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Editorial

I don't get it. I just don't get it. Why don't people tell me their stories? Recently, whenever I talk with other gamers about characters, they tell me about what their characters could do in game mechanics. You know, stuff like "Zardox the Battle Robot had a PX-52.2 Make-em Dead Neutronic Battle Cannon that could do 500d6 damage!" or "Sir Rupert of the Bear had a Prismatic +5 Holy Avenger Longsword!" Lots of game mechanics.

As some of you know, I'm a great believer in the idea that the game mechanics are less important than the stories we are trying to create and tell when we game. To me, the game mechanics are a vehicle to enable us to model aspects of the real world, and a valuable set of procedures that let us resolve some forms of conflict with fewer arguments about what should happen. They are not the be all and end all of the game. The game mechanics are there to serve the story, and not the other way round.

I cannot deny that it is easy to slip into a discussion about game mechanics. After all, everyone has access to the rules, and not everyone knows about the stories surrounding our characters. But I wish I heard more stories about what characters did, instead of what ordnance/powers/rules quirks they used to beat the stuffing out of the cannon fodder set before them. Other gamers may like talking about how to exploit the rules: I don't.

I just want to hear more stories.

The next issue of the *Queensland Wargamer* will be delayed until September because I am going to the United Kingdom to study at Cambridge for the months of June and July. The deadline for submissions is Friday the 16th of August.

Gary Johnson

Mélêe Manoeuvres

by Nick Lawrence

Mélêe Manoeuvres (*MM*) is a system for managing movement in combat with a single d20 roll. The inspiration for this article comes from *Tripod of Light*, the simple role-playing system presented in the last issue of the *Queensland Wargamer* (number 43). I have attempted to make *MM* possess the same simplicity and ease of use, while being readily adapted to other systems.

The basis of *MM* is that in many cases of mélêe combat it is not so important to know exactly where a character is on the battlefield as to know where they are relative to an opponent or team-mate. *MM* concentrates exclusively on this concept of relative positioning. There are advantages and disadvantages in this approach, but whether the disadvantages arise depends on your style of play. For example, *MM* suits short combat rounds and is good for players who want to incorporate more tactics into combat.

Sequence of Events in a Combat Round

1. Players decide their manoeuvres simultaneously.
2. Players roll dice and announce Initiatives. Ties are resolved by a second roll.
3. Characters move and attack in sequence, from highest Initiative to lowest Initiative. Players cannot change their manoeuvres after seeing what other players have chosen this round.

Relative Positioning

A character's position is defined relative to a target, either another character or an object. You may want to move into a position where close combat with another character is possible, or alternatively you may want to guard a doorway. Both the other character and the doorway are targets. Position relative to a target is determined by three distinct elements, *distance*, *aspect*, and *approach*. *Distance* is the distance between the character and the target expressed as fractions or multiples of the distance a character is allowed to move in combat. The GM can determine how great this distance is. *Aspect* is where the target is in relation to the character's facing. *Approach* is which side of the target the character wishes to be on.

Distance	Aspect	Approach
close enough for combat	front	front
up to half of a move away	side	side
up to all of a move away	rear	rear
up to all of two moves away		

At the start of each combat round, you determine your character's starting position relative to whatever target you choose. Then you decide where you want your character to end up in relation to the chosen target. Whether or not you succeed in carrying out your intended manoeuvre depends on the result of your initiative roll.

> *Blorg the Barbarian is about 2 metres away from Grolb the Cleric, his designated target. Blorg and Grolb are facing each other. Thus, Blorg's position is up to half of a move away (Distance), front (Aspect) and front (Approach). Blorg decides to move close enough to attack Grolb, but be facing her side. Blorg's ideal finishing position is close enough for combat (Distance), front (Aspect), and side (Approach). Grolb, however, has ideas of her own. She wants to move close enough to attack Blorg but be behind him. Thus, she is changing one step of Distance and two steps of Approach.*

Initiative and Success

Both the sequence of attacks in a Combat Round and the success or failure of a manoeuvre are determined by the same die roll. Initiative is 1d20 – Difficulty Modifier. Characters act from highest to lowest Initiative score, and should roll dice to determine who goes first if there was a tie. (The same order of initiative for manoeuvres is used as the order of initiative for attacks because this reflects the loss of initiative inherent in performing difficult manoeuvres.)

If your Initiative is a positive number (i.e. the number you rolled was greater than the Difficulty Modifier) you succeed in your manoeuvre, unless your manoeuvre directly contradicts another character's intended manoeuvre. Manoeuvres contradict each other if it is impossible for both characters to end up where they want to end up. In such cases, the character with a higher Initiative roll succeeds and the other character fails.

If your Initiative is a negative number (i.e. the number you rolled was equal to or less than the Difficulty Modifier) you succeed in your manoeuvre if the Difficulty Modifier is 6 or less; otherwise, you fail to carry out your manoeuvre, and remain in your starting position relative to your chosen target.

Difficulty Modifiers

Some manoeuvres are harder than others, and this is represented by the Difficulty Modifier. The Difficulty Modifier is calculated by determining which parts of your character's position have changed, and the number of steps by which it has changed. Each step on the *Distance* scale costs 1 point, each step of *Aspect* 3 points, and each step of *Approach* 5 points. The total of these points is the Difficulty Modifier of the manoeuvre.

When a character chooses a moving target for the first time (for instance, when a fight begins, or when the character switches opponent), add 9 to the Difficulty Modifier. This represents how hard it is to focus on a moving target for the first time. After the first attempted manoeuvre, the character has focussed on the target, and you should not add these

extra 9 points a second time. (For those who are interested. 9 was chosen because it is the total points cost of changing all three parts of position by one step.) Focussing on a target that cannot move about. such as a door or a rock, does not increase the Difficulty Modifier.

> When we calculate the Difficulty Modifiers for Blorg and Grolb, we find that Blorg's manoeuvre has a Difficulty Modifier of 6, while Grolb's manoeuvre has a Difficulty Modifier of 11. Both players roll for Initiative, and as it happens. Blorg's player rolls a 16 and Grolb's player rolls a 12. Blorg's Initiative is 16-6=10, and Grolb's Initiative is 12-11=1. Both Initiatives are positive numbers, and thus both manoeuvres would succeed if they were not contradictory. However, Blorg cannot be facing Grolb's side if she is facing his back. Since they are incompatible manoeuvres, the character with the higher Initiative succeeds, and that means that Blorg winds up beside Grolb as Blorg's player desires.

Battlefield Features

There may be objects (e.g. walls. posts. pits) on the battlefield that can prevent a manoeuvre succeeding regardless of the Initiative roll. It is impossible to be beside someone in a narrow corridor! However, some battlefield features may not make certain manoeuvres impossible, just harder. Such conditions may add additional points to the Difficulty Modifier of a manoeuvre. For example. moving in a stream should be harder than on dry ground: perhaps all manoeuvres should cost an extra 2 points.

If the character wants to avoid certain battlefield elements, such as a pit or enemy soldiers, the GM should assign an additional Difficulty Modifier. Inanimate objects would not increase the Difficulty Modifier by much. but avoiding a person should cost an extra 9 points, just as focussing on that person would if she or he was your target. As always, obstacles and special features are at the discretion of the GM.

For consistency, you may choose to enforce a "to hit" penalty on characters attacking anything otherthan their target for manoeuvring. This is to represent the way in which concentrating on one person or object makes it harder to focus on other people or objects. Of course. this rule is entirely optional.

Tactics

MM can be used to simulate a variety of different battlefield tactics:

Archery — instead of closing with the enemy. archers may wish to maintain a certain distance between themselves and the enemy.

Backstab — manoeuvre so that your character is facing your target's back. This feat requires a large Difficulty Modifier. but if the target is unaware or busy, she or he won't react in time. If you are patient. you can manoeuvre to the target's side, and then her or his back.

Guarding — this involves making your target someone or something you wish to guard, then manoeuvring so that your back is to the target. Once in position it should be relatively easy to maintain position.

Line — a line of foot soldiers can be formed if each soldier chooses one of her or his neighbours as a target and maintains relative position. If the character commanding the unit moves forward. any soldier targeting that character will also move forward to maintain their relative positions. and so on down the line.

Push — suppose your enemy is between you and a sharp drop. You can target the drop and manoeuvre right up to it. If your enemy is maintaining the distance between the two of you, and isn't increasing the Difficulty Modifier to be aware of the pit. she or he has a good chance of falling off.

Retreat — moving from close to a full move away while still facing the enemy is only a Difficulty Modifier of 2. If you succeed on Initiative your foe can't touch you, if you fail you're still facing them.

Rout — optionally. if you voluntarily turn your back on an opponent while moving away, the GM may let you reduce the Difficulty Modifier for your manoeuvre by 6 to improve your chance of rolling a greater number on the Initiative roll and acting first.

MM is designed to encompass much while remaining simple to use. It does have deficiencies. but there are related to what role-players consider important when resolving combat. A variety of manoeuvres can be attempted. many of which are difficult to achieve. but which can result in a tactically superior position that often offsets any loss of initiative.
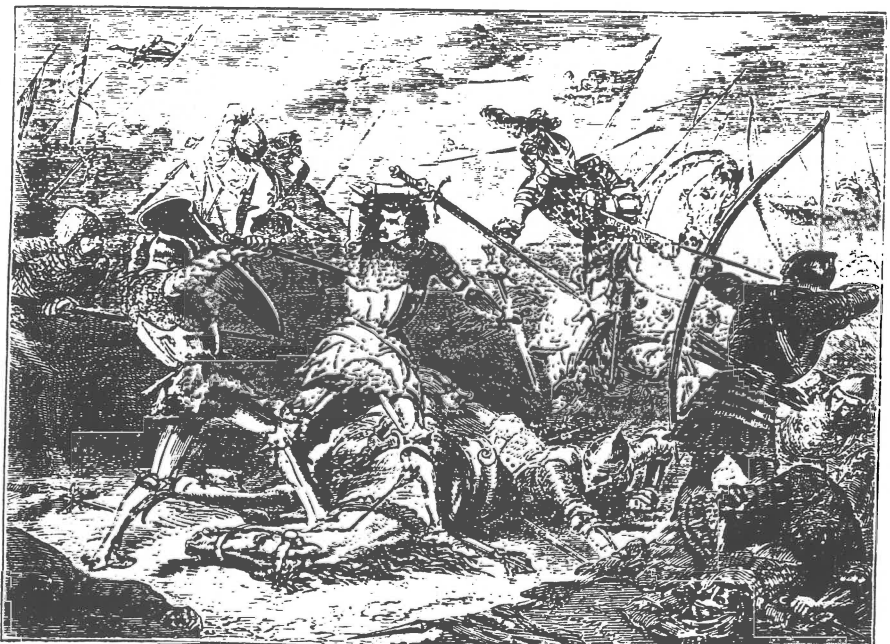
"You've Made Magic Really Hurt": Spellcasters, Miracle-Workers, and *ToL*

by Gary Johnson

During the weeks since the last issue of the *Queensland Wargamer* was published, I have received several comments and criticisms of *Tripod of Light*. One of the more memorable comments is the one quoted in the title of this article, namely "You've made Magic really hurt." Thinking about this accurate observation has inspired me to discuss the role of magic in *ToL*, to offer an indication of how to scale your own Spells and Miracles, and to provide rules for making Magic items.

