

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

THAUMATOLOGY[™]

CHINESE ELEMENTAL POWERS[™]

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
<i>About GURPS</i>	4
Publication History	4
Recommended Books	4
About the Author	4
1. THE CYCLES OF THE ELEMENTS	5
FIVE ELEMENTS	5
CHI	5
<i>Thinking in Fives</i>	5
<i>A Note on Language</i>	6
YIN AND YANG	6
ELEMENTAL INTERACTIONS	6
Water Nourishes Wood	7
<i>Elements and Trigrams</i>	7
Water Quenches Fire	7
2. FUNDAMENTALS	8
DEFINING POWERS	8
Power Talent	8
<i>Power Perks</i>	8
Abilities	8
Power Modifier	9
<i>Alternative Modifiers</i>	9
USING POWERS	10
Learning Abilities	10
Detecting Powers	10
Activating Powers	10
Powers, Defense, and Resistance	10
Extra Effort	12
Crippled Abilities	12
Abilities and Skills	13
3. CHARACTER TRAITS	15
ADVANTAGES	15
Perks	16
MODIFIERS	17
DISADVANTAGES	18

*My friend from Asia
has powers and magic.
– Robinson Jeffers,
Credo*

SKILLS	18
<i>Cinematic Skills</i>	19
TECHNIQUES	20
4. ELEMENTAL ABILITIES	21
Basic Ability	21
<i>Overlapping Abilities</i>	21
WOOD	21
Internal Wood	21
External Wood	23
<i>Wood Perks</i>	23
FIRE	24
Internal Fire	24
External Fire	25
<i>Fire Perks</i>	25
EARTH	26
Internal Earth	26
External Earth	27
<i>Earth Perks</i>	27
METAL	28
Internal Metal	28
External Metal	29
<i>Metal Perks</i>	29
WATER	30
Internal Water	30
External Water	31
<i>Water Perks</i>	32
ADVANCED ABILITIES	33
5. CAMPAIGNS AND CROSSOVERS	34
SETTINGS	34
Historical China	34
Recent China	34
Overseas	35
Future Chinese Communities	35
<i>Encountering Other Traditions</i>	35
Alternate Histories	36
<i>Chi in Outer Space</i>	36
Fantasy Settings	36
THEMES	36
Teachers and Students	37
Professionals	37
Wu	37
Special Agents	37
Imperial Advisors	38
CROSSOVERS	38
Low-Tech	38
Martial Arts	39
Supers	39
<i>Powers and Elixirs</i>	39
APPENDIX: WANG LAOWU	40
INDEX	41

INTRODUCTION

"Where are you bound, foreigner?"

Father Ismael wasn't sure for a moment where the call came from; the Yangtze was loud, echoing off the banks of the gorge, and his head had been bowed in prayer. After a moment, he made out a man in a sort of skiff, out on the turbulent water, holding a long pole in both hands.

"I go to Yiling, old sir," Ismael said. "This is the road there, yes?"

"Yiling is downstream, but not much of a road.

You'd do better riding with me." The boatman poled toward the near bank as he spoke.

The water looked alarmingly rough, but Ismael could see the boatman's wrinkles; he must have been on the river a long time. Ismael descended the bank to climb into the boat. "If Heaven sends aid, man should trust in it," he said. "How should one call you, old sir?"

"I am Wang! And what do they call you?"

The Chinese found "Ismael Branco" unpronounceable, so the priest gave his usual answer: "Call me Yu, if you would." The name meant "pilgrim," which he thought fitting.

The banks grew steep as they descended the river, and Ismael thought he had made the right choice. Then he saw the rocks and white water, and wasn't so sure. As two boulders loomed over them, Wang said, "Well, pilgrim, now it gets lively. Sit down and hold on!"

The little boat slipped between the rocks, and then was swept ahead by turbulent water, faster than a man could run. Wang stood in its prow. From time to time he shoved them away from a rock with his pole, but mostly he seemed to do nothing . . . yet no wave overturned them, no snag caught them, no hidden rock smashed their hull, despite the river's roughness.

Then Wang leaned far out, so far Ismael thought he would fall. He stood up, in a crouch, hoping to save the old man – and himself, for he couldn't navigate these waters – and the boat's balance shifted and he was in the river. The current dragged him under, and he tried to make peace with God in his last thought.

A hand gripped his robes and pulled him back to the surface. He gasped for air, and realized that Wang's head was next to his, but the skiff was yards away. Then Wang's arms held him. Ismael had thought himself a decent swimmer, back in Oporto, but Wang swam like one of the seals in the harbor, dragging him back to the side of the boat. The words of the Eighteenth Psalm came into Ismael's mind: "He drew me out of deep waters."

What had he found here, he wondered: a holy man, a pagan spirit of nature, or perhaps his guardian angel?

The diverse magical arts in **GURPS Thaumatology** grow out of three roots: mana-based magic, Path and Book magic, and powers. Mana-based magic has 24 colleges worth of spells, defined in **GURPS Magic**, and **GURPS Thaumatology** offers

11 Paths and three Books of rituals for Path and Book magic – but provides only brief sketches of powers as magic. **GURPS Powers** discusses powers in depth, but does so at a very general level: powers as magic and powers in fantasy are just a few of its many options. **GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers** fills out the middle ground, as a worked example of using powers to represent magical arts.



The elements of earth, water, air, and fire have played a big part in European thought, going back to ancient Greece. **GURPS Magic** reflects this idea, with its Air, Earth, Fire, and Water colleges. But the Chinese have a different list, developed by Taoist natural philosophy. The idea of "magic as power" fits the Chinese view of nature, in which each element has the power to create or restrict other elements.

The other side of this is "power as magic": the Chinese elements are treated not as a generic power source that allows free invention of abilities, but as the basis of an art comparable to a college of spells or a ritual Path. Each element has its own predesigned abilities, which define the particular things that element can do. And rather than having multiple power levels, each ability is "powered up" by extra effort, aided by a unique *Focus* technique. Thus, just as a mage can specialize in a few spells, a Chinese elemental can specialize in *Focus* to improve a few abilities.

The true man of old . . . could climb mountains without fear, enter water without getting wet, and pass through fire unscathed. This is the knowledge that leads to Tao.

– Zhuang Zi

These new rules can be added onto a cinematic martial-arts campaign as a source of high-end abilities for Chinese martial artists, comparable to but distinct from the cinematic skills in the *GURPS Basic Set*. They can be used in creating Chinese magic workers, for a historical fantasy campaign or a “hidden

magic” campaign set in the modern world. They can be the abilities of Chinese or Chinese-descended supers, paralleling the “elemental” abilities of some Western-based supers. Or they can provide a prototype for a *different* treatment of magic reflecting some other view of the elements, whether taken from another culture or newly invented.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what’s new at gurps.sjgames.com.

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Pyramid (pyramid.sjgames.com). Our monthly PDF magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*, systemless locations, adventures, and much more. Look for each themed issue from e23!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. The web page for *GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers* is gurps.sjgames.com/chineseelementalpowers.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we’re putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book’s web page and look for the “Bibliography” link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Chinese view of the elements was previously set forth in *GURPS China* (a *GURPS Third Edition* book). Information on Chinese medicine can be found in *GURPS Low-Tech*. The game mechanics in this work derive largely from *GURPS Martial Arts*, *GURPS Powers*, and *GURPS Thaumatology*. Some traits and modifiers from *GURPS Powers* are repeated here and used to build elemental abilities. The descriptions of powers follow the format in *GURPS Psionic Powers*. All of these books were inspirational, but the main content of *Chinese Elemental Powers* is original, and not taken from any previous source.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Only the *GURPS Basic Set* is required to use *Chinese Elemental Powers*. However, some parts of this work reference the magical systems of *GURPS Thaumatology*, the styles and cinematic skills of *GURPS Martial Arts*, the various realistic rules of *GURPS Low-Tech*, and the special traits and modifiers from *GURPS Powers*; readers will find all these books useful (but not *mandatory*).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Stoddard began playing roleplaying games in 1975, and published his first book, *GURPS Steampunk*, in 2000. His interest in other cultures goes back to his reading Rudyard Kipling’s Indian stories in his childhood, and has inspired campaigns with settings from the late Roman Empire and the Near East during the First Crusade to Hong Kong just after the Chinese accession. This gives him an excuse for his other favorite recreation, doing research! He lives in San Diego, in an apartment that holds far too many books.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CYCLES OF THE ELEMENTS

The ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles (490-430 B.C.), in his poem *On Nature*, claimed that the world was made up of four basic substances or “roots.” Nearly a century later, Plato (424-348 B.C.) gave them the name “elements” (*stoicheia*). This concept survived for 2,000 years in Western natural philosophy, influenced early chemists, and is preserved in many systems of magic. Among other things, it inspired the idea of elemental spirits, created by the Renaissance scientist/sorcerer Paracelsus.

Other cultures had their own ideas on the subject. The Indian system adds a fifth element, void/ether, to the European list, and the Japanese largely follow the Indian view. Early Chinese thinkers developed a different theory of five basic elements that made up the natural world. Their ideas shaped their practice of chemistry and medicine, and gave rise to their own schools of alchemy and magic. These pursuits promised to grant extraordinary powers, whether through internal self-discipline (*neidan*) or by taking elixirs (*waidan*).

FIVE ELEMENTS

What the Chinese meant by “element” (*xing*, pronounced roughly “sheeng”) was not an indestructible basic substance, but a phase that matter passed through. The five *xing* form a recurring cycle of transformations. They don’t fall into pairs of opposites, like fire/water and earth/air in Greek thought. Each element opposes or limits one of the others, but that element opposes or limits still another element, forming a second cycle. See *Elemental Interactions* (pp. 6-7) for details.

Fire (huo) includes flame, but also anything burning (such as coals) or intensely hot (such as lava).

Wood (mu) includes both dead wood and living vegetation. *Earth (tu)* includes solid stone, rocks and gravel, and various forms of soil.

Metal (jin) is not subsumed under earth, but treated as a separate category.

Water (shui) has the same meaning as in Western natural philosophy.

The five *xing* are linked to various other categories in Chinese culture (see *Thinking in Fives*, below, for a chart).

CHI

Most of the Greek *stoicheia* are represented within the Chinese *xing*: fire remains fire, water remains water, and earth correlates to both earth and metal. But what happened to air? Which Chinese element represents this Western one?

Surprisingly, none of them! Chinese thought doesn’t consider air to be a phase of matter. It equates air to *qi* (or “chi,” the older transliteration), the force or principle that flows through all of the elements and animates them.

Thinking in Fives

Element	Direction	Season	Color	Taste	Emotion	Organs	Sense	Life Cycle	Planet
Wood	East	Spring	Green	Sour	Anger	Liver, gall bladder	Sight	Birth	Jupiter
Fire	South	Summer	Red	Bitter	Joy	Heart, small intestine	Speech	Youth	Mars
Earth	Middle	Changes	Yellow	Sweet	Love	Spleen, stomach	Taste	Adulthood	Saturn
Metal	West	Fall	White	Pungent	Grief	Lung, large intestine	Smell	Old age	Venus
Water	North	Winter	Black	Salty	Fear	Kidney, bladder	Hearing	Death	Mercury

A Note on Language

Chinese has been written in the Roman alphabet following several different approaches: Wade-Giles, pinyin, less widely known schemes such as Yale romanization, and improvised spellings such as “woo” for *wu*. Pinyin is used in most recent books, and this work follows it. For example, the founder of the Qin (or Ch’in) Dynasty is referred to as Qin Shi Huangdi.

But established **GURPS** terminology refers to “chi” rather than *qi*, following common usage in older English works. For consistency, this supplement retains the spelling “chi” when referring to the power modifier (p. 9) or other parts of the **GURPS** system, such as chi-based cinematic skills. The long-established name “Taoism” will be used for the religion and philosophy, for similar reasons. The spellings *qi* and *dao* are used to discuss concepts in the Chinese linguistic and cultural context.

Like many human cultures, the Chinese originally thought of air, breath, and spirit as the same thing, which they regarded as the source of life. The earliest way of writing *qi* was as three wavy lines, representing breath on a cold day.

In Chinese thought, *qi* took on less material aspects, as “spirit” did in Western thinking. But there was never a sharp dividing line between material and immaterial. *Qi* could be the wind moving above the earth, the breath of a living creature, the energy that transformed one element into another, or the vitality of the human body.

GURPS defines chi primarily as internal vital energy, as covered in **GURPS Powers** and **GURPS Martial Arts**. However, it retains some association with air and breath. For example, some of the styles in **GURPS Martial Arts** include Breath Control: Hung Gar Kung Fu, Goju Ryu, Kempo, and T'ai Chi Chuan.

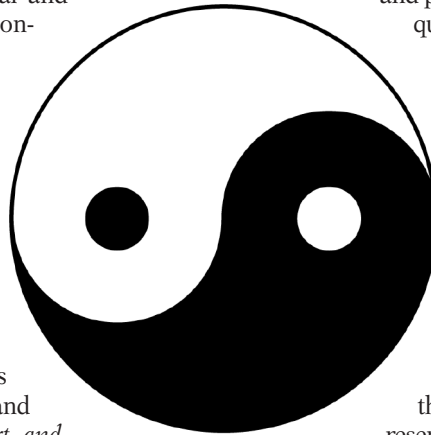
YIN AND YANG

Underlying elemental transformations in Chinese thought is a basic polarity: *yin* and *yang*. Wood and fire are classified as lesser and greater yang, metal and water as lesser and greater yin. Earth is considered neutral.

Yin and yang are linked with other paired concepts: earth and heaven, darkness and light, cold and heat, wetness and dryness, female and male, below and above. In relation to the human body, yin is the interior of the body or each part of it, and yang is the exterior. This is related to the distinction between internal and external styles in martial arts.

Traditional Chinese medicine (*Esoteric Medicine*, p. 19) regards many diseases as disturbed physiological states in which yin and yang are out of balance (see *Extra Effort and*

Crippled Abilities, p. 12); treatment aims to restore the balance by various methods. Foods are classed as yin or yang, and patients may be advised to eat foods with the quality they lack, and avoid foods with the quality they have in excess.



Yin and yang are *not* evil and good. Trying to have yang without yin would be like trying to have a right side and no left side. Taoism emphasizes the virtues of balance and harmony. The person whose yin and yang are out of balance is not only medically but emotionally and morally disturbed. Inner balance is represented by the *taiji* symbol: a circle divided into complementary light and dark shapes, with a dot of the other color in the middle of each. Only the entire circle, representing *dao*, the way of nature, is complete.

ELEMENTAL INTERACTIONS

The primary relationship among the elements involves one element creating or nourishing another. This forms a cycle, the “generating” or “mother” cycle. The sequence is as follows (see the diagram on p. 7):

Earth contains metals, and veins of ore that can be smelted into metals.

Metal forms water by condensation.

Water nourishes trees that form wood.

Wood fuels fire.

Fire leaves behind ash, which is considered a form of earth.

If this cycle is applied *backward*, the child has some form of power over its mother: Metal tools move earth, water corrodes

metal (or metal sinks in water), wood floats on water (or vegetation dams water), fire consumes wood, and earth covers fire.

The pairs of elements that aren't directly linked within the generating cycle are involved in a second set of relationships in which one element limits or restrains another: the “overcoming” or “father” cycle. The sequence is as follows (see the diagram):

Earth can absorb water.

Water quenches fire.

Fire is able to melt or warp metal.

Metal shaped into axes and saws can cut wood.

Wood covers earth and binds it with its roots *or* wooden spades turn over soil.

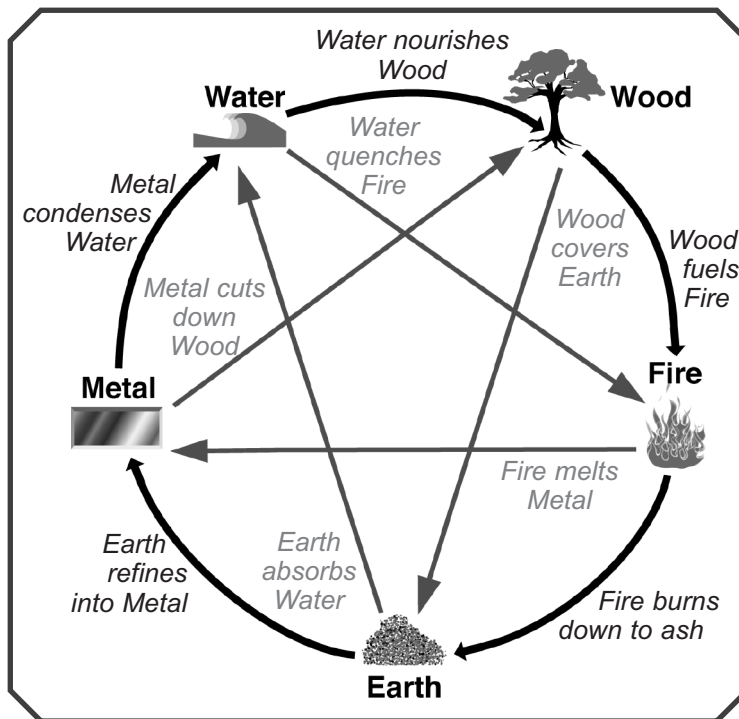
These relationships are used in defining powers based on the five elements, creating a complex, structured system in which each element generates another (as its “mother”), and can be countered by the effects of *two* other elements (its “child” and “father”). Most of the interactions can be represented by existing *GURPS* rules, but some require new mechanics.

WATER NOURISHES WOOD

Plants, like humans and other animals, need water, and suffer from not getting enough. Short-lived plants such as grasses die out when short of water; long-lived plants such as trees become dormant, surviving on internally stored water. Plants adapted to different climates need different amounts of water.

As a rule of thumb, short grasses need five quarts of water per square yard per day during the growing season. Each 10% shortfall reduces yield by 25%. Plants are not subject to fatigue, but if water is short enough to reduce yield by 100%, each day without water requires a HT roll. A short-lived plant that fails this roll dies; a long-lived one sheds its leaves, flowers, and fruit and becomes dormant.

Water requirements may be lowered for desert plants, raised for some woodland plants, and raised substantially for jungle or swamp plants. Most plants have HT 10, but delicate

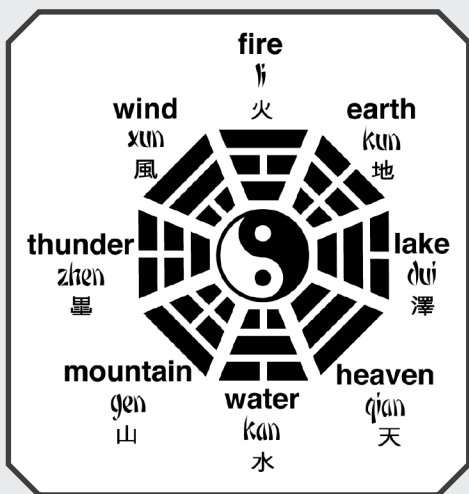


plants (such as orchids) that require stable environments may have HT as low as 8, while hardy plants that tolerate climate fluctuations may have HT up to 12.

Elements and Trigrams

Another set of categories in Chinese thought is the eight *trigrams* (*bagua*) on which the *I Ching* is based. These are made up of broken or yin lines and unbroken or yang lines, in eight possible combinations. (This idea, brought back to Europe by Jesuit missionaries, inspired the mathematician Leibniz to invent binary arithmetic!) The trigrams are called *heaven, lake, fire, thunder, wind, water, mountain, and earth*. The 64 ordered pairs of trigrams make up the hexagrams of the *I Ching*.

Taoist thought links the fire and water trigrams with their respective elements. Each other element corresponds to two trigrams: wood to wind and thunder, earth to earth and mountain, and metal to heaven and lake. Notice that the yin and yang associations are different! Fire is greater yang, and water is greater yin, but their trigrams have mixed yang and yin lines. Three yang lines form the trigram heaven, which is assigned to the lesser yin element metal; three yin lines form the trigram earth, which is assigned to the neutral element earth. Most of the powers in this work are not based on the trigrams.



WATER QUENCHES FIRE

Water puts out fires both by turning into steam that mixes with the air, so that the oxygen level is too low to sustain combustion, and by absorbing heat from surfaces, making them less likely to catch fire. Quenching a fire with water can be represented by a variant of the rules for making things burn (p. B433). There are three levels of water exposure, each represented as a point value:

Droplets (from light rain or a sprinkler): 1 point.

Spray (from a bucket, a fire hose, or pouring rain): 3 points.

Immersion (in a flood): 10 points.

For water-based Innate Attacks, use the rolled damage as the point value. For abilities with defensive effects, treat the DR vs. burning attacks as the point value. Once this value is known, compare it to the fire’s rolled damage:

Rolled fire damage is less than water value: Fire goes out immediately.

Rolled fire damage is less than 3×(water value): Fire goes out after 10 seconds.

Rolled fire damage is less than 10×(water value): Fire goes out after two minutes.

Rolled fire damage is 10×(water value) or more: Fire does not go out.

CHAPTER TWO

FUNDAMENTALS

Mastery of the Chinese elements is an example of magic as a power, or a set of powers, as discussed in **GURPS Thaumatology**. It's not identical to the elemental command power found in that supplement, because it both embodies

different views of the elements (*The Cycles of the Elements*, pp. 5-7) and has a different source of power. But this entire supplement is an extended example of "magic as power." Thus, the general rules for powers apply to the powers it presents.

DEFINING POWERS

The definition of powers follows the pattern of psionics (pp. B254-257), as elaborated upon in **GURPS Powers**. A Chinese elemental power is defined by three things:

- A *Talent* that gives a bonus to rolls to activate or use the power.
- A list of *abilities* that benefit from the Talent, based on modified advantages.
- A *power modifier* that affects the cost of these abilities, and makes their use subject to special conditions.

