

CONAN[®]

KHITAI



SECOND EDITION



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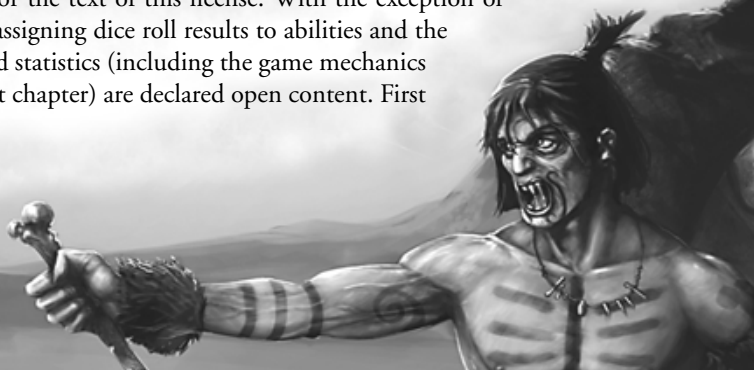
KHITAI

SECOND EDITION

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Khitai

"Then there were camels and yellow-skinned men who wore silk robes and spoke in a weird tongue. ...He was a magician from far 'Khitai, returning to his native kingdom after a journey to Stygia. He took me with him to purple-towered 'Paikang, its minarets rising amid the vine-festooned jungles of bamboo and there I grew to womanhood under his teaching. Age had steeped him deep in black wisdom, not weakened his powers of evil. Many things he taught me --"

-- 'Robert E. Howard: 'A 'Witch Shall 'Be 'Born"

The inscrutable land of Khitai, insulated from the barbarism of the west by its immense wall and its jungles of bamboo and dense, green trees, is the subject of this book. It delves deep beyond that wall, ploughing into those jungles, examining the people of Khitai, their customs, their politics, their rulers, their sorcery and their gods.

In this book you will find everything you need to know about this mysterious land and the background necessary to create compelling Khitan adventurers, opponents and scenarios. It takes, as its source material, Robert E Howard's original stories and the background material presented in Return to the Road of Kings. Further embellishment has, of course, been necessary to fully detail but all additions have been made in the spirit of Howard's stories and draw upon the rich myths and legends of the orient.

Khitai is divided into the following chapters:

CHAPTER ONE BEYOND THE WALL

An overview of Khitai; its history and its regions.

CHAPTER TWO KHITAN BORN

The people, customs and culture of the Khitan people.

CHAPTER THREE ANCESTORS, DEMONS AND GODS

The creatures worshipped by the Khitans – from the ancestor gods, through to the demons summoned and trapped on the earthly plane.

CHAPTER FOUR BLACK WISDOM

The magic and sorcery of Khitai.

CHAPTER FIVE KHITAI AT WAR

A guide to the armies of Khitai and their traditions

CHAPTER SIX A KHITAI GAZETEER

Personalities and character statistics for Conan Second Edition

CHAPTER SEVEN CREATURES

Animals and monsters from beyond the Great Wall.

CHAPTER EIGHT ADVENTURES BEYOND THE WALL

Scenario hooks for Khitai adventures.



Beyond the Wall

Which came first – Khitai or the Great Wall? Only the Ancestors know this for certain and they will not say because even Ancestors must have their secrets but the Great Wall has always been with us, just as the Ancestors have always been with us. It is possible, then, that Khitai and the Wall came into being at the same time or possibly the Wall defined Khitai and made it real. Beyond that, there is no certainty.

Yet... yet we do know that there are *two* Great Walls. The first was not made of the stones we see now when we gaze to the west. That first wall was made of bamboo and bone, knotted, slotted and slatted together so it was 1,000 miles long and 100 feet high. That first wall was the creation of sorcery, the bamboo cut in a single movement of a single scythe and strengthened with the bones of the enemies of the east who had thrown themselves at the emerging wall in a bid to over-run the eastern lands and defile them. The Ancestors, when restless, whisper something of the demigod who protected Khitai at that time; a vast, foul being who was, for all her ugliness, a protector of our lands. She felled the bamboo and wove the wall and then, when the enemies threw themselves at it in their thousands, she felled them and wove their bones into the bamboo so that the two became indistinguishable. This made our enemies fear us – as they still do – because they witnessed the power of the demiurges and knew that Khitai was strong with its gods and unwilling to brook invasion and oppression.

The wall of bamboo and bone was replaced perhaps 1,000 years later when the demigod had gone and God Emperor Z'xang first ruled. He wished to march soldiers along the Wall so that they could keep watch on the enemies beyond it but it was difficult for human feet to tread the bamboo curtain and anyway, men feared the moans and sighs emanating from the demiurge's wall, for the dead souls of the enemies were trapped, still, in the weave. So Z'xang commanded that the wall be replaced, mile by mile, with stones but that the bamboo and bones should remain. So the wall of stone was built around the wall of the demiurge, following its pattern but made greater with the towers set at each three mile interval. So now the Great Wall is all of stone but is really two walls, for the bamboo wall is within the stone wall and the tormented souls of the dead are contained forever.

Yet the wall still moans, and forever it will. That is what our enemies should know: come against Khitai and your souls will be trapped within our land for forever. No rest, no mercy, not until the prophets of Yag command that time should end and the Ancestors be brought forth to judge all crimes and atrocities. Then, our enemies shall come face to face with the wrath and justice of our Ancestors!

Jung-Kao, Historian Sorcerer of Khitai, writing in 'The Great and Glorious Scroll of the Khitan People'



HISTORY

The sprawling kingdom of Khitai has been isolated from the rest of the world for as long as anyone in Khitai can recall. The Great Wall throws-up an impenetrable barrier along Khitai's western border and in the east, the ocean itself defines the extent of the land. The wall spans 1,500 miles, an unbroken, serpent-like barrier of imposing stone lined with guard towers every three miles. To the north the immense River of Yellow Curses separates Khitai from the Desert of Black Sand and Hyrkania; and, within its borders, Khitai is choked with a dense jungle of thick-bowled trees and the all pervasive bamboo, which visibly grows as men sit to watch it.

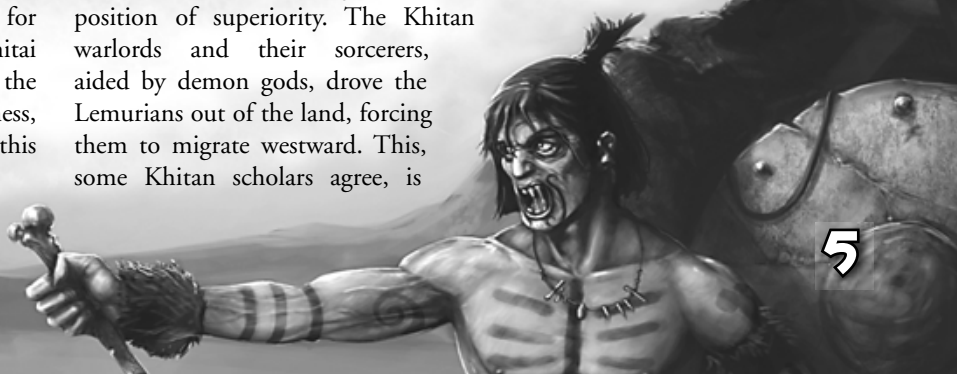
Khitai is distanced from the world around it physically and culturally. This is a deliberate act to prevent its nature from being corrupted by the barbaric ways of the west. The people of Khitai fear and scorn what is beyond their borders, secure in the knowledge (or delusion) that their ways are the true ways and all else is falsehood.

In the distant times, when the Atlanteans ruled the world, Khitai was already old and insular. The Atlanteans, for unknown reasons, never attempted to conquer Khitai although, at the time, the Great Wall did not exist. After the Atlanteans were destroyed and the world fell to darkness, savagery enveloped the land but Khitai was immune to this degeneracy. Perhaps this was when the wall was

really built: a physical foe can be subdued readily enough but the sapping of a cultural identity is an insidious thing that must be resisted in different ways.

Later, when the world began its slow climb from the dark times, the nomads of Hyrkania (who bear a passing resemblance to the Khitans) attempted to cross the River of Yellow Curses and seize the territories of the north but found themselves halted by the jungle, which made it tough for their horses and ponies to thread deeper into the country. Strange beasts waylaid warriors and it is said in Hyrkanian tales, creatures arose from the River of Yellow Curses to devour rider and mount alike.

Khitai has never been truly conquered. After the Cataclysm refugees from Lemuria flocked east and were taken into Khitai only to be enslaved and repressed. Thousands of proud Lemurians were treated worse than animals and this situation continued for centuries until the Lemurians took advantage of the squabbling between the Khitan City States and mounted their own rebellion. For a short time the kingdom of Khitai was overthrown but the Lemurians had little hope of maintaining such a tentative position of superiority. The Khitan warlords and their sorcerers, aided by demon gods, drove the Lemurians out of the land, forcing them to migrate westward. This, some Khitan scholars agree, is





when the Great Wall was made – to prevent the Lemurians from returning – but a lack of certainty still prevails over the details.

At around the time of the Lemurian rebellion, Khitai claimed all of the lands from the northern Taiga forests to the edge of the Kambujan jungle. The Khari warlords of the northern city states claimed, perhaps falsely, that Khitai was the centre of the sprawling Khari empire that once challenged the mighty Atlanteans on equal terms. The Cataclysm had sundered the empire but Khitai was still its heart and the Khari warlords were dedicated to re-establishing it. The Khari fell to the Lemurian rebellion and in their place, more warlords and would-be emperors arose.

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

The bickering between the various city states and their ruling elites eventually coalesced into a period known as The Years of the Middle Kingdom. This saw power concentrated into the hands of the rulers of Khitai's Rolling Plains, which came to regard itself as the central or middle, kingdom of the Khitai nation. The common regard was that the city of Shau Lun, then the greatest city of Khitai, was also the centre of the Khari Empire – even though the extent and purpose of the Khari Empire was unknown. The Middle Kingdom saw Khitai forge the cultural identity it exhibits in Conan's time, even though the Years of the Middle Kingdom were relatively short-lived. Sorcery became an established practice and even sanctioned by the rulers of the Middle Kingdom and the first demon gods were summoned. The cultural practices of Khitai were defined and codified in the Seven Books of Wisdom and Grace and the social hierarchy that still perpetuates was formed. The practice of isolationism from the west, despite the Middle Kingdom considering itself the heart of a great (yet mythical) empire, became the accepted state of being for Khitai.

The Years of the Middle Kingdom lasted for just over a century but the cultural advances it championed led to its destruction. The cultural solidity established through a burgeoning bureaucracy allowed the city states to develop their own institutions and armies. Political divisions supported by the practice of sorcery created increasingly powerful dynastic units and inevitably, the city states fell back into warfare. The Years of the Middle Kingdom ended when Paikang rose against Shau Lun and Shu Chen and sacked both cities, installing his own rulers in the

place of the hereditary powers. The Middle Kingdom dissolved as power shifted east to Paikang and the wisdom of the Middle Kingdom became absorbed into the greater ideals of Paikang's ambitious rulers.

THE PAIKANG POWER STRUGGLES

Now the dominant city state of Khitai, Paikang wasted no time in ensuring that the rest of the vast country followed its lead. Other city states were permitted to continue on their own courses as long as Paikang's position as the ruling power of all Khitai was recognised. Paikang became the seat of the God Emperor with Khu Yang the first God Emperor of the Khu dynasty. Some city states rebelled but this was a token resistance soon crushed by the armies of Khu Yang engaging in the Bamboo Defeats that saw six decisive battles being waged – and won – in the course of six days.

Naturally enough Khu Yang had his own opponents in Paikang and over the course of 100 years the Khu dynasty was challenged by a variety of competing interests – from both within and without the Khu dynasty. Khu Yang was himself poisoned and replaced by his insane cousin Khu Fong who decreed that all women were tradable possessions and all children no better than frogs. His madness contributed to the decline of the Khu dynasty as a power, even though three more Khu God Emperors ascended to the Jade Throne. The entire line was eventually extinguished when the Yu-Yhai dynasty summoned the demon god Oorlong and wiped-out the entire Khu family in a single, bloody purge.

The God Emperorship was fiercely contested for a century or so with Emperors being acclaimed and then either deposed or killed with frightening regularity. In this tumultuous period Shau Lun grew once again in power and sent its own people into the Paikang struggle. Through clever inter-marriage and stealthy power-broking, the Hun-We dynasty established itself and managed to unite the warring families of Paikang through a combination of threats, rewards, sorcery and judicious murder. The God Emperor Hun-We Pau ruled over a peaceful Khitai for six decades but refused to shift power back to Shau Lun, despite forceful representation for the old Shau Lun kingmakers who had effectively engineered the Hun-We dynasty's ascent to power. When Hun-We Pau achieved the somewhat startling feat (so the sorcerer scribes say) of transcending the mortal to become an Ancestor God, power passed to the Yah dynasty, which still maintains power (albeit of an uneasy kind) across Khitai.

We call Hun-We Pau the Grand Ancestor or Pau-Lung-Shu, because he became the Living Ancestor, passing from the realm of the mortal and into the realm of the Ancestors without first having to negotiate the veil of death. When we die, our mortal concerns are shed and we lose all interest in the mortal world and those within it. Our souls become Ancestors who look upon the mortal world and provide only the vaguest guidance. Before Pau-Lung-Shu the Ancestors could not guide us correctly, even though we mortals revered them. When Pau-Lung-Sue came into being in the world beyond the veil of death, our Ancestors were enlightened because he brought with him mortal wisdom to balance the immortal wisdom. So was harmony established and so we revere Pau-Lung-Sue as the Grand Ancestor and name the great feast day in his honour.

Jung-Kao, Historian Sorcerer of Khitai, writing in 'The Great and Glorious Scroll of the Khitan People'

GEOGRAPHY OF KHITAI

Khitai stretches some 3,150 miles across the eastern landmass bordering the Eastern Ocean in a continually changing pattern of broad plains, thick, dense woodland and jungle, expansive deserts and lofty mountain ranges, including vast areas of inhospitable terrain. The eastern half of the country, its seacoast fringed with offshore islands, is a region of fertile lowlands, foothills and mountains, deserts, steppes and subtropical areas. The western half of Khitai, towards the Great Wall, is a region of forests, bamboo jungles, sunken basins, rolling plateaus and towering massifs.

The country is certainly mountainous with more than a third of its area consisting of steep, jagged,

densely and sparsely forested peaks that further enforce the isolation and loneliness of the country. Settlements huddle in the narrow valleys between hills and mountain ranges, strung-out like pearls on a slender string, following rivers and streams and making the most of the fertile strands of plain. The central basin of Khitai, the Rolling Plains, is centre for the greatest concentrations of habitation, of which more, later.

The greatest of Khitai's mountains is the Tai D'shan, a craggy, finger-like peak wreathed in mists that has been worshipped as a god, demon and ancestor throughout Khitai's history. It looms, threateningly, over the centre of the Great Highlands, the hills below it forming a great, bamboo-covered fist, which has led to countless legends concerning Tai D'shan's origins as the limb of a great demon who threatened the world before the Cataclysm.

Khitai can be divided into 14 rough geographical regions, each with their own features and characteristics. The Great Wall bands some of these regions and is treated as a region in its own right.

CHOSAIN

In the north-east of the country, Chosain is a mixture of terrain: steep, densely forested hills and narrow, tortuously twisting valleys in the west of the region and low, pleasant plains that roll down towards the sea in the east. The west is notorious bandit country; dozens of vicious bandit clans war against each other and prey on the traders and merchants from the east of Chosain who must come through their territory if they are to avoid travelling through the Khitain swamplands when they travel to Paikang and other cities of the central basin.

The east is more civilised. Its capital is Hien-Lu, a small city-state close to the border of the satellite kingdom of Kusan. Hien-Lu is walled with a maze of narrow streets threading in towards the palace complex of the Chosain Tongxing Wang, Yana Wa. Yana Wa is distantly related to the God Emperor and makes much of the relationship even though it is a low-ranking alliance at best. High taxes of the eastern Chosain populace keeps Yana Wa in the luxury he adores whilst around him the city state crumbles. The taxes his treasury reaps should go towards protecting the merchants of Chosain who must pass through the western badlands to reach the central markets but Yana Wa has little time for such expenditure when he can make better use for money in buying expensive jade ornaments, upgrading his palace

THE WALL



complex and importing the finest foodstuffs whilst his people eke out a living in the fields and paddies.

The eastern bandits take full advantage of Yana Wa's weakness. The bandit clans are a mixture of the dispossessed of Hien-Lu, outlaws driven north from Paikang and the surrounding region and murderous ne'er-do-wells from across Khitai. When not raiding merchants, they war amongst themselves, raiding clan settlements and settling petty scores amongst the high hills and thick, bamboo-choked forests. The Xun clan of the Dark Hill is the acknowledged power amongst the bandit clans: it is the largest, with some 400 members and its leader, the self-styled King of the Dark Hill, being a ruthless cannibal famed for eating the brains of his enemies. Despite its power and gruesome reputation the Xun clan does not occupy an unassailable position. Resentful of the King of Dark Hill's arrogance several of the smaller clans have joined forces (uneasily) to challenge the Xun clan's supremacy, leading to a series of bloody feuds fought amongst the forests and within the valleys in an attempt to weaken Xun's stranglehold. If Xun falls, a power vacuum would doubtless emerge, leading to yet more fighting and bloodshed as the remaining clans vie for control of the banditry.

Travel through the bandit country of eastern Chosain is a necessary risk for most of the merchants of the region. To the south of the region are the vast and impassable swamplands – misty, treacherous marshes filled with strange creatures, malevolent demons, and a race of degenerate savages said to be the remnants of Lemurian refugees who were driven into the swamps following the slave rebellion. To reach the affluent markets of Paikang and Shau Lun the merchants have no option but to negotiate the bandit country. Some pay a ransom to the King of the Dark Hill in order to secure safe passage; others employ mercenaries to act as bodyguards for the duration of the risky passage. A few brave souls risk their lives and travel without protection, hoping that the Ancestors will offer them some hope and deliver them free from molestation.

Several years ago Yana Wa sent emissaries to parley with the King of the Dark Hill in a bid to ease the deafening protests of the Hien-Lu merchant caste but the severed heads of the emissaries (minus their brains) were all that were returned to the city. From that point Yana Wa decided that the bandit problem could not be cured by the intervention of any one person and that, sooner or later, the bandits would murder each other and leave the trade routes free. This callous and naive optimism is symptomatic of Yana Wa's negligent rule but his wealth and links with the Imperial

Court mean that deposing him would not be an easy task. However the merchants of Hien-Lu, now at their wits' end are desperate enough to employ someone to tackle Yana Wa head-on. His corrupt court, isolated from Chosain's suffering, needs to be challenged before the entire region is plunged into a darkness that the bandit lords will be only too willing to exploit.

DESERT MARCHES

A band of arid land stretching for a third of the Great Wall's length and flanking its central region, the desert marches are not a true desert but a rocky, dry undulating scrubland that receives little rainfall and has precious little water save for the odd, semi-dry creek or stagnant pool. Water does exist – trapped beneath the surface of the scrub in artesian wells that the plucky inhabitants of the marches have managed to tap to sustain their settlements.

The marches therefore support a very sparse, much dispersed community of lowly peasants and renegades. With its proximity to the Great Wall's administrative section and because the annual procession of the Lei-Kang (see page 13) must pass through the marches, these communities often find themselves pressed into service on the wall, acting as builders, servants and so forth. Some of the marches settlements view this as an honour; others as a heinous imposition – which, under the current Lei-Kang, it is.

The settlements are no larger than a couple of hundred souls and most raise goats, which are hardy enough to find sustenance amongst the rocky hills and dry gullies. The people have the look of the land; hard, weathered faces creased by the winds and the oppressive summer heat and they have temperaments to match: suspicious, superstitious and defensive of what little they have.

As the desert marches near the Great Wall itself, the land gives way to rolling, fertile countryside. On the far edge of the rocky scrubland, where the land becomes greener and the Great Wall dominates the view, the huge Kang Pagoda squats imposingly, surrounded by the hovels and dishevelled buildings of those who serve the Lei-Kang, ambassador minister to the Great Wall. The pagoda has 12 tiers and is decorated in ornate Khitan designs. It is every inch a palace and is home to the corpulent, corrupt and sadistic Lei-Kang, Po Sha. The entire edifice is given over to serving Po Sha's twisted needs and is a constant hive of activity



with servants and slaves scuttling round, preparing meals, fetching and carrying the great papers of state that Po Sha needs for his work. Emissaries from the Great Wall visit daily to give their reports, which Po Sha receives in the huge Reception Vestibule on the ground floor of the pagoda. Such is Po Sha's size he must be winched from the upper floors and a startling mechanism of ropes, chains, pulleys and brakes has been installed for this purpose.

GREAT DESERT

The vast Great Desert is a place of extremes. Much of its terrain is rocky and scrub-like with few dunes (although fine sand is found in the north-western reaches). Temperatures range from -40 degrees up to $+40$ and it is not uncommon to find frost or snow in the higher parts. The surface of the desert plain is greatly eroded, consisting of broad flat depressions and basins separated by groups of flat-topped mountains through which archaic rocks crop out as crags and isolated rugged masses. The terrain is harsh and unforgiving but it is leavened slightly by small oases and narrow rivers trickling through the lower regions.

Crossing the desert is a daunting task. The temperatures and scouring winds are the chief difficulty but the hard, rocky terrain makes the going slow unless one is accompanied by a knowledgeable guide who knows intimately the most navigable routes. Routes across the desert come in too types: the well-trodden merchant trails which, whilst not necessarily the fastest, have the benefit of threading between sources of water and shelter and making the best of the navigable land. The second type is the nomad trails, which the indigenous people of the desert use for their own movement and are often kept a secret from outsiders. These trails make the same use of water and shelter as do the merchant trails but are supplemented by short-cuts, avoid key hazards (such as rock slides or certain exposed areas) and pass through those regions where wildlife thrives, allowing for hunting and grazing in this parched land.

The desert is home to small clans of nomads who circulate around the oases and rivers. These camel-riding travellers know the desert and its ways and even revere its power as any other Khitan might revere the Ancestors. They know how to find food amongst the stunted, wind-battered trees and where to locate water. Their weathered, darkened faces are implacable and they swathe themselves in voluminous robes with dark veils to cover their noses and mouths when the fierce westerly winds whip the sand and stone into ragged spindrifts. In the hot dry rasp of

these devil winds, the nomads are the kings of the region, providing guides to the caravans that must cross the Great Desert to reach the Great Wall. Most nomad clans are taciturn but peaceful. A few, however, are ferocious predators who enjoy nothing more than luring an unsuspecting merchant into a place of ambush or mounting raids from the high ground, their camels pounding the earth as they bear down on the caravan line.

The Great Desert is not bereft of life. Wildlife takes many forms. The *taki* is a wild relative of the domesticated horse – a hardy pony with a scraggy mane, with herds that stick to the higher regions of the desert. The *jerboa* – a small, nocturnal rodent with angular ears and widely spaced eyes – is considered a trickster spirit by the nomads of the desert and they have countless myths relating to the cunning pranks these creatures play for the amusement of the gods. In the highest regions the *snow leopards* hunt; huge cats with white pelts and dark spots. And, ranging across the desert plains and amongst the steep gorges, *ibex* graze, their skins and straight, sharp antlers being prized by the nomad clans.

One of the mysteries of the Great Desert is the ghost-city of Chamba-Ri. On certain days, dictated by the phases of the moon, Chamba-Ri – a gleaming walled city filled with palaces carved from jade, ivory, onyx and pearl – appears amongst the featureless dunes or open plains of the desert. It is a shimmering haven of peace and tranquillity and is the city of the Ancestors. Within its walls all know peace with all desire for violence or intemperance immediately quelled. Here, every Ancestor of Khitai dwells and thus Chamba-Ri is a city of vast wisdom and arcane knowledge. Many claim to have seen the city emerge as night falls, its spires and minarets forming from the nothingness of the steppe. A few claim to have visited it and they speak in hushed tones of the awe-inspiring peace of its streets and the grace and wisdom of its people. Honoured ancestors and beloved relatives have provided shelter, healing and food, yet no mortal has ever spent more than a single night in Chamba-Ri: when they awake (because sleep always seems to overcome visitors to the city, despite its wonders) the city has gone but the visitor is refreshed and filled with renewed optimism. The great astrologers of the Imperial Court have devoted countless hours to the reports of Chamba-Ri's appearances, noting the phase of the moon, local conditions, the witness's birth chart and state of character and the movement of the constellations. No correlation has ever been established. Chamba-Ri appears to manifest when it decides to; there is no grand pattern to its appearances. Yet this does not prevent pilgrims from across Khitai banding together to plunge into the Great Desert and spend many days trudging the trails, hoping for Chamba-Ri to magically appear before them.

These pilgrims, often ill-prepared for their journey, bring with them offerings for the Ancestors: gold, silver, jade... and in doing so, make themselves a target for the more unscrupulous nomad clans who care little for pilgrims or ghost cities but a great deal for wealth and easy pickings.

GREAT HIGHLANDS

South of the Great Desert the Great Highlands or the Khitan-Yun, rear up to overlook the Rolling Plains to the east and Escarpment to the west. This mountainous region is peppered with rivers and streams, thick with forests of oak, maple, pine, spruce, larch, cedar and of course, bamboo. In the valleys and lower areas the forest becomes a jungle: dense and almost impenetrable, the undergrowth and the valleys trapping warm, humid and creating a sweating, insect filled hot-house. The upper regions of the hills, leading into the Yunang mountains of the east, are cooler and in the winter, blanketed with snow.

Travel through the Highlands is always difficult: slow, hot and plagued by all manner of natural hazards: hidden ravines, pockets of deep swamp, insect swarms and the massive serpents that make their home in the undergrowth and the branches of trees, ready to swing down to either poison or crush their prey.

The Highlands are sparsely populated. The forested hills and small mountains have almost no inhabitants save for a few brave hermits who have decided that the Khitan-Yun represents the way to spiritual salvation and sublimation into an Ancestor. Elsewhere, small tribes of diminutive savages – dark-skinned, with crazed eyes and startled expressions – roam the forest and jungle trails hunting for whatever food they can find. Monkey is a favoured meat and the old rumour is that the savages relish the large, hairless monkeys that live in cities and towns above the wild, hairy monkeys that scamper through the trees. The savages are adept with simple bows and blowpipes but are also masters of a kind of bolas: a pair of heavy balls made from lime and the crushed skulls and brains of their enemies, joined together by lengths of bamboo fibre. These bolas, thrown with deadly accuracy, can behead a man or sever his limbs.

The wildlife is varied. Big cats – leopards and tigers – roam the highlands. Monkeys are abundant, as are bears, rodents and bugs. In the highest regions are the pandas, the black and white, solitary animals that eat nothing but bamboo. Pandas are held in high regard within Khitan society and most believe that they are the sacred animals of the Ancestors and so must be left in peace. Some believe that pandas are the Ancestors who have taken-on mortal

form to better contemplate the universe. Some of those mountain-dwelling hermits hope to become pandas and so paint their eyes and arms black with soot and their skin white with chalk or lime, in a bid to emulate them. The more fervent even convert to a diet of bamboo, shunning all other foods.

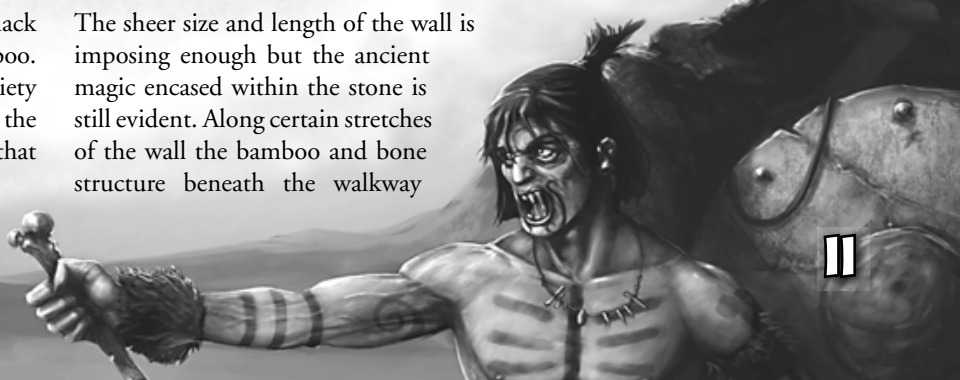
GREAT WALL

Stretching 4,000 miles across Khitai's western border, the Great Wall or Kang-Cheng (literally Long Wall) is an incredible feat of engineering unrivalled anywhere in the Hyborian age. Even the Atlanteans, with their vast knowledge of architecture and grand design had nothing that came close to the Great Wall's scale.

Although the wall is made of stone and mortar, the original barrier was a combination of bamboo and bone, weaved together from the enemies who assailed Khitai and cemented with their blood. That original wall was enchanted by gods or demons barely remembered and perhaps its magic came to fail because, over time, the current stone wall was built around it, encasing the old barrier within a sturdier, stronger (physically, at least) and more imposing structure. The second Great Wall was built with a combination of sorcery and slave labour, although the immense sorcery used in the construction of the bamboo and bone wall was curiously absent, with the magics employed simply to shift and position the huge blocks of stone and seal them in place.

The Great Wall follows a disciplined design. It follows the contours of the countryside and is uniformly 25 feet high and 15 feet in width. Crenulated along its vast length, guard towers 50 feet high are positioned every three miles which also act as lateral gates to divide the wall into administrative sections under the command of a Kang-Ho or Wall Commander. Smaller buildings along the top of the wall provide barracks and other facilities (armouries, kitchens, stores and so forth) and in some stretches, the interior of the wall is hollow to allow archers to use defensive platforms and arrow slits built into the wall's exterior. Smaller towers have been built under successive administrations to supplement the 3 mile towers; the Great Wall is nothing less than a 4,000 mile-long fortress – the greatest fortification ever built by man.

The sheer size and length of the wall is imposing enough but the ancient magic encased within the stone is still evident. Along certain stretches of the wall the bamboo and bone structure beneath the walkway



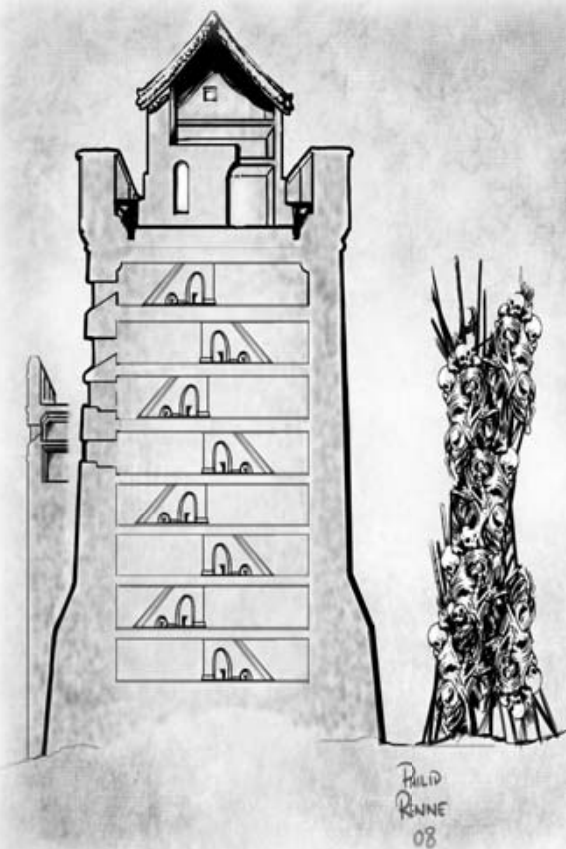
THE WALL

can be heard shifting and groaning. Forlorn cries drift-up through the masonry as the doomed souls of those whose skeletons were used in the construction complain of their plight. No one has dared attack Khitai for centuries but if they did, the wall's sorcerers, the Kang-Ka, are taught the spells necessary to animate and free the bamboo and bone guardians held within the stonework to supplement the wall's standing army. No one in living memory has ever seen one of these now mythical, undead warriors but their legend is potent: monstrous, unstoppable amalgams feeling neither pity nor pain and completely bent to the will of the spells raising them. These creatures are called the Kang-Zai – Wall Guardians – and even the stalwart Khitan soldiers patrolling the Great Wall fear their nature, something the Kang-Ka relish almost as much as their capability to summon the monsters.

The Great Wall is a working military installation. Each three-mile stretch between major watch towers forms a Division. Each Division is under the control of a Kang-Ho who is supported by a sorcerous adviser, the Kang-Ka. Each Division is patrolled by 100 warriors, divided into Watches of 20 men per watch, each watch being under the command of a Kang-So or Watch Captain; so the Kang-Ho always has 5 Kang-So as direct reports and the Kang-Ka as an adviser. It is the custom and practice for the Kang-Ho to liaise each week with the Kang-Hos to either side of his Division and in this way, orders concerning the Great Wall's administration are communicated along its length.

The Kang-Ka, as well as being a sorcerer, is in charge of all personnel responsible for serving the soldiery: cooks, storemen, masons, builders, cleaners and so forth. Most Kang-Ka despise this somewhat mundane administrative position but accept it as part of their role, as defined by the God Emperor, nonetheless. It is usual for the Kang-Ka to treat those under him with either contempt or harsh discipline and more often than not, an unpleasant mixture of the two. The Kang-Kas maintain their own lines of communication, again based on liaising with the Divisions to either side of their own and they meet separately to the Kang-Hos. Whilst this ensures that the sorcerers are able to exchange information relating solely to mundane administration, it also gives them the opportunity to politick away from the military leaders – and if a Kang-Ho and Kang-Ka of a Division do not get along, the Kang-Ka Conclave usually concocts its own ways and agendas to ensure that the sorcerer's needs are promoted. Given the guile most Khitan sorcerers are noted for, it therefore benefits any Kang-Ho to maintain cordial relations with his sorcerous counsel. There are many tales of Kang-Ho who found themselves either removed from duty or meeting much more interesting ends as a result of disgruntled and duplicitous Kang-Ka.

Politically, the Great Wall is under the direct remit of the God Emperor. As the supreme protector of Khitai the Great Wall forms his most formidable defence. For practical purposes the wall's affairs are directed by the Kang Ministry. This civilian bureaucratic body is responsible for the administration of the wall's army, for appointing its commanders and sorcerers and for enacting the God Emperor's will concerning its operation. The Kang Ministry is a select appointment, attracting the cream of Khitai's capable bureaucrats, politicians and administrators. It is seen as the foremost ministry and competition to be granted a position within its sprawling structure (almost as the wall itself sprawls) is fierce. However, being based in Paikang, and very distant from the Great Wall, the Kang Ministry relies on a vast network of messengers, observers



and other functionaries who are responsible for conveying orders back and forth.

The foremost representative of the Kang Ministry and based in the fabulous Kang Pagoda, is the Lei-Kang - or Wall Ambassador. The Kang Pagoda is close to the wall's central length and the Lei-Kang is the ministry's direct representative at the wall, co-ordinating all messaging to and from Paikang and then across the wall's length itself. All day to day affairs on the wall, including the co-ordination of the Kang-Ho and Kang-Ka is the Lei-Kang's responsibility. The Lei-Kang can be either a man or a woman; capability is the key and he or she resides in wondrous splendour within the Kang Pagoda, supported by a small army of lesser bureaucrats who serve the wall's direct needs. Once a year the Lei-Kang's enormous, 500-strong retinue leaves the Kang Pagoda and snakes its way across Khitai to Paikang so that the Lei-Kang can give his Grand Report, a verbal summary of the wall's affairs, accounts, problems and concerns. The Grand Report takes six days to deliver and the whole of the Kang Ministry gathers in the Great Pavilion of the Imperial Palace to listen to it.

The Lei-Kang's journey to and from Paikang is a hazardous business. The retinue must pass through countryside teeming with bandits who seek to prey on the retinue as it winds its way through narrow gorges, steep valleys, dense, wild, woodland and across open, unprotected grasslands. The journey takes weeks, with regular stops at countless villages that are, by tradition, forced to accommodate and feed the immense retinue from its own stores. This is an enormous burden on the impoverished, isolated, largely forgotten Khitan communities and the arrival of the Lei-Kang Retinue is, for many, a dreaded event. No sooner has the retinue left than preparations for its possible return visit begin. Thousands go hungry in preparation for feeding the travel-weary retinue although, those villages who provide the most courteous service are rewarded either financially or with gifts of food, wine or other commodities, by the Lei-Kang himself.

The current Lei-Kang is Po-Sha, a career diplomat who has lied, cheated, poisoned and adulterated his way up through the Kang Ministry. He is a corpulent, arrogant, merciless excuse for a human who delights in cruelty and must be carried everywhere on a vast palanquin draped in robes of crimson. He lost the ability to walk several years ago and his vast body is wrecked with weeping sores that a small team of physicians must constantly tend. Po-Sha is highly intelligent and a natural orator; his decisiveness and administrative capabilities make him a natural choice for Lei-Kang but he controls the Kang Pagoda like a fiefdom and treats the annual procession to Paikang as a

means of promoting himself almost as a demi-god to the unfortunate villages who must support him as he travels. It has been Po-Sha's practice to set villages against each other, spreading rumours and lies about receptions he has just enjoyed or has been promised, leading to villages developing jealous feuds in a bid to outdo the competition. In the Kang Ministry, Po-Sha is hated but his brilliance is difficult to challenge and his six day Grand Report is considered to be a work of enthralling art that informs, amuses and entertains. Nevertheless, there are those within the Kang Ministry who would see Po-Sha removed, by whatever means. His treatment of the villages during his procession to and from the capital is causing difficulties in the outlying provinces and, soon, something will need to be done before others, outside the Kang Ministry, decide to take matters into their own hands.

KAMBUJAN MARCHES

In Khitai's far south, the ancient jungles give way to the flat, wet plains of the Kambujan Marches, a lawless place scourged by bandits and clan wars. Here, the bandit leader Sung, commander of the 100 spirits, each of which is now one of his bandit captains, rules the wide expanse of the marches, preying on Khitan and Kambujan merchants alike, and seemingly blessed with all manner of supernatural powers, gifts from each of the spirits he released from their eternal captivity.

The marches themselves are grey, vaguely hilly and lashed by strong, year-round rains. In the summer the marches are unbearably hot, the heat broken only by the daily downpours that cause flash-floods and mudslides. In the winter the temperature drops so that the ground freezes and the rivers and streams become sullen with ice. Merchants trading with the Kambujan capital of Anghkor (a fabulous market for gold, silk and jade) have no option but to pass through the marches, braving the monotonous terrain, its dreadful weather and the threat of predation from Sung and his bandit legions.

However Sung's reputation, whilst fearsome, is not always that of murderous bandit leader. To some he is a benevolent figure who drove-out the corrupt and sadistic Dagger Princes who once ruled the marches from their palaces of stone and bronze. These princes, born, it is said, of unholy unions between demons and mortal mothers, controlled the marches through cruelty and avarice. Their three palaces, identical in every respect, were havens for debauchery that mocked the God Emperor and the Ancestors alike. Cruel gods came





and went; sorcerers freely experimented on the hapless, terrified locals. Human sacrifice was a common occurrence and even the God Emperor feared to send armies against the Dagger Rulers.

Only Sung, the only child of a lowly potter, dared challenge the Dagger Princes. He quested into the jungles to the north and found the captured spirits of the 100 Immortal Companions – great warriors and magicians who, through trickery, has been imprisoned by a previous emperor and his craven witch-bride centuries ago. Sung found the way to free the captives and the spirits took the forms of mortal men, each with a particular power and gave part of their power to Sung as a gift.

Sung and the 100 Companions rode against the Dagger Princes and defeated them, destroying their cities and ridding the marches of their cruel, evil ways. But Sung's curse was to be forever an outlaw, forever feared and forever hunted. The God Emperor views Sung as a man who, having challenged the Dagger Princes might one day challenge the Imperial Court: so, Sung is forbidden to leave the marches and is treated as a common bandit.

Sung does, indeed, prey upon merchant caravans. His bandit armies waylay caravans travelling to and from Kambuja taking what they want and what they need. However death is not always on the agenda: many escape with their lives and return home with tails of gruff courtesy and apologies for the theft. Some merchants are even prepared to make direct offerings to Sung's men, in return for safe passage and Sung as noted as a hero of sorts who will, if the conditions are right, send his men, led by the Companions, against those who would raid and murder indiscriminately.

Sung's hideout is said to be a cave system in the eastern hills of the marches, hidden from view by powerful magics created by the 100 Companions. Other hideouts belonging to the Companions are scattered through the marches, watching the trade routes.

The God Emperor (and other emperors before him) has periodically sent warriors and heroes of his own into the marches to find and capture Sung or his companions.

None have succeeded. Indeed some have joined Sung's cause, further embedding his reputation as a traitor and pretender to the Jade Throne. An entire cycle of myths and romance has built around Sung and the 100 Companions, creating a combination of ruthless pirate, noble

protector, doomed warrior and vicious predator. What people believe depends very much on what they hear – and merchants are notorious for embellishing their experiences. Those who have suffered at the hands of the bandits claim Sung is a demon, worse than any Dagger Prince. Those who have come through unscathed and treated with courtesy, hail him as a stern but necessary, force for god. Sung and the Kambuljan Marches, remain an enigma.

KHITAIN ESCARPMENT

The Khitan Escarpment rises from the western hills of the Khitan Yu, a long, gradual slope that culminates in the vast line of steep cliffs, topped by the snaking line of the Great Wall. The escarpment's slope is a mixture of heavy bamboo and tree forests, punctuated by grasslands and bare rocky outcrops. The lower reaches of the slope are settled with many small villages, all eking an existence from the woodlands and wetlands at the base of the slope where the valleys before the Khitan Yu begin. The scenery is breathtaking, with the eastern hills and mountains rising starkly before the upward slope of the escarpment, casting long shadows across the countryside.

The cliffs, surmounted by the Great Wall, are some 600 feet high, rugged, ragged and treacherous to climb. Along the central stretch of the cliffs, where they gaze over the Yusan steppe, a winding stairway has been cut into the cliff face by hands unknown. The stairs double-back on themselves many times and with no railings climbing them is every bit as challenging as attempting to scale the cliff-face. The stairs are known as the Steps of Heaven and local legend has it that the souls of the dead either climb the stairs on the way to the afterlife or descend them to be swallowed by hell.

KHITAIN CROPLANDS

North of the Great Desert and Grasslands the land becomes highly fertile, fed by many rivers, streams and lakes and blessed with good, deep, rich soils. This is the breadbasket of Khitai: the region produces grains, rice and raises livestock on the many small farms that dot the huge, sweeping landscape. Low hills offer shelter whilst warm, life-giving rains sweep in from the west, breaking over the Khin Mountains.

The region is ruled by the Yixing Wang Gan Ha Sho. Sho is a benevolent ruler but arrogant with it. His wife, the hóu Na-San, is considered one of the most beautiful women in the world and Sho guards her with jealous zeal, permitting none but himself to gaze upon her face. Sho is supported by an impressive army led by his Dragon Cohort, skilled charioteers and archers who practice manoeuvres across

the regions grasslands and keep the croplands free from the bandits who would otherwise raid the small farms and homesteads that work the pleasant lands.

Gan Ha Sho's seat of power is the small city-state of Ho-Lan, in the west of the region and within the shadow of the Khin mountains. It is a wealthy, content city state surrounded by an impressive wall that is topped with statues of the Ancestors who watch over the croplands region. At the city's centre Sho's palace rises – a series of interconnected pagodas and single-storey buildings that were built two centuries ago by Gan Ha Sho's direct ancestors. Their spirits inhabit the palace and it is said, guide Gan Ha Sho's decisions. His loyalty to the Ancestor spirits has been rewarded in the croplands' prosperity and Na-san's beauty. If either were challenged, then the palace would fall and the croplands' wealth would fall with it. Therefore Gan Ha Sho does everything in his power to revere his ancestors and maintain the region's stability.

Every year Gan Ha Sho tours the croplands with a large retinue in tow, his Dragon Cohort preparing the way. Na-san accompanies him and in this show of strength and leadership Sho courts the respect and loyalty of the lower classes, dispensing money and honours as he passes through the various settlements. His ministers of justice accompany him, overseeing local disputes and ensuring taxes are collected and accounted for in a timely fashion. Hundreds flock to see Gan Ha Sho's procession, both to receive favours but also to try to catch a glimpse of Na-san, whose face is hidden behind a veil of gold and scarlet, only her fascinating almond eyes visible. Gan Ha Sho adores the attention his procession generates and he basks in the adoration of the populace. For all his arrogance he protects and serves his people, from a position that many others of similar station would exploit to the hilt.

Gan Ha Sho is viewed favourably in the Imperial Court despite his arrogance. The wealth generated by the croplands provides a healthy influx to the God Emperor's treasury; so much, that certain nobles in the Imperial Court gaze upon the croplands (and the renowned beauty of Na-san) with greedy and jealous eyes. One or two unscrupulous bó, hóu and gong plot to overthrow Gan Ha Sho in some way, take his lands and his wife; but their plots are subtle and need to be exercised with care. The God Emperor has no immediate wishes to see Sho deposed nor any special desire to see Na-san become the wife or concubine of an invader. The croplands are content and Sho is an effective ruler. Replacing him could seriously injure the taxes raised and the food produced. Unfortunately not all in the Imperial Court see things in such an enlightened way and would risk a great deal to make the croplands (and Na-san) become theirs'.