Firstly, I suppose that I should explain why Magic Spells hurt in *ToL*. In short, it's a matter of game balance. Whenever a Spellcaster casts a Spell, she or he loses Hit Points. This loss represents the caster using her or his own "life force" to provide the power that makes the Spell happen. Spellcasters lose Hit Points when they case Spells because the silly D&D rule that Magic-Users and Clerics forget how to cast a Spell the moment they have cast it does not apply. Spells are also more effective in some ways than their D&D equivalents are, because Saving Throws are worse in *ToL* than in D&D and some Spells no longer allow victims to make a Saving Throw to halve the damage they take. It seems fair to me that Spells should have some limitations on the caster, given their effectiveness in game mechanics. Yes, Spellcasting does hurt, but Spellcasters are also very powerful.

Spellcasting is not the only way in which PCs can try and Magically alter the course of events in the game. The alternative is to invoke Miracles. Miracle-Workers have advantages and disadvantages when compared to Spellcasters. Because the power that causes the Miracle comes from a deity, and not from the Miracle-Worker, there is no loss of Hit Points when a Miracle occurs. The gods can make things happen that Spellcasters cannot, such as resurrecting the dead. Conversely, the player cannot be certain that a Miracle will occur. Because a Miracle will occur only if the deity agrees to fulfil the Miracle-Worker's request, the GM can always decide that the Miracle will not happen. Being a Miracle-Worker limits a character, because she or he must be devout, pious, and an intimate of her or his deity. I have found that many players cannot confidently role-play these requirements, perhaps because most Australians do not have a mystical and intense relationship with the supernatural in their "real" lives. It is hard to pretend to be something that isn't familiar to you. Of course, if consistent and plausible characterisation isn't important to you, don't worry about this problem.

These limitations on the use of Magic are important, because I conceive of the *ToL* game world as a world with relatively few Spellcasters and Miracle-Workers: in other words, a world like our own Medieval world with a small collection of people who have unusual abilities. It is much more convenient for both the GM and the players if there are as few significant differences as possible between our "real" world and the game world; a large number of people publicly and visibly using supernatural powers should significantly alter the game world to the point where analogies to the "real" Medieval world do not hold up very well. For instance, if every village has a priest who is a Miracle-Worker, than healing magic will be widely available. If this

is the case, far fewer people will die from illness or during childbirth, and population levels will be high. Usually there would be regular and devastating famines because of the ensuing imbalance between food production and food consumption: however, I think it is inconsistent for a good deity to miraculously heal people so that they can starve to death. Thus, something would be done by the deity to ensure that everyone is fed. As a result, the population will continue to grow, more and more land will be farmed, pollution may start occurring, and so on, all making the game world very different to most people's conceptions of the Medieval past as a world with relatively low populations and large wastelands.

To avoid problems such as the one outlined above, *ToL* is meant to have relatively few Spellcasters and Miracle-Workers. As a result, player-character Spellcasters and Miracle-Workers will be significantly advantaged. If Magic is otherwise rare, having two or three characters that use Magic in the group of player-characters makes that group formidable and exceptional. Since many GMs will want their players to have Magic-using characters, or feel bad if they don't allow their players the choice, I felt that there had to be disadvantages built into the game mechanics of Spellcasting and Miracle-Working. Thus, Spellcasting can weaken or even kill a character, while Miracle-Working only works with the GM's permission, since the deity is a NPC. This is why Magic really hurts.

But how much should a Spell hurt? The *ToL* rulebook was put together in a hurry to pad out the last *Wargamer*, and many significant points were glossed over or completely ignored. How to determine the Hit Points Cost of a new Spell was not mentioned, and since the Hit Points Cost of a Spell is the most important aspect of the game balance of Spellcasting, I am now rectifying that fault. The basic principle behind the Hit Points Cost is that it should cost the same number of Hit Dice to cast a Spell as that Spell can inflict in damage. For "instant kill" Spells, I decided that, since the average person would reach about 6th Level in her or his life, an "instant kill" Spell like Disintegration should cost 6 Hit Dice, or 6d8. For Spells that create a Magic Item, such as Golden Arrow, I decided that the Spell should cost the number of Hit Dice that is equal to or greater than the average damage done by the Spell per hit. Thus Golden Arrow costs 1d8 Hit Points (average 4.5) for 1d6+1 damage (average 4.5). Sword of Damocles *(see below)* costs 2d8 Hit Points (average 9) for 1d10+3 (average 8.5). By the way, the Hit Points Cost of casting a Spell should always be a whole number of d8s, and never a fraction or a formula like "1d8+1".

For Spells that incapacitate the target but don't cause damage in Hit Points, I adopted the following principles: 4 Hit Dice for a Spell that leaves the target alive but takes away her or his ability to act as they wish (e.g. Change Form), 2 Hit Dice for a Spell that restricts but does not take away the target's ability to act as they wish (e.g. Charm, Imprison *[see below]*). Remember that some Spells allow the caster to affect the target to various degrees, especially Change Form, which can turn someone into a statue, a duck, or a human being who looks

different to the way they were before: such Spells always cost the number of Hit Dice that their most powerful effect can have, even if the Spell is not being used to full effect. Changing a human's form into a more attractive human form does not restrict her or his freedom to move or to communicate, but it costs as many Hit Dice as turning that person into a silk shirt!

Beneficial Spells come in several varieties. Spells that affect the caster's perceptions cost 1d8 Hit Points if the caster's local perceptions are enhanced (e.g. See Magic), and 2d8 Hit Points if the caster's perceptions are extended further away than usually possible (e.g. Farsight *[see below]*). Spells that alter the caster's form in one aspect (e.g. Invisibility) cost 2d8 Hit Points, while a complete change costs 4d8 Hit Points (Change Form). It costs at least 3d8 Hit Points to affect other Spells: Dispel costs 3d8 Hit Points, while Reflect *(see below)* costs 4d8 Hit Points.

Any Spell that directly and magically affects the target entitles the target to a Resistance Roll. It is possible for Spells to indirectly affect the target, in which case she or he does not get a Resistance Roll. Such Spells include Bolt of Lightning, Golden Arrow, and Sword of Damocles *(see below)*. All three spells create an object magically (lightning, Magic arrow, and Magic sword respectively), but the object does not convey damage through Magic. If there was a Spell that drained away the target's Hit Points by magically draining away the target's "life force", it would entitle the target to a Resistance Roll.

It isn't easy to provide guide-lines on how to decide on the Range and Duration of Spells. The "instant kill" Spells and the significantly incapacitating Spells should have smaller Ranges than the less (potentially) devastating Spells for game balance, so that the Spellcaster has to be close to her or his target to be able to kill or incapacitate them instantly. Spells that incapacitate the target should allow a Resistance Roll every day to see if the target sloughs off the Spell's effects. Apart from these principles, you're pretty much on your own. Use the various Spells in the rules and at the end of this article as examples when you design your own Spells.

I will pass over Miracles with only a few brief observations. Firstly, the Target Number is an indication of how often the Miracle will occur if the Miracle-Worker's deity is not intervening. A Miracle-Worker of Eru will be able to Avert Evil three times out of four even if Eru is not actively helping her or him. There are some Miracles that will not occur without the active intervention of the deity, such as Resurrection; receiving instructions or visions also falls into this category. As far as new Miracles go, the Bible is an excellent treasure trove of examples: I suggest that anyone who wants to design new Miracles uses the Bible as a source of examples. As for determining Target Numbers, you could work out how many Hit Dice the Miracle would cost if it was a Spell, and then convert Hit Dice into Target Numbers as follows: 1d8 Hit Points = Target Number 6, 2d8 HP = TN 9, 3d8 HP = TN 12, 4d8 HP = TN 15, 5d8 HP = TN 18, 6d8 HP = TN 21. Such a system would get you Target Numbers close to the ones given in the rules.

Personally, if I had a Miracle-Worker in my group of players, I would be prepared to ad-lib my way through the campaign rather than having her or him regularly rolling to see if the desired Miracle

happens, but this course of action may not be to your liking. I wouldn't encourage my players to be Miracle-Workers in the first place: Miracle-Workers are in the rules more for completeness than anything else. Finally, never forget that a Miracle can happen to anybody at any time that the GM wants: just as the GM is not bound to let a Miracle happen when a player-character wants one to occur, so too can the GM let a Miracle occur even when the player-character is not expecting it or is not a Miracle-Worker.

On a different matter, spellcasters can cast Spells that permanently infuse inanimate objects with one or more Spells. The most important thing to know about creating Magic items is that the Hit Points spent to enchant the object in question are lost **permanently**. when a Magic item is created, the Spellcaster loses some of her or his "life force" to enchant the item. If the Magic item is destroyed, the Spellcaster does not regain the Hit Points she or he lost enchanting the item. This may help explain the scarcity of Magic items in the *ToL* game world. Magic Object *(see below)* is the Spell for making Magic armour and weapons; Magic devices are created by casting any Spell on the chosen item. Magic armour and weapons do not have charges; Magic devices have one charge per Spell cast upon them. Thus, to create a Ring of Invisibility with two charges costs 4d8 Hit Points, which are lost for good. The trigger word for Magic devices is always from the language *Magic*. The Spellcaster creating the Magic device chooses the trigger word, whether the user must also perform a certain action, and how the Magic device regains its charges.

More Spells

Deceit
Hit Points Cost: 1d8.
Range: Caster.
Duration: 20 minutes.
Effect: When cast, anything the caster says that is plausible will seem absolutely correct to any listeners who do not make a Resistance Roll. However, the caster cannot tell obvious lies and expect to be believed: this Spell does not make the listeners stupid.

> *Obi-ken Wanobi is trying to leave the city of Rattonoa with two Elves, who are wanted for questioning by the evil prince Varus. The group is stopped by two members of the town guard, who ask, "Who are these Elves?" Obi-ken could say, "These aren't the Elves you're looking for," and be believed by any member of the town guard who fails a Resistance Roll. This statement is plausible, and could be true. He couldn't say, "They aren't Elves, they're Dwarves," and be believed, because that is obviously not true.*

Farsight
Hit Points Cost: 2d8.
Range: 1000m.
Duration: 20 minutes.

Effect: When this Spell is cast, the caster can translocate her or his vision to any place within 1000 metres. The caster can move her or his point of view about during the duration of this Spell. If the caster could not normally see in the place where her or his vision is currently positioned, the caster will be aware of this. Throughout the duration of this Spell, the caster cannot use her or his ordinary sight; once the caster chooses to see through her or his own eyes, the Spell is cancelled.

Imprison
Hit Points Cost: 2d8.
Range: 40m.
Duration: variable.
Effect: When this Spell is cast, the target is surrounded by swirling lights of many colours. If the target fails a Resistance Roll, she or he is pinned in place by these swirling lights, which harden into a hard layer over the target. The target cannot move, but can still use all her or his senses and can still talk to others. Imprison traps the target's body in stasis, but leaves the target's consciousness unharmed. It is not possible to physically harm anyone trapped by this Spell, though Spells can still directly affect the target: that is, only Spells that allow the target a Resistance Roll can affect someone trapped by an Imprison Spell. An Imprisoned person may make a Resistance Roll every day to see if she or he overcomes this Spell.