POWER TALENT

Just as a mundane Talent aids skills, a power Talent adds to all rolls to use abilities of a given power. For example, the internal water ability Dragon Swiftiness (p. 30) grants enhanced speed in water, so Chinese Water Talent gives a bonus to Swimming and Aquabatics rolls used with Dragon Swiftiness. The GM is free to interpret Talent creatively for abilities that don't normally require a die roll.

Unlike mundane Talents, power Talents have no effect on reaction rolls.

A power Talent "keeps the door open" for gaining new abilities belonging to the power. See *Learning Abilities* (p. 10).

Power Perks

Each power has associated perks – minor abilities that make use of the element in some way. These don't have explicitly stated enhancements or limitations, but they have chi as a source (*Chi*, p. 9), with the attendant requirements and difficulties. In compensation, they may be *slightly* more useful than other comparable perks, and their use benefits from the power Talent. The GM may adjudicate whether a given perk counts as internal or external, if necessary.

The † symbol means a perk is available in multiple specialties; you must specialize. The ‡ symbol means the perk is *leveled*, with a cost of 1 point/level; you may take one level for each level of your power Talent.

Earned character points can be spent freely to add levels of a power Talent. No character can have more than four levels of a power Talent without special permission from the GM.

Most Talents cost 5 points per level; this includes Chinese Earth, Fire, Metal, Water, and Wood Talents. A Talent with unusually wide applications costs 10 points per level, comparable to the cost of standard Magery; Chinese Elemental Talent, applying to all five elements, is such a Talent. See *Talent* (p. 16) for a summary.

ABILITIES

Each power grants access to a variety of abilities. Two practitioners with the same basic power may have entirely different sets of abilities! Chapter 4 defines abilities for all five powers.

The abilities for Chinese elemental powers are divided into two subgroups: *internal* and *external*. Internal abilities adjust the flow of chi within the body to affect its functioning or physical state, or to manifest the qualities of the element at its surface. External abilities control the flow of chi through the natural environment or the behavior of the element outside the body.

Any Chinese elemental power can be limited to *only* internal or *only* external abilities. This doesn't modify the cost of the abilities themselves. However, it modifies the cost of the Talent:

External: Your power Talent enhances only your use of external abilities. -40%.

Internal: Your power Talent enhances only your use of internal abilities. -40%.

All abilities were created using the advantages and modifiers in the **Basic Set** and **GURPS Powers** (plus a few more defined on pp. 17-18). The GM may create additional abilities using these same traits, perhaps as "secret disciplines"; learning such secrets may be the focus of a scenario or a campaign (see *Teachers and Students*, p. 37). He may even allow players to create them, if they want to undertake more complex character design. Make sure to verify that each ability has the appropriate power modifier(s) and that its cost is correct.

Internal Abilities

Adapt: Most powers provide the ability to adapt the body to their own element.

Attack Foes: Most powers provide an ability that can injure or afflict humans and animals.

Attack or Control Other Element: Every power allows the practitioner's body to restrain or damage the next element in the "overcoming" cycle (*Elemental Interactions*, pp. 6-7).

Create or Nourish Other Element: Every power allows the practitioner's body to produce or aid the growth of the next element in the "generating" cycle (*Elemental Interactions*, pp. 6-7).

Impairment: Every power allows use of inner chi to disrupt another person's vital functions. This is based on the power of one's own element to control or limit another element and the organs associated with it (*Thinking in Fives*, p. 5).

Lifting: Most powers can increase lifting strength.

Movement: Most powers grant enhanced ability to move – or resist moving.

Resist Attacks: Most powers provide some form of armor or other protection against attacks.

External Abilities

Command Own Element: All powers allow control of their own element if this is present in the environment.

Neutralize Other Power: Each element can restrict the use of one other element by an adversary.

Obscure: Some powers provide a way to use their element to hinder others' perception.

Ranged Attack: All powers provide some way to attack a distant foe.

Sense Own Element: All powers can detect and analyze their own element if this is present in the environment.

Storm: All powers can create a sudden convulsion of nature. Every Storm of (Element) ability has the Elemental Storm meta-enhancement (p. 17) and Extended Duration x3 (increasing duration to 30 seconds).

POWER MODIFIER

Each ability has one or more modifiers based on its source. These modifiers define ways in which use of the ability is restricted or hindered (or augmented) in comparison to the advantages it's based on.

All Chinese elemental abilities must take the Chi modifier. Most external abilities *also* add the Elemental modifier (for a net -20%), as they can be countered. The various Knowing Hidden (Element) abilities are an example of external abilities that lack Elemental, as they cannot be blocked by mundane or supernatural countermeasures.

Chi

-10%

Your power emanates from the vital energy of your body. To be able to use that energy in performing superhuman feats, you must spend a few hours each day engaging in exercises and meditation. This requires Meditation skill (p. 20). The *requirement* for meditation and exercise is a -10-point disadvantage, which may be Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism or

Alternative Modifiers

Chinese elemental powers take Chi as a modifier because the Chinese elements are manifestations of chi. But there are other options, depending on the campaign assumptions. Whichever the GM takes, most external powers also have Elemental as a modifier.

You should still roleplay the disciplines that maintain your powers, but you need not treat this as Disciplines of Faith or a Vow. The GM may allow you to take your meditative activities as a quirk.

Magical

-10%

In a strongly fantasy-oriented campaign, the GM may have Chinese elemental powers depend on mana rather than chi, or decide that mana and chi are different names for the same thing. If so, your powers depend on mana: Rolls to use your abilities are at -5 in low-mana areas and don't work at all in no-mana areas, the Mana Damper advantage simulates the effects of low or no mana, and Magic Resistance protects others from your attacks. In addition, spells that dispel or protect against magic are effective against your powers. This is the same as the Mana Sensitive limitation (p. B34).

Super

-10%

In a supers campaign – especially a classic "four-color" one – control over the Chinese elements may be just one more set of generic superpowers, as control over the Greek elements sometimes is. Your powers can be affected by Neutralize and Static (see *GURPS Powers* for details), and gadgeteers can create weird-science devices to block or even steal them. For example, some feng shui practitioners believe that electromagnetic devices distort *qi*, so electromagnetic disruption of chi powers might be workable.

Mysticism), an appropriate Vow, or a combination of Disciplines of Faith (Contemplation) (p. 18) with either a lesser Vow (such as Three Treasures, p. 18) or Pacifism (Reluctant Killer). If you neglect this, your power fails the first time you call on it under stress, leaving you mildly ill; treat this as one of coughing/sneezing, drowsy, nauseated, or moderate pain (all p. B428), as the GM determines. You need 1d days of continued meditation to restore your inner balance.

Elemental

-10%

Your power works with one of the five elements that is present in the immediate environment. It's subject to being blocked by mundane conditions that resist that element, and to mundane countermeasures against it. These include, but are not confined to, the effects of its limiting ("father") element and of its "child" element (*Elemental Interactions*, pp. 6-7). For example, both water and earth limit fire by putting it out, so the use of water or earth is a countermeasure against most external fire powers. See Chapter 4 for details.

USING POWERS

Defining Chinese elemental magic as a set of powers makes some optional rules from *GURPS Powers* applicable to it. The rules provided here define the game mechanics for elemental magic.

LEARNING ABILITIES

There are several paths to power over an element, or all the elements.

If you have at least one level of Talent for an elemental power, you can acquire new abilities of that power by study. A character with *no* abilities can have a level of Talent as a “placeholder” for the potential to gain them, much as *Magery* (p. B66) indicates the potential for learning spells in mana-based magic. At the GM’s option, each 200 hours of study may earn 1 point toward the cost of the studied ability, or the student may spend points earned through adventure toward a designated ability, with no set time requirement – or both. Each level of Talent then reduces this study requirement by 10%, to a minimum of 60% (120 hours/point) for Talent 4. Talent does not alter the point cost of an ability.

To improve an ability you already have, as opposed to gaining a new ability, study the Focus technique (p. 20) for that ability. This does not require Talent, but benefits from it in reduced study time.

If you have an ability but no Talent, you cannot gain new abilities except through repetition of whatever accident, enchantment, or miracle gave you the first one. (This is a deliberate restriction in comparison to the more generous rules in *GURPS Powers*.) However, you can spend study time or points from experience on acquiring the Talent, which will then open the door to a wider range of abilities. Study time for Talent does *not* benefit from any Talent you may already have!

In a martial-arts-themed campaign, elemental abilities may represent secret advanced training in a martial art. Trained by a Master can substitute for Talent in allowing acquisition of elemental abilities – but only the abilities that the style teaches. Conversely, Talent may grant access to select cinematic skills (see p. 19) without the need for Trained by a Master.

If you have Wild Talent with Retention and Wild Ability (p. 16), you may work to master new abilities manifested through your Wild Talent. If you have enough character points to purchase the ability immediately, you may do so. If not, you may begin working to acquire the additional points. If no teacher with the ability is available, the time to add a point through study is *doubled*.

If you were granted an ability through alchemical elixirs (p. 39), experimental medical procedures, or other external methods, the same methods may grant you new abilities. Having power Talent doesn’t help with this, but if you gain new abilities of the same power, its Talent applies once you have them.

DETECTING POWERS

As a rule, *external* abilities have obvious effects: Ordinary human senses can notice their use. If the elemental is making an effort to use a power *inconspicuously*, noticing its use requires a Sense roll. This involves using the external

environment for concealment; the ability itself can’t be made any less conspicuous! External abilities whose only effect is to sense or perceive something (e.g., Knowing Hidden (Element), Inner Awareness, and Inner Discrimination) count as having subtle effects, as defined below.

Internal abilities mostly have subtle effects; they cause changes inside the elemental’s body. These cannot be perceived by ordinary human senses. At the GM’s option, scientific or medical scanners may react to them. However, if the elemental uses his abilities to lift great weights, move quickly, withstand injury, or the like, observers are likely to figure out that something is going on.

Both external and internal abilities can be identified with Inner Awareness (p. 21), Inner Discrimination (p. 33), or other chi-attuned senses (usually based on Detect).

ACTIVATING POWERS

Exercising chi-based elemental powers is a conscious choice. No elemental abilities are always on; they are always switchable or transient (see *GURPS Powers*). The switchable ones require a Concentrate maneuver to activate; once activated, they remain active until the user chooses to deactivate them, or loses consciousness. Transient abilities also require a Concentrate maneuver, but may be used to attack (for example) in the same turn.

The requirement for the user to be conscious is inherent in many mental abilities, including active sensory abilities such as Detect. For physical abilities, including passive sensory abilities, the need for an initial Concentrate and the failure of the ability on loss of consciousness together count as Accessibility, While conscious (p. 17).

If the underlying advantage is always on, and *having it on is inconvenient in some way*, Switchable is an enhancement. This applies, for example, to physiological traits such as Claws or Flight with wings, which are visible and conspicuous even when not in use. If there is no drawback, being switchable is a 0% special effect. This applies, for example, to Damage Resistance, which can be either always on or switchable for the same point cost. (However, Damage Resistance with Can’t Wear Armor is inconvenient, so making it Switchable is an enhancement.) See *Switchable* (pp. 17-18) for more.

Using a switchable ability costs 1 FP/hour. This rate of fatigue does not count as a limitation (*Costs Fatigue*, p. 17), but it’s sufficient to force elementals to rest regularly. A GM who prefers to have masters of the elements go lightly clad, protected by their powers or skills rather than armor, can apply increased fatigue costs based on encumbrance, as with hiking (see p. B426).

POWERS, DEFENSE, AND RESISTANCE

Elemental powers provide various kinds of defense. Ordinarily, these work automatically once the ability is activated. But some abilities can be used for active defense against attacks of certain kinds. Active defenses don’t require a Concentrate maneuver.

Various elemental abilities allow one of Power Dodge, Power Parry, or Power Block (originally defined in **GURPS Powers**). Combat Reflexes and Enhanced Time Sense add their usual bonuses to these.

Power Dodge

Forest Walking (p. 22) can be used to evade an attack by retreating into dense vegetation, or to get out of sight in the same way. The roll (dropping fractions) is:

$$\text{Power Dodge} = 3 + \text{Basic Speed} + \text{Talent}/2.$$

Success protects you completely against most attacks. If the vegetation is screening you from the source of an impaling, piercing, or tight-beam burning attack, an attack that succeeds by 5 or more finds a gap in the vegetation and cannot be dodged.

You may similarly Power Dodge to avoid being seen (assuming the observer hasn't *already* seen you). *Each* observer requires a separate Power Dodge, at a cumulative -1 for each person already fooled; you choose the order in which to roll. Those unaffected do not *automatically* see you; they must win or tie a Quick Contest of their Perception (plus Vision modifiers) vs. your Stealth to do so. If they are actively looking for you, they may use Observation if better.

*He who knows how to live
can walk abroad*

*Without fear of rhinoceros
or tiger.*

*He will not be wounded
in battle.*

– **Tao Te Ching**

Power Parry

The following attacks can make a Power Parry, but only under two specific circumstances (below): Club Fist (pp. 21-22), Drowning Embrace (pp. 30-31), Flame Breath (p. 24), Glinting Edge (p. 28), Stream of Needles (p. 30), and Water Spear (p. 33). The roll is based on the skill used to attack with the ability (drop all fractions):

$$\text{Power Parry} = 3 + (\text{attack skill} + \text{Talent})/2.$$

Standard Parry modifiers apply, with a few exceptions: There's no penalty to parry a ranged attack; shield DB applies only if the *attacking* ability has the Blockable or Melee Attack limitation; and modifiers for bad footing, posture, and relative height apply only if the *parrying* ability has Melee Attack.

The circumstances under which a Power Parry makes sense are:

1. If the attacker uses the same elemental power as the defender, *or* the attack is a mundane one using the same element (for example, a fire-lance against a master of fire), the two can

collide with each other. Roll damage for both normally. If the damage for the attack exceeds the damage for the defense, the excess damage takes effect; if it's equal or less, neither combatant is hurt. The deflected attack damage lands in an adjacent hex and may injure its occupant; determine which hex as for *Scatter* (p. B414).

2. If the defender's elemental power limits or restrains the attacker's element *or* the element used by a mundane weapon (see *Elemental Interactions*, pp. 6-7), the rolls are compared in the same way, but part or all of the attack is *negated* rather than deflected and does no harm to anyone. This doesn't work in reverse! A fire mage's Burning Spear could melt a metal mage's Stream of Needles (spoiling its aerodynamics), but the metal mage couldn't hinder the fire mage.

Elemental mages who have multiple elements at their command may choose between different elements for attacking or parrying. It's not obvious in advance which element a foe's attack will use. Mages' duels may turn into arcane versions of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Critical success on analysis with Inner Awareness can reveal a foe's intention before he acts; Inner Discrimination is too slow for combat use.

Power Block

Four forms of Power Block are available through elemental powers. They have the same roll (drop all fractions):

$$\text{Power Block} = 3 + (\text{Will} + \text{Talent})/2.$$

1. If the defender's ability provides DR vs. the same element as the attacker's attack, or DR of the element that limits or restrains that element (see *Elemental Interactions*, pp. 6-7), a successful Power Block doubles the DR granted. This applies to Heat Endurance (p. 24), Iron Skull (p. 29), Resistance to Fire (p. 31), Skin of Bronze (p. 29), Skin of Earth (p. 26), and Skin of Oak (p. 22).

2. If the defender's ability grants a bonus to a resistance roll against some sort of attack ability (see *Resisting Abilities*, p. 12), a successful Power Block doubles the bonus. This applies to Immobility (p. 28).

3. If the attack is an Affliction or Innate Attack and the defending ability is a form of Control or Obscure that could reasonably influence or block the attack's focus, a successful Power Block provides DR 1 *or* +1 to resist per level of the defending advantage. This applies to Blowing Leaves (p. 23), Commanding Earth (p. 27), Commanding Fire (p. 25), Commanding Metal (p. 29), Commanding Water (p. 32), Commanding Wood (p. 23), Dust Cloud (p. 27), Smoke Veil (p. 25), and Summoning Fog (p. 33). They can be used not only against elemental powers, but also against other powers or mundane weapons, even advanced technological weapons; e.g., Smoke Veil (based on Obscure 5) could provide DR 5 against laser weapons.

4. Many of the abilities listed for option 3 can be used to block *perception* as well as attacks. A successful Power Block doubles the penalty to the affected sense.

In all these cases, the defense must be focused on a specific attack or observer; it grants no benefit against other attacks or observers. However, a failure negates the defense *entirely* against all attacks in that turn. For example, a failed Power Block using Skin of Bronze means that the ability provides *no* DR vs. the incoming attack!

Resisting Abilities

Several elemental abilities can be resisted with a simple roll against HT; e.g., the Touching the (Internal Organ) abilities and the side effects of some of the Storm of (Element) abilities. Fit gives +1 to resist these effects; Very Fit gives +2.

Skin of Bronze (p. 29), Skin of Earth (p. 26), and Skin of Oak (p. 22) add their DR to all rolls to resist most Afflictions; however, only Skin of Earth protects against Afflictions based on skin contact, like the Touching the (Internal Organ) abilities! Heat Endurance (p. 24) does the same, but only against heat- and fire-based Afflictions. Resistance to Fire (p. 31) is more narrowly limited, to fire-based Afflictions only.

The metal ability Immobility (p. 28) gives +3 or +8 to ST to resist knockback; this includes the doubled knockback from Avalanche (p. 26), Storm of Rain (p. 33), and Storm of Wind (p. 23).

*The movement of heaven is full
of power.*

*Thus the superior man makes
himself strong and untiring.*

*– I Ching, Hexagram 1,
the Creative*

EXTRA EFFORT

Most elemental abilities can be pushed past their normal limits by spending FP on them. Extra effort can enhance the effects of elemental abilities as it can for ordinary physical tasks (pp. B356-357). To do so, make a Will roll at -1 per 5% increase in the effect of the abilities, or fraction thereof. The maximum bonus to effect is 100%, at -20 to Will. Use Will even for purely physical extra effort, such as increasing your carrying capacity for Forest Walking (p. 22).

For abilities resulting from training, Meditation (p. 20) may substitute for Will. A successful roll vs. Breath Control (p. 19) grants +2 to Meditation for this purpose. For a single ability, this benefit can be enhanced further through Focus (p. 20). Talent adds to the Will, Meditation, or Focus roll.

The descriptions of abilities in Chapter 4 include the benefits of extra effort; if no benefits are described, extra effort does not apply to the ability. General categories of benefits include the following:

- *Increased damage*, for abilities based on Innate Attack
- *Increased range*, for ranged attacks or jumping abilities
- *Increased ST*, for abilities based on Binding
- *Increased ST bonus*, for abilities based on Lifting ST
- *Increased top speed*, for movement abilities

More generally, almost any ability based on an advantage that has levels can gain increased levels through extra effort. The GM has the final say.

A critical failure when using extra effort is *especially* bad; see *Extra Effort and Crippled Abilities* (below) for details.

CRIPPLED ABILITIES

All chi abilities draw on the natural flow of chi through the user's body. Mishaps during use can distort that flow, causing effects that resemble straining a muscle. Any critical failure on the roll to use an active ability, or for active use of a passive ability (*Powers, Defense, and Resistance*, pp. 10-12), requires an immediate check for crippling.

To make such a check, roll vs. Will – or vs. Meditation (p. 20), if higher. If this second roll is a failure, the ability suffers *temporary* crippling, making it unavailable for minutes equal to the margin of failure. After this time has passed, roll once per additional minute; the ability recovers on the first success.

Critical failure results in *lasting* failure of the ability, making it completely unavailable for 1d months. Treatment with Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) (p. 19) can shorten this time by two months. If you have Breath Control (p. 19), two hour-long sessions of breathing exercises daily can shorten it by one month. These benefits are cumulative, but cannot reduce recovery time to less than one month.

Extra Effort and Crippled Abilities

The effects of crippling are *much* worse if you were using extra effort at the time! In *addition* to the loss of power, there are systemic consequences for the duration (temporary or lasting). The details depend on which power was being used:

Excess Yang: Results from crippling a metal or water ability while using extra effort. The user's yang energies become dominant, with the following effects:

- Impulsiveness (12).
- Lecherousness (12).
- A quirk-level desire for easy pleasures.
- Noticeably hot, dry skin (treat as Distinctive Features).
- -2 to HT rolls to resist disease.
- -3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of heat.
- +2 to HT rolls to resist the effects of cold.
- External abilities that remain usable are at +1 to Talent; internal abilities are at -1.

Excess Yin: Results from crippling a fire or wood ability while using extra effort. The user's yin energies become dominant, with the following effects:

- Bully (12), largely expressed as a tendency to spiteful remarks.
- Lecherousness (12).
- Distinctive Features (Noticeably clammy skin).
- -2 to HT rolls to resist disease.
- -3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of cold.
- +2 to HT rolls to resist the effects of heat.
- Internal abilities that remain usable are at +1 to Talent; external abilities are at -1.

Unstable Chi: Results from crippling an earth ability while using extra effort. When the crippling is suffered, roll 1d. On 1 or 2, the user has excess yang, with all its effects; on 5 or 6, he has excess yin, with all its effects. On a 3 or 4, he is *temporarily* in balance, but *any* attempted extra effort with any of his powers requires a new roll. For lasting crippling, make the same roll at the start of each session, and every five hours of game time thereafter.

Deliberate Crippling

It's possible, instead of attacking a foe's physical body, to overwhelm one of his abilities. This requires an attack based on the element that overcomes the element of the ability being attacked. Suitable attack abilities include Club Fist (pp. 21-22) against an earth ability; Flame Breath (p. 24), Incendiary (p. 25), or Scattering Ashes (p. 25) against metal; Avalanche (p. 26) against water; Glinting Edge (p. 28) or Stream of Needles (p. 30) against wood; or Drowning Embrace (p. 30-31) or Water Spear (p. 33) against fire.

