

Group 17

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“Everyone Wants to Sit besides the King”

Playability

“Everyone Wants to Sit besides the King” has a clear flow, from the emperor deciding the direction of play, normal players playing their cards, to the emperor doing their special actions. It incorporates the theme of Chinese ancient royal conflict to welcome players to immerse in the narrative. Meanwhile, its social deduction game nature gives its gameplay more uncertainty and tension between players.

Amount of Players :

5-7 players

Theme & Background:

In 221 BC, Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified the six states and established China's first centralized authoritarian state, but his rule still faced numerous challenges. Power struggles and political conspiracies continued to prevail within and outside the palace. In this card game, you will play as the emperor, loyalists, or rebels of the Qin Dynasty, competing for the emperor's favor and striving to either defend the unity of the empire or seize the throne for yourself.

Game Elements:

Identity Cards: (x 19)

Emperor card x 1, Loyalist and Rebel identity card x 18 (3 x 6)

From the 18 identity cards, each player draws 3 identity cards randomly. (maximum of 6 players outside of Emperor) For each player, the identity that takes the larger portion in the 3 cards determines the identity of that player.

Special Ability Cards: (x 21)

- 1. Transposition x 8**
Exchange positions with the player on their left or right side.
- 2. Condemn x 4**
Kill any player except the Emperor
- 3. Self-clearance x 3 (*Instinct Card*) Could be used at any time.**
Players with this card could counter the Condemn card, and avoid death.
- 4. Counter-Condemn x 1 (*Instinct Card*) Could be used at any time.**
Players with this card could counter the Condemn card, avoid death, and kill the player who uses the Condemn card.
- 5. Swap x 1**
Swap all your identity cards with any player.
- 6. Investigation x 1**
See two identity cards at once. (two cards of one player or one each of two players)

7. Guarding x 1

Jump to the left or right side of the Emperor

8. Accuse x 1 (Instinct Card) Could be used at any time.

Stop the action of any player for one turn.

Basic Rules:

Players sit in a circle together before the game starts so that they can know who to swap positions with. Players with disabilities might have a hard time in frequently swapping positions, then they could simply swap the position of cards on the board.

Every round in the game follow the sequence:

1. The Emperor decides the direction of play, either clockwise or counterclockwise.
2. The players take action in their turn following the phases order below.
3. The Emperor tells his Royal Order as the last one to move before the turn ends.
- 4.

Every player should do these things in their turn:

1. **Drawing Phase:** Draw 1 card
2. **Playing Phase:** see one identity card of any player or use the special ability card.
3. **Discarding Phase:** Discard cards if your cards exceed 1.
- 4.

Emperor's Royal Order : (Choose one the following action each turn)

1. **Tianzhu (spelling of the word meaning sanctions from the supreme being)**
Kill any player, no ability cards could be used to avoid death. (CD = 2 round)
2. **Investigation:**
See one identity card of two players at once.
3. **Huarong Dao**
Exchange position with the player on the left or right side. (CD = 1 round)

Winning Condition :

Rebel: When two of them swap to the left and right positions of the Emperor and try to rebel at the same time, they win. When one of them swaps to the left or right position of the Emperor and stays for another three rounds, they win.

Loyalist & Emperor: Kill all of the Rebel

Thematic Integration

The theme of "Sit Beside the Emperor" is after the unification of the central plains with the defeat of the six states. Emperor Qin Shi Huang is using policies to unify the nation, such as standardizing weights and measures to strengthen the national unity. However, within the court, remnants of the six conquered states are plotting their revenge against the Emperor. During a court session, a conspiracy is unfolding. The player will play the role of Qin Shi Huang or his loyal minister, working to identify and eliminate the remnants of old states to secure unity or as remnants trying to kill the emperor for the throne themselves.

The gameplay of changing seats is consistent with the court meetings in the Chinese dynasty. In the meeting, the Emperor sits at the highest position with the ministers below him, ready to receive orders or offer suggestions. Due to this arrangement, the game requires two remnants to be positioned on either side of the emperor, which is necessary to have a substantial to assassinate the emperor. Each player has three identity cards, reflecting the power relationship is extremely intricate. Everyone in the imperial court has contributed to the unity of the Qin dynasty, making it challenging to discern who is truly intent to kill the emperor. That's why players need to examine at least twice to know the other player's real identity. In addition, the game's logic is very clear as its name: the loyal minister needs to sit beside the emperor to protect the emperor to avoid being killed, and the remnants need to sit beside the emperor to assassinate. Players could have a clear goal during the play.