Magic Object
Hit Points Cost: 1d8 per +1 bonus
Range: touch.
Duration: instant effect.
Effect: This Spell allows the Spellcaster to permanently enchant an object with a bonus **either** to Armour Class and Resistance Rolls **or** to "To Hit" and damage rolls. The Hit Points lost casting this Spell are lost permanently.

Pathfinder
Hit Points Cost: 1d8 or more.
Range: 1000m or more.
Duration: variable.
Effect: When cast, this Spell creates a shimmering golden globe of energy approximately 10cm in diameter. This globe will hover at about eye level some 5m away from the caster, and will indicate the direction the Spellcaster must travel to reach a particular location stated by the caster when she or he casts the Spell. Possible destinations include "the exit from this maze", "the entrance to the sorcerer's tower", "the Blue Oyster Bar in the village of Shandilaur", "to Kerrin Vlauwitz", and so on. The pathfinder will indicate the most direct route the caster can take. The golden ball will continue to hover 5m away from the caster until she or he arrives at the chosen destination. This could be somewhat inconvenient, as the pathfinder is not inconspicuous.

The number of Hit Points lost when casting this Spell depends on the distance between the Caster and the chosen destination. Distances of up to 1000m cost 1d8 Hit Points, and the maximum distance triples for every extra 1d8 Hit Points Cost (i.e. up to 3000m for 2d8 Hit Points, 9000m for 3d8 Hit Points, *et cetera*). If the caster does not specify a maximum distance that the Spell will function over (e.g."lead me to an exit from this maze within 3km") then she or he will lose as many dice of Hit Points as it takes to carry out the command.

If casting the Pathfinder Spell kills the Spellcaster, the golden globe will not appear, even if the caster's Hit Points total is 0. If the Spell does not work for some other reason (e.g. there is no exit from the maze within 3km, or there is no such person as Kerrin Vlauwitz) then no golden globe will appear.

Reflect
Hit Points Cost: 4d8.
Range: Caster.
Duration: 10 minutes.
Effect: This Spell creates a shimmering golden haze around the caster that will cause any Magic Spell directly targeted at the caster to reflect back at the caster of the other Spell. This haze evaporates at the end of the first Combat Round that the Spell actually reflected another Spell, or after 10 minutes if no Spells were directly targeted at the caster.

Shape Stone
Hit Points Cost: 5d8.
Range: Caster.
Duration: 10 minutes.
Effect: This Spell makes stone as pliant and flexible as plasticine to the caster's touch. Anyone using this spell can mould, shape, detach, and twist stone as they want. Corridors can be improvised, statues fashioned, and stone beings horrendously injured, mutilated, and killed. Shape Stone does not transform the stone into a plasticine-like substance; only the caster can manipulate stone using this Spell.

Sword of Damocles
Hit Points Cost: 2d8.
Range: 50m.
Duration: 10 minutes.
Effect: When this Spell is cast, a glowing golden two-handed sword appears above the head of the target. The caster can cause this sword to strike the target once, after which the sword will disappear. The sword is equivalent to a magic +3 two-handed sword in effect (i.e. the sword does 1d10+3 damage). The target does not get to make a Resistance Roll to avoid the effect of this Spell.

Water Breathing
Hit Points Cost: 4d8 or 6d8.
Range: 40m or 20m.
Duration: 1 hour.
Effect: The recipient of this Spell can breathe underwater without difficulty. There is a vicious version of this Spell that also takes away the target's ability to breathe out of water: this costs 6d8 Hit Points, and has a range of 20m. The target may attempt to make a Resistance Roll to avoid the effect of either version of this Spell. If the Spell succeeds, it will remain in effect until either the caster decides to cancel the effects or 1 hour passes.

Trolls 'R' Us

by Julian Smith

New and experienced players alike will admit that any gaming system has its flaws. Experienced players find where it consistently falls down and where it can be rorted, while new players have trouble relating to stupid idiosyncrasies or alien concepts. Most game systems have some form of automated healing shortcuts, be it a gift from God, a force of nature, or simply because the game would be too difficult if it did not exist. Doom™ is a great example of this. Consider trying to play "Real Doom", which not only had no healing, but you collapsed in a pool of blood and agony the first time you got nicked by a pistol guy. This obviously does not work as a game concept, which no doubt is why the bad guys were given inaccurate BB guns by their boss. But it still comes back to those medikits, which have no logical explanation in the game system, but are an essential component thereof.

Most of the players I know have at least some reservations about the extreme convenience of healing, yet it seems to be one of those intractable fundamentals of gaming. A while ago, someone I know made a suggestion in passing that people could be able to heal naturally as rapidly as if they had taken a healing potion. I have to admit that I find the idea of rapid healing intriguing. In fact, I find the idea completely enchanting, and I will attempt now to show you why.

Come with me if you dare. I will take you, if I may ... hmm, that is pretty suggestive, but how about you let me finish the sentence! I will take you, if I may, to another place, in another time, that might just raise the eyebrows a bit, but could be thoroughly cool!

Consider, then, a world where regeneration does not happen only to insane Time Lords who have never heard of the Prime Directive. Imagine, if you can, a world where bones knit in hours and disembowelling would be quite annoying, as you would need to clean it all up and shove it all back in before you healed shut and spent the remainder of your life looking like a hideous pink jellyfish. I guess there would also be the psychological trauma of not only feeling nauseous but also being able to see yourself feeling nauseous. Having your stomach squirming in your hands like a ball of kid's slime would not be my idea of stress relief.

But I digress. Only now that we have almost completely screwed things up are we beginning to realise exactly how comprehensively interconnected and fragile the ecosystem is. Only now are we beginning to understand precisely how fine the balance of everything is, as the ecologically sudden supremacy of humankind has changed the planetary balance forever. Only now are we beginning to realise that giving is taking, viewed from elsewhere, and that minuscule changes have violent, long reaching effects (if you believe all that mumbo jumbo about chaos butterflies).

A point that should be made here is that fantasy worlds do not compare to the world as we know it in either complexity or causality, but that certainly does not mean that a world that draws upon ours for reasoning, inspiration and mechanics is necessarily bad. After all, players come from this world, and it is extremely hard to deny a lifetime of conditioning. This is probably why formulated American saccharine pap sells so very well. Certainly it is neither realistic, logically sound, nor accurate, but it is very popular. The bank balances of Feist, Eddings and Salvatore can all attest strongly to this.

Most players that participate in role-playing tend more towards "playing a game" than "playing a role". Their characters are a page of numbers that gives them a wonderful sense of fulfilment. However, role-playing is literally "playing a role", i.e. acting, and involves interaction with other characters, particularly NPCs, which is pointless for those who are "playing a game" because they are too busy looting their warm, bloody, twitching corpses for copper pieces. This article is mainly for those that "play a role" rather than "play a game", but these suggestions could also bring happiness to those who just wish to roll.

Initially, there are two options to consider: either everything in the game universe also regenerates, or bald apes are unique. However, if the first possibility is the case, and all life shared these rapid-healing genes, then evolution would be prolific, viral mutation would be catastrophic, and the only real relative effect would be that the sunlight cycle would appear to be severely extended and out of sync with all life on earth. What would be the point in that?

What we have decided on is a world where humans are unique in having extraordinarily rapid cell regeneration. For those that have not noticed, humans have really got a good monopoly going in the world domination stakes, despite the fact that we are a pretty pathetic excuse for a species. Consider what these genetically improved humans would have done to life on earth.

Having rapid cell regeneration would have several massive effects, which, despite causing some dramatic changes, or because of this, could make a world or system incorporating them a heck of a lot of fun.

Cancer is probably the easiest potential change to dismiss. Cancer, the scourge of the 20th century, slayer of kings, destroyer of relationships, minds, bodies, bodily functions and bank balances. Rapid cell regeneration would greatly increase the occurrence of cancer, but as I am yet to experience a low technology fantasy scenario that encompasses cancer it would be foolish to start now.

Gestation rates are determined mainly by the size of the animal, but also by the rate at which that animal can grow cells. If cell regeneration, repair and growth rates are increased by a factor of say 100, imagine what that is going to do to gestation rates. One hundred was obtained by assuming that a six week bone fracture could mend in twelve hours. This is far too slow for game requirements, and yet already gestation is down to three days. Obviously, to make this remotely workable, these two inseparable figures must both be stretched to suit. However, even a ludicrous distortion of 2500%, making a break heal in two hours and a pregnancy take two weeks, would be a disastrous set-up.

The main effect that would occur is that aging must also be proportionally affected by the extreme rise in metabolism. Again using the factor of 100, people would live on average for nine months by today's standards. They would only live on average for six months going by Medieval standards, and

would be more likely to succumb to a fatal illness during the two week infant mortality bracket.

We have, then, with more doctoring of figures, breaks that heal in four hours, people that live for ten years, hit puberty at three, and can pop out a kid every month or so. Animals that high up on the food chain cannot breed that prolifically without affecting the balance of things, especially when disease would be eradicated by a hyperactive immune system before it got the chance to take hold.. People that bred like rabbits but did not have the natural enemies of rabbits would quickly over-populate and be forced into tribal warfare, wholesale slaughter and almost certainly cannibalism (depending on the maturity of the players and their ability to handle it). People possessing this kind of genetic advantage almost certainly would have destroyed the world before they reached the levels of sapiency required for dungeon campaigns, but let us assume somehow they did not. (A thought here is to introduce dragons and other "natural" predators to keep numbers down and a gregarious instinct up.)

Wars would be very frequent, bloodthirsty and horrific. Armour would not be of quite the same importance and battle tactics would be very different. The wounded could not be ignored, letting you move on to the next target straightaway. The dying would already be dead or on the road to a speedy recovery. The emphasis on killing the foe would have to be absolute. Making rounds of the battlefield slaying the vanquished enemy would suddenly be a life and death matter rather than one of expediency.

To be honest, the sad thing about this is that the AD&D Hit Point system more accurately portrays a world like this than the kind of game worlds that TSR publishes for use with AD&D. The fact that the helpless are easily slain but the wounded fight on absolutely unperturbed is almost entirely consistent with rapid regeneration.

In order to have survived, a species with this kind of metabolism would either have to eat ten times as much, which is impossible, or have a digestive system that is ten times more efficient, which is possible. It must be asked, though, why it is just us with that genetic mutation advantage. Luck, I guess, followed by natural selection, which took care of the rest. Those that had the superb digestion DNA but a normal metabolism died of chronic obesity. Those with a normal digestion and a high metabolism starved. Those who were normal in both respects got crapped on by everybody else.

Next, let us consider the cognitive state of these people. There would be very little time for learning, and even less time for accumulating the wisdom of the ages. In reality, a race of these people would be pushing it to get to the iron age. There would not be time for one person to accumulate the lifetime of experience that is essential for discovery and certainly no time to pass it down to the next generation. The game world would extend as far as the village in the next valley, as anyone who tried to go further than the crest of the hill never came back.

The world would be over-populated by primitive, aggressive, destructive savages that would have an exceedingly wide array of fearsome weapons and dog collars for armour. Campaigns would be very violent, destructive, and brief. This should have enormous appeal to gamers of all ages.

History is almost nothing but examples of how humanity behaves when we listen to our ignorance. How badly our baser emotions betray us, how gross our basic pattern of behaviour is! Imagine, then, greatly multiplying the ignorance, the fear, the hatred, and all the other instinctive behaviours. Then place these people in a world that is not just desensitised to violence, but one where you simply do not need to be sensitive to violence. The squeamish may be excused. Then again, I suppose that the squeamish did not make it past the jelly fish comment.