The ability attacked must actually be in use when the attack is made, and it must have visible effects *or* the attacker must use Inner Awareness (p. 21), Inner Discrimination (p. 33), or some other appropriate Detect-based ability to target it. The attack roll is at -4. The attack must be made with a combat skill, not with DX, even if the ability allows normal attacks with a roll vs. DX. The target may attempt to dodge, but may not parry or block.

If the attack hits, roll its damage as usual (subtracting any DR) but treat it as having No Wounding; add any damage bonuses for extra effort, but disregard Double Knockback. *Triple* the penetrating damage; if the result *exceeds* the target's HP, he is at risk of crippling. If the attack roll is a critical success, he is at risk of crippling regardless of the damage. A target at risk must roll against the best of Will, Meditation (p. 20), or Focus (p. 20), with the following (more severe than usual) effects:

Critical Success: He avoids crippling entirely.

Success: Temporary crippling.

Failure: Lasting crippling.

Critical Failure: Permanent crippling. The ability is lost and cannot be restored by anything short of a miracle!

Attacking the Organs

Chinese medical theory associates the elements with bodily organs (see *Thinking in Fives*, p. 5). The *zang* organs are masses of solid or spongy tissue – the kidney (water), lung (metal), spleen (earth), liver (wood), and heart (fire). The *fu* organs are membranes surrounding cavities that can store various fluids – the bladder (water), large intestine (metal), stomach (earth), gall bladder (wood), and small intestine (fire). The *zang* organs are yin and the *fu* organs yang (*Yin and Yang*, p. 6).

Attacks on these organs can cripple the abilities for the associated elements indirectly. Treat this as deliberate crippling (above)! Several kinds of attack are possible:

- A roll vs. Pressure Secrets; the attack must target the vitals (p. B399) at an extra -2 to single out a specific organ (net -5). This may benefit from one of the Touching attacks (*Abilities Enhancing Cinematic Skills*, p. 14).

- Any attack that targets a specific vital organ (at the same -5 as above), and inflicts injury *over* HP/10. Identifying the proper organ requires an Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) (p. 19) roll.

- A roll vs. the lower of Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) and Poisons to compound a drug that interferes with the organs.

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Elemental abilities are often learned in conjunction with skills. Either can make the other more effective. A Taoist might compare this to the harmony of yang and yin.

A skill cannot both be enhanced by an ability *and* benefit the use of that ability, with respect to the same action.

Skills Enhancing Abilities

Using elemental abilities normally involves rolling against an attribute, modified by a power Talent. If the GM agrees, a mundane skill may take the place of the attribute, if better. Talent also adds to these skill rolls.

Below is a list of skills that can aid abilities. Players are welcome to propose other such benefits. However, the GM's approval is always required, whether for the listed benefits, for player-proposed benefits, or even for using this concept in a campaign at all!



Acrobatics can replace DX for attempting to touch a nearby surface in order to use Ivy Climb (p. 22) to break a fall.

Aquabatics can replace DX to move through water with Dragon Swiftness (p. 30).

Body Control can replace IQ for Holding Water (p. 26) rolls.

Chemistry (or *Alchemy*, pp. 18-19, at -3) can replace IQ for analysis rolls with Knowing Hidden Water (p. 32).

Engineer (*Civil, Combat, or Mining*) can replace IQ for using Shaking the Ground (p. 28) to damage structures of the respective types.

Esoteric Medicine (*Taoist*) (p. 19) can replace IQ for the use of Restoring the Body's Water (p. 31).

Forced Entry can be used to break open doors or containers with Club Fist (pp. 21-22) or Glinting Edge (p. 28).

Kiai can take the place of Innate Attack (Breath) for aiming Drowning Embrace (pp. 30-31)

or Flame Breath (p. 24).

Lifting can be used in conjunction with Metal Frame (pp. 28-29), Stone Frame (p. 26), or Wood Frame (p. 23).

Metallurgy can replace IQ for analysis rolls with Knowing Hidden Metal (p. 30).

Meteorology can replace IQ to produce optimal results from Herding Clouds (p. 32).

Naturalist can replace IQ for analysis rolls with Knowing Hidden Vegetation (p. 23).

Prospecting can replace IQ for analysis rolls with Knowing Hidden Metal (p. 30) or Knowing Hidden Stone (pp. 27-28).

Abilities Enhancing Skills

Elemental abilities can grant bonuses to skill rolls for various ordinary practical activities. Abilities that substitute for using fine-quality mundane equipment give +2. Abilities that grant truly miraculous benefits give +4. Whether to allow this (and when) is up to the GM.

Roll normally to activate the ability. Abilities that always activate require a Meditation (p. 20) roll to direct them; such abilities can't turn around and grant bonuses to Meditation! On a success, the skill gains the bonus. On a critical success, if the skill is at least 3 *without the bonus*, the skill roll is an automatic success. If the skill is 2 or less, but the bonus raises it to 3 or more, roll normally; if the skill is still less than 3, the task is impossible.

On a failure, the skill is at -1, because the user was distracted; if the ability was inappropriate *in the GM's opinion*, this becomes -2. On a critical failure, the skill roll is an automatic critical failure; if the ability was inappropriate, the results should be especially embarrassing (-2 to reaction rolls for any witnesses).

Here are some examples of abilities that aid skills:

Club Fist (pp. 21-22): +2 to Forced Entry; equivalent to having a ram or sledgehammer.

Commanding Earth (p. 27): +2 to Artist (Sculpting) or Masonry; equivalent to having fine tools.

Commanding Fire (p. 25): +2 to Explosives (Fireworks) to produce controlled effects.

Commanding Metal (p. 29): +2 to Armoury, Artist (Sculpting), Jeweler, Machinist, or Smith; equivalent to having fine tools.

Commanding Wood (p. 23): +2 to Armoury, Artist (Woodworking), or Carpentry; equivalent to having fine tools.

Exude Fuel (p. 23): +2 to Housekeeping or Survival to start a fire; equivalent to having high-quality kindling.

Forge (p. 24): +2 to Jeweler or Smith to work metal; equivalent to having a highly controllable forge.

Germinate (p. 32): +4 to Gardening; allows miraculous support for sprouting.

Hot Metal (p. 25): +2 to Housekeeping or Survival to start a fire; equivalent to having a lighter.

Incendiary (p. 25): +4 to Housekeeping or Survival to start a fire; starts fires miraculously.

Inner Awareness (p. 21): +2 to Diagnosis or Meteorology; equivalent to having superior instruments.

Inner Discrimination (p. 33): +4 to Diagnosis; allows a detailed internal scan.

Knowing Hidden Fire (p. 25): +2 to Artist (Pottery or Sculpting) or Metallurgy, for tasks that benefit from knowing the temperature in a foundry or kiln.

Knowing Hidden Metal (p. 30): +2 to Metallurgy to produce alloys with a desired composition. +4 to Prospecting to locate veins of native metal.

Knowing Hidden Stone (pp. 27-28): +4 to Prospecting to locate nonmetallic minerals.

Knowing Hidden Vegetation (p. 23): +4 to Naturalist when trying to locate herbs or other plants.

Knowing Hidden Water (p. 32): +2 to Navigation to select a course for a boat or ship, by virtue of knowing the currents. +4 to Naturalist or Prospecting to find water.

Lightened Body (p. 24): +4 to Acrobatics, Climbing, or Jumping.

Quenching Touch (p. 32): +4 to Fire Eating, by applying it inside the mouth.

“Since I have known the Way,” said Wukung, “I have the ability of seventy-two transformations. The cloud-somersault has unlimited power. I am familiar with the magic of body concealment and the magic of displacement. I can find my way to Heaven or I can enter the Earth. I can walk past the sun and the moon without casting a shadow, and I can penetrate stone and metal without hindrance.”

– Wu Chengen, *Journey to the West [Monkey]*

Abilities Enhancing Cinematic Skills

The use of abilities to enhance cinematic skills, which are also based on chi, is particularly appropriate; even in a campaign where abilities cannot enhance ordinary skills, the GM may allow them to enhance cinematic skills. This list also includes peaceful cinematic skills (*Skills*, pp. 18-20).

Avalanche (p. 26): +2 to Push.

Club Fist (pp. 21-22): +2 to Power Blow for striking blows.

Glinting Edge (p. 28): +2 to Breaking Blow.

Immobility (p. 28): +2 to Immovable Stance.

Inner Awareness (p. 21): +2 to Body Control, Erotic Art (p. 19), Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) (p. 19), Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui) (pp. 19-20), or Sensitivity.

Inner Discrimination (p. 33): +4 to Erotic Art, Esoteric Medicine (Taoist), or Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui).

Ivy Climb (p. 22): +2 to Lizard Climb.

Knowing Hidden Fire (p. 25), *Knowing Hidden Metal* (p. 30), *Knowing Hidden Stone* (pp. 27-28), *Knowing Hidden Vegetation* (p. 23), or *Knowing Hidden Water* (p. 32): +1 to Alchemy (pp. 18-19) from any one; +2 to Alchemy from using *all five* (roll only once, using the lowest of the five abilities if they differ).

Knowing Hidden Vegetation (p. 23): +2 to Herb Lore (p. 20).

Lightened Body (p. 24): +2 to Flying Leap and Light Walk.

Metal Frame (pp. 28-29), *Stone Frame* (p. 26), or *Wood Frame* (p. 23): +2 to Power Blow for lifting and handling heavy objects.

Restoring the Body's Water (p. 31): +2 to Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) to flush poisons from the body.

Touching the Heart (p. 31), *Kidneys* (p. 27), *Liver* (p. 29), *Lungs* (p. 25), or *Spleen* (p. 22): +2 to Pressure Secrets when it is used to cripple an elemental power (*Attacking the Organs*, p. 13).

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTER TRAITS

Masters of the Chinese elements may have a variety of other traits, in addition to their powers. In particular,

elementalists often learn cinematic skills and gain traits that support those skills.

ADVANTAGES

Some of the following advantages are reprinted from other supplements. Others are new interpretations of established advantages.

Blessed

see pp. B40-41

One version of this trait is a distinctively Chinese form of attunement to a cosmic power.

Harmony with the Tao: Through *wu wei* (“without doing,” or action through inaction), you can make yourself receptive to the flow of chi about you – you are attuned to the cosmic power of the Tao. You gain the ability to learn peaceful cinematic skills (*Skills*, pp. 18-20), similar to the way Trained by a Master allows learning martial cinematic skills. You do not gain the ability to learn skills with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master as a prerequisite, and do not acquire any combat benefits. Other Taoists sense your inner harmony and react to you at +1. 5 points.

Resistant

see pp. B80-B81

As with psi, it’s possible to be resistant or immune to chi. This protects against chi-based cinematic skills that allow resistance rolls: Hypnotic Hands (see *GURPS Martial Arts*), Invisibility Art (it adds to Vision rolls), Kiai, Pressure Points, Pressure Secrets, and Push (it adds to ST to resist knockback). It also protects against all chi abilities for which a resistance roll is allowed, such as the various Touching the (Internal Organ) abilities. It has no effect on threats that cannot be resisted, including most external damaging abilities; e.g., Stream of Needles (p. 30). Note that *all* Chinese elemental abilities are based on chi unless using *Alternative Modifiers* (p. 9).

If you have Resistant or Immunity to an element, you cannot use that element’s abilities. However, it’s very appropriate to buy Resistant or Immunity to the element that your element controls or limits (*Elemental Interactions*, pp. 6-7). This advantage is not restricted to those with chi-based powers or

esoteric skills; unless the GM rules otherwise, anyone may take it.

The category of “all chi abilities: powers *and* skills” is a Very Common one. Chi elemental powers are Common, any one element counts as Occasional, and any one ability is Rare. Chi-based skills are considered Occasional; each specific skill is Rare. Skills are *not* covered by Resistant or Immunity to their associated elements (*Cinematic Skills*, p. 19).

Resistant or Immunity to Metabolic Hazards (p. B81) protects against chi-based disruption of the body’s internal functions. This includes any chi attack that specifically targets the subject’s physiology; e.g., Pressure Points, Pressure Secrets, the various Touching the (Internal Organ) abilities, and any ability that inflicts toxic damage or fatigue damage without Hazard.

Super Jump

see p. B89

The following limitation (expanded on the version from *GURPS Powers*) has effects relevant to a martial-arts or fantasy campaign:

Lighter Than Air: You jump by becoming lighter than air. Your Move while jumping is not increased to 1/5 of your maximum long jump, so you may stay in the air a long time! For each second off the ground, your landing point drifts a yard in the direction the wind is blowing per 5 mph of wind speed. For instance, if you’re in the air for six seconds in a 10 mph wind from the west, you’ll land 12 yards east of the point you aimed for.

Because you’ve lightened your body, you don’t hit as hard when you land, and your collision damage is reduced:

<i>Levels of Super Jump</i>	<i>Damage Multiplier</i>
1	4/5
2	5/8
3	1/2

Every additional three levels *halves* the multiplier; e.g., with Super Jump 4 (Lighter Than Air), you’d do 2/5 normal slam damage. -10%.

Super Throw

10 points/level

This advantage (from *GURPS Supers*) doesn't increase the weight you can throw, but lets you throw objects of the same size faster and harder. Figure throwing range and damage normally, as defined on p. B355. Then, for each level of Super Throw, *double* range. Regardless of range, the throw will be completed in one turn. Each level of Super Throw increases damage by +2 per die. For example, a ST 10 man can throw a 20-lb. rock 6 yards, inflicting 1d-1 damage on his target; with one level of Super Throw, he can throw it 12 yards and inflict 1d+1 damage.

Talent

see pp. B89-91

Two new Talents, originally defined in *GURPS Martial Arts*, can benefit cinematic skills:

Forceful Chi: Breaking Blow, Erotic Art (p. 19), Flying Leap, Hypnotic Hands, Hypnotism, Invisibility Art, Kiai, Power Blow, Precognitive Parry, Pressure Points, Pressure Secrets, Push, Throwing Art, and Zen Archery. At the GM's discretion, it may also apply to Alchemy (pp. 18-19) and Herb Lore (p. 20). *Reaction bonus*: Honorable opponents, those who practice "hard" or "external" styles (including potential students and masters), and past or present lovers. 15 points/level.

Inner Balance: Autohypnosis, Blind Fighting, Body Control, Body Language, Body Sense, Breath Control (p. 19), Dreaming, Immovable Stance, Light Walk, Lizard Climb, Meditation (p. 20), Mental Strength, Mind Block, and Sensitivity. At the GM's discretion, it may also apply to the cinematic forms of Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) (p. 19) and Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui) (pp. 19-20). *Reaction bonus*: Pacifists, ascetics, and those who practice "soft" or "internal" martial-arts styles. 15 points/level.

In addition to these mundane Talents, six power Talents (p. 8) are available:

Chinese Earth Talent: Improves your rolls to use Chinese earth abilities and allows you to learn additional ones. 5 points/level.

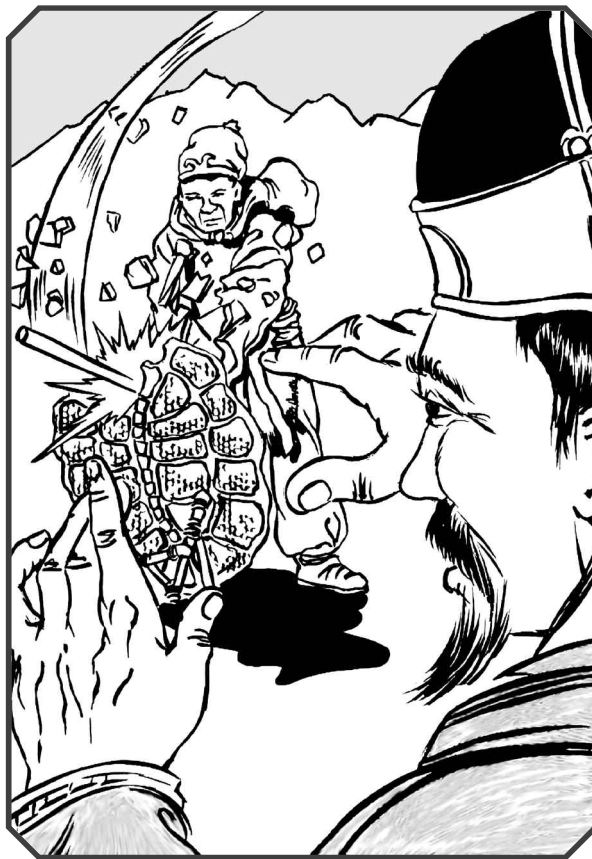
Chinese Elemental Talent: Improves your rolls to use all Chinese elemental abilities and allows you to learn additional ones. This Talent stacks with the more restricted power Talents listed here, but your total bonus cannot exceed +4. 10 points/level.

Chinese Fire Talent: Improves your rolls to use Chinese fire abilities and allows you to learn additional ones. 5 points/level.

Chinese Metal Talent: Improves your rolls to use Chinese metal abilities and allows you to learn additional ones. 5 points/level.

Chinese Water Talent: Improves your rolls to use Chinese water abilities and allows you to learn additional ones. 5 points/level.

Chinese Wood Talent: Improves your rolls to use Chinese wood abilities and allows you to learn additional ones. 5 points/level.



Wild Talent

see pp. B99-100

A new special enhancement from *GURPS Powers* is especially appropriate for Taoist masters who emphasize spontaneity or *wu wei* (p. 15):

Wild Ability: Only for those with powers. In addition to unknown skills, you can use *abilities* you don't have. Any such ability must be part of one of your powers, and can't have modifiers other than those required by the power it belongs to (for instance, its power modifier). You get one "use" of the ability – which means exactly what it does for Limited Use (p. B112). +50%.

PERKS

Several perks can be used in campaigns with chi-based abilities such as elemental powers. The † symbol means that the perk requires specialization.

Body Discipline†

Originally defined in *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings*, this perk lets you apply a particular DX-based skill as a spiritual discipline. As described for Breath Control (p. 19), a successful skill roll grants +2 to Meditation (p. 20) rolls to enter a trance. For example, Body Discipline (Judo Art) would let you perform the motions of grappling and shifting balance (as in T'ai Chi Chuan) as a meditative discipline; a roll vs. Judo Art would give you +2 to Meditation. You must specialize by skill.

Erotic Art (p. 19) is a special case; its successful use as a body discipline grants +2 to *your partner's* rolls.

Special Exercises†

Originally defined in *GURPS Martial Arts*, this perk allows access to an advantage or other capability that's normally off-limits to your race; for example, an archer might take Special Exercises (Arm ST 1). You must specialize by advantage or ability. In martial-arts-themed campaigns, gaining Chinese elemental Talents through martial training may require this perk, which is then treated as leveled; each level of the perk allows one level of the Talent.

MODIFIERS

Enhancements and limitations are keys to defining the abilities of powers, as distinguished from raw advantages. Some new variants of existing modifiers are used in creating elemental abilities. See also *Power Modifier* (p. 9).

Accessibility

see p. B110

Many of the abilities in this work have a new variant of Accessibility:

While conscious: You must be conscious to activate your ability, and doing so is not a free action but requires a Concentrate maneuver. You can keep your ability active by choosing to do so, without further actions, but if you lose consciousness it shuts down. Use this with switchable abilities (*Switchable*, below) but not with transient ones, including most attacks, as those automatically shut down after the turn in which you use them. -5%.

Costs Fatigue

see p. B111

Costs Fatigue is worth -10% per FP if the FP cost is per second, or -5% per FP if it's applied each minute. Using the elemental abilities in this supplement costs 1 or more FP *per hour* (see *Activating Powers*, p. 10). This is a 0% option; it prevents keeping an ability on *all the time*, but isn't applied often enough to meaningfully limit use when it is on.

*Other Taoists sense
your inner harmony.*

Elemental Storm

+190%

This is a meta-enhancement – a combination of enhancements and limitations, treated as a single enhancement for convenience – from *GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements*.

Once a day, the user may perform a dramatic gesture (smashing a vessel of water, striking the ground with a staff, etc.) and initiate a “storm.” The gesture is treated as an Attack maneuver. The GM may wish to imitate martial-arts films by requiring the user to call out the name of the attack!

On the attack turn and on each of nine subsequent turns (10 seconds total), the storm blasts *everyone*, friend or foe, within 16 yards of the spot where he stood. Roll an attack from above at skill 14; victims may block or dodge, but must focus their attention either upward on the storm *or* on foes at ground level, suffering -2 on defenses vs. attacks from the other direction. The summoner is safe if he remains at the eye of the storm, as is any foe in close combat with him, but if he moves away (or is moved!), he also suffers the storm's effects. He cannot end, move, or modify the storm once it begins.

Talent does not apply *directly* to storm attacks, but it does add to the user's rolls to avoid being thrown, shoved, or pulled out of the eye of his own storm. He also adds Talent to his ST for the sole purpose of assessing the knockback he suffers, and to any Quick Contest to resist an attempt to move him or knock him down (e.g., via Judo Throw or Sweep). This never improves his *active defenses* in any way.

Statistics: Accessibility, Requires dramatic gesture, -10%; Area Effect, 16 yards, +200%; Bombardment, Skill 14, -5%; Emanation, -20%; Limited Use, 1/day, -40%; Nuisance Effect, Exploitable hole in center, -5%; Overhead, +30%; Persistent, +40%.

Melee Attack

see p. B112

Several of the attack abilities in Chapter 4 use a new variant of this modifier, originally defined in *GURPS Powers*:

Melee Attack, ST-Based: Only for Crushing, Cutting, and Impaling Attacks. You can add your dice of thrust or swing damage to the damage of your Innate Attack. Work out Melee Attack as usual, and then add a +100% enhancement.