KHITAIN GRASSLANDS

South of the productive croplands the Grasslands are great swathes of rolling countryside, mostly uncultivated, save for small farms occupying the shallow valleys and numerous little towns that are scattered like cherry blossom across the region.

Two rival cities occupy the grasslands. In the north, Gun-Hai, a dark, walled city controlled by the upstart warlord Yun Rau and his army of thugs, bandits and renegade soldiers from all across Khitai. In the south, Gun-Xiu, controlled by the ageing and beleaguered gong, Min Cho and his mercenary army.

The two cities have been at war for decades. The prize is the sole control of the grasslands and neither city is prepared to yield. Gun-Xiu controls more territory across the south but Gun-Hai has the stronger army and the greater resolve. Neither ruler can bear to see the other make any kind of headway and although many efforts have been made in the past to resolve the enmity, they have all failed. Warriors from both cities fight running skirmishes across the region, aiming to seize control of villages and annex areas of profitable land in a bid to deny the opponent. As a result, there is too much concentration on war and precious little on developing the grasslands into a region to rival the northern croplands.

Both Yun Rau and Min Cho know that the situation cannot continue and at some point, a great battle must occur between them. Both cities are actively recruiting warriors, irrespective of their origins, to fight for their cause. Yun Rau makes rash promises of gold and jade to buy his troops: Min Cho promises land and titles. Neither is likely to make good on their promises because the two rulers are blinded by their hatred of each other and are too selfish to share any of their eventual kingdom.

Into this hotbed of rivalry the mercenary sorcerer Kun Whu has stepped. Kun Whu has a pact with the demon goddess Cunurra, the Spider Mistress and he seeks to play Gun-Xiu and Gun-Hai against each other, resulting in the destruction of both and allowing him to step into the role of ruler of the Grasslands. Kun Whu has established a stronghold in the foothills of the western Pathenian hills and is gathering about him his own troops but more importantly, the support of the peasants of the region. Kun Whu currently provides the protection and strength Yun Rau and Min Cho fail to deliver and the sorcerer is gaining in popularity. Whoever he favours would win the battle of the cities but Kun Whu is unwilling to





declare his support for either city just yet: he is enjoying the attention he courts from both and delights in concocting devious plans involving both sides that will line his coffers and consolidate his own position as a kingmaker.

KHITAIN SWAMPS

To the south of Chosain, the land lowers and forms the huge region that is the Khitain swamps. Water predominates in this region, with vast areas of surface water replacing dry land between the long stretches of coniferous trees and sparse patches of higher ground. In the southern part of the region, it is a maze of trees, rivers, large, open lakes and wide waterways. Further north, the trees give way to sparse marshlands and thick mudflats.

The whole region teems with life. Insects abound – scratching, biting and nipping varieties mixed with water-born creatures that flit across the water's surface. Water birds gather in huge colonies: waders, fishers and curve-beaked scavengers that settled around the trees, mudflats and marshlands to feed on the wide variety of fish, amphibians and large insects that throng the area. At dawn and dusk the bird colonies take to the wing and provide a dazzling aerial display of balletic grace, wheeling and twisting in the sky, filling the air with a cacophony of shrieks and whistles.

The humans of the Khitain Swamps are a tenacious breed. Making their homes in the trees and building stilt-raised huts, they are master fishermen and hunters, navigating the dizzying maze of their territories in reed coracles and dug-out canoes. The populace is organised on clan lines, with the clans being identified by the kind of boat they pilot. The coracle clans tend to be peaceful fishers and hunter gatherers; the canoe clans are more aggressive although they generally stick to their own territories and are unconcerned with the wider world. No one rules the swamps; it is considered a wild land that cannot be effectively administered and so the clans of the swamps are left to their own devices.

Given this lack of administration, the western reaches of the swamps are a lawless margin where renegades seek an escape from their crimes. The swamp is not a welcoming environment: the dreadful humidity, swarms of insects and the pungent smell of the undergrowth contribute to an unpleasant experience for the unwary. Those born to



the swamps are used to it and would have no other life but to those used to dry land, dry clothes and an existence unplagued by insect bites, life in the swamp is tortuous.

The swamps are filled with mystery. The region was created, legends say, at the time of the Cataclysm when a mighty city was submerged in punishment for severe blasphemies and foul practices. The souls of its inhabitants became the trees and mangroves, depending on their station and the insects are their sins made physical. It is difficult to prove truth in these legends but difficult, too, to disprove them. Hidden in the swamps, half-submerged, caked in moss, mould and creeping vines, are several ancient temples and palaces, flooded now but once places of great wealth and power. A handful of swamp clans know the location of these ruins but have no reverence for them: they treat them as places of malevolence and try to keep their locations a secret for fear of what lies within them that might be awoken.



THE SWAMP TEMPLES OF VAZ-TCHI

Two of the temples hidden deep within the humid swamps of the central Swamplands are the brother and sister temples of the demigods Vaz and Tchi. These demonic siblings, denizens of another, distant universe, came to the earth to drain it of its energy and took the shape of a pair of ornate temples. Vaz and Tchi lured the primitives of these lands into the temples as worshippers but drained their life energy steadily in return for ecstatic visions of paradise. Eventually Tchi, the sister temple, fell sick, poisoned, perhaps, by a drained soul and she fell into a coma. Vaz, her brother, was consumed with grief and slaughtered 1,000 of his worshipers as punishment for his sister's plight. Trapped in this world, the twin temples of Vaz-Tchi are almost ghost-like: Tchi comatose and Vaz in a state of grief-fuelled hatred for humankind.

To cure his sister Vaz sends forth disturbing dreams aimed at summoning the unwary to the temples. Vaz seeks a pure soul to feed to his sister and thus cure the disease that has felled her. Vaz knows he needs dozens of pure souls and so his spells ripple through Khitai, entering the dreams of the pure and those connected with them, urging them to travel into the swamps and pay homage to the great Vaz-Tchi gods, little understanding that doom awaits their souls at the end of the pilgrimage.

PAIKANG

Paikang is the name of both the capital city of Khitai and the province surrounding it – a region of bamboo and vine-festooned jungle that occupies the hilly heartland of the country. The purple and jade towered Paikang is the fairest of all Khitan cities, rising out of the jungle like a jewel, its towers and minarets glistening, its great walls topped with flags and warriors armoured in glittering jade and polished bronze breastplates and helms. This is the seat of the God Emperor: foremost of Khitai's citizens, blessed and beloved of the Ancestors, an equal to demi-gods and the golden voice of Reason across the whole of the country.

The administrative region of Paiking consists of a wide expanse of tree and bamboo jungle, threaded with the trade roads leading from the outlying provinces into the heart of the capital. For all the greenery and the city-state of Paikang at its centre, the region is accessible and well-travelled. Dozens of smaller towns follow the trade routes, creating satellites about Paikang's vast walls. The Imperial army polices the area with ruthless zeal, putting paid to the intentions of bandits and highwaymen to use the jungle as cover for their nefarious activities.

Despite the density of the jungle Paikang city has plenty of satellite settlements nestled in clearings around the city walls and along the mighty, slow-flowing Pai River which cuts through the jungle like a silver sword blade. River traffic is plentiful – brightly painted, shallow-bottomed junks that reach excellent speed on the jungle-lined river. Monkeys, flying squirrel, sloth, leopards and other creatures inhabit the jungle-lands of Paikang, turning the jungle into a squawking, chirruping jewel. Deep within the jungle, away from the main settlements, are hidden temples; some ruined but some still active. Here the priests of various sects of the Khitan pantheon (see the Ancestors, Demons and Gods chapter) practice their worship and summonings in seclusion, dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to the pursuit of knowledge far away from the distractions of civilisation.

Politically Paikang is considered a single province. Whilst the city has several independent rulers, the administration for the wider region is in the hands of the Imperial Court. In reality, as a great deal of Paikang is jungle, the area is under-governed and the many small settlements go about their own affairs without the interference of the Imperial Bureaucracy (which is principally concerned with the needs of the



Imperial Palace and therefore oblivious to a few dozen small towns eking their living from the undergrowth).

PAIKANG CITY

The city state of Paikang is ancient and fabulous. It rises from the vine festooned jungles like a crown of jade and silver, its towers glittering above the dense tree canopy surrounding it, its walls holding back the march of the jungle and holding within the glory of the Khitan Empire.

The Pai River flows through Paikang's centre, entering at the Northern Great Arch and exiting at the Southern Great Arch. Both arches are fashioned from bone, ivory and jade to resemble the mouths of gods, and the northern gate represents heaven whilst the southern represents the underworld. The river is deep and navigable and plied by countless boats that make their way north and south although many never leave the city by either gate.

Paikang sprawls, although its vast wall contains it neatly. Within it is divided into seven districts whilst the mighty Imperial Palace, home to the God Emperor and the Imperial Court, creates an eighth: a city within a city. The districts are controlled by one of the wealthy and powerful Khitan families and each district ruler occupies the status of

a Gong (see page 37) – a ruler over all within his territory. This subdivision of Paikang occurred centuries ago when the God Emperor's position was threatened. At that time the God Emperor ruled the city completely but so unpopular was he that rebellion was inevitable. Eventually he relinquished control to the seven great families and those divisions have remained in place ever since, whilst the God Emperor retains complete control of the Imperial Palace. The seven families are old, in-bred and entrenched. All are dynastic; some are murderers; others are the most corrupt institutions in Khitain. All of them scheme, meddle, politick, lie, cheat and vie for greater power at the expense of their rivals. Of course, all this is done under a veneer of courtesy, politeness and respect but the seven districts of Paikang are states at war. The war is subtle and is not waged with soldiers. It is waged with rumour, strategically and surgically engineered lies, slanders and smears. Character assassination is far more effective than any assassin's garrote and the families derive huge pleasure from belittling their rivals and gaining prestige before their allies. The God Emperor watches this never-ending war from the sanctity of the Imperial Palace and approves. It breeds strong, devious, quick-witted politicians and strategists. It provides entertainment. So, under careful instruction, the God Emperor's agents are abroad in the seven districts manipulating the families with no other agenda than to see what will happen next.

THE SEVEN DISTRICTS



Ruled by the Ai dynasty and its fearsome, half-mad matriarch, Sxi Ai. Through consorting with the kuei demon Asenabos, Sxi Ai is 200 years old but has the physical appearance of a young, beautiful woman. Her reward to those who please her is to be given audience with Asenabos and rewarded with renewed youth and vitality. The Ai district controls the northern stretch of the Pai River traffic and owns the floating market. The Ai dynasty specialises in trade and guards its markets and merchants jealously – frequently hiring mercenaries to protect its caravans that export and import produce all across Khitai.

C'IENTG

This district is close to the Imperial Palace and specialises in producing top-drawer bureaucrats and scholars. The C'ientg library also serves as the home for the ruling elite – a huge, jade-topped pagoda with the library's reading rooms and vaults deep beneath the ground. The best education is to be found in the C'ientg academies and from amongst its loyal professors who aim to excel in particular lores and a variety of esoteric. All educational services must be paid for: the vast proceeds from its academies (which attract students from the wealthy families across Khitai) are ploughed into C'ientg's avaristic desire to expand its library so that it becomes the greatest in the world. The library, operating almost as a state within a state, hires adventurers to go in search of rare tomes and scriptures, paying good prices and encouraging all manner of risk to obtain what it wants. The chained kuei demon, Uxus, is noted as the keeper of the library of the underworld. The C'ientg rulership is shared by the mysterious 'Three Who See', a trio of inbred sorcerer-academics who have not been witnessed in the flesh for more than 30 years.

H'NG

The H'ng district is also known as the district of 1,000 temples. There are certainly too many temples to count and many or nothing more than small ancestor shrines tucked away in the corners of houses. The H'ng claim to have powerful contacts in both heaven and the underworld that watch over and bless the clan's activities. Anyone resident in H'ng is expected to be utterly devout to both of the ancestors, the gods of heaven and the gods of the underworld who walk abroad in H'ng district. The clan is jointly ruled by Go-Ming and the demigod known only as The Old Man. Go-Ming is a talented sorcerer priestess dedicated to the worship of Cheng-Ho (see page 57) and The Old Man is Cheng-Ho's abiding gift to her: a demigod who enjoys the mortal realm far more than the underworld (although he claims to come from heaven). The Old Man wanders H'ng district frequently, dressed in robes with the texture and colour of clouds, his bare feet never touching the ground. His fingernails are each three feet long and coiled so that he cannot use his hands: two servants, known as the Left Palm and the Right Palm attend him constantly, using their own hands to achieve what The Old Man cannot achieve with his own. H'ng refuses to acknowledge the sanctity of the God Emperor and so Go-Ming compensates by being doubly loyal to the Jade Throne.

KAN-PI

Holding sway in the southern part of the city, sullen Kan-pi has designs on the Imperial Throne. The scheming husband and wife partnership (also brother and sister) who go by the single name of Pi, have, over decades, manoeuvred their offspring and favoured relatives into positions of influence in the Imperial Court. The Pi are always on the look-out for an advantageous marriage and are now so adept at the process of either spotting or manufacturing a favourable pairing that their services outside Paikang are often sought by other Gongs and families who are keen to position their sons, daughters, nephews and nieces to the maximum advantage. As a result of their ability to arrange fortuitous marriages, the Pi are exceedingly knowledgeable about the wider politics of Khitai – which, naturally, is very valuable to the God Emperor and the Seven Counsellors, further cementing Kan-pi's standing within the Imperial Court. The Pi family are supported by the sorceress Lei-No – another acquisition by marriage but this time from the rival city state of Ruo-gen. Lei-No was lured into the Kan-pi clan from her prospective husband, the war-like younger son of Ruo-gen's despot. As a result, Kan-pi has considerable enemies within Ruo-gen and only the clan's strong ties with the Imperial Court have prevented serious bloodshed from erupting between the two sides.





KAN-ZA

A rival clan to Kan-pi, the ancient Kan clan split into its Pi and Za components a century ago for reasons unknown. Kan-za hates Kan-pi with a passion and has certainly provided aid to Ruo-gen against its neighbour. Kan-za's specialisation is in the silk and jade industries and the ramshackle backstreets of its district are filled with silk spinners, weavers, dyers, jade carvers and jewellers of all descriptions. Kan-za is wealthy but miserly: it refuses to lavish great wealth even on its own clan members, let alone the people of the district and even the grand pagoda of Kan-za is a shabby, peeling relic that is an embarrassment to the glittering glory of Paikang. Instead Kan-za hoards its wealth in underground vaults and makes judicious loans to the Imperial Court and the C'eng clan, which it then recoups at a healthy interest. Kan-za's immediate clan members are shrewd economists and loan-sharks able to use the clan's finances to exert influence through money in the same way Kan-pi exercises it through marriage deals. Curiously for a Paikang clan, Kan-za has no trust of sorcery and does not seek to employ it: Kan-za members pride themselves on their abilities to manipulate money in ways sorcery is powerless to do. Simple people fear sorcerer – but few simple people fear the lure of a silver piece or the prospect of further riches to come.

T'IAN AN

Warlike T'ian'an is a martial clan that deals in making weapons, training mercenaries and then hiring them to the likes of Ai and Huz. Traditionally the God Emperor's personal bodyguard has comprised of warriors specially selected from amongst the T'ian'an clan (or those it proposes) for their loyalty and skill with arms. Craftsmen in the T'ian'an district are noted for building the finest chariots and weapons anywhere in Khitai although the smiths of Ruo-gen would dispute that claim. In recent years, thanks, largely, to Kan-pi and C'eng meddling, T'ian'an has been overlooked for supplying the bodyguard in favour of warriors from other Khitan city states. Naturally enough the ruler of T'ian'an, Yi-T'ian, is furious at both Kan-pi and C'eng, and is desperate to exact an appropriate revenge.

HUZ

Another mercantile district, the Huz are in direct competition with Ai district. Wrangles over who controls the waterway through the city are frequent but Huz operates the huge covered market, watched over by the inscrutable gaze of the Huz Trading League – a mixture of merchant adventurers and C'ien-trained bureaucrats that are constantly vigilant for Ai intrusions. Huz sponsors and encourages the various artisans' guilds, which any trader in Paikang must belong to if he wants to trade or operate in the city. The guilds contribute a great deal of silver to the Huz coffers and Ai is as jealous of this level of control as Huz is of Ai's dominance of the river trade. The Huz district and family is ruled by the beguiling Yu-Lin-Tzo, once a formidable general in the Imperial Army but now a ruthless protector of the guilds. He is either Sxi Ai's greatest enemy or her deepest lover: none can be certain.

THE STREETS OF PAIKANG

The streets of Paikang are narrow and dark, forming a maze of interconnecting allies and avenues that suddenly give way to the extensive courtyards and plazas that surround the grand pagodas and edifices of the districts' ruling families. Houses are made of wood and bamboo with baked tile roofs and often supported by bamboo scaffolding. Amongst the countless rows of houses are ornate temples decorated with jade and painted in garish colours, with ornamental status of dragons, lions, tigers, bears and a variety of demons and ancestors rooted in Khitan myth.

In the poorer areas the houses are run-down and rat-infested. Sometimes two or three families share a single dwelling and even the richest districts have their slum areas. For the well-heeled these areas can be dangerous places. Whilst most of the Khitan poor are wary of the consequences of crime (the shame and the harsh punishments) opportunists lurk in the shadows ready to take advantage of the unwary or the incautious. Backing onto the rows of slums are the buildings of the wealthier citizens, two or three storeys high and often with open courtyards or gardens. The elite of the city – the rulers of the districts – live in the grand



Businesses and Premises Table 1

1D100	Business/Building	1D100	Business/Building
01-03	Alchemist	51-53	Musician
04-10	Artist	54-55	Physician
11-13	Baker	56-58	Residence (Architect, Engineer)
14-15	Bathhouse	59-60	Residence (Astronomer, Astrologer, Fortune Teller)
17-19	Chandler	61-65	Residence (Decent House or apartment – for Rent)
20-21	Merchants' Inn	66-70	Residence (Fine House or apartment – for Rent)
22-27	Goldsmith	71-73	Residence (Nobleman, Merchant)
28-30	Jade smith	74	Residence (Philosopher)
31-35	Inn	75-76	Residence (Scholar)
36-40	Jeweller	77	Residence (Noble)
41-44	Livestock Merchant	78-80	Silversmith
45-46	Scholar	81-83	Herb or Spice Merchant
47-49	Milliner	84-90	Stable
50	Miller	91-00	Tavern

Businesses and Premises Table 2

1D100	Business/Building	1D100	Business/Building
01-02	Animal trainer	41-43	Residence (Decent – for Rent)
03-04	Armourer	44-50	Residence (Fair – for Rent)
05-06	Baker/Miller	51-54	Scribe
07-09	Boarding House	55-56	Boat handler
10-12	Bowyer/Fletcher	57-58	Silk merchant
13-14	Cartographer	59-62	Smithy
15-17	Animal trader	63-68	Stable
18-19	Engraver	69-71	Tailor
20-21	Glassblower	72-80	Inn
22-25	Carpenter	81-85	Tavern/Tea House
26-29	Weaver	86	Veterinarian
30-32	Coppersmith	87-90	Weaponsmith
33-34	Scribe	91-93	Wheelwright/Cartwright
35-36	Leather worker	94-97	Wine merchant
37-39	Scholar	98-00	Woodcarver
40	Outfitter/Perfumer		

pagodas and ostentatious buildings that are surrounded by the paved plazas and patrolled by private security – liveried warriors belonging either to the ruling clan or mercenaries hired for the purpose.

The great and the good of the city rarely travel in the open. Most travel in palanquins carried by slaves, veiled from the world by silk drapes. A few swagger around the city surrounded by their fawning entourages and the lesser nobles are attended by their own bodyguards. When a palanquin is seen bobbing through the streets it is the practice of all low-ranking Khitans to bow or throw themselves prostrate, irrespective of where in the city they might be or who the occupant of the

palanquin is. Deference is ingrained and reflected in the streets which, whilst busy, are, to outsiders, curiously well-mannered and quiet.

BUSINESSES AND PREMISES OF THE CITY

The accompanying map of Paikang shows the city's layout and its district. Space precludes a building-by-building description of the city, the following tables can be used to quickly identify a particular building's function.



Businesses and Premises Table 3

1D100	Business/Building	1D100	Business/Building
01-03	Baker/Miller	48-51	Mason
04-05	Barber/Physician	52-55	Moneylender
06-08	Brewer	56-60	Pawnbroker
09-13	Butcher	61-62	Painter/Sign maker
14-15	Brothel	63-65	Paper and Ink maker
16-17	Candle maker	66-70	Potter
18-20	Carpenter	71-74	Residence (Fair – for Rent)
21-24	Cobbler	75-76	Residence (Squalid – for Rent)
25-28	Cooper	77-79	Residence (Dormitory/shared rooms)
29-30	Distiller	80-85	Residence (Doss house)
31-33	Dyer/Tanner	86-87	Ropemaker/Netmaker
34-38	Fishmonger	88-89	Sail maker
39-41	Fortune-teller/Entertainer	90-91	Sharpener
42-43	Fuller	92-93	Spinner
44-45	Gaming hall	94-96	Stable
46-47	Laundry	97-00	Tavern/Inn

There are three tables in all, with different districts using different tables as follows:

Ai and Huz districts	Table 1
C'ieng and Kan-pi	Table 2
Kan-za, H'ng and T'ian'an	Table 3

PAIKANG MILITIA

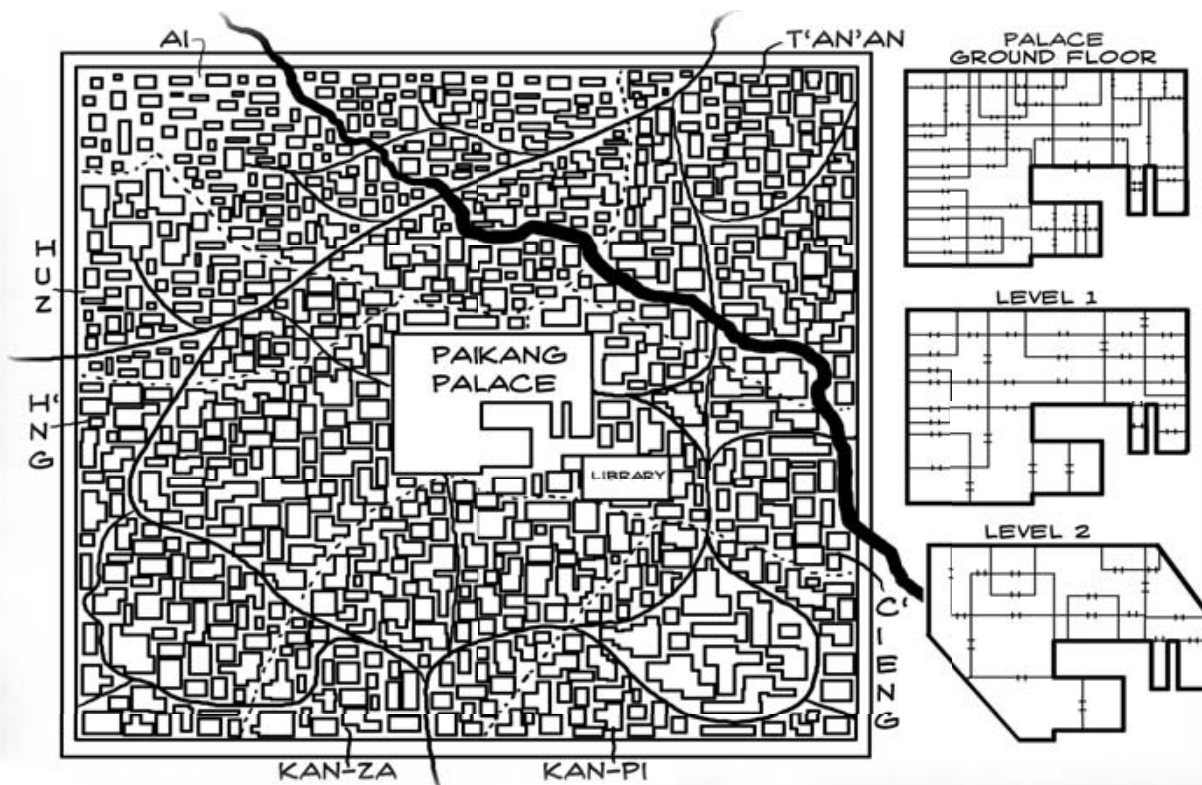
The Paikang militia is an agency of the Imperial Court - a relatively small force of volunteers who agree to spend three days of each week conducting the militia's duties of street patrols and gate tending, night-time patrols of a particular district and to defend the city if the God Emperor commands it. In return the militia receives training, equipment (a halberd, a shortsword and leather armour) and an annual stipend of 150 Silver Pieces. The militia is not noted for being overly diligent in its duties but this is largely because Paikang is a peaceful enough place and because the district rulers employ their own security. Most crime involves drunkenness, the occasional brawl and petty theft such as burglary and pick-pocketing but most people are happy to walk the streets at night and to leave their doors unlocked. News travels quickly in Paikang, so anyone known to be causing trouble or taking advantage of others, soon finds their activities are known by the wider community and dealt with in an appropriate way.

THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The residence of the God Emperor and all the preceding God Emperors, the Imperial Palace is at the very centre of Paikang and is a city within a city. A rectangle 2,260 feet across and 2,880 lengthways, the Imperial Palace contains 1,000 buildings and precisely 8,000 rooms. It is surrounded by a wall 20 feet in height and eight feet in thickness, with a 150 foot moat separating the buildings from the walls. Gates to the interior of the palace are stationed according to the points of the compass with gates of wood, iron and bronze being flanked by pagoda like watchtowers.

The Imperial Palace is considered to be a realm of heaven on the mortal world. Those occupying it view it as a divine place divorced from the mundane. Only the members of the Imperial Court, the Imperial Bureacracy and specially summoned or invited members of the ruling classes are permitted entry to the Imperial Palace. Those who serve the court (with the exception of the Imperial Bodyguard) are all born within the palace and are forbidden to set-foot outside it. Thus, there are entire generations of servants, slaves and officials who know nothing of life beyond the walls of the palace and will die in their blissful ignorance.

Everything within is geared towards the need of the God Emperor and the Seven Counsellors. The finest of everything is brought into the compound and there is no need for the God Emperor to emerge: the affairs of Khitai



can be administered without the God Emperor setting foot beyond the wall and indeed, the Jade Council (see page 37) brings the affairs of Khitai direct to the God Emperor's lap.

The populace of the Imperial Palace numbers some 50,000. The bulk of them are slaves and servants. Next is the Imperial Bureaucracy – the army of diplomats, scholars, book-keepers, accountants and scribes that attend to the minutiae of imperial affairs. Each belongs to a particular ministry and the heads of the ministries are responsible to one of the Seven Counsellors. Most of the bureaucrats are menial functionaries who will never rise beyond the tasks of transcribing, filing and fawning to their masters but some, the clever, are arch-schemers who treat the Imperial Palace as a country completely cut-off from Khitai (which it is) and the politics of wider Khitai as some form of great game, there for them to manipulate.

The Imperial Bodyguard is the army of the Imperial Palace. It numbers 10,000 warriors that, traditionally, were hand-picked and supplied by the T'ian'an clan of the outer city. In the past decade replacement warriors have come from other parts of Khitai, much to T'ian'an's chagrin. Every member of the Imperial Bodyguard swears an oath to the God Emperor and is expected to lay down his life if it

should prove necessary. When a member of the bodyguard is too old to fight, he is either offered one of three options: a place in the bureaucracy; the option to leave the city (but his tongue is cut-out so he may never speak of what he has seen within); or he may take his own life, with the assurance that his soul – his *han* – will join the Ancestor Bodyguard which is the army of heaven.

The God Emperor's rooms occupy an area equivalent to a small town. At the centre is the Jade Throne – the massive reception area where the God Emperor receives reports from the Seven Counsellors. The Jade Throne is carved into the semblance of a dragon from a single, immense piece of jade and mounted on eight plinths of veined marble. Around the throne room are thousands of passages that connect the private and public rooms of the God Emperor's domain, including his bedrooms, bathing suites, wardrobes, private shrines, harem (he has 800 wives) and so forth. The internal configuration of this maze of rooms and passages is such that it can be changed to either suit the God Emperor's will or to confuse intruders. There is no need for the God Emperor to leave this inner sanctum – everything he could possibly want or need is brought to him – but it is customary for the God Emperor to wander the wider





palace simply to remain in touch with his direct subjects. When this happens, all, with the exception of the Imperial Guard and the Seven Counsellors, must fall prone and avert their eyes; one may only gaze upon the God Emperor's radiance if he declares it permissible to do so.

Once per year the Imperial Palace is host to the Jade Council, wherein the rulers of the various Khitan states, city-states and provinces congregate in Paikang to present their reports to the God Emperor. The population of the Imperial Palace swells enormously as the movers and shakers of mighty Khitai descend on Paikang and during this month of intense political intrigue, the whole city of Paikan benefits from an almost carnival spirit. Only those of the highest honour may enter the Imperial Palace but the entourages, being typically large, take-up residence in the wider city and, having little else to do, make the most of their stay.

RUO-GEN

West of Paikang, beyond the jungles of that city's province, the Gen plains are dominated by the great walled city of Ruo-gen. A rival to Paikang in every sense of the word, this is a city state that encapsulates grandeur.

Everything before Ruo-gen is controlled by it. Every town, village and river crossing is the property of the city; people work the land, the forests and rivers so that Ruo-gen can prosper and eclipse Paikang. Workers toil for the good of the city and warriors spill their blood to defend it. Ruo-gen was, is and shall ever be. Nothing matters but Ruo-gen's prosperity. Landslides and earthquakes might wipe-out entire settlements within Ruo-gen's shadow (and they do) but as long as Ruo-gen stands firm, there is no cause for alarm.

The walls of the city are an unbroken ring of stone a mile in diameter and 50 feet high. The spires of the city scratch at the clouds like skeletal fingers, jade cornices dazzling when the light strikes them. The western mountains loom in the distance and Ruo-gen is a great stone skull dominating the plains as though some giant had fallen to earth and left nought else behind. The single, massive gate that gives access to Ruo-gen is made of iron and bronze, its immense hinges worked by 100 slaves who open the gates at dawn and haul them shut at dusk.

In the intervening time traffic pours in and out of the city in a steady stream, for Ruo-gen welcomes trade and tribute.

Ruo-gen is ruled by the Gong Kai-quan-Gen and has been for 50 years. Kai-quan-Gen has, in this time, seen-off no less than twenty seven separate assassination attempts which include surviving eight poisonings. The dynasty he belongs to, the Quan, was ever duplicitous, fractious and ambitious. Over the course of eight centuries members of the Quan dynasty have murdered their mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, cousins, half-cousins and quarter-cousins. Power is everything to the Quan and trust impossibility. Only two trophies matter: the throne of Ruo-gen and the Jade Throne of the Imperial Court. It is the Quan ambition to secure both and to rule Khitai with a ruthlessness never before seen in the nation's long and bloody history.

The Quan dynasty dominates the higher echelons of Ruo-gen: rivals were either driven-out or slaughtered long ago. The entire ruling class of the city is of the Quan line. Many of the lower orders claim, and have, ties into the dynasty because the Quan males have sired countless bastards amongst the lower classes. The Quan heritage permeates Ruo-gen like a rash, tying together the city, the land and the people in a single, incredibly complex knot. If the God Emperor of Khitai fears any one force, be it military or political, then it is the Quan dynasty of Ruo-gen.

The city is divided along class lines. The Han class lives in one quarter of the city; two thirds of the population squashed into one quarter of the city's area. Hive-like tenements are crushed against the curving city wall with makeshift shanties built on the roofs of other dwellings so that a ragged pile of huts and makeshiftes teeters like some unholy pagoda over the stinking, claustrophobic streets. Quan edicts prevent anyone of the Han class from living anywhere else if they choose to dwell in the city walls: so, many live outside the walls in the many satellite settlements of the Gen plain but are then denied permission to enter the city to either visit relatives or to work. A stark choice.

The remaining three quarters of the city is given over to the Quan echelon. Buildings are ostentatious, flamboyant and gaudily decorated. Ornate guardians are attached to splendid pagodas and narrow ziggurats. Follies fashioned in the likeness of western buildings are used as tea houses and bordellos. The streets are wide, tree-lined and frequently enhanced by bubbling fountains. Quan family members stroll these open streets with undisguised arrogance, trailed by their slaves and servants. A current fashion is for a slave or two to walk ahead of an entourage scattering cherry blossom in the path so that Quan feet might tread on a carpet of sweet-smelling pink and white petals at all times.



The mighty palace of Quan squats at the centre of the city and deliberately mimics the Imperial Palace in design, if not in size. Here Kai-quan-Gen rules with his scheming, incestuous wife, Gei-ling on the left-hand and his wizened, sadistic sorcerer-uncle, Mhu-quan-Kee on his right. These two mimic the Seven Counsellors: Gei-ling worships the she-demon Fhaasa, which assumes the form of a half-woman, half-serpent monstrosity that delights in feasting on human entrails. Mhu-quan-Kee, on the other hand, is a student of the dark secrets of Ch'i-wen, the Water Dragon, and seeks nothing less than the destruction of the moon and the restoration of the Water Dragon to heaven. Mhu-quan-Kee sees his personal struggle as representative of the Quan dynasty's struggle against the God Emperor, with the Quan family being wrongly prevented from entering heaven whilst the current imperial dynasty lives. Kai-quan-Gen is a military leader of considerable skill. An adherent of the warrior god Cheng-Wu, he is steadily building his reserves and forces for an attack on the imperial city of Paikang. This plan is highly secretive and in public, he protests loyalty to the God Emperor but every year, at the Jade Council, he strengthens his position with subtle alliances that stretch the Quan dynasty's reach further across Khitai. He is not yet in a position to move against the Imperial Court but the day of reckoning is not too far distant.

SHAULUN

Not as big as Paikang, not as ambitious as Ruo-gen, not as introspective as Shu-Chen, Shaulun, straddling the Shau river and close to the Pai, gleams in opal and jade splendour. This is the city of the Moon Goddess, dedicated heart and soul to the veneration of Cheng-Ho and built in her honour. The people of Shaulun believe that in the waters of the river Shau, where the city stands, Cheng-Ho gazed up at the moon and desired it. From her celestial place she now gazes down upon the same waters and laments. Thus Shaulun was built to please her eye and to offer worship to this most serene of goddesses.

Shaulun is stuffed with scholars and sages who study Cheng-Ho's myths and use their seeing-glasses to peer at her face on the calm, bright nights when she displays her radiance to the earth. Buildings are tall and slender, with parapets at the apex of the towers so that the scholars can be closer to her and see more of her face. Shaulun's image is everywhere in the city: the moon in all its phases decorates buildings, walls and even the pavements. Cheng-Ho is the city's patron goddess.

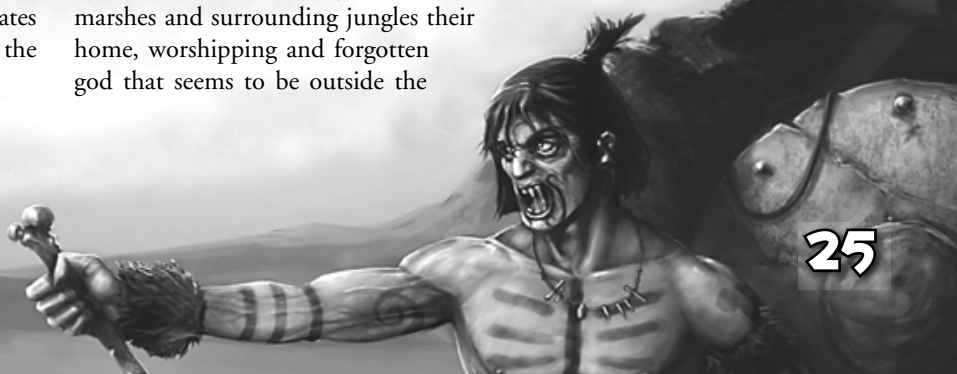
In addition to studying her countenance, others, sorcerers, summon the Moon Children in their laboratory temples. These kuei spirits are Cheng-Ho's messengers who once resided in heaven but must now reside in the underworld. They are spirits of mischief and duplicity but fall far short of being evil or malicious. The Moon Children delight in the curiosities of humankind just as a child delights in the curiosities of an anthill. They serve and teach magic and enjoy the veneration their mother receives and accept it themselves when offered. They amuse themselves by playing tricks and working mischief which, sometimes, has unfortunate consequences but is always done with innocence.

The city is ruled by the Gong Hu-Suei. Hu-Suei is also the foremost of the priests of Cheng-Ho and leads all rituals surrounding the moon goddess's veneration. He delights in mysticism and esoteric, wearing his snow-white hair and beard long and railing against the dark sorceries and secrets that the likes of Ruo-gen and Paikang dabble in constantly. His extended family is devout to Cheng-Ho's worship but lacks the same intensity of Shaulun's king. They are more prepared to investigate the ways of Paikang and Ruo-gen, to observe how cities can have many gods and thus gain a wider understanding the universe. This leads some to stray and some to corruption but most simply widen their horizons.

SHU CHEN

To the north of Paikang is the province of Shu Chen, the name of the area and its city state. The region is a mixture of inland forest and jungle and in the east, coastal marshland. Sparsely populated Shu Chen was once a rival to Paikang but its power diminished with the rise of the Ruo-gen Quan dynasty and the peculiar melancholia that settled across Shu Chen's city-state not long after Kai-quan-Gen married his wife, Gei-ling.

The jungle is typical of Khitai; dense, humid forests with few trails save for the trade roads carved out centuries before to link the city with Paikang and Ruo-gen. Towards the coast the land becomes marshy and inhospitable; a morose expanse of mangroves, thick weeds, and mosquito swarming grounds the size of small cities. Most shun the marshlands and their eerie, moaning mists that are claimed to be souls trapped between the underworld and the mortal world but a handful of insane savages have made the marshes and surrounding jungles their home, worshipping and forgotten god that seems to be outside the





Khitan pantheon. The savages are raving, orgiastic and cannibalistic, dedicated to some dark blasphemy that only they can understand.

The city state of Shu Chen is a wall-less gaggle of settlements that, over time and with the unifying hand of the great sorcerer-ruler Wu-Yun, became the sprawling city it is in Conan's time. The city is haphazard – a mixture of poor and wealthy dwellings existing side by side with little common architectural theme or style. The various districts reflect the old settlements and the families who dominate each district are the descendents of the old village clans. Shu Chen is therefore parochial and sectarian. District pride comes before the overall pride of Shu Chen although the city state does maintain a singular identity.

Because it has no wall and because Wu-Yun decreed that none should be built, Shu-Chen has been allowed to expand, clearing away the surrounding undergrowth as villages were expanded to fit the needs of the population. There are many outlying districts that are distanced from the centre of the city, which identify themselves as being part of Shu-Chen and at times, it seems that the very jungle itself encroaches into the city's fabric. Some regions of the city have been vacated, leaving ghost-towns which the jungle has reclaimed and so the edges of Shu-Chen seem to wage a constant battle with the jungle, claiming and then being claimed by, the advancing nature so that Shu-Chen's outer border is in a constant state of flux.

For two or three centuries, under the rulership of Wu-Yun (who venerated Ch'eng-huang – see page 57) Shu-Chen prospered and was seen as the true rival to Paikang. Trade flourished and relations harmonious. All that ceased when the Quan dynasty of Ruo-gen attained complete control over their city state and was sealed in the marriage of Kai-quan and Gei-ling. At that point Shu-Chen's fortunes turned. The kwei guardians Wu-Yun has summoned to look after the city departed the mortal realm for the underworld. The marsh mists of the east swept into the city, driving hundreds insane and soon Shu-Chen developed a reputation as a place forsaken by heaven and cursed by the gods of the underworld. Trade dried, influence in the Imperial Court diminished, and Shu-Chen fell into a state of melancholia for its glory days. The spirits amongst the people refuse to lift and the whole city is listless and pathetic.

THE MOANING MISTS OF SHU CHEN

The eastern edge of Shu Chen is cursed. Here, even before the Atlanteans fell two powerful supernatural enemies from distant stars fell to earth and did battle. One was destroyed and faded into nothingness; the other, mortally wounded, slid beneath the earth and its inhuman blood turned the ground into the marshland that now dominates. The mist is the creature's dying breath (though it will take hundreds of thousands of years for this thing to expire) and the moaning its rasping, protracted death rattle.

The creature beneath the ground is immense and now formless – a ghastly accretion of flesh and gangrenous tissue that has no intellect or discernible conscience. However its powers seep through the land in the form of the mist and draw to it those who seek black wisdom and insane secrets.

Anyone who spends more than a day in the marshlands, inhaling the mists, must make a Fortitude Saving Throw against DC 30. If they fail they lose 1d4 points of the Wisdom ability but gain, in its place, a randomly selected spell from the Necromantic sorcery style. Gaining knowledge of the spell is no guarantee of its use and any character that cannot use the knowledge is driven insane by it. Assign the spell a DC of $15 + 1d20$, representing its potency. Every week the character must make a Fortitude Saving Throw against the spell's potency or lose a further 1d3 Wisdom. When Wisdom reaches zero, the character is permanently insane. His dreams are filled with dread thoughts and images of an immense, all-consuming war fought over aeons by two inhuman races that care nothing for the continuation of the universe – or indeed, the fabric of reality. Any insane character is compelled to remain here in the Shu Chen marshes dedicating his life to the worship of the dying creature beneath the stinking waters.

The creature has a name: Ko-too-Lu.

The ruler of the city, Nara-Tien, is the widow of Tien-I, a benevolent descendent of Wun-Yu who fell to the madness of the marsh mists. Nara-Tien mourns for him still, refusing to let his body be interred until his mind, which she believes is loose and wandering the marshes of the east, is reunited with his soul. Nara-Tien remains veiled at all times, swathed in the mourning colour of scarlet and spends days beside her husband's skeletal remains that are placed on a great plinth in the Shu-Chen palace and guarded by spells. She has promised to trade the rulership of Shu-Chen for the return of her husband's mind so it can be reunited with its soul, although few in Shu-Chen have the will or capability to take-up the offer.

SOUTHERN JUNGLES

Between the Rolling Plains and the Kambuljan Marches the southern jungles rule. A vast swathe of jungle that bands Khitai, lush, humid and in places, so dense that entire cultures could rise and fall with wider Khitai none the wiser for their existence. The jungle abounds with exotic plant and animal life and the flora within forms the basis of many Khitan medicines and sorcery components that cannot be found anywhere else in the world, let alone Khitai.

It was to these jungles that the elephant headed god, Yogah, made his home in the remote temples where the Yellow Priests offered him veneration. There are many hidden, ruined and abandoned shrines that bear Yogah's resemblance, although the star god's influence waned a long time ago.

THE ROLLING PLAINS

The Rolling plains separate the southern jungles from the great desert, an open expanse of gentle hills, valleys, woodlands and meadows. The Gen plain is to the east and

the Rolling Plains contain many small, hidden and quiet settlements, worked by families who have owned the same properties for centuries and care nothing for the greater politics and events of the great cities.

Yet the Rolling Plains are far from idyllic. Bandits wander, unhindered, in the hills and valleys, able to prey on merchants moving across the plains as the mood takes them and finding plenty of hiding places either in the landscape or in the isolated, simple, superstitious communities. Most of these bandit gangs are content to rob rather than murder; the plains seem to exert a more peaceful nature on the people who frequent them but it is still a risk for anyone travelling across the plains without adequate protection.

Across the settlements of the plains the worship of Ch'eng-huang, Cheng Wu and Cheng-Ho is common. Shrines to these gods are common in the villages, at roadsides and in isolated forests and copses. An itinerant priesthood, known as the Mei Tei, circulates through these shrines, clad in their striking robes of orange and white, visiting each shrine in turn, conducting simple rituals and leading the veneration of the gods. The Mei Tei are peaceful and number 100. When they move they walk in single-file, the left hand on the shoulder of the priest in front, with the leading priest carrying a stout staff which guides the way. They chant and sing as they walk, bells attached to their wrists and ankles alerting all to their presence with a gentle jingling, carried far on the wind. It is considered to be very bad luck to insult or harm a Mei Tei priest and so the communities of the Rolling Plains welcome them with open hearts and feed them free of charge from their own supplies.

Some of the callous bandits abroad in the plains wear bells similar to the Mei Tei in order to lull the unwary into a false sense of security. Those that do are considered by the wider plains communities to be denigrating the Mei Tei's name and so deserving of every ill-fortune under the sky.





Khitan Born

This chapter delves into the lives, customs and traditions of the Khitan people. As well as the descriptive elements it contains rules for new classes for the Conan game specific to Khitai along with guidance on using the existing character generation rules to gain the most from Khitan characters.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KHITANS

The Khitans are an oriental people and they display markedly different physical characteristics to westerners. As they are isolated from the west by the Great Wall and very few venture into the wider world, the Khitans seem to be highly exotic when compared with the Caucasian races. The following characteristics are the most evident,

Complexion: The Khitan complexion carries a slightly yellow tinge leading to some westerners terming the Khitans 'The Yellow Men'. In the north of Khitai, the complexion is lighter; in the south of the country the skin is darker and almost bronzed. As Khitans age, their skin develops impressively deep lines and wrinkles which, amongst the southern Khitans, creates a leathery appearance to the skin.