Caution, a word AD&D players know well as a symptom of usually justifiable paranoia, would not be quite as paramount. Repercussions of stupid acts of bravado could almost certainly be easily laughed off. Injury just would not have the crippling permanency that is so sickening. People could be treated like airfix kits. "Oh, has that snapped off? Well, just hold it in place for a few minutes until the glue dries, and you'll be as right as rain."

You could imagine two fanatical cults, one of which swaps limbs because of a belief that it promotes peace, unity, and understanding, while the other cult swaps limbs because it is grotesque, abhorrent, satanic and truly bloodthirsty. Can the campaign adventurer tell these two cults apart until really, really close up? It wouldn't be at all interesting if they could, now would it? To make things truly interesting, the good cult could grant fantastic boons, but only if trusted, loved, and never doubted or offended. This would involve getting really close, possibly while unarmed. What would the evil cult do if the PCs got really close while unarmed? Well that would ruin the surprise, wouldn't it? (Hint! Undoubtedly they would try to disarm the PCs still further. And you thought that the Monty Python skit about live organ donations was implausible.)

To sum up: it would be very easy for a GM to create such a world. A very small scale map, unsophisticated plots, and a crude arsenal would be the essentials, and almost all that was really required. Some prehistoric anthropology would also be handy. The setting could be tribes at war, nomadic wanderers, or humans trying hard not to be monster fodder. Remember, dragons did very well in life until humans invented steel, so don't go overboard with monsters.

Oh, what a joyous idea for a plot. Your conventional AD&D party, complete with magic-users and plate mail, is sucked into an astral gate and materialises on this world full of savage, berserker troll-like humans. The players could aim for world domination, world annihilation, or contriving a route home. Talented players could try for all three.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *   *   *</p>

A second scenario also comes to mind. When we played around with figures earlier, it became immediately apparent that it would be most convenient if there were massive discrepancies between regeneration time and its correlated side effects, such as gestation and aging. It would be convenient if you could age normally, but heal quickly when required. A neat solution that comes immediately to mind is to have a potion that does that. Voilà! Suddenly we have a healing potion, but it isn't "magic". Now that we have normal aging and gestation rates, the standard deviation of life as we know it approaches normality, if you will excuse the pun. (After all, the definition of normality is being standardly devious.)

Basically, such a potion invokes metabolic features similar to those outlined in the previous

scenario, and thus evokes similar side effects. Using a healing potion could easily age you three months or more over the period of a few hours. Convenience dictates that you should be able to measure the dosage so that you can alter either the time taken to heal, the corresponding increase in aging, or even both, but such side-effects would make using potions a more risky undertaking than the no-risk situation in most fantasy games. Of course, this healing potion is not all it is cut up to be. Like alcohol, it is recommended that minors do not use it. Likewise for pregnant women. Like alcohol, it should not be taken frequently or in large doses as it would really muck you up. Most importantly, like alcohol, it would be in very high demand.

Most of the role-players I know dislike the extreme convenience, improbability and neatness of a healing potion. Suddenly, there is a system that would be a little more challenging to play and a lot more consequential. Having a down side balances any system a little better. Healing will take several hours, which may be a factor, the character will feel uncomfortable for a while after, develop if they are an adolescent or child, and grow older. Getting hurt is a serious hassle, which really is the way it should be.

Hopefully these changes should bring two new effects into play. Firstly, it should stop the rorting of a "free ride, get out of jail free" concept. Getting sliced open would actually be a problem. This might bring a little more realism into characters' behaviour. Secondly, this potion should also bring a little more realism to the game world in general.

Celery slightly slows down your metabolism. What is to say that you could not get a cheap, very common plant extract that does the opposite, in vast quantities so that supply is never a problem for pricing or logistics, and thus the only reason to abstain is caution due to the side effects? (Not to mention that the opportunity to convalesce waist deep in compassionate nurses for six months sure beats being sent back to the front lines the next day, physically six months older, but feeling six years older.) This also makes healing available to lowly herbalists, peasants, and even cattle. Suddenly clerics are not indispensable members of the party, and are instead insufferable, radically zealous twits like paladins.

One problem that is hard to ignore is fuel. Six months of living should require six months of food. Consuming six months of food in six hours is really going to be a neat trick. One solution is to ignore it. Another is to decide that this plant extract is also an amazingly rich food source, but that could totally ruin food as the world knows it, unless the two properties of the plant are inseparable. The bit that speeds up the metabolism also fuels it. I guess that was not so much of a problem after all. Another thought that can be edited out under the guidelines of taste is the question of what on earth this amazing food source and six months of waste is going to do to your bowels. If this does not give your characters fluorescent diarrhoea for a few days, nothing will. This could prove to be exceptionally awkward both socially and militarily, especially for fans of plate mail. Certainly it would explain how infirmaries got their name.

However, logic also dictates that a speeded up metabolism would result in speeded up reflexes and mental functioning. Why else is caffeine the wonder drug of the nineties? This means that a healing potion could do really bad things to attack rates in battle. "Cool, I get initiative for my first two

hundred and fifty-five attacks! You suckers are in trouble, you can't even see me I'm moving so fast!" Hence there must also be a powerful sleeping draught present in the plant. You drink the potion, you wake up a little later feeling completely refreshed, and we will definitely ignore the wastage of muscle and joint seizure that would normally result from a six month nap. The most reasonable explanation for quibbling players is, "Try going without sleep for six months when you are horrifically injured you smartarse git!" Thus, you can take the potion, but ten seconds later it is lights out time.

One of the major differences that this will create is that healing cannot be used in battle, unless you use it on the opposition to render them unconscious, and you should not be able to get close enough to ram the potion down their throats. Remember that this is not a very nice thing to do to someone, since from their perspective it could be viewed as sucking away six months of their life.

We must also address poisons. Poisons are meant to be shunned by all those who have a code of ethics. The fact that they are not is splitting hairs. In this world, a stance upon poisons is vitally important. Tactically, the use of poisons is very valuable. The trick to temporarily neutralising most poisons or surviving until help arrives is to slow your metabolism down. Taking a potion and speeding up your metabolism would cause instant death if your body couldn't naturally disperse the poison. Thus, poisoning someone in battle has huge effects. All poisonings must be treated before the character can be healed. This also dictates that health potions must be ingested to react with a stomach enzyme, or players will be coating their arrows with either the healing potion (to act as a sleeping agent) or with both a poison and the healing potion (for the double whammy).

This suggested potion happily parallels the AD&D spell Haste. You take a very diluted portion of this potion, because in tiny dosages the sleeping effect can be ignored, but the aging effect remains. The problem is that Haste, as defined by the AD&D rules, ages the character an entire year, which is not consistent with the system outlined above, and makes it effectively unusable by humans. Two weeks would be a far more sensible penalty that is consistent with the figures being used in this article. Such a loss makes Haste something you do not want to use a lot, but could happily use if you had to.

One other system to consider is one in which healing is still magical, but it operates by inducing the physical effects discussed in this scenario, and as such has all the related side effects. This leaves healing as an exclusive power of spell casters. The previous world does not really have the technologies required for magic, unless you want to incorporate shamans, but the current system does. You could treat this either as an AD&D variant complete with magic, or as an historical campaign.

Something else to take into consideration is the effect that this will have upon the longer-lived races. It has always been my impression that the ancient races, with their extremely slow development, infrequent births, and minimal eating, must have a different metabolic rate. To avoid further disadvantaging human characters, perhaps other races take a proportional aging penalty.

Any characteristic modifiers for being healed are easily derived from common sense. For instance, it is sensible to have a dexterity penalty just after extensive healing, perhaps −3 for the first hour, −2

for the next two, and −1 for the rest of the day. Increase these penalties by 2 for youths (i.e. −5 for the first hour, −4 for the next two, and −3 for the rest of the day), apply a −2 penalty for the rest of the week and a −1 penalty for the following week. This should factor in waking up much larger and the subsequent acclimatisation period. Such penalties should not be cumulative if the potion was used a second time within a few days, but taking a potion starts the sequence all over again. Youths would have to cope with being three inches taller, might have greater food requirements than adults and thus could wake up with a mild form of starvation.

A possible use for such an accessible potion in a fantasy campaign is mass production. An evil tyrant with a few captured females and a quantity of potion could start mass-producing children, with each woman forced to give birth to twenty kids a year, each child being fed the potion until it barfed, and stopping when the kid is three years old and six feet tall. Of course, it would almost certainly be simpler to hire a band of mercenaries that would certainly be better fighters, but it could make a good campaign if you are into wholesale slaughter with a long term goal and plot. The tyrant with the mass production program certainly wouldn't be above a few choice genetic engineering projects (remember that comment about treating people like airfix kits?). Seasoned fighters with gigantic strength and four arms could be a real problem, especially when three arms are holding battle axes and the fourth arm is carrying an one inch thick steel shield.

I suppose these kids must have spent most of their first few years asleep or being taught to talk and to be coordinated. That only leaves a few years of training and brainwashing before the rabid, mutant, killer six year olds are unleashed. Steroid abuse in this reality would just be a variant on the Haste spell, and doesn't warrant any further thought. PCs could resort to this, seeking short term rewards, but they will pay for it in the long run. Then there is the marketing appeal of the good old wholesome US of A "all-natural" athletes against the corrupt, evil Eastern Bloc steroid machines. You can feel pious and morally luxuriant while wading through piles and piles of battery children.

The effects of such a potion on a foetus could be catastrophic. Thus, pregnant women shouldn't use the potion except in extreme circumstances. Indeed, the effects would be worse in the early stages of pregnancy, since sometimes the woman will not know that she is putting the foetus at risk. A healing potion that is effectively unsafe for sexually active women can be a greater restriction than a lower maximum strength for female characters. There may be a sharp rise in the number of female characters who choose chastity above charity and prize their virtue above all else (death before dishonour, *et cetera*).

Tactics may have to be rethought a little and hopefully new scenarios could be presented (even using the ideas given above) or old ones re-tried. This system would be ideal for experienced players looking for a greater degree of challenge and accuracy and equally great to ease first time players into as it would suit their caution, not to mention being able to explain a system sounds a lot better than, "Look, it just is, OK?!?" So although we are returning to a more conventional fantasy world with healing potions, these adaptations could provide for a little more thought and entertainment if players feel that things are a little stale and are looking for variations. Disorientation on awakening could be mandatory, or just left to those who want to act a little or peeve the other PCs.