Periodic Recharge

Variable

Your ability must be sustained or renewed from an external source, or it stops working. For this to be a valid limitation, access to the source has to be a major difficulty; for example, you can't carry it with you *or* you have to wait an hour after using your ability to recharge it. This doesn't restrict the number of times you can use the ability in the period between recharges, and using it at less than full power (to “save energy”) won't prolong the cycle. The value depends on the interval between recharges:

Interval	Limitation
Up to 1 minute	-80%
Up to 10 minutes	-40%
Up to 1 hour	-20%
Up to 8 hours	-10%
Up to 24 hours	-5%

An interval longer than 24 hours is not a meaningful limitation. This modifier is often used in conjunction with *Powers and Elixirs* (p. 39); it may represent a potion that cannot be safely consumed again until an hour has passed, one that must be brewed on the spot and consumed immediately (not carried), or some other elixir with restrictions on its use. For a version without such restrictions, see *Trigger* (p. 18).

Switchable

+10% or 0%

This enhancement can only be applied to advantages that are always on, such as anatomical features. It lets you switch the advantage on or off with a Ready maneuver. You can define it as turning off automatically, turning on automatically, or staying in its current state if you lose consciousness.

If an advantage lists special modifiers that allow it to be turned on or off, it cannot have Switchable as well or instead; use those special modifiers. As well, if it has Switchable as a special enhancement with a different value, use that value. Otherwise, if there is some inconvenience in having the advantage always on (see *Always On*, p. B110), Switchable is a +10% enhancement; if there isn't, it's a 0% option. For example, whether Damage Resistance is always on or switchable is normally a special effect – but Can't Wear Armor (p. B47) makes it inconvenient to have it on, making Switchable a +10% enhancement.

Trigger

see p. B115

If a “use” of the advantage is defined as being longer than one minute, the value of Trigger drops. If each dose allows you

to use the ability for 10 minutes, halve the value. For 1 hour, quarter it. For 8 hours, divide it by 8. In all cases, round up (toward 0) to the nearest 5%.

Example: Tam gains several fire abilities for an hour (1/4 value) by drinking a rare elixir (-40%); he buys each one with Trigger, Flame Elixir, 1 hour, -10%. He also acquires extra power Talent for an hour (1/4 value) when he eats wildflowers (-10%). The fraction reduces the limitation to -2.5%, which rounds up to -0%; this is thus not a meaningful limitation.

This “extended” version of Trigger is particularly useful for building elixir-based abilities; see *Powers and Elixirs* (p. 39). If the trigger is unique and difficult to use in some way, see *Periodic Recharge* (p. 17).

DISADVANTAGES

In a Chinese cultural setting, adventurers may choose among new self-imposed behavioral restrictions.

Code of Honor

see p. B127

Two forms of this disadvantage are important in traditional Chinese society:

Code of Honor (Confucian): Generally similar to Code of Honor (Gentleman's). Show humanity to others, especially those who owe you duties; goodwill is more important than following exact rules. Respect society and its customs and traditions. Perform your duties to the emperor, your parents, your husband, your older siblings, and your friends; this includes duties to the dead, even remote ancestors. -10 points.

Code of Honor (Xia): The way of Chinese knights-errant in the early empire. You must be skilled at arms. You must keep your word, honor your pledges, be humble, and uphold justice for those in need. You must be brave and not spare yourself harm to help others. You must be willing to use force, but also to show restraint when force isn't needed. You must respect and honor your teacher. -10 points.

Disciplines of Faith

see p. B132

Taoist masters have their own set of requirements, similar to those of Mysticism, but less intense:

Contemplation: You engage in regular meditation through stillness, attention, breathing exercises, and perhaps physical activities, at least once daily. At all times, you maintain habits of moderation in diet, possessions, and enjoyments. Other people who spend time with you, if they are not students or fellow contemplatives, regard you as eccentric and react at -1. -5 points.

Vow

see pp. B160-161

Following the teachings of Lao Tzu (in pinyin, *Lao Zi*), the reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing*), Taoists recognize three essential virtues: mercy or nonaggression, frugality or economy, and “daring not to put oneself first.” These are called the Three Treasures (*sanbao*). Taoists who strive to live by these can be treated as having a Minor Vow, comparable to the “chastity, poverty, and obedience” of Christian monks. -5 points.

SKILLS

If the GM is using Harmony with the Tao (*Blessed*, p. 15) in the campaign, five peaceful skills – Alchemy (below), Erotic Art (p. 19), Esoteric Medicine (p. 19), Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui) (pp. 19-20), and Herb Lore (p. 20) – become available in either realistic or cinematic versions. This doesn't mean each is split into two different skills; the skills themselves are bought normally, and then Harmony with the Tao “powers them up” to the cinematic version. For example, if you know the realistic version of Alchemy, and then add Harmony with the Tao, your Alchemy skill is automatically “upgraded” to the cinematic version! (You can still choose to use the realistic aspect of the skill, however – Harmony with the Tao gives you access to *both* versions.) If the GM is *not* using Harmony with the Tao, he can ignore the new rules for those skills – or pick and choose which to adopt.

Alchemy

see pp. B174-175

The *cinematic* version of this skill allows for the creation of potions, as defined in the *Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. Chinese alchemy emphasizes immortality drugs rather than transmutation of metals; many of these drugs contain inorganic toxins such as arsenic or mercury! Rather than destroying the alchemist's laboratory, critical failures produce elixirs that poison those who take them. Use the effects of arsenic (p. B439) to represent such toxic results. Immortality elixirs work slightly differently from the standard youth potion in *GURPS Magic*: Instead of subtracting one year from the age the recipient has attained, they make him Unaging for one year.

The *realistic* version is effectively a collection of practical chemical techniques – it was Chinese alchemists who invented porcelain. Use unmodified Alchemy skill for extractive procedures such as distillation (discussed in *GURPS Low-Tech*) and for *simple* inorganic synthesis of substances such as sulfuric acid (“oil of vitriol”). If Chemistry (p. B183) is available, realistic alchemists are better off learning that skill; it’s Hard instead of Very Hard, yet is broader in scope! But in settings where Chemistry doesn’t exist as a science or skill, realistic Alchemy is a way to sneak its basics into the game – it’s expensive, but by definition, its capabilities are *highly* advanced for the setting.

Breath Control

see p. B182

In addition to its more practical uses, this skill can aid meditation through breathing in a controlled pattern. A success grants +2 when seeking trance through Meditation (p. 20). Other body disciplines may grant similar benefits (see *Body Discipline*, p. 16).

Erotic Art

see p. B192

The *cinematic* version of this skill is the basis of tantric mysticism and its Taoist analogues. A successful roll allows you to transfer chi (in the form of FP) between each other, up to your margin of success (minimum 1); if you *both* have this skill (and both succeed), add your margins of success! For prolonged activity, make a *HT*-based roll; your margin of success is how many hours you can last without fatiguing (minimum 1). Either partner may also make a *Will*-based roll to avoid any risk of pregnancy.

The *realistic* version is a collection of advanced, practical techniques that emphasize sensitivity to a partner’s responses. Successful use induces euphoria in your partner; a critical success produces ecstasy (see p. B428 for both). This is good for +1 (+2 for ecstasy) to reaction rolls and Influence rolls involving your partner’s feelings toward you; it lasts for days equal to twice your margin of success (minimum 1 day). You may also roll against *HT*-based Erotic Art instead of HT (if better) for any rolls the GM requires to avoid losing FP from exertion while using the skill.

When combined with Body Discipline (p. 16), either version of Erotic Art lets you give +2 to your *partner’s* Meditation rolls instead of your own. This cannot be combined with inducing euphoria or ecstasy!

Esoteric Medicine

see p. B192

The *cinematic* version of this skill allows treatment by direct manipulation of the flow of chi within a sufferer’s body. The results are exactly as effective as for Physician at the same TL. Regardless of TL, Esoteric Medicine grants benefits equivalent to those of antibiotics (p. B443) when treating illness or infection. It also allows resuscitation (p. B425). If an elemental suffers lasting crippling (p. 12) of an ability, Esoteric Medicine can aid its recovery.

The *realistic* version of this skill allows use of the practical Chinese medical techniques discussed in *GURPS Low-Tech*.

If you lack access to those rules, assume that realistic Esoteric Medicine is as effective as First Aid, but *also* includes the equivalent of Professional Skill (Healer), granting basic knowledge of massage, nutrition, and general health.

Cinematic Skills

At the GM’s option, Chinese elemental powers may offer a path to learning the cinematic skills associated with East Asian martial arts. Each of the elemental Talents (p. 16) can substitute for Trained by a Master (p. B93) as a prerequisite for learning a limited set of skills, through specialized use of focused chi. You still must have the other prerequisites! The Talent bonus does not add to skill or aid skill rolls, and the penalty for Rapid Strikes or multiple parries is not reduced.

Chinese Fire Talent allows Flying Leap, Light Walk, and Zen Archery. Light Walk takes the place of Power Blow as a prerequisite for Flying Leap; you aren’t hurling yourself through the air with great force, but making yourself lighter. As a result, you roll at +5 to use Flying Leap, but use your *unmodified* (not tripled) jumping distance and ST to calculate slam or kick damage.

Chinese Wood Talent allows Lizard Climb (see *GURPS Martial Arts*), Power Blow, and Throwing Art.

Chinese Earth Talent allows Body Control, Kiai, and Pressure Points.

Chinese Metal Talent allows Breaking Blow, Immovable Stance, and Mental Strength.

Chinese Water Talent allows Blind Fighting, Push, and Sensitivity (see *GURPS Martial Arts*).

If you have Chinese Elemental Talent, you can learn all these skills. You also gain access to Pressure Secrets, which grants special benefits against other elemental practitioners (p. 13).

If the GM uses Harmony with the Tao (p. 15), the peaceful cinematic skills are also associated with the elements: Herb Lore with Wood, Erotic Art with Fire, Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) with Earth, Alchemy with Metal, and Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui) with Water.

Expert Skill

see pp. B193-194

The GM may allow Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy) to complement peaceful cinematic skills (those that benefit from Harmony with the Tao, p. 15). Roll against Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy) first; critical success gives +2 to the primary skill, success gives +1, failure gives -1, and critical failure gives -2.

Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui)

see p. B196

Feng Shui (“wind and water”) is Chinese geomancy. The *cinematic* version of this skill can see how chi flows inside a building, or through the natural environment. This allows the user to identify spiritual disturbances. A successful roll can also complement Architecture or Artist (Interior Decorating) rolls: +2 on a critical success, +1 on a success, -1 on a failure, -2 on a critical failure. Other skills may also benefit, at the GM’s discretion. Charisma does *not* give a bonus for this use of the skill.

The *realistic* version isn't magic, but applied psychology, as explained in the **Basic Set**. It consists of asking leading questions, reading people's behavioral signals, and making proclamations (about how to rearrange their living or working space) that they'll want to believe.

Herb Lore

see p. B199

Treat the *cinematic* version of this skill like Alchemy (pp. 18-19), but without the inorganic ingredients; it's based on plants and other biological materials. Herbal elixirs are less toxic, and may produce fatigue and afflictions such as nausea rather than inflicting damage. On the other hand, elixirs made from ordinary herbs can't confer immortality. Critical failure almost never produces laboratory disasters such as explosions; nauseating brews, stinks, and ghastly messes are typical.

The *realistic* version is comparable to Pharmacy (Herbal), which is discussed in **GURPS Low-Tech**. Because Pharmacy is Hard and realistic Herb Lore is Very Hard, realistic herbalists

are usually better off learning the former skill. However, if Pharmacy (Herbal) does not exist in the setting, realistic Herb Lore is a way to bring it in (at a premium cost), similar to realistic Alchemy acting as a proxy for Chemistry.

Meditation

see p. B207

Meditation is a vital aspect of Taoism, often aided by Breath Control (p. 19) or other physical exercises (*Body Discipline*, p. 16). The practice of meditation can restore inner balance (*Chi*, pp. 5-6). Meditation can take the place of Will in extra effort rolls (p. 12), which makes it possible to learn Focus (below) for specific abilities.

Savoir-Faire (Dojo)

see p. B218

In a campaign where elemental abilities are taught as advanced training for martial artists, elementalists must have this skill.

"Plenty of activities," said the Patriarch, ". . . experimentation with alchemical formulas, burning rushes and forging cauldrons, taking red mercury, making autumn stone, and drinking bride's milk and the like."

"Can such bring about long life?" asked Wukung.

– Wu Chengen, Journey to the West [Monkey]

TECHNIQUES

The following new techniques enhance the effectiveness of elemental abilities.

Deliberate Crippling

Hard

Default: attack skill-4.

Prerequisites: An appropriate elemental ability and an attack skill for it; cannot exceed attack skill.

Some elemental masters specialize in attacking the abilities of the element their own element restrains or limits (see *Deliberate Crippling*, p. 13). This requires a roll at -4 against a specific attack skill. It's possible to train in this kind of attack, buying off the penalty. You must specialize by your attack skill *and* by the element you've trained to cripple; e.g., Deliberate Crippling (Innate Attack (Beam)/Fire).

Focus

Hard

Default: Meditation.

Prerequisite: Meditation.

When you use extra effort (p. 12) with *one specific ability*, you can attune yourself to the Tao so effectively that the resulting enhanced flow of chi is nearly spontaneous. To do so, buy the Focus technique for that particular ability, and

apply the extra-effort penalty (-1 per 5% increase in effect) to Focus rather than to Meditation or Will. Roll against the *lower* of modified Focus or unmodified Meditation skill; that is, Focus can remove penalties for extra effort, but cannot give a net bonus over Meditation. (You are *not* limited by your Will score.)

Learning Focus for multiple abilities is often inefficient. The cost of the first level of Focus for two abilities is 4 points; that's enough to raise Meditation one level, which benefits extra effort with *all* abilities. The payoff of extra effort is generally higher for expensive abilities, so learning Focus for such an ability is usually a good investment. Focus is *never* a good investment for more than three abilities.

Example: Liang Danbao is an elemental master of fire with HT 12, Will 12, Meditation-14, and Focus (Heat Endurance)-18. Passing through a village, she sees a house burning and a woman being held back from going in to save her son. Liang invokes her Heat Endurance (p. 24) to help her enter the building safely. This normally adds HTx4 degrees to her comfort zone, but she wants to use extra effort to increase this to HTx5 degrees, at -5 to Will. This -5 brings her Focus to 13; her unmodified Meditation is 14. She rolls against the lower of the two (the 13) and succeeds, raising the upper limit of her comfort zone to 150°F. Trusting in that and her DR 4 vs. heat and flames, she runs into the house.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELEMENTAL

ABILITIES

Chinese elemental powers have a complex structure, fitting the elaborate interrelationships of the elements. There are five basic powers: earth, fire, metal, water, and wood. But each is subdivided into internal and external aspects, with distinct lists of abilities, as noted in *Defining Powers* (pp. 8-9). Each power also has a few associated perks.

In particular, several powers have an "Exude" perk, which represents the use of an elemental principle within one's body to form a small quantity of its daughter element at the body's surface. Effectively, this is perk-level Create (from *GURPS Powers*). The amounts involved are small enough that there is no need to account worry about a Creation Pool; think of this as an Accessory perk, with the accessory being a small container of the substance.

One ability is available to anyone who has *any* of the five Chinese elemental powers. To avoid repetition, this comes first, as a *Basic Ability*. There are also *Advanced Abilities* (p. 33), which are available only to masters of all five elements (see *Power Talent*, p. 8).

A number of abilities are ranged attacks. Unless otherwise specified, their statistics are 1/2D -, Max 100, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots -, and Recoil 1.

BASIC ABILITY

Anyone who has an elemental Talent can learn to perceive the flow of chi with this ability. It is external, but is not subject to countermeasures.

Inner Awareness

18 points

You can detect the flow of chi within living bodies and through the natural environment, locate such flows, analyze the elemental affinity of chi, and diagnose disturbances in its flow. You are especially sensitive to intense flows of chi created by the use of cinematic skills or chi-based powers. Detection requires a Per roll subject to range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); analysis calls for an IQ roll. Talent adds to both rolls.

Statistics: Detect Chi (Chi, -10%) [18].

Overlapping Abilities

The elements of earth, metal, and wood all grant abilities based on Lifting Strength: +5 for Wood Frame (p. 23) and +10 for Metal Frame (pp. 28-29) or Stone Frame (p. 26). These bonuses don't add; you can only use one ability at a time! Having a second ability, or all three, is useful mainly as insurance against power loss, e.g., from crippling (pp. 12-13). Pay full price only for the most expensive ability; the others are 1/5 cost (rounded up). These are not alternative abilities; if one is disabled, the others are still usable.

WOOD

Wood includes all forms of plant matter, both living and dead. Lumber, thatch, basketry, and plant fiber all count as wood.

INTERNAL WOOD

These powers manifest the vegetative aspects of the body.

Catapult Hand

9 points

You can throw objects, including weapons, with doubled range and +2 damage per die, as if your arm were the stave of

a bow or the lever of a catapult. You can't throw heavier missiles than usual. Regardless of distance, every throw is completed in one turn. Talent adds to your Throwing, Throwing Art, or Thrown Weapon roll to hit.

Extra effort improves your basic throwing ability (p. B357) before the effects of Catapult Hand are applied.

Statistics: Super Throw 1 (Chi, -10%) [9].

Club Fist

8 points

You can strike with your fists as with a baton or club, inflicting greatly enhanced damage by virtue of mass and hardness.

Increase your normal punching damage by 1d. You can parry attacks with weapons at no penalty, but if the parry fails, the attacker may choose to injure the parrying hand! As well, if you strike a target with DR 3+ and *fail* to penetrate it, see *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379); ignore this rule if his DR has the Tough Skin limitation. Talent adds to your DX or unarmed striking skill to hit.

Extra effort grants +1 to damage per -6 to Will; this is cumulative with Mighty Blows (p. B357). You may Power Parry (p. 11) with Club Fist.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 1d (Chi, -10%; Melee Attack, ST-Based, Reach C, +70%) [8].

Endurance of Bamboo

33 points

Taoist writings draw a lesson from bamboo, which bends before storm winds and then stands back up, when a tree might be broken or uprooted. You have similar strength against impact-based attacks (those that cause crushing, cutting, impaling, or piercing damage). After applying DR and wounding modifiers to an incoming attack, *halve* the resulting injury; round down, but with a minimum 1 point of injury. Talent adds to your HT when you roll for the effects of crippling injury to a *body part* from such an attack – but not against one intended to cripple a *power or ability!*

Because of the distinctively passive character of this ability, extra effort *requires* a Meditation (or Focus) roll rather than a Will roll. Roll Meditation at -10 to divide injury by 3 (instead of halving it), or roll at -20 to quarter it.

Statistics: Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 2; Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Limited, Impact damage, -20%) [33].

Forest Walking

14 points

You can move freely and quietly through vegetation that would impede a normal person. You can wear clothing and carry objects, but you are limited to No Encumbrance. You have +1 to Stealth when moving, or +2 if completely still. Talent adds to all DX or skill rolls made to move while using this ability – including Stealth rolls!

Extra effort does not apply directly to the ability but enhances either the load you can carry or the speed of your movement (see p. B357).

You may Power Dodge (p. 11) with Forest Walking.

Statistics: Permeation (Dense vegetation; Can Carry Objects, No Encumbrance, +10%; Chi, -10%; Link, +10%) [11] + Silence 1 (Chi, -10%; Environmental, Dense vegetation, -40%; Link, +10%) [3].

Ivy Climb

15 points

You can grip an earthen wall like a climbing vine, allowing secure ascent without a Climbing roll. This works for surfaces of earth, plaster, brick, stone, or concrete, and for wooden surfaces, but metal and glass are too slick and hard. Talent adds to ST, DX, or skill rolls to stop a fall or negotiate obstacles. You can move at half your Basic Move, rounded down; a faster climb requires extra effort (p. B357).

Statistics: Clinging (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Specific, Not glass or metal, -10%) [15].

Root Grip

4 points

You can seize hold of sand, earth, or clay with a DX roll, aided by Talent, and your fingers form minute fibers that bind it together into a mass that you can pull down or out. Roll 2d corrosion damage. Soil is diffuse, so you can't inflict more than 2 points of injury on it, but you can erode away the DR of soil used as cover: 1 point of DR is lost for each 5 points of rolled damage.

Extra effort adds +1 per damage per -3 to Will (or +1d per -10).

You can use one of the resulting clods as an improvised missile. Use the rules for throwing (p. B355) to determine distance and damage; treat the thrown clod as weighing 1 lb. Because it's not as solid as a rock, it has armor divisor (0.5) if it hits (pp. B378-379). Such attacks don't benefit from Talent or from extra effort with your power, but you can apply ordinary *muscular* extra effort to throw farther and harder (p. B357), or use Catapult Hand (p. 21).

Statistics: Corrosion Attack 2d (Accessibility, Only against earth, -40%; Chi, -10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [4].

Skin of Oak

7 points

Your body surface can take on the hardness and resilience of wood, making it functionally equivalent to armor with DR 3. However, it is still skin! Being living tissue, it is flexible and provides no protection against attacks based on skin contact. You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Skin of Oak.

Statistics: Damage Resistance 3 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Tough Skin, -40%) [7].

Bamboo bends before storm winds and stands back up.

Touching the Spleen

11 points

This attack uses wood chi to afflict another person's earth chi. Despite the name, it primarily affects the functioning of the stomach, which is associated with the spleen in Taoist medicine. The strike requires skin-to-skin contact (possibly necessitating a hit location penalty); Talent adds to the DX or unarmed combat skill roll to hit. The target resists with a roll vs. HT-1 or is nauseated (p. B428) for minutes equal to his margin of failure.

Extra effort gives -1 to the target's resistance roll per -10 to Will.

Statistics: Affliction 2 (HT-1; Chi, -10%; Contact Agent, -30%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Nauseated, +30%) [11].

Wood Frame

13 points

You have the strength to lift and support massive weights, like a wooden beam. By concentrating for one second, you increase your effective ST by 5 for lifting purposes only.