Eyes: Like most oriental people Khitans have an epicanthic fold (that is, a fold of skin that covers the inner corner of the eye) and usually only a single crease to the eyelid. These ocular features lend the characteristic oriental appearance more so than any other facial feature. In the north, a double crease in the eyelid is more common (though still rare).

Nose: The Khitan nose tends to be broad and flat compared with that of westerners. In the north of the country noses tend to be longer and are less flattened whilst in the south and east, particularly amongst the jungle and swamp dwelling communities, the nose is slightly wider than normal.

Hair: All Khitans have dark, straight hair that grows luxuriantly, particularly in the north. The colour ranges from very dark brown through to raven-black. Hair is traditionally worn long in both sexes but neatly tied and secured with a variety of fixings (plaits, crossed sticks, ribbons and so forth). Beards are seen as somewhat uncouth in polite Khitan society although moustaches are considered to lend gravitas and importance. Amongst the learned classes it is common to shave the forehead into a tonsure; removing the hair laterally back to the crown and then wearing the long hair plaited to hang down the back. Hairstyles are commonly used to denote rank and station, with the highest placed in society possessing the most elaborate hair arrangements.

Stature: Khitans are typically shorter than westerners. The average height of a Khitan is 5'5" for males and 5'0" for females. Some from the north are slightly taller than this but generally very tall Khitans (above 5'9") are a rarity. The general stature for Khitans is a proud, upright posture, especially amongst the higher classes of society. Peasants, when in the company of the higher ranks, adopt a natural, deferential stoop to emphasise the social division.



LANGUAGE

The predominant Khitan language is called *Mandir* and it has both high and low forms. High Mandir is the language of the bureaucracy, aristocracy and artists. It is a fast, fluid tongue with an emphasis on vowel sounds with few hard consonants. Low Mandir, the language of the street and lower orders, is a coarser, even faster language that uses abbreviated forms of High Mandir and sounds clipped compared with the high tongue. It is forbidden for the lower orders to speak in High Mandir although written communication can be conducted in High Mandir especially in official documents.

In the south of Khitai, the Min language is common. Min has but one form and is functionally very different to Mandir, with a mixture of vowels and hard consonants. A Min speaker will struggle to make himself understood to a Mandir speaker and vice versa and the diversity of Min dialects can make even native Min speakers unintelligible to each other depending on their region.

Merchants and traders have therefore adopted a trade cant, known as *Fu*, which mixes Mandir and Min and is used only for commerce. It is a peculiar sounding tongue but allows the language divide to be bridged by those merchants who travel widely.

Both Mandir and Min use ideograms rather than individual letters in their written forms. An ideogram conveys single words but also whole expressions, including tense, inflection and emotional weight with thousands of ideograms making-up both Mandir and Min tongues. The written forms of both languages flow from top to bottom and from the right to left. The ideogram style is a mixture of hard and soft lines, often crossed, with swirls, dashes and dots used to convey tense, emphasis and emotion. High Mandir, in its written form, is an artwork and the scribes of the Paikang bureaucracy are trained in calligraphy to ensure perfection and clarity (but not necessarily brevity) in every document created.

In the towns and cities, literacy is commonplace; beyond them, in the wilder areas of the country, most Khitans are functionally illiterate.

DRESS

The Khitans use two fabrics in their clothes: silk and cotton. Linen is rarely used and leather is reserved for functional items only (such as armour).

Khitan clothing is divided into three main types. The *pien-fu* is a two-piece ceremonial costume consisting of a tunic-like top extending to the knees and then either a skirt or trousers extending to the ankles. The *k'ang-p'ao* is a one-piece garment extending from the shoulders to the heels, common amongst the peasantry. The *shen-i* is a cross between the *pien-fu* and the *k'ang-p'ao*; it consists of a tunic and a skirt or trousers but the tunic and the skirt are stitched together and form one piece like the *k'ang-p'ao*. Consequently, the *shen-i* is the predominant form of the three types.

All examples of Khitan clothing are characterised by wide and voluminous sleeves and a very loose fit. The tunic and trousers (or tunic and skirt), use the very minimum number of stitches for the amount of cloth used. As the main clothing forms are relatively plain in design and structure, embroidered edgings, decorated bands, draped cloth or silks, patterns on the shoulders and sashes are an ornamentation.

Darker colours are preferred to lighter shades, so the main colour of high-ranking and ceremonial clothing tends to be dark with bright, elaborate tapestry designs and ornamentation used to offset the darker colours. Lighter colours are worn by the common people and peasantry but sometimes by the higher orders household use. The Khitans associate certain colours with specific seasons: green represents spring, red symbolizes summer, white represents autumn and black symbolizes winter.

ARMOUR

Only nobles and ranking soldiers are permitted to wear armour. Leather forms the basis and most warriors tend to wear only a leather cuirass with either bronze or turtle shell plates stitched onto it to form an overlapping design. In battle, shoulder plates and guards for the upper legs are also worn, with thick padding used for the lower legs. The arms are typically unarmoured so that mobility is unrestricted.

The richest nobles or most prestigious warriors, such as those of the Imperial Guard, wear Mountain Armour. This is, again, a cuirass of leather but the scales are iron or steel and shaped to form the Mandir character for the word *mountain*, hence the armour's name. Mountain armour is strong, flexible and does not restrict mobility. Those who own it prize it and tend it with the love and care it needs to prevent against rust. Skilled armourers who can maintain and repair





Khitai Armour Characteristics

Armour	Cost	Damage Reduction	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armour Check Penalty	Sorcery Failure	Speed	Weight
Bronze Cuirass	300sp	6	+5	-4	40%	30ft	35lb
Turtle Shell Cuirass	350sp	5	+6	-3	30%	30ft	30lb
Mountain Armour	6,000sp	7	+4	-5	50%	25ft	45lb
Standard Helm	+40sp	+1	-	-	10%	-	3lb
Skirted Helm	+70sp	+2	-	-1	15%	-	5lb

Mountain Armour form a part of every self-respecting noble warrior's retinue.

Helmets are generally a leather, iron or steel cap, sometimes supplemented by bronze, iron or turtle shell scales (which form a skirt to protect the back of the neck and the ears). The richer designs are extremely elaborate, adding horns and other decorative flourishes designed to impress and reflect rank, rather than to scare or intimidate.

KHITAN SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Although Khitai presents itself as a unified nation under the control of the God Emperor, it is, in fact, a loose and frequently fractious collection of small kingdoms, each with their own agendas and designs upon the highest seat of power in the land. A kingdom can be as large as a province or as small as a city state; much depends on the ambition and political will and expertise of its ruler and the level of support he commands from the nobility.

Khitai society is highly stratified. The position of one's birth is generally set for life although, in some exceptional circumstances, mobility between ranks is possible, if an individual impresses the right people and distinguishes himself in some way.

The four classes of society are, in order of precedence:

ZHOU

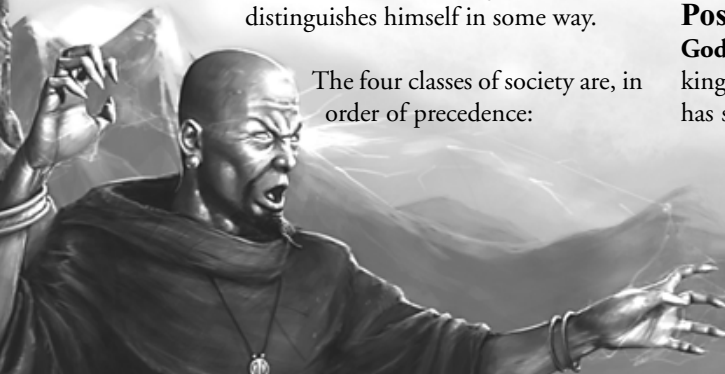
The Imperial Court. Those who claim a relationship, either directly or indirectly, with the God Emperor or God Emperor's family. The Zhou class therefore includes a variety of kings (either appointed or self-proclaimed) and the Ministers of the Imperial Court who, as direct servants of both the God Emperor and the state, are all elevated members of the Zhuzou.

At the top of the Zhou hierarchy is the Emperor, also called the *Huangdi*, who is backed by seven counsellors. Some believe the Emperor is but a figurehead and the seven counsellors make the decisions but the common belief is that the Emperor occupies the status of a demigod, at the very least. The seven counsellors are three *huang* (god-kings) and five *di* (sage-kings). The emperor title is passed from father to son, although not necessarily the oldest son. Also, Khitan politics allow for changes in dynasty so emperors can also be replaced by successful rebel leaders. Generally, royal or official titles from one dynasty are not carried over to the next dynasty. Otherwise, titles are hereditary for up to 26 generations.

Members of the Zhou class are entitled to hold or administer armies, official rites and to establish officially recognised clans and dynasties.

Positions within the Zhou

God Emperor: The Emperor of Khitai rules as a god-king. He is the head of the cults in Khitai, so he usually has sorcerous powers in addition to his noble lineage. His



power derives from his lineage, so it falls to him to make sure his ancestors are worshipped by the people as gods. If the people feel he is no longer supported by the ancestors or the spirits, he will be overthrown.

Crown Prince: The heir apparent to the throne, the Crown Prince is normally the eldest son of the Emperor and the Queen Consort, although this is not always the case. The Emperor usually consults his high ministers for advice on who to name the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince is not named a Yixing Wang (and loses such title and lands if he already is one) but lives with the Emperor. The position is dismissible at the whim of the Emperor.

Tongxing Wang: The wang is the title for a prince – he is essentially a king but of the same family as the emperor, usually sons or brothers of the emperor.

Yixing Wang: The wang is the title for a vassal king who is from a different family than the emperor, usually a gong with so much wealth that he declares himself a wang.

ZHUHOU

Beneath the emperor are the nobles. The nobles are ranked as follows: *gong* (prince); *mingong* or *kung* (duke); *hou* (marquis); *peh* (earl); *bo* (count); *tszi* (viscount); and *nan* (baron). If the noble actually governs a place, the place name is also in his title. The eldest son of a consort inherits the title from his father, retaining the same rank. Other sons from the consort, as well as from concubines and mistresses, are given titles one rank lower than their father. These nobles rarely have a place name in their titles. Dukes are required to render assistance to the emperor in an emergency. Many of these titles are granted for military merits, not blood-line merits. Thus it is easier for a Khitan to multi-class into noble than most races.

Nobles own land, raise taxes and pledge allegiance to a member of the Zhou: all members of the Zhuhou pledge allegiance to the God Emperor but in reality, the most important allegiance is with the member of the ruling Zhou for the area. Zhuhou in remote areas wield almost complete authority over their subjects; it is rare for the Zhou to become directly involved unless a significant petition from the lower orders is raised against the Zhuhou for the region. This allows the Zhuhou to behave almost like kings in their own territories and such behaviour is generally condoned as long as the Zhou's interests are not under threat.

The nobles practice horsemanship and military skills by hunting. Like most Khitans, the nobles delight in ritual. The elite of Khitan society love music, especially bells and chimes. The people honour familial relationships above all, using family to maintain social status distinctions.

Positions within the Zhuhou

Gong zi: A gong zi is any son of a king no matter what his rank or title actually is.

Gong: The Khitan equivalent of a duke or prince, a gong rules a large domain with an impressive number of troops. A gong is at the top of the Zhuhou class.

Hóu: A hóu is the Khitan equivalent of a marquess. This is also the title of lesser sons of gongs.

Bó: The equivalent of a count or earl, a bó follows the hóu in precedence. This is also the title of lesser sons of hóu.

Zi: A zi is the Khitan equivalent of a viscount. This is also the title of lesser sons of bó.

Nán: A nán is the Khitan equivalent of a baron. This is the lowest rank of the Zhuhou. This is also the title of lesser sons of zi.

Note: Any female member of the Zhuhou is simply called *gongzhu*, which means princess. The only exception is the Queen Consort of the Emperor. The social ranking of any particular *gongzhu* is the same as her husband or a step lower than her father.

QING

Beneath the nobles are the gentry, the *Oing*. These are often court officials assigned to the nobles, generals (*qingche duwei*), commanders (*qi duwei*), officers (*yunqiwei*), and knights (*enqiwei*). The lesser sons of barons are also in this rank. Any member of the nobility or gentry can be called *gongzi*. High ranking Qing resemble Zhuhou in many respects but their foremost occupation is with the defence of the realm. Again, all Qing swear allegiance to the ruling Zhou and to the God Emperor, but are also answerable to the Zhuhou for their actions. Only the ranks of Qing and above are entitled to carry weapons.



Positions within the Qing

Qingche Duwei: The Qingche Duwei are members of the qing (gentry) and rank below the Zhuhou nobles. They are comparable to generals who have been decorated in battle.

Qi Duwei: The Qi Duwei are members of the qing (gentry) and rank below the Zhuhou nobles. They are comparable to a Commander of a Knightly Order.

Yunqiwei: The yunqiwei are members of the qing (gentry) and rank below the Zhuhou nobles. They are military officers and adjutants.

Enqiwei: The enqiwei are members of the qing (gentry) and rank below the Zhuhou nobles. They are equivalent to a knight.

HAN

The Han or Low Class, is divided into two. Ranking beneath the Qing are the *gentlemen* or *Daifu*. These are professional vocations such as physicians, teachers and merchants. Scholars with the Noble Blood feat are usually of this rank. Also, the lesser sons of the gentry are of this rank. Court officials assigned to the gentry are also members of this rank. Members of the *Daifu* may also be merchants and servants. Khitan caravans trade with Kusan, Turan, Stygia, Meru, Vendhya and Iranistan. Their caravans are loaded with jade, cloth-of-gold, silk, lotus blossoms, domesticated jungle animals, gold, silver, spices, charms, amulets, porcelain figures and vases and many other works of Oriental art. These caravans and a few exiled Khitans are the only contact with the West.

Below the gentlemen are the lower Han orders. First are the yeomen or *Shi*, who are minor court officials assigned to the gentlemen, as well as the lesser sons of gentlemen. Often this rank is awarded to commoners who perform valorous deeds for the Emperor or the kings. The *Shi* are farmers and craftsmen directed by the nobility. The farmers work land owned by the nobles and must give up a ninth of their produce to the government. The craftsmen make weapons, tools and clothing as directed by the nobility.

At the very bottom of the heap are the Shumin, the peasants. Peasants are, for the most part, workers of the land and are beholden to all higher ranks.

Positions within the Han

Daifu: Daifu are the ranks of scholars, teachers, merchants and physicians: the *gentlemen*.

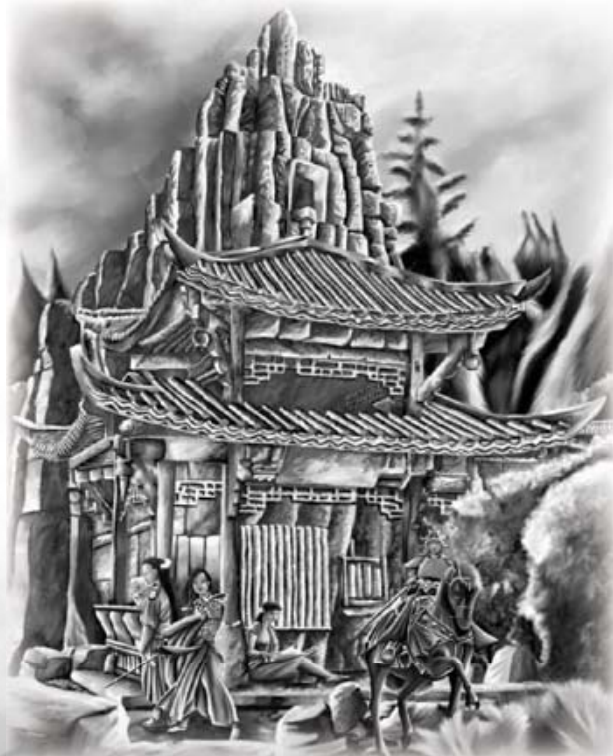
Shi: Shi are Khitan artisans, farmers and craftsmen.

Shumin: Shumin are the commoners of Khitai, the common peasantry and rabble.

WOMEN IN KHITAI

Khitai has a more enlightened approach to the role of women than in many western nations. Whilst women are, traditionally (and certainly in the lower classes) mothers and home-makers and are expected to be deferential to men, they can achieve status and import of their own. No profession is closed to any Khitan woman, even the military ones and many learned scholars, bureaucrats and physicians are female. Women therefore enjoy an *almost* equal status to men and are more than mere chattels but there is no question that Khitai is a male dominated society.

Any female member of the nobility, save for the wife of the emperor or a king (who are called queens), may be called princess or *gongzhu*. She may also incorporate any place name she is associated with into her title. Even women can become generals in this culture. The spouse of a princess, unless he has a title of his own, is given the noble title of *fuma*.



Khitan Precedence

Class	Position	Control Over	Primary Arena	Languages Permitted	Social Status	Base Legitimate Power	Maximum Power
Zhou (Imperial Court)	God Emperor	Khitai	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	6	+30	60
	Crown Prince	Khitai	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	5	+30	50
	Queen Consort of the Emperor	Khitai	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	5	+25	50
	Ministers	Khitai	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	5	+25	50
	Gong zi	Varies	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	4	+25	40
	Tongxing Wang	Kingdoms	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	4	+25	40
Zhuhou (Nobles)	Yixing Wang	Kingdoms	Political	High Mandir, Low Mandir	4	+20	40
	Gong	Provinces	Social	High Mandir, Low Mandir	4	+20	40
	Hóu	Personal lands	Social	High Mandir, Low Mandir	4	+20	40
	Bó	Personal lands	Social	High Mandir, Low Mandir	3	+20	30
	Zi	Personal lands	Social	High Mandir, Low Mandir	3	+15	30
Q i n g (Gentry)	Nán	Personal lands	Social	High Mandir, Low Mandir	3	+15	30
	Qingche Duwei	Army	Military	High Mandir, Low Mandir	3	+15	30
	Qi Duwei	Army	Military	High Mandir, Low Mandir	2	+15	20
	Yunqiwei	Army	Military	Low Mandir	2	+10	20
Han (Low Class)	Enqiwei	Army	Military	Low Mandir	1	+5	10
	Daifu	Business	Economic	Low Mandir	1	+5	10
	Shi	Farms	Economic	Low Mandir	1	+5	10
	Shumin	Family	Economic	Low Mandir	0	+0	0

ETIQUETTE

The demonstration of position within society is immediately apparent through bearing, dress, quality of residence and the language spoken. Lower positions within a class must always defer to higher positions and lower classes must always defer to higher ones in all matters. Lower orders must always bow to the higher ranks and when in the presence of the God Emperor (a rare occurrence), everyone must prostrate themselves until the God Emperor gives the permission to rise.

Lower classes are forbidden to openly disagree with the opinions and decisions of a higher class, no matter what the consequences might be. The appropriate etiquette for handling disagreements is to lodge a formal spoken or written petition with someone of a higher rank than the person with whom one disagrees. A petition outlines the disagreement, formulates the reasons, proposes the alternative



argument and proposes the solution. If the arbitrator of the petition agrees with the petitioner, he can, if he wishes, overturn or over-rule a judgment. If he does not, then the petitioner must accept the situation and is forbidden to argue the case further. It is thus rare for Khitans to argue or disagree in public, creating a sense of a highly polite, ordered, society. In reality, Khitans disagree as vehemently as any other society but their methods of expression are very different, even if the emotions behind them are the same as anywhere else.

Courtesy is of prime importance to the Khitan. Even the lowliest peasant is entitled to a certain degree of courtesy from his betters and this is what the Khitans believe places them above the uncultured savages of the west.

All Khitans believe in *justice*, which is not the same as freedom or equality. Justice is the justice of the Ancestors, which means receiving that to which one is entitled according to one's station and through one's deeds. Justice is therefore predicated on expecting no *more* and no *less* than one's entitlement. Denying what a man is entitled to is injustice; denying one's position is unjust. The Khitan notion of justice includes the concept of hospitality but precludes charity. A good and just Khitan is hospitable to anyone who comes to his house or who seeks help; but hospitality does not automatically grant entitlement. A peasant seeking refuge in the house of a noble will be welcomed but will be given a stable floor to sleep on, bread to eat and water to drink. It is not the peasant's right to expect more but neither is he expected to accept anything less.

In their general outlook Khitans are open, as honest as their station entitles them to be and fond of laughter at the right times. Despite their aloof demeanour and almost painful attention to courtesy, Khitans can be welcoming and good company but maintain a calm reserve when the situation demands it. They are not prone to irrational outbursts or violent rages. Khitan anger manifests itself as a short rebuke followed by a dignified withdrawal. Khitan happiness is the abundant use of sly wit, subtle jokes as dry as the desert sands and a playful chiding that echoes the earthy humour of the monkeys of the jungles. Vulgarity and lewdness is disdained but every Khitan harbours a bawdy streak that emerges slowly in the right company and circumstances.

FOREIGNERS

Foreigners are viewed with suspicion and disdain. Every Khitan knows that foreigners brought disaster to the world and that Khitai was blameless. While all around was chaos and savagery, Khitai retained its civilisation and developed it. Foreigners, particularly westerners, might have worked hard to attain some semblance of civilisation but they remain little better than barbarians, for all their wealth and pretensions towards culture and learning.

Foreigners are not banned from entering Khitai – indeed they prove useful for trade and as mercenaries – but any foreigner abroad in Khitai is regarded with suspicion and a certain level of distrust. It does not matter how trustworthy or hardworking a foreigner might be, he is still, at heart, a barbarian. The word of the Khitai, no matter what his station, will always carry more weight than that of a foreigner, unless the Zhou have declared that foreigner to be 'enlightened' (meaning he has demonstrated exemplary trustworthiness, honour or courtesy that even the God Emperor recognises the veracity of his word).

TRADE AND ECONOMY

Virtually all merchants are of the Daifu rank of the Han class; the act of trade and commerce is considered a low endeavour for the Zhuhou and the Zhou and so mercantile activity is left to the Han, as is befitting of their station. Successful merchants can become extremely wealthy, depending on what they trade but they generally will always be Han Daifu – *gentlemen* but never *gentry*.

Khitan caravans trade with Kusan, Turan, Stygia, Meru, Vendhya and Iranistan. Their caravans are loaded with jade, cloth-of-gold, silk, lotus blossoms, domesticated jungle animals, gold, silver, spices, charms, amulets, porcelain figures and vases and many other works of Oriental art. These caravans and a few exiled Khitans are the only contact with the West. Thus, the bulk of trade is internal but even internal trade is fraught with difficulty. Khitai is a huge country with countless competing interests. Huge swathes of uncivilised land divide the mercantile centres of Paikang, Ruo-gen, Shaulun and Shu-chen and these areas are plagued by bandits, robbers and highwaymen. Any merchant worth his salt hires bodyguards and only the most foolish trust to fate. Caravans therefore tend to be an amalgamation of merchants who are bound for the same area. Pooling resources means the ability to hire more



and better bodyguards and a typical caravan might contain 10 or more merchants, their employees, their pack animals and then a guard contingent.

Khitai produces many, many things of value to its internal and external markets: jade, cloth-of-gold, silk, lotus blossoms, domesticated jungle animals, gold, silver, spices, charms, amulets, porcelain figures and vases of all descriptions. The jungles, in particular, yield many valuable commodities: rare herbs with medicinal benefits; flowers that are used in dyeing, perfumery, cosmetics and textiles; strong, light woods (including the hugely versatile bamboo). Khitan metals include brass, copper, tin, iron and steel. The quality of Khitan iron and steel is, however, poor and so this is a commodity Khitan traders seek to import from the west (although no Khitan would ever admit the poor quality of these metals to a foreigner!).

In addition to the caravans that move throughout Khitai and the lands west of the wall, Khitan junks ply the coastal waters of the east, the many rivers cutting through the interior and occasionally, sail north to Hyrkania. Once Khitai was a more ambitious sea-going power but its isolationism has diminished that ambition and so its ships remain in territorial waters rarely venturing more than a hundred miles away from the eastern coast. In the past, though, it is believed that Khitan ships reached the lands of the Unknown West and brought back many treasures, which now reside in the vaults of the God Emperor.

The general economy of Khitai is based on three coins; the golden *sai*, the silver *dao* and the copper *hin*. The currency is based on the number 12 with 12 hin equalling one dao and 12 dao equalling one sai. Hin are small, square coins stamped with the crest of the God Emperor on one side and a Khitan animal on the reverse. Dao are half as large as a hin and similarly stamped but with the symbol of the consort on the reverse side. Gold sai are palm-sized coins that are carved rather than minted and thus of considerable value. Although a single sai is worth 24 hin, they are rare indeed and the preserve of the very wealthy. Most transactions are therefore conducted in hin and dao and both coins have a hole in the centre, allowing them to be strung onto thongs that are then worn attached to the sash.

Most cities and towns deal in coins but out in the remote settlements barter is prevalent, with goods and services traded on a like for like basis. Aside from barter and coinage, gems are a popular form of currency, particularly jade, beloved of the Khitan, which is valued in the number of sai a piece of jade equals.

SLAVERY

Slavery is common throughout Khitai. Slaves are either Khitans condemned to it as part of a punishment for crimes or are foreigners captured in battles against the Hyrkanians. Once, slaves were treated with a reasonable degree of respect but the rebellion by Lemurian slaves now means that all slaves are treated with contempt and suspicion. Cruelty (beatings, poor rations and in many cases, sexual abuse) is common: slaves are *property* and not an especially highly valued property at that.

Only the Zhuhou and above may own slaves although the Han Diafur can be granted the permission to possess no more than one or two slaves by someone of the Zhuhou class. Despite the Khitan respect for justice, slaves are utterly denied either respect or courtesy. For a Khitan to become a slave is the ultimate in shame and he can expect to be completely disowned by his family and friends as a result.

Slaves are given a new name reflecting their station – and this will be something derogatory, focusing on a facial feature or particular habit. Some slaves are referred to simply as ‘Ono’ (the Low Mandir word for slave) without even the luxury of owning a name. For them to use their previous name is a transgression punishable by a beating.

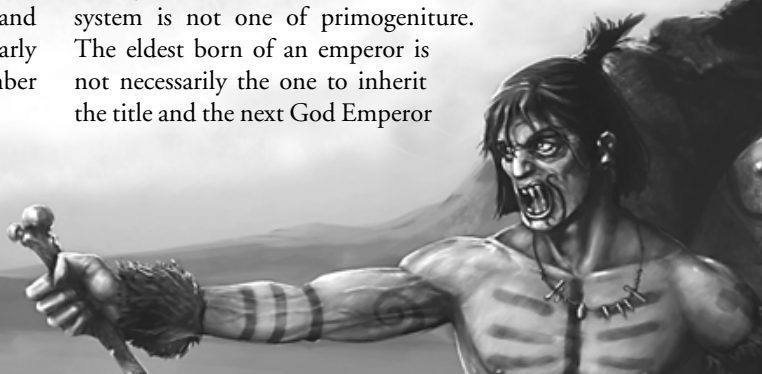
Given the slave economy, trade in slaves burgeons in Khitai. The shai-rida is the central slave market of Paikang with similar markets in Ruo-gen, Shu-chen and Shaulun. Here, slaves of all types are bought and sold: from the very young to the very old. Fit and healthy slaves are paraded, shackled at the ankles, their hands and heads bound in wooden halters, before the eager crowds. Good slaves fetch hundreds or thousands of sai; poor ones cost only a few dozen.

Slaves are denied any access to justice and it is quite legal to kill a slave – although, given their cost, this is not an everyday occurrence.

KHITAN GOVERNMENT

Khitai is ruled on dynastic lines: a succession of emperors, all from the same family with power being handed down through paternal lines – however, the dynastic system is not one of primogeniture.

The eldest born of an emperor is not necessarily the one to inherit the title and the next God Emperor





is either determined by the incumbent Emperor or through a complex process overseen by the Seven God Kings in which suitable candidates are assessed and the various gods and ancestors consulted.

Supplanting a single Emperor is therefore not a guarantee of attaining power: any pretender to the Jade Throne must have the support of the seven God Kings and be assured that the religious selection process will go in his favour. On rare occasions an entire dynasty might be challenged by another ruling family, intent on placing its own lined in charge of Khitai's fate. In these circumstances dynastic war breaks out, with the whole fabric of Khitan society being forced to choose a side whilst the two dynastic lines clash and vie for power. Naturally enough the punishment for challenging the God Emperor in this way is death and where a challenging dynastic line is concerned, that means the execution of the *entire* dynasty. Any family seeking to rule Khitai needs to be certain that it can win the struggle or every single adult member of the line is put to death and the children enslaved.

The last known dynasty is the Yah Dynasty. The governmental system in Khitai is similar to that of the Hyborian nations in that it is feudal but instead of being built around the manor the city-state is the basic political unit. Khitai is a land of volatile politics and the God-Emperor can rarely control his powerful *Gongs*, who swear Allegiance to the God-Emperor and are required to follow his edicts and support the emperor with an army if desired.

YAH CHIENG - THE RETURN OF CONAN

The Games Master should decide if Yah Chieng was the last of his dynasty or if it continued after his death in Björn Nyberg's *Return of Conan*.

THE SEVEN COUNSELLORS

Every God Emperor is supported by the Seven Counsellors: the three *huang* or God-King and five *di* or Sage-kings. Despite having the title of king, these counsellors have no land or subjects and are responsible solely for advising the God Emperor and administering the whole of Khitai.

The God Kings advise on military matters: the army, the royal fleet and the Great Wall. The Sage Kings are all sorcerers or sorcerer-priests and they advise on all matters spiritual, religious, mystical and magical. Almost every aspect of the God Emperor's life is controlled by the Seven Counsellors in some way: they define his duties, manage his diary, advise him of what is happening in the wider kingdom, read documents and transcripts to him and suggest courses of action for him to ratify. The Seven Counsellors therefore occupy the real positions of power within Khitai. They make important appointments, control the exchequer, dictate foreign and domestic policy and administer the law – all in the God Emperor's name. The God Emperor is, at any time, free to ignore the advice of the Seven but tradition and superstition dictates that this is unwise. The Seven Counsellors are always selected for their wisdom and loyalty; questioning or ignoring their judgement is considered to be offensive to the Ancestors although many emperors have challenged the advice of their Counsellors and found prosperity arose as a result.

It is the Seven Counsellors who decide which of the God Emperor's children, usually a son, will be handed the title of God Emperor. On many occasions in the past the Counsellors have deliberately selected a young child as the heir to the Jade Throne so that a regent can be appointed – someone who is not entitled to an imperial position but shares the Counsellors' interests sufficiently to warrant the position of the throne's custodian until the young God Emperor is old enough to take over the reins. The position of regent grants enormous prestige to the regent's family, bringing them into the fold of the Imperial Court. It can be a risky strategy for the Seven Counsellors if the regent and his family decide to challenge for the throne directly but it can also be a wise move if a ruling dynasty has no sons or daughters worthy of taking the title of God Emperor and a new dynasty needs to be installed. The Seven Counsellors, naturally enough, are forbidden to become either the regent or the God Emperor. In fact, to become one of the Counsel, all previous allegiances must be disavowed before the Ancestors and a blood-oath taken to uphold the office of the God Emperor. Any Counsellor who went against his oaths would find himself the target

of the other counsellors' wrath and their very soul under threat from the wrath of the Ancestors

GONGS AND HÓU

The chief reward for loyal service is land and a title. Khitai has land in abundance and it is the habit of the God Emperor to reward his loyal nobility with gifts of land that they can, in effect, rule as separate kingdoms with little interference from the Paikang administration. To go with the land, the title of *Gong* is awarded. The Gongs are usually ministers or generals of high merit and along with their land and title (which is hereditary), they are given dispensation to raise both an army and taxes. The army must, of course, swear loyalty to the God Emperor but loyalty to the Gong is always ensured and this is how some ambitious nobles manage to challenge neighbouring nobles and, if they consolidate their power to the right level, even the God Emperor. Khitans place personal loyalty above all things and so loyalty to a Gong is considered to be of paramount importance. In return Gongs reward their loyalist followers and their families with further gifts of land within their own borders, further cementing the trust and loyalty. These families become *Hóu*.

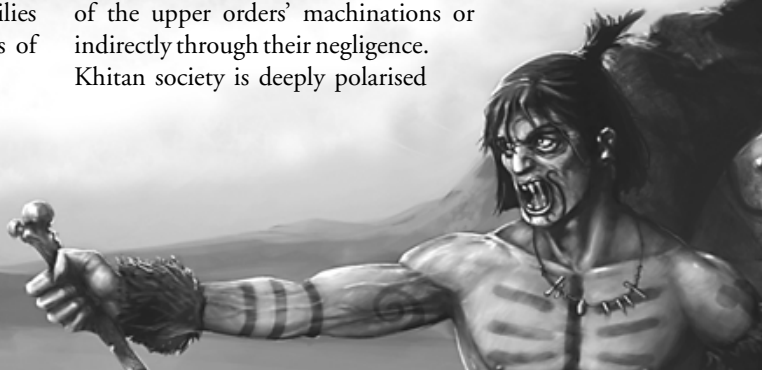
The Hóu divide up the land further to families loyal to *them*, calling them *Bó* and so on. Each of these noble families can pass their titles to their heirs, making them all hereditary titles once earned. The taxes flow upwards until they reach the God Emperor, who is then expected to use the money to build walls around the cities, roads, dams and to maintain an army. The threads of loyalty between *Bó*, *Hóu* and *Gong* become incredibly complex and support webs of intrigue and ambition that even the most diligent sage has difficulty in comprehending. The webs of relationships, loyalties, honour-debts and so forth create a complicated climate but one well-suited to scheming, power-plays and corruption. Advancement in noble society is not a question of money but a question of power and influence. Gaining power and influence means courting those who already have it and manoeuvring one's self into positions where it is transferred. The Khitan hereditary system is not based on primogeniture and so someone with money, land and influence can bequeath it to any male relative he wishes. Eldest sons cannot rely on their fathers to set them up for life: nephews, cousins and half cousins may often benefit more than direct family if they have greased the wheels appropriately. So the webs become more complex; families become sprawling networks of relatives and the seeds of tension are easily sown.

THE JADE COUNCIL

The God Emperor rules through the Seven Counsellors and they in turn, convene the Jade Council once per year. The Jade Council brings together every Gong and his advisers, plus the ministers for key areas such as the Great Wall. The Council meets within the Jade Palace at Paikang and here, the Seven Councillors hear the reports of each Gong, listen to disputes and adjudicate settlements, receive and assess taxes and tributes and dispense the God Emperor's orders to all concerned who then expected to go away and do his bidding.

The Jade Council lasts for a month and during this time the Jade Palace is overtaken by the Gongs and their retinues, swelling its usual population tenfold. During the day the Seven Counsellors conduct the essential business in the Meeting Hall of August Reason and in the evening, conduct private meetings with the Gongs whilst the Gongs conduct their own meetings (or avoid them). This is where the real politics is conducted; not in the lengthy reports, dispensations and arbitrations but in the complex, convoluted and shady discussion that are held in tea pavilions, private chambers and the secluded gardens of the palace. Alliances are made and broken, enemies reconciled and made, deals brokered, deals broken and plots hatched. Any Gong that fears the intense politicking of the Jade Council is guaranteed to become inconsequential and see his power diminish. The Jade Council is a fierce arena and the strong flourish. It is a time for both flamboyance and discretion. The politeness of the meetings veils steely wills that seek to advance positions and gain more influence. Securing the favour of the Seven Counsellors is paramount because, in that way, a Gong can influence the God Emperor and more directly benefit from his power.

At the end of the Jade Council the political arena for the next year will have been set. Gongs will have their orders but, most importantly, they will know who their allies and enemies are and will use the long trips back to their lands to decide on how best to deal with them. Couple this with the complex and fractious domestic politics of the Hóu and *Bó* and it becomes evident that Khitai, for all its veneer of culture, is really a sprawling, disorganised, tumultuous ants' nest of corruption, ambition, duplicity and deceit. Whilst the Gongs, Hóus and Bós concern themselves with their personal politics, the ordinary people of Khitai, the Han, suffer – either directly as a result of the upper orders' machinations or indirectly through their negligence. Khitan society is deeply polarised





and kept in order only through the Khitan peoples' natural belief in courtesy and adherence to tradition. In any other culture beyond the Great Wall, the Khitan social and governmental model would have guaranteed bloody civil war lasting for decades, if not centuries. Khitai itself is not *that* far removed from such a state of misery.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Khitan law is documented in the ancient documents known as the Articles. These formidable tomes, bound in brass, bronze, silver and jade, outline every law, its application and the punishments that go with it. Almost every aspect of social conduct is covered although, for practical purposes, only those that concern the key crimes of theft, rape, arson, treason, fraud and blackmail are every applied rigorously.

Most of Khitai's laws derive from the moral teachings of the ancestors and previous God Emperors, particularly the God Emperor Munhg-Nahn who delighted in the study of morality and how it the moral compass of the Khitan people should be calibrated.

The basic law concerns the devotion of children to parents and obedience of the government. The rest of the laws consist of orders handed down by the emperors and are often variations on a similar theme or clarifications on existing ones. It is the duty of the Ministers and the Zhuhou to teach the laws to the people through a variety of public proclamations, public notices and examples supported by lengthy reports on how a judicial decision or punishment has been determined.

If the law is broken then punishments are severe. The seriousness of a crime determines the form of punishment that is received. Beating with a bamboo stick is considered to be a mild punishment for public insults, disrespect and trivial theft. Pick-pockets are branded on the arms for their first and second offences, while a third offence brings them before the criminal courts and results in the amputation of limb. Armed robbery of any kind punishable by death.

Punishments for women are especially harsh and aimed at enforcing social compliance. Any girl who insults her parents is strangled; if she injures them with intent, then she is liable for torture and dismemberment.



A father is responsible for the conduct of his children and his slaves. If they commit any crimes that he could have prevented then he is charged. Stealing from a member of the family is considered a most heinous crime, especially if younger brothers take an inheritance that should have been shared between older brothers or uncles.

Those found informing, for any reason, on parents, grandparents, uncles or older brothers are struck 100 times with bamboo stick and exiled for three years either in the Swamps or the Kambuljan Marches. However, if the information the informer has given proves not to be true, then they are strangled.

Several crimes are punished by permanent exile, either to the Swamps, the Marches or beyond Khitai's borders. In this kind of case all records of the individual are wiped and he is deemed to have never existed. Permanent exile tends to be the prerogative of the Zhou and Zhuhou rather than for the lower orders, although certain Qing and Han may be deemed worthy of such treatment.

Crimes such as rape, fraud, arson and criminal damage are punishable by the criminals having their cheeks branded by red-hot irons so that all will know of their misdeeds. The branding iron used is usually shaped into the Low Mandir



character for the offence, so that no one is in any doubt of the crime committed.

The most shameful of all crimes is treason against the emperor and it is punishable by decapitation – the most shameful of punishments. Anyone found guilty of treason against the God Emperor dooms not only himself but his wife, his parents and his siblings to the same fate. If a traitor has children, then they are sold directly into slavery.

Where execution is concerned, enqiwei (knights) are usually chosen to be the executioners and they are proud of the strength needed to carry out their duties. The executioner accompanies his victim to the place of execution (generally a dank, underground chamber) where, wearing a yellow silk apron and with a sword wrapped in yellow, showing that he acts with the God Emperor's authority, he conducts the beheading with a single blow. The best executioners pride themselves on being able to decapitate a prisoner without spilling a single drop of blood.

Other crimes deemed heinous in the eyes of the Articles:

- ✱ Family burial sites are considered sacred and cannot be taken over by anyone else.
- ✱ It is forbidden, under pain of death, to cut trees down until they die naturally and permission has been granted for their felling.
- ✱ Nobody is permitted to remove any item from any tomb – even a relative's – on pain of limb amputation

KHITAN RELIGION

The Khitans hold to many strange beliefs and bizarre superstitions. One example is the legend that death must answer any question put to her by a man with courage enough to grasp and hold her. Khitan temples serve as sorcerous schools, teaching knowledge of all sorts. The emphasis on music in Khitan temples suggests some form of shamanism. The worship of Yogah of Yag also indicates that the Khitans like to worship beings they feel are real.

The Khitans believe the universe has three interconnected divisions: The heavens; the earth; and the underworld. Each person has two souls: one soul is forever linked to his descendants and the other goes into the underworld after death to continue life. Much of Khitan worship revolves around ancestor veneration, spirit and demon worship and blood sacrifices. Khitans believe that any serious request of the gods, spirits or demons must be accompanied by blood. Also, music plays a large role in their sorcerous religious rites.

The sorcerers of Khitai probably summon to the earth their dark gods so that they can be worshipped in person. In many of the stories, cities founded by easterners have dark gods living in nameless pits. Salome, in *A Witch Shall Be Born*, was educated in Khitai and when she took over Khauran, she conjured up Thaug to put in a temple, conducting sacrificial rituals to appease it. This, with evidence from other stories, indicates an eastern practise of demon-worship. As more and more demons are summoned and worshipped, the pantheon grows and becomes ever more complex.

Khitain religion receives fuller treatment in the next chapter, Ancestors, Demons and Gods.

KHITAI ATTITUDES

To westerners, Khitan attitudes often appear to be strange, bizarre or disturbing. The high degree of courtesy permeating society is quite often a shock, especially after the bustling, rowdy, rude market places of the west but there are other, quite alien attitudes displayed by the Khitans.

LIFE, AND ITS CHEAPNESS

Life is cheap in Khitai. When it passes there is a certain amount of restrained grief but it is rapidly dispensed with and life goes on. The propensity for large, sprawling families across all classes is not the product of a deep abiding love for life but a practical necessity given that infant mortality rates are high. When a death occurs, it is the will of the Ancestors and there is no sense wasting in time in grief and despair; the dead undoubtedly go to a better place and if fortunate, join the Ancestors and become one of them. Khitans mourn the loss of respect, honour and duty more than they do the dead – although after the burial the burial site becomes sacrosanct.

Human sacrifice is common in Khitai. Most sacrifices are condemned prisoners but the Khitan nobility is able to make any sacrifice it wishes, so slaves, peasants or even willing family members can find themselves en-route to the sacrificial altar or stone. Sacrifice is seen as a noble undertaking; the surest, most courteous way of proving one's dedication and loyalty, to the Gong, the God Emperor and the Ancestors. Ancestral spirits, in particular, require blood to be spilt to prove the serious nature of any request. River, mountain and other nature spirits often require similar tokens of seriousness. In addition to human sacrifice, animal sacrifice is also rampant, especially



large animals such as elephants and rhinoceroses. There is a Khitan notion that a person's spirit lingers on in a spirit world after death. If a scholar shows proper respect to departed ancestors, this realm's powers can be tapped into to aid the living. This being the case, the dead in Khitai are buried with things needed to live a comfortable life in the hereafter, for a comfortable, pleased spirit is more conducive to giving advice or favours when requested. Further, the spirits of ancient kings act as intermediaries to the actual gods, who are strange and unknowable to mortals. Spirits are nourished by human blood, so vast amounts of human sacrifice are necessary to maintain the integrity and unity of Khitai.

SORCERY

The practice of sorcery is viewed with suspicion in many nations of the Hyborian Age but in Khitai it is viewed as a legitimate pursuit and great sorcerers are revered. There is a simple understanding that the ability to harness the powers of the universe is a marvellous gift that should be put to use in whatever ways or means necessary. This does not mean that sorcerers are common in Khitai because they are not; yet they are not shunned as they are in some nations. Itinerant mercenary sorcerers wander the jungles and plains of Khitai selling their services and attaining great prestige if their services help a Gong advance or better his enemies. Local rulers seek-out and sponsor sorcerers who live in their midst, putting their powers to practical, political use.

DEMONS

The dark creatures of the underworld are summoned and worshipped as gods in Khitai. The belief is that, upon death, the soul is divided into two. One part ascends to heaven where it resides with the ancestors and assists in ordering the cosmos. The second part descends to the underworld where it continues its life unhindered by mortal constraints. Whilst in the underworld it will become privy to great secrets and knowledge and may advance to the point where it is, in fact, a demigod. An underworld soul that has achieved such power can be summoned back to the mortal world to exercise its power, for good or ill. In western cultures such creatures are called demons or fiends but in Khitai these are semi-divine creatures that

deserve reverence and sacrifice. They grant great power to the earth-bound and have cosmic insights that benefit all of Khitai.

More on demon veneration can be found in the next chapter.

JADE AND ART

Nobles wear ceremonial articles and personal ornaments of exquisite craftsmanship, usually in designs such as coiled dragons, trumpeting elephants, charging tigers and crouching bears. Jade is especially valuable to the Khitans. It is, to them, the essence of heaven and Earth combined. Almost all items used in Khitan rituals are made from jade. It is more valuable than gold. If the Emperor sends a noble or scholar on a royal mission or duty, he often gives the noble or scholar a certain jade tablet to prove that he doing divinely charged work.

Nobles often have their orders to their officials inscribed on bronze bowls. Great military or diplomatic conquests are

KHITAN TOMBS

All Khitan nobles are interred in a tomb. Lower ranking Khitans make do with a simple grave burial in a dedicated graveyard, although wealthy Han may have the funds to build an impressive mausoleum.