The first world I described is not obsolete either. It could still stand on its own as an exceedingly violent, vicious, reduced world with limited horizons. This could make a refreshing change for those feeling thirsty or in the mood for a swim. It is interesting to note that of the two worlds discussed in this article, one would instil a greater degree of respect and caution in the player, while the other world is one of extreme chaos, madness, and violence. *"Carpe Diem"* is suddenly a lot more relevant when you are going to be over the hill next month and I shudder to think of a world where jumping out of a tree and healing at the bottom is preferred to climbing down, since the former takes far less effort and less precious time. Revel in the insanity of it all.
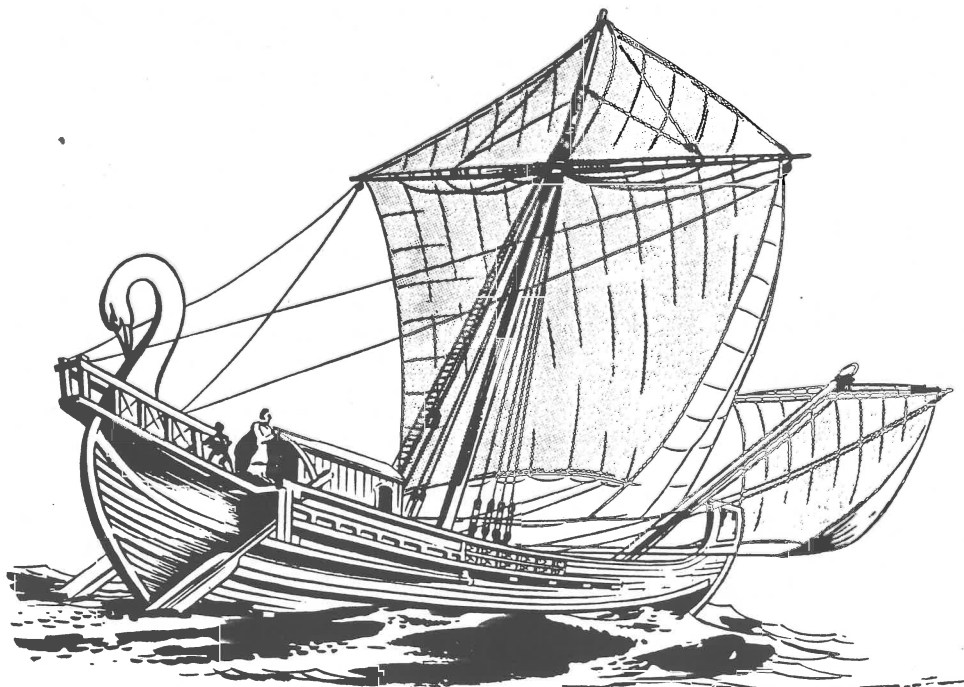
Disease and Healing Magic in Fantasy Role-Playing

by Gary Johnson and Taina Nieminen[1]

It's Tuesday morning, which means that a small group of young people gathers at the back door of the Temple of the Rose. The Order of the Rose is a charitable religious organisation that funds orphanages, runs soup kitchens for homeless people and, every Tuesday morning, holds a free STD clinic for local prostitutes. There are, of course, compassionate reasons for doing this, but the Order of the Rose is also well aware of the public health benefits: healing the prostitutes will reduce the level of STDs in the general population. Okay, but won't they just be back next Tuesday? Maybe or maybe not. It depends on how healing spells actually work.

A magical spell which cures infectious diseases could work in a number of ways:

(1) It might boost the body's own immune system. Such a spell would act through physiological mechanisms already present in the body by enhancing them to the peak of their potential. A spell that healed injuries could act in a similar fashion by increasing the rate of cell growth and division within the natural healing process, and at the same time prevent infection by improving the effectiveness of the immune system against bacteria present at the injury site. The effect of such spells could not be instantaneous.

(2) It might destroy the infectious agent magically, and may or may not repair tissue damage caused by the agent. The body's immune system, although not involved in the spell, will have responded to the infection, even if it was unable to overcome it. Healing under such a spell may or may not be instantaneous, but the body may well take some time to recover from the symptoms of the disease.

(3) It might return the body to the state it was in before infection took place. In this case, the body's immune system has not yet been called into action. Healing, involving a purely magical event, will probably be instantaneous.

(4) It might physically transform the body to a new state of health. In this case, all diseases which are capable of being affected by the spell would be healed, whereas this is not necessarily so in the first three examples. Again, healing will probably be instantaneous.

The particular mechanism is important with respect to the question of future visits by prostitutes to the STD clinic. After healing by mechanisms (1) or (2), the body's immune system remains primed for that particular disease. Any future contact with the responsible agent will lead to a rapid and effective immune response which will deal with the infectious organism before it multiplies sufficiently to cause disease. In effect, the person has been immunised against that particular disease. So, even if the prostitutes are back next Tuesday with a new infection, eventually they will be immune to all STDs they are likely to come into contact with, making the clinic a very worthwhile public health service. After healing by mechanism (3) on the other hand, the person will not be immunised, making the

clinic only a worthwhile public health service. Mechanism (4) may or may not confer immunity.

The question is relevant for any campaign in which diseases are individual infections and ailments and not just "diseases". If your PC has been bitten by a rabid dog and then cured, does that mean you can now safely approach dogs that froth at the mouth? If you've been cured of the plague, does that mean you can loot the houses of plague victims with impunity? Do you no longer need to carry limes on long sea voyages to prevent scurvy? Should you save up your minor illnesses and save money by getting a cleric to cure them all in one go?

The best answer we can give is that it all depends. Once you know how the spell works, these questions can be answered with some thought. Ultimately, how the spell works is the GM's decision, but the spell descriptions given in game systems can provide guidance. Our guess is that the AD&D *Cure Disease* works through mechanism (2) and involves the repair of any tissue damage caused by the disease, and the much more powerful *Heal* works through mechanism (4), although it is subject to certain limitations: new limbs will not grow nor severed ones reattach.[2] *Heal* does not confer future immunity to "disease", but if *Cure Disease* allows immunisation against a particular disease, it makes sense for *Heal* to do so as well, and to interpret the spell description as meaning, quite sensibly, that it does not confer immunity to *all* diseases. Both spells, then, would let you loot with impunity.

Cure Disease may cure only the specific disease being targeted, in which case you can't save money by having them all done at once, while *Heal* most likely cures all diseases suffered by the patient. Scurvy is a vitamin deficiency disease and could not be cured under mechanism (1) unless vitamin C was also given to the patient. Mechanisms (3) and (4) will cure scurvy, but limes may still be a cheaper alternative to *Heal* spells. Mechanism (2) may or may not cure scurvy. *Cure Disease* is stated to cure infectious and other diseases, leaving the specification of "other diseases" up to the GM, who may decide that scurvy is one of the diseases that *Cure Disease* does not affect. *Neutralize Poison* probably works through a variant of mechanism (2) in which the poison is magically removed from the body and tissue damage repaired. *Regeneration* may work through a variant of mechanism (4) which is not subject to the limitations of *Heal*.

If you're interested in physiology and medicine, you can invest further detail into any system of healing magic. The question of what diseases will be affected is a problem associated with any spell which does not cure any and all diseases. We think that the effect of healing magic on mental illness is particularly interesting. *Heal* "will not cure serious forms of mental disorders not related to spells or inflicted by injury to the brain" (*DMG*). Our interpretation of this is that *Heal* will cure brain damage and mental disorders caused by spells, but not purely psychological disorders. However, what about schizophrenia, which is a serious mental illness caused by a physical disorder of the brain that is not an injury?[3] If *Heal* can cure epilepsy, which it must because it cures all diseases (*PH*), then it ought to cure schizophrenia: epilepsy is also an illness

(although a physical and not a mental one) caused by a brain disorder.

More problematically, if *Cure Disease* can cure epilepsy, perhaps it should also cure schizophrenia. To get around this problem, we could decide that *Cure Disease* is not effective on brain disorders and will cure neither epilepsy nor schizophrenia. But, if *Cure Disease* can cure the central nervous system damage caused by rabies, an infectious disease, then it should be able to cure other forms of brain damage and disorder. We could deal with this problem by remembering that schizophrenia is not caused by physical injury to the brain but by something more subtle—imbalances in the levels of neurotransmitters. Perhaps such subtle magic is beyond the capacity of a 3rd-level spell of a 5th-level spell caster. However, we could also deal with it by introducing a new level of complexity. Our suggestion for *Heal*, then, is that "injury to the brain" be given a broad definition to incorporate all brain disorders, and that these be excluded from *Cure Disease*. Diseases such as schizophrenia, epilepsy, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease can be cured by *Heal* but not by *Cure Disease*. In this case, the rabies virus infection could be cured by *Cure Disease* but the brain damage could not: a person bitten by a rabid animal would want to seek treatment promptly before any brain deterioration occurred.

The treatment of injuries highlights other inconsistencies in the AD&D healing spells. all of which can restore damaged or lost tissue by creating matter where there was none before. If *Cure Light Wounds* can restore hit points lost to a fire attack, then it can bring about a sophisticated regeneration of burnt skin, muscle and other organs. If *Cure Disease* can heal the tissue damage caused by the Ebola virus (Ebola is an infectious disease and by definition curable by the spell), it must also be able to cause the regeneration of various organs and tissues throughout the body. Why do we have to wait until the 7th-level *Regeneration* to regrow a hand? Is a hand so much more complicated than the half-a-kidney, ribs, muscle and skin destroyed by an axe blow? Why does *Regeneration* and not, by implication, *Heal* allow us to replicate microsurgery and re-attach severed limbs? Perhaps *Heal* is incapable of inducing nerve regeneration, but as it can repair brain damage, it ought to be able to convince peripheral nerves to regrow. For that matter, what is the difference between *Cure Light Wounds* and higher-level healing spells which restore hit points? All of the spells create new, highly complex, living tissue where there was none before, and so are different only in degree and not in kind.

The analysis we've just made is an interesting intellectual exercise, but is it actually important? Who, after all, has schizophrenia or epilepsy in a game world? Who wants to know whether a spell can cure Parkinson's disease? Who cares how long you can take to find medical or clerical treatment after you've been bitten by a dog? Obviously we do, and we believe that thinking about disease and magic can add some of those details that help you feel that you're in a "real" world.

The inconsistencies that we talked about in AD&D spells are only inconsistencies when interpreted against our real-world model of disease causation. They need not be inconsistencies under other models, and these other models can add a new element of fantasy into role-playing. Take schizophrenia as an example. Perhaps schizophrenia isn't caused by neurotransmitter levels in the brain.

Perhaps it isn't even a disease. Suppose that people with schizophrenia are in fact able to see a second reality that underlies our own, which is why they become shamans. They possess a magical power that manifests itself as schizophrenia, and to remove that condition with a spell like *Restoration* would not be a welcome cure, but instead akin to a lobotomy.

Models for other possible theories of disease causation can be found from history. Disease is an old companion of the human species and our ancestors tried to explain, from observation and logic, why it should be so. This was a rational pursuit, not a mystical one, even if their answers seem superstitious or mystical to us. We live in a world of microbes and molecules and the double helix. Our answers to the questions of disease can be much more complex and correct than those of the past. The fact that our ancestors were wrong doesn't mean that they weren't rational or intelligent. Without a knowledge of micro-organisms, what should a disease-causing agent be? If you can't see it, might it not be an evil spirit or miasma? Without a knowledge of DNA and genetic mutation, how should a deformed child be explained? If both parents were healthy, might it not be caused by something the mother did during pregnancy? How indeed should the marvellous fact of a self-healing body be explained?

These theories fall into two major categories: the natural and the supernatural. A supernatural theory could explain disease as a punishment sent by God, or a curse put on you by an evil sorcerer. Some people might possess the evil eye, a power which causes them, voluntarily or involuntarily, to hex people and cause bad luck or illness. Diseases might also be caused by evil spirits or demon possession. Natural theories seek to explain health and disease through normal and abnormal functioning of the body; an external agent may or may not be responsible for causing malfunctions. One possible external influence is a miasma—a poisonous vapour extruded by corpses or other rotting matter, or associated with certain noxious places. Malaria, for example, was associated with swampy areas, and so attributed to the influence of a miasma given off by swamps. The Greek theory of the Four Humours and the Chinese theory of yin and yang balance explained illness as an imbalance in human physiology, as they understood it. Injury and other external influences might cause disease in this theory, but the cure is effected through restoring balance in physiology.