Extra effort grants another +1 Lifting ST per -4 to Will.

See *Overlapping Abilities* (p. 21) if you have more than one (Element) Frame ability.

Statistics: Lifting ST 5 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%) [13].

EXTERNAL WOOD

These abilities involve perceiving or controlling wood and vegetation outside the body. Mundane countermeasures include the use of metal tools to cut wood, or of fire to consume it.

Blowing Leaves

5 points

You can cast a stream of leaves from your hand at a foe up to 100 yards away, borne on a current of air. The whirling leaves occupy a two-yard-radius area. They cause no injury but interfere with vision for 10 seconds, giving -2 to all Vision rolls to see into, out of, or through the area. Aiming the leaves requires a roll against Innate Attack (Projectile) plus Talent; standard range penalties (p. B550) apply. Wind or rain can deflect your aim (GM's call). The attack can be blocked with a shield, but not parried. If you miss, or the target defends, see *Scatter* (p. B141).

Extra effort can make the interference more severe: another -1 to Vision for each -10 to Will. You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Blowing Leaves.

Statistics: Obscure 2 (Vision; Blockable, -5%; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Ranged, +50%) [5].

Commanding Wood

16 points

You can move or reshape a single mass of wood weighing no more than 10 lbs. (about 1/3 cubic foot for most wood). You must touch the material to establish initial control, and roll against IQ plus Talent. Maintaining control requires constant concentration, though not contact. You can force it to roll or shamble at Move 1, but you can't lift it into the air! Giving it a beautiful or functional shape may require an Armoury, Artist (Woodworking), or Carpentry roll. Wood cannot be commanded to attack a foe, but can be shaped into a shield, a staff, etc. You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Commanding Wood.

Extra effort increases your weight limit:

Will Penalty	Weight	Will Penalty	Weight
-2	12 lbs.	-12	26 lbs.
-4	14 lbs.	-14	29 lbs.
-6	17 lbs.	-16	32 lbs.
-8	20 lbs.	-18	36 lbs.
-10	23 lbs.	-20	40 lbs.

Statistics: Control Wood 1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%) [16].

Wood Perks

Exude Fuel

You can't directly produce fire, but you can secrete a thick, flammable (p. B433) sap or resin from your skin, which can be set on fire or used to fuel an existing fire. This produces a hot flame, adding 1 point of burning damage to an existing flame. The amount produced is no more than 1 pint; you can store it for later use, but you can't make more until you use it.

Thorns

You can will the surface of your body to become covered with sharp thorns. This is equivalent to having Short Spines (p. B88). The thorns go away if you lose consciousness (see *Accessibility*, p. 17).

Ultimate Stave

When you wield a wooden weapon in your hands, its quality goes up one level: cheap weapons become good and good weapons become fine. This benefits batons, clubs, staves, and so on, and also bows made entirely of wood, but not composite bows, crossbows (where the wielder does not directly touch the bow), or melee weapons such as maces and spears (with a stone or metal head on a wooden shaft).

Knowing Hidden Vegetation

18 points

You can sense whether plants and material of vegetative origin are present and determine their direction and amount. This can locate wooden objects, material made of plant fibers (e.g., linen or paper), or buried seeds or hidden herbs. You can also analyze the composition and shape of vegetation. Detection requires a Per roll subject to range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); analysis calls for an IQ roll. Talent adds to both rolls.

Statistics: Detect Plant Matter (Chi, -10%) [18].

Storm of Wind

23 points

Based on the affinity of wood for wind and thunder, this elemental attack calls down howling winds in a 16-yard radius around you (*Elemental Storm*, p. 17) for 30 seconds, once per day. They cause no direct injury, but the force of the winds does 1d+1 crushing damage for the purpose of blunt trauma, *doubled* for knockback. If rolled damage exceeds a target's DR, he must make a HT roll, at -1 per 2 points of excess, or be Hard of Hearing for (20-HT) minutes.

Extra effort grants +1 damage per -5 to Will.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 1d+1 (Chi, -10%; Double Knockback, +20%; Elemental, -10%; Elemental Storm, +190%; Extended Duration, 3x duration, +20%; No Wounding, -50%; Side Effect, Hard of Hearing, +60%) [23].

Tangling Vines and Branches

25 points

You can direct existing vegetation to entangle and restrain everyone within an eight-yard-radius area. On land this requires nearby tree branches, vines, or tall grass; in the ocean it works if there's dense seaweed. It requires a roll against Innate Attack (Beam) plus Talent; if you miss, see *Scatter* (p. B414).

The binding has ST 5 and lasts for 10 seconds, continuing to entangle new people who blunder into it. Those already caught grow more tightly entangled, with +1 to the ST of their bonds for each additional second they remain grappled.

Extra effort adds +1 to effective ST for every -4 to Will.

Statistics: Binding 5 (Area Effect, 8 yards, +150%; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Environmental, Dense vegetation, -40%; Persistent, +40%; Underwater, +20%) [25].

FIRE

Fire includes flames, hot coals, and also superheated matter such as lava.

INTERNAL FIRE

These abilities manifest the body's internal heat.

Flame Breath

3 points

You can exhale a burst of flame from your mouth, inflicting 1d-1 burning damage as a ranged attack with 1/2D 10 and Max 100. Aiming it requires a roll against Innate Attack (Breath), plus Talent, at a range penalty of -1 *per yard*.

Extra effort grants +1 to damage per -9 to Will. You may Power Parry (p. 11) with Flame Breath.

Statistics: Burning Attack 1d-1 (Chi, -10%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Short-Range 1, -10%) [3].

Forge

25 points

By holding metal in your hands and concentrating for four seconds, you can cause it to soften as if it were being heated. This temporarily reduces the DR of the material by 5 (to a minimum of 0). You do not actually heat the metal; the effect comes from the *essence* of heat pervading the metal. You must *win* a Quick Contest of your Will (plus Talent) vs. the object's HT-1; the softening then lasts for as long as you maintain concentration, to a maximum duration of minutes equal to your margin of victory. (You may let go of the metal while maintaining the effect.)

Extra effort gives -1 to the object's resistance per -10 to Will.

Statistics: Affliction 2 (HT-1; Accessibility, Only metal, -20%; Chi, -10%; Malediction 1, +100%; Melee Attack, Reach C, No Parry, -35%; Negated Advantage, DR 5, +25%; Requires Concentrate, -15%; Takes Extra Time 2, -20%) [25].

Heat Endurance

19 points

You can focus your will to resist heat and burns, gaining DR 4 vs. damage caused by heat or fire *and* adding 4xHT to the upper limit of your temperature comfort zone (p. B434). The benefits cover your clothing and carried equipment, making them less likely to catch fire (*Making Things Burn*, p. B433).

Extra effort adds HT degrees to the upper limit of your comfort zone per -5 to Will. You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Heat Endurance.

Statistics: Damage Resistance 4 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Force Field, +20%; Limited, Heat/Fire, -40%; Link, +10%) [15] + Temperature Tolerance 4 (Heat; Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Link, +10%) [4].

Lightened Body

8 points

You can use your attunement to fire to diminish your body's weight when you jump, doubling your maximum distance. If this ability increases your jumping distance (in yards) to greater than your Move (in yards/second), then such a jump *will* take you multiple seconds; see *Super Jump* (p. 15) for more. Talent adds to your DX or Jumping when you leap. You do 4/5 normal slam damage while using this ability, due to your reduced weight. If you fall from a distance equal to or less than your (improved) maximum high jump, you take no damage.

Extra effort increases your maximum jumping distance, at +5% distance per -1 to Will.

Statistics: Super Jump 1 (Chi, -10%; Lighter Than Air, -10%) [8].

*Fire licked Chen's hair and the hem of
the alchemist's robes and the alchemist
went up like a torch: the chemicals which
stained his robes burning now
ultramarine, now amber.*

– Liz Williams, *Snake Agent*

Smoke Endurance

7 points

You can breathe freely in smoke-filled air, and your eyes are tougher (DR 2) and resistant to smoke irritation, tear gas, etc. (+2 to all HT rolls concerned with eye protection). Talent adds to HT rolls to resist coughing or choking, or to recover from eye damage from smoke or vapors.

Statistics: Filter Lungs (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Link, +10%) [5] + Nictitating Membrane 2 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Link, +10%) [2].

Touching the Lungs

9 points

This attack uses fire chi to afflict another person's metal chi. The strike requires skin-to-skin contact (possibly necessitating a hit location penalty); Talent adds to the DX or unarmed combat skill roll to hit. The target resists with a roll vs. HT-1 or suffers coughing (p. B428) for minutes equal to his margin of failure.

Extra effort gives -1 to the target's resistance roll per -10 to Will.

Statistics: Affliction 2 (HT-1; Chi, -10%; Contact Agent, -30%; Coughing, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [9].

EXTERNAL FIRE

These abilities involve perceiving or controlling fire outside the body. Mundane countermeasures include the use of water to quench fire (*Water Quenches Fire*, p. 7), or of earth to cover it.

Commanding Fire

16 points

You can move or reshape a single fire in a one-yard-radius area. This calls for a roll against IQ plus Talent, and requires constant concentration to maintain. You can't detach the flame from its fuel! You must hold your hand in the flame to establish control initially; this may cause injury if you don't have Heat Endurance (p. 24) or Resistance to Fire (p. 31). Flame can be directed onto an adjacent foe, causing its normal damage (1d-3 for typical fires, assuming he's free to move away) if he fails to dodge. You can also give -1 or +1 to specific, appropriate rolls, such as -1 to combat rolls made in or adjacent to the flame, -1 to Vision rolls by creating a flare, or +1 to Vision rolls by increasing the fire's brightness.

Extra effort increases your radius of control by 0.1 yard per -2 to Will. You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Commanding Fire.

Statistics: Control Fire 1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%) [16].

Incendiary

9 points

If there is flammable material present, you can will it to start burning. This requires a Concentrate maneuver and a Will roll; add Talent but subtract standard range penalties (p. B550). A sapient target may resist, turning this into a Quick Contest of Will. Roll 1d damage if your attack succeeds, but don't actually reduce the subject's HP; instead, compare it to the damage threshold for the material's flammability class (*Making Things Burn*, p. B433), ignoring any DR, to see if the target bursts into flame.

Extra effort adds +1 damage for each -6 to Will.

Statistics: Burning Attack 1d (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Wounding, -50%) [9].

Fire Perks

Hot Metal

You can heat a metal object in your hand, causing it to inflict 1 point of burning damage – enough to set paper or tinder aflame. If you use the object as a weapon, this is linked (p. B381) to its normal damage. The heat does not injure *you*.

Illumination

You can emit light from your body equivalent to a torch, removing darkness penalties within two yards. At night, this makes you highly visible; *reverse* the local darkness penalty (making it a bonus) for others' Vision rolls to see you!

Inner Heat‡

This leveled perk (*Power Perks*, p. 8) grants improved resistance to cold. It's essentially Temperature Tolerance (Cold), but based on the better of Will or Meditation, rather than HT. It requires conscious intent to activate (see *Accessibility*, p. 17).

Scattering Ashes

Your skin can exude a small cloud of hot ashes, which slowly scatter onto the ground around you. For this to do more than look cool, you must stand in place for 10 seconds, after which they'll cover a one-yard-radius area (one hex on a battle map) centered on you. These ashes cannot set anything on fire, but their innate heat can discolor skin; anyone in direct contact with hot ashes for 10 seconds or longer takes a flat 1 point of burning damage. Thick clothing or innate DR prevents this. The ashes cool after 1d minutes.

The ashes remain behind. If worked into soil, they will enhance the fertility within a one-yard radius, giving +2 to Gardening. With enough ash to cover a crop field, this can give +2 to Farming as well, but it takes one elemental over 13 *hours* to cover each acre, not including breaks to eat and replenish lost FP! This bonus lasts for one season (three months).

Knowing Hidden Fire

18 points

You can sense whether fire is present and determine its direction and size. You can also analyze its intensity and shape, for such purposes as monitoring the temperature in an oven or furnace. Detection requires a Per roll subject to range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); analysis calls for an IQ roll. Talent adds to both rolls.

Statistics: Detect Fire (Chi, -10%) [18].

Smoke Veil

8 points

You can emit clouds of smoke from your person, making it hard to see you clearly but hindering your own vision as well. The covering effect fills a two-yard radius around you and gives -5 to all Vision and attack rolls. (This also applies to such rolls made by people *within* the smoke – including you!)

Extra effort makes the smoke denser: another -1 in effect for each -4 to Will. You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Smoke Veil.

Statistics: Obscure 5 (Vision; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%) [8].

Storm of Fire

21 points

This elemental attack rains down fire in a 16-yard radius around you (*Elemental Storm*, p. 17), lasting 30 seconds, once per day. Each second of exposure inflicts 1d+1 burning damage,

which may set clothes or other objects on fire (*Making Things Burn*, p. B433).

Extra effort grants +1 damage per -5 to Will.

Statistics: Burning Attack 1d+1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Elemental Storm, +190%; Extended Duration, 3× duration, +20%) [21].

EARTH

Earth includes the various forms of soil and rock that make up the ground underfoot. It excludes metal, which is a separate element (see pp. 28-30).

As they were about to leave, Zhishen fixed his eye on them again and said, "Are your heads as hard as this pine tree?"

They replied, "Our heads are such as our parents gave us, just skin and flesh and a little bit of bone."

– Shi Naian and Luo Guanzhong,
Water Margin

INTERNAL EARTH

These abilities manifest the earthlike aspects of the human body, such as its mass and solidity.

Avalanche

11 points

When you shove (p. B372) another character or an object, you can use the force of the earth to augment your push. Your Talent adds to your DX or Sumo Wrestling roll to hit, and you roll an additional 2d damage (*before doubling*) for determining knockback! For example, a ST 15 fighter (thrust 1d+1) would roll 3d+1 damage, then *double* it, for knockback purposes only.

Extra effort gives +1 damage (before doubling) per -3 to Will.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 2d (Chi, -10%; Double Knockback, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, ST-Based, +70%; No Blunt Trauma, -20%; No Wounding, -50%) [11].

Holding Water

14 points

You can absorb up to 10 pints (about 1/6 cubic foot) of water by placing part of your body in it and rolling against IQ plus Talent. The water can be fresh, salt, or even contaminated; your body processes it as though you were drinking clean, fresh water (eradicating the impurities). The absorption is not *directly* reversible, but the water will eventually be released by

your normal metabolism. You cannot use this ability to dehydrate a living creature.

Extra effort increases the amount of water you can absorb:

Will Penalty	Quantity	Will Penalty	Quantity
-2	12 pints	-12	26 pints
-4	14 pints	-14	29 pints
-6	17 pints	-16	32 pints
-8	20 pints	-18	36 pints
-10	23 pints	-20	40 pints

Statistics: Accessory (Water Filter) [1] + Create Aqueous Solutions 1 (Chi, -10%; Destruction Only, +0%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 2, +40%) [13].

Skin of Earth

15 points

You can mineralize your skin to cover yourself with a layer of packed soil, which will absorb the impacts of blows and the heat of burns as DR 6 armor. This is flexible, but it *does* protect against contact attacks; e.g., the various Touching the (Internal Organ) abilities. However, you lose 1 DR for every *full* 10 points of basic damage rolled against you in each attack. (An attack that does less than 10 points of basic damage does not reduce your DR.) You may reabsorb your hardened outer surface at any time, dismissing it – but if any was flaked away by damage, it will still be lost when you next armor up! You regain lost DR at the same rate as you regain lost HP, whether your armor is active or not. While your armor is active, you suffer -1 to reactions for being literally covered in dirt.

You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Skin of Earth.

See also *Striking Surface* (p. 27).

Statistics: Damage Resistance 6 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Flexible, -20%; Nuisance Effect, Covered in dirt, -1 to reactions, -5%; Semi-Ablative, -20%; Switchable, +10%) [15].

Stone Frame

26 points

You have the strength to lift and support massive weights, like a stone pillar. By concentrating for one second, you increase your effective ST by 10 for lifting purposes only.

Extra effort grants another +1 Lifting ST per -2 to Will.

See *Overlapping Abilities* (p. 21) if you have more than one (Element) Frame ability.

Statistics: Lifting ST 10 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%) [26].

Touching the Kidneys

9 points

This attack uses earth chi to afflict another person's water chi. The strike requires skin-to-skin contact (possibly necessitating a hit location penalty); Talent adds to the DX or unarmed combat skill roll to hit. If hit, the target takes 2d fatigue damage as if from dehydration (p. B426); it cannot be recovered without rest and copious amounts of water.

Extra effort gives +1 damage per -3 to Will.

Statistics: Fatigue Attack 2d (Chi, -10%; Contact Agent, -30%; Hazard, Dehydration, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [9].

EXTERNAL EARTH

These abilities involve perceiving or controlling soil and rock outside the body. Mundane countermeasures include the use of wood or metal tools to move or block earth.

Commanding Earth

16 points

You can move or reshape a stone, or a mass of soil or clay, weighing no more than 10 lbs. (about 1/16 cubic foot). You must touch the material to establish initial control, and roll against IQ plus Talent. Maintaining control requires constant concentration, though not contact. You can force it to roll or shamble at Move 1, but you can't lift it into the air! Giving it a beautiful or functional shape may require an Artist (Sculpting), Engineer (Mining), or Masonry roll. You can inflict -1 to combat rolls by such methods as shifting the ground under an opponent's feet.

You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Commanding Earth. Extra effort increases your weight limit:

Will Penalty	Weight	Will Penalty	Weight
-2	12 lbs.	-12	26 lbs.
-4	14 lbs.	-14	29 lbs.
-6	17 lbs.	-16	32 lbs.
-8	20 lbs.	-18	36 lbs.
-10	23 lbs.	-20	40 lbs.

Statistics: Control Earth 1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%) [16].

Dust Cloud

13 points

You can cause an eruption of sand, dust, etc. from the ground, creating a two-yard-radius cloud that gives -5 to Vision and attack rolls for 10 seconds. This is a ranged attack; roll vs. Innate Attack (Projectile) plus Talent to hit anyone up to 100 yards away. Standard range penalties (p. B550) apply.

Extra effort makes the cloud denser: another -1 to effect for each -4 to Will. You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Dust Cloud.

Statistics: Obscure 5 (Vision; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Ranged, +50%) [13].

Knowing Hidden Stone

18 points

You can sense whether a nonmetallic mineral is present and determine its direction and amount. This can locate gemstones, veins of ore, geological strata, and so on.

Earth Perks

Escaping Burial

You have +4 to ST to dig yourself out of loose earth (e.g., from a landslide or collapse). This affects the ST-4 roll allowed for Shape Earth (p. B245), ST-based digging-time calculations, and so on. If a roll is involved, you may make one attempt per second. The GM may make the roll harder, or require multiple rolls, if you are buried under more than two cubic yards of earth.

Exude Metal

You can secrete veins of metal from your skin, in such forms as plates, wires, or rods; this does not have enough structural integrity to grant DR, but can serve as an improvised, simple, small tool. You can produce up to 1 lb. of most metals, but only once per day; if producing precious metals, you're limited to 1% of the campaign's average starting wealth (e.g., in a TL3 setting, you can make \$10 worth of silver, or about 1/8 ounce).

Striking Surface

Prerequisite: Iron Skull (p. 29) or Skin of Earth (p. 26).

This is an earth perk *and* a metal perk. If you have both prerequisite abilities, *both* paragraphs below apply!

If you have Skin of Earth, your hard body surface can cover your fists and feet in extra dirt, increasing barehanded damage. Your punch counts as having brass knuckles and your kick works as if wearing heavy boots. This gives +1 to damage – not cumulative with *actual* brass knuckles or boots! If your DR is worn down to 2 or less, you can no longer use Striking Surface. Your perk is hidden when not in use, but you suffer Bad Grip 3 while using it.

If you have Iron Skull, you can roll against Brawling-1 or Karate-1 to head-butt for thrust crushing damage. (If you lack those skills, you can roll against DX-2 to do thrust-1 crushing damage.) If you butt DR 3+, see *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) – though Iron Skull will help protect you! If a foe parries your head butt, any damage this causes affects your face.

Sure-Footed†

You can use your chi to attune your feet to the ground under them, letting you ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend for a specific type of bad footing. *You must specialize.* Sure-Footed (Shifting) lets you move on gravel, sand, or loose soil without having it slip out from under your feet; Sure-Footed (Soft) avoids sinking into mud or quicksand; Sure-Footed (Uneven) lets you move on hills and slopes.

You can also analyze composition and shape. Detection requires a Per roll subject to range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); analysis calls for an IQ roll. Talent adds to both rolls.

Statistics: Detect Nonmetallic Minerals (Chi, -10%) [18].

Shaking the Ground

54 points

You can create earth tremors within a radius of 0.3 *mile* (528 yards) with a roll vs. IQ plus Talent. This can give -1 to any roll that ground tremors could hinder, such as Hiking rolls, ground vehicle operation rolls, combat rolls, or Strategy rolls for ground troops. Every building or tunnel in the area must roll against HT-1 or suffer minor damage (e.g., cracks); on a *critical* failure, the structure collapses. If you use this power openly, your Intimidation rolls have an extra +1 on *top* of the bonus for displaying supernatural power.

Extra effort adds 0.03 *mile* (53 yards) of radius per -2 to Will.

Statistics: Control Seismic Vibrations 3 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Natural Phenomena, +100%) [54].

Storm of Stones

25 points

This elemental attack makes the earth itself rise up as a flurry of small rocks and gravel. This fills a 16-yard radius around you (see *Elemental Storm*, p. 17) for 30 seconds, once per day. The bombardment comes not from above but from below, and bypasses any cover that does not provide underfoot protection. Each second of exposure causes 1d+1 crushing damage. Those affected suffer from bad footing during the attack. If damage penetrates a target's DR, he must make a HT roll, at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage, or suffer from Crippled Legs (p. B141) for (20-HT) minutes, minimum 1 minute.

