

# *The Three Kingdoms Card Game*

## **Rule Book**

*“What was divided shall be united;  
what was united shall be divided.”*

The Three Kingdoms, 三國, era is the most fascinating period in Chinese history. Many a Lord vied to unite the great country under one rule and become Emperor. It was a time for heroes and rogues, for bold warriors and cunning strategists; a time when history and legend collided.

Now, when playing this game, you can learn about both history and legend, about heroes and battle strategies famous in China – through spoken tales and the written word, through comic books, movies, series, and numerous games on paper and computer. Now, you too can be part of the legend, a lord among lords, a hero among heroes!

The game is very interactive. Players can make deals with each other at any time during the Main Phase of any player’s turn:

– *“Give me one of your cards; otherwise, my ‘Burned Supply Trains’ will have you randomly discard two cards from your Hand.”*

– *“If you use this card on me, I think I’ll use an ‘Assassin’ on your Lord. Worth the risk?”*

– *“I send an ‘Assassin’ to kill your ‘Liou Biao’.”*  
(Play ‘Assassin’ card.)


– *“Hold on! Your ‘Assassin’ is now ‘Immobilized by the Golden Seal’.”*  
(Play ‘Immobilized by the Golden Seal’ card.)

– *“Ah! Look, I’ve ‘Opened a Bag of Trick’ to counter your*

*‘Immobilized by the Golden Seal’.*  
 (Play ‘Opened a Bag of Trick’ card.)  
 - *“Uh oh... Does anyone else have an ‘Opened a Bag of Trick’ card?... I would like to trade it against a ‘Sniped’...”*

Part I Cards

| Type of card | Background color | Number of cards   |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Character    | Yellow           | 40                |
| Event        | Blue             | 52                |
| Artifact     | Green            | 6                 |
| Land         | Purple           | 13                |
| War          | Red              | 2 sets of 3 cards |

 **Instant cards:** a card with a lightning symbol can be played at any time during the Main Phase of any player’s turn.

**Character Card**



(a) Name of the Character.

(b) Some characters have “Lord” before their name.

(c) Political Power: the Character’s ability to control lands.

(d) Fighting Spirit: the Character’s ability to fight.

(e) Stratagem: if the Character has this symbol, he is a strategist.

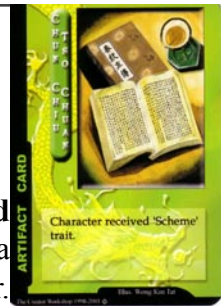
(f) Text box: here is described the Character’s special ability, if any.

(g) Loyalty: the more Heart symbols, the more loyal the Character.



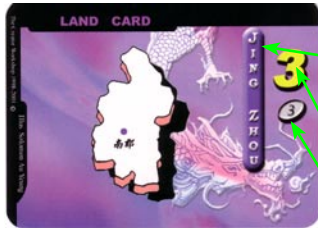
### Event Card

(a) Text box: here is explained the function of the card (as well as special conditions of use, if any).



### Artifact Card

This card must be attached to a Character.



### Land Card

(a) Name of the Land.

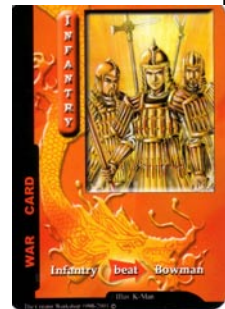
(b) Value of the Land.

(c) Defensive Power of the Land.

### War Card

There are 3 types of war cards:

|          |       |          |
|----------|-------|----------|
| Cavalry  | beats | Infantry |
| Infantry | beats | Bowman   |
| Bowman   | beats | Cavalry  |



## Part II

how to win

The player who totals 6+ in land value at the BEGINNING of her/his turn wins the game. The game also ends if the Main Deck is exhausted for the second time (after the first time, just shuffle the cards in the Discard Pile back into the Main Deck); in that case, the player with the highest Land value total wins.

## Part III

how to start

- Place all 13 Land cards at the center of the table as Public Lands.
- Put the 2 sets of War cards aside for later use.

- The **Lord** Character cards are shuffled into a separate deck. Each player draws one **Lord** card and places it in front of her/him. The remaining **Lord** cards are set aside and not in play.
- Shuffle the remaining cards: place this Main Deck close to the Public Lands.
- Each player rolls the 6-sided die to determine who goes first. The highest number wins. If some players are tied, they roll again against each other.
- Turns take place in a clockwise order.
- Each player draws 7 cards from the Main Deck.

|         |                                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Part IV | structure of a player's game turn |
|---------|-----------------------------------|

There are 3 phases:

- (1) Opening Phase
- (2) Main Phase
- (3) Ending Phase

### IV.1. Opening Phase

Draw as many cards as you have lands under your control, or at least one card.