Spirits and Demons

> And there met Him a man with an unclean spirit, who, when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." For He said unto him, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." And He asked him, "What is thy name?" And the man answered, saying, "My name is Legion: for we are many." (paraphrase of *Mark* 5.2-9, authorised King James version)

Anyone familiar with the world-view of the gospel writers is aware of a plethora of passages like

the one cited above. A wicked spirit enters a person's body, and causes a disease of some kind, whether insanity, epilepsy, paralysis, leprosy, or something else. The victim cannot recover from this disease without supernatural intervention, and so a holy person is called on to drive the wicked spirit out through the power of her or his god, and thus the disease is cured.

This simple model of disease causation has been popular for millennia, and is still accepted by some people today. It was widely accepted in ancient and medieval Europe, and explains why clerics in particular are able to heal diseases. Given the clear parallels between clerical magic in AD&D and the Biblical miracles, it is hardly surprising that clerical spells are very compatible with the theory of disease causation extolled in the Bible. The differences between spells of different levels are due to the fact that particular diseases (such as mental illnesses) are caused by powerful demons who require exceptionally powerful clerics to cast them out.

Of course, there are a number of reasons why demons might possess people, and which ones apply in a particular game world are a matter of choice. In the Bible, demons are a force for evil, sometimes sent by God to punish the wicked or the righteous (take the case of Job as an example of the latter), sometimes just getting up to trouble without orders from Heaven. In a more secular framework, demons could be sent to afflict a particular victim by a human sorcerer, and possibly cast out by another sorcerer who knew the right rituals to dismiss a spirit, irrespective of her or his holiness. Perhaps demons are not evil beings, but just another part of the supernatural ecosystem. Is there one demon for each disease, or a multitude of demons, each of which can cause any number of diseases? Will a demon enter your body through your mouth if you eat food without blessing it beforehand? If diseases are caused by demons sent by the gods to punish the wicked, should the ill be healed? There are a large number of interesting possibilities to be considered.

This model is not incompatible with other theories of disease causation, and can co-exist with one or more alternate theories. Perhaps most people who catch a disease were exposed to the right germ, but some people get sick because a demon possesses them and induces the illness in them. Some literally-minded Christians still subscribe to this particular argument. You might like to know that this supernatural theory of disease co-existed during Antiquity and the Middle Ages with the scientific theory of the four humours, which we'll discuss next.

The Four Humours

The theory of the four humours was developed by Classical Greek doctors like Hippocrates (responsible for the Hippocratic oath) and endorsed by Galen, whose textbooks were authoritative for much of the Middle Ages. The theory began with the observation that the body contained three different fluids: blood, phlegm, and bile (also known as yellow bile). Because observers believed that these fluids could be compared to the four elements, a fourth fluid, atrabile

(black bile, which is imaginary), was hypothesised. It was argued that the relative proportions of these four fluids in the body determined both a person's health and their physical and mental nature. Thus, for instance, people who were angry and passionate were held to have a choleric temperament, caused by a preponderance of yellow bile in their bodies. See the table at the bottom of the page for the associated qualities of the four humours.

Because some Greek philosophers held that the ideal physical and mental state was one that was balanced, in which no tendency dominated the others, the same ideal was applied to the theory of the humours. Thus, disease was caused by an imbalance in the combination or proportion of the humours in the body. Pain was caused either by the failure of the humours to combine properly in the body or because there was too much or too little of one of them. A disease which afflicted the whole body was usually caused by the former condition, and a disease which affected only part of the body was the result of the latter.

Treatment was, in both cases, based around the concept of allopathy, or cure by opposites. Diseases caused by excess were cured by reduction, diseases caused by exertion by rest, and diseases caused by inactivity by exercise. The principle of reduction lies behind the most famous aspect of medieval medicine, namely bloodletting (phlebotomy). If there was too much of a particular humour in your blood, it had to be drained away to help restore the balance. Bloodletting was the most popular treatment for reducing excess, but there were alternatives, such as vomiting and defecating.

When deciding on a treatment, the physician had to take into account the activities of the patient and the environment they lived in. Diet was an important aspect of physical condition, and often a cause of illness (if only through over-eating!). It was held that excess in the body usually coloured a person's urine. The quality of the air the patient breathed was important, because air was seen as being more important to life than food and water (after all, you could live for days without food and water, but only minutes without air).

Also, the balance of the humours in the body was synchronised with the seasons: phlegm, for instance, increased in winter and decreased in summer, while blood did the opposite. Local variations in temperature and humidity also increased and decreased the relevant humours. The patient's character was an important indicator of the usual balance of humours in her or his body, and this guided the doctor's treatment, since what was appropriate for a sanguine person would be ineffective, and possibly harmful, to a phlegmatic person. Because of the perceived need to know everything about the patient to be able to effect the perfect cure, and the belief that individuals were connected to the world around them, some doctors used astrology to learn as much as possible about the effects of the stars and the planets on their patients.

What effects a particular imbalance would have was not always easy to determine, because doctors seem to have been more concerned to remove

Humour	Temperament	Element	Moisture	Colour	Character Features
blood	sanguine	air	hot & damp	red	brave, amorous, hopeful
phlegm	phlegmatic	earth	cold & damp	white	cold, sluggish, apathetic
bile	choleric	fire	hot & dry	yellow	angry, passionate
black bile	melancholy	water	cold & dry	black	irascible, sullen

whatever excess they felt was causing the illness than to determine which disease was caused by what humour. Thus, a doctor confronted with a paralysed hand would have bled that hand to drain away the excess causing the paralysis, and not worried too much about which particular humour was causing it. Still, there were some generally accepted associations between humours and particular diseases. Excessive amounts of black bile were responsible for fevers, while phlegm caused epilepsy. Excesses also caused personality disorders, the most notable being melancholia, caused (once again) by black bile. If you're interested in using the four humours theory, you can prepare your own list of illnesses and what causes them.

The four humours theory subscribes to a very different understanding of human physiology and disease causation, which may make it difficult to use in a campaign without giving it a lot of thought. However, it is an inventive and complex attempt to explain how illness and disease operates, and consistent with the AD&D spells that cure diseases. Magical healing spells would work by restoring the balance of the humours in the body, presumably by transforming any excess into the other humours. We think that the four humours theory does not allow people to develop immunity to particular diseases, but this is open to interpretation.

Rwandan Popular Medicine

Traditional Rwandan concepts of health and illness are based on a flow of fluids, both within the body, and between people through the exchange of bodily fluids or gifts of fluids such as milk and honey. A blockage of flow within the body or between people can cause illness, although not all illness is caused in this way. Bodily health is, in this paradigm, overtly linked to amicable social relations, which are maintained by the regular exchange of gifts of liquids.

Important bodily fluids are blood, saliva, semen and maternal milk. The most important relationships that involve the exchange of these fluids are those between husband and wife, and between mother and child. Of those liquids exchanged as gifts in social interaction, beer, honey and milk are especially valued. These fluids are held in such high esteem in Rwandan culture that the social elite claim they never eat solid food.

Saliva is thought to embody a person's nature: it is a by-product of normal brain activity, and people who are mad have dry mouths. Saliva is also used in the treatment of some diseases, particularly skin disorders.

Blood is used in witchcraft or poisoning. To make someone ill, the poisoner must first obtain some of the victim's bodily fluids. Having obtained that, they can either affect the victim's blood or send evil spirits that cause disease. In the former case, the poisoner can either block the flow of blood, or can drain away the blood of the victim. Consider the concept of a vampire that can drain blood (or vital energy) at a distance, if they can obtain bodily fluids of the victim.

The salient points of Rwandan popular medicine are that individual health and social tranquillity are all dependent on the continuous flow (exchange) of fluids and liquid gifts between individuals and groups.

Reference: C.C. Taylor (1988), "The concept of flow in Rwandan popular medicine," *Social Science and Medicine*, 27 (12), 1343-48.

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1 We'd like to thank Christina Lynch, R.N., for reading a draft of this article. Any mistakes that remain are, of course, our own.

2 Our analysis of AD&D magical spells is based on first edition rules. Second edition rules may lend themselves to a different interpretation.

3 We mean real schizophrenia, which is a mental illness marked by disordered thought and perception; hallucinations and delusions are common. It is not multiple personality syndrome.

LIBERTY

CITY LIMITS
pop. 9,832
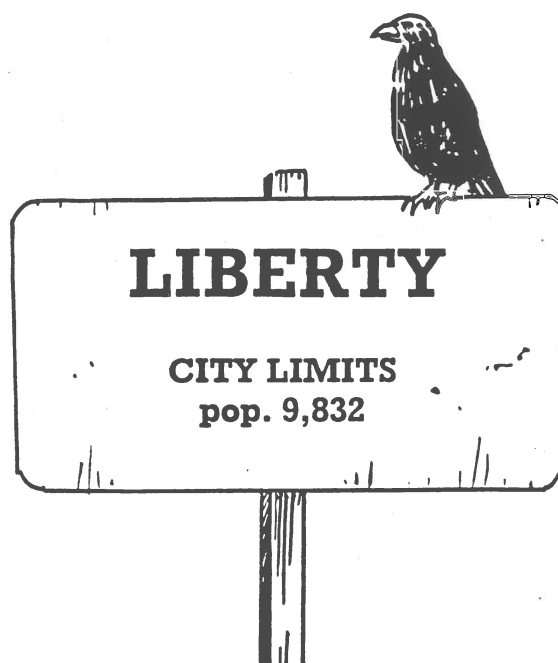
Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine
(Role-playing in Asian Settings 4)

by Taina Nieminen

Elements of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) can be incorporated into any fantasy role-playing world, perhaps in an Asian setting, or as an exotic tradition practised in foreign countries or by immigrants from far-off places. In the first part of this article, I'll describe briefly some aspects of TCM, and in the second, I'll give some ideas on how they could be used in fantasy role-playing. If you want to find out more about TCM, all of the books in the *Further Reading* list are held in the University libraries.

Chinese medical theory and practice has, of course, changed considerably over time, but shows remarkable continuity from about 500 B.C. onwards. Until then, healers were people, mostly women, called *wu* (sometimes translated as shaman or witch). The *wu* had two closely related abilities: she could speak to spirits, and she could heal the sick by exorcising the evil spirits that caused sickness. She could also go to the underworld in a spirit journey and find out how Death could be persuaded not to take a particular person. Illness could also be caused by ghosts who stole the souls of people, and the *wu* could send out her soul to search for the culprit. On finding it, she would make it release the soul, and then cure the sick by reuniting soul with body.

This early theory of disease causation was replaced by that of *qi* (*ch'i*), which remained the orthodox theory for the next two-and-a-half thousand years. The *wu* lost her role as healer, and physicians came to form a specialist profession with medical colleges and qualifying examinations. These doctors, who were usually men, used a wide range of methods to treat illness and injury, and also to promote health and prolong life. These methods included acupuncture and moxibustion, drugs and surgery, diet, breathing exercises and massage.