Extra effort grants +1 to damage per -5 to Will.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 1d+1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Elemental Storm, +190%; Extended Duration, 3x duration, +20%; Overhead, From below, +0%; Side Effect, Crippled Legs, +60%) [25].

METAL

Metal includes all the metallic elements and their alloys. It does not include metal ores such as oxides; these count as forms of earth. For example, mercury is metal, but cinnabar (mercury sulfide) is earth.

INTERNAL METAL

These powers involve the manifestation of the metallic aspects of the body.

Bones of Iron

9 points

Your skeleton can take on the hardness and resilience of metal. Damage to limbs and extremities still causes injury, but the injury needed to cripple them is *twice* normal – the amount usually required to dismember. Crippling (pp. B420-422) is at worst lasting; you never suffer permanent crippling or dismemberment. The GM may rule that injury that destroys your body breaks your skeleton, but you'll be dead by that time. Injury represents damage to the flesh covering your bones, not to your skeleton – or concussion transmitted through the skull, if an attack targets the brain. Talent adds to HT rolls to resist crippling.

See also *Iron Skull* (p. 29).

Statistics: Injury Tolerance (Unbreakable Bones; Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%) [9].

Glinting Edge

7 points

Your extremities can take on the qualities of a sharp metal tool or weapon, such as an axe or knife. This lets you inflict enhanced damage, but only against organic matter (e.g., flesh, wood, or other vegetative matter): Your punches or kicks become cutting *and* do an additional 1d-1 damage. If attacked

with organic (usually wooden) weapons, you may parry them at no penalty, but if the parry fails, the attacker may choose to injure the parrying hand (as usual). Talent adds to your DX or unarmed combat skill to attack.

Extra effort gives 1 added point of damage per -9 to Will. You may Power Parry (p. 11) with Glinting Edge.

Statistics: Cutting Attack 1d-1 (Accessibility, Only vs. organic matter, -20%; Chi, -10%; Melee Attack, ST-Based, Reach C, +70%) [7].

Immobility

3 or 5 points

You can take on increased density, like that of metal, making you harder to lift and more resistant to knockback. Your outward appearance does not change. There are two levels of this ability:

Lesser Immobility gives +3 to effective ST, but makes you twice as heavy when using it. 3 points.

Greater Immobility gives +8 to effective ST, but makes you five times as heavy when using it. 5 points.

You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Immobility.

Statistics: Lesser Immobility is Resistant to Knockback (+3) (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Switchable, +10%) [3] and the 0-point special effect that the user's mass is doubled while using it. Greater Immobility raises this to (+8) [5] but with 5x mass.

Metal Frame

26 points

You have the strength to lift and support massive weights, like a metal column. By concentrating for one second, you increase your effective ST by 10 for lifting purposes only.

Extra effort grants another +1 Lifting ST per -2 to Will.

See *Overlapping Abilities* (p. 21) if you have more than one (Element) Frame ability.

Statistics: Lifting ST 10 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%) [26].

Skin of Bronze

23 points

Your body surface can take on the hardness and resilience of metal, making it functionally equivalent to armor (DR 10). However, it is still skin! Being living tissue, it provides no protection against attacks based on skin contact. You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Skin of Bronze.

Statistics: Damage Resistance 10 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Tough Skin, -40%) [23].

Touching the Liver

13 points

This attack uses metal chi to afflict another person's wood chi. It affects the gall bladder and bile duct as well as the liver. The strike requires skin-to-skin contact (possibly necessitating a hit location penalty); Talent adds to the DX or unarmed combat skill roll to hit. The target resists with a roll vs. HT-1 or suffers severe pain (p. B428) for minutes equal to his margin of failure.

Extra effort gives -1 to the target's resistance roll per -10 to Will.

Statistics: Affliction 2 (HT-1; Chi, -10%; Contact Agent, -30%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Severe Pain, +40%) [13].

EXTERNAL METAL

These abilities involve perceiving or controlling metal outside the body. Mundane countermeasures include the use of fire to soften or melt metal, water to cover metal (metal sinks in water), or water or acid to corrode metal. (Water corrodes slowly, but acids in aqueous solution do so more quickly; see *Acid*, p. B428.)

Attracting Iron

10 points

You can generate a magnetic field that pulls one item made of ferrous metal toward you with telekinetic ST 10 – or, if the object is fixed in place or too heavy to move, pulls you toward it. An active opponent can resist the pull with his ST (or telekinetic ST, if better).

Extra effort gives you +1 telekinetic ST per -2 to Will.

Statistics: Telekinesis 10 (Attraction, Action/Reaction, -30%*; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Magnetic, -50%) [10].

* A less restrictive version of Attraction (*GURPS Powers*, p. 83) that can also target the user, but *only* to move him toward the object if it's unable to move toward him.

Metal Perks

Exude Water

Metal's good heat conduction makes metal surfaces feel cool; water naturally condenses on them. You have the ability to collect water on your skin in the same way, if the air is at least slightly humid. The water cannot be used offensively, but will wash materials such as salt, soap, or mud off your skin. You can collect it into a container (this takes about a minute) for cleaning, cooling others, or quenching thirst. You can produce up to 1 pint at a time; you may store it, but you won't be able to produce more until you pour it out or drink it.

Inner Compass

You can attune yourself to the planet's magnetic field. This is not as good as Absolute Direction, but acts as a compass: +1 to Navigation (Air, Land, or Sea), not cumulative with the bonus from a real compass, GPS, etc.

Iron Skull‡

Prerequisite: Bones of Iron (p. 28).

Each level (*Power Perks*, p. 8) of this perk improves your skull's natural DR 2 (p. B399) by 1. You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Iron Skull. See also *Striking Surface* (*Earth Perks*, p. 27).

Striking Surface

See *Earth Perks* (p. 27). This is an earth *and* metal perk.

Ultimate Blade

When you wield a metal knife, sword, or fencing weapon in your hands, its quality goes up one level: Cheap weapons become good, good weapons become fine, and fine weapons become very fine. This does not benefit blunt metal weapons, or weapons with a wooden shaft such as axes and spears.

Commanding Metal

16 points

You can move or reshape a single mass of metal weighing no more than 10 lbs. (about 1/50 cubic foot for iron or steel). You must touch the material to establish initial control, and roll against IQ plus Talent. Maintaining control requires constant concentration, though not contact. You can force it to roll or shamble at Move 1, but you can't lift it into the air! Giving it a beautiful or functional shape may require an Armoury, Artist (Sculpting), Jeweler, Machinist, or Smith roll. Metal cannot be commanded to attack a foe, but can be shaped into shackles, a shield, etc.

You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Commanding Metal. Extra effort increases your weight limit:

Will Penalty	Weight	Will Penalty	Weight
-2	12 lbs.	-12	26 lbs.
-4	14 lbs.	-14	29 lbs.
-6	17 lbs.	-16	32 lbs.
-8	20 lbs.	-18	36 lbs.
-10	23 lbs.	-20	40 lbs.

Statistics: Control Metal 1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%) [16].

Knowing Hidden Metal

18 points

You can sense whether metal is present and determine its direction and amount. This can locate hidden treasure, native metal underground, concealed weapons, and so on. You can also analyze its composition and shape. Detection requires a Per roll subject to range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); analysis calls for an IQ roll. Talent adds to both rolls.

Statistics: Detect Metal (Chi, -10%) [18].

Storm of Metal

21 points

This elemental attack fills a 16-yard radius around you with sharp shards of metal (see *Elemental Storm*, p. 17) for 30 seconds, once per day. Each second of exposure inflicts 1d cutting damage.

Extra effort grants +1 to damage per -6 to Will.

Statistics: Cutting Attack 1d (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Elemental Storm, +190%; Extended Duration, 3× duration, +20%) [21].

Stream of Needles

10 points

You can blast your foes with sharp metal slivers flung from your pointed fingertips. This is a ranged attack with Acc 3, 1/2D 100, Max 100, RoF 4, and Rcl 1. The skill for this ability is Innate Attack (Projectile); Talent adds to your roll to hit. Each needle that hits causes 1d-1 impaling damage.

Extra effort projects one extra needle per -5 to Will (improving RoF by 25%). You may Power Parry (p. 11) with Stream of Needles.

Statistics: Impaling Attack 1d-1 (Blockable, -5%; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Increased 1/2D, 10×, +15%; Rapid Fire, RoF 4, +70%) [10].

WATER

Not all liquids are water. A fluid only counts as “water” if it forms part of the environmental water cycle: rain, runoff, evaporation, and so on. This includes liquid water (fresh or salt), but also the droplets that make up clouds and fog. However, fluids that originate from within living organisms (blood or sap), are secreted by them (milk or honey), or are extracted from them (fruit juice or wine) are not water. Living organisms are complex systems in which all five forms of chi are mixed.

These abilities *can* affect water mixed with impurities. The impurities may be organic (such as heavily watered-down wine) or inorganic (such as acid in aqueous solution). However, all rolls to affect such water are at -1 for up to 5% impurities, -2 for up to 10%, and so on, down to -10 for 50%. Liquids with more than 50% impurities no longer count as “water.”

INTERNAL WATER

These powers involve manifesting the watery aspects of the body, and interaction of the body with water.

Breathing Water

14 points

You can adapt to living under water, like a fish, and survive there as long as you remain conscious. If you lose consciousness, you will begin to drown. You can change depth freely without suffering from the bends, and can dive to 100 yards without ill effects from pressure. At greater depths you suffer effects comparable to those of superdense atmospheric pressure (p. B429). Regardless of depth, if there is no dissolved oxygen in the water, you will suffocate. Talent adds to HT rolls to resist pressure exceeding 10 atmospheres (p. B435).

Extra effort allows you to withstand a maximum depth 5 yards greater per -1 to Will, but requires one Will roll (and 1 FP!) per minute.

Statistics: Doesn't Breathe (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Gills, -50%; Linked, +10%) [9] + Pressure Support 1 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Linked, +10%) [5].

Dragon Swiftness

9 points

Like the *lung* (dragon), ruler of moving water, you can move as freely in water as on land, with the same Move. You never need to make Swimming rolls. Talent adds to all DX and skill rolls required to move through the water.

Extra effort further enhances your swimming speed as if you were running (p. B357).

Statistics: Amphibious (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%) [9].

Drowning Embrace

11 points

You can direct a continuous jet of water outward from your mouth to fill an adversary's lungs, so that he inhales water and begins to drown (see *Suffocation*, p. B436), suffering 1d fatigue damage (DR does not protect). If you damage the same target on subsequent turns, he is unable to take a breath and continues to drown! Use Innate Attack (Breath) plus Talent to hit. A target with Filter Lungs or Doesn't Breathe is immune; a successful Breath Control roll halves the fatigue damage suffered (roll once per successful attack).

There are two ways to attack:

Contact: If you have the target's torso, neck, or head grappled, you may target his face at -5 to hit. He can dodge (at the usual -1 for being grappled). If you successfully hit, you are at no hit location penalty for *subsequent* attacks, as long as you maintain the grapple. If you trick the target into kissing you first, you hit automatically (don't roll attack or defense) on the first turn!

Noncontact: You can attack your target's face (at -5 to hit) from up to one yard away. He may dodge or block. Your attack does half damage if successful.

Extra effort gives +1 damage per -6 to Will. You may Power Parry (p. 11) with Drowning Embrace.

Statistics: Fatigue Attack 1d (Chi, -10%; Hazard, Drowning, +0%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Range, ×1/10, -30%; Respiratory Agent, +50%) [11].

Resistance to Fire

7 points

You can draw on the power of water to resist fire. You, your clothing, and any equipment you're carrying have DR 3 against fire. This only protects against open flame, not damage from heat or other kinds of burning attacks (e.g., electricity or lasers).

You can make a Power Block (p. 11) with Resistance to Fire.

Statistics: Damage Resistance 3 (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Chi, -10%; Force Field, +20%; Limited, Fire, -60%) [7].

*Water does not stick
to the mountain, and
vengeance does not
stick to a big heart.
– Chinese proverb*

Restoring the Body's Water

11 points

Prerequisite: Inner Fountain (p. 32).

You can use your attunement to water to restore FP lost to dehydration. You must make skin-to-skin contact with the beneficiary for a full minute, and roll against IQ plus Talent. If you succeed, he immediately recovers up to 2 FP as if he had been resting and drinking water. This will not restore FP lost to other causes! Repeated application on the same day brings no increased benefit.

You can apply this to any animal that drinks water for hydration, *other than yourself*. If you apply it to nonhuman beings, reverse the SM and apply it as a modifier; for example, the roll to help an SM -2 creature would be at +2.

Extra effort restores 1 additional FP (a 50% improvement) per -10 to Will.

Statistics: Healing (Accessibility, Only dehydration-caused FP, -40%; Capped, 2 FP, -25%; Chi, -10%; Contact Agent, -30%; Fatigue Only, +0%*; Immediate Preparation Required, 1 minute, -30%†; Once per subject per day, -10%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 2, +40%; Xenohealing, All water-dependent land animals, +40%) [11].

* Your Healing restores FP instead of HP. This costs 1 FP per FP restored (instead of 1 FP per 2 HP healed).

† As for Preparation Required (p. B114), but the ability must be used *immediately* after its preparation.

Taking the Narrow Passage

18 points

You can bend, stretch, and distort your body to crawl through small openings or narrow tunnels. You cannot reach greater distances or use other "elastic" abilities; your body can elongate only with the external bracing of the tunnel or opening. This capability gives you two different benefits.

- You make Escape rolls at +5, with an added bonus for your Talent. Extra effort gives you a *further* +1 to Escape rolls (a 20% increase in the bonus) per -4 to Will.

- You can squeeze through extremely narrow openings. An Escape roll allows a normal human being to get through an opening three SM levels smaller than his height; you can manage an extra SM level, a total of four levels. Talent does not directly affect this, though it still benefits your Escape roll. Extreme extra effort (-20 to Will!) allows you to slip a *second* SM level, a total of five levels, *instead of* gaining a bonus to Escape.

Statistics: Double-Jointed (Accessibility, While conscious, -5%; Aspected, Only to fit through narrow places, -20%; Chi, -10%; Linked, +20%) [13] + Stretching 1 (Aspected, Only to fit through narrow places, -20%; Chi, -10%; Linked, +10%) [5].

Touching the Heart

10 points

This attack uses water chi to afflict another person's fire chi. The strike requires skin-to-skin contact (possibly necessitating a hit location penalty); Talent adds to the DX or unarmed combat skill roll to hit. If struck, the target takes 4d fatigue damage from system shock.

Extra effort gives +1d fatigue damage per -5 to Will.

Statistics: Fatigue Attack 4d (Chi, -10%; Contact Agent, -30%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [10].

EXTERNAL WATER

These abilities involve perceiving or controlling water outside the body. There are a variety of mundane countermeasures. Earth can absorb water, clog a pipe, or dam a stream. Wood floats on water, and in the form of vegetation it can slow water's flow or block it completely.

Water Perks

Germinate

By holding the seed of a plant in your hand for one minute, you can induce it to sprout by rolling against HT plus Talent.

Inner Fountain‡

This is a leveled perk; see *Power Perks* (p. 8). Levels 1-4 are equivalent to Reduced Consumption 1-4 (Water Only, -50%). There are no higher levels, even if the GM allows more than four levels of Talent.

Irrigate

Prerequisite: Inner Fountain (above).

This perk allows you to restore plants that are suffering from drought. This takes a minute of concentration, after which you must roll against IQ plus Talent. If successful, you make up for a two-quart shortfall of water for one large plant (which you must touch with your bare skin) or one square yard of small leafy plants (which you need only stand among). See *Water Nourishes Wood* (p. 7)

for details. Repeated application on the same day for the same plant has no further effect.

Quenching Touch

Prerequisite: Resistance to Fire (p. 31).

This allows you to use Resistance to Fire actively. If you place your hand in a flame or on a burning object, you can use your Damage Resistance to put out the fire, with “water points” equal to your DR; see *Water Quenches Fire* (p. 7). Burning damage in excess of your Damage Resistance injures your hand.

Squirt

A perk-level version of Water Spear (p. 33). Use all the rules for that ability, except that this does no damage, no blunt trauma, and no knockback. It can startle or distract the target, or put out a small flame like a candle. If you have both Squirt and Water Spear, you can choose to do any amount of damage (for blunt trauma and knockback purposes only) from 0 to 1d+2.

Commanding Water

12 points

You can control the movement or shape of liquid water, up to 10 pints (about 1/6 cubic foot). You must touch the water to establish initial control, and roll against IQ plus Talent. Maintaining control requires constant concentration, though not contact. You can force it to flow (even uphill) at Move 1, but you can't lift it into the air! It can't cause direct damage, but creative use of it can inflict -1 to combat and other skills. A flow of water can also put out a fire (*Water Quenches Fire*, p. 7) or irrigate plants (*Water Nourishes Wood*, p. 7).

You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Commanding Water. Extra effort increases how many pints you can control:

<i>Will Penalty</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Will Penalty</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
-2	12 pints	-12	26 pints
-4	14 pints	-14	29 pints
-6	17 pints	-16	32 pints
-8	20 pints	-18	36 pints
-10	23 pints	-20	40 pints

Statistics: Control Liquid Water 1 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%) [12].

Herding Clouds

54 points

Within a radius of 0.3 mile (528 yards), you can command the movement and behavior of clouds (if any are present) with a roll against IQ plus Talent. The GM should apply between +5 and -5 based on how much existing cloud cover favors or hinders the desired effect. You can make the day brighter or dimmer, cause thunder, call down light rain (or reduce the strength of heavy rain), and so on. You can grant +1 or -1 to rolls such effects could help or hinder: increasing or decreasing darkness penalties, backing up your words with a roll of

thunder for reaction or Intimidation bonuses, or bringing down rain to dampen the ground for bad footing penalties or to enhance skills such as Farming (by watering crops) or Survival (by providing drinking water).

Extra effort adds 0.03 mile (53 yards) of radius per -2 to Will.

Statistics: Control Clouds 3 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Natural Phenomena, +100%) [54].

Knowing Hidden Water

9 points

You can sense whether water is present and determine its direction and amount. This can locate underground springs, pipes in walls, and the like. You can also analyze its composition. Detection requires a Per roll subject to range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550); analysis calls for an IQ roll. Talent adds to both rolls.

Statistics: Detect Water (Chi, -10%) [9].

Ruling Lakes and Seas

108 points

The most potent of the water abilities, Ruling Lakes and Seas commands the behavior of large bodies of water within a radius of 0.3 mile (528 yards) with a roll against IQ plus Talent. You can create or calm waves, cause, strengthen, or weaken currents, and so on. This grants +1 or -1 to rolls such effects could help or hinder: Boating, Seamanship, Shiphandling, Swimming, or even Intimidation for dramatic effect.

Extra effort lets you control an added 0.03 mile (53 yards) radius per -2 to Will.

The GM may allow a similar ability: Ruling Rivers and Streams. This costs 81 points and affects these natural sources of running water, but is otherwise identical.

Statistics: Control Oceans and Lakes 3 (Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Natural Phenomena, +100%) [108].

Storm of Rain

21 points

This elemental attack calls down driving rain in the 16-yard-radius area around you (see *Elemental Storm*, p. 17) for 30 seconds, once per day. The drops cause no direct injury, but the force of the rain does 1d-1 crushing damage for the purpose of blunt trauma; this is *doubled* for knockback. In addition, everyone in the area must roll HT+2 each turn; failure means inhaling water (lose 1 FP) as if drowning. (Those with Doesn't Breathe or Filter Lungs are immune.)

Extra effort gives +1 crushing damage per -9 to Will; it doesn't increase the fatigue damage.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 1d-1 (Chi, -10%; Double Knockback, +20%; Elemental, -10%; Elemental Storm, +190%; Extended Duration, 3× duration, +20%; Link, +10%; No Wounding, -50%) [11] + Fatigue Attack 1 point (Chi, -10%; Drowning, +0%; Elemental, -10%; Elemental Storm, +190%; Extended Duration, 3× duration, +20%; Link, +10%; Resistible, HT+2, -40%; Respiratory Agent, +50%) [10].

Summoning Fog

17 points

You can create a fog to hinder your foes, giving them -5 to Vision rolls and related Sense rolls. This is a ranged attack

that creates fog in a two-yard radius, up to 100 yards away. It takes two Ready maneuvers to prepare this attack, as the fog gathers; you may “fire” it on the third turn. Roll vs. Innate Attack (Beam) plus Talent to hit; standard range penalties (p. B550) apply. The fog persists for five minutes before dissipating. You do not have to wait for one cloud to dissipate before creating another!

Extra effort makes the fog denser: another -1 to effect for each -4 to Will. You may make a Power Block (p. 11) with Summoning Fog.

Statistics: Obscure 5 (Vision; Chi, -10%; Elemental, -10%; Extended Duration, 30×, +60%; Ranged, +50%; Takes Extra Time 2, -20%) [17].

Water Spear

4 points

You can hurl a lance of water at foes, using Innate Attack (Beam) plus Talent to hit. This is a jet with 1/2D 5 and Max 10; it has no Acc and takes no range penalties. Your attack does not *directly* wound your foes, but it inflicts 1d+2 crushing damage for the purpose of blunt trauma (p. B379) and *double* that for knockback.

Extra effort gives +1 damage per -4 to Will. You may Power Parry (p. 11) with Water Spear.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 1d+2 (Chi, -10%; Double Knockback, +20%; Elemental, -10%; Jet, +0%; No Wounding, -50%) [4].

ADVANCED ABILITIES

Further abilities are available to elementalists who have power over all five elements. You must have at least one level of Chinese Elemental Talent *or* one level of *each* of the various 5-point power Talents (see p. 16) to learn these. Inner Discrimination is an external ability (but not one susceptible to countermeasures); Life of the Tortoise is internal.