Tombs in Khitai are built below ground with walls and floors of rammed earth. The tombs are often huge, measuring around 60 feet long, 50 feet wide and 40 feet deep. At the bottom of this shaft a small bit is made with ledges of pounded earth. An eight foot tall wooden chamber is built to house the coffin. The Khitan kings are buried with hundreds of bronze artefacts, jades, bone objects, ivory carvings, pottery and cowry shells. These artefacts include mirrors, ceremonial vessels, bells and weapons. Men, women, children and dogs are sacrificed for the benefit of the tombs' occupants and buried with them. Their bodies litter the walkway to the tomb. They are sacrificed by beheading in a gruesome ritual. The skulls are not placed with the bodies. Instead they are stacked in the centre of the tomb facing the wooden chamber.



TOMB ARMY OF THE GOD EMPEROR Q'ANG

Known as the Lord of War, God Emperor Q'ang united the Gongs of Khitai against the Lemurian slave revolt and against one of Hyrkania's distant mass incursions into northern Khitai. The war against the Hyrkanians was especially successful and Q'ang slew many that day but also suffered a mortal wound.

On his death bed, Q'ang gathered the Seven Counsellors to him and revealed that, upon passing into the afterlife, he would face too further battles: one in heaven and one in the underworld. He therefore required an army to accompany him. Q'ang demanded that the army that had so faithfully served him in defeating the Hyrkanians should be the army to serve him after death. The Seven Counsellors, sensing the enormity of Q'ang's request, tried to convince him otherwise but Q'ang would not be dissuaded. Also, because the Seven Counsellors loved the God Emperor so much, they reluctantly agreed.

The first thing they did was prepare Q'ang's tomb. An area the size of a palace was excavated and in its centre, where the burial catafalque would stand, a pit was dug. Seven sorcerers were brought to the tomb: three from Paikang and four from Ruo-gen. The sorcerers summoned the demon ancestor Gharnesh from the underworld, the notorious terracotta destroyer and outlined Q'ang's request. Gharnesh replied that Q'ang's beliefs were true: a great rebellion in heaven and the underworld was brewing and only Q'ang and his army could lead the Ancestors and underworld spirits in retaliation against the monstrous foes.

Next, the army was ordered to muster in the tomb, surrounding the catafalque and in battle formations. Chariots, horses, spearmen, swordsmen and archers made their battle lines, believing they were simply preparing an honour guard for Q'ang's burial ceremony. However when Gharnesh manifested before them, they knew their true purpose. Their souls were taken and their bodies transformed into perfect terracotta statues. Then, Q'ang's body was brought into the tomb and placed in the centre of the statue army, just as he had led it in mortal life. The army and its emperor assembled, the great tomb was sealed shut and then covered in foliage and trees so that no one might be tempted to disturb the God Emperor's plans as he and his army marched to defeat the monstrous armies threatening the Otherworlds.

The tomb still exists, intact, in the north of Khitai perhaps 100 miles from the border with Hyrkania. Its precise location is known only to the Seven Counsellors and the incumbent God Emperor. No one knows how Q'ang fared in the heavenly war but as the Ancestors, spirits and demons still serve Khitai, he must have been gloriously triumphant.





KHITAN CALENDAR

Khitans measure time from the building of the first Great Wall, 1,600 years before Conan's time. So, for campaigns set during at the time of Conan's birth, the year will be 1580GW (Great Wall) and at about the time of the story 'Tower of the Elephant' around 1600/1601GW.

Each year is divided into 12 months, with each month named for its position – so, First Month, Second Month, and so forth. Each month is 30 days long, with five days segregated for special holidays: Emperor's Day, Ancestors' Day, All Gods' Day, Spirits' Day and New Year's Day. The order of months and special holidays is below:

New Year's Day
First Month
Second Month
Emperor's Day
Third Month
Fourth Month
Ancestors' Day
Fifth Month
Sixth Month
All Gods' Day
Seventh Month
Eighth Month (month during which the Jade Council convenes in Paikang)
Ninth Month
Spirits' Day
Tenth Month
Eleventh Month
Twelfth Month

The five special days are times of great celebration and public holidays. Feasts are common amongst the wealthy orders and the lower classes enjoy whatever treats they have managed to save during the year.

NEW YEARS DAY

New Year is celebrated with fireworks and feasting. A serpent is made from papier-mâché and traditionally burned to symbolise the passing of the old year and the rising of the new from the ashes. People wear green, which is a lucky colour for a new year and small gifts meant to bring prosperity are exchanged between families.



EMPERORS DAY

On Emperor's Day it is customary for a member of the Seven Counsellors to read out a proclamation from the God Emperor that is meant to benefit all people. This might be a reduction in taxes for a month or the granting of an additional holiday. Prisoners of certain crimes might be released. This is an opportunity for certain politically astute announcements to be made ahead of the Jade Council, which convenes in the eighth month and the proclamation is always eagerly awaited by the rich and powerful.

ANCESTORS DAY

All ancestors are worshipped most reverently on this day. Houses are cleaned from top to bottom the night before and at dawn, whole communities troop to the major ancestral shrines where the priests lead prayers and offerings. A sacrifice (a condemned criminal, usually) is made and then a feast held, with places reserved for the ancestral spirits. Those hoping for great miracles await Ancestors' Day with barely disguised impatience; this is the day when the ancestors are closest to Khitai and the day when their power to show signs and work heavenly power is greatest.



ALL GODS DAY

The day on which all gods, whether residing in heaven, the mortal world or the underworld are venerated simultaneously. This is a day of great reverence given over to solemn prayer and complex cult rituals. In Paikang, 100 condemned prisoners are sacrificed in the public square before the Imperial Palace and other sacrificial offerings are made throughout the cities of Khitai. As evening descends great parades replace the solemnity of the rituals with people donning papier-mâché costumes of animals (elephants are popular) to parade through the streets.

SPIRITS DAY

This is the Khitan equivalent of the harvest festival and celebrated more in the northern croplands than in the southern, jungle communities. The nature spirits are venerated and thanked for providing a bountiful harvest or placated if the harvest was especially poor. There are no sacrifices on this day but offerings of food and drink are made at the countless small nature spirit shrines scattered throughout the land.

KHITAN CHARACTER CLASSES

KHITAN BARBARIANS

Barbarian is a prohibited class for the Khitan. Any barbarians found in the trackless jungles or dank swamps of Khitai are not technically part of the Empire and thus are not Khitan. These barbarians are believed to be cannibal by most Khitans. Certainly they eat foods most would refuse. They cover themselves in mud paint to ward off mosquitoes and other insects. They adhere to unusual gods, venerating serpents, insects and reptiles as manifestations of divine will. Barbarians from these regions should take the Great Fortitude feat to fight off contagions. They have barbarian as a favoured class, have a -2 racial penalty against hypnotism, a +2 racial bonus to Hide checks, and have Hide, Profession (boatman) and Survival as background skills. All classes other than barbarian or commoner are prohibited to them.

KHITAN BORDERERS

Khitai uses borderers to defend its frontiers and to cut paths through the humid, tangled jungles. The Khitan borderer's

passion is for leading people safely through the wilderness. He knows the jungle trails as well as he knows himself and he is a part of the jungle in a way that few others can match. He is not much interested in finding new lands or territories but in fully exploring those areas already known. He has a vested interest in protecting the safety of his trails, so he will crush bandits and natives who endanger them or his charges. He is often a shrewd negotiator and is far more comfortable in civilised society than many woodsmen of other realms are. He is fairly talkative and friendly and far more accepting of outsiders than many other borderers. He has to be; his livelihood depends on satisfying those he guides through the jungles.

Khitan borderers often take the Khitan jungle hunter combat style, the Khitan unarmed combat style or the archery combat style. Many Khitan borderers are dabblers in the Counterspells sorcery style to protect them from ancient spells guarding the ruins of Khitai's jungles. The background skills of the Khitan aid the borderer in his hunts. Knowledge (arcana) helps him know the darksome secrets of the twisted jungles and their grim ruins, Knowledge (any) can be used for geography, nature or local knowledge to good effect and Move Silently, of course, is always a need in a black jungle crawling with death on padded paws or slick scales. The cat-footedness of Khitans aids their Move Silently ability greatly. The Khitan borderer almost always puts a few ranks in Diplomacy, although rarely more than five.

The wild hunter, the emissary, the runner, the guide, the skirmisher, the scout (see *Conan: Free Companies*) and the outlaw are all admirable class combinations for the Khitan. The guide is perhaps the most likely combination, as scholar is a favoured class for the Khitan. Guides lead other scholars and visitors to the curious ruins hidden by the night-time jungles of Khitai.

RULES VARIANT

The Games Master may allow Khitan borderers to dabble in the Nature or Oriental sorcery styles.

KHITAN NOMADS

Nomad is a prohibited class for the Khitan. Some Khitan soldiers multiclass into nomad to become jinettes (see *Conan: The Free Companies*), but this is uncommon.





NOBLES

Khitai has a long-standing and rich tradition in nobility and class hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy is the Emperor, called the *Huangdi*, who is backed by seven counsellors. Some believe the Emperor is but a figurehead and the seven counsellors make the decisions. The seven counsellors are three *huang* (god-kings) and five *di* (sage-kings). The emperor title is passed from father to son, although not necessarily the oldest son. Also, Khitan politics allow for changes in dynasty so emperors can also be replaced by successful rebel leaders. Generally, royal or official titles from one dynasty are not carried over to the next dynasty. Otherwise, titles are hereditary for up to 26 generations.

Beneath the emperor are the nobles. The nobles are ranked as follows: *gong* (prince); *mingong* or *kung* (duke); *hou* (marquis); *peh* (earl); *bo* (count); *tszi* (viscount); and *nan* (baron). If the noble actually governs a place, the place name is also in his title. The eldest son of a consort inherits the title from his father, retaining the same rank. Other sons from the consort, as well as from concubines and mistresses, are given titles one rank lower than their father. These nobles rarely have a place name in their titles. Dukes are required to render assistance to the emperor in an emergency. Many of these titles are granted for military merits, not blood-line merits. Thus it is easier for a Khitan to multi-class into noble than most races.

Beneath the nobles are the gentry, the *Oing*. These are often court officials assigned to the nobles, generals (*qingche duwei*), commanders (*qi duwei*), officers (*yunqiwei*), and knights (*engqiwei*). The lesser sons of barons are also in this rank. Any member of the nobility or gentry can be called *gongzi*.

Ranking beneath the gentry are the gentlemen. The gentlemen or *Daifu*, are often sages or physicians. Scholars with the Noble Blood feat are usually of this rank. Also, the lesser sons of the gentry are of this rank. Court officials assigned to the gentry are also members of this rank. Below the gentlemen are the yeomen or *Shi*, who are minor court officials assigned to the gentlemen, as well as the lesser sons of gentlemen. Often this rank is awarded to commoners who perform valorous deeds for the emperor or the kings.

Any female member of the nobility, save for the wife of the emperor or a king (who are called queens), may be called princess or *gongzhu*. She may also incorporate any place name she is associated with into her

title. Even women can become generals in this culture. The spouse of a princess, unless he has a title of his own, is given the noble title of *fuma*.

Nobles wear ceremonial articles and personal ornaments of exquisite craftsmanship, usually in designs such as coiled dragons, trumpeting elephants, charging tigers and crouching bears. Jade is especially valuable to the Khitans. It is, to them, the essence of heaven and Earth combined. Almost all items used in Khitan rituals are made from jade. It is more valuable than gold. If the Emperor sends a noble or scholar on a royal mission or duty, he often gives the noble or scholar a certain jade tablet to prove that he doing divinely charged work. In addition to jade, the nobles of Khitai wear silk. The Emperor and his counsellors usually wear yellow silks. The nobles dress in high-necked, long silk jackets and embroidered trousers, the women fixing their hair in complicated coiffeurs.

Nobles often have their orders to their officials inscribed on bronze bowls. Great military or diplomatic conquests are likewise commemorated in bronze.

Charisma will almost always be the highest statistic for a Khitan noble. Khitai's culture places a lot of value on strong leadership. Khitan nobles should choose Knowledge (nobility) as one of their background skills. Knowledgeable is a good choice of feat, taking advantage of the character's racial bonus and the noble's special regional bonus to make a true know-it-all. Walking quietly is important to Khitans, so a few ranks should be placed in Move Silently. The Khitan noble should take either Dodge or Improved Unarmed Strike for his bonus feat. Bluff, Diplomacy and Intimidation are also appropriate for the Khitan noble. Khitans tend to be looked at with suspicion by other races, making Intimidation a natural choice. Their inscrutable, almost unemotional, mien makes Bluff another natural choice. They are also known for careful word choice and precise emphasis on tone and inflection, making Diplomacy yet another natural choice. Khitan nobles tend to be scrupulously honest and most take the honest subtype of Reputation.

Kings of Khitai practise divination. Using a bone, such as an ox scapula or a tortoise shell, the king inscribes a question on one side. He drills an indentation in this side, then applies a heated point to the depression. This causes the other side of the bone to crack and the cracks are interpreted for their meaning. Some kings do the interpretation themselves while others employ a court diviner for the interpretation. Many kings and nobles of Khitai at least play around in Divination via the Dabble feat.

The noble savage, the exile, the king of the coast, dilettante, the mercenary knight and the jinette (see *Conan: The Free Companies*) are all choice class combinations for the Khitan noble. The dilettante is the most likely because scholar is a favoured class for the Khitan. The exile is another good choice, as most Khitans met by those of the West are usually exiles or sorcerers.

RULES VARIANT

The Games Master may allow Khitan nobles to dabble in the Nature or Oriental sorcery styles.

'He was a magician from far 'Khitaí, returning to his native kingdom after a journey to Stygia. He took me with him to purple-towered Paikang, its minarets rising amid the vine-festooned jungles of bamboo and there I grew to womanhood under his teaching. Age had steeped him deep in black wisdom, not weakened his powers of evil. Many things he taught me-'

*'Robert E. Howard.
A Witch Shall Be Born*

SCHOLARS

Most Khitan sorcerers value information above all else and though they will not hesitate to slay those who deserve it or are their allotted targets, they prefer to avoid unnecessary deaths. They also learn Oriental magic and curses, making them highly effective combatants. They favour staffs as a weapon and, if they can get them, Staffs of Death (see *Conan the Roleplaying Game*) as a means of delivering their spells. Khitan sorcerers almost always travel and train in small groups. One member of the group will be the senior sorcerer, responsible for teaching the others. He will usually be scrupulously fair but by no means a pushover.

SOLDIERS

The brawler, the skirmisher, the warrior of the wasteland, the sea hawk, the warrior of the horde (see *Conan: Hyboria's Fiercest*), the military assassin and the jinette (see *Conan: Free Companies*) are all appropriate class combinations for the Khitan soldier.

KHITAN PIRATE

Khitan pirates usually strike at night. They sneak up alongside whatever ship was chosen for their prey. Once alongside, the pirates use long bamboo poles with hooks as a form of ladder to climb aboard the prey ship. Once aboard, the Khitan pirates steal cargo and anything else left unsecured. Other pirates take a more active role in attacking ships and approach their prey with bows or crossbows firing. Some pirate captains run protection rackets for fishermen and other fleets in addition to the usual kidnappings, ransoms, thefts and murders. Most Khitan pirates take ranks in Hide and Move Silently, avoiding direct combat if possible. Many Khitan pirates are rebels against the god-emperor of Paikang and are often led by a shaman as opposed to a traditional pirate captain. A Khitan pirate should probably choose Dodge or Improved Unarmed Strike as his 1st level bonus feat. Knowledge (geography) is possibly the most appropriate Knowledge skill to take for his Background Skill choice.





Khitan pirates are hanged immediately upon capture, usually with no trial. They are virtually never imprisoned save on lesser charges because their vocation as a pirate was not known. These prisoners will not talk about their maritime activities to anyone for fear they will be hanged. If imprisoned on lesser charges, they usually receive a black ring around one of their arms. Many pirates sport several of these dishonourable rings as badges of honour. Colourful and elaborate tattoos are also common among the pirates, who are misfits from society and use the tattoo as a symbolic severing of the 'natural' order of society by giving themselves unnatural colouring.

The Corsair, Treasure Hunter, Sea Captain, Sea Chanter, Privateer and Smuggler (see *Hyboria's Fiercest*) are appropriate multi-class options for the Khitan character. Also, the marine from *Conan: The Free Companies* is appropriate.

KHITAN THIEF

Most Khitan thieves live in the urban cities. They will take skills and feats appropriate to their role in society. Their racial bonus to Move Silently helps them become excellent assassins, burglars and muggers. Horse thieves are common, as horses are rare and valuable commodities in Khitai. Interestingly, Khitan culture believes placing umbrellas in urns near the front door of the house wards off thieves. Some thieves superstitiously back off from robbing a home with such an umbrella placed; others do not care.

Khitan thieves tend to be poor, landless, delinquents and misfits. Criminals in Khitai are tattooed with a black ring around an arm. Each offence warrants another ring. Some criminals get more ornate tattoos as testament to their disregard for authority. Tattoos also mark the misfits, who get them as a symbol that they are unwilling to adapt to society. These tattoos are elaborate and painful to get, yet they cover nearly the entire body of many of the best thieves. Unlike Hyborian and Zamorian thieves, Khitan thieves do not bother to keep a low profile. They walk about in gangs in flagrant disregard for public decency. They tend to organise into crime families, although blood-relationships are not necessary for the group formation.

Khitan have a racial bonus to all Knowledge checks and to Move Silently checks. This implies a racial tendency toward intelligence and cat-footedness. A

Khitan character makes a wonderful Intelligence-based thief as well as an excellent Dexterity-based thief. Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike and

Weapon Focus (staff) are the most appropriate bonus feats for the 1st level Khitan thief.

Although not shown on in the multi-class options for thieves because only this culture would produce one, it would certainly be in keeping with the culture to create a thief-scholar who is pretty much a ninja.

The Bounty Hunter, Crime Lord, Wastrel, Grimalkin and Minder multi-class options are suitable for the Khitan thief. Crime lord is doubly appropriate because of the bonus to Knowledge checks. Grimalkin is well-suited because scholar is a favoured class for the Khitans; they usually take the Oriental sorcery style early on and tattoo themselves with symbols of sorcerous power.

Any of the Thief or class variants are appropriate for the bandit gangs roaming areas such as the marches or the northern hills and valleys.

KHITAN TEMPTRESS

Often known as 'green dragons' in Khitai, the Khitan temptress finds herself in an interesting position. Due to ancestor worship and other cultural factors, the family in Khitai is sacred and holy, as are familial roles. The role of the woman in a family is to be gentle, calm, respectful and to obey her husband or father (depending if she were married or unmarried). The temptress who betrays this is practically disobeying the order of the universe, her ancestors and is committing blasphemy. Thus, the quintessential temptress is breaking some serious bonds when she rebels against her assigned role in society. Femme fatale type temptresses, who put on male armour and go off to war pretending to be male or otherwise break from man's shackles bring dishonour not only on themselves but also on their entire family. Worse, her immediate family is not the only family dishonoured; her *entire* family, past, present and future is dishonoured. She risks the displeasure and the curses of her ancestors. Still, there are those brave enough to risk it all for glory and success.

Many Khitan temptresses get tattoos to symbolise their break from 'decent' society. Those who are caught and punished are tattooed with a black ring around an arm for every offence. Some go ahead and adorn themselves with symbols of feminine power, such as the green dragon. Femme fatales are known to dress as men and fight in wars in full armour, often pretending to be men. Black widows prowl among the nobility, marrying for wealth and position, controlling men from behind the scenes. Lolitas twirl men around their little fingers with an almost sadistic glee.



As far as sex goes, in Khitai, both men and women are seen to have magical forces within them that are counterpoints to each other and necessary for life. The female magical force is felt to be infinite within each woman but the male magical force is considered quite finite. Thus, sexual relationships are seen as a necessary transfer of these forces to the other. Since the female force is infinitely contained in each woman, she is expected to climax multiple times, masturbate often and have sex with other women if she wants. Men, however, are expected to climax once and must never masturbate or have sex with another man, since they would lose their finite magical energy and not get anything back. Women who have sex with many men are felt to have more magical energy, so many men seek out prostitutes.

The Manhunter, Nymph, Manipulator, Siren, Vamp, Shield Maiden and Black Widow multi-class concepts work well for the Khitan temptress. The temptress class is favoured for Khitan women.

KHITAN CHARACTER KIT

The people dress in high-necked, long silk jackets and embroidered trousers, the women fixing their hair in complicated coiffeurs and optionally dispensing with the trousers, wearing a slit skirt instead. The nobles dress similarly but their clothing is made out of more elaborate materials. Silk and cotton are common materials for clothing. Scholars shave their heads. Note that Khitan steel is weak (-2 on Hardness rating, 1 minimum).

Borderer: Leather jerkin, bow (any +0), 20 arrows, steel cap, arming sword, large shield, broadsword.

Noble: Noble outfit (elaborate embroidery on silk), jade ornament, bronze bowl with title and jurisdiction inscribed, intricate, lacquered armour, complete with tassels and flaring helmets secured with a complicated bow (treat as scale hauberk and great helm), a war sword, Khitan strength bow (damage as hunting bow, up to +2), 20 arrows, any shield, belt, belt pouch, horse and riding gear.

Pirate: Cutlass, silk trousers and jacket, knife, buckler, 1d4 black rings tattooed around one arm, other tattoos of choice.

Scholar: Quarterstaff; jade dagger; three small, inscribed, two-pitch hand-bells; high-necked, long silk jacket, embroidered trousers, hooded and wide-sleeved robes (dark grey or black), sandals, incense worth 100 sp, herbalist's kit, quill, ink, 10 sheets of parchment

Soldiers: Soldiers may pick one group from the following groups of weapons.

- ✱ Infantrymen have a quilted jerkin, a wicker shield (destroyed after five rounds of active combat), bronze knife and a yard-long, wood-hafted bronze halberd or spear and a sharpening stone.
- ✱ Cavalry have a quilted jerkin, steel cap, large shield, broadsword, horse and riding gear.
- ✱ Archers wear a leather jerkin, bow (any +0), 20 arrows, steel cap, arming sword, large shield, broadsword and bronze knife.
- ✱ Charioteers wear a leather jerkin and light helmets secured with elaborate bows; they are issued a chariot, two horses, bronze knife and a yard-long, wood-hafted bronze spear, a wicker shield (destroyed after five rounds of active combat) and a hunting bow with 10 arrows.
- ✱ Player Characters with the Noble Blood feat may wear intricate, lacquered armour, complete with tassels and flaring helmets secured with a complicated bow (treat as scale hauberk and great helm). This armour design has an exotic, sinister look to Westerners. They also have a war sword, bow (any +0), 20 arrows, any shield, belt, belt pouch, horse and riding gear.

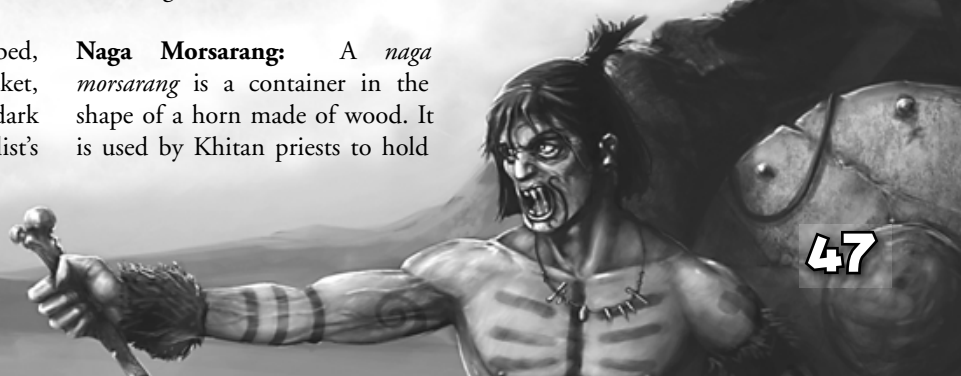
Thief/Temptress: Dagger or quarterstaff, 1d4-1 black rings tattooed around one arm, other tattoos of choice. Thieves start play with thieves' tools.

UNUSUAL ITEMS FROM KHITAI

Batak Stick: A batak stick is a bamboo stick inscribed with Khitan writing (usually High Mandir). These writings can include instruction manuals, myths, fables, poems, missives and even sorcerous spells. They function as any other book or scroll, magical or mundane.

Gharu Incense: Gharu trees in the *Swamps of the Dead* (south of Khitai) produce a dark, hard resin that creates a mystical incense used to contact the spirit world. The shamans of the swamp tribes refuse to sell the incense because they believe a curse will fall on tribes who misuse the incense; treating the resin and incense as a commodity is seen as abuse. The use of Gharu incense adds a +2 circumstance bonus to any Perform checks made while breathing its fumes.

Naga Morsarang: A *naga morsarang* is a container in the shape of a horn made of wood. It is used by Khitan priests to hold





their herbs, magical components and other sorcerous items. The wooden horn is usually carved with human figures seated on *singhas*. A *singha* is a Khitan monster that is part crocodile, part water buffalo and part human.

Pagar: A *pagar* is a magic charm used by Khitan shamans, especially in the south and in the Swamps of the Dead. A *pagar* is a 10 inch tall, hollow wooden figurine. The hollow figure is filled with powdered medicine and the hole is plugged. The *pagar* can be used in healing rituals. The use of a *pagar* on a sick or wounded Khitan who believes in ancestor worship can add a +2 bonus to any related save or skill check to heal the patient.

Statue of a Shambling Elder God: The statue is of some Elder God, one so ancient that any record of its popular worship no longer exists, a god who is remembered now only in the darkest of cults in their innermost secret circles. Seeing the idol causes a Terror check DC 18. Pausing long enough causes one to 'hear' a mental whisper if the character has at least a 10 Wis. All creatures who hear this horrible whisper within a 60-foot spread must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or be affected strangely for 1d2 rounds. This strange affectation causes the hearer to attack the statue with a melee or ranged weapon on a roll of 1-3 on a d20 or babble incoherently on a roll of 4-10 on a d20 or flee away at top speed on a roll of 11-14 on a d20 or attack the nearest person on a roll of 15-20 on a d20. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the idol in this manner for 24 hours. Spending any time mediating in front of it or even working around it for a long period of time causes a Corruption save (DC 15). The idol can teach spells, so a sorcerer who mediates in front of the statue after sacrificing a life to it may gain sorcerous knowledge.

KHITAN NAMES

The following name lists are representative of Khitan names. Others can be found throughout this book and, of course, in the Conan stories. The names here are based on traditional Chinese names, because Khitai is essentially a Chinese analogue but you need not feel constrained by typically Chinese-sounding names; as long as the name has an oriental flavour, then it will be reflecting the themes of the saga.

MALE NAMES

Ah-cy, Ai-de, An-shi, An-te-hai,
An-yan, An-yi, Bai-luo, Baio,

Bang, Bang-xao, Bao-qing, Bao-tian, Bei, Biao, Bi-jun, Bin, Bing, Bing-de, Bing-zhang, Bing-zhong, Bin-ying, Bor-zeng, Bu-wei, Cai-fei, Ch'ang-chieh, Chang, Chang-lit, Chang-wei, Chang-yong, Chao, Chao-yang, Chee-hwa, Cheh, Cheng-en, Cheng-gong, Cheng-hao, Cheng-ho, Cheng-ji, Cheng-qian, Cheuk-yan, Cheung, Chi ju, Chia-ch'ing, Chiah-jen, Chia-kang, Chia-liang, Chiang-hui, Chien-shih, Chih, Chih-hsiung, Chih-tui, Chi-ming, Ching, Ching-hsia, Ching-wei, Chin-yau, Chi-young, Chong-xian, Chong-yee, Cho-yun, Chua chay, Chua-kah, Chuk-yan, Chung, Chun-hua, Chun-mei, Chut-sai, Cong, Dai-lin, Dan-zu, Dao-zi, Da-xia, Decheng, De-shi, De-wei, Ding-bong, Dong, Dongdo-pa, Dong-hua, Dong-po, Dou-guan, Dou-wan, Du, Du-yang, Eng-hee, En-guo, En-lai, Er, Fa-hsien, Fai, Fa-tang, Fei, Fei-hsien, Feng, Feng-linag, Feng-xiang, Feng-yi, Fo-hian, Fook, Fu, Fu-chi, Fu-Kang, Fu-po, Fu-quan, Gah-fat, Gan, Gang, Gang-sheng, Gao, Ghi-cheng, Gin-fan, Gong, Gong-sun, Gu, Guan-cai, Guang, Guan-pei, Guan-xiu, Gui, Gui-fan, Gui-fei, Guo, Guo-dong, Guo-fang, Guo-feng, Guo-liang, Guo-ning, Guo-qing, Guo-quiang, Guo-xiu, Hai-dong, Hai-feng, Hai-liang, Han, Hang-fu, Hang-ki, Han-wu, Hao, Hao-hing, Hark, He, Heng-zong, Hen-to, He-ping, Hiang-ta, Hi-yuan, Ho, Hong-bin, Hong-bo, Hong-quan, Hongwu, Hoo-gwo, Hou, Hou-kang, Ho-win, Hsiao-lou, Hsi-chuen, Hsien-feng, Hsi-men, Hsin-pei, Hsin-ping, Hsin-ta, Hsu, Hsuang-tsung, Hsueh-liang, Hsui-chen, Hsui-chuan, Hu, Hua-ding, Huai-yi, Huai-yu, Huang, Huang-di, Huang-fu, Hui, Hui-ying, Hung, Hung-chang, Hung-k'uei, Huo-tu, Hwen-thiang, Hwui-ning, I-po, I-tsing, Jai-guo, Jang-lu, Jen-djeh, Jen-kan, Jen-ta, Jhong-shun, Ji, Jian, Ji-an, Jian-cheng, Jian-gang, Jian-gun, Jian-guo, Jian-ying, Jian-zhang, Jiao-long, Ji-e, Jin, Jing, Jing-bo, Jing-quo, Jing-sheng, Jing-shuan, Jin-guo, Jing-xiang, Jing-yu, Jing-zhong, Jin-song, Jin-woo, Jiong, Jit wei, Jiu-ling, Jo-hsi, Joong, Joy-shan, Ju-ao, Ju-long, Jun, Ju-wei, Ju-yi, Ju-zheng, Ka-fei, Kai-ge, Kai-shek, Kai-xi, Kang, Kang-xi, Kao-kan, Kaong, Kao-tsu, Ka-pa, Kee, Ke-huy, Kei-thing, Keng-chi, Keung, Ke-yong, Ke-yue, Khai, Khoi, Kian-tat, Kian-zhi, Kien, Kien-lung, Ki-tong, Koi-sho, Kol-in-sen, Kong, Kuan, Kuang, Kuang-an, Kuang-yin, Kuan-tai, Kuan-yew, Kuei-lin, Kun, Kung, Kung-zheng, Kwang-chih, Kwan-yew, Lai-hsiang, Lan-fang, Lang, Lan-quing, Lao, Lao-che, Lao-sheng, Lau-po, Lee tai hoi, Le-song, Liang, Liangde, Liang-hsi, Liann-wei, Lian-wei, Li-ben, Li-chi, Li-cong, Lieh, Lien-ying, Li-hong, Ling-kung, Ling-lai, Li-ping, Li-ren, Liu-chun, Liu-liang, Li-xue, Li-zhi, Li-zhu, Loo, Lu, Lu-fang, Lung, Luo-han, Luo-lang, Luo-shan, Lu-po-teh, Lu-shan, Ma-huan, Man, Mang, Man-keung, Mao, Mao-you, Mei, Mei-shan, Mei-shio, Min, Ming, Ming-an, Ming-feng, Ming-hoa, Ming-jiang,





FEMALE NAMES

Ming-yu, Min-zhong, Mi-yuan, Mo, Mo-ruo, Mun-wah, Ni, Ning, Ning-qing, On, Pang, Pao-tzu, Pei, Peng, Pi-ao, Pie-qi, Pin-zhen, Po-fu, Pok-too, Po-sin, Pu-feng, Pu-la, Qian, Qian-fu, Qian-gui, Qian-hua, Qi-chang, Qi-chao, Qi-chen, Qing-hua, Qing-lai, Qing-nian, Qin-shu, Qi-zhen, Quan, Qu-bing, Quiang, Qui-li, Quon, Ren-qing, Run-ming, San-gui, San-pao, See-tong, Shan, Shan-bo, Shang-de, Shan-tang, Shao-qi, Shao-zu, She, Shen, Sheng, Shi-fa, Shi-fu, Shih-k'ai, Shi-kai, Shi-lin, Shi-min, Shing, Shi-ping, Shi-xian, Shi-yu, Shou-chien, Shou-feng, Shou-xin, Shuan-yan, Shu-de, Shu-yaan, Shu-yen, Si, Si-dao, Siu-chung, Si-xun, Song, Sun, Sun-wei, Su-shun, Su-wu, Sy-ing, Sze, Szeto, Ta-heng, Tai, Tai fat, Tai hoi, Tai sun, Ta-kai, Tak-hing, Tak-keung, Tak-wai, Tan, Tan-ming, Tao, Tat, Te, Teh-huai, Tia, Ti-an, Tian-bai, Tian-yun, Tien-kai, Tin-jong, Tong, To-wai, Tse-peng, Tse-tung, Tsing, Tso-i, Tso-lin, Tsu-wee, Tu-an, Tu-fu, Tung, Tung-chi, Tuo-zhou, Tyan-yu, Tze-meng, Tzu-hsia, Tzu-jao, Tzu-yu, Wai-ho, Wan-fang, Wan-fu, Wang-fen, Wan-hua, Wan-ling, Way-ming, Wei, Wei-fang, Wei-guo, Wei-hong, Wei-kang, Wei-liang, Wei-qian, Wei-qiang, Wei-quo, Wei-sng, Wen, Wen-hua, Wen-huan, Wen-zhong, Wing, Wing-chiu, Wing-fung, Wing-kit, Wing-tat, Wu, Wu-han, Wu-ji, Wu-jiang, Wu-sheng, Wu-shiun, Wu-shun, Wu-ti, Xian, Xian-gan, Xiang-ling, Xian-yao, Xiao-gang, Xiao-mei, Xiao-peng, Xiao-shuang, Xiao-wei, Xiao-xuan, Xiao-yan, Xiao-yong, Xie-li, Xi-ku, Xin, Xin-fang, Xing-fu, Xing-hua, Xing-li, Xing-peng, Xing-yun, Xinpeng, Xiong, Xi-tong, Xiu-tou, Xi-wang, Xu, Xuan-ling, Xue-liang, Xue-qin, Xu-gang, Xun, Yang, Yang-cheng, Yan-hao, Yao-bang, Yao-pang, Yao-qing, Yat-sen, Ye, Yee, Yen-nien, Yen-ti, Yeow-why, Ye-qing, Yi, Yic, Yi-da, Yifu, Yi-ke, Yi-lin, Yi-mou, Yin-fat, Ying-hua, Yin-reng, Yin-ti, Yin-tou, Yin-xiang, Yin-zhen, Yi-ping, Yi-xiao, Yo, Yok-sing, Yong, Yong-hong, Yong-zhan, Yoo-ngan, You-cheng, You-de, You-liang, Young-lau, You-yi, Yu, Yuan, Yuan-zhang, Yu-bao, Yu-eh, Yue-jiu, Yue-rong, Yu-hsui, Yuk, Yun, Yun-fat, Yun-qi, Yu-shu, Yu-wei, Yu-xing, Yu-zeng, Yu-zhang, Zai-shuo, Ze-dong, Zee-loo, Ze-min, Zhang, Zhang-sung, Zhao-dao, Zhao-hui, Zhao-ji, Zhao-jun, Zhao-ying, Zhen-bang, Zheng-xin, Zheng-ze, Zhen-ying, Zhi, Zhi-bin, Zhi-fu, Zhi-gang, Zhi-huan, Zhi-jan, Zhi-jun, Zhi-peng, Zhi-qiang, Zhi-xin, Zhong, Zhong-qi, Zhong-shan, Zhong-shu, Zhong-xian, Zhong-yan, Zhong-yi, Zhu, Zhu-lan, Zhuo-cheng, Zi-cheng, Zi-jing, Zi-jun, Zi-xing, Zi-yang, Zong-ming, Zong-yuan, Zuo-lin, Zuo-qian

Ah-ch'ou, Ah-chu, Ah-lam, Ai-ling, An, An-mei, An-xi, Bao, Bao-yu, Ben-xu, Bik, Cai, Cai-yun, Ch'ui-hsia, Ch'un-hsiang, Chen, Chin-chiao, Chin-chih, Ching, Chuhua, Chun, Chun-hsia, Chun-hsiang, Chun-lan, Chun-ping, Chwun-hwa, Chwun-yu, Ci-xi, Dan, Dao-ming, Da-xia, De, Dina, Ding, Donglu, Dou, Dou-wan, Erhong, Fang, Fang-hua, Fei, Feng, Feng-ying, Foh, Fu-gin, Gaik-hong, Gschu, Gui-fei, Hai-xia, Hai-ying, He-man, Ho, Hong, Hong-miao, Hong-yan, Hseuh, Hsing-hsing, Hsiu-feng, Hsui-ying, Hua, Huan, Huang, Hui, Hui-fang, Hui-lan, Hu-lan, Jai, Jeak-ling, Jiang-kui, Jia-ni, Jian-ku, Jian-kui, Jian-ping, Ji-hong, Jing, Jing-mei, Jing-shin, Jing-wei, Jing-yi, Jing-zhi, Jin-hua, Jin-shan, Jue-feng, Jui-juan, Jun, Jung, Jung-jie, Jy-ying, Kit ling, Kuei-fen, Kwan, Lai, Lan, Lang, Lao-shih, Lei, Li, Lian, Lian-hua, Lien, Lien-ying, Li-hua, Li-juan, Li-jun, Lili, Li-li, Li-min, Li-ming, Lin, Li-na, Lin-do, Ling, Ling-juan, Lin-wei, Liping, Liu-hong, Li-ya, Lu, Mae-wan, Mao, May-ling, Mei, Mei-chu, Mei-chuan, Mei-hua, Mei-kai, Mei-li, Mei-lian, Mei-lin, Mei-ling, Mei-shio, Mei-su, Mei-xing, Mei-ying, Mei-zhen, Mei-zhu, Meng, Miao-yin, Min, Ming, Ming-zing, Min-luong, Mo-chou, Mu, My-lai, Nai-jian, Nan, Nan-nan, Nine, Niu-niu, Nui, Nu-wa, Pao-pao, Pei-hsi, Pei-jun, Pei-pei, Phan-hue, Ping, Qing, Qiu-ju, Qiu-rui, Qui, Quing, Qun, Ran-ting, Rong-fang, Rou-wan, Rui-hong, Ruina, Ruinna, Rui-ping, Ru-ping, Sa-kota, Sang-wa, Shan-lee, Shao-yan, Shi-ting, Shoshana, Shou-yun, Shu-kan, Shu-ting, Sia-wai, Song-lian, Su-chen, Su-chu, Suet-lin, Sung-lee, Su-yin, Su-yuan, Sze-mei, Szu, Szu-zhan, Tai-hoi, Tan-hung, Te-ling, Ting, Ts'ui-fang, Tsai-chin, Tsao-lin, Tse, Tung-mei, Tzu-his, Wai-ting, Wan, Wei, Wei-hong, Wei-li, Wei-min, Wei-yan, Wen, Weng, Wen-hua, Wen-jiing, Wen-jing, Wen-rong, Woei-wan, Xiang, Xiao-bo, Xiao-cheng, Xiao-jie, Xiao-jun, Xiao-lan, Xiao-li, Xiao-mei, Xiaoming, Xiao-niao, Xiao-xia, Xiaoxian, Xiao-xing, Xiao-ying, Xide, Xi-lan, Xin, Xing-jiang, Xiong-hong, Xiu-lan, Xiu-mei, Xiu-min, Xiu-ying, Xue, Xue-di, Xue-mei, Xuer-nei, Xu-hu, Xu-xa, Yan, Yan-hong, Yan-jun, Yan-mei, Ya-ping, Yasha, Yehonala, Yi, Yi-ku, Yin, Ying, Ying-nana, Ying-tai, Ying-ying, Yi-xuan, Yong, Yong-mei, Yong-tai, Yuan, Yuan-yuan, Yue, Yue-feng, Yue-qin, Yu-ling, Yu-mei, Yung-ping, Yun-he, Yun-ping, Yushiou, Yu-zhu, Zan, Zhao-ying, Zhen, Zhen-li, Zhi-chao, Zhi-hong, Zhuo, Zi.



Ancestors, Demons and Gods

The Khitan pantheon is as mysterious to Westerners as the whole of that distant nation. Shaven-headed priests are said to have temples deep in the Khitan jungles; entirely religious communities are common. The Khitans hold to many strange beliefs and bizarre superstitions.

One example is the legend that Death must answer any question put to her by a man with courage enough to grasp and hold her.

RELIGION IS PERSONAL, NOT UNIVERSAL

Khitans have a well-developed idea of and approach to, the afterlife. Fundamentally they believe that everything is a creation of the Source of All Things and that this Source is oblivious to human concerns. Therefore, no amount of organised veneration or worship can influence creation or, indeed, cause the Source of All Things to respect or aid humankind. The Source of All Things is preoccupied with maintaining the order of the cosmos; in the grand scheme of things, mortals are inconsequential.

Khitai's cults, unlike many Western religions, do not bother teaching they are of the only true church and that all the others are fundamentally flawed. Khitan worshippers simply do not care. Few Khitans are well-travelled enough to even know about other religions, so Khitai's religions do not have the need to compare themselves to those of other cultures. They do not claim other religions are 'flawed' or have false teachings. Khitan priests are not evangelists nor missionaries. They do not try to win converts or spread their religion. Worship is not directed through mass rituals or social compulsions; individuals are free to worship as they see fit. The only rules, if they can be called such, are to venerate the Ancestors and to act dutifully – because duty is the foundation of order and without Chaos will destroy all.

DUALITY OF THE SOUL

The Khitans believe a person has two souls. The first is known as the hun. This soul materialises at birth and moves into heaven after death, becoming a spirit linked to his descendants. The second soul, known as the po, materialises with conception and at death, descends into the underworld as a ghost linked to its physical corpse and/or tomb.

Once the mortal body has died the two aspects of the soul can never be reunited. The hun, once in heaven, can never take physical form again. However the po remains linked with the corpse or place of burial and it can, for a variety of reasons (revenge, guardianship or simple sheer malevolence), manifest either within its remains as a physical entity or as a spirit linked to a specific relic or place.

The two parts of the soul reflect the twin natures of man: the hun reflects calm, peace, duty, altruism and wisdom; the po reflects selfishness, aggression, cruelty, base desires and foolishness. The extent to which these aspect of the dual parts of the soul manifest depends on how the mortal person conducted his life. Someone who was peaceful, calm and wise during life will see his hun displaying a magnified version of these characteristics whilst his po will be relatively benign (yet still display the baser character elements all po exhibit). Conversely a violent sadist's po will be highly evil and malignant whilst his hun will be reticent and inarticulate – but peaceful nonetheless.

BASIC COSMOLOGY

The Khitans believe the universe has three basic divisions: the heavens, the earth and the underworld. Each division retains connections to the other. By extension, all interconnected things retain those connections, so a person is connected to a father and a mother, who are, in turn, connected to their parents in a chain spanning all of history. Thus, a person is connected to all of his ancestors

and this ancestral chain is an important component in keeping the cosmos ordered.

Heaven and the underworld are not reward and punishment arenas. Heaven is where the cosmos is controlled by the Source of All Things and his attendant gods, nature spirits and ancestral souls (known as hun). The underworld (sometimes called the underworld of yellow springs) is just a place where other souls (known as po) live much as they did in life.



HEAVEN

The Source of All Things is not, in itself a god but a complex, sentient philosophy that sees all of time, space and creation in all its forms simultaneously. The gods and spirits serve the Source of All Things, take wisdom from it and communicate its power. The ancestral chains thread through the Source of All Things and anchor it in heaven, ensuring that its enemy, Chaos, cannot fragment it and pervert it to its own ends – which would result in the destruction of creation.

The gods are those residents of heaven who have communed with the Source of All Things and been granted some of its power. Each god has separate powers and no two are alike. Their chief concern is to keep Chaos away from heaven and to maintain the ancestral chains; they do this by calling for souls and creating new ancestors from the mortal spirits, the hun, that come into heaven. Favour is given to those spirits delivered as part of sacrifice. The sins or crimes of the mortal life are forgiven by the gods and the soul is permitted to reside in the Gardens of Memory where all is good and plentiful.

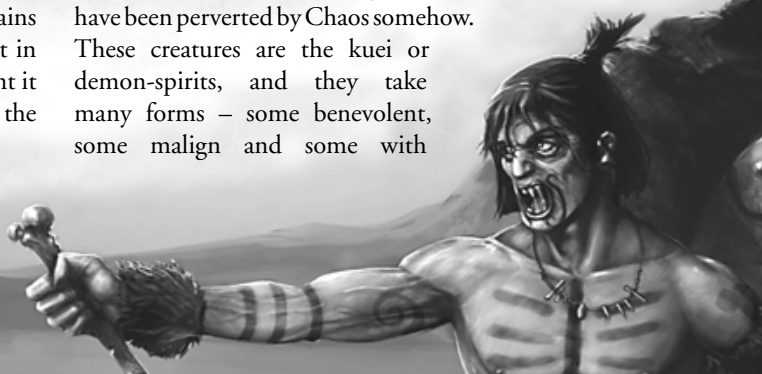
Nature spirits exist in both heaven and earth simultaneously. In heaven they create the Gardens of Memory and create the Everlasting Paradise of August Beauty, which stretches into infinity and is sheltered by the Source of All Things. On earth the spirits inhabit the natural features of Khitai – the rivers, lakes, mountains, forests, jungle, hedgerows and so forth. They require no sacrifices but enjoy reverence and respect. Those who offer reverence are permitted into the Everlasting Paradise of August Beauty upon death, there to enjoy an idyllic existence for eternity.