A first-class doctor could prevent disease before it took hold, and only a second-rate one had to wait for his patient to fall ill before he could diagnose and treat the problem. The doctor was therefore paid by his patients only when they were well. Naturally, the doctor had to pay for all costs of treatment. This method was fine for the wealthy who could afford to have a physician on retainer; poor people went to the doctor when they were ill and paid for the treatment they received, just as we do today.

Qi (Ch'i)

Qi is the vital life force of human beings and of the universe. It is an energy that circulates in the body in anatomically fixed channels (meridians), and is of two kinds. The first is acquired at conception from the combined *qi* of the ovum and sperm, and cannot be replenished. It is gradually used up throughout life, and its total exhaustion causes death. The second kind of *qi* must be acquired regularly from food and air, explaining why eating and breathing are essential to sustain life.

TCM also uses the concept of yin and yang, found in various schools of Chinese philosophy. Yin and Yang are the negative and positive components of all matter and energy in the universe, and *qi*, like everything else, is composed of a mix of both. If yin and yang are in the correct proportions,

the body is healthy. If they are not, illness is caused. The aim of TCM is to restore the balance of yin and yang in the body, resulting in the restoration of health. In this view, the body is a self-repairing mechanism, and treatment enables the body to return to its natural, balanced state of health.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin needles into subcutaneous connective tissue or muscle at specific points in the body (known as acupuncture points or acupoints). It is used in TCM to treat a wide variety of illnesses, with unsupported claims for effectiveness. Whatever effects it may have in treating illness generally, it unarguably gives pain relief (analgesia) to a significant number of people: 55% to 85% of patients, compared with a general placebo effect of 30% for the treatment of chronic pain. Electroacupuncture, in which a small electrical current is passed through the needle, is used to produce anaesthesia for surgery. Acupuncture is also reported to impart a general feeling of well-being.

The physiological mechanism of the analgesic and anaesthetic effects of acupuncture is now clearly established. The needles stimulate peripheral nerves, which then signal the brain to produce endorphins and monoamines—chemical transmitters that block pain. The production of endorphins, which are the body's natural opiates, may also account for the feelings of well-being that are produced by acupuncture. According to the Chinese theory, the needles are inserted at particular points on the *qi* circulatory system, and the acupuncturist uses the needles to manipulate the flow of *qi* to restore the correct balance of yin and yang in the body.

Moxibustion

Moxibustion, the lesser-known cousin of acupuncture, is the practice of burning the dried leaves of *artemisia vulgaris* (mugwort) either directly on the skin or just above it, perhaps with a slice of ginger or bean paste placed between the moxa leaves and the skin. The material used must be *artemisia*; the plant may contain a pharmacologically active compound. Moxibustion was of the same importance in TCM as acupuncture, and was used for chronic illness whereas acupuncture was generally preferred for acute cases. Both acupuncture and moxibustion could be lethal: acupuncture, if lethal, and hence forbidden, acupoints were used; moxibustion, if it was used when unnecessary, in which case it could cause the element of "fire" to enter the body.

Pharmacy and Drugs

TCM uses drugs of plant, animal and mineral origin. The traditional pharmacopeia contains thousands of plants, some of which are known to be pharmacologically active: *dichroa febrifuga* contains an anti-malarial agent, as does *artemisia annua* (sweet wormwood); *ephedra sinica* is the source of ephedrine, used to treat asthma; aconite

(monkshood) is a cardiac poison and like digitalis, can be used as a heart stimulant in small doses; *nux vomica* is the source of strychnine; cannabis and opium are used for anaesthesia and analgesia.

Ginseng (*panax ginseng*) is an important all-round invigorating tonic and beneficial in all cases of chronic illness. No TCM pharmacy should be without it, although I don't vouch for its efficacy. Ginger is used for colds and coughs, apricot seeds for cough and constipation. In fact, the seeds and rinds of many fruits (such as plum, pomegranate and tangerine) are used for gastric disorders. Other plants are used to treat diseases such as hepatitis (*gardenia jasminoides*), injuries such as burns (*sophora flavescens*, used externally), and for infections and snakebite (*lobelia chinensis*). Drugs, of varying effectiveness, could be prescribed for virtually all injuries and illnesses.

Poison antidotes are also found in the Chinese pharmacy. Some examples are: (1) an overdose of medicine can be treated by tea made from roasted rice or by egg yolks swallowed whole; (2) arsenic poisoning by the juice of soybeans; (3) mineral drug poisoning by a liquid infusion of ginseng or white duck's droppings; (4) arrow poison by lotus root or hemp seed extract; (5) mushroom poisoning by drinking the clear fluid left after a clay-water mix has settled for a few minutes.

Alchemy

The early Chinese noticed that if an ill person took medicine, she or he might recover and thereby postpone death. From this, they reasoned that if medicine could put off death temporarily, perhaps it could put off death permanently, and turned to the search for the Elixir of Life. Unfortunately, the minerals they chose to work with—mercury, lead and arsenic—were extremely toxic. Cinnabar (mercury sulphide) was especially popular because of its red colour and association with life-giving blood. Not unexpectedly, the death rates from these experiments were rather high, with even emperors dying from elixir poisoning. After a short while of passing these deaths off as the transformation of the physical body to an incorporeal, immortal one, the alchemists changed to a less toxic repertory of experimental substances, in which gold was important.

Longevity and Immortality

The search for longevity and immortality is found in TCM, alchemy and some schools of Chinese philosophy such as Taoism. One school of thought advised that to prolong life, one should not overeat, breath too hard, sleep too long, release semen, or become intoxicated. All of these either injured or drained *qi*, and thus shortened life. These lifestyle constraints were perhaps not very popular, and it was just as well that certain herbs were believed to have the power to reverse aging and prolong life. Naturally, these grew in unknown and inaccessible parts, or had to be harvested at very special times (astrological conjunctions which occurred once every sixty years, for example). One plant of immortality was believed to grow on an enchanted island that floated somewhere in the eastern ocean, and early emperors spent small fortunes on expeditions sent to look for it.

The Elixir of Life, an alchemical concoction, was aimed at achieving bodily immortality: at the height of its popularity (4th century B.C. to 1st century A.D.), China had yet to come in contact with Buddhist ideas of soul and rebirth, and it was believed that although the soul did experience some sort of afterlife, it would, like the body, eventually perish. Bodily immortality was therefore essential for eternal life, but it could take the form of a "levitant aerostatic subtle body", a perfect body that could wander at will over the earth, among the clouds, and even the stars.

Applications in Role-playing

Acupuncture

The effect that acupuncture can have in a fantasy campaign will depend on the way in which diseases are caused. If the causes of illness are those of the real world, the effects of acupuncture will be largely restricted to pain relief and anaesthesia, irrespective of the presence or absence of magic. This is because *acupuncture is not magical*. It is a rational technique, based on a rational, if incorrect, theory of disease causation.

If, on the other hand, the *qi* theory of disease is correct, then acupuncture will affect a great many diseases by correcting the imbalance in yin and yang, although cures are not instantaneous. Treatment may take weeks of repeated visits to an acupuncturist. As a guide, acupuncture could successfully treat anything influenced by a physiological process: infectious disease, migraine, stomach ulcers and so on could be treated, but anatomical changes such as osteoarthritis and cataracts could not, although they could be treated by other aspects of TCM. Cataracts, for instance, might be treated with surgery.

The GM could also decide that acupuncture can speed up the rate of healing from trauma. Anecdotal evidence of the healing of fractures under TCM (which uses many small splints instead of a single large one) is that it reduces healing time to about 60% of normal. Clearly, acupuncture has its biggest impact in a campaign either devoid of conventional instant healing magic, or in which such magic is available to the elite only. In any case, the most appropriate way in which to model acupuncture, irrespective of the theory of disease causation or the type of magic available, is as a learned skill. Magical spells are simply not true to the rational spirit in which acupuncture and TCM were held in China.

Longevity and Immortality

Herbs of immortality or Elixirs of Life could be introduced into a game in a number of forms. In one, the herb is extremely rare, perhaps unique, and the object of a great many, so far unsuccessful, quests. In another, the Elixir of Life is an alchemist's potion, produced according to scientific principles, not magical ones. It could be either commonplace or rare, but it is always possible that the commonly available ones are only toxic cinnabar drinks. It is also possible that a necessary, although unfortunate, side-effect of immortality is the abandonment of one's material body.

At any rate, the plant of immortality was believed to be extremely rare, and the Elixir of Life something available only to alchemists and emperors. They were both believed to have the power to confer bodily immortality, and more importantly, were one of the few ways in which this could be achieved. Their impact would diminish greatly if powerful healing and longevity magic was easily available. The truest representation of the Chinese tradition,

therefore, is in a campaign in which such magic is rare, although elements of TCM can be applied in any type of fantasy campaign without incorporating the tradition as a whole. Perhaps the most essential aspect of the tradition is that it was rational, not mystical, and given the limited knowledge of the time, could be considered an almost scientific attempt to explain illness and health.