Inner Discrimination

34 points

Comparable to Inner Awareness (p. 21), but it takes one minute to attune oneself to the nuances of the flow of chi. However, you *can* spend a minute attuning, then wait until later to use the ability. If your Per roll to detect chi is successful, your analysis roll *automatically* succeeds! You may then make a follow-up IQ roll to examine the precise patterns of chi; once you've studied the use of a chi ability, you can self-teach yourself that ability. This takes 400 hours of self-directed study per character point; see *Learning Abilities* (p. 10). Range penalties (p. B550) affect Per rolls, while Talent aids both rolls.

If you have both Inner Awareness and Inner Discrimination, pay the full cost for Inner Discrimination (34 points), but make Inner Awareness an alternative ability (4 points), for a total cost of 38 points. (Thus, if you already have Inner Awareness, it costs just 20 additional character points to later add Inner Discrimination.) You may take a Ready maneuver to

switch between the two abilities; if one is crippled (pp. 12-13) or otherwise disabled, so is the other.

Statistics: Detect Chi (Analyzing, +100%; Chi, -10%; Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [34].

Life of the Tortoise

9 points

Through daily meditation and breathing exercises, you hold off the effects of old age. This is not automatically successful against accelerated aging caused by curses, spells, or the Steal Youth version of Leech (defined in *GURPS Powers*), but you can resist such attacks using Meditation + Talent.

With GM permission, you can apply extra effort to Life of the Tortoise to *more* than cancel aging, actually growing younger as time passes. This requires sustained effort for three months at a time; you are down 1 FP the entire time. Roll for extra effort at the end; for each -2 to Will, you youthen by 9 days (10% of three months). The 1 FP loss is due to constant physiological strain, as if you were short of food, water, or sleep; you can recover from the loss with a full day of rest and a Meditation roll (or treatment with Esoteric Medicine), but if you do this before the end of the three months, you can't grow younger at the end!

Statistics: Unaging (Chi, -10%; Not immune to aging attacks, -35%) [9].

CHAPTER FIVE

CAMPAIGNS AND CROSSOVERS

Now that your players have created their elemental masters, what are they going to do with them? The GM's part of the arrangement is to provide a campaign where the powers

are important and interesting. Before deciding to use Chinese elemental powers, decide why your particular campaign *needs* them.

SETTINGS

The five elements are more than just a source of magical or superhuman powers. As *The Cycles of the Elements* (pp. 5-7) suggests, they're a great unifying theme of Chinese culture. Their natural settings are versions of China, or culturally Chinese communities elsewhere. *GURPS China* (a *GURPS Third Edition* supplement) can provide inspiration and information for creating such a setting.

*The Yellow Emperor spoke:
"I have heard there were true men
in antiquity. They controlled heaven
and earth; all things associated with
yin and yang lay in their hands."*

– *Huangdi Neijing*

HISTORICAL CHINA

The categories of yin and yang developed in the last few centuries B.C., and were first systematically applied to medicine in the *Huangdi Neijing* ("the Yellow Emperor's inner classic"): a collection of medical treatises in the form of dialogues between the legendary Yellow Emperor and his ministers, first mentioned in a bibliography compiled in 111 B.C. This work emphasized the natural causes of health and illness, including the five elements. The theory of the elements was systematized by Zou Yan, a Taoist natural philosopher. The first mention of alchemy in Chinese historical records appears in the writings of Sima Qian in the second century B.C., under the early Han Dynasty.

Acupuncture, originally a separate approach (perhaps developed as a method of exorcism), was integrated into Taoist medicine as a method for adjusting the flow of *qi* within the body.

It was controversial at first; Sima Qian describes a pioneering acupuncturist on trial for malpractice. (See *GURPS Low-Tech* for information on acupuncture and the related practices of acupressure and moxibustion.)

Adventurers in a historical Chinese setting may have access to elemental powers, whether through advanced training in the martial arts, meditative disciplines, or drugs and elixirs. As a form of magic, the use of such powers represents influence over natural forces or qualities, rather than command over spirits. Any historical account that attributes amazing feats to people in the distant past can be the basis for a campaign of this type.

RECENT CHINA

After the development of regular trade and communication between China and the West, Western reactions to Chinese elemental powers are likely to be important.

At first contact, China is a land of wonders – fabulous wealth, advanced technologies, and, in a fantastic campaign, mysterious powers. Western characters will mostly be travelers, hoping to gain acceptance and amazed by what they see. This can begin as early as Niccolò and Maffeo Polo's visit to the court of Kublai Khan in 1266. Their return in 1274 as emissaries of the Pope began a long tradition of Christian missions to China, such as the Jesuit Matteo Ricci's stay from 1582 to his death in 1610.

Europe stopped being in awe of China in the 19th century. A key incident was the British invasion of 1840, during the first Opium War, when the British acquired Hong Kong and compelled the Chinese to legalize the opium trade. The Chinese Empire faced internal revolts, such as the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864, led by Chinese Christians, and the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1901, led by the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, who claimed miraculous powers, including immunity to bullets. In 1912, a Chinese Republic was formed to replace it, under Sun Yat-sen's leadership, but it proved unable to maintain order against warlords or to keep out the Japanese invasion from 1937 to 1945.

The natural role for masters of the elements in this era is as leaders of resistance to foreign domination. There's also room for straightforward adventure – perhaps even with Western explorers or missionaries as allies of Chinese heroes.

The position of elementalists in China would become more difficult after 1949, under the People's Republic. Communism officially denounced spiritualism; for example, the state-sponsored martial art, wushu (literally “military discipline”), rejected mysticism, myths, and traditional martial arts. Anyone trying to keep elemental traditions alive under the Cultural Revolution would need to be secretive or risk imprisonment and “reeducation.” Elemental powers might be kept alive on Taiwan, or in Hong Kong, until the People's Republic took possession of it in 1997 – or even afterward, more discretely. The feats shown in wuxia films might not all be stunts and special effects!

OVERSEAS

Large Chinese emigrant populations can be found in the United States and Canada, and smaller ones in Australia and several European nations. Often they settled in urban districts called Chinatowns. San Francisco's is the best known in North America, but prominent Chinese communities can be found in Vancouver and in several parts of New York; London's Chinatown was established in the Limehouse district of the East End. These communities date mainly to the 19th century. Many Chinese communities were poor, crowded enclaves hemmed in by mistrustful neighbors; in their early years their residents had Social Stigma (Minority Group). The legal authorities were often hostile and might know little of Chinese traditions. Social order was maintained unofficially by traditional authorities, who sometimes gained revenue from vice. Elementalists could fit into this setting as anything from hired enforcers to honorable defenders of Chinese tradition; the classic noir idea of the tarnished knight would adapt well to such a campaign.

Chinese settlement in Asia began much earlier, and several Southeast Asian nations have large Chinese populations, including Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Campaigns set there will be more challenging to run, requiring an understanding of two *different* non-Western traditions and

how they interact. The mixture of martial arts traditions – as in the Philippines, where indigenously developed escrima exists alongside immigrant-Chinese kungfu (see *GURPS Martial Arts*) – could be a model for how Chinese elemental masters deal with other magical and spiritual traditions.

Singapore is a special case: an independent city-state with a Chinese *majority*. Its official attitudes are largely modern, meritocratic, and scientific. But a significant part of the population is Taoist and might support elemental disciplines, and the government might find elemental powers useful for covert operations.

FUTURE CHINESE COMMUNITIES

The history of the future will almost surely include Chinese emigration to new countries, and even the founding of new Chinese communities outside of China. Chinese martial arts, meditative disciplines, and supernatural beliefs will go along. If China has masters of the elements, overseas communities will eventually have them too. The same will be true if humanity occupies new habitats: floating seasteading communities, *undersea* colonies, Antarctic settlements, or even space habitats, asteroids, or other planets (see *Chi in Outer Space*, p. 36).

If elemental powers are purely mystical or supernatural, taught by ancient and secretive traditions, they'll likely continue to be so in the future. Esoteric orders of elemental masters may be hidden guardians of the common people or the natural environment against totalitarian or technology-obsessed dystopias.

On the other hand, if Chinese natural philosophy offers insights into nature that Western science hasn't yet grasped, more advanced science might be able to build on them. Parahuman races of the future might be engineered with a selection of abilities from this book. This might involve genetically altering the channels for chi within the body – or, if “chi” turns out to be another name for “psi,” genetically enhancing the psionic centers within the brain for the same purpose. In such a setting, the Biological or Psionic power modifier might replace Chi (see *Alternative Modifiers*, p. 9).

Encountering Other Traditions

If Chinese elemental theories are true, what about other elemental traditions? The Greeks distinguished earth, water, air, and fire; Indian thinkers added *void/ether* as a fifth element, associated with sound. Are these completely wrong, or are they distorted partial glimpses of underlying reality? Mages or mystics from other cultures may be able to acquire some of the abilities of Chinese elementalists – or even some abilities that followers of the Chinese path can't figure out.

Chinese elementalists may encounter followers of less naturalistic traditions – sorcerers who call upon demons or spirits and make pacts with them. Such ideas may be

prevalent among the barbarian peoples beyond the Chinese frontier, in Korea or Mongolia, Tibet or Vietnam. Or they may linger among the Chinese themselves. Perhaps relics from long ago may still have the power to call up spirits and inflict curses.

It's also possible to reverse this, and confront mages (or scientists) from other traditions with the mysterious powers of Chinese elemental masters. Richard Garfinkle's *Celestial Matters* shows such an encounter from the viewpoint of an Aristotelian scientist in a high-tech Macedonian Empire that has survived for a thousand years, in a world with different natural laws (see *Alternate Histories*, p. 36).

ALTERNATE HISTORIES

Chinese ways of thinking don't oppose natural and supernatural as sharply as European ones. In a setting where the powers in this supplement really work, the study of *qi* could be the basis for an alternative kind of science, pursued by Taoist natural philosophers, and giving rise to applied sciences such as medicine and alchemy. China's early mastery of this science could be the basis for an alternate timeline. Legalists might use it to bring order to the world by force, Confucians might seek to educate the world in Chinese ethics and Chinese technology, or Taoist sages might explore it under a "prime directive" of noninterference based on the principle of *wu wei* (p. 15).

Masters of the elements might have been involved in the conflict between noble lineages and the new bureaucracy under the Qin (221-206 B.C.) and Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). With sorcerers fighting alongside nobles and warriors, the traditionalists might have defeated Qin Shi Huangdi, preventing China's unification, or led the resistance to his rule that later gave rise to the Han under the rebel leader Liu

Chi in Outer Space

Future Chinese communities don't have to be on Earth; they could be on other planets, or in orbital habitats. But in such a setting, does chi work the same way?

The ties between chi and air/breath (*Chi*, pp. 5-6) suggest that worlds with unbreathable atmospheres – especially at radically different temperatures, where natural substances are found in different physical states – may have different forms of chi as well. A world in vacuum, or with a trace atmosphere, might have none at all. Survival gear might provide localized chi, able to support internal abilities without a penalty, but external abilities would be at -2 for an elemental wearing a respirator and air tanks (pp. B429-430), or -5 for one in a sealed suit.

The presence of chi might be linked to Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis, which envisions the Earth as a single, self-regulating living organism; perhaps lifeless worlds have no chi, but some sterile equivalent. In that case, terraforming a planet might result in its *acquiring* chi. Elemental powers might even aid a terraforming project. The advice of geomancers (*Fortune-Telling*, pp. 19-20) may help terraformers attain better results by shaping a planet's feng shui. The design of space habitats, like buildings or cities, might also take feng shui into account.

In a setting with interstellar travel, many worlds might have life and chi. But each world might have subtly different chi; a visitor to a new planet might face penalties (from -1 to -5) until he became attuned to its chi after several weeks or months. A more immaterial understanding of chi might treat it as a web linking together all planets with life, somewhat like the Force in *Star Wars*.

Bang. Alternatively, natural philosophy and elemental powers might have been systematized under the civil service and become a foundation of its rule.

In most alternate histories, it will be the ongoing development of knowledge, not the actions of individuals, that changes things. Individual masters will act on too small a scale, or will neutralize each other's efforts. But that doesn't have to be true! What if the most powerful masters of the elements can challenge entire nations, or change their fates? This could give rise to the ultimate "great man" theory of history, with the course of events being transformed by a chi-powered super or a Taoist "mad scientist."

FANTASY SETTINGS

For a more overtly fantastic treatment of elemental powers, a campaign can be set in a world where magical and otherwise supernatural events are widespread and well recognized.

Such a world can be a "fantasy China" – an alternate-historical China where magic works; a timeless or archetypal China where features of Chinese history from different eras coexist; or a re-creation of China as an invented kingdom with its own name, geography, and history. Or it could be one of the fantastic realms in Chinese legends and literature – for example, one of the places visited by the Monkey King in *Journey to the West*.

Fantasy set in the remote past is particularly suited to Chinese culture and mythology. Some of the oldest classics look back to virtuous men of their own distant past, including emperors of earlier dynasties, crediting them with powers lost to their own degraded times.

A freely created world is another option. The GM could take the elemental powers described in this work and embed them in a newly imagined setting. This might exist entirely separately, or might be a mystical realm that characters from our world can enter, thanks to Chinese ancestry, reincarnation, or discovery of interdimensional gateways. *GURPS Fantasy* offers suggestions on creating such a background. The animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* envisions such a world, though it doesn't use the Chinese elements.

Sahud, in *GURPS Banestorm*, could plausibly have elementals (with either the Chi or Magical power modifier). The difference between elemental powers and mana-based magic would make Sahud just that much stranger to the rest of Yrth!

THEMES

The theme of a campaign is the focus of its incidents and scenarios. Whatever the setting, the central characters typically spend their time doing *one particular thing*, or one kind of thing. That's what they're designed to do, at

the outset, and that's what they get better at doing, as play progresses.

Campaigns that include Chinese elemental powers will mostly focus on some group of people who use those powers.

*It's an energy field created by all living things.
It surrounds us; it penetrates us; it binds
the galaxy together.*

– *Obi-Wan, Star Wars: A New Hope*

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

In a setting where powers can be learned, there will be people who teach them. This may be a one-on-one process, with a master and a single apprentice. But a school of the elemental arts, with multiple students learning and practicing together, can be a good framework for a campaign. Martial-arts schools, which emphasize exercises rather than books and lectures, provide an especially good model.

There are several ways such a school might be organized. It could be a single master and a small band of students. It might be a larger organization with one or more teachers for each element, and perhaps one venerable master guiding the whole school. It could be a monastery or other retreat, where the emphasis is on developing inner harmony, and mysterious powers are only a byproduct – external signs of internal enlightenment.

Campaigns about schools will often have scenes of instruction, where students attempt to master new abilities. These may be used in *training montages* (see **GURPS Martial Arts**), sequences of scenes that portray the acquisition of new abilities in a compressed way, telescoping the actual time involved. Relationships with teachers will also be important, especially if the teachers act as spiritual mentors or exemplars. Relationships among students, friendly or rivalrous, can provide many storylines for a scholastic campaign as well. Another option worth exploring is relationships with students from other schools, whether as honorable rivals or bitter enemies.

PROFESSIONALS

Once they've finished their training in elemental transformations, what do students do with their lives? In some settings, they go on to become professionals. A town, or even a village, may have its masters of wood and water, just as it has its acupuncturist and its herbalist. In some settings they may be kept on call for emergencies, including natural disasters or attacks by outlaw elementalists in others they may find ways to turn their abilities to productive use day to day, perhaps helping farmers and craftsmen.

Another occupation for trained elementalists would be training new elementalists. A campaign could focus on the faculty of an academy of elemental arts, rather than on its students. Conflicts in this kind of campaign could include keeping impetuous students in check, resisting pressure from wealthy or influential parents, rivalry with other

schools, and ongoing disputes with other masters in their own school.

In a traditional Chinese setting, practitioners might be an imperial service, like mandarins. Schooling would prepare them for an official examination, offered at regular intervals; if they passed, they would be placed on salary and sent where the empire needed them. They would have a Duty to the imperial service, and most of their “adventures” would focus on fulfilling it. A continuing focus for this kind of campaign would be making a good impression on one’s superiors and gaining promotions.

WU

Masters of the elements may lead a more adventurous life, traveling from place to place and testing their powers against challenges, as *wu* (originally “shamans,” later “sorcerers”). In a Chinese setting such adventurers might be expected to be gentlemen, like the *xia* of early China (*Code of Honor*, p. 18). They might well combine mastery of one or several elements with weapons and unarmed combat skills.

A plausible arrangement for a company of such adventurers would be as a party of five, each skilled with one element. This kind of campaign would differ from more traditional fantasy campaigns in having magic not be a specialized skill of one character, but a common theme for the entire group.

SPECIAL AGENTS

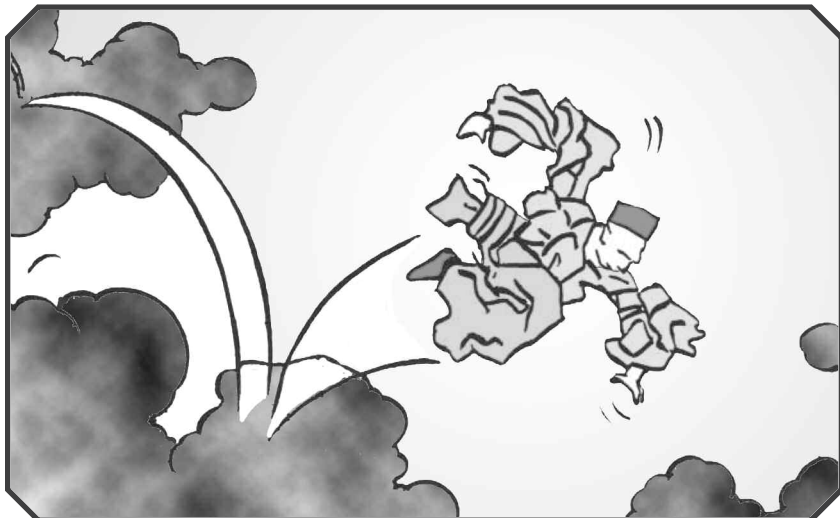
Other adventurers may not be freelancers, but work for the imperial government, either as warriors or as spies and scouts. Elemental powers have important advantages over weapons and other gear: spies value the ease of concealment, while warriors enjoy the freedom from logistic problems. An empire in a world where elemental powers are effective may have elite forces wielding such powers in the emperor’s service. In terms of **GURPS Mass Combat**, elemental warriors might be battle mages, or warriors of other types with the Super-Soldier feature or a Terrain feature.

Such groups might still operate in a modern setting. The Chinese Republic, founded by Sun Yat-sen, preserved many traditional ideas; for example, it divided government into five *yuan* – legislative, judicial, executive, examination (concerned with official examinations for civil servants), and control (concerned with investigating charges of wrongdoing against officials in other branches). A secret force of elemental masters could be a fantastic element in a Chinese urban-fantasy campaign.

Either a secret or an overt force could justify an alternate history where the Chinese Republic was more successful against adversaries, from the Japanese Empire to the Communists.

IMPERIAL ADVISORS

Service to the empire isn't performed only by soldiers, spies, and local administrators. The emperor's ministers are servants as well.



Ordinarily, of course, high officials are going to be mainly concerned with giving other people orders, not with doing things by their own efforts; political skills will matter more to them than mysterious powers. But if elemental magic is an important tool of the state, some high officials may have been trained in it earlier in life. They may even have passed imperial examinations in it (*Professionals*, p. 37).

In a high-fantasy setting, the roles of ministers may be fundamentally *defined* in terms of the five elements. Ministers may primarily be responsible for ensuring that water, or metal, or wood serve the needs of the empire, with administrative and practical tasks assigned to the ministries where they best fit. In some settings, a minister's most important tasks might be ritual and ceremonial, and performance of the necessary rites might in itself ensure success in practical matters.

In a smaller political domain, and especially one where rulers personally lead armies and judge disputes, the ruler's closest aides may be responsible more for personal endeavors than for running organizations. They may be heroic warriors or acclaimed leaders rather than generals. In the same way, they may be powerful mages rather than magical bureaucrats. Early China's kingdoms were mostly small, and masters of the elements might well become personal protectors of such kingdoms.

CROSSOVERS

Elemental powers don't need to be the only fantastic element in a campaign, or the only focus of attention. There are ways to combine the Chinese elements with other focal concerns.

LOW-TECH

The Chinese regarded the *xing* as aspects of the natural world (*The Cycles of the Elements*, pp. 5-7). Modern science views the natural world differently, through the lens of mathematics. But the Taoist view of nature might be true – perhaps in a world with different natural laws. In such a world, control of the elements might enable advances in various fields of technology. The resulting tech level might be from TL(1+1) to TL(4+1).

Chemistry and Alchemy

Alchemy in Chinese thought is divided into *waidan* or “outer alchemy” and *neidan* or “inner alchemy.” The skill of Alchemy (pp. 18-19) represents *waidan*, while *neidan* involves physical exercises akin to those of Taoist martial arts (p. 39).

The practice of Alchemy could become the basis of an alternative technology – perhaps even a very advanced one. The medicinal use of inorganic compounds could be a foundation for pharmaceutical advances in the treatment of disease; it could even achieve the legendary elixir of immortality or elixirs granting superhuman powers (*Powers and Elixirs*, p. 39). The chemical transformations that went into making

these elixirs (such as breaking cinnabar down into mercury and sulfur) could lead to a wider range of transformations and to the creation of new substances. See *GURPS Bio-Tech* for a wealth of possibilities.

Esoteric Medicine

Awareness and control of chi allows treatment of the actual causes of illness by restoring the inner balance of the body. A practitioner of Esoteric Medicine (Taoist) might be the equivalent of a trained physician.

Fortune-Telling

A master of feng shui can identify the best arrangement of a home interior or the best placement of a building or a city. Among other benefits, this allows construction of a healthy site for a city, avoiding the penalties to contagion and infection rolls discussed in *GURPS City Stats*. Strict enforcement of good feng shui by conscientious officials may even give +1 to HT for these purposes. Similar benefits may accrue to other aspects of urban life, from economic prosperity to attractive street scenes. See *GURPS Thaumatology: Urban Magics* for detailed mechanics for such benefits.

Metallurgy

Elemental masters of metal and of fire can control the composition and physical structure of metals with high precision.

In a society with elemental technology, fine weapons may be available at list price, and very fine fencing weapons and swords at 4× list price. The GM might even allow the superfine blades from **GURPS Ultra-Tech** as an option for masters of metal. Fencing skills may be commonplace in such a society.

Pharmacy (Herbal) and Herb Lore

Herb Lore, like Alchemy, represents waidan (*Chemistry and Alchemy*, p. 38); it can be used to create elixirs that treat many diseases or grant minor advantages. Herb Lore cannot produce immortality elixirs from any ordinary herbs – though a rare herb that prevents aging or resurrects the dead might be the object of a heroic quest.

MARTIAL ARTS

The martial arts of Hsing I Chuan (*xingyiquan*), Pa Kua Chuan (*baguazhang*), and T'ai Chi Chuan (*taijiquan*) are founded on Taoist philosophy; see **GURPS Martial Arts** for more information. Instruction in these and other martial arts such as Chin Na (*qin na*) is often presented in terms of control of chi. Films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *The Heroic Trio*, *Big Trouble in Little China*, and *Kung Fu Panda* – and many video games – show advanced masters of the martial arts as projecting energy or elemental attacks by drawing on their own chi or life force. Conversely, elemental mages might learn cinematic martial-arts skills in the course of mastering their power (*Cinematic Skills*, p. 19).

For this kind of campaign, elementalists should almost always be skilled in martial arts as well. The GM may present elemental Talents as “inner teachings” of martial-arts schools, with a Style Familiarity (**GURPS Martial Arts**, p. 49) as prerequisite. Advanced students would gain levels of the Special Exercises (Elemental Talent) perk (p. 16) and of an elemental Talent, which in turn would grant them access both to suitable elemental abilities (pp. 21-33) and to the cinematic skills for their element. Gaining elemental powers without studying a martial art might require an Unusual Background.

The Body Discipline perk (p. 16) is strongly recommended for elementalists who take this path. It should be specialized in one of the DX-based skills for their chosen style.

SUPERS

Finally, it's possible to take this work as being about, not *magic* as powers, but *magic* as *powers*. In other words, it's possible to treat masters of the elements as supers. Both the Elementals and the Fantastic Four, in American comics, had powers that reflected the four classical elements. A Chinese elemental team could work just as well.

In a lot of settings, supers can have more-or-less any origin story and any source for their powers. For example, the first Green Lantern – who got his powers from a magical lamp of Chinese make, and could control metal but was helpless against wood – shared adventures with highly trained athletes, ingenious chemists, a reincarnated pharaoh, and even the vengeful ghost of a murder victim. Ethnically Chinese heroes, or students of lost Chinese arts, could join teams of Western supers, or fight alongside them.

Powers and Elixirs

Rather than treating Chinese elixirs as standard potions (as described in **GURPS Magic**), the GM may prefer to have them bestow elemental abilities. This may be a temporary or permanent effect.

Giving an elixir a permanent effect simply makes it the source of an advantage. For example, taking an potion might be the origin of a super's powers. The GM may treat access to such elixirs as an Unusual Background.

Temporary effects can be represented by buying each ability with a rare Trigger (p. 18) for most elixirs, or with Periodic Recharge (p. 17) for potions with heavy restrictions on use. Either way, the limitation used takes the place of the Chi power modifier (the elixir itself is the source of chi) *and* the limitation Accessibility, While conscious (if the ability normally has it), as, once taken, the elixir remains in effect until it wears off.

On the other hand, just as there are settings where every super is a reawakened demigod or has been infected with an exotic virus, there can be settings where every super has extraordinary chi.

It's also possible to hold a dark mirror up to such a world. Perhaps the master villain, or a group of conspiring villains, gains secret mastery of chi that no one else knows about, while intrepid Western or Russian adventurers struggle to keep the Mandate of Heaven from falling back into his hands. The Fu Manchu novels had this theme, though their master villain relied less on inherent powers than on esoteric medicine and pharmacy.

For high-powered supers campaigns, it may be necessary to “power up” elemental abilities. A way to do this that fits the legendary background is to use *godlike extra effort* (from **GURPS Supers**): Heroes may spend more than 1 FP per action on extra effort, multiplying the increase in effect by the FP spent!

Example: An elemental master with Stream of Needles would normally spend 1 FP and roll at -5 to Will for one extra needle. If he spent 6 FP instead, that same -5 to Will would get him *six* extra needles!

This will result in *rapid* expenditure of FP! Such heroes will find it useful to have an Energy Reserve (see **GURPS Powers**, **GURPS Supers**, or **GURPS Thaumatology**), either as a reservoir within the body, or contained within some external power object bought with gadget limitations. For a more mystical treatment, allow recharge of the Energy Reserve by Taoist meditation, using the rules for meditation as an energy source (see **GURPS Thaumatology**).

As an optional rule, the FP spent on godlike extra effort may be limited by the user's Power Talent; for example, an elemental with Chinese Water Talent 3 could spend no more than 3 FP on any one use of a water ability. An elemental without Power Talent would then be incapable of extra effort.

It's also possible to redesign the abilities in Chapter 4 to offer multiple levels, with higher levels costing more points. For example, a second level of Breathing Water could include Pressure Support 2 rather than Pressure Support 1 (with the same modifiers), for a total cost of 19 points. This is more work for the GM but may provide a more “four-color” feel.

APPENDIX

WANG LAOWU

Wang is an old man, though he moves like a young one. For as long as most people remember, he's been poling his boat up and down the Yangtze. He seems almost like an embodiment of the river to many people: He swims like an otter, lives mainly on the fish he catches, and has an uncanny awareness of weather. Other than his sampan, he owns very little, and gives away money and possessions freely to anyone in need. Despite his poverty, though, he can get a hearing from imperial officials when he needs to.

All this suggests a retired official who's taken the Taoist vow of mercy, frugality, and not putting oneself first, and Wang fits a lot of people's image of a follower of Tao. He spends much of each day on breathing exercises, which seemingly have helped keep him fit into old age. He acts on impulse more than by calculation. He's eccentric and prefers to be alone, though he occasionally takes in someone who needs help. He reads, writes, and sings poetry – though his singing is untrained and a bit uncertain in pitch!

Wang doesn't like to show off his external water abilities, but they're at his command in an emergency. He has special skill in incapacitating masters of fire using a Water Spear attack. He can use the same attack to put out a small fire, or call down pouring rain to end a larger one.

WANG LAOWU

250 points

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 15 [50].

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 13 [10]; Per 15 [20]; FP 18 [9].

Basic Speed 6.00 [-20]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 8 (Judo).

5'6"; 120 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 3+1 [0].

CF: Han [0].

Language: Classical Chinese (Native) [0].

Advantages

Chinese Water Talent 4 [20]; Fit [5]; Longevity [2]; Signature Gear 2 (Sampan, \$1,800) [2]; Social Regard 4 (Venerated) [20].

Elemental Abilities: Dragon Swiftess [9]; Inner Awareness [18]; Knowing Hidden Water [9]; Resistance to Fire [7] (Power Block-11); Restoring the Body's Water [11]; Storm of Rain [21]; Summoning Fog [17] (Power Block-11); Water Spear [4] (Power Parry-12).

Perks: Courtesy Administrative Rank 4; Inner Fountain 4; Quenching Touch. [9]

Disadvantages

Compulsive Generosity (6) [-10]; Disciplines of Faith (Contemplation) [-5]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Crotchety and eccentric) [-10]; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10]; Status -2 [-10]; Vow (Three Treasures) [-5]; Wealth (Poor) [-15] Weiridness Magnet [-15].

Quirks: Broad-Minded; Likes to sing, though untrained; Uncongenial. [-3]

Skills

Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Area Knowledge (Yangtze River) (E) IQ+3 [8]-14; Artist (Calligraphy) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; Boating (Unpowered) (A) DX [2]-13; Breath Control (H) HT-1 [2]-14; Carousing (E) HT [1]-15; Carpentry (E) IQ [1]-11; Connoisseur (Music) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-11; Fishing (E) Per [1]-15; Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-11; Innate Attack (Beam) (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Judo (H) DX-2 [1]-11; Meditation (H) Will+1 [8]-14; Navigation (Sea) (A) IQ [2]-11; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-14; Poetry (A) IQ [2]-11; Push (H) DX [4]-13; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-11; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-15; Singing (E) HT-4 [0]-11*; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Survival (River/Stream) (A) Per-1 [1]-14; Weather Sense (A) IQ-1 [1]-10.

Techniques

Deliberate Crippling (Innate Attack (Beam)/Fire) (H) [3]-12.

* Default use.



INDEX

- Abilities, *activating*, 10; *advanced*, 33; *basic*, 21; *crippled*, 12-13; *defensive*, 10-12; *deliberate crippling*, 13, 20; *detecting*, 10; *Earth*, 26-28; *enhanced by skills*, 13-14; *enhancing skills*, 14; *external*, 9, 10; *external advanced*, 33; *extra effort*, 12; *Fire*, 24-26; *internal*, 9, 10; *internal advanced*, 33; *learning*, 10; *Metal*, 28-30; *organs and*, 13; *overlapping*, 21; *overview*, 8-9; *resisting*, 12; *using*, 10-14; *Water*, 30-33; *Wood*, 21-24; *see also Powers*.
- Accessibility limitation, 17.
- Acrobatics skill, 13, 14.
- Acupuncture, 34.
- Advantages, 15-17.
- Adventures, *see Campaigns*.
- Affliction advantage, 12.
- Air element, 5; *see also Chi*.
- Alchemy skill, 13, 14, 16, 18-19, 38.
- Aquabatics skill, 13.
- Attacks, *against organs*, 13; *crippling abilities*, 13.
- Attracting Iron ability, 29.
- Avalanche ability, 26; *using*, 13, 14.
- Bagua, 7.
- Blessed advantage, 15.
- Blocks, power, 11.
- Blowing Leaves ability, 23; *using*, 11.
- Body Discipline perk, 16, 19.
- Bones of Iron ability, 28.
- Breath Control skill, 6, 12, 16, 19.
- Breathing Water ability, 30.
- Campaigns, *alternate histories*, 36; *China*, 34-35; *crossovers*, 38-39; *encountering other traditions*, 35; *fantasy*, 4, 9, 15, 36, 38; *martial arts*, 4, 10, 15, 16, 39; *settings*, 34-36; *themes*, 36.
- Catapult Hand ability, 21.
- Characters, *occupations*, 37-38; *sample*, 40; *traits*, 15-20.
- Chemistry skill, 13, 38.
- Chi, *power modifier*, 9; *overview*, 5-6; *unstable*, 12.
- Chinese Earth Talent, 8, 16, 19.
- Chinese Elemental Talent, 8, 16, 19.
- Chinese Fire Talent, 8, 16, 19.
- Chinese Metal Talent, 8, 16, 19.
- Chinese Water Talent, 8, 16, 19.
- Chinese Wood Talent, 8, 16, 19.
- Chinese words, 6.
- Club Fist ability, 21-22; *using*, 11, 13, 14.
- Code of Honor disadvantage, 18.
- Colors, elements and, 5.
- Commanding Earth ability, 27; *using*, 11, 14.
- Commanding Fire ability, 25; *using*, 11, 14.
- Commanding Metal ability, 29; *using*, 11, 14.
- Commanding Water ability, 32; *using*, 11.
- Commanding Wood ability, 23; *using*, 11, 14.
- Confucian Code of Honor, 18.
- Contemplation Disciplines of Faith, 18.
- Costs Fatigue limitation, 17.
- Deliberate Crippling technique, 13, 20.
- Diagrams, 7.
- Direction, elements and, 5.
- Disadvantages, 18; *caused by crippled abilities*, 12.
- Disciplines of Faith disadvantage, 18.
- Dodges, power, 11.
- Dragon Swiftiness ability, 30; *using*, 13.
- Drowning Embrace ability, 30-31; *using*, 11, 13.
- Dust Cloud ability, 27; *using*, 11.
- Earth, *countermeasures*, 27; *crippled abilities*, 12; *definition*, 5, 26; *element interactions*, 6-7; *external abilities*, 27-28; *internal abilities*, 26-27; *perks*, 27; *trigrams and*, 7; *yin and yang*, 6.
- Elemental power modifier, 9.
- Elemental Storm enhancement, 17.
- Elements, *correspondences*, 5; *defensive interactions*, 11; *diagrams*, 7; *interactions*, 6-7; *list*, 5; *trigrams and*, 7; *yin and yang*, 6; *see also Earth, Fire, Metal, Water, Wood*.
- Elixirs, 39; *advantage limitations for*, 17, 18; *skills for*, 18, 20, 38, 39.
- Emotions, elements and, 5.
- Endurance of Bamboo ability, 22.
- Engineer skill, 13.
- Enhancements, 17-18.
- Erotic Art skill, 14, 19.
- Escaping Burial perk, 27.
- Esoteric Medicine skill, 12-14, 19, 38.
- Expert Skill, 19.
- Exude Fuel perk, 14, 23.
- Exude Metal perk, 27.
- Exude Water perk, 29.
- Father cycle, 6.
- Feng Shui Fortune-Telling, 19.
- Fire, *crippled abilities*, 12; *definition*, 5, 24; *element interactions*, 6-7; *external abilities*, 25-26; *internal abilities*, 24-25; *perks*, 25; *water vs.*, 7; *trigrams and*, 7; *yang*, 6.
- Flame Breath ability, 24; *using*, 11, 13.
- Flying Leap skill, 14, 16, 19.
- Focus technique, 10, 20.
- Forced Entry skill, 13, 14.
- Forceful Chi Talent, 16.
- Forest Walking ability, 22; *using*, 11.
- Forge ability, 24; *using*, 14.
- Fortune-Telling skill, 14, 19, 38.
- Fu organs, 13; *see also Organs*.
- Generating cycle, 6.
- Geomancy, 19-20.
- Germinate perk, 14, 32.
- Glinting Edge ability, 28; *using*, 11, 13, 14.
- GURPS**, 6, 7; **Banestorm**, 36; **Basic Set**, 4, 8, 18, 20; **Bio-Tech**, 38; **China**, 4, 34; **City Stats**, 38; **Fantasy**, 36; **Low-Tech**, 4, 19, 20, 34; **Low-Tech Companion 1: Philosophers and Kings**, 16; **Magic**, 3, 18, 39; **Martial Arts**, 4, 6, 15, 16, 19, 35, 37, 39; **Mass Combat**, 37; **Power-Ups 4: Enhancements**, 17; **Powers**, 3, 4, 6, 8-11, 15-17, 21, 29, 33, 39; **Psionic Powers**, 4; **Supers**, 16, 39; **Thaumatology**, 3, 4, 8, 39; **Thaumatology: Urban Magics**, 38; **Ultra-Tech**, 39.
- Harmony with the Tao Blessed advantage, 15, 18.
- Heat Endurance ability, 24; *using*, 11, 12.
- Herb Lore skill, 14, 16, 20, 39.
- Herding Clouds ability, 32; *using*, 13.
- Holding Water ability, 26; *using*, 13.
- Hot Metal perk, 14, 25.
- Huo, *see Fire*.
- I Ching*, 7.
- Illumination perk, 25.
- Immobility ability, 28; *using*, 11, 12, 14.
- Incendiary ability, 25; *using*, 13, 14.
- Inner Awareness ability, 21; *using*, 11, 13, 14.
- Inner Balance Talent, 16.
- Inner Compass perk, 29.
- Inner Discrimination ability, 33; *using*, 11, 13, 14.
- Inner Fountain perk, 32.
- Inner Heat perk, 25.
- Iron Skull perk, 11, 29.
- Irrigate perk, 32.
- Ivy Climb ability, 22; *using*, 13, 14.
- Jin, *see Metal*.
- Kiai skill, 13.
- Knowing Hidden Fire ability, 25; *using*, 14.
- Knowing Hidden Metal ability, 30; *using*, 14.
- Knowing Hidden Stone ability, 27-28; *using*, 14.
- Knowing Hidden Vegetation ability, 23; *using*, 14.
- Knowing Hidden Water ability, 32; *using*, 13, 14.
- Life cycles, elements and, 5.
- Life of the Tortoise ability, 33.
- Lifting skill, 13.
- Lightened Body ability, 24; *using*, 14.
- Limitations, 17, 18.
- Magical power modifier, 9.
- Meditation skill, 9, 14, 16, 20.
- Melee Attack enhancement, 17.
- Metal, *countermeasures*, 29; *crippled abilities*, 12; *definition*, 5, 28; *element interactions*, 6-7; *external abilities*, 29-30; *internal abilities*, 28-30; *perks*, 29; *trigrams and*, 7; *yin*, 6.
- Metal Frame ability, 28-29; *using*, 13, 14, 21.
- Metallurgy skill, 38-39; *using*, 13, 14.

Meteorology skill, 13, 14.
 Mother cycle, 6.
 Mu, *see* Wood.
 Natural Philosophy Expert Skill, 19.
 Organs, *attacking*, 13; *elements and*, 5; *offensive abilities*, 22, 25, 27, 29, 31; *relationship to elements*, 5; *yin and yang*, 13.
 Overcoming cycle, 6.
 Parries, power, 11.
 Periodic Recharge limitation, 17.
 Perks, *element*, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32; *general*, 16; *overview*, 8.
 Pharmacy (Herbal) skill, 20, 39.
 Pinyin, 6.
 Planets, elements and, 5.
 Plants, water requirements, 7.
 Power Block defense, 11.
 Power Dodge defense, 11.
 Power modifiers, 9; *alternative*, 9.
 Power Parry defense, 11.
 Powers, *elixirs and*, 39; *format*, 8; *perks overview*, 8; *Talent overview*, 8; *using*, 10-14; *see also Abilities, Perks, Talents*.
 Pressure Secrets skill, 13, 14, 16, 19.
 Prospecting skill, 14.
 Qi, *see* Chi.
 Quenching Touch perk, 14, 32.
 Resistance to Fire ability, 31; *using*, 11, 12.
 Resistant advantage, 15.
 Restoring the Body's Water ability, 31; *using*, 13.
 Root Grip ability, 22.
 Ruling Lakes and Seas ability, 32-33.

Savoir-Faire (Dojo) skill, 20.
 Scattering Ashes perk, 13, 25.
 Seasons, elements and, 5.
 Senses, elements and, 5.
 Shaking the Ground ability, 28; *using*, 13.
 Shui, *see* Water.
 Skills, 18-20; *cinematic*, 14, 19; *enhanced by abilities*, 14; *enhancing abilities*, 13-14.
 Skin of Bronze ability, 29; *using*, 11, 12.
 Skin of Earth ability, 26; *using*, 11, 12, 27.
 Skin of Oak ability, 22; *using*, 11, 12.
 Smoke Endurance ability, 24.
 Smoke Veil ability, 25; *using*, 11.
 Special Exercises perk, 16.
 Squirt perk, 32.
 Stone Frame ability, 26; *using*, 13, 21.
 Storm of Fire ability, 26.
 Storm of Metal ability, 30.
 Storm of Rain ability, 33.
 Storm of Stones ability, 28.
 Storm of Wind ability, 23.
 Stream of Needles ability, 30; *using*, 11, 13.
 Striking Surface perk, 27, 29.
 Summoning Fog ability, 33; *using*, 11.
 Super Jump advantage, 15.
 Super power modifier, 9.
 Super Throw advantage, 16.
 Sure-Footed perk, 27.
 Switchable limitation, 17-18.
 Tables, *diagrams*, 7; *elements*, 5.
 Taking the Narrow Passage ability, 31.
 Talent, 16; *overview*, 8.
 Tangling Vines and Branches ability, 24.
 Tastes, elements and, 5.
 Techniques, 20.

Thorns perk, 23.
 Touching the Heart ability, 31; *using*, 14.
 Touching the Kidneys ability, 27; *using*, 14.
 Touching the Liver ability, 29; *using*, 14.
 Touching the Lungs ability, 25; *using*, 14.
 Touching the Spleen ability, 22; *using*, 14.
 Trained by a Master advantage, 10, 19.
 Trigger limitation, 18.
 Trigrams, 7.
 Tu, *see* Earth.
 Ultimate Blade perk, 29.
 Ultimate Stave perk, 23.
 Vow disadvantage, 18.
 Wang Laowu, 40.
 Water, *countermeasures*, 31; *crippled abilities*, 12; *definition*, 5, 30; *element interactions*, 6-7; *external abilities*, 31-33; *fire vs.*, 7; *internal abilities*, 30-33; *perks*, 32; *plants and*, 7; *trigrams and*, 7; *yin*, 6.
 Water Spear ability, 33; *using*, 11, 13.
 Wild Ability enhancement, 16.
 Wild Talent advantage, 10, 16.
 Wood, *countermeasures*, 23; *crippled abilities*, 12; *definition*, 5, 21; *element interactions*, 6-7; *external abilities*, 23-24; *internal abilities*, 21-23; *perks*, 23; *trigrams and*, 7; *yang*, 6.
 Wood Frame ability, 23; *using*, 13, 21.
 Wu wei, 15.
 Xia Code of Honor, 18.
 Xing, *see* Elements.
 Yang, 6, 7, 34; *excess*, 12; *organs*, 13.
 Yin, 6, 7, 34; *excess*, 12; *organs*, 13.
 Zang organs, 13; *see also* Organs.

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