventure with 1-5 Experience Points which they can use to improve their characters. EP can be used to improve skills or techniques at this rate:

Skills: 1 EP per 1 skill point (if that skill has been used extensively in the adventure)

Techniques: 2 EP per 1 skill point

Mystical Abilities: At the GM's discretion

## EJE Character Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ Hair: \_\_\_\_\_ Skin: \_\_\_\_\_ Eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

Distinguishing features: \_\_\_\_\_

Str \_\_\_\_ Story:

Tou \_\_\_\_

Agi \_\_\_\_

Ref \_\_\_\_

Wit \_\_\_\_

Spi \_\_\_\_

Body: \_\_\_\_

Speed: \_\_\_\_

Qi: \_\_\_\_

### Wushu Style:

High Kick \_\_\_\_ Elbow Strike \_\_\_\_ Knee Strike \_\_\_\_ Low Kick \_\_\_\_ Sweep \_\_\_\_ Weak  
Point Strike \_\_\_\_ Grapple/Joint Lock \_\_\_\_ Punch \_\_\_\_ Footwork \_\_\_\_ Jumping/Flipping  
\_\_\_\_ Blocking/Parrying

ST: \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

Weapon: \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

MA:

Other Skills:

### Equipment

Designed and written by Gary Charles Wilkens

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