The ancestor spirits are the souls of mortals who are judged for their deeds on earth. Those who led good, dutiful lives are presented before the gods who decide whether or not the ancestor may now continue to assist the mortal components of his chain. If the ancestor is blessed in this way, he is granted a small part of the Source of All Things' power to wield as his own, as long as his mortal links in the chain continue to offer the right degree of reverence on earth. This is why the ancestor rites and sacrifices are so important to Khitans; without them, the ancestor would lose his heavenly powers.

THE UNDERWORLD

The underworld is ruled by the god, Yun. He manages the hierarchy of souls living there and is a counterpart to the God Emperor of the mortal world, along with advisors and a palace. The souls residing here, the po, continue life much as it was lived before although an anchor with their corpse or place of burial ties them to the mortal world. Those spirits that are forceful on some shape or form can be summoned forth as demons and are even treated as demigods. Similarly the underworld is inhabited by beings that were never human to begin with or who have been perverted by Chaos somehow.

These creatures are the kuei or demon-spirits, and they take many forms – some benevolent, some malign and some with





very complex agendas that may or may not have a moral purpose. Kuei can be summoned from the underworld by a sorcerer who knows the Demonic Pact, Greater Demonic Pact, Summon Demon or Channel Demon spells as part of the Summoning sorcery style. Individual kuei might claim to be kings or rulers of the underworld and many are treated as gods or demigods but all are loyal to Yun. Kuei might war against each other or try to control other po but the Cosmic Order, as imposed and maintained by the Source of All Things prevents any one kuei from attaining complete power over either the underworld or Yun. Only Chaos could create such a situation and for that to happen, Chaos would need to rupture the Source of All Things' control of the universe.

It is believed possible for mortals to travel into the underworld and sorcerers claim it as a part of any kuei pact they might hold. Descent into the underworld is only possible through the sorcery of one of its denizens; there are no portals or enchanted staircases leading into the depths of the earth. If a kuei takes a mortal into the underworld it will be for a specific reason and the journey will have a finite duration.

The Khitan underworld resembles the earth in almost all respects. The geography is familiar and travellers will see many landmarks they recognise. However there are no cities to rival Paikang or Ruo-gen: the inhabitants of the underworld have no use for cities. The po resident in the underworld occupy dwellings similar to those of their life – huts, villas or grand houses according to station – and go about simple, daily activities. The smell of the grave, tomb or mausoleum clings to the po dwellings, and all the items buried with the original corpse are present and functional. The po behaves according to its base instincts magnified. An inhospitable person in life is doubly so in death. A violent person in life is twice as aggressive in his po form. Behaviours are exaggerated; personalities taken to extremes; bad habits become terrible ones and good habits are diminished. The underworld is a disturbing place for the mortal mind because the checks and balances of earthly life are removed. The underworld is a polarisation of human character.

Although the underworld is never dark, it is sunless. The sky above is a featureless grey. The kuei and other creatures like them dwell well away from the habitations of human po but from time to time a demon or dragon spirit might be seen flying through the featureless sky.

Time passes normally in the underworld but its inhabitants do not sense the passage of time. They do not sleep, do not eat or drink and have no need to concern themselves with such mortal needs. Food and drink can be found in the underworld but it is tasteless and un-refreshing, possessing no nutritional value. Without food brought from the mortal realm, a mortal could not survive in the underworld for very long.

Mortals can be injured and killed. Healing magic will work but the wound will be forever painful on return to the earth. If killed, both parts of the soul are trapped in the underworld. The hun cannot ascend to heaven and the po has no attachment a corpse or grave on the earth. The soul is therefore divided but trapped and denied: it goes mad. This delights certain kuei who will come for these trapped souls so that they can be made into new kuei – malevolent demons of suffering that cannot know peace, cannot know heaven and have no interest in the good of the mortal world.

SACRIFICES TO THE SPIRITS ANCESTORS

Human sacrifice is the name of the game for Khitan priests. Ancestral spirits require blood to be spilt to prove the serious nature of any request. River, mountain and other nature spirits often require similar tokens of seriousness. In addition to human sacrifice, animal sacrifice is also rampant, especially large animals such as elephants and rhinoceroses. There is a Khitan notion that a person's spirit lingers on in a spirit world after death. If a scholar shows proper respect to departed ancestors, this realm's powers can be tapped to aid the living. This being the case, the dead in Khitai are buried with possessions and slaves needed to live a comfortable life in the hereafter, for a comfortable, pleased spirit is more conducive to giving advice or favours when requested. Further, the spirits of ancient kings act as intermediaries to the actual gods, who are strange and unknowable to mortals. Spirits are nourished by human blood, so vast numbers of human sacrifices are necessary to maintain the integrity and unity of Khitai.

ANCESTOR VENERATION

The primary form of Khitan worship revolves around the veneration of ancestral spirits. As stated earlier, a Khitan believes in a continuing connection with parents, who are connected to their parents, who are connected to their parents and so on, all in an everlasting chain reaching through the dimmest mists of history to the family of the Yellow Emperor. Pathenians and some Hyrkanians believe the Emperor in Yellow to be Erlik, the first man.

Ancestor veneration serves to justify and maintain the existing culture, emphasising aspects of the culture that are deemed important. In Khitai's case, the veneration of ancestors cultivates and promotes the value of kinship: because the ancestors are real and can help if they are honoured, even from beyond death, it is wise to honour one's kind whilst they are alive. This ancient practice teaches filial piety, family loyalty and lineage continuity. Through ancestor veneration, a family is bound together through generations almost without number. The veneration of ancestors also fulfils another basic human need: the need to believe in an afterlife. Ancestor veneration reinforces the belief that the souls go on after death, so death is nothing to be feared, for the souls will be taken care of by descendants. History is also important to Khitans. After all, they fight, live and die for causes and they do not want those struggles to be forgotten, so they, in turn, make sure they remember their ancestors and their deeds so their own will be remembered by future generations.

Every home has a small shrine to the ancestors of the family. The ancestors are represented by small clay figures wrapped in something that belonged to the ancestor, such as a piece of clothing or a length of hair. In wealthy houses the representations may be more elaborate, such as finely carved jade likenesses or delicate, life-like busts or full-size replicas made from porcelain or terracotta.

Daily worship takes the form of gifts, usually wine and food that are offered to the ancestors to show respect and to make the lives of the ancestors easier. Food, wine and precious objects offered to the ancestors feed and aid the ancestor spirits. Slaves sacrificed to the ancestors grant the ancestor

spirit a slave in the afterworld. Not providing the gifts on a regular basis can bring about natural or personal disasters: ancestors are linked to the Source of All Things and if they are unhappy or neglected, then this reverberates through the ancestral chain and into the Source itself, causing bad luck, misfortune and physical disaster to strike.

Khitans believe their ancestors continue to have a keen interest in the affairs of humanity – especially in the affairs of their descendants. Thus, Khitans are expected to inform their ancestors of any major decisions and seek their guidance.

CALCULATING AN ANCESTORS POWER

The ancestor spirits are rated in terms of their Ancestral Power. It is calculated as follows:

1 point for every 10 years since death
(minimum of 1 point) + 1D20

For example, an ancestor dead for 200 years would have an Ancestral Power of between 21 and 40. One dead for 1000 would have an Ancestral Power of between 101 and 120.

When petitioned in this way, the ancestors must first be reached. Reaching out to an ancestor depends on the power of the ancestor spirit and the level of sacrifice or offering made to it. The older and more powerful the ancestor, the harder it is to attract their attention as the ancestor's mind is focused on far more important spiritual matters.

To reach an Ancestor through a petition the petitioner must make a Will Saving Throw with the DC equal to the Ancestor's Ancestral Power. The DC is reduced according to the following:



Offering	DC Reduction
Sacrifice of poor quality food or drink	1
Sacrifice of reasonable quality food or drink	2
Sacrifice of good quality food or drink	3
Sacrifice of superior quality food or drink	4
Offering of a Precious Object	Object's Value in silver dao / 10 (minimum of 1
Offering an Animal Sacrifice (small animal – cat or dog, for example)	1
Offering an Animal Sacrifice (medium animal – calf or pig)	3
Offering an Animal Sacrifice (large animal – ox or horse)	5
Offering an Animal Sacrifice (huge animal – elephant, for example)	8
Offering of a human sacrifice (slave or unwilling victim)	1 point for each class level of the sacrifice
Offering a willing human sacrifice	2 points for each class level of the sacrifice

For example, Gun-Lao's rice crop has failed once more for the third year running. In desperation he goes to the shrine of the ancestors in the village and requests the help of Xing-lo-Pau, the beloved founder of the village who died 160 years ago. Xing-lo-Pau's Ancestral Power is 22, so this is the DC for Gun-Lao's Will ST. Gun-Lao offers the ancestor what little rice he can spare (a poor quality food offering worth 1 point, and sacrifices a racoon he caught that morning (for a further 1 point). The DC for the Will ST is now 20. Gun-Lao has a Will ST bonus of +3 for his class and +1 for his Wisdom modifier. He rolls 17 which, with his class and ability modifiers gives him a 21: Xing-lo-Pau, revered ancestor, hears Gun-Lao's call and listens carefully...

If the Saving Throw fails the character may try again but must offer another sacrifice that is better than the last by at least 1 point.

Once an ancestor's attention has been grasped, it will offer help. The help offered is never direct and always takes the form of a sign, omen or dream. The clarity of the sign depends on the Ancestor's Ancestral Power once again: the higher the Ancestral Power, the clearer the sign, portent, omen or dream.

In all cases the Games Master must determine what the advice is and what form it takes. If the Will ST for defining the meaning is failed, then the character must make a fresh petition for advice.

Xing-lo-Pau sends Gun-Lao an omen in the form of a waking dream. As Xing-lo-Pau's Ancestral Power is 22, the dream could be interpreted in one of several ways. Gun-Lao must make a further Will ST against a DC of 15. He rolls a 12, which is adjusted to 16 for his class and ability modifiers. Gun-Lao correctly interprets that the rice crop is being blighted because a spirit of disease has captured and imprisoned the nature spirit that guards the rice paddies of the village. Gun-Lao must find a way to rid the village of this pestilence if the next rice crop is to be saved.

DEMON AND SPIRIT WORSHIP

The spirits and demons of the underworld, the kuei, are worshipped as gods in Khitai. Kuei take many forms and have many powers. These powers and spheres of influence are all granted by the Source of All Things, which has determined the shape of the universe and allowed the kuei to have the powers they exhibit. Khitans therefore accept that the natures of the kuei, whether benign, neutral or benevolent, are also determined by the Source of the All Things. In the Khitan view, there is no such thing as good or evil where the kuei are concerned: they are what they are and are defined by the ordering of the cosmos. It is accepted that worshipping the kuei is to effectively trade in dark powers. These creatures are denizens of the underworld

Ancestral Power	Clarity
1 – 20	Vague and inconclusive. Character must make a Will Saving Throw against a DC of 20 to determine the advice or meaning
21 – 40	Contains some clarity, but could be interpreted in several ways. Will Saving Throw against a DC of 15 to determine the advice or meaning
41 – 60	A clear message or sign that points the way or reveals most of the truth. Will Saving Throw against a DC of 10 to determine the full message.
61 – 80	The message is clear and unambiguous. The character has no trouble grasping the ancestor's meaning.
81 – 100	As above, but the ancestor also offers additional advice or guidance relating to something concerning the original problem.
100+	As above, but the ancestor also offers a brief insight into the future and how it will be shaped if the ancestor's advice is heeded.

and not heaven, so their motives will not always be to the greater benefit of humankind.

The sorcerers of Khitai summon to the earth their dark gods so they can be worshipped in person and so that powers of the kuei can be channelled towards mortal use. In return the kuei, just like the ancestors, receive sacrifices. However kuei always demand a sacrifice of either blood or something precious: they have no need for food or drink

but enjoy souls and for some reason, valuable books, scrolls, gems and treasures.

Kuei can be summoned using the spells of the Summoning sorcery style. Khitan sorcerers, when summoning a demon or pacting with one, use the Kuei found in chapter 56, Bestiary of Khitai. All summoning costs are as per the standard Conan rules and kuei are classed as Demon Lords. Any summoning attempt must be accompanied by a sacrifice and the sacrifice must be of a sapient creature. If the summoning is not preceded by a blood sacrifice, then the kuei simply refuses to manifest.

WHAT ARE KUEI?

As mentioned, kuei take many forms:

- ✿ The souls of suicides, warped by the act of taking their own life, denying the ancestral chain.
- ✿ Wandering demons from far away planes or stars, trapped in the underworld by sorcery or residing there through choice.
- ✿ A manifestation of a natural force or power, such as the sun, the moon or the oceans.
- ✿ A dragon spirit, for dragons can assume many forms.

Statistics for sample kuei of these types are given in chapter 56.

Kuei are also gods of a sort in that they react positively to worship or veneration and allow their powers to be channelled by those who offer worship or veneration. Their powers of creation are limited





THE SUMMONING RITUAL

The detail of the ritual is abstracted by the various summoning spells provided in the Conan rules but there are certain activities needed to make the summoning effective.

Dig a hole or pit. This creates a metaphysical channel to the underworld and allows the kuei to pass between the mortal barrier. The pit's depth must be at least six feet. Greater depths depend on resources possessed, natural obstacles beneath the soil's surface (such as bedrock) and the patience of the sorcerer.

Create a covering. Most kuei summonings are performed in naturally occurring shelter, such as a cave or basement or in a purpose-built chamber. Kuei themselves believe that exposure to the sky is to expose themselves to the Source of All Things and that is not something they consider desirable. Thus, shelter from the sky (which acts as a channel to heaven in much the same way the pit acts as a channel to the underworld) is preferred – but is not essential.

Offer a sacrifice. Kuei adore blood and souls. These are the accoutrements that tempt them out of the underworld and prove the summoner's dedication.

Cast the spell. The spell includes the necessary incantations to establish a working conduit between the mortal world and the underworld.

Offer reverence. If the summoning is successful and the kuei appears, the summoner must offer reverence as a mark of duty and respect. Any sorcerer arrogant enough to summon a kuei without being prepared to offer such reverence risks being attacked by the kuei and being dragged into the underworld and either imprisoned or killed. Offering reverence can be abstracted to a Will Saving Throw with the kuei's Wisdom ability multiplied by 2 as the DC. The Intelligence ability of the sacrifice reduces the DC by 1 point for every point of Int the sacrifice has.

For example, Ho-Chen summons a kuei that is equivalent to a Black Fiend (page 378 of the Conan rules). He offers a slave (Int 10) as a sacrifice. To display reverence to the Black Fiend he must make a Will ST against a DC of 24 (the Fiend's Wisdom of 17 multiplied by 2 and then reduced by the sacrifice's Int of 10).

If the attempt to offer reverence fails, then the kuei returns to the underworld without a word and it must be summoned again, with a fresh sacrifice, from scratch.

Once summoned a kuei remains in the mortal world for as long as it wishes to and for as long as the sorcerer continues to offer it reverence. No further Saving Throws are required by the sorcerer but he must continually display veneration, usually in the form of a sacrifice and personal respect. The kuei will generally remain in the pit created for it, out of sight, until its summoner calls it forth with a prayer or sacrifice.

KHITAN PANTHEON

The Khitan pantheon hosts more than 9,000 gods. Many of these are revered ancestors, kuei summoned to the earth, powerful kuei who remain in the underworld, imported gods from the lands of the west, mythical and legendary heroes and so on. The pantheon is all-encompassing: anyone or anything that can be revered and which assists Khitans on either a personal or collective level can be absorbed into the pantheon. Demons and outsiders are often worshipped as gods because they are plainly seen, have awesome powers and have mystical knowledge.

In the beliefs of the Khitans, the gods of Khitai live as men do, in a hierarchy much like that found in Khitai, with all the gods serving an emperor god named Yun. The lesser gods are served by demigods, who are served by spirits, immortals and human souls. Tales show them with human characteristics, including faults. They live in homes just as the Khitans do: from hovels through the palaces. The worship of the gods is distinct from ancestor veneration, in that the ancestors are clearly a way of maintaining a chain between heaven and the mortal world. However some ancestors are treated and revered as gods, if their actions or advice have helped Khitai in a wide enough context and that help has been evident to all.

The major gods of the Khitan pantheon are as follows.

CHENG-HO

Cheng Ho is the moon-goddess of Khitai. Her myth tells that she was once a water spirit who developed an all-consuming desire to possess the August Opal of Heaven,



which was a gem created by the Source of All Things. She sneaked into heaven one night and took the opal from its hiding place but awoke the three Heavenly Dragons who guarded it. The dragons chased Cheng-Ho out of the heavenly palace and into the night sky where she cried-out to the Source of All Things to be spared whatever fate the dragons had in store for her. The Source of All Things heard her pleas and in its mercy, merged Cheng-Ho with the opal she had craved so badly, creating the moon. Now, Cheng-Ho watches over the world as the opal sphere and her presence controls the tides of the seas, which were once her home. She is an aloof goddess, because her powers are limited but Khitan sailors and travellers offer her reverence because her brilliant opal light guides them in their journeys and because she can make the waves as calm or as fierce as she wishes.

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 1 sp/level/month to the priests or a one-off payment of an opal or piece of jade worth at least 1,000 sp.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith.

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must donate all gems (especially opals or jade) to the priesthood.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Gain fear of the moon: Cheng-Ho's unwavering gaze on clear nights reduces disloyal priests a nervous, quivering wreck which increases all DCs by +8.

YU HUANG

Also known as Shang-Ti, Yu Huang is the August Emperor of Jade. Raised by the God Emperor Te and his consort in a mortal household, Yu Huang declined the Jade Throne in favour of a life of personal meditation and self-improvement, ascending to heaven to seek the wisdom of the Source of All Things. He has visited earth 800 times to help the sick and the pure and a further 800 times to spread wisdom and happiness throughout the mortal realm. Yu Huang is thought to wander Khitai from time to time, taking the form of a bent, jovial old man, a serious young woman who does not smile or a mischievous monkey that wears a frayed old cloak. His palace, made of jade, is located in the constellation known as Ta Wei (the Great Bear).

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 8 sp/level/month to the priests, or serve at the temple full-time as a monk.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (any). When the priest has served for 8 years, his Wisdom ability score increases by 1 and again for each 8 full years spent in service.

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: expected to show wisdom and deliberation in all things without leaping to conclusions or rushing to unsound judgements.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Must undertake the 800 mile pilgrimage on foot, during which time he may never sleep indoors nor cover his head from the elements

CH'ENG-HUANG

The protector of humans, Ch'eng-huang safeguarded humankind when Yen-wang, the King of the Dead, wanted all mortals to join the realm of the dead. Because of his wisdom Ch'eng-huang now acts as a judge of the dead and decides how the two souls of a person, his han and his po, will be represented when they ascend to heaven and descend to the underworld. He is also considered to be a god of walls and moats and so large stretches of the Great Wall are dedicated to Ch'eng-huang. The warriors of bone and bamboo that can be called upon to defend Khitai are thought to be kwei of Ch'eng-huang's creation.

Requirements of Worship: Undertake a vow to protect all Khitans and pay 10% of all income to the temple of ordination.

Benefits of Worship: Faith, Spells (any).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must serve as a priest at the Great Wall for 1 full year and a day.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Must walk the entire length of the Great Wall in one direction and then again in the other.



CHENG WU

A divine warrior of heaven who slit open his own belly and removed five vital organs, which he transformed into animals. The knife transformed into a youth and the knife's scabbard turned into a beautiful maiden. Cheng Wu dwells in a palace on the Jade Mountain which separates heaven and the underworld and he passes freely between the two, attempting to catch the animals created from his vital organs, which are now ravaging beasts. When he captures one, he transforms it into a magical instrument which is used by the choirs of heaven to sing the songs that keep the Source of All Things focused on maintaining order.

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 5 sp/level/month to the priests.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (any).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know the Oriental Magic sorcery style; must learn to play one musical instrument; must use no other weapon than a knife.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests:

Must enter the underworld to assist Cheng Wu himself in the quest to capture the five rampaging animals.

CHI-FU-SHEN

The collective name given to the seven gods of happiness, sons of the Source of All Things that represent the seven happinesses of food, drink, music, poetry, love, sex and jade. Shrines to the Chi'fu-shen usually include small jade representations of each god as a round-faced, bald-headed man indulging in the thing that brings him joy: eating, drinking, playing an instrument, writing poetry, wooing a maiden, masturbating or copulating and polishing a piece of jade.

Requirements of Worship: No specific requirements save simple veneration and modest sacrifices.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement.

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: the Chi'fu-shen have no direct priesthood

CHI-KU-NIANG

A daughter of Yu Huang, Chi'ku-niang is a goddess of maidens and the betrothed. It is her duty to bring visions of the intended husband to any maiden who makes an offering of food, drink or jade at one of her shrines. The visions show the man whom the maiden will one day marry or if the maiden is already engaged to be wed, reveal the husband-to-be's true character. Chi'ku-niang can be petitioned for this information in the same way as any ancestor. Her Ancestral Power score is 150.

Requirements of Worship: An offering of food, drink or jade.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith.

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Chi'-ku-niang can only be worshipped by female priests. Standard, plus as follows: vows of obedience and regular offerings.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (Divination).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priestesses: To be afflicted by terrible nightmares and to become ugly and despised by all men.

CH'I-TI

The Sky God, who, through his breath, keeps the sky and the earth separate. His domain is in the clouds above the southern reaches of the Khitai and specifically the Kambuljan Marches where his enemies, the Dagger Princes, once made their lair. It is said that Ch'i-Ti gave the hero Sung the magic to free the 100 spirits who are now his companions. Amongst the Imperial Court, Ch'i-Ti is therefore seen as a rebel god and a protector of bandits.

Requirements of Worship: Offerings of jade or other precious items.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Spells (Oriental magic).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Ch'i-Ti has no formal priesthood.

CH'I-WEN

The dragon of the waters, Ch'i-wen is one of the three heavenly dragons that pursued Cheng-Ho when she stole the pearl of heaven. Forbidden to return to heaven now that Cheng-Ho has been merged with the opal, Ch'i-wen is forced to move between the underworld and the mortal world, where it has assumed the role of Guardian of the Eternal Waters, now that Cheng-Ho is absent from the world.

Ch'i-wen takes the form of a mile-long blue, green and silver serpent that runs through the sky or across the tops of waves on its six, huge, lithe legs. It has the face and mane of a lion and the forked tongue of a serpent. It does not breathe fire but is possessed of powerful magic. Like all god spirits it likes to be revered and accepts sacrifices from mariners, in exchange for guiding their ships safely through stormy waters.

The dragon dearly wishes to return to heaven but cannot do so whilst Cheng-Ho and the opal are as one. Ch'i-wen

considers itself the enemy of the moon and can sometimes be seen obscuring it with clouds to prevent Cheng-Ho from gazing upon her former territories.

Requirements of Worship: Sacrifice of livestock to the sea or to a major river.

Benefits of Worship: Spells (Nature Magic).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Ch'i-wen has no ordained priesthood.

CHANG TZU-YA

A revered general of the Battle of Mu who, upon death, become a Grand Ancestral spirit dwelling in the Jade Palace of Yu Huang. Whilst there, the Old Man of the Southlands came to visit the palace and brought with him a list of ways for mortals to attain immortality without becoming ancestors. Chang Tzu-ya was given the list which he decided to take to the God Emperor of mortals in Paikang. On his way back to the mortal world, Chang Tzu-ya was challenged many times by other gods, demi gods and demons who wanted the list for himself. Chang Tzu-ya repelled each challenge with either reason, magic or force of arms and safely delivered the list to the God Emperor. Chang Tzu-ya is therefore a highly revered ancestor of the Imperial Court, although no God Emperor in living memory has ever seen the list of immortal ways Chang Tzu-ya brought to the earth.

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 8 sp/level/month to the priests, or serve at the temple full-time as a warrior-monk.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (Counterspells, Oriental Magic).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know the Oriental Magic sorcery style; vows of absolute obedience to the God Emperor.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (Counterspells, Oriental Magic). High ranking priests may be rewarded with lands and a title by the God Emperor.

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Exiled from Khitai and set to wandering the Earth.

YANG SUNG-TZU

The god of rain and sometimes, fertility, in which case he is represented in female form. Yang Sung-tzu took the waters of the sea to make rain when a great drought struck the



land and all was on the edge of death. Since then Yang Sung-tzu has been cursed as the bane of Khitai whenever the rains cause flashfloods or mudslides, only to be feted if the rice crop starts to falter.

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 3 sp/level/month to the priests, or serve at the temple full-time as a monk.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (any).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know the Nature Magic sorcery style.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any). Typical

Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Rendered infertile and unable to pleasure any woman (or man).

CHIH YÜ

Half man and half bull, Chih Yü is a warrior god who invented weapons and gave the secret to humankind. Chih Yü resides in the underworld where he led a rebellion against Yun but was defeated and was forced, as punishment, to hold-up heaven on his shoulders for 10,000 years. He has 72 brothers, all of them bull-men like him and with heads of bronze. Many temples are guarded by 73 statues of bull-headed man, representing Chih Yü and his brothers.



Requirements of Worship: Animal or human sacrifice twice a year.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (any).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know the Oriental Magic sorcery style; must swear never to engage in rebellion against the Gong.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (Oriental Magic).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Must carry the Weight of Heaven, a 500lb block of stone that is placed on the prone priest's back and left there for 1 day and 1 night. Those who are not crushed to death are considered absolved of all crimes and sin.

YOGAH

'I am very old, oh man of the waste countries; long and long ago I came to this planet with others of my world, from the green planet Yag, which circles for ever in the outer fringe of this universe. We swept through space on mighty wings that drove us through the cosmos quicker than light, because we had warred with the kings of Yag and were defeated and outcast. But we could never return, for on earth our wings withered from our shoulders. Here we abode apart from earthly life. We fought the strange and terrible forms of life which then walked the earth, so that we became feared, and were not molested in the dim jungles of the east, where we had our abode.'

The Tower of the Elephant

Yogah is the strange, elephant-headed star-being from the story The Tower of the Elephant. He is not immortal but measures his lifespan in thousands of millions of years and possesses phenomenal sorcerous knowledge of both the white and black arts. For millennia he resided in the jungles of Khitai, worshipped by the Yellow Priests and white apes and later, by humans who sought sorcerous teaching from him.

Yogah was taken from Khitai by Yara, a student of sorcery who craved knowledge of the black arts and imprisoned in the Tower where Conan finally encounters him. However, despite being absent from Khitai for many, many years, he is still revered in the half-forgotten jungle temples, far from the capital, where his teachings of white magic have been preserved by those priests still remaining faithful to his memory.

Requirements of Worship: Remain in the jungles of Khitai and worship at the altar of the elephant.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (any, with the exception of Necromancy).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know the Oriental Magic sorcery style; become an enemy of Yara.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any, with the exception of Necromancy).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Death.

YUN

Yun is the Emperor of the Underworld and the main god worshipped in the jungle temples. He is the head of the Khitan pantheon but almost nothing is known of him save that his worship seems to involve music in the form of chimes or bells. All kuei of the underworld are obeisant to Yun and so the priests of Yun believe it is their right to call and command the kuei as it forms part of their loyalty to the Emperor of the Gods.

Yun is a popular god in the Imperial Court and is served by a devout and ferocious priesthood supported by a cadre of warrior-monks and holy warriors who believe that, upon death, their souls will become honoured ancestors and serve in the po armies of Yun, fighting across the underworld. Yun is therefore sometimes seen as the po equivalent of the Source of All Things.

Requirements of Worship: Pay a tithe worth 3 sp/level/month to the priests or serve at the temple full-time as a monk.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith, Spells (any).

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: must know the Oriental Magic sorcery style; vows of obedience, poverty and chastity are common but not universal; expected to be scrupulously honest and a powerful leader.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard, plus as follows: sorcery teaching is available (any).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Priests: Exiled from Khitai and set to wandering the Earth.

KHITAN PRIESTS

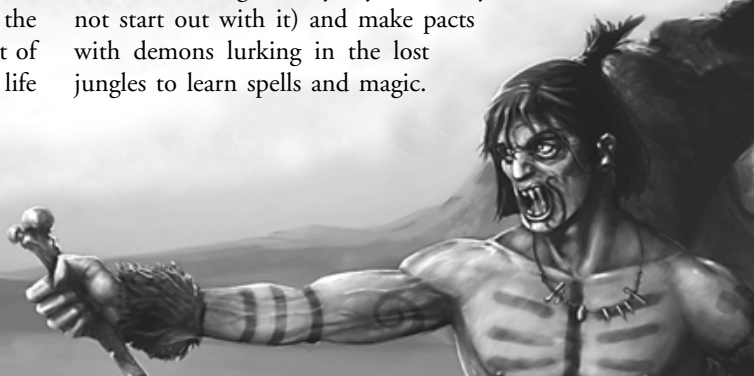
There are two kinds of Khitan priest: the shaman and the ritual priest. The shaman serves the villages, living out of a house or personal temple and uses magic to control life



circumstances and events, cure the sick and predict the future. Ritual priests serve the temples and live in communes. Most Khitan priests and sorcerers value information above all else and though they will not hesitate to slay those who deserve to die or are their allotted targets, they prefer to avoid unnecessary deaths. They also learn Oriental magic and curses, making them highly effective combatants. They favour staffs as weapons and if they can get them, they prefer Staffs of Death (*see Conan the Roleplaying Game*) as a means of delivering their spells. Khitan sorcerers almost always travel and train in small groups. One member of the group will be the senior sorcerer, responsible for teaching the others. He will usually be scrupulously fair but is by no means a pushover.

SORCERY STYLES

The kings of Khitai like diviners. Only the king practises divining but he employs court diviners to interpret the results of the oracle bones. Many Khitan priests, if they do not begin the game with the Oriental sorcery style, begin with the Divination style. Further, Khitans are notorious demon worshippers, so many eventually take the Summoning sorcery style (if they do not start out with it) and make pacts with demons lurking in the lost jungles to learn spells and magic.





Most Khitan scholars take each of these styles as early as possible. Cosmic Sorcery (from *Conan: The Scrolls of Skelos*) is another popular style for Khitan sorcerers. They are also known as hexers. Virtually all the sorcery styles are open and recommended for a Khitan sorcerer. Khitan scholars in search of immortality have a curious method of doing so. They believe only total seclusion can bring about the spirits' permission to earn immortality. Those who learn the Immortality sorcery style (from *Conan: The Scrolls of Skelos*) forbid their servants to reveal their whereabouts to anyone, even another servant and enclose all walkways on their property so that no one ever knows where they really are until the style is mastered (all spells known in that style). Tombs in Khitai are built below ground with walls and floors of rammed earth. The tombs are often huge, measuring around 60 feet long, 50 feet wide and 40 feet deep. At the bottom of a tomb shaft a small section is made with ledges of pounded earth. An eight foot tall wooden chamber is built to house the coffin. The Khitan kings are buried with hundreds of bronze artefacts, jades, bone objects, ivory carvings, pottery and cowry shells. These artefacts include mirrors, ceremonial vessels, bells and weapons. Men, women, children and dogs are sacrificed for the benefit of the tombs' occupants and buried with them. Their bodies litter the walkway to the tomb. They are sacrificed by beheading in a gruesome ritual. The skulls are not placed with the bodies. Instead they are stacked in the centre of the tomb facing the wooden chamber. Many Khitan hermits lurk around these tombs, practising Divination and Necromancy sorcery styles.

SKILLS AND FEATS

Knowledgeable is a good choice of feat for the Khitan scholar, taking advantage of the character's racial bonus to make the Khitan seem like a veritable walking encyclopaedia. Walking quietly is important to Khitans, so a few ranks should be placed in Move Silently. Their inscrutable, almost unemotional, mien makes Bluff another natural choice. They are also known for careful word choice and precise emphasis on tone and inflection, making Diplomacy yet another natural choice. Of course, ranks in Perform (ritual) and Perform (any music or dance)

are a must, especially if the Khitan intends on summoning elementals and other powerful outsiders to his service. Music plays an important cultural role in Khitai's esoteric rituals, so putting ranks in musical performance skills is equally important. Most of a Khitan's servants will also have Perform (any music or dance) skills to help with any large rituals or play large instruments, such as the bells described earlier.

ABILITY SCORES AND REPUTATION

Khitai's culture expects priests to be honest and charismatic. Charisma will usually be the highest ability score a Khitan scholar has. Most will also take the honest subtype of Reputation, especially if they are seeking ordained priesthood. Respect is accorded to those with the most followers, so even Khitan sorcerers take the Leadership feat if they seek popular support or noble respect. Many Khitan scholars also take vows of obedience, vows of poverty and/or vows of chastity. These are not universal among all scholars but they are fairly common.

CLOTHING

Khitan priests dress in high-necked, long silk jackets, embroidered trousers, hooded and wide-sleeved robes of a very dark grey or black material and sandals beneath their robes. The men shave their heads. The women fix their hair in complicated coiffeurs.

RELIGIOUS ACCOUTREMENTS AND BELIEFS

RELIGIOUS AND SORCEROUS MUSIC

Bells and chimes play a large part in solemn Khitan rituals, especially in the veneration of Yun. Almost all Khitan bells have a two-pitch quality, the sound depending on



where the bell is struck by the mallet and this reflects the duality of the soul. Almost all bells are inscribed to indicate the notes they play, indicating remarkable musical achievement, for the pitches are calculated before the bell is cast in bronze. These bells range in size from eight inches to over five feet in height. Some nobles and scholars have sets consisting of 64 of these two-pitched bells covering the entire range of sizes. These sets are usually arranged hanging mouth down in three rows on a huge L-shaped frame capable of supporting the three tons of bronze bells. The 19 smallest bells occupy the top row. The 33 middle-sized bells occupy the middle row and are used for the melody. The remaining bells, the largest, are on the bottom row to produce the accompaniment. The whole set is played by numerous musicians working in concert, often accompanied by dancers. Owning a complete bell set gives a noble or scholar a +1 bonus to Reputation.

MALE AND FEMALE ENERGIES

As far as sex goes, in Khitai, both men and women are seen to have magical forces within them that are counterpoints to each other and necessary for life. The female magical force is felt to be infinite within each woman but the male magical force is considered quite finite. Thus, sexual relationships are seen as a necessary transfer of these forces to the other. Since the female force is infinitely contained in each woman, she is expected to climax multiple times, masturbate often and have sex with other women if she wants. Men, however, are expected to climax once and must never masturbate or have sex with another man,

since they would lose their finite magical energy and not get anything back.

Women who have sex with many men are felt to have more magical energy, so many men seek out prostitutes. Prostitution is therefore a welcomed profession in Khitai and prostitutes suffer none of the social stigma of many western cultures. Indeed, before a particular act of veneration, be it to petition the ancestors or to summon a kuei, a man will typically enjoy sex with his wife and then visit a prostitute for good measure, in order to gain as much magical force as possible.

However, despite this highly relaxed approach to female sexuality, it is never acceptable for a married woman to have sex with another man. The union of marriage is thought to sanctify and intensify the magical exchange occurring between a wife and her husband. For a wife to sleep with another man goes against the order of the cosmos and weakens any transfer of magical energy during subsequent sexual congress with her spouse. Khitans treat spousal infidelity very seriously: any wife who sleeps with another man is sentenced to death – although it is acceptable for a man to sleep with another woman because he is, effectively, gaining magically as a result. A man who sleeps with another man's wife is considered to have acted unlawfully and can expect to be beaten with a bamboo cane and then branded, because he has weakened the husband's magical bond with his wife but he will not, usually, face the death penalty because of it.



Black Wisdom

This chapter looks in-depth at the sorcery and sorcery styles of Khitai. It includes notes on creating Khitan sorcerer characters and expands upon the magic described in the Conan Second Edition rules.

Although Khitan sorcerers can ostensibly study any of the available sorcery styles, their emphasis tends to focus around the Oriental Magic, Necromancy and Summoning styles and so the expansions to sorcery in this chapter have a similar focus. From the Khitan point of view this emphasis is a result of the ancient teachings of the gods, demons and ancestors. Yogah, in particular, has been incredibly influential on sorcerous teaching even though most Khitan sorcerers will be ignorant of this fact. The Magician of Yag sorcery style, new to Conan and described in this book, is a direct result of the elephant headed demigod's instruction that has been codified by the Yellow Priests and subsequently has found its way into wider Khitan sorcerous teaching.

Khitan sorcerers are most certainly questers for knowledge rather than for power. The inherent belief that the universe is ordered by the Source of All Things means that Khitan Sorcerers believe that magical power is limited by the order of the universe and is ultimately finite. Knowledge, however, is a different matter. Knowledge of the secrets of the universe is locked into the ancestral chains, the secrets of the kuei, the secrets of the han and po aspects of the soul and even into the fabric of time and space. This latter realisation is based on ancient scriptures either written by Yogah or collated from his teachings: students of the Yag style of sorcery know that creatures reside in the stars beyond heaven and that powerful beings are capable of traversing both time and space.

ORIENTAL MAGIC

The Oriental Magic sorcery style offers a range of offensive and defensive spells but is, as presented in the Conan Second Edition rules, limited in its scale. The spells offered below are additions to the Oriental Magic style and

are therefore available to eastern sorcerers in general unless otherwise stated in the spell's description.

HEAVEN'S STAIRWAY

Power Point Cost: 5+

Components: V, S

Casting Time: One Standard Action

Range: Personal

Target: Self

Duration: 1d4 minutes per Power Point

Saving Throw: None

This spell temporarily transfers the sorcerer's consciousness to the realm of heaven. The usual point of arrival is the Jade Palace of Yu Huang. The sorcerer remains in heaven for 1d4 minutes per Power Point invested in the spell. Whilst in heaven he is able to wander it and commune with its inhabitants, which are treated like any other encounters. He cannot harm the inhabitants of heaven and, if commanded to leave, he must do so immediately or his mortal body starts to sustain 1d6 Hit Points of damage for every minute he chooses to defy the command.

Travel around heaven is the same as travelling on the mortal plane: he cannot teleport from place to place and must walk at his Movement rate like everyone else. He can use magic but must also expect it to be used against him – or he can expect to be commanded to leave, with the results described earlier.

Whilst in heaven, the sorcerer can commune with any of the residents – gods and ancestors – to receive knowledge. The gods and ancestors see much that is denied to mortal eyes and, if treated with courtesy and respect, will be willing to share some of that knowledge. Treat the DC for gaining knowledge as 15 for a minor ancestor, 25 for a major ancestor and 30 for a god (such as Yu Huang, for example). None of the residents of heaven will teach magic through such a communion and nor will they reveal any information that would harm the structure of the universe but they can perceive future events, have knowledge of past events, and understand hidden motives and intent.

EYES OF TRUTH

Power Point Cost: 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: One Standard Action

Range: Close

Target: One Object or Person

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes, plus 1 minute per level

Saving Throw: None

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcane) 4 ranks.

Skill Checks: Knowledge (arcane) DC 11

The spell allows the sorcerer to see through any illusion to the truth within. It does not dispel the illusion and nor does it reveal its source (unless its source is evident when the illusion's nature is penetrated).

SHIELD OF THE X ANCESTORS

Power Point Cost: 10, +1 per additional person included in the spell

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: One standard action

Range: Personal but extendable to a group

Target: Self

Duration: 5 minutes

Saving Throw: None

This spell protects the caster and those travelling close to him from one specific element. There are therefore five versions of this spell – one for the elements of Air, Earth, Fire and Water, plus a fifth for Wood, which covers forests and jungles. The spell creates a direct channel of prayer to the ancestors who have some governance of the element concerned; their power forms a protective bubble, visible as a whirling miasma of supernatural energy, about the caster and any others included in the spell. For the spell's duration, attacks from that element, including magical ones, are ineffective, bouncing off the supernatural shield sent by the ancestors. However the shield works both ways and magical or physical attacks launched from those inside it cannot penetrate the barrier and are rendered inert.

The bubble of protection moves with the caster and movement rates are unhindered whilst the spell is active.

The material component of the spell is a small amount of the element concerned which the caster must clasp in his palm.

CASTLE OF BAMBOO

Power Point Cost: 5+

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 2 Standard Actions

Range: Personal

Target: Self

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcane) 4 ranks.

Skill Checks: Knowledge (arcane) DC 11

This spell must be cast in a place where bamboo grows naturally. A magical castle of bamboo forms around the caster providing a natural DR of 2 for every 5 Power Points invested in the spell. The interior of the castle includes scaffolding-like floors, linked by ladders and terraces, with one floor, 8 feet above the previous floor, forming for each 5 Power Points invested in the spell. The spell accelerates the natural growth of bamboo to an alarming rate and controls the shape of the overall structure. The structure, once complete, is permanent although it cannot be moved and any attempt to do so results in its disintegration.

The material component is healthy, naturally occurring bamboo.





BAMBOO STORM

Power Point Cost: 2+
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Close
Target: 1 or more creatures or objects
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflexes – halve damage
Prerequisites: Magic attack bonus +5,
Magic Attack Roll: Sets DC for target's Saving Throw

With this spell the sorcerer creates a storm of razor-sharp bamboo shards that can be directed against a particular target or group of targets. The storm inflicts 1d4 points of damage for each 2 Power Points invested in it. It is effective up to Close range (25 feet) and can be concentrated at either an individual target, which sustains the full-force of the damage or are a group of targets, in which the rolled damage is divided by the number in the group (rounding fractions down). The target(s) of the spell are permitted a Reflexes Saving Throw to attempt to duck or avoid the storm, reducing the damage sustained by half if successful.

The sorcerer must be surrounded by bamboo or have at least three naturally growing bamboo plants within 25 feet for this spell to be effective. The spell consumes three bamboo plants (which need not be mature) as its material component.

EYES OF THE TIGER

Power Point Cost: 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Close
Target: Personal
Duration: 10 minutes

The sorcerer imbues his eyes with mystic light. He always has daylight-level vision available, to a distance of 25', no matter what the actual conditions are. This does not reduce the effects of thick smoke, fog, blinding spells or attacks. It only permits the sorcerer to see in the dark.

1D6		
1	Sleep	Victim falls asleep for 1 hour, plus an additional 30 minutes for each extra Power Point invested in the spell.
2	Hallucinations	Victim hallucinates vividly for 1 hour, plus an additional 30 minutes for each extra Power Point invested in the spell. The hallucinations always present the caster in an extremely powerful, terrifying fashion.
3	Helplessness	Victim is filled with a sense of complete helplessness for 1 hour, plus an additional 30 minutes for each extra Power Point invested in the spell. In this time he cannot act but is neither unconscious nor immobilised. He behaves compliantly with anything the caster commands or suggests.
4	Enraged	Victim is filled with hatred for anyone standing near him, with the exception of the caster. He launches an attack against the subject of his rage and only ceases the attack if he himself suffers a wound that draws blood. The rage lasts for 1 hour, plus an additional 30 minutes for each extra Power Point invested in the spell otherwise.
5	Joyous	Victim is filled with joy, hope and optimism for 1 hour, plus an additional 30 minutes for each extra Power Point invested in the spell. He cannot act aggressively but neither can he be commanded.
6	Paranoia	Victim is filled with deep paranoia: everything around him is a threat. The feelings lasts for 1 hour, plus an additional 30 minutes for each extra Power Point invested in the spell. During this time the victim feels compelled to flee as far away from the caster as possible but is still filled with paranoia until the end of the spell's duration.



SMOKES OF PARADISE

Power Point Cost: 5 base. Additional Power Points increase DC for resisting smoke effects.

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3 Standard Actions

Range: Close

Target: Sentient Creatures within 25 feet.

Duration: 1 Hour + 30 minutes per additional Power Point

Saving Throw: Reflexes and Fortitude. See spell description

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcane) 5 ranks

Magic Attack Roll: Sets DC for avoiding inhalation

This spell creates a thick, sweet-smelling cloud of smoke that, if inhaled by anyone except the caster, induces one of several effects determined randomly. The cloud fills a 25ft diameter area taking 3 Standard Actions to do so. Those caught in the smoke must first make a Reflexes Saving Throw against a base DC of 15, plus the caster's Magical Attack bonus, to avoid inhaling the cloud. If the smoke is inhaled, they must make a Fortitude ST against a DC of 20 + the number of Power Points the sorcerer has invested in the spell to avoid one of the random effects.

The material component of this spell is a burning brazier and one handful of ground white lotus petals (found in the northern jungles of Khitai) for the basic spell, plus an additional handful for every Power Point invested.

BAMBOO DOOM

Power Point Cost: 5+

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3 standard actions

Range: Touch

Target: One Sentient Creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Fortitude: DC equals Power Points + Sorcerer's Level

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcane) 10 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 10 ranks

This spell turns the victim into bamboo. To resist its effects the victim is allowed a Fortitude Saving Throw against a DC equal to the Power Points invested in the spell, plus the caster's level. Thus, low level necromancers must invest more Power Points in the spell if they want to be certain of success. If the Fortitude Saving Throw is successful, then the spell has failed. If it succeeds, the victim begins his

transformation, becoming first rooted to the ground and then turning into a length of stout bamboo from the feet upwards over the course of 1d6 hours. If the sorcerer is killed during this period of growth then the spell is broken and the victim is released without harm.