### IV.2. Main Phase

The Main Phase is composed of three stages, which can be played in any order. You can play all stages or skip any.

- (a) Event Stage      (b) Battle Stage      (c) Bribery Stage

Instant cards (cards with a lightning symbol) can be played at any point, even during someone else's turn.

### *IV.2.a. Event Stage*

You can take any or all of the following actions in any order during your Event Stage:

- Choose 1 Character card from your Hand and place it onto the table.
- Choose 1 Artifact card from your Hand and place it onto the table.
- Choose 1 Event card from your Hand and place it onto the table.
- Activate the special ability of any or all of your cards on the table.

A Character entering play can be placed on a Land card you control, even when this Land already supports other Characters. Characters on a Land can control and defend it but can also be subject to attacks by other Characters, while a Character not on a Land can only be subject to some special abilities (e.g. attacked by an Assassin, challenged to a duel by Mistress Zhu Rong, controlled by Diao Chan, etc.).

### *IV.2.b. Battle Stage*

You can send one of your Characters to conquer a Land. You choose one of your Characters and put it in front of the targeted Land card. If it is a Public Land, you go to war; if it is a Private Land (i.e. under the control of another player), you have the choice between (1) war, and (2) issuing a challenge to a duel.

### **Duel**

The attacking Character challenges to a duel the Character(s) controlling a Land. The defending player chooses one of those Characters to answer the challenge. Both players roll the 6-sided die and add the result to their Character's Fighting Spirit. The Character with the highest total wins, the other dies. If the attacking Charac-

ter wins, (s)he gains the Land and all Characters controlling it die. Dead characters are added to the Discard Pile.

In case of a tie, no one dies and the Land stays under the control of the defending player.

## War

If the Land attacked is a Private Land, the defending player is the owner of the Land and (s)he can choose one Character controlling it to protect it. If the Land attacked is a Public Land, the defending player is the player on the left of the attacking player. Both the attacking and defending players pick up one set of War cards. Each player selects one War card and places it facedown on the table.

If the attacking Character is a strategist (i.e. has the Stratagem symbol on his card), the attacking player can ask if the defending player's chosen card is of a certain type (e.g. "Is your chosen card Infantry?"). If the guess is right, the attacking side wins the war. If not, continue to the next step.

If the defending Character is a strategist, the defending player can ask if the attacking player's chosen card is of a certain type. If the guess is right, the defending side wins the war. If not, continue to the next step.

Both players reveal their War card at the same time, in order to determine the issue of the battle:

| Attacker<br>Defender | <b>Cavalry</b> | <b>Infantry</b> | <b>Bowmen</b> |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Cavalry</b>       | Tie            | Defender Win    | Attacker Win  |
| <b>Infantry</b>      | Attacker Win   | Tie             | Defender Win  |
| <b>Bowmen</b>        | Defender Win   | Attacker Win    | Tie           |

The winner owns the Land. If the attacker loses, the attacking Character dies. If the defender loses, all of her/his Characters con-

trolling the Land die.

Dead characters are added to the Discard Pile.

In case of a tie, compare the Fighting Spirit of the attacking Character to the Defensive Power of the Land + the Fighting Spirit of the Character defending it (if any). The highest number wins. If it is still a tie, the Land stays under the control of the defending player, or remains a Public Land, and no Character dies.

#### *IV.2.c. Bribery Stage*

Any Character on the table can be bribed, with the exception of Lords. First, the initiating player declares which other player's Character is the target of a bribery attempt.

Both players select a number of cards from their Hands, in secret. The initiating player must select at least one card; the defending player can select any number of cards, or none. The nature of each card is irrelevant.

Both players reveal the number of cards they have selected, simultaneously. If the initiating player offers more cards than the defending player, (s)he gains control of the Character; if not, the Character stays under the control of the defending player. Whatever the result, all bidden cards are lost: they are added to the Discard Pile.

Note: Each Heart symbol on the target Character's card counts as one bidden card more for the defending player. So, for instance, if the target Character has one Heart and the defending player has selected one card, the initiating player will need to have bidden THREE cards to successfully bribe the target Character.

#### *IV.2.d. Interventions*

At any time during the Main Phase of a player's turn, any player can:

- Play an instant card (a card with a lightning symbol on it), even

as an answer to another instant card.

