

Counting Coup

by Phil Hine

The growth of Chaos Magic has seen a rise of interest inactively researching into Magical Combat techniques and theory. However, I am not proposing that people take out their frustrations on each other (for slights imagined and otherwise) to a deadly extent, but to propose that Magical Combat can be used as a training exercise.

True instances of Magical Combat are rare indeed. In fifteen years of active magical practice I have only been attacked by other magicians three times - and in each instance, was able to do something about it. I daresay there have been more attempts, but seeing as I haven't noticed them, they've either been extremely subtle or, as is more likely, have failed utterly.

To be effective in Magical Combat situations, you need to have developed the following skills:

- A fair degree of Psychic sensitivity - you have to be aware that an attack is being made on you before you can do something about it.
- A good understanding of your own Self, its demons, paranoias, and defences.
- An ability to quickly assess a situation and make the most effective response.
- A good knowledge (and skill) in a variety of Combat techniques - both defensive and offensive.
- A sense of perspective in how you deal with the situation.

All these skills are useful in other areas, and what I am proposing here is that a structured Combat System can test out these skills in a 'live' situation.

COUNTING COUP

I don't think it would be constructive for people to go around 'zapping' each other indiscriminately. Hence the American Indian concept of 'Counting Coup' where the sense of honour came through penetrating an enemies defences, and merely 'touching' them with a lance.

Doing this as a Magical Exercise necessitates that a minimum of three individuals be made aware of the situation: the two opponents and a moderator. The test can take place between members of a group, or individuals across time & space. Co-operation and strict honesty on all parts must be stressed.

SAMPLE GUIDELINES

Soror Wibble and Frater Bater agree to challenge each other and request that Soror Valknut

act as Moderator. Soror V. decides that the time-span for the Combat will be six weeks - so the two opponents can attempt to Count Coup on each other within that period only - too short a period means that the opponents will most likely spend too much time 'actively' concentrating on their defence strategies - making the period several weeks means that either of them is more likely to be caught 'off-guard' - which is the whole point; testing awareness and responses. Each participant will individually discuss with Soror V. which Combat 'forms' they are likely to attempt, and to contact her immediately that they perceive that they have been successfully 'attacked'. Soror V., once the combat period is over, can then assess each individuals' performance.

Example Combat Forms

DREAMSTALKING

Involves appearing in opponents' dream-world and executing a specific action or message (as given to moderator) - such as blowing a raspberry, 'mooning' or delivering a ribald message.

POP-UP SERVITORS

Involves sneaking a specifically-programmed Servitor in past opponents' local defences, and having it execute some 'harmless' task such as waking them up in the middle of the night several times consecutively.

'BLANK' THUNDERBOLTS

Involves hurling bolts of magical energy at opponent, which, though not destructive, do effect them - bolts of sudden inspiration, for example.

PASSING THE P-RUNES

Involves passing opponent a physical object which is charged (for example, using a sigil) so as to affect them in a given way.

INVOKING FROM A DISTANCE

Involves invoking an entity upon opponent from a distance - to cause a change in behaviour.

MISC.

Any other combat Forms which the opponents, in consultation with the moderator, may devise.

INFORMATION-GATHERING

Within the Combat, it is permissible for opponents to resort to information-gathering strategies to check on each other, such as scrying, tarot, runes, or oracles.

BYSTANDERS

It is NOT permissible to 'attack' opponents by going via other people around them, except in

those instances when entire groups of magicians are entering the period of Combat.

ENDING

Once the Combat moderator has declared the Combat period elapsed or declared in favour of one participant, then opponents must cease all related activities. It might be beneficial for the moderator to bring both participants together for a formal 'closing' rite, followed by divers revels and merriment. The 'winner' may be awarded some cheap token of 'marksmanship' followed by the moderator setting them some small task to perform for the 'loser' (like washing socks, for example). Thus balance is maintained.

NOTES

It goes without saying that the successful execution of Combat strategies itself is a useful test of skill and technique.

I have deliberately not given detailed instructions on Magical Combat Forms & Defensive Strategies. Competent magicians who desire to attempt this exercise should use their own ingenium in working out strategies.