If the spell completely succeeds then the victim is a length of sentient bamboo, aware of all that passes before it. If questioned by the sorcerer it is compelled to answer truthfully and completely, as though the sorcerer had used the Verdant Mastery spell. The victim can only communicate in woody, reedy whispers and only a blessing or counterspell from the ancestors or a powerful kuei can reverse the effect of the enchantment.

The material component is a patch of existing bamboo within 25 feet of the sorcerer's casting point.

CONQUERING GAZE (SUMMONING)

Power Point Cost: Victim's Wisdom + Level

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 3 Standard Actions

Range: Sorcerer must have eye contact with intended victim

Target: Human

Duration: Number of days equal to caster's level

Saving Throw: None

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 10 ranks

Magic Attack Roll: DC equal to Victim's Wisdom ability + their level

This spell ensorcells a victim, making him a slave to the sorcerer's will. The sorcerer must have eye contact with the victim and beat a DC of the victim's Wisdom plus his level. The number of Power Points is equal to the DC.

If the spell fails, then sorcerer may not attempt it again on the same victim. If it succeeds, then the victim is a slave to the sorcerer for a number of days equal to the sorcerer's level; in this time the sorcerer can attempt to extend the control by recasting the spell exactly as before.

The victim must obey the caster's commands but will not attempt any action that would be normally contrary to his nature and nor will he take his own



life: any command of that nature automatically breaks the spell. Nor can the victim be compelled to reveal secrets or provide information – other spells are needed for the sorcerer to accomplish that aim.

Enchanted victims do not act unless instructed by the sorcerer and they cannot question their commands (save in the case of self-harm, in which case the spell is broken). When released from the charm they have no recollection of their actions although their dreams may sometimes include hazy memories of their time under the sorcerer's power.

A sorcerer may have multiple victims enchanted at once but never more than half his level.

GROUND ROT

Power Point Cost: 3+

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3 Standard Actions

Range: 1 yard per 3 Power Points

Target: Specific patch of solid ground

Duration: Days equal to sorcerer's level

Saving Throw: Reflexes. DC equals Sorcerer's Level + Power Points of the spell.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (nature) 5 ranks

With this spell the sorcerer rots the ground beneath the feet of an opponent, creating a fetid, muddy pit filled with insects, maggots and putrescent larvae. When cast, the victim sinks into the pit of rotten material at a rate of 1 foot per Combat Round unless he can extricate himself with a Reflexes saving throw. The DC for the Reflexes ST is the sorcerer's level plus the number of Power Points invested in the spell; every time the saving throw is failed, the next saving throw is made at a DC of one higher than the last. Whilst fighting the rotting ground the victim can make no other actions. Alternatively he may take another action but is unable to fight the pit's pull, sinking at one foot per Combat Round.

When the victim has been swallowed (usually after five or six Combat Rounds, depending on his height) he starts to suffocate as per the rules on page 221 of the *Conan Core Rulebook*.

The rotten ground has a radius of one yard for every 3 Power Points invested in the spell. Multiple targets can therefore be affected by one casting.

The material component for the spell is a bag of earth taken from a grave. One bag is enough to affect one yard of unsullied ground.

NECROMANCY

The black art that Yara so craved Yogah to teach him and the sorcery style favoured by many Khitan magicians. Necromancers specialise in the magic of the dead – reanimating corpses and summoning the deceased from the underworld.

As the Khitans believe that the soul that goes to the underworld, the po, maintains a physical link with the earth, necromancy comes easy to them. Also, because of the reverence for the ancestors, necromancers are viewed with suspicion and hostility by many Khitans. In reality though, not all Khitan necromancers are grave-defilers and black-hearted magicians; many genuinely seek to explore mysteries and further their understanding of the afterlife and because necromancy is of considerable use in guarding the tombs of glorious (and not so glorious) kings and emperors, as a sorcerous style it is not shunned or reviled as it is in other Hyborian Age cultures.

The spells here increase the fold for Khitan necromancers and whilst they might be applicable to other dark sorcerers, they have a distinct position and use in the Khitan approach to magic.



THE CIRCLE OF MIDNIGHT

Power Point Cost: 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Varies

Target: Area designated by sorcerer

Duration: 2 minutes per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: None

The sorcerer creates an area of utter darkness. Normal light has no effect within the enchanted area although spells such as Eyes of Fire allow normal vision. Magical light sources have their range of illumination reduced by 50%. The size of the Midnight Circle is 5 yards per Level of the caster from the target point designated.

VERDANT MASTERY

Power Point Cost: 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: 1 yard per level of caster

Target: Plantlife only

Duration: Varies

Prerequisites: Knowledge (Nature) 5 ranks

Magic Attack Roll: Must beat DC of 20 with Magic Attack bonus

The sorcerer can control plant life within the range of the spell, which is 1 yard for every level of the sorcerer. To successfully cast the spell, the sorcerer must beat a DC of 20 with his Magic Attack.

Successfully casting the Spell allows the sorcerer to give any of the following commands, to be obeyed by the local plants:

- ✱ Plants die. All plant life within the target area shrivels and dies.
- ✱ Plants grow. Plants undergo a spurt of rapid growth, doubling their size and volume for every 2 Power Points invested in the spell. The plants remain at this size for a number of days equal the caster's level x10 before shrinking back to normal size.
- ✱ Whispers of the Green: the sorcerer can perceive things, which happened in the plant's vicinity for a period in hours equal to his level. Since there may be much trivia and confusing data in such impressions, the spell allows him to determine if some activity of interest to him occurred in the area by making a Will Saving Throw against DC of 18

UNDERWORLD'S STAIRWAY

Power Point Cost: 5+

Components: V, S

Casting Time: One Standard Action

Range: Personal

Target: Self

Duration: 1d4 minutes per Power Point

Saving Throw: None

The companion spell to Heaven's Stairway but allowing the caster to descend into the underworld. The caster always arrives in the hall of Ch'eng-huang, who judges the soul of all humans upon death. The sorcerer must convince Ch'eng-huang of his intention to return to the mortal world and seek permission from the god to remain in the underworld temporarily. This is abstracted through a Will Saving Throw against Ch'eng-huang's DC of 25. If the roll fails, then the sorcerer is commanded to return to his body and must comply or be locked in the underworld forever, his po becoming prey to the kuei who crave trapped souls.

As with Heaven's Stairway the sorcerer may travel around the underworld and commune with its inhabitants. However, no po or kuei will compel a sorcerer to leave; rather they will do everything they can to cause the sorcerer to remain. Souls can only attempt to persuade but the spirits, the kuei, can trap and coerce, especially if they are malevolent. A sorcerer can use his own magic to counter such attacks but if he is trapped beyond the spell's duration, he remains in the underworld forever and is at risk of becoming corrupted by predatory kuei (which may even be desirable for some sorcerers).

ETERNAL WARRIOR

Power Point Cost: 10 per Warrior

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 day per warrior

Range: Personal

Target: Prep-prepared figure

Duration: Permanent, but number of animations limited to sorcerer's level divided by 5

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 10 ranks

This spell specifically animates warriors cast from terracotta or similar materials to guard a tomb or grave. Its primary use is by Emperors where entire terracotta armies are prepared but others have called upon a necromancer to animate one or two guardians and



some jungle temples have Eternal Warriors as part of the general temple defences but a similar spell also creates the bone and bamboo guardians of the Great Wall.

The spell relies heavily on its material component, which is the statue to be animated. The figure needs to be specially cast, carved or moulded, and a pint of its blood mixed with the material somehow. The figure can be of any type: the spell's matrix animates it appropriately – see the Bestiary chapter for some examples of different Eternal Warrior Guardians.

The spell is a powerful, permanent enchantment but it has limitations. The number of times an Eternal Warrior can animate is dependent on the level of the caster at the time he works the spell. An Eternal Guardian will animate, under strict conditions, once for every five levels of the caster (so a terracotta warrior created by a necromancer of level 20 will animate 4 times); however, once the figure comes to life, it remains active until either destroyed or commanded to halt by its creator.

At the point of creation the necromancer must also specify the conditions that cause the figure to animate and what it must do when animated. 'Come to life when the Emperor's tomb is breached by robbers' is a good example of when to animate and; 'Slaughter all who try to escape' a good example of what the Eternal Warrior is to do. Note, however, that if someone accidentally came across the tomb and entered it simply out of curiosity, leaving without taking anything, the Eternal Warrior would remain inert.

A single spell matrix can be used to create as many Eternal Warriors as the sorcerer has Power Points available. The spell will not animate skeletons or corpses to become Eternal Warriors: for that, the sorcerer must use Raise Corpse (page 258 of the Conan Rules).

WOUNDS OF CHENG WU

Power Point Cost: 1 per 2HP
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Close
Target: Wounded Opponent
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 10 ranks
Saving Throw: To mitigate damage, Fortitude Saving Throw DC equal to caster's level +10

When a sorcerer suffers physical wound damage, this spell causes similar wounds to appear on an opponent, causing the same Hit Point damage the caster has suffered. The spell need not direct the damage at the person who has inflicted the wounds.

The target is allowed a Fortitude Saving Throw against the sorcerer's level +10 as the DC; if successful then the damage from the spell is halved. Damage Reduction has no effect on the damage sustained by the target.

SKIN OF THE GRAVE

Power Point Cost: 1+
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Close
Target: Breathing opponent
Duration: 2 minutes per level of the caster
Saving Throw: To reject the spell, Fortitude Saving Throw DC equal to caster's level +10

The spell causes the target to appear to be an animated corpse: the skin takes on the cyanotic pallor of the grave and the target's motions become sluggish and jerky for the duration of the spell. To all observers the target is an undead creature although the target himself, although being unable to act quickly, feels no ill effects other than all skill tests suffering an automatic increase in the DC equal to the caster's level, +1 for each additional Power Point invested in the spell. His movement rate is also halved for the spell's duration.

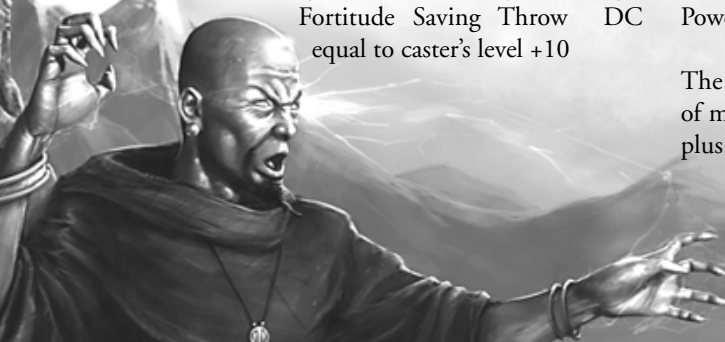
If the target succeeds in a Fortitude Saving Throw then the spell has no effect.

The spell's material component is a handful of dirt taken from a graveyard.

BLESSING OF CH'ENG-HUANG

Power Point Cost: 1+
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Touch
Target: Corpse
Duration: 1 month per level of caster, plus 1 month per Power Point.

The spell protects a corpse from decomposing for a number of months equal to the Power Points invested in the spell, plus the caster's level. The caster can voluntarily reduce the



spell's duration but he cannot extend it above these limits (for example a level 5 sorcerer could choose to preserve a corpses for only 1 month instead of 5 if he wished).

The spell does not bring the corpse back to life and nor does it heal any damage it has suffered; however it does prevent putrefaction. However once the spell ends, time catches-up with the corpse and the natural process of decay is accelerated with the events that would have occurred as a natural part of the process occurring simultaneously once the enchantment expires.

RESTING OF CH'ENG-HUANG

Power Point Cost: 1+
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Personal
Target: Corpse
Duration: 1 month per level of caster

This spell allows the caster to create a safe place to lay fallen comrades or family without fear of grave robbers, scavengers or rival necromancers. The structure built can be as simple as a fence with a gate or as elaborate as a mausoleum but it must have four walls and a lockable entrance. The spell creates a place that will protect up to one corpse laid within the structure per Power Point of the spell, for one month per level of the caster. Anyone or anything trying to enter the structure by any means in order to interact disrespectfully with the protected corpse(s) will need to make a Will Saving Throw against a DC equal to 10 + the caster's level + the Power Points invested in the spell. Those who fail the saving throw are prevented from entering the resting place, suffering an uncontrollable sense of dread as they try to cross the threshold.

CALL OF THE DEAD

Power Point Cost: 1 per undead called
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Caster's level in miles
Target: Undead
Duration: 10 minutes per level of the caster
Prerequisites: *Raise Corpse*

This spell allows the caster to call an undead being to come to his area from within a range equal to the caster's level in miles. The undead creature will be naturally drawn to the place where the spell is cast; assuming nothing interferes with their movement. If the undead being can circumvent the barrier without bringing harm to itself, it

will do so. The spell does nothing to dissuade the wants or needs of the creature summoned if it is an intelligent undead but will place any mindless undead in the thrall of the caster when they arrive. As a note, this spell does not *create* undead, it merely calls existing undead to the caster. Once the undead arrive they remain under the caster's control for 10 minutes per his level; at the end of the spell the creatures become inert unless the caster invests a further Power Point for every 10 minutes he wishes to maintain control over the creatures.

CURSE OF THE WOOD

Power Point Cost: 1+
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 20 minutes
Range: Touch
Target: Any wooden object
Duration: See below
Prerequisites: Knowledge (nature or wood) 10 ranks

This spell enchants any wooden object to become a manifestation of rot and decay, turning a simple piece of wood or bamboo into a deadly weapon capable of leeching the life from whatever it touches. Once enchanted, the object will drain 1 level from any living thing it comes into contact with that fails a Fortitude Saving Throw against a DC equal to the caster's level +10. This drained life is transferred to the wielder of the enchanted object directly as regained Hit Points equal to the levels drained multiplied by 3. The enchanted object can do this once per contact, up to a number of times equal to the Power Points invested in the object, at which point the item crumbles to dust.

LANGUAGE OF THE JUDGED

Power Point Cost: 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 Standard Action
Range: Touch
Target: Sentient Creature
Duration: 1 minute per level of the caster
Prerequisites: *Raise Corpse*

This spell allows the target to speak to mindless undead (zombies, skeletons, etc.). Although it does not instantly give the target the ability to command or lead these creatures, it does allow him to communicate normally with them and perhaps



to get them to do his bidding. Most mindless undead have no reason to lie or hold back information as they have no concept of what they are saying but they also do not have

to stop attacking to answer the target's questions...

CH'ENG-HUANG'S BLESSING

Power Point Cost: 1 per level of the target

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Touch

Target: Sentient Creature

Duration: 1 minute per level of the caster

Prerequisites: Knowledge (Arcana) 15 ranks

With this spell the target cannot normally die for the duration of the spell. The target can still be maimed, knocked unconscious, dismembered and so forth but he cannot die by *mundane* means. He may even be reduced to any number of negative Hit Points but will not die. If the target is restored to health before the spell's duration ends, then all is well. If Suspend Death expires while the target is still mortally wounded, then he will likely succumb to his wounds and die.

SUMMONING

Khitans sorcerers studying the Summoning style are prepared to summon and bargain with the creatures of the underworld, the kuei, many of which are worshipped as gods and demigods. Khitans have little difficulty accepting the work of summoners: the universe is balanced between heaven, the mortal world and the underworld and it is the will of the Source of All Things that permits mortals to transcend the barriers separating the underworld from the mortal world. Not all kuei are uncaring, raving demons – many are curious and pursue peaceful agendas; others simply adore the veneration mortals give to them.

IDENTIFY KUEI

Power Point Cost: 8

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Close

Target: Kuei

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: Will ST at a DC equal to 10 + Caster's level

Prerequisites: *Demonic Pact*

This spell allows a sorcerer to identify the name and nature of any demon or kuei that has already been summoned to the mortal world. He cannot control it, nor can he determine the creature's magic but he can determine:

- ✱ Who summoned the kuei
- ✱ The reasons behind the summoning
- ✱ The kuei's agenda, if it has one
- ✱ The essence of the pact the summoned creature has with its summoner

The kuei is permitted a Will Saving Throw to reject the caster's attempts to gain information. The DC for the Saving Throw is the caster's level +10. If the kuei succeeds, then the caster cannot attempt to use this spell against this particular kuei again. If the summoner of the kuei is also present and aware of the attempt to gain knowledge, he may reduce the DC of the Saving Throw by half his level (rounded down).

SERVITUDE

Power Point Cost: 8

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Close

Target: Sentient creature

Duration: 1 day per level of the caster

Saving Throw: Will ST at a DC equal to 10 + Caster's level + kuei's Will ST modifier

Prerequisites: *Demonic Pact*

This spell compels the target to become a follower or worshipper of the caster's summoned kuei. It must be cast in the kuei's presence.

The target is allowed to make a Will Saving Throw to resist the effects of the spell against a DC equal to the caster's level, plus the kuei's Will ST modifier, +10. If the saving throw is successful, then the compulsion fails.

If the spell succeeds then the target is brought under the kuei's influence and can be commanded by either the kuei or the caster for the spell's duration. Whilst enchanted the target acts normally but *always* in the kuei's interests; he cannot follow any other allegiances whilst under the spell's influence.

A sorcerer can direct the spell at multiple targets at a cost of 8 Power Points per target.



HEAVEN'S AUGUST LIGHT

Power Point Cost: 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Standard Action

Range: Dependent on caster's level

Target: Sentient creatures

Duration: 1 round for every 5 Power Points invested in the spell

Prerequisites: Caster must be an active priest of a god or kuei

This spell summons forth the radiance of heaven to beam down, bathing an area of radius equal to the caster's level in feet. The effect of the spell depends on the will of the sorcerer: the sorcerer can either enhance *all* Saving Throws modifiers by his level or reduce them by the same amount. The former is used to augment the sorcerer and those faithful to him and the latter to smite his enemies. Everyone caught in the beam of heavenly radiance is affected and is not allowed any Saving Throw to negate the energies of heaven.

SUMMON ANCESTOR

Power Point Cost: 10

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 day

Range: Personal

Target: Ancestors

Duration: Days equal to the caster's level

Prerequisites: Caster must be an active priest of a Khitan religion.

The spell summons a named ancestor from heaven and locks the ancestor's spirit back into the mortal world for a number of days equal to the caster's level. The summoned ancestor is then compelled to provide advice and guidance to the sorcerer and to use its magic in his favour, much as any other summoned entity must. Ancestors are resistant to this form of magic; they are content in heaven and so, the ancestor receives a Will Saving Throw to resist the spell, breaking it completely if it succeeds. The ancestor is allowed a further Saving Throw to resist the sorcerer's requests or commands each time one is made.

The material component is something linking the ancestor to the mortal realm, such as an heirloom or a revered statue from an ancestral shrine.



SUMMON DRAGON

Power Point Cost: 20

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 day

Range: Personal

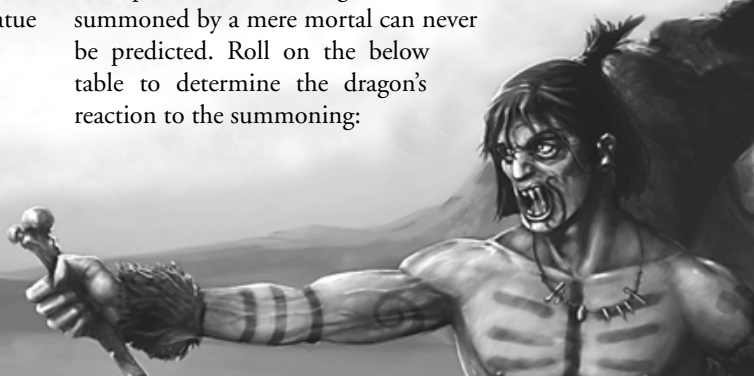
Target: Dragons

Duration: One specified task

Prerequisites: A suitable offering. Knowledge (arcane) 10 ranks.

The dragons of Khitai are ethereal beings that traverse the realms of heaven, the mortal world and the underworld. They are magically very powerful and whilst usually benign, capable of great wrathfulness if angered.

Summoning a dragon cannot compel it to act in a particular way. The sorcerer must, instead, persuade the dragon that it must do something: if the dragon refuses, no force on earth can command it. Furthermore, dragons are capricious and the dragon's reaction to be summoned by a mere mortal can never be predicted. Roll on the below table to determine the dragon's reaction to the summoning:





1D10	Attitude	Game Effects	DC Modification
1	Argumentative	The kuei delights in contradictions and argument. It does not become physically aggressive but may be verbally abusive. It certainly sticks to its own point of view, rejecting out of hand the most reasoned cases put to it.	+7
2-3	Arrogant	The kuei treats those who interact with it as worthless scum, unfit to occupy the same physical space as itself. If the character might be useful in some capacity, then kuei might deign to engage but is otherwise contemptuous of such an inferior, mortal being.	+10
4	Dismissive	The kuei dismisses, without any discussion, anyone who tries to engage with it.	+12
5	Domineering	The kuei seeks to use intimidation or threats of violence to browbeat anyone it meets into some form of service.	+10
6	Hostile	The kuei is hostile to all mortals. It attacks immediately.	+12
7	Intrigued	The kuei expresses a huge degree of interest in the character's motives. It spends 1D3 hours engaged in deep and detailed questions. At the end of this period, roll again on this table to determine the kuei's final reaction.	-6
8	Neutral	The kuei has no strong opinions one way or another. It simply goes about its business.	0
9	Oblivious	The kuei is oblivious to mortal life. It exists in its own existential bubble.	+10
10	Welcoming	The kuei is open, friendly and willing to engage in conversation. Friendship may result.	-10

The DC modification is applied to the base DC for the persuasion attempt, which is always 25. Further modifiers can be applied according to the circumstances.

Once summoned the dragon, if persuaded, performs only one action. It also requires a sacrifice. This may be a life of

some form but it may equally be riches or jade. The higher the quantity or quality of the offering, lower the DC by 1 or 2 points – but never by more than 5. Dragons, whilst vain, cannot be swayed by offerings alone; the sorcerer must have a compelling reason for the summoning.



Khitai at War

Khitai has fought many wars even though its western border is guarded by the Great Wall and its interior is a mixture of unforgiving desert and thick jungle. Its principal enemy in Conan's time is Hyrkania and the Hyrkanians have mounted several attempts to annex portions of Khitai or press into Paikang itself to seize complete power.

Despite the fractious nature of the Gongs, Khitans are united in their rejection of outside influence. If a nation such as Hyrkania offers a threat, the God Emperor can command the Imperial Army – that is, all the armies of the loyal Gongs – to repel the aggressor. Any Gong who refused such a command would become not just a pariah but would be actively attacked by the God Emperor and his allies, not to mention a host of supernatural creatures.

The Hyrkanians see in Khitai somewhere unknown to be brought to heel. Its treasures are an undoubted lure but for them it is a question of conquest rather than looting. The dark secrets of the jungles offer considerable fascination and the opportunity to bend Khitai's gods to their own will is a driver for Hyrkanian aggression.

KEY BATTLES OF KHITAN HISTORY

The following timeline notes key dates in Khitai's history from a military and dynastic perspective (which are frequently the same thing). Since 1400GW Khitai has known relative peace but in the turbulent times of Conan, that is never guaranteed and various Khitan scholars have noted astrological indications that some strange, foreboding event is due to engulf Khitai in the years ahead.

0-1 - Battle of Ch'ai. Hyrkania throws an invasion force against Khitai's western border, slaughtering thousands in the onslaught. The invasion is halted and reversed when the demigod Tu'r-Li, a vast, foul being loyal to the war god Cheng Wu, weaves the Great Wall. Hyrkania is repelled but promises bloody revenge.

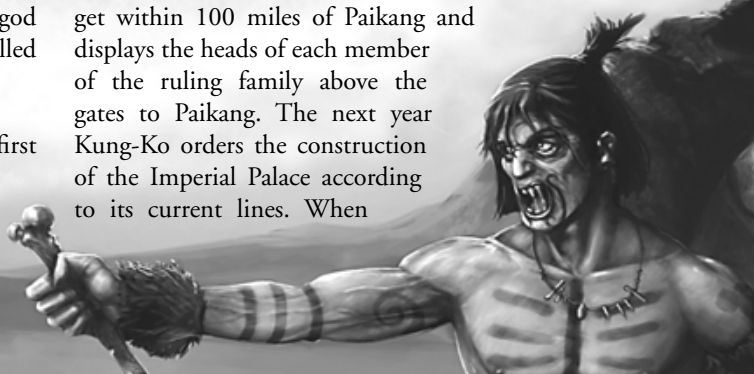
2-497 - Dominance of the Q'ah Dynasty. The first Emperor, No Q'ah, establishes Paikang as the capital. The dynasty then rapidly expanded



through a series of conquests of the south east and west, spreading the Q'ah heritage far and wide. Chang Tzu-ya is the leading hero general of the Q'ah dynasty.

466 - Battle of Mu. Wang Ka, the 'Beggar King' of the Ka, a barbaric people from the south opposed to Q'ah domination, sacks the new city of Mu and threatens to head north to sack Paikang. Chang Tzu-ya perfects the use of the battlefield chariot and, using 300 of them, defeats Wang Ka in the ruins of Mu but is mortally wounded. On his death he ascends to heaven where he becomes a god.

575 - Rise of the Kung dynasty. Kung-Ko is proclaimed regent for 12 years until the old Emperor's son is old enough to assume leadership of the empire. Several powerful clans of the north and west move against Kung-ko intent on removing the infant emperor from the throne. Kung-Ko defeats each family in turn before any can get within 100 miles of Paikang and displays the heads of each member of the ruling family above the gates to Paikang. The next year Kung-Ko orders the construction of the Imperial Palace according to its current lines. When





it is finished, 11 years later, Kung-Ko steps aside and allows Xan-Xan to become Emperor, as per the agreement. Xan-Xan appoints Kung-Ko as his principal adviser and instructs him to recruit six more 'men of honesty' so that the Emperor will always be guided fairly.

600-700 Kung expansion – Driving eastward Lemuria and north into the croplands, the Kung dynasty becomes the dominant power in the region for the next two centuries.

775 – Lemurian Slave Revolt. The Lemurian slaves, present in Khitai for hundreds and hundreds of years, rise-up in a revolt that had not been foreseen. Paikang, Ruo-gen and other cities are sacked and the slave army goes on the march. Emperor Q'ang, the Lord of War, unites the disparate, beleaguered kings, against the slave army and defeats its four generals at the Battle of Four Winds.

777 – Hyrkania, seeking to take advantage of a Khitai weakened by the slave revolt, invades northern Khitai with a force of 50,000 warriors. Emperor Q'ang, with a force of over 3,000 chariots, met the Hyrkanian army head-on in the northern grasslands and defeats the superior force, although he is mortally wounded in the process.

800 – 1000 – C'hu dynasty, which replaced the Kung in the wake of Q'ang's death, slowly disintegrates and falls prey to a strong cabal of nobles based in Ruo-gen and Shaulun. During this time the One Hundred Warlords mount a sustained campaign of disinformation, scandal and surgical assassination against the C'hu dynastic base. The kuei Haakaang orchestrates the warlords and sustains their power but eventually betrays several of their leaders: Ch'I, Chin, Ch'in, Wu, Yueh and Sung. As a result of this betrayal, the C'hu dynasty continues for a further century – albeit feebly.

1000 - 1100 – Fall of the C'hu Dynasty – As conflicts and friction between the corrupt C'hu nobles became more intense, the dynasty divides into three major powers. The Ch'in in Paikang, the Ch'u in Shaulun and the Wu, located along the eastern coast. The Ch'u attempt to annex the Great Wall and make it a new capital but are defeated in the Nau-Sang battle where kuei warriors, for the first time, supplement imperial troops on the battlefield.

1119 - 1125 – This six year period sees a pivotal war between the Wu and Ch'u power bases. Both armies, depleted following the Nau-Sang battle and four years of famine and drought

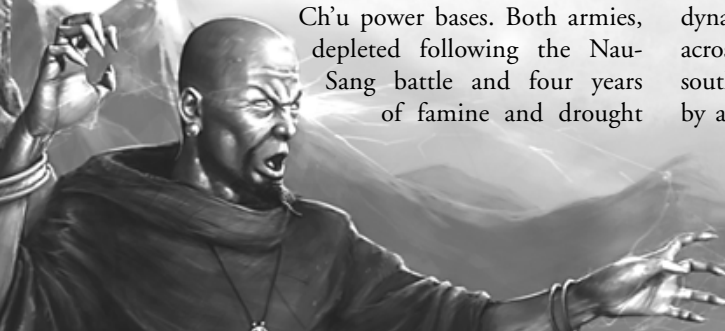
(caused by the ancestors, the seers claim), recruit peasant armies to fight their ongoing war, culminating in the battle of Ju-Bi in 1125. The Wu forces are forced to retreat before the superior onslaught of the Ch'u armies. Seeing that the Ch'u had a numerical and terrain advantage, the Wu generals feigned a retreat, only to turn and attack the Ch'u once their forces were scattered and vulnerable. The high-risk strategy worked (thanks in no small part to cunning sorcery and the aid of Hyrkanian mercenaries). The Wu army pursued the routed Ch'u to Ruo-gen and crushed them before they could reach the sanctuary of the city's walls.

1125 – 1397 The supremacy of the Wu clan, which becomes dynastic following the occupation of Ruo-gen, leads to a change in how war is fought in Khitai. Learning from the cunning tactics of the peasant ranks, armoured infantry (spearmen, swordsmen, and pikemen) are arranged into coherent units that can control and be controlled upon, the battlefield. Noble orders form the first cavalry regiments and matched with the new disciplines of infantry warfare, the armies of the Wu are the strongest Khitai has ever seen.

1147 – 1246 The Rise of the Hin dynasty in Paikang. Using clever politics the Hin dynasty forges an alliance with the Wu dynasty and begins to ascend to power in Paikang where it re-opens the Imperial Palace and begins to reassert the need for the Emperor's presence in Paikang rather than in Ruo-gen. For 100 years the God Emperor (a member of the Wu dynasty) remains in Ruo-gen but eventually, capitulates to Hin entreaties and returns the imperial seat to Paikang. A month after returning to the Imperial Palace, the Emperor is assassinated and a Hin Emperor assumes the Jade Throne.

1246-1247 – War between Wu and Hin. The Wu army besieges Paikang and demands the immediate abdication of the 'False Emperor'. Hin, facing elimination by a superior force, calls upon the gods for assistance and summons the Sun Dragon, Quy-Na, to smite the Wu army. The 'False Emperor' is recognised as a legitimate God Emperor and the Wu leaders are executed in grotesque sacrificial rites decreed by the Sun Dragon itself.

1258 – 1280 - War between Hin and the Rebel Warlords. After dealing with Wu, the Imperial Army mounts an extended campaign against those who supported the Wu dynasty, hunting the fleeing remnants of the 100 Warlords across Khitai. A series of battles rocks Khitai from north to south, with heavy cavalry being employed for the first time by an Imperial army. The final battle, at Xun-Hou, sees



the final rebel army crushed and massacred after a two-day battle across the Chosain plains.

1289 –Cavalry becomes the dominant arm of the army under the Hin dynasty, with all nobles expected to serve as cavalry soldiers. Horse breeding specialises in producing heavy horses solely for cavalry purposes and the new noble cavalry elites command the Imperial and private armies of loyal Gongs.

1340 – Second Battle of the Wall – Hyrkanian forces stage an attempt to scale the Great Wall at its northern and southern extremities but are repelled. The Wall Guardians are not summoned but the Wall Sorcerers co-ordinate the battle with spirit allies, striking fear into the Hyrkanian forces. Six days of celebration follow the victory.

1349 - Zhao Hin becomes God Emperor. His first act is to make war upon Kambulja for failing to send delegates to his coronation. Infantry and cavalry are despatched to the Marches and then towards Angkhor. The expeditionary force is defeated by Kambuljan charioteers and archers. One of the generals of the army, Yah-yoh, begins to conspire against Zhao Hin secretly.

1353 - 1359 – Zhao Hin's rule becomes increasingly corrupt as the God Emperor becomes increasingly insane. Gladiatorial contests are staged regularly for his enjoyment and he comes to believe that he is an earthly incarnation of the Source of All Things. Zhao Hin creates a gladiator army and retires many of the long-standing generals. Discipline begins to fragment. Yah-yoh's conspiracy moves to Paikang where the various families of the seven districts join to depose the remains of the Hin dynasty.

1360 – Zhao Hin is besieged within the Imperial Fortress. The remains of the Imperial Army face the gladiator army the God Emperor has created and defeats it. Zhao Hin is found in his throne room, a gibbering wreck, having killed and eaten two of his wives. He is buried alive in his own tomb, along with his gladiator army cast in terracotta. The location of Zhao Hin's tomb is erased from public record.

1361 - 1390 – Yah Dynasty – Yah-yoh becomes God Emperor and begins to absorb various families into the Yah dynasty. The army is re-established and strengthened and the bandit lords that had been allowed to flourish under Zhao Hin's rule are hunted down and exterminated.

1380 -1383 – Under the command of the God Emperor's generals T'ien-mo and Chai-ti, the Yah dynasty re-conquers the Kambuljan Marches which Kambulja had annexed following its defeat of Zhao Hin's expeditionary

force. The Dagger Princes have already instituted their rule here but they offer oaths of loyalty to the Emperor and all allowed to remain.

1390 – Emperor Yah-yoh dies; his inept son Hai-yah assumes the throne where he begins to show similar signs of the insanity that befell Zhao Hin.

1393– Hai-yah is murdered, setting off a series of power struggles between the Yah dynasty and Pang-lu, a popular revolutionary leader from the west. Much of the war is fought in the jungles, which Pang-lu controls but Pang-lu is killed in the battle of the Cursed Stream and the Yah dynasty cements its control over the empire by instituting political reforms.

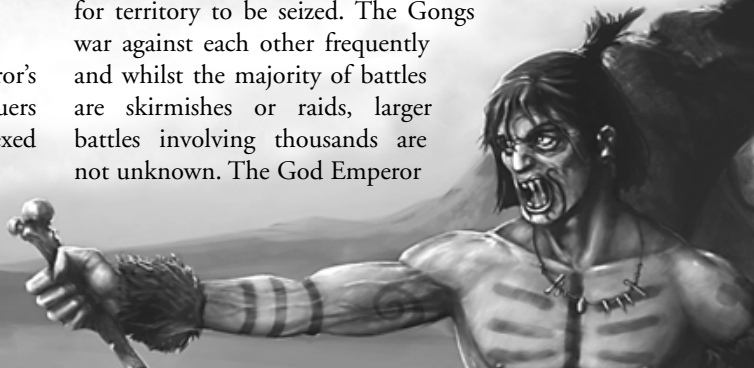
1398 – God Emperor Lo-Yah leads the Imperial Army against a masked army that invades from the north, defeating it in two days. He is considered a great general.

1399 – Invasion of the Hyrkanians – The Kyrkanians pierce the Great Wall with an army of over 300,000 men and advance to the edge of the Great Desert. Lo-Yah's forces engage with the Hyrkanian army in the greatest battle of Khitai's history. All elements are deployed: infantry, archers, charioteers and light and heavy cavalry. The battle lasts four days, culminating in the siege of the Lonely Plateau where the surviving Hyrkanian forces are trapped. In a last, desperate charge, they are slaughtered by Lo-Yah's army and their heads returned to Hyrkania with the God Emperor's blessings. The Hyrkanians mount no more raids against Khitai.

1400 - 1600 – Lo-Yah decrees the isolationist policy that remains in force for the next 200 years. The Yah dynasty thrives and becomes the wealthiest and most influential of all the Khitan dynasties. The emperor at the time of Return of Conan is Yah-Chieng and he meets his end as described in that book.

THE MILITARY OF KHITAI

Khitan Gongs often find it necessary to go to war: in so large and isolated a country, it is easy for borders to be ignored by a neighbouring or rival Gong and for territory to be seized. The Gongs war against each other frequently and whilst the majority of battles are skirmishes or raids, larger battles involving thousands are not unknown. The God Emperor





and his counsellors rarely intervene in such disputes; it is considered to be part of the natural order for men to war against each other and by and large war helps keep the Gongs manageable. The Jade Council is where the Khitan government brings any necessary pressure to bear but warring states are expected to find their own resolution. So, battles between local rulers are frequent and to this end, every Gong raises an army and appoints generals. Armies are a mixture of professionals and conscripts with the latter making up the bulk of the rank and file. Refusing to serve one's Gong in the time of war is a capital crime.

INFANTRY

Infantrymen are unarmoured, wearing high-necked, padded jackets and embroidered trousers. Infantry men are equipped with small bronze knives, sharpening stones, yard-long wood-hafted bronze halberds or spears and leather or wicker shields backed with silk on a wooden frame, usually decorated with the motif of their Gong. Their shields are useless after five rounds of combat. Almost all soldiers have a few levels in commoner. Characters playing a Khitan infantryman should realise that his character will not be trained to become an expert at his weapon. He is fodder and little else.



ARCHERS

Archers are barely trained conscripts from the Han class (so many have one or more ranks of commoner) who are forbidden to see their families for four years. Archers are equipped with bows and arrows, as well as the infantry knife and a broadsword. Bows are made of cattle sinew and horn and are the height of a man. The feathered, wood-shaft arrows are half the size of the bow. They are tipped with stone, bone, antler, shell or bronze. Archers wear light armour. They use their bows until the opponent closes, then sling their wicker shields from their backs and continue the fight with their knives and swords. Their shields are useless after five rounds of combat.

CHARIOTEERS

Khitai is proud of its skill with war chariots. These are two-wheeled, two-horse vehicles made of leather and wood with enough room for a driver and archer. The Imperial Army maintains 10,000 chariots and no king, prince or other ruler is permitted to have more than 1,000 chariots, such is the premium placed upon them in combat. Of course, chariots are only as capable as the terrain they travel over, and are therefore at their best in flat, open areas like the Rolling Plains, the Marches, the Grasslands and the Croplands.

Chariots are traditionally used in companies comprised of five squadrons with each squadron having five chariots. Charioteers have small bronze knives, sharpening stones, yard-long wood-hafted bronze halberds and leather or wicker shields on a wooden frame, usually decorated with a tiger motif. Charioteers wear slightly heavier armour than archers and infantrymen and wear light helmets secured with elaborate bows.

Nobles and commanders usually use ornate battle-chariots pulled by anything up to eight horses; however these vehicles are there to note prestige, position and rank and are not serious implements of war. The lighter, more manoeuvrable two-horsed versions are versatile, fast and in the hands of a skilled driver, deadly.

CAVALRY

The Khitan cavalry is also, by western standards, poorly equipped and trained but numerous. They use broadswords and large shields in battle, wearing high-collared, embroidered coats with raw silk padding and steel caps. They lose three soldiers for every nomad slain in a typical battle. This character spends Skill Points on Ride and Handle Animal, as well as Mounted Combat. They are at a supreme disadvantage against the Hyrkanians because they

do not practise mounted archery. They attempt to make up for this disadvantage through sheer weight of number.

MERCENARIES

Where professional soldiers are concerned, Gongs are prepared to hire mercenaries to supplement the ranks. Mercenaries are easy to come by in Khitai. With so many competing interests amongst the local kings wandering mercenaries – either individuals or groups (many of which are little better than bandits when not engaged by the ruler) – tread the country searching for petty wars and an eager employer. Foreign mercenaries are welcomed in Khitai: their lives are meaningless and the foreigners bring fighting techniques that might provide an edge over the adversary. However foreign mercenaries typically lack the levels of courtesy and respect Khitan commanders enjoy from native troops. It is therefore rare for foreign mercenaries to receive any respect in return and any outsider wishing to

in amongst its own ranks, if the area around it is not cleared in time and some of the huge wooden catapults are simply too large and heavy to be assembled in time, save where a city or settlement is being laid under siege.

Battlefield sorcery is more effective. Sorcerer priests who summon demons and kuei and persuade them to fight are able to deliver the monstrosities of the underworld to the field of battle, terrifying the conscripted troops and seasoned infantry alike. Undead, too, can be summoned forth and sorcerers have been known to create zombie creatures from the dead of the battle to be redeployed as lumbering sword-fodder to help hasten a cavalry charge.

Alchemists create smoke and fire weapons that can be either thrown or delivered by catapult. The alchemical items detailed on pages 279 to 281 of the Conan rules are available to Khitan alchemists and whilst their names are different (see below), the effects are the same.

Standard Conan Name	Khitan Equivalent
Acheronian Demon Fire	Spittle of the Kuei
Flame Powder	Dust of Heaven
Golden Wine of Xuthal	Elixir of the Ancestors
Kothic Demon Fire	August Blood of the Kuei
Lotus Smoke	Mists of Trepidation
Stygian Tomb Dust	Dust of the Ancestors

fight for a Khitan Gong will have a great deal of work to do in securing a fair price for his talents.

ENGINEERS

The Imperial Army and some of the wealthier Gongs employ soldier-scholars and war-priests who supplement the force with a mixture of war machines, alchemy and sorcery. The priests of the Chang Tzu-ya and Cheng Wu religions are warlike and study the combat disciplines of their gods to improve their usefulness to the God Emperor.

The soldier scholars specialise in alchemy and the construction/operation of elaborate war machines: catapults, trebuchets and other devices designed to assist in siege warfare and deliver high-levels of carnage at range. Khitai has a fascination with such devices and the soldier scholars of Chang Tzu-ya delight in building bigger and more elaborate variations on familiar themes. Devices such as the Whirlwind Catapult are designed to fling rocks in any direction using a series of arms connected to a vertical axle that is turned by slaves (the energy being stored in knotted ropes) and then released so that the horizontal arms whirl around at high speed. Of course, such devices are impressive, but not necessarily effective. The Whirlwind catapult for example deposits missiles

OTHER UNITS

Commanders and other officers wear intricate, lacquered armour, complete with tassels and flaring helmets secured with a complicated bow. This armour design has an exotic, sinister look to Westerners. The armies of Khitai use colourful flags to indicate the locations of units. Unit commanders have a similar flag attached to their armour, jutting up over their helmets. Individual soldiers do not wear distinguishing identification.

Other soldiers, not members of the military, are persons trained to defend the temples via hand-to-hand combat. Some form cults of assassins trained in stealth and the martial arts. They take unarmed fighting feats, Stealthy and similar feats. Since only nobility or members of the military may wield weapons, these soldiers must learn to fight without swords.



UNIFORMS AND REGALIA OF THE KHITAN ARMIES

Khitans delight in the trappings of battle, especially the noble orders and uniforms are worn with pride.

GENERALS/HIGH RANKING OFFICERS

All high ranking command staff wear armour, whether active on the battlefield or not. Long coats covered in a pointed flap of armour, with ribbon-festooned tunics and tall, winged caps, is the standard dress for a Khitan officer. All officers carry a sword and dagger and some also wear fighting staves in their belts (which are wide, brightly coloured sashes fastened over the armoured coat). Coats are generally dyed green – a lucky colour in Khitai – with purple or scarlet linings and intricately decorated hems. The deeper the green, the more elaborate the hem, the higher the rank. On the back of the coat it is common for the heraldic device of the Gong being served to be displayed, although some officers opt for designs of birds or animals. The winged cap offers no armour protection but is a potent symbol of rank. An arrangement of leather and stiffened linen it is dyed black and sculpted into a swept-back wing design that fastens to the head with a wide chin strap tied with a bow at the throat.

ARCHERS

As most archers are conscripts, they are denied armour. The standard uniform is a wrap-around coat made of thick cotton that is secured over trousers and a tunic by a narrow belt that is connected with bronze belthooks. The quiver is worn on either the left or right hip and every archer carries a dagger and fighting staff. Archers do not wear helmets or head-dresses but coil the hair into a waxed topknot that is secured by a spare bowstring (sometimes several) and then covered with a length of ribbon to keep it dry.

INFANTRY

Light infantry wear long, plain tunics secured by a sash belt, short trousers and puttees (cloth wrapped around the shins and knees), which allows for fluid movement.

Again, helmets are not worn and the hair is secured in a topknot and held in place by pins and a length of dark ribbon.

Heavy infantry forms the bulk of the foot-force of a Khitan army.

Long, armoured tunics are worn over short

trousers and puttees. The armoured coat ends just above the elbow, allowing for improved dexterity and swathes of padded cotton or linen may be worn as greaves to protect the forearm and upper wrist. Heavy infantry wear the hair in a topknot but are also allowed a close-fitting cap that slips over the hair and forehead.

Both light and heavy infantry carry a shortsword, a dagger, a fighting staff and then either a two handed spear or a pike, depending on their unit's type.

CHARIOTEERS

Charioteers are permitted similar armour to heavy infantry although the armoured coat is decorated with high collar and the sleeves extend all the way to the wrist, with bronze or leather plates projecting out from the end of the sleeves to protect the hands and fingers. Charioteers wear their hair in flattened winged knots that are tied into place with lengths of cotton or wool. A brightly coloured neck scarf is worn by those charioteers who have earned some notice on the battlefield.

ENGINEERS

The engineering units usually wear their priestly vestments supplemented by short armoured coats and stiff, conical hats of lacquered leather (usually dyed black). Engineers involved in alchemy wear backpacks and side-satchels that carry their chemical ingredients and prepared ordinance. They do not carry any other weapons.