- Ask to trade with another. Any number of cards can be exchanged at the same time (which also means that 2 cards can be traded for 3, etc.). The catch is: cards are traded face down, so neither player needs to have told the truth about the card(s) offered.

### **IV.3. Ending Phase**

The Ending Phase is composed of two stages:

- (a) Rearranging Stage
- (b) Discarding Stage

#### *IV.3.a. Rearranging Stage*

You can take any or all of the following actions in any order during your Rearranging Stage:

- Rearrange your Characters on the table to better control your Lands. If you cannot control one of your Lands for lack of Political Power, you lose it at the end of your turn: it becomes a Public Land.
- Switch Artifacts on the table among your Characters on the table.
- Return one Character or Artifact on the table to your Hand.

If you return Diao Chan to your Hand and she was controlling another Character, this Character returns under the control of her/his original player. Same thing if she dies. If the Character she controls dies, she does not, but her card is still rotated 90° clockwise, so she cannot activate her ability again unless she comes into play again, which usually means that her player must return her to her/his Hand first.

#### *IV.3.b. Discarding Stage*

If you have more than seven cards in your Hand at the end of your turn, you must discard enough of them so that you have no more than seven left. The selected discarded cards are added to the Dis-

card Pile.

Cards with a lightning symbol are Instant cards. You can play as many as you want during the Main Phase of any player's turn (not just your own). Once played, an Instant Event card is added to the Discard Pile; other Instant cards remain in play.

## V.1. Character Cards

### *V.1.a. Lord*

Each player draws (randomly picks) a Lord at the beginning of the game. There are 10 Lords, and the maximum number of players recommended is 6. If, during the game, your Lord has been killed and added to the Discard Pile, you can choose to appoint another of your Characters on the table as your Lord. A Lord cannot be bribed or controlled by other players. Once you have appointed a Character as your Lord, you cannot change your decision (though, if this new Lord dies, you can appoint another one).

### *V.1.b. Political Power*

- Each Character can control any number of Lands whose total value is no more than her/his Political Power (e.g. if a Character's Political Power is 3, he can control one Land with a value of 3, two Lands with values of 2 and 1 respectively, three lands with a value of 1 each, or even just two Lands with a value of 1 each).
- Two or three characters can control a Land together (e.g. two characters with a Political Power of 1 can cooperate to control a Land with a value of 2). Even a Character whose Political Power is unneeded, or with a Political Power of 0, can share a land with other Characters. It can be an efficient tactic against duels, since the defending player gets to choose who among the Characters on his targeted Land will answer the challenge.

- Two/three characters cannot control 2+ lands together.

### *V.1.c. Fighting Spirit*

A Character's Fighting Spirit shines during duels, and sometimes during wars (see IV.2.b. Battle Stage). Some Characters have special abilities allowing them to attack another outside of the Battle Stage, but even if they win, they do not gain the Land their target controlled, if any (and other Characters on the Land, if any, are safe).

### *V.1.d. Stratagem*

Characters with a Stratagem symbol are great assets during wars (see IV.2.b. Battle Stage).

### *V.1.e. Loyalty*

Characters with Heart symbols are more loyal to their Lord (see IV.2.c. Bribery Stage).

### *V.1.f. Special Ability*

Some Characters have special abilities printed in the text box of their card. Such abilities may be permanent, activated on a successful die roll, or by some other condition.

For those special abilities activated on a die roll, the result has to be lower or equal to the target number for the ability to work. For example,  $D \leq 3$  means that the power is activated on a roll of 1, 2 or 3 on the 6-sided die. Regardless of the result of the roll, the card is rotated 90° clockwise, to represent that its ability has been used. A rotated card cannot be straightened up, but it can return to its player's Hand (see IV.3.a. Rearranging Stage) to be played again later in the game.

## V.2. Event Cards

A non-Instant Event card is played during the Event Stage (see IV.2.a.). As soon as on the table, its ability is activated (though it can be countered by an Instant card). Once its ability has been used, even if successfully countered, an Even card is put into the Discard Pile. If a player's non-Instant Event card has been successfully countered, (s)he can play another, until either:

- one is not successfully countered,
- (s)he runs out of Event cards,
- (s)he decides to move to the next Main Phase stage, or to the Ending Phase.

## V.3. Artifact Cards

An Artifact must be attached to a Character. If the Character ends into the Discard Pile, returns to the player's Hand (see IV.3.a. Rearranging Stage) or passes under the control of another player, so does the Artifact.

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