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MAP 1 (SEE NEXT ARTICLE)
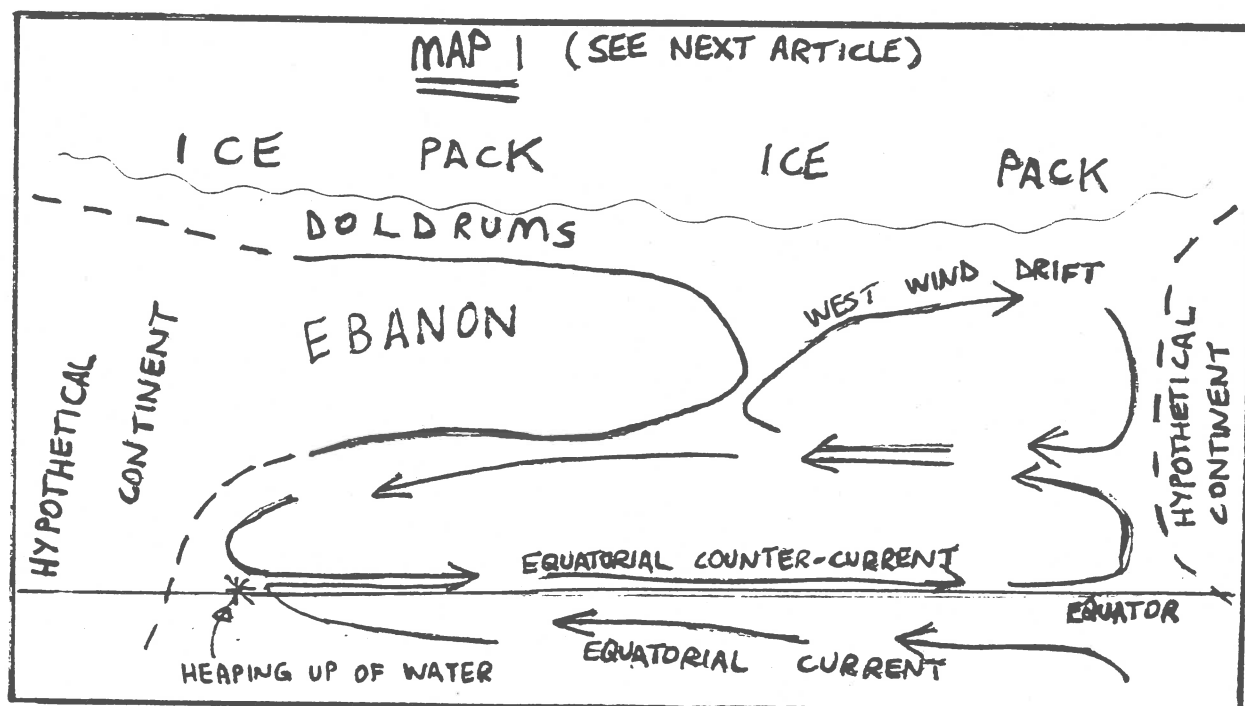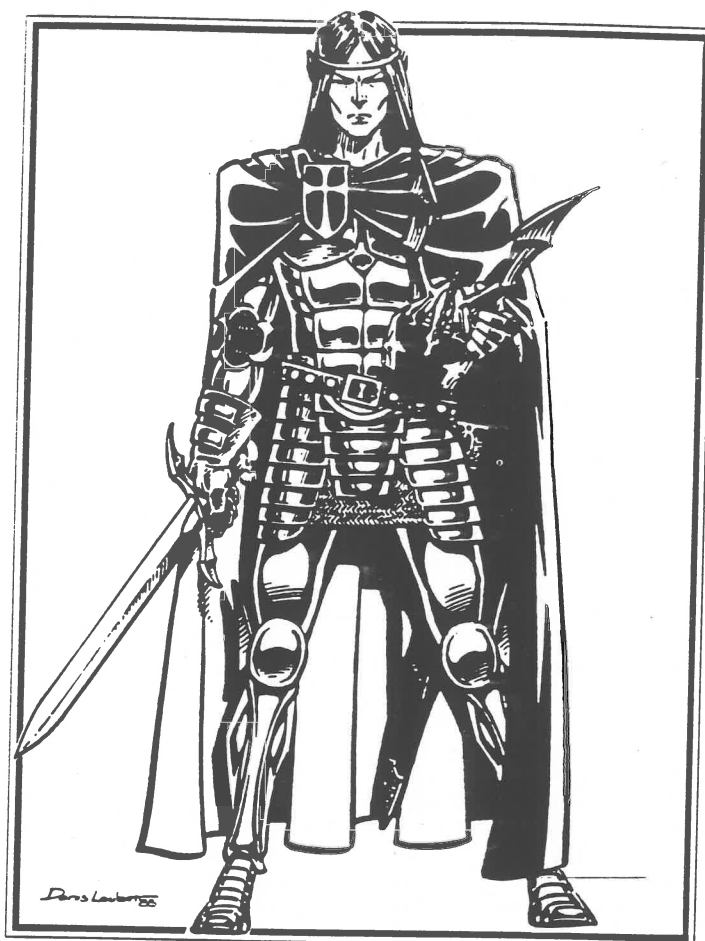
Geographical Notes for *Tripod of Light*

by Gary Johnson

I promised in my last editorial that I would put some notes on the *Tripod of Light* game world into this issue of the *Queensland Wargamer*. Thus, here are some guidelines about the geography, demographics, politics, and history of the world of Ebanon. Also, there is a large-scale map of Ebanon on the back cover. I hope that these notes will be of some use, despite their brevity and terseness. Feel free to change whatever you don't like and add to these notes as you see fit.

Geography & Demographics

For convenience, I assume that the world is round, there are other continents, there is one moon, *et cetera*, so that I can draw conclusions from the way things are in our "real" world and apply them to Ebanon. Don't feel that you must abide by this model, or that your players' characters must know the truth about the size or shape of the world.

Ebanon lies in the northern hemisphere. It is either an island (like Australia) or a peninsula jutting off an even larger continent to the west (like Europe). For those who are curious about time differences, 15° of longitude equals 1 hour. The predominant ocean current flows westward at about 30° North, separating into two branches near the coast of Ebanon (see map 1).

The key geographical feature of Ebanon is the high ridge running from east to west across the length of Ebanon, dividing the continent into three parts: the cold, densely forested, and lightly populated northern coast; the warm, intensively farmed, and heavily populated southern coast; and the central highlands (see map 2). The drainage patterns of Ebanon are influenced by the contours of this ridge (see map 3).

The eastern end of the ridge is the home of the Dwarves of Ebanon, who named the mountains the Luin Erod Mountains (the Humans of the south have a different name for these same mountains, calling them the Nevrast Mountains). The western end of this ridge is also a series of rugged mountain ranges. Between these mountain chains lies the Curitiba (Orcish for "Great Plain"), a vast expanse of level but high steppes, where the Orcs settled.

Both the Elves and the Humans settled to the south of this ridge. The Elves concentrated in the Menehalad Forest west of the Curituba, while the Humans spread along the southern coastal plains. The eastern half of the northern coastal strip is inhabited by a curious mix of Humans, Orcs, and Elves, collectively known as the Ruapeh. The western half of the north coast is tundra, and very few travellers go there.

MAP 2

COLD NORTH
HIGHLANDS
WARM SOUTH

MAP 3

TUNDRA
NORTHERN
EASTERN
RUAPEH
RANGE
SOUTHERN
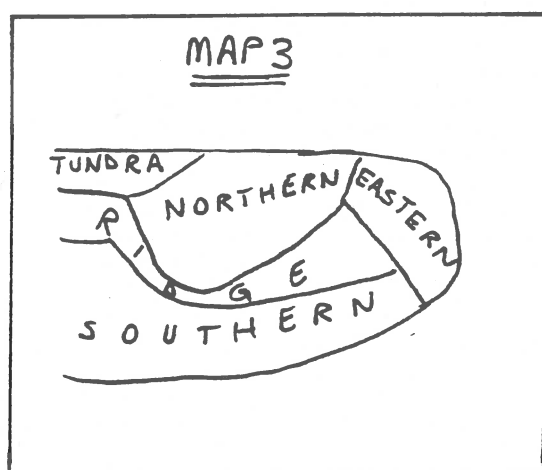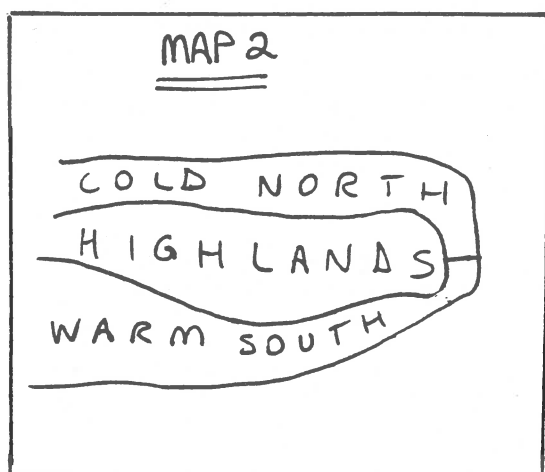
Politics and History

The Empire of Khantai

Imperial Khantai was the first political state to form among the Humans. Based around the city of Funchal, Eru's home, the Empire rose under Eru's supervision because She believed it was the best way to unite Her people against the Orcs of Morgoth. As time passed, the Empire spread over great distances, incorporating many peoples and regions, and fought many wars against Morgoth's servants (the Orcs, Demons, and Undead). Because of the unending warfare on its western borders, it was deemed necessary to move the political capital of Khantai to Yunnan. Funchal remains the religious and ideological capital, however, and new emperors/empresses rush along the coastal road from Yunnan to Khantai to bathe in the Waters of Eru and to be crowned with the Imperial Circlet by the Senior Priest of Eru. The culture of the ruling elite of Khantai is homogenous across the far-flung provinces of the Empire, but there are a great number of local traditions and practices as well. The government is run by a strongly centralised bureaucracy, admission to which is nominally by merit. The army is run separately to the civil administration.

The Republic of Annam

The Republic of Annam is a vassal-state of Khantai, but Annam is essentially independent and there is little contact with the Imperial administration at Yunnan. Annam contains numerous gold mines, and most coins west of Khantai are minted in the Republic. The government is run by office-holders elected for life to a non-hereditary position in the Senate, and only the wealthy property-owners are entitled to stand for election.

The Kingdom of Pernam

The kingdom of Pernam has existed for several centuries, but was divided into two parts last century when Khantai occupied Southern Pernam. The two halves of Pernam were re-united by the liberating armies of Northern Pernam after several decades, but the effects of this division of of the kingdom still linger on today. Southern Pernam is culturally attuned to Khantai, and the royal court is strikingly similar in many respects to the imperial court. Northern Pernam, by contrast, is an insular, dour society, dominated by the noble lords in their forts and castles, and economically under-developed. Pernam's government and foreign policy are still strongly opposed to Khantai, and it is hard for southerners to attain high office. Civil and military offices are not separated, as they are in Khantai, and northerners tend to hold most important offices.

The Freeholds

In theory, all farm-owners in the Freeholds are their own masters, answerable to no other. In practice, the Freeholders tend towards forming voluntary assemblies, especially in times of trouble. In the eastern half of the Freeholds, a majority of villages have a petty lord, some of whom have joined the kingdom of Donnymede.

The Kingdom of Donnymede

Donnymede is the latest in a long line of ephemeral kingdoms nestling between the Freeholds, Khantai, and the Curitiba. Because of regular Orcish raids and invasions in the past, the region east of Lainton and west of Khantai (i.e. the eastern half of the Freeholds) is heavily militarised, and used to being ruled by army commanders. The king/queen of Donnymede is such a commander, elected to office by the many petty lords who command the forces of the kingdom of Donnymede. The central government has little influence in many parts of Donnymede, as the majority of the royal lands lie east and north of the Lemaris River. Donnymede is a vassal-state of Khantai.

The City of Lainton

Lainton is a large city-state that controls trade between Donnymede and Alegreor. It is governed by the Senate of Twenty-Four, membership of which is hereditary.

The Kingdom of Alegreor

The ruler of the Elves is called the Thiudan. She or he is an essentially ceremonial monarch, Aldaron's representative, and must belong to the Lorandel clan. Most of the Thiudan's duties are religious in character. In times of war, the Elves elect a Savone, or warleader, from the Vulerien clan. These two officials are about the full extent of the Elven government. However, Elven culture emphasises mutual co-operation and the work ethic, so the Kingdom of Alegreor is not a chaotic anarchy. The Elves practice sensible forest management, and export a great volume of timber and other forest products to the east through the city of Lainton.

The Clans of the Curitiba

Freed from the dictatorial control of Morgoth, the Orcs live in clans, travelling across the Curitiba herding their cattle and horses. Some still raid south into Donnymede and Khantai, but for the most part the Orcs stay away from the lands of the other Races.

The Frozen North

The nightmarish frozen land of the distant north. On a clear day you can see the permanent ice pack that extends south from the pole.

The Ruapeh

The Ruapeh are a strange federation of Human, Orcish, and Elven tribes (the proportions of the different races are roughly 55%/30%/15%). All claim to be the descendants of an ancient champion, Muradelura, of unknown race and gender, whom they worship as a Deity. The Ruapeh ignored the Wars of the Gods, and claim to not know of Eru, Morgoth, and Aldaron. The swampy forests that they inhabit are full of strange monsters.

The City of Ouro Preto

Most of the Dwarves live in the underground metropolis of Ouro Preto, the home of Aulë. Dwarven society is very wealthy by comparison with other nations, due to the low numbers of Dwarves and the desire of their neighbours for the gold, gems, and other precious metals they dig out of the Luin Erod Mountains. The basis of the Dwarven diet is falanwë, a plant created by Aulë that grows in rock and doesn't need to be watered.