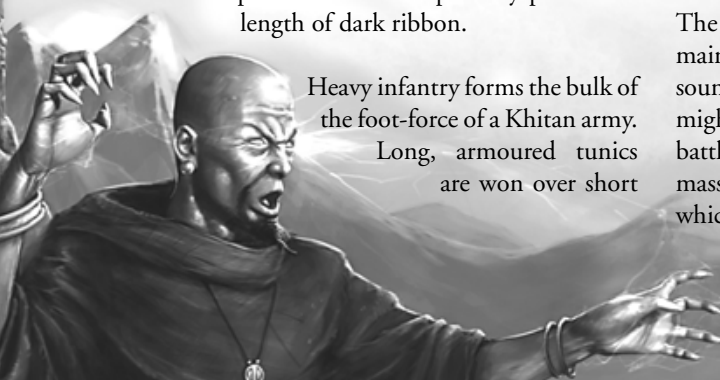
MERCENARIES

Mercenaries wear whatever armour they own or can buy. No foreigner is permitted to wear the regalia of a Khitan warrior, even if he can afford to buy it.

KHITAN MILITARY STRATEGY

History is written by the victors. The timeline, earlier in this chapter, tells of great Khitan victories but it does not tell the full story. Yes, Khitai was victorious but in terms of its organisation and deployment of troops, it was also lucky.

The Khitan approach to war is based on gaining or maintaining numerical superiority rather than on applying sound strategies and tactics. Although a Gong's army might be arranged into neat ranks and formations on the battlefield, the standard form of deployment is to throw masses of men at each other and see which side prevails and which side falls. Conscript troops, who are, usually, scared



out of their wits, have trouble following detailed orders anyway and their commanders, eager to attain personal glory, ignore any strategies or tactics save the most obvious. If they see a chance for attaining some personal honour, they will do so, irrespective of the overall battle-plan.

Khitai armies are therefore large, well-ordered to begin with but soon descend into an unholy mess once battle has commenced. Many conscripts flee as soon as the first arrows fly or swords are rattled and shamed, become bandits who haunt the hills, forests and valleys. Those that remain fight with what little expertise they have but rely on the weight of their own side for protection and courage. In a full-scale battle losses are high – a combination of desertion and inept tactics. Commanders and generals are usually reduced to watching the battle degenerate into a squalid melee having failed to plan adequately before or impotent to maintain plans once forces have engaged.

When not fighting wars, Khitai's armies either sit on the border to await a Hyrkanian attack or they patrol the interior of the nation, collecting taxes and suppressing bandits and anyone rebelling against the God Emperor. Khitai orders its troops in regular and predictable arrangements determined more by tradition than any particular strategy. Infantry and archers are arranged in formations consisting of three 100-man companies, one each to the left, right and centre. Chariot squadrons follow behind and then, if used, light cavalry and then heavy cavalry.

KHITAN MILITARY CLASSES

KHITAN MERCENARY

The disparate of kingdoms of Khitai employ private armies consisting of troops from both the region or settlement and paid swords recruited from the itinerant mercenaries who hope to make a living fighting for whichever side pays the highest. The mercenary profession is not viewed as particularly honourable amongst Khitans but it can be lucrative, especially as the clans and dynasties of Khitai frequently squabble and make war upon each other.

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

The Khitan Mercenary's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are features of the Khitan mercenary class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Khitan mercenary is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, two-weapon combat, light, medium and heavy armour and shields.

Blood Money: A Khitan mercenary is motivated not by patriotism, love nor discipline but money. The listed number of times per day, a mercenary being paid a substantial sum may gain a +2 morale bonus to any one attack roll, damage roll, skill check or saving throw. To activate this ability the 'substantial sum' must be at least 100 silver pieces per character level if the sum is to be delivered as a lump on completion of the work or three silver pieces per character level if the character is being paid on a daily basis. The Khitan mercenary must either have received the sum already, have been paid a due share of it that day, be in line to receive the sum within 30 days or some combination of these.

Patchwork Armour: Khitan mercenaries constantly work on their armour, repairing tears and dents and adding pieces of metal, hide and armour of their opponents to shore up any weak spots. A Khitan mercenary with this ability adds the listed bonus to the DR of any suit of armour he has owned for more than one month. However, the maximum DR a suit of armour can gain with this ability is equal to the character's Khitan mercenary class level. For example, a 6th level Khitan mercenary is given a quilted jerkin as part of his 'signing bonus' with a local militia. After a month the DR of this armour becomes five, as the Khitan mercenary has added to the armour. Later, this mercenary kills a soldier wearing a scale corselet. After taking a few pieces to add to his armour, he leaves the armour on the corpse, as his quilted jerkin provides just as much protection.

Cheap Shot: Mercenaries have no concept of fair play or chivalry in battle. The Khitan mercenary seeks an edge in battle and no target is off limits. Khitan mercenaries also look for any weakness in an opponent's armour and will repeatedly strike at a weaker area, such as a shoulder, attempting to wear through the protection. Once per day a Khitan mercenary may add the listed bonus to the damage of a successful attack. This damage also adds to the damage dealt for the purposes of damaging armour, since the Khitan mercenary will try to exploit and open up any weaknesses.



Khitan Mercenary

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Dodge Bonus	Base Parry Bonus	Magic Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	+0	Blood Money 1/day
2	+2	+1	+1	+0	+3	+3	+0	Patchwork Armour +1
3	+3	+1	+2	+0	+3	+3	+1	Cheap Shot +1d6
4	+4	+2	+3	+1	+4	+4	+1	Blood Money 2/day
5	+5	+2	+3	+1	+4	+4	+1	Patchwork Armour +2
6	+6/+1	+3	+4	+1	+5	+5	+2	Cheap Shot +2d6
7	+7/+2	+3	+5	+1	+5	+5	+2	Patchwork Armour +3
8	+8/+3	+4	+6	+2	+6	+6	+2	Blood Money 3/day, Cheap Shot 2/day
9	+9/+4	+4	+6	+2	+6	+6	+3	Blood Money 4/day
10	+10/+5	+5	+7	+2	+7	+7	+3	Patchwork Armour +4
11	+11/+6/+1	+5	+7	+3	+7	+7	+3	Cheap Shot +3d6
12	+12/+7/+2	+6	+8	+3	+8	+8	+3	Blood Money 4/day, Cheap Shot 3/day
13	+13/+8/+3	+6	+8	+3	+8	+8	+4	Blood Money 5/day
14	+14/+9/+4	+7	+9	+4	+9	+9	+4	Patchwork Armour +5
15		+7	+9	+4	+9	+9	+4	Cheap Shot +4d6
16		+8	+10	+4	+10	+10	+5	Blood Money 5/day, Cheap Shot 4/day
17		+8	+10	+5	+10	+10	+5	Blood Money 6/day
18		+9	+11	+5	+11	+11	+5	Patchwork Armour +6
19		+9	+11	+5	+11	+11	+6	Cheap Shot +5d6
20		+10	+12	+6	+12	+12	+6	Patchwork Armour +7



KHITAN PIKEMAN

Khitans are renowned for their skills with pikes. Working in tightly ordered ranks they are deadly with their weapons and can quickly dispatch those who move within the reach of their blades. They are almost barbaric as they defend their fields of battle, showing no quarter because they know that when an enemy cavalry charges, they will be given none.

Abilities: Those who specialise with the Khitan pike depend mostly on the strength and dexterity of their bodies. Some feel that one must be able to take as much as one can dish out and focus on constitution. Yet, others who are destined to be leaders focus on charisma.

Hit Die: d10.

Class Skills

The Professional's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Survival (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Khitan Pike: At 1st level, a Khitan Pikeman gains Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Khitan Pike) as a bonus feat. All of the best pikemen that Khitan has to offer carry true Khitan Pikes.

Pike Mastery: Beginning at 1st level and again at 5th and 10th level, the Khitan Pikeman gains better proficiency when wielding a pike. This correlates to a +1 bonus to attack and damage. These bonuses stack with all other applicable bonuses, such as those from Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialisation.

Close Combat Weapon: At 2nd level, the Khitan Pikeman learns to quickly respond to any threat lucky enough to get past the area threatened by his pike. This allows him to drop his pike on the ground and draw a secondary weapon to attack adjacent foes as a free action. He may only do

so during his turn. Reclaiming his pike from the ground or sheathing his secondary weapon is a move equivalent action as normal. However, the Khitan Pikeman may stick his secondary weapon in the ground (if possible) and retrieve his pike from the ground as a single move equivalent action. The secondary weapon may then be utilised using this ability the next time as necessary.

Pike Bash: Beginning at 3rd level, the Khitan Pikeman learns to use the haft of his pike to attack opponents 10 feet away from him but not those adjacent to him. The damage for this attack is half as much as the base damage for the pike being wielded and the damage is bludgeoning, not piercing. If the character has multiple attacks and uses the full attack action, this ability may be used as many times as he has attacks.

Bonus Feat: At 3rd, 6th, 9th and every three levels beyond, the Khitan Pikeman may choose a bonus feat. These feats may be chosen from the soldier bonus feats list. The feats that may be selected as Khitan Pikeman bonus feats are indicated as soldier bonus feats in the Feats table in the Feats chapter of Conan the Roleplaying Game. A Khitan Pikeman must still meet all prerequisites for a feat, including ability score and base attack bonus minimums.

Charge Barricade: At 4th level, the Khitan Pikeman is always ready against a charge from an opponent. As a free action, even if it is not currently his turn, he may set his pike against a charge versus any opponent who initiates a charge against the Khitan Pikeman. The Khitan Pikeman's attack is resolved before the attack of the charging opponent and does double damage (triple damage on a critical hit). Charge Barricade is an attack of opportunity and follows the normal rules for attacks of opportunity.

Greater Khitan Pike-and-shield Fighting: At 7th level, the Khitan Pikeman's shield bonuses, when used in conjunction with a pike are increased by +1.

Supreme Bravery: Khitan are some of the bravest warriors in all of Hyboria. Khitan Pikemen are even braver, standing steadfast on the front lines of most any conflict. If the pike wall fails, the rest of the army could quickly falter. At 8th level, Khitan Pikemen gain a +3 bravery bonus to will saves versus fear effects. If they do succumb to fear, the severity of the fear is lessened by two categories.



KHITAI AT WAR



Khitan Pikeman

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Dodge Bonus	Base Parry Bonus	Magic Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0	Khitan Pike, Pike Mastery
2	+2	+1	+1	+0	+3	+0	+0	Close Combat Weapon
3	+3	+1	+2	+0	+3	+1	+1	Pike Bash, Bonus Feat
4	+4	+2	+3	+1	+4	+1	+1	Charge Barricade
5	+5	+2	+3	+1	+4	+1	+1	Pike Mastery
6	+6/+1	+3	+4	+1	+5	+2	+2	Bonus Feat
7	+7/+2	+3	+5	+1	+5	+2	+2	Greater Khitan Pike-and-shield fighting
8	+8/+3	+4	+6	+2	+6	+2	+2	Supreme Bravery
9	+9/+4	+4	+6	+2	+6	+3	+3	Bonus Feat
10	+10/+5	+5	+7	+2	+7	+3	+3	Pike Mastery
11	+11/+6/+1	+5	+7	+2	+7	+3	+3	Close Combat Weapon
12	+12/+7/+2	+6	+8	+3	+8	+4	+4	Bonus Feat
13	+13/+8/+3	+6	+8	+3	+8	+4	+4	Supreme Bravery
14	+14/+9/+4	+7	+9	+3	+9	+4	+4	Pike Bash,
15		+7	+9	+3	+9	+5	+5	Bonus Feat
16		+8	+10	+4	+10	+5	+5	Close Combat Weapon
17		+8	+10	+4	+10	+5	+5	Supreme Bravery
18		+9	+11	+4	+11	+6	+6	Bonus Feat
19		+9	+11	+4	+11	+6	+6	Pike Mastery
20		+10	+12	+5	+12	+6	+6	Greater Khitan Pike-and-shield fighting



KHITAN NOBLE CAVALRY

The noble ranks of Khitan society do not lower themselves to serve as foot soldiers; for them it is horseback or nothing and those nobles who serve find themselves as trained cavalymen. However Khitai's cavalry tradition is not as sophisticated as that of nations such as Aquilonia and so the skills are not as refined. Yet they are the elite and behave as such, riding to war with a swagger and sneer, believing that the ancestors will protect them even when good armour cannot.

Hit Die: d10

Class Skills

The Khitan Noble Cavalry class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nobility) (Int) and Ride (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are features of the Khitan Cavalryman class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Khitan Cavalryman is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light, heavy, and medium armour and shields.

Born to the Saddle: A Khitan Cavalryman is nothing without a good horse; selecting the best mount is therefore extremely important. If a Khitan Cavalryman makes a successful Handle Animal or Ride check (DC 15), he can determine the precise number of hit points and hit dice of any horse. Unlike the nomad ability of the same name, a Khitan Cavalryman cannot use this ability on a camel or pony. This extraordinary ability takes 1d6 rounds to perform and the Khitan Cavalryman must be within 5 feet of the creature to be assessed.

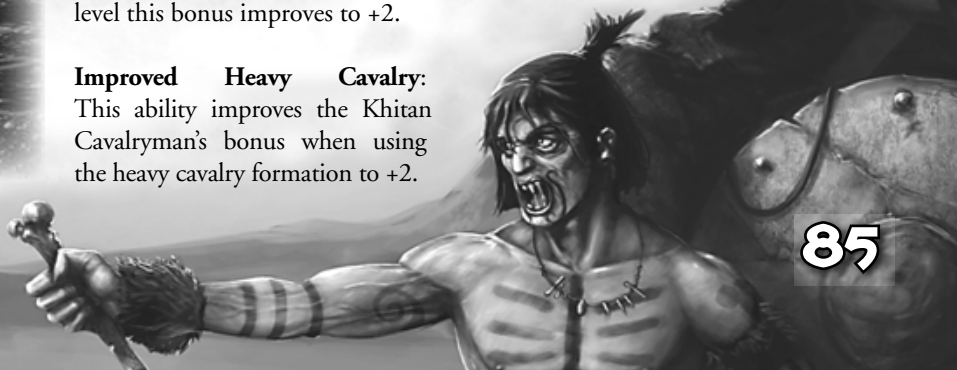
At 10th level a Khitan Cavalryman may also determine a horse's precise ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, and so forth) if he succeeds at the Handle Animal or Ride check.

At 15th level a Khitan Cavalryman can determine all of the above as a free action for any horse he can see, for a number of times per round up to his Wisdom modifier + 3.

Armour Tolerance: A Khitan Cavalryman's training begins in earnest when he is as young as 10, when the boy is referred to as a squire. Combat practice and other vigorous activities such as horsemanship, climbing fences and crossing muddy ditches are all performed in armour. As the squire progresses in his training the type of armour worn during these activities becomes progressively heavier. By the time a squire becomes a full-fledged Khitan Cavalryman, the heaviest armour is worn with ease. The listed modifier is added to the maximum Dexterity bonus and armour check penalty of any medium or heavy armour worn by a Khitan Cavalryman. The maximum armour check penalty for a suit of armour is -0. This allows the knight to make Ride checks for fast mounting and dismounting, Jump and Climb checks with a reduced penalty.

Lance Charge: The signature attack of the Khitan Cavalryman, at 4th level he gains the listed bonus to damage rolls and to armour piercing when making a mounted charge attack with a lance. At 8th level this bonus improves to +2.

Improved Heavy Cavalry: This ability improves the Khitan Cavalryman's bonus when using the heavy cavalry formation to +2.



KHITAI AT WAR



Khitan Cavalryman

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Dodge Bonus	Base Parry Bonus	Magic Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0	Born to the Saddle; Horsemanship +1
2	+2	+1	+1	+0	+3	+0	+0	Armour Tolerance +1
3	+3	+1	+2	+0	+3	+1	+1	Horsemanship +2
4	+4	+2	+3	+1	+4	+1	+1	Armour Tolerance +2; Lance Charge +1
5	+5	+2	+3	+1	+4	+1	+1	Born to the Saddle
6	+6/+1	+3	+4	+1	+5	+2	+2	Armour Tolerance +3; Horsemanship +3
7	+7/+2	+3	+5	+1	+5	+2	+2	Improved Heavy Cavalry
8	+8/+3	+4	+6	+2	+6	+2	+2	Armour Tolerance +4; Lance Charge +2
9	+9/+4	+4	+6	+2	+6	+3	+3	Horsemanship +4
10	+10/+5	+5	+7	+2	+7	+3	+3	Armour Tolerance +5; Born to the Saddle
11		+5	+7	+2	+7	+3	+3	Horsemanship +5
12		+6	+8	+3	+7	+3	+3	Lance Charge +3
13		+6	+8	+3	+8	+4	+4	Armour Tolerance +6; Born to the Saddle
14		+7	+9	+3	+8	+4	+4	Horsemanship +6
15		+7	+9	+3	+9	+4	+4	Improved Heavy Cavalry
16		+8	+10	+4	+9	+4	+4	Armour Tolerance +7; Lance Charge +4
17		+8	+10	+4	+10	+5	+5	Horsemanship +7
18		+9	+11	+4	+10	+5	+5	Lance Charge +5
19		+9	+11	+4	+11	+5	+5	Improved Heavy Cavalry
20		+10	+12	+5	+11	+5	+5	Armour Tolerance +8; Lance Charge +6



A Khitai Gazeteer

This chapter provides game statistics for a variety of Khitan character types using *Conan Second Edition Rules*. The chapter breaks into two sections: Typical Mass characters, for use as combatants with little in the way of personality and Encounter Archetypes – a range of individuals representing Khitan professions with some notes on personality, motivation and background.

TYPICAL MASS CHARACTERS

Sample Generic Khitan Bandits

	1st level Rabble	3rd level Gang Veteran	5th level Gang Leader
Hit Dice:	1d8+1 (5 hit points)	3d8+3 (15 hit points)	5d8+5 (25 hit points)
Initiative:	+5	+6	+8
Speed:	30 ft.		
DV Dodge:	12 (+2 Dex)	14 (+2 Dex, +2 base)	15 (+2 Dex, +3 base)
DV Parry:	11 (+1 Str)	12 (+1 Str, +1 base)	12 (+1 Str, +1 base)
BAB/Grapple:	+1/+2	+3/+4	+5/+6
Attack:	Broadsword +4 (1d8+1/x2, AP 2); Hunting spear +4 (1d8/x2, AP 1*)	Broadsword +6 (1d8+1/x2, AP 2); Hunting spear +6 (1d8/x2, AP 1*)	Broadsword +9 (1d8+1/x2, AP 2); Hunting spear +6 (1d8/x2, AP 1*)

BANDIT GANGS

Typical bandits lurking in the hills of western Chosain and the countless other areas of Khitai that are perfect for ambush, being poorly policed or guarded. The bandits here are based on the Pirate class which equates to the feral behaviour these desperate outlaws display.

A typical bandit gang consists of 3d6 1st level Rabble, 1d6+1 Veterans and a Gang Leader.



	1st level Rabble	3rd level Gang Veteran	5th level Gang Leader
Full Attack:	Broadsword +4/+4 melee (1d8+1/ x2, AP 2, and 1d6/x2); or Hunting spear +6 (1d8/x2, AP 1*)	Broadsword +6/+6 melee (1d8+1/ x2, AP 2, and 1d6/x2); or Hunting spear +6 (1d8/x2, AP 1*)	Broadsword +9/+9melee (1d8+1/ x2, AP 2, and 1d6/x2); or Hunting spear +7 (1d8/x2, AP 1*)
Special Attacks:	Versatility (only -2 penalty when using improvised weapons)	Versatility (only -2 penalty when using improvised weapons), Crimson Mist	Versatility (only -2 penalty when using improvised weapons), Crimson Mist
Special Qualities:	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism
Space/Reach:	5 ft.(1)/5 ft.(1)		
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0	Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 8	Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 8	Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 8
Skills: Note:	Hide +11, Jump +7, Listen +2,	Hide +12, Jump +7, Listen +3,	Hide +14, Jump +7, Listen +4,
Circumstance bonuses figured into skills	Move Silently +11, Spot +2, Bluff +2, Hide +2, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (Geography) +0, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Ride +4, Spot +2;	Move Silently +13, Spot +2, Bluff +4, Hide +2, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Geography) +0, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Ride +4, Spot +2;	Move Silently +15, Spot +2, Bluff +6, Hide +2, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Geography) +0, Listen +2, Move Silently +12, Ride +4, Spot +2;
Feats:	Self Sufficient, Shield Proficiency	Blind-Fight, Endurance, Weapon Focus (Broadsword).	Power Attack, Quick Draw, Run
Possessions:	Broadsword, hunting spear, round shield		



KHITAN PRIVATE ARMY PATROL

The kingdoms making up Khitai are ruled by local kings – Gongs – who maintain their own private armies that, when summoned by the God Emperor, combine to form the Imperial Army. When not pressed into such loyal service, these private armies are used for border defence and waging war against rival Gongs.

A typical patrol consists of 20 light infantry, 5 archers, 5 light cavalry (consisting of junior nobles) and a sergeant and a patrol commander. Chariots are not normally used as part of a standard patrol.

These same statistics can also be used for the Great Wall patrols.

Sample Generic Private Army Patrol

	Light Infantry (3rd level Soldier)	Archers (3rd Level Soldier)	Light Cavalry (4th Level Khitai Cavalry)	Sergeant (6th Level Soldier)	Commander (10th Level Noble)
Hit Dice:	3d10+2 (20 HP)	3d10+2 (20 HP)	4d10+1 (24 HP)	6d10+2 (39 HP)	10d8+2 (60 HP)
Initiative:	+2	+2	+3	+3	+6
Speed:	30ft	30ft	30ft	30ft	30ft
DV Dodge:	+12	+12	+13	+16	+14
DV Parry:	+13	+13	+11	+17	+15
BAB/Grapple:	+3/+3	+3/+3	+4/+4	+7/+2	+7/+7
Attack:	Broadsword +3, Dagger +3	Bow +3, Dagger +3	Broadsword +4 Lance +4	Broadsword +7, Dagger +7	Broadsword +7, Dagger +7
Full Attack:	Broadsword +3, Dagger +3	Bow +3, Dagger +3	Broadsword +4 Lance +4	Broadsword +7/+2, Dagger +7/+2	Broadsword +7/+2, Dagger +7/+2
Special Attacks:	Weapon Focus	Weapon Focus (Bow)	Weapon Focus (Lance), Lance Charge +1	Weapon Focus	



	Light Infantry (3 rd Level Soldier)	Archers (3 rd Level Soldier)	Light Cavalry (4 th Level Khitan Cavalry)	Sergeant (6 th Level Soldier)	Commander (10 th Level Noble)
Special Qualities:	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism	Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism Title, Rank Hath its Privileges, Wealth, Social Ability, Enhanced Leadership, Lead by Example +4
Space/Reach:	5 ft.(1)/5 ft.(1)				
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0	Fort +5, Ref +3, Will -1	Fort +5, Ref +2, Will -1	Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3	Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6
Abilities:	Str 11, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 10	Str 11, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 10	Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 14	Str 13, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 12	Str 11, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 15
Skills: Note: Circumstance bonuses figured into skills	Intimidate +3, Search +3	Knowledge (rumours) +3 Search +3	Intimidate +4, Ride +4	Intimidate +6, Search +6, Knowledge (rumours) +6 Search +6	Appraise +7, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information, +7 Handle Animal +4, Hide +4, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Knowledge (warfare)+8, Ride +10, Sense Motive +7, Survival +7
Feats:	Formation Combat, Power Attack	Formation Combat, Combat Reflexes	Mounted Combat	Formation Combat, Power Attack, Combat Reflexes	Alertness, Armour Proficiency (Light and Medium), Leadership, Mounted Combat, Persuasive
Possessions:	Weapons, armour, rations (dried meats and fruits), water				



KHITAN ENCOUNTERS

WILY PAIKANG MERCHANT

In amongst the streets and markets of the greatest city in the world, the Paikang merchant plies his wares, be these trinkets, ornaments, jewellery fashioned from silver or jade or common commodities such as foodstuffs or clothing. He knows the trade angles; he knows the prices and markets; he haggles hard. His eyes are bright as the customer approaches and brighter still as the price is agreed. His family extends and becomes ever sicker whenever the customer tries to drive a harder bargain than he likes and he makes no bones of the fact that, tomorrow, he will be destitute and his family driven into slavery. Slavery? You need a slave? I know just the person to help you!

Level: 6
Hit Dice: 6d6 (21 HP)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +11
DV Parry: +11
BAB/Grapple: +4/+4
Attack: Dagger +4
Full Attack: Dagger +4
Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks, +2 bonus to Move Silently checks, -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +2, Reflexes +1, Will +8 (includes Iron Will)
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 16
Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +8, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local area) +6, Knowledge (barter) +8, Listen +7, Sense Motive +5 (includes Negotiator), Spot +6
Feats: Diligent, Iron Will, Negotiator
Possessions: Market stall or cart according to station, 1,000 SP worth of tradable goods, decent robes, fashionable winged cap, beads, rings and bangles, dagger.

ERUDITE SCHOLAR

Whether he is a hermit, living out in the jungle or a city-dweller, crouched in the upper floor of a tenement in Ruogen, the scholar has ink-stained fingers, strained eyes, a pale complexion (through a lack of exposure to the sun) and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He has studied the Star Texts of Yag; he has read the Ninety Four Scrolls of Revelation; he has memorised the Holy Memorable Chants of the obscure N'iin Dynasty and he can name every God Emperor, in order, and cite their dates of birth, death and what size hat they wore. Knowledge is there to be accumulated; he sometimes likes to share it, but he always likes to gain it. Any scrap of history or mystical insight; any fragment of lore or learning. He has no passion for the dark arts of sorcery but could, if he wanted, turn his hand to them. For him, learning is *all*.

Level: 12
Hit Dice: 12d6 (42 HP)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +13
DV Parry: +13
BAB/Grapple: +7/+7
Attack: Dagger +7
Full Attack: Dagger +7





Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +3, Reflexes +3, Will +13 (includes Iron Will)
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 10
Skills: Concentration +10, Craft (any appropriate to the situation) +8, Craft (herbalism) +6, Decipher Script +14, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (arcane) +10, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (legends) +8, Knowledge (Khitan customs and rituals) +8
Feats: Diligent, Iron Will, Knowledgeable
Possessions: Reams of paper, countless dusty scrolls, quills, ink, and books. Lots of books.

SCHEMING NOBLE

Dressed in the finest silks and wearing his hair in the most fashionable style, he is a minor noble of the Zhuhou class. His is the life of privilege in amongst the extended family of his clan. His father or uncle is heavily entitled, loyal to the Gong and the God Emperor but this young man has no such allegiances deep down – though he politely declares them whenever forced to do so. His loyalty is to himself and his own desires. Also he desires money (more of it), power (all of it) and all the trappings that go with it. He will lie and scheme to get what he wants – always politely, always with an innocent look upon his face. His rivals are the many brothers, cousins, nephews and uncles that saturate the family line. They all have more than he – or have been promised it. It should be his by right. He can summon a million reasons why he is entitled to more. Has he not been loyal? Has he not been a diligent and good son? His ambition is matched only by his ego and a duplicitous streak as long as the Great Wall runs through him. Trust him at your peril.

Level: 4
Hit Dice: 4d8 (20 HP)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +12
DV Parry: +13
BAB/Grapple: +3

Attack: Dagger or Sword +3
Full Attack: Dagger or Sword +3
Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently

checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Title (as appropriate to situation), Rank Hath Its Privileges, Wealth
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +1, Reflexes +2, Will +7 (includes No Honour)
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +6, Knowledge (local) +2, Knowledge (nobility) +4, Listen +4, Ride +3, Spot +4, Sense Motive +6, Social Standing +5
Feats: No Honour, Persuasive
Possessions: Fine robes, a private residence, one slave, 600 SP, food and drink as he demands it, a dagger and a sword.

KHITAN SLAVE

He was a petty thief who got caught once too often. His face is branded with the Mandir for 'Slave Thief' and his sunken eyes tell of the misery he has endured since losing it all: his family, his home, his honour. He sought only to feed his wife, children and sick parents; he sought only to make his way in the world. He only stole from those who could spare it but, as it happens, they are the ones who demand the highest punishments. He could have lost a hand and he wishes he had. Losing his freedom is so much worse than the loss of a limb. However that was many years ago. Now he is a slave, fetching and carrying, weathering the frequent beatings meekly, his spirit broken. He serves the family he stole from and every day they remind him of his crimes. If he had the energy or the will, he would rise up against them – just as the Lemurians once did – but he is forever hungry, forever tired. Too tired. If only he had the energy...

Level: 5
Hit Dice: 5d8 +1 (25 HP)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +13
DV Parry: +13
BAB/Grapple: +3
Attack: +3
Full Attack: Bare hands +3
Special Attacks: Sneak Attack style (+3d6/+3d8)
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Sneak Attack style, Eyes of the Cat, Trap Sense +1, Light Footed
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude -1, Reflexes +5, Will +4 (includes No Honour and Iron Will)
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 13, Con 7, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 5
Skills: Climb +4, Gather Information +1, Jump +5,



Knowledge (nobility) +5, Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: No Honour, Iron Will

Possessions: Filthy cotton slave garments, shackles, broken memories.

SORCERER PRIEST

She is a priestess of one of the Khitans' many cults, adept at veneration for the ancestors and her patron god. She prays delay and observes every ritual with diligence; when not engaged in veneration she meditates and studies, seeking enlightenment and her knowledge of the universe. She knows, when her time comes, that she is guaranteed a place in heaven amongst the Priest Ancestors of her cult. She knows her underworld soul will serve the kuei or become like them. She summons the dark spirits forth to aid her religion but does not abuse the rights and ranks of her position because that would be to go against the holy orders of her kind. Her dress is as ostentatious as it needs to be and her cult looks after her every need. In a society where women must walk two paces behind the men, she is proud to stride in front, leading the faithful.

Level: 10

Hit Dice: 10d6 (42 HP)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +14

DV Parry: +14

BAB/Grapple: +7/+2

Attack: Dagger +7

Full Attack: Dagger +7

Magic Attack: +7

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Scholar Background, Knowledge is Power, Iron Will, Increased Maximum Power Points (triple)

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +4, Reflexes +4, Will +13 (includes Iron Will)

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 14

Skills: Concentration +12, Craft (herbalism) +10, Decipher Script +10, Heal +9, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcane) +12, Listen +9, Spot +6, Sense Motive +8

Feats: Iron Will, Hexer, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Oriental Magic (Calm of the Adept, Heaven's Stairway, Willow Dance), Summoning (Demonic Pact, Summon Elemental, Identify Kuei), Curses (Lesser Ill Fortune)

Possessions: Fine robes of ceremony, incense, dagger or shortsword, holy symbols.

KHITAN WARLORD

A nobleman of the zhuhou and an expert warrior to boot, he commands the army of the gong or is almost a gong himself, leading a warband in the unclaimed territories of the north or south. He is outwardly loyal, of course but inwardly has a private agenda. He cares for prestige and power of the kind found in victory. He is no politician but no politicians who seek power themselves can do without the might he commands. The warlord's wrath is terrible, yet his men are loyal, driven by their commander's zeal and appetite for war. He either inspires bravery or drives it out of those who might otherwise shirk. Peacetime is anathema to him; only the prospect of battle excites and encourages. Khitan was forged out of war and it is a natural state of being for true Khitans. Peace is fine for a while but there is always someone like the Warlord, ready to conquer and challenge.

Level: 15

Hit Dice: 15d10 +3 (105 HP)

Initiative: +6 (includes Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +19

DV Parry: +22

BAB/Grapple: +16/+11/+6

Attack: Sword +16

Full Attack: Sword +16/+11/+6

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack style (+3d6/+3d8)

Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Officer +2, Formation Combat (4)

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +12, Reflexes +7, Will +5

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 13

Skills: Climb +10, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (warfare) +10, Ride +12

Feats: Armour Proficiency (all), Combat Expertise (Improved Feint), Defensive Martial Arts, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat

Possessions: Heavy armour, fine warhorse, weapons, war fan, coat of arms.

IMPERIAL MINISTER

He is a trusted bureaucrat of the Imperial Court; a mover and shaker in the labyrinthine corridors of state. He is followed everywhere by his loyal entourage of scribes and runners and people bow as he passes, sensing full well the power he commands. Nothing within his sphere of influence passes him by – and plenty in other spheres



is known to him too. He makes and shapes policy: without him the God Emperor would be impotent. In fact, he knows more than the God Emperor ever will about how the great empire of Khitai is run. Everyday he must assess facts and make judgements. Armies might move with the God Emperor's assent but it is the Minister who formulates the plan and drafts the strategy. The true power of the Jade Throne is in his hands and every year at the Jade Council it is his time to shine as he threads his way through the assembled rulers, counselling here, arbitrating there, learning more and more as he goes.

Level: 10
Hit Dice: 10d6 -1 (32 HP)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +14
DV Parry: +14
BAB/Grapple: +7/+2
Attack: Dagger +7
Full Attack: Dagger +7
Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +2, Reflexes +4, Will +10
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14
Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +13 (includes Skill Focus), Knowledge (imperial affairs) +10, Knowledge (Khitan politics) +8, Knowledge (Imperial Palace) +7, Intimidate +4
Feats: Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Knowledgeable
Possessions: Court robes, a slave, a coterie of followers, offices in the Imperial Palace. No social life.

GREAT WALL COMMANDER (KANG-HO)

Responsible for a 3-mile section of the Great Wall, this dedicated soldier has lived and grown in the wall's vast shadow. It is his home and he is dedicated to it, a part of it, as much a part as any of the stones and ramparts. His men are like him: stoic and strong, dedicated to Khitai's safety and the wall's posterity. Without him, the hordes from Hyrkania would surge through the dust and overwhelm the country. Without him the wall would be nothing. The Kang-Ho works diligently to fulfil his orders. His reports are compiled



on time and delivered. He meets with his sorcerer-adviser, his kang-ka, on a regular basis but does not trust him. How can he? Sorcerers are duplicitous and snake-tongued. They are not solid men but writhing serpents who deal with demons. Still, the wall cannot do without the kang-ka. Their presence is enough to terrify any would-be invaders and in the event of battle their spells summon forth the dreadful guardians of the wall. The kang-ho has never seen them but he knows they are there and he shudders at the thought, but never lets it show. Just like the Wall.

Level: 9
Hit Dice: 9d10 +1 (50 HP)
Initiative: +4 (includes Improved Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +15
DV Parry: +18
BAB/Grapple: +11/+6
Attack: Sword +11
Full Attack: Sword +11/+6
Special Attacks:
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks.



–2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Officer +1, Formation Combat (2)

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +7, Reflexes +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +6, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Great Wall) +9, Knowledge (warfare) +6

Feats: Armour Proficiency (all), Improved Critical, Improved Initiative

Possessions: Heavy armour, weapons

GREAT WALL SORCERER (KANG-KA)

Attached to the kang-ho the sorcerer of the Great Wall knows the barrier intimately. The kang-ho sees the mundane but the kang-ka sees the secrets. With his brother sorcerers he is the true master of the great divide between the barbarians and glorious Khitai; he knows the dark things that lurk within the stones and he knows how to call them forth. Through his magic Khitai remains secure; through his dark knowledge the Great Wall remains as more than a symbol. Together with his brothers, the kang-ka controls the wall's agenda and its ways. The soldiers believe themselves to be mighty but they are but a rabble – a useful one, perhaps, but a rabble nonetheless. It is the kang-ka who has the ear of the Wall Minister and it is they who direct the Great Wall's destiny.

Level: 9

Hit Dice: 9d6 (42 HP)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +13

DV Parry: +13

BAB/Grapple: +6/+1

Attack: Dagger +6

Full Attack: Dagger +6/+1

Magic Attack: +7

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. –2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Scholar Background, Knowledge is Power, Iron Will, Increased Maximum Power Points (triple)

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +4, Reflexes +3, Will +12 (includes Iron Will)

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 9

Skills: Concentration +8, Decipher Script +9, Gather

Information +7, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcane)

+10, Listen +6, Spot +7, Sense Motive +6

Feats: Iron Will, Ritual Sacrifice

Sorcery Styles: Summoning (Demonic Pact, Summon Elemental, Identify Kuei), Necromancer (Eternal Warrior, Raise Corpse, The Dead Speak)

Possessions: Fine robes of ceremony, incense, dagger or shortsword, holy symbols.

BANDIT LEADER

The bandit leader strikes terror into the hearts of the simple, backwater people of Khitai. His robbers haunt the lonely roads and forest trails, preying on the wealthy and not so wealthy alike. Also in command of them all, the bandit leader, arrogant, desperate, takes what he wants without a thought for the consequences. He might once have been a noble soldier who fell upon hard times but it is more likely he is simply another Khitan opportunist prepared to inflict suffering on those who have worked for their wealth. He trusts no one – not even his own men. Perhaps he gained his position by slaying the previous leader; if so, he mistrusts with cause, because one day he might be deposed in a similar fashion. Whatever his position, the hungry look in the eyes of his bandits is already hungry. There are no laws in the wilds, few codes. At any time someone stronger and more ruthless than himself might vie for position and authority. However for now he is in charge and he rules the lonely territories with an iron will. Those who fall prey to him might escape with their lives if they try not to be heroes but otherwise they are simply a means to an end. He must live and his men must live. Life is tough. That is the will of the universe.

Level: 9

Hit Dice: 9d8+1 (45 HP)

Initiative: +4 (includes Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +17

DV Parry: +17

BAB/Grapple: +17/+4

Attack: Sword, bow or spear +17

Full Attack: Sword, bow or spear +17/+7

Special Attacks: Ferocious Attack, Sneak Attack +3d6, Sneak Subdual

Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. –2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Ferocious Attack, Bandit Code (Khitan Bandit





Code), Sneak Attack +3d6, Sneak Subdual, Improved Uncanny Dodge, Mobility, Bite Sword, Poison Resistance

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +7, Reflexes +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +6, Bluff +6, Climb +4, Disguise +4, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (rumours) +4, Knowledge (ambush) +4

Feats: Improved Critical, Improved Initiative

Possessions: Medium armour, weapons, horse

IMPERIAL COUNSELLOR

One of the Seven Counsellors of the God Emperor, this is as high as any man can advance in Khitan society without being the God Emperor himself. The counsellor is not a king but ranks alongside them. Below him are the Ministers who, arrogantly, believe they wield true power but are, in reality, being manipulated just as surely as everyone else. Only the Imperial Counsellor is above manipulation. In them rest all the secrets of empire, all the knowledge. Everything that the God Emperor says and does has been influenced directly by the Seven and from them all things stem. Naturally they wield their power carefully; it does not do to be too arrogant or too greedy. Being Lords of All Things, they order the court and empire just as the Source of All Things orders heaven and the universe. The Counsellor is clever, articulate and cunning. His power is immense – his guile even more so. No one with a scrap of sanity crosses the Seven; those with brains are wary of them and respectful. That is how kings are made and broken.

Level: 20

Hit Dice: 20d6 (70 HP)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +7

DV Parry: +7

BAB/Grapple: +15/+10/+5

Attack: Dagger +15

Full Attack: Dagger +15/+10/+5

Magic Attack: +14

Special Attacks:

Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. –2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Scholar Background, Knowledge is

Power, Iron Will, Increased Maximum Power Points (quintuple)

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +6, Reflexes +6, Will +19 (includes Iron Will)

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 19, Wis 19, Cha 16

Skills: Concentration +18, Decipher Script +19, Diplomacy +19, Gather Information +20, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcane) +18, Knowledge (Imperial Court) +20, Knowledge (Politics) +17, Knowledge (God Emperor's Will) +17, Listen +16, Spot +17, Sense Motive +16

Feats: Diligent, Iron Will, Investigator, Leadership, Persuasive, Steely Gaze, Menacing Aura

Sorcery Styles: Oriental Magic (Eyes of Truth, Eyes of the Tiger, Smokes of Paradise)

Possessions: Fine robes of ceremony, 1d6 slaves, imperial staff, dagger or shortsword, disdainful expression, more power than is healthy.

IMPERIAL OR NOBLE CONCUBINE

Behind every great man is a great woman. Sometime several and the concubine is one these women. Ostensibly she is the servant of the ruler: the warmer of his bed and the servant of his appetites. Yet she is more. She listens to his hopes and woes, his plans and dreams. In doing so the concubine is party to the ruler's secrets – when he discloses them – or an interpreter of them when he chooses not to. She might never get the chance to exercise her knowledge in more than the most tacit of ways; a coy suggestion here or a tactful question there but occasionally she will be able to speak some of her mind and, in so doing, influence the ruler's plans, dreams and woes. Otherwise she is chosen for her skills as a lover and faithful servant. Her place is amongst the other concubines where, as in any part of Khitan society, there is a hierarchy of power and she must struggle, as most all others, to carve a place for herself.

Level: 3

Hit Dice: 3d6 (11 HP)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +13

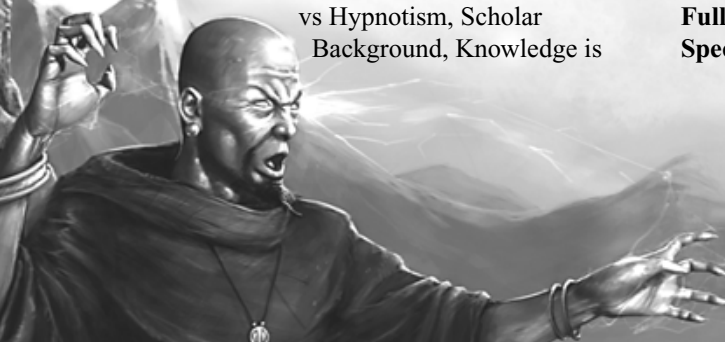
DV Parry: +10

BAB/Grapple: +2

Attack: +2

Full Attack: Nails +2

Special Attacks: None



Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Comeliness, Savoir Faire, Seductive Art +1, Compelling Performance (once per day), Secret Art (politics – Improved Standing)
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +1, Reflexes +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 9, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 17
Skills: Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Perform +6
Feats: None
Possessions: Robes pleasing to the ruler, perfume, jewellery, various secrets relating to whom she serves.

JADE TEMPTRESS

Prostitution is encouraged in Khitai as the union between man and woman creates and promotes the bond of spiritual energies. The very best whores are the temptresses of jade and this temptress epitomises her kind. She is beautiful and demure; she is intelligent and cunning. Her skills in the bedroom are first-rate and yet, as a schemer and politician, she is a match for any minister of the Imperial Court. The Jade Temptress pursues personal power and knowledge. She enjoys the company of the rich and influential and uses her liaisons to further her own standing, being forever watchful and careful of those who would use her for their own ends. If there is using to be done, then she will be the one to do it. This Jade Temptress might also be a priestess of the moon cult or a sorcerer in her own right. Her trade as a prostitute allows her to exercise certain privileges many Khitan women are forbidden to enjoy. She is a study in emerald; a woman to be wary of, and not one to cross.

Level: 10
Hit Dice: 10d6 (35 HP)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +17
DV Parry: +16
BAB/Grapple: +7/+2
Attack: +7/+2
Magical Attack: +5
Full Attack: Shortsword +7/+2
Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Comeliness, Savoir Faire, Seductive Art +3, Compelling Performance (three per day), Improved Secret Art (Sorcery – Oriental Magic), Seductive Savant, Binding Contract, Admirers, Inspire,

Outrageous Flattery
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +3, Reflexes +9, Will +9
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 18
Skills: Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +16, Knowledge (Seduction), Listen +8, Perform +16, Spot +8, Sense Motive +8
Feats: None
Sorcery Styles: Oriental Magic (Calm of the Adept)
Possessions: Robes pleasing to the ruler, perfume, jewellery, various secrets relating to whom she serves.

SCHOLAR OF DARK WISDOM

A necromancer and a summoner, he is skilled in dealing with the underworld and the world of the dead to serve either his god, his gong or the Imperial Court. Perhaps one of the Yellow Priests who worships Yogah or a follower of one of the ten thousand kuei gods summoned to Khitai, he is knowledgeable, cunning, ruthless and a master of the dark arts. Power and knowledge are his goals; all else is secondary – even his allegiances. God Emperors come and go, as do kings but the spirits and kuei are immortal and in them is true power and wisdom. His homes are the dark cellars and forgotten temples of the jungle; his way is the way of all sorcerers – to bring forth those who can serve him and grant him greater power. He may be arrogant or he may be a modest man but there is no doubting his talents in the Dark Wisdom.

Level: 18
Hit Dice: 18d6+1 (81 HP)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft
DV Dodge: +6
DV Parry: +6
BAB/Grapple: +13/+8/+3
Attack: Dagger +13
Full Attack: Dagger +13/+8/+3
Magic Attack: +17
Special Attacks: None
Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Scholar Background, Knowledge is Power, Iron Will, Increased Maximum Power Points (quadruple)
Space/Reach: 5ft
Saves: Fortitude +7, Reflexes +6, Will +14 (includes Iron Will)





Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 10

Skills: Concentration +18, Decipher Script +19, Gather Information +17, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcane) +18, Listen +12, Spot +11, Sense Motive +10

Feats: Iron Will, Ritual Sacrifice, Opportunistic Sacrifice, Summoner, Augment Summoning
Sorcery Styles: Summoning (Master Word and Pacts, Greater Demonic Pact, Channel Demon, Identify Kuei), Necromancer (Circle of Midnight, Underworld's Stairway, Eternal Warrior)

Possessions: Fine robes of ceremony, incense, dagger or shortsword, holy symbols.