Creativity

In the game, both loyal subjects and rebels share the ultimate goal of sitting next to the lord, making it difficult to deduce players' identities solely through their actions. Our solution is to grant players the ability to inspect others' identities. However, direct identity revelation would make it too easy to discern who is a friend or foe. Therefore, we decided to draw inspiration from the identity determination method of a board game called "Good Cop Bad Cop." Apart from the king, players are randomly dealt three cards at the beginning of the game, and the majority card type among these three cards determines the player's identity for that round (loyal subject or rebel). During the inspection process, the inspecting player must choose one card from the three cards of the player they are inspecting. There's a significant chance that they might see the opponent's true identity, but there's also a possibility of seeing a false one. This adds an element of uncertainty, requiring players to think and experiment more. We believe that this identity-guessing game mechanic, combined with the determination method from "Good Cop Bad Cop," adds a lot of enjoyment to the game. Because the identity cards you see in others' hands may not necessarily represent their true identities, it encourages players to think carefully and introduces a certain level of risk when making actions or using skill cards. Our game differs from the Good Cop Bad Cop by a rule we add to the view identity phase, which is the player that is being viewed needs to close their eyes so that they do not know which card is being viewed, this way the player being viewed will need to guess the identity of the viewer and what card is viewed based on the viewer's action. Another similar game is "Legends of the Three Kingdoms," Our game builds on the foundation laid by "Legends of the Three Kingdoms" by maintaining the core concept of hidden identities and the struggle between the loyal subjects and the rebels. However, we differ greatly in the ways in which we reveal these identities. In our game, players are given three identity cards, with the majority card type determining their allegiance. This mechanic not only adds suspense but also a tactical element of misdirection. Players must be astute in their investigations, as a single card reveal may not always convey the truth of one's loyalty. The introduction of specific cards like "Transposition," "Condemn," and "Self-clearance" further differentiates our game from "Legends of the Three Kingdoms." These cards allow for sudden shifts in player positioning and can dramatically alter the state of the game. The "Counter-Condemn" card introduces a high-stakes counterplay element, where an attempted elimination can be turned back upon the aggressor, fostering a climate where every move can be potentially lethal.

Connections to Readings/Videos

First of all, when designing this card game, our team members obeyed the rules that we learned from the video “Magic: The Gathering: Twenty Years, Twenty Lessons Learned” by Mark Rosewater. As Mark suggests, we keep the description and wording clean and simple for players to understand. For example, we write “Draw 1 card” to tell the players to draw one card from the deck. In this way, we prevent the players’ heads from being information overloaded. Meanwhile, we incorporate preexisting knowledge which is the conflict in the royal court of the Qin dynasty into the game background. Even though players may not be familiar with ancient Chinese history, we are sure that they have learned the concept of a lord, loyalists, and rebels from either history textbooks or TV shows. Of course, we remembered that Mark had mentioned that game designers should try doing new things instead of improving the old good mechanics. When we discussed the proposal during the week, we finally decided to abandon our previous plan and shifted to the new game ideas surrounding the theme of social deduction game, due to its playability, increasing tension between players, and interesting dynamics around identity guessing.

Also, since our course title is “Mobile and Ubiquitous Games”, we have thought about the way we can port the card game to mobile devices. In the video “Designing for a Touch Screen” by Extra Credits, the speaker claims that turn-based games such as card games are easy to convert into mobile games since they provide players time to think and do their actions. Also, the speaker points out that a good mobile game mimics human motions we know, including flicking, pulling, sliding, and clicking. Similarly, in our game, our group members plan to utilize clicking and dragging for playing a card. These natural motions that feel natural as human beings make players comfortable. In addition, the position switching can be demonstrated using 2D or 3d animation, increasing the game’s visual appeal.

The article “The Playing Card Platform” written by Nathan Altice introduces different aspects of the form of card games. Specifically, he talks about how the pattern side of card games allows players to switch between displaying and hiding information for and from other players. Just like “One Night Ultimate Werewolf”, our game “combines secrecy and role-playing”, and players “deduce [each others’] roles through logic, conversation, and intrigue”. At the beginning of gameplay, except for the king, nobody’s identity cards are revealed. As the game progresses, players’ true identities are gradually revealed, and everyone’s intentions and actions shift accordingly. Whether it’s the internal struggle of players mustering the courage to initiate a duel or the daring wager involved in uncovering the true identities concealed beneath the cards, the element of uncertainty enhances the complexity of the game and intensifies the tension among players.

Work Cited

Altice, Nathan. "The Playing Card Platform." *Analog Game Studies*, 3 Nov. 2014, analoggamestudies.org/2014/11/the-playing-card-platform/.

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