IMPERIAL MAGISTRATE

The magistrates travel Khitai with a retinue in tow, hearing disputes, dispensing justice and trying criminals. They carry the seals of the Imperial Articles and know them inside out; officious and pompous, this magistrate enjoys his work heartily, especially when condemning some poor soul or slavery or death. As a carrier of the law the magistrate is feared, especially in those small communities where the ways are simple and the people easily bullied. For all his grandeur he is not above a bribe, although this is by no means a guarantee of clemency. It does, however, fund the lifestyle to which he is accustomed: fine food and wine; the attention of whores; the fawning of lesser nobles

who are every bit as guilty as the starving thief but far too influential to be anything but innocent.

Level: 11

Hit Dice: 11d6 (38 HP)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft

DV Dodge: +14

DV Parry: +13

BAB/Grapple: +8/+3

Attack: +8/+3

Full Attack: Dagger +13/+8/+3

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Khitan racial qualities, +1 all Knowledge checks. +2 bonus to Move Silently checks. -2 Penalty vs Hypnotism, Scholar Background, Knowledge is Power, Iron Will, Increased Maximum Power Points (triple)

Space/Reach: 5ft

Saves: Fortitude +3, Reflexes +3, Will +9

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 9

Skills: Decipher Script +10, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Investigate +11, Knowledge (Khitan Law) +12, Listen +7, Spot +7, Sense Motive +10

Feats: None

Possessions: Fine robes of ceremony, scriptures of Imperial Law, retinue of 6 slaves.



A Khitan Bestiary

Khitai is filled with all manner of strange creatures in addition to the mundane. Summoned demons, the kuei, are found in ancient jungle temples, forgotten gods craving worship; the white furred apes roam the upper jungles of the west and south, ranging through the higher ground. Also other, more fantastic creatures spawned of either heaven or hell make their presence felt across Khitai's vast landscape. This chapter describes some of them.

WHITE APES

Large Animal

Climate/Terrain: Upland jungle

Organisation: Small groups of 2 or 3; otherwise solitary

Initiative: +8

Senses: Listen +6, Spot +7, scent

Dodge Defence 18

Hit Points: 40 (8 HD); DR 1

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +3

Speed: 30ft, Climb 30ft

Space: 12ft; Reach 12ft

Melee: 2 claws + 10 (1d8+7, AP -) and bite +5 (1d8+3, AP -)

Base Attk +4; Grp +18

Special Attacks: Improved grab, crush

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 5

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Toughness

Skills: Climb +16, Intimidate +6, Listen +6, Spot +6

Advancement: 9 – 13 HD (Large)

Huge, nimble, fast and vicious, the white apes of the Khitai jungle are considered a race of cursed humans who sought chaos in preference to the order of the universe. Their fur is snow-white and their reddish-pink faces have a distinctly human cast, although their red eyes are narrow slits and their mouths are filled with sharp, ripping teeth. Their arms are long and powerful; the legs shortened and thick but incredibly strong. They propel themselves in the traditional, loping, ape-like manner but are extremely fast, even in undergrowth and are naturally expert climbers.

Forgotten jungle temples, particularly in the southern jungles, hold a special fascination for the white apes. Whilst they do not inhabit them or go into them, they make their homes close by, watching the ruins, whether out of fear or protection, one cannot be certain.

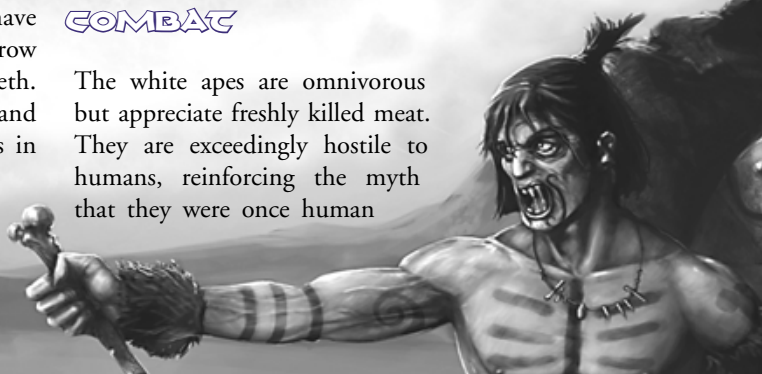
Khitai legends claim that certain sorcerers who challenge heaven are transformed into white apes upon death, their souls being denied either heaven or the underworld. The



attraction to the temples lends this myth certain credence, as does their human-like appearance.

COMBAT

The white apes are omnivorous but appreciate freshly killed meat. They are exceedingly hostile to humans, reinforcing the myth that they were once human





but are now cursed into an ape form. They are certainly intelligent and communicate in a snarling, whooping language. Easily enraged, they aim to seize an enemy in their long-fingered, hairless hands and either crush or rend the body or bite out the throat. They are known to stalk those who stray into their territory and although solitary creatures, small groups of two or three will work together to isolate an intruder before moving in for the kill.

KUEI

The demons of the Khitan underworld are akin to demigods or gods: capricious, powerful, often malevolent

but sometimes benign and even kindly, despite their grotesque appearance. The chapter Ancestors, Demons and Gods provides a way of determining a kuei's appearance and demeanour; their statistics are presented here.

Kuei tend to come in one of three forms. Lesser kuei are more in the mould of traditional fiends or demons: capricious creatures with a talent for mischief and mayhem. They like to be worshipped but lack the powers of their brethren. Major kuei are demigods in terms of their power and attitude; they have to be worshipped if they are to commune with mortals. Spirit kuei are on a par with gods and include certain kinds of dragon (although dragons are treated separately here).

	Lesser Kuei Medium Outsider	Major Kuei Large Outsider	Spirit Kuei Large Outsider
Climate/Terrain:	Any building or underground	Any building or underground	Anywhere
Organisation:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Initiative:	+7	+10	+20
Senses	Listen +3, Spot +3	Listen +8, Spot +8	Listen +15, Spot +15
Languages	Mandir, Demonic	Mandir, Demonic	Mandir, Demonic
Dodge Defence	17	20	30
Hit Points: DR	39 (6HD) Total, silver/fire	52 (8HD) Total, silver/fire	78 (12 HD) Total, silver/fire
Saves	Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +9	Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +11	Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +15
Speed:	40ft	40ft	60ft
Melee:	Gore +9 finesse (1d8+1), 2 physical attacks based on body type +6 finesse (1d6+1)	Gore +15 finesse (1d8+1), 2 physical attacks based on body type +10 finesse (1d6+1)	Gore +25 finesse (1d8+1), 2 physical attacks based on body type +20 finesse (1d6+1)
Immunities	All physical damage	All physical damage	All physical damage
Base Attk Grp	+6 +8	+10 +12	+20 +22
Sorcery	Knowledge of 1d4+1 styles	Knowledge of 1d4+1 styles	Knowledge of all styles
Abilities:			
Str	13	18	23
Dex	14	16	20
Con	15	16	20
Int	12	15	25
Wis	17	18	25
Cha	19	21	23



	Lesser Kuei	Major Kuei	Spirit Kuei
	Medium Outsider	Large Outsider	Large Outsider
Special Qualities	Immunity, manifest	Immunity, manifest	Immunity, manifest
Feats	Dodge, multiattack, Weapon Focus (gore)	Dodge, multiattack, Weapon Focus (gore), Steely Gaze	Dodge, multiattack, Weapon Focus (gore), Steely Gaze, Menacing Aura
Skills	Craft (any) +10, Hide +19, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (underworld) +19, Move Silently +15	Craft (any) +18, Hide +25, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (underworld) +25, Move Silently +20	Craft (any) +25, Hide +25, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (underworld) +30, Move Silently +25
Advancement:	By character class (usually scholar)	By character class (usually scholar)	By character class (usually scholar)

All Kuei are summoned using the Summon Demon spell. Where Demonic Pact is used, the kuei is prepared to use its magic on behalf of the summoner: all kuei know the spells associated with the styles they wield.

KUEI MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES

Roll 1D4 to determine the physique type of the kuei's manifestation. On a roll of 1, the kuei takes a singular form. On a roll of 2 or more, the kuei is a combination of different forms. Choose one as the dominant form (usually the first form rolled), which is then modified by the others. A kuei might, for example, have the humaniform body type as is dominant shape but be equipped with spider limbs and a horse's head.

In all cases roll 1D20 and consult the Physique Table to determine the body type(s) for the kuei.

The kuei's initial attitude, when summoned, can be either determined by the Games Master according to the needs of the campaign or randomly, using the following table. The attitude it displays may be contradictory to the sorcerer's need for the summoning: if so, then a further successful Offering of reverence, as outlined above, is needed for the kuei to become co-operative, with a DC modification as indicated by its attitude. The sorcerer may offer a further sacrifice, with the Intelligence of the victim acting as a further modifier to the ST.

Kuei Physique Type

	Body Type	Nature
1	Arachnine	Spider
2	Caprine	Goat
3	Cancrine	Crab
4	Crocilian	Crocodile
5	Equine	Horse
6	Feline	Cat
7	Hirudinal	Leech
8	Humaniform	Human
9	Insectile	Insect
10	Lupine	Wolf
11	Noctillionine	Bat
12	Octopine	Octopus
13	Piscine	Fish
14	Porcine	Boar
15	Ranine	Frog
16	Saurian	Lizard
17	Simian	Ape
18	Taurine	Bull
19	Ursine	Bear
20	Vermian	Worm



Kuei Attitude Table

1D10	Attitude	Game Effects	DC Modification
1	Amorous	The kuei develops a physical attraction for anyone who tries to engage with it. It may become protective, jealous or lustful depending on how the encounter develops.	-5
2	Argumentative	The kuei delights in contradictions and argument. It does not become physically aggressive but may be verbally abusive. It certainly sticks to its own point of view, rejecting out of hand the most reasoned cases put to it.	+5
3	Arrogant	The kuei treats those who interact with it as worthless scum, unfit to occupy the same physical space as itself. If the character might be useful in some capacity, then kuei might deign to engage, but is otherwise contemptuous of such an inferior, mortal being.	+8
4	Dismissive	The kuei dismisses, without any discussion, anyone who tries to engage with it.	+10
5	Domineering	The kuei seeks to use intimidation or threats of violence to browbeat anyone it meets into some form of service.	+8
6	Hostile	The kuei is hostile to all mortals. It attacks immediately.	+10
7	Intrigued	The kuei expresses a huge degree of interest in the character's motives. It spends 1D3 hours engaged in deep and detailed questions. At the end of this period, roll again on this table to determine the kuei's final reaction.	-8
8	Neutral	The kuei has no strong opinions one way or another. It simply goes about its business.	0
9	Oblivious	The kuei is oblivious to mortal life. It exists in its own existential bubble.	+8
10	Welcoming	The kuei is open, friendly and willing to engage in conversation. Friendship may result.	-10

For example, the Fiend Ho-Chen has summoned displays the Dismissive attitude and studiously ignores Ho-Chen even though he has successfully offered reverence once already. Ho-Chen repeats the Will ST, but this time against a DC of 34. To counter the kuei's nonchalance, he sacrifices a further two slaves as proof of his devotion and dedication. Their combined Intelligence is 17, which reduces the DC to 17. Ho-Chen is successful. After many minutes of the sorcerer's fawning and scraping the Black Fiend gazes down on the prostrate Ho-Chen and inquires how it might be of service...

and are only likely to respond to overt attacks rather than initiate combat themselves. When engaged in combat, kuei are completely ruthless, caring little for please of clemency or mercy.

Immunities: all kuei are immune to physical damage except that dealt by fire or silver objects.

Manifest: as a standard action a kuei can leave Earth and return to the underworld, or return to Earth. In either case it manifests at the new location at the end of its action.

COMBAT

Lesser kuei really on surprise and sneak attacks, when called upon to do so, in addition to sorcery. Major and Spirit kuei consider having to combat mortals as beneath them

NIAN

Huge Animal
Climate/Terrain: Sea, coasts
Organisation: Solitary
Initiative: +0
Senses: Listen +4, Spot +4

Dodge Defence 11

Hit Points: 78 (12 HD); DR 4

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +9

Speed: 20ft (land), 60ft (swimming)

Space: 15ft; Reach 12ft

Melee: 2 claws + 13 (2d8+4, AP -) and bite +18 (4d6+8, AP -)

Base Attk +12; Grp +28

Special Attacks: Crush

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9

Feats: Endurance, Toughness

Skills: Swim +25

An ancient Khitan legend tells of a man-eating predator called *Nian*. The monster is extremely fierce, with a long head and a single, sharp horn. Nian dwells deep in the sea for the whole year but on every New Year's Eve it climbs to the shore to devour livestock and harm humans in near-by villages. When Nian has attacked, it has been randomly along the eastern coast and its appearance each New Year's Eve is not guaranteed. Local villages often offer a human sacrifice on New Years Eve in a bid to prevent Nian from attacking, although this is no guarantee of safety. Therefore the sacrifices in some villages grow in number yet the monster still comes.

Nian resembles a gigantic turtle with warty, human-like arms and paddle-like rear legs. Its shell is crusted with barnacles, weed and sharp protrusions. Its head is long, extending from the shell on a thick, extensible and highly mobile neck. The head is thin and almost equine in appearance but with dull, human-like eyes, weed-choked hair and a vast, drooling, tooth-filled mouth. In the sea it is agile and fast but on land, rather more slow and cumbersome, pulling itself along the beach by its arms, whilst pushing with its flippers, the long, thin head swaying from side to side.

COMBAT

Nian lives to feast, which it does once per year at precisely the same time. It gorges on whatever flesh it can find: livestock, wild animal or human. As it surfaces from the water, its huge shell breaking the surf, it immediately extends its head to sniff the air and locate the nearest source of food. Once located, it lumbers in that direction and starts its destruction and carnage, killing and eating until the first light of dawn when, satiated, it fumbles its way back to the sea to sleep for a further year. Nian

prefers to seize prey with its mighty, barnacled fists and drag the shrieking, struggling prey into its mouth. If its claws are occupied, it uses its agile neck to snap down and bite its targets.

If reduced to two thirds of its hit points, Nian attempts to return to the sea to lick its wounds and sleep again. Otherwise it is oblivious to everything else, driven solely by hunger. If a large enough feast is offered, it heads for it – but that feast must be sufficient to keep it interested until dawn (essential the equivalent of another Huge Animal) or it goes in search of more prey.

THE GOD OF THUNDER

Large Outsider

Climate/Terrain: Great Highlands, mountains

Organisation: Solitary

Initiative: +1

Senses: Listen +8, Spot +6

Dodge Defence 15

Hit Points: 61 (10 HD); DR 1

Saves: Fort +16, Ref +7, Will +9

Speed: 30ft (land), 40ft (flying)

Space: 10ft; Reach 10ft

Melee: Club + 14 (1d10+4, AP 2) and gore +12 (2d6+2, AP -)

Base Attk +10; Grp +19

Special Attacks: Raincloud (see below)

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 10, Con 29, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 12

Feats: Weapon Focus (club), Stunning Attack, Toughness

Skills: Climb +18, Concentration +22, Hide +13, Intimidate +17, Listen +8, Move Silently +13, Search +15, Spot +6

The God of Thunder is a kuei living in the Great Highlands of western Khitai, amongst the mountains. It is a huge, winged human figure with the head of a pig, the mouth of a chicken, three eyes and hairy horns. When not striding along on its powerful limbs, it rides a cloudburst through the sky with thunder booming in its wake.

Although called the God of Thunder, the creature is a lesser Kuei and a malicious, mischievous one at that. It delights in tormenting travellers, scooting overhead and delivering torrential rain upon them from its cloudburst before dropping to the



ground and stealing anything loose and expensive looking. If challenged, it fights and is not averse to killing those who dare to oppose it.

Locals in the mountainous region live in a mixture of fear and awe of the God of Thunder. Sacrifices and offerings do not placate it and the more a village tries to do so, the more it plagues them with torrential rain, theft and beatings. Moreover, it refuses to return to the underworld, where its love of pranks and mischief has made it some very powerful enemies. The God of Thunder is essentially a supernatural bully – not keen on those stronger than itself and taking perverse pleasure in afflicting those weaker than itself.

Because it has been banished from the underworld the God of Thunder can be harmed physically, unlike most kuei. It is terrified of fire and shows of superior force. If successfully Intimidated, it can be persuaded to perform one errand for whoever is successful but thereafter resumes its menacing ways.

COMBAT

The God of Thunder always inflicts thunder, hail and heavy rain on those it wants to torment before launching physical attacks. Its thundercloud is a huge, dark, rolling cloud that hovers directly above those it wants to pick on. The rain comes down in sheets, reducing all skill ranks and combat abilities by 1d4 if a Fortitude Saving Throw against a DC of 21 is failed. This reduction in abilities lasts until the target has time to dry-out and gain some warmth.

In melee combat the God of Thunder fights with his enormous club which, when it strikes an opposing object, emits a thunderous rumble. If the fight goes against it, it leaps into the air surrounding itself with the cloudburst and speeding off into the higher ground.

LEI JEN ZU

Huge Outsider

Climate/Terrain: Jungle

Organisation: Solitary

Initiative: +1

Senses: Listen +8, Spot +8

Dodge Defence +15

Hit Points: 91 (14 HD); DR 5

Saves: Fort +17, Ref +10, Will +15

Speed: 30ft

Space: 15ft; Reach 15ft

Melee: 2 claws +17 (1d8+3, AP -) and Gore +20 (2d6+7, AP -)

Base Attk +14; Grp +29

Special Attacks: Improved Critical

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 13, Con 27, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 15

Feats: Weapon Focus (claws), Negotiator

Skills: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +16, Hide +10, Intimidate +12

Another earth-bound kuei, Lei Jen Zu is the son of the thunder dragon and a human mother. The egg from which he hatched was expelled from heaven and formed when lightning struck the earth. As a child, he started out as a human but gradually changed into a green-faced dragon with the tusks and hide of a boar and an anteater's snout. Lei Jen Zu cannot fly and nor can it return to either Heaven or the Underworld. Stuck in the mortal world it is bitter over its appearance and wants to become human again so that it will be accepted into society.

Lei Jen Zu lives in the southern jungles of Khitai, frequently wandering around old temples or even venturing as far



north of the outskirts of Paikang. It believes that, if it can be made human again, it can assume the throne of the God Emperor owing to its divine heritage. It therefore tries to gain favour with the wealthy and powerful although its grotesque appearance means that it is usually driven away or attacked before anyone will listen to it. Thus, Lei Jen Zu grows bitterer towards humanity with each encounter, although it will never cease in its bid to become the God Emperor, such is its stubborn tenacity.

COMBAT

Lei Jen Zu is never immediately hostile. Its first tactic is to try to gain the trust of those who look like they have some wealth and to tell its sorrowful story of rejection and misery. If this works, it offers companionship and the promise of magical teaching, which it will provide if whoever it has won-over agrees to help it change back into a human. Lei Jen Zu knows no magic whatsoever – a fact that can be easily spotted by any magical adept – and is a duplicitous creature bent on attaining power at any cost. If its offers are rejected, it becomes violent, seeking to kill whoever has rejected it. Lei Jen Zu believes that if it eats enough human brains (sucking them through the nose with its anteater snout) and wearing human skins as a suit of cloths, it will start to become human. It will not; and its experiments have always come to nought, hence its increasing frustration.

When fighting it uses its lithe, clawed limbs to gouge and rend and its boar tusks to gore and tear. If clearly losing a fight, it flees back into the jungle to sulk, wallow in self-pity and await a new target.

BA SHE (CULTIVATED SNAKES)

Gargantuan Animal
Climate/Terrain: Jungle
Organisation: Solitary
Initiative: +6
Senses: Listen +7, Spot +7

Dodge Defence +20
Hit Points: 104 (16 HD); DR 3
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +4

Speed: 40ft, Climb 20 ft, Swim 20 ft
Space: 20ft; Reach 20ft
Melee: Constrict +10 (2d8+10), Swallow +10 (1d6+1)

Base Attk +8; Grp +23
Special Attacks: Improved Grab

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 12

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Skill Focus (hide), Toughness

Skills: Climb +17, Hide +20, Listen +7, Spot +7

So called because they are cultivated by gods, Cultivated Snakes are immense, jungle-dwelling constrictors with a greeny-yellow skin and thick scales. They are capable of swallowing an elephant whole by dislocating their jaws and moving the mouth over the prey and when elephant is unavailable, any large prey will suffice.

COMBAT

Cultivated Snakes prefer to hide amongst the jungle undergrowth where their camouflage offers them almost total invisibility. When something that takes their interest comes past, they use their bodies to grasp and constrict the target until it ceases to struggle – at which point it is swallowed.

The hide of these rare creatures is greatly prized in the cities of Khitai, and the scales are used in religious ceremonies, ground-up to make powerful incense which is also an aphrodisiac. Cultivated snakes are believed to be an experiment by the gods to make a snake that could swallow chaos whole but they grew bored of their work and left them to wander the jungles of the country.

TAI SUI

Medium Monstrous Plant
Climate/Terrain: Jungle
Organisation: Clumps of 2 or 3
Initiative: +0
Senses: Listen +0, Spot +0

Dodge Defence +0
Hit Points: 26 (4 HD); DR 0
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1

Speed: -
Space: -
Melee: -

Base -
Special Attacks: Growth, see below

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 1, Con 12, Int 0, Wis 0, Cha 0

Feats: -

Skills: -



This despicable jungle plant is a combination of flora and fauna. Appearing as a fleshy lump about the size of a human torso it roots in clumps alongside riverbanks or stagnant pools in the sweatiest parts of the jungle. It is flesh coloured, covered with small fissures and has a pair of lidless, blind eyes on the top of its body. It resembles an ox-liver.

Tai Sui exudes a powerful musk that carries on the wind. The musk triggers feelings of deep hunger in those who smell it and anyone failing a Will Saving Throw against a DC of 25 are compelled to seek-out the creature and eat it. The flesh tastes delicious raw or cooked – like sweet, deeply flavoured beef – and the Tai Sui quivers as chunks are carved from it, almost as though enjoying the mutilation.

The human body cannot digest Tai Sui flesh. Once eaten, the flesh starts to regenerate, using the gastric juices to trigger its reproductive process. The swallowed portion grows into a new Tai Sui, forming at a rate of 6 inches per day. As it grows, the ingester needs to make a Fortitude Saving Throw against a DC of 18 and then again every day at a further +3, as the plant continues to grow inside the host, to work through the intense stomach cramps. After the third day, the gestating creature begins to inflict internal damage: 1d4+1 HP per day. As the thing grows, the host's belly swells and the stomach pains become so intense that, eventually, the host dies. The Tai Sui then commences its next stage of growth: the absorption of the host's entire body.

After several weeks the body has been completely absorbed and what remains is a mature, healthy, Tai Sui that roots where its host has fallen.

Anyone who eats Tai Sui and realises what fate has in store needs to find a purgative quickly. This requires a combination of roots, herbs and alcohol that must be prepared by an alchemist against a DC of 23. The purgative causes the Tai Sui to break down in the host's gut and passed out through vomiting and diarrhoea over the course of 1d6 days. The host sustains 1d3 damage for each day of the purging.

The Shan Hai Classic gives a description of this creature: a flesh lump shaped being like a liver of ox, has two eyes. When it is eaten, the rest part will re-grow to the original shape, thus it could not be eaten up. It has no stomach.

DRAGON (LUNG)

Gargantuan Outsider

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organisation: Solitary

Initiative: +10

Senses: Listen +8, Spot +8

Dodge Defence +25

Hit Points: 537 (37 HD+ 296); DR 8

Saves: Fort +28, Ref +20, Will +25

Speed: 60ft (ground), 100ft (flying)

Space: 30ft; Reach 30ft

Melee: 2 claws +37 (4d6, AP 5), Bite +46 (4d6), Crush +37 (3d8), Tail Sweep +37 (2d8)

Base Attk +37; Grp +62

Special Attacks: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical,

Magical Attack: +25

Abilities: Str 37, Dex 10, Con 27, Int 25, Wis 21, Cha 20

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical, Steely Gaze, Menacing Aura

Skills: Bluff +18, Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcane) +20, Knowledge (Heaven and Underworld) +20, Knowledge (Khitan customs) +18, Listen +8, Sense Motive +16, Spot +8.

Sorcery: 1d4+1 sorcery styles

Khitan dragons are immense, wingless serpents, often brightly coloured and often with elaborate heads and faces resembling lions, serpents, stylised humans, tigers or the traditional reptilian dragon visage. They are not mortal reptiles at all but one of the highest orders of Spirit kuei. They are, for all intents and purposes, gods, created by the Source of All Things as part of the order of the universe and tasked with watching over creation and keeping chaos at bay.

The Khitan name for a dragon is Lung. They are very ancient, immortal and highly intelligent. It is rare for them to manifest in the mortal world and, when they do, it is usually because the lung is on a particular quest or mission. They can be summoned using the Summon Dragon spell and their reaction to being called upon in this way depends purely on the individual dragon summoned. See the spell description on page 73. They are not immediately hostile and have a huge respect for mortal life but will retaliate if angered or abused. Dragons are arrogant and demand the same kind of deference the God Emperor demands. If they



do not receive it, they become sullen and uncooperative, perhaps even aggressive.

Dragons are completely immune to all physical attacks and are unaffected by silver. If the dragon's physical form is killed, the dragon's spirit returns to either heaven or the underworld – whichever it has chosen as its home – and creates a new body which hatches from an egg. The dragon retains all its memories and powers.

Although not winged, dragons run through the air, their bodies snaking as they go. Their passing is marked by thunderclaps, lightning or rays of brilliant sunshine on even the darkest day.

COMBAT

Dragons do not enter combat lightly but when they do, rely on bites, claws and crush attacks to deal with their foes. The tail can be used to flatten targets or to sweep them to one side, causing horrible injury in the process. All dragons know magic, having knowledge of 1d4+1 sorcery styles and all the spells within that sorcery style. If forced to call upon magic, then they use whatever spells are essential to the issue at hand.

The carcass of a dragon is the most valuable commodity in Khitai. Few have ever been recovered. Within the mouth of a dragon, behind the tongue, is a pearl, usually the size of a fist. This pearl is the source of the dragon's magic and contains 2d8 spells from randomly determined sorcery styles. Anyone grinding and ingesting the pearl gains the ability to cast these spells as though having the Dabbler feat.

Immunities: All physical damage

Manifest: A dragon can return to the underworld or heaven at the end of one standard action.

JIANG SHI (KHITAN VAMPIRE)

Sample Vampire – based on a 4th Level Khitan Scholar

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organisation: Solitary

Initiative: +1

Senses: Listen +4, Spot +4

Dodge Defence 11

Hit Points: 14 (4 HD); DR -

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +5

Speed: 30ft (night), 10ft (daylight)

Space: 5ft; Reach 5ft

Melee: Dagger +3 finesse (1d4-1, 19-20/x2 critical). Bite +5 (1d4 + level drain)

Base Attk +3; Grp +2

Special Attacks: Life Essence Drain. 1d6 levels per bite.

Magical Attack: +2

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 5

Special Qualities: Quarter damage from standard weapons. Khitan qualities.

Feats: Steely Gaze, Menacing Aura

Skills: Search +4, Listen +4, Spot +4.





Khitan vampires arise when a person's soul is forbidden the judgement of death, causing the undead corpse to walk abroad in search of the life essence it has lost. Khitan vampires are characterised by the general state of decay of the body, plus a mane of long white hair and a greenish, downy covering across the pallid flesh, a result of mould from the grave.

Khitan vampires are averse to sunlight but are not destroyed by it. The sun makes movement sluggish and the jiang shi are unable to see effectively. By day, the vampire usually finds somewhere to hide or returns to its grave but by night it is free to wander, searching for living victims which it drains of life essence.

Life is drained when the vampire bites. It does not suck blood but instead drains the very soul. Each bite of the vampire drains 1d6 character levels, reducing capabilities and statistics accordingly, as well as inflicting physical damage due to the bite and subsequent blood loss. When a victim reaches zero, he is dead and will resurrect the following night as a jiang shi himself.

The vampire retains the statistics and capabilities (including feats) of the character level it possessed when still alive and before being transformed into a vampire. It feels the compulsion to drain life essence and, as time passes, its body steadily decays (although hair grows and mould forms as the flesh and soft tissues of the body rot). Vampires therefore have an exceedingly disturbing

appearance depending on the length of bodily decay. Some are skeletal-like beings with nothing but bones and scraps of sinew holding them together; others are zombie-like.

Jiang shi can be killed through burning. The entire body of the creature must be consumed completely by fire to render it permanently dead. Physical attacks inflict only a quarter of normal damage although fire, silver objects and spells inflict full damage.

COMBAT

Jiang shi attack by attempting to grasp the prey and haul them forward towards the waiting teeth. Once the vampire bites, it attempts to hold onto the victim draining 1d6 levels for each standard action. A held victim can attempt to break free by making a Fortitude Saving Throw vs a DC of 15 plus the vampire's character level; the Str modifier can be used as a bonus to the Saving Throw but note that as levels are drained, so the base Saving Throw modifier will decrease according to the decrease in character level.

Vampires can make physical attacks with weapons in order to incapacitate and subdue a target, although death is always delivered through a bit and level drain. For this reason vampires rely on sneak attacks and grappling so they can get close enough to bite.

Any skills or sorcery a character knew are forgotten when he becomes jiang shi. He gains Search, Spot and Listen at a number of ranks equal to his level before death.





Adventures in Khitai

This chapter contains a number of scenario ideas that can be extended into full adventures centred in and around Khitai. They draw their inspiration from the previous chapters of this book and involve a selection of challenges: quests, monster hunts and political intrigue.

TA-HENG'S PROTECTION

Location: Chosain

Cast of Characters: Wily merchant, various commoners, bandit gang.

Ta-heng is a merchant of the crumbling city state of Hien-Lu and a dealer in jade jewellery. As the markets of Hien-Lu fail, owing to the neglect of the Tongxing Wang, Yana Wa, Ta-heng is forced to make the perilous journey south to Paikang where he hopes to sell the fine jade ornamental dragons carved by his daughter, Jian-kui. This means passing through the forested hills west of the city, which is plagued with bandits, thieves and highwaymen. He needs bodyguards.

The merchant puts out the word for paid help through local tea houses. He offers 20 dao (silver pieces) with 10 payable in advance and the rest on arrival safely in Paikang, plus food during the journey, which will take around two weeks of travel on horseback. His daughter, Jian-kui, is to remain behind despite her protestations and desire to see the capital city.

Candidates for the post of bodyguard are to present themselves at Ta-heng's premises in the south of the city. The house is a modest, two-storey affair, with the merchant's workshop on the ground level and living quarters above. Jian-kui works diligently in a back room when the characters arrive for their interview but is summoned to serve tea and savouries as a courtesy whilst Ta-heng interviews the candidates.

Ta-heng is a dour, short-sighted, bald-headed man with scant patience and a grasping nature. It is obvious he is rich but mean and this is confirmed when he attempts to engage the characters for 15 dao instead of the promised 20. Either Bluff, Negotiation or Diplomacy tests are needed against a DC of 18 to persuade Ta-heng to

honour the advertised fee. Threats have the same effect and any particularly effective skill test successes can up the ante from 20 dao to 25.

Jian-kui, being a wilful daughter of 17, is not content to remain behind. She assembles a male disguise involving a full face-scarf, male robes and so forth and intends to accompany the group, riding at the back of the entourage. Her skill at craft is good, and her disguise has a DC of 18, should anyone seek to see beyond it. She claims, in a reasonably gruff, male voice, to be an additional candidate hired after the characters first visited her father.

Ta-heng's caravan comprises of horses for himself and the characters (if they do not have their own), plus an additional two pack animals carrying his supply of jade items (which total some 3,000 silver in value). The caravan leaves Hien-lu on a cloudy morning and, by nightfall, is winding its way into the hills.

Characters with skills in local geography of the Chosain region can keep the party to the usual trade roads. Ta-heng insists that a scout or two rides ahead to check that the way is clear. For three or four days the road is free from bandit trouble but from the fourth day onwards, as the road snakes into the heavily forested hills, bandit ambushes are a possibility. There is a 25% chance each day of a bandit raid, with 2d6+2 bandits staging an ambush from higher, forested ground. Their tactic is to divide the caravan, allowing two or three of their number to snatch the pack animals and ride into the undergrowth. The bandits attack on foot and are armed with bows, swords and spears. If they can gain horses, they use them. They show little in the way of mercy for anyone getting in their way.

Ta-heng is a cowardly old miser. If the battle goes against the characters, he turns and flees towards Hien-Lu, wailing in terror as he goes. Jian-kui, however, is braver. She is not about to see her hard work be stolen by common thieves. She gives chase if the bandits capture the pack horses, and risks capture herself. Indeed, if caught, it adds an extra dimension to the scenario.



JIAN-KUI CAPTURED

A captured Jian-kui is taken by the bandits into the forest and along secret trails that lead, eventually, to the cave lair of the King of Dark Hill. This self-styled bandit king likes pretty young girls and intends to make Jian-kui his wife. She is pretty and feisty enough to engage his amusement and he has no intention of releasing her without a fight. Despite his rough demeanour, the King of Dark Hill is no monster. He intends to treat Jian-kui with respect in the hope that she will be a dutiful wife and bring him the sons he so desperately craves. The loot from the caravan is divided amongst his men; Jian-kui is the only prize he wants.



Although cursing the bandits for their audacity, Jian-kui treats her capture as something of an adventure. The King of Dark Hill is ruggedly handsome and everything her father is not. For every day of her captivity, she becomes a little more enamoured of the bandit king. After five days, she is won-over and prepared to remain as his wife. If rescued, she protests and stages a spirited resistance, depending on how long she has been in captivity.

The bandit's lair is a large cave halfway up a forested hill towering over the route through the Chosain bandit lands. The King of Dark Hill has some 100 bandits loyal to him in the vicinity and more camped throughout the extensive forests. Towards males who try to deny him his spoils, he is merciless; towards females, he is somewhat more lenient: he enjoys the prospect of many wives.

Ta-heng, naturally enough, may escape and bandit raid and return to the city where he discovers his daughter's absence. He also realises her deceit and blames her capture on the characters. He complains to the ministers of Yana Wa, insisting that the characters were in league with the bandits and instrumental in her capture. Promising half the value of his stolen goods as a tribute to Yana Wa, Ta-heng succeeds in persuading the ministers to sponsor a second band of mercenaries to pursue the characters and bring them back to the city to face charges of theft, deception, kidnapping and all manner of trumped-up charges.

THE ROAD TO PAIKANG

If the caravan escapes a bandit assault or bandits are defeated or driven-off, then caravan passes out of Chosain and skirts the western reaches of the Khitan swamps before dropping down towards the jungles of Paikang. Halfway through the journey the party reaches a roadside hostelry on the edge of the swamplands. Tired from the journey, Ta-heng declares that two days rest will be made at the hostel so that the horses can be refreshed.

The hostel is owned by a pair of brothers, twins and their wives, who are also twins. They are a poor family and can only serve meagre fare but are polite and deferential. Ta-heng treats them like slaves, making increasingly bitter complaints about the state of the accommodation, the quality of the food and the proximity to the swamp. The two brothers weather the complaints with good grace but their shrewish wives do not. To silence Ta-heng, the two women concoct a sleeping draught that is slipped into food and the food of anyone else who may have annoyed them. The draught has a DC of 22 and requires a Fortitude ST to avoid its effects – a deep, dreamless sleep for 12 +1d6 hours, which nothing can disturb.



The brothers are apologetic for their wives' actions but silencing Ta-heng offers a blessed relief from his irritating ways. Ta-heng does not see it this way: on waking, he accuses the wives of being witches and claims his dreams were filled with nightmarish images of soul-sucking demons – of which the husbands are clearly earthly manifestations. He also claims his stock of jade has been plundered (it has not) and he demands that the characters slaughter the entire family since they care clearly monsters of dark, malevolent sorcery.

The four owners of the hostelry are Hyborian commoners and little threat to seasoned adventurers. They plead their innocence, of course and the meek husbands plead for their lives if faced with the real prospect of death. Ta-heng shows no clemency and it requires some dedicated persuasion on the characters' behalf (assisted by Ta-heng's daughter, if present) to make the merchant see sense and drag him, cursing, from the hostelry, before any further trouble ensues.

ARRIVAL IN PAIKANG

Finally the entourage reaches Paikang via its northern gate, having passed through the jungle roads and being beset by large, black horseflies that nibble at exposed flesh and irrigate as much as the irascible merchant. Ta-heng makes straight for the Kan-za district, where he believes the greatest market for jade is to be had. As an outsider, he finds it difficult to sell his wares: Kan-za has its own jade merchants who have items of better quality and workmanship and at a lower price. By this time, the characters have completed their service to Ta-heng but he refuses to pay what he owes until he has sold some of his cargo – which he will struggle to do at the prices he charges.

In the meantime, if Jian-kui is present, and her disguise not blown, she reveals who she is to the characters and much to her father's ire. She then informs him, in no uncertain terms, that she has no intention of returning to Chosain and intends to remain in Paikang where she can learn from the craftsmen of Kan-za district. If anyone tries to stop her (and Ta-heng commands it furiously), Jian-kui flees into the side-streets of the district and attempts to lose herself amongst the many maze-like alleys. If not found she will, in time, marry a wealthy and handsome jade merchant and become a respected name in her own right. If found, she pleads with the characters to be allowed to live her own life away from her mean, miserable father's tyranny. This makes her an undutiful daughter and it may cause a moral dilemma for the characters. In truth, Ta-heng is more concerned with losing another possession rather than his

daughter's love and Jian-kui is resourceful enough to find the wealthy merchant benefactor who will, later, become her husband and protector.

In his attempts to shift his stock of jade carvings, Ta-heng upsets several local jadesmiths who decide to rid Kan-za of this self-serving curmudgeon who attempts to undercut their already fair prices. Thugs are hired to waylay Ta-hang and beat him soundly and there is the opportunity for the characters to save him from a very savage (if deserved) kicking. He finally pleads with them to help him return to Chosain, where life is easier and he is a respected man. He offers to pay what is owed and pay a further 30 dao if the characters will escort him back to Hien-Lu – but what the characters decide to do is their affair. Perhaps Ta-heng has finally received the justice he deserves.

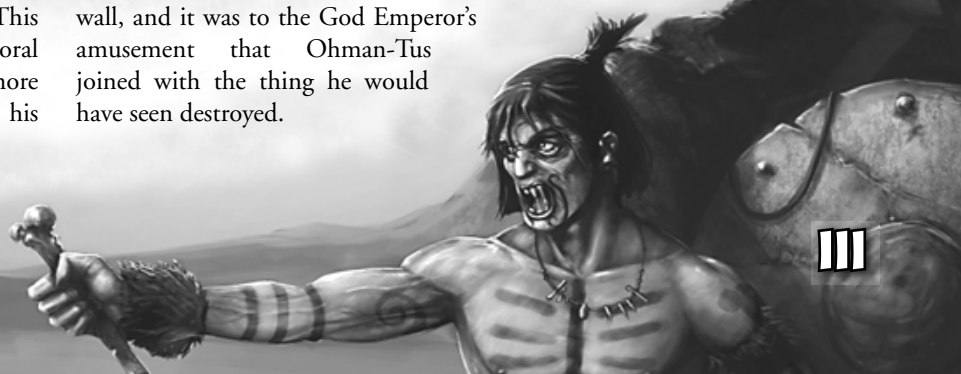
THE TEMPLE OF OHMAN-TUS

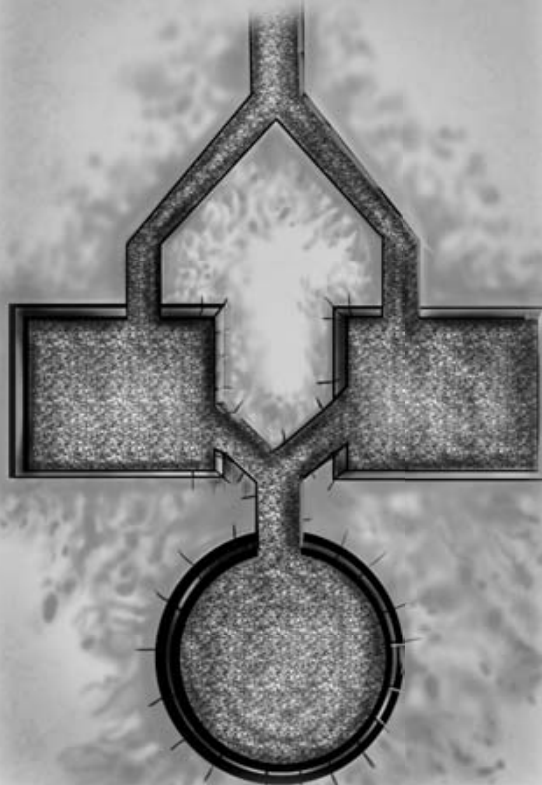
Location: Desert Marches

Cast of Characters:

Hidden in the central hills of the desert marches is the forgotten temple of Ohman-Tus. Its outer facade has almost crumbled away but within is a magnificent temple complex carved from the red sandstone, occupying several levels. Ohman-Tus was, in ancient times, a sorcerer-sage who wandered far from Paikang and came to settle in the marches. Here he summoned the demon Purasnan, a forlorn creature that was the spawn of a true demon and an ancestor spirit bound, in some way, to Ohman-Tus's family. Purasnan carved the temple that Ohman-Tus made his home and together the sorcerer and demon investigated many secrets in a bid to destroy the Great Wall.

Naturally enough the God Emperor discovered Ohman-Tus's plot and sent soldiers and sorcerers of his own. The battle raged for a week as Ohman-Tus and Purasnan, working alone, defended their temple from the God Emperor's soldiers and the sorcerers' spells. However, eventually, Ohman-Tus fell, betrayed by Purasnan at the final hour. The temple was sealed and Purasnan left to whatever fate imprisoned demons suffer. Ohman-Tus's bones were taken to the Great Wall (which was, in those times, bamboo) and grafted into its structure. His soul's cries joined those already trapped within the wall, and it was to the God Emperor's amusement that Ohman-Tus joined with the thing he would have seen destroyed.





THE TEMPLE OF OHMAN-TUS

The temple is very well hidden. It could be stumbled upon by travellers but some of the less scrupulous in Paikang and Shaulun claim to have maps detailing its location. Alternatively, Ohman-Tus's soul, trapped forever in the fabric of the Great Wall, might whisper its location to some lonely soldier, patrolling the wall, late at night.

The temple is carved into a hill side at the end of a snaking ravine in the northern end of the desert marches. All that marks its presence is a partially obscure cave mouth just wide enough to admit one person. Old, worn stairs lead up into the hill side and emerge in the first of three connected antechambers.

In the first antechamber, known as the Hall of Red Carvings, Purasnan the demon has carved a perfect depiction of the Great Wall around three sides of the room. The carving is to scale and is highly detailed. The carving was used to study the wall's weaknesses and from

here Ohman-Tus plotted to bring down the wall. It was his belief that Khitai would become rotten if isolated from the rest of the world and only the healing forces of the west would stop the rot through the cleansing power of fire. As well as the carving of the wall, a small part of Ohman-Tus's fortune is buried behind a section of the carving. Pressing the right watchtowers on the wall causes a secret section to slide back revealing a small, dark alcove. Within is a small, locked chest containing 1,000 pieces of gold.

The second antechamber was where Ohman-Tus slept and studied. The bed has long-since crumbled to dust but one of his familiars still lurks in this place. Kumo, a giant venomous spider clings to the ceiling, wreathed in shadows, awaiting a long-deserved meal to enter the room. Kumo is intelligent, very old and wrathful. The size of a horse it waits to eat anything of sufficient size that dares tread the corridors of the temple – and once alerted to intruders it stalks them, using the shadows and the many nooks and crannies to hide its ghastly, black, hairy form.

Kumo Giant Spider Familiar

Initiative +1

Senses: Listen +5, Spot +5, low-light vision

Dodge Defence: 14

Hit Points: 32 (5HD), DR 2

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2

Speed: 20ft

Melee: Web +7 (entangle); Bite +5 1d4+1, Poison (1d3+6), Leg Impale +3 1d6+1

Base Atk: +3, Grp: +12

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11

Skills: Spot +9, Survival +9

Kumo's sole intention is to maintain the temple free from outside contamination: it remembers how Ohman-Tus's enemies came for the master and did dreadful things to him. All humans are considered enemies to be slain and eaten.

The third chamber is a rough-hewn circular room with a single, impossibly deep pit in its centre. This is the ethereal layer of the demon Purasnan. The demon has not emerged since Ohman-Tus was killed but its essence remains and the demon can manifest within one standard action if his chamber is entered. Purasnan manifests as a gnarled old man, his spine twisted and bent, his claw-like hands tipped with nails of iron. Purasnan's motives are malign: he hates Khitai for reasons only he understands and he would see the country crushed. Ohman-Tus interpreted this as wanting a new, purer Khitai to emerge from the ashes of the old but Purasnan just prefers the ashes. His intent is still the destruction of the Great Wall but with no human agents to act on his behalf he dreams are impotent.

The demon is a demi-god (Major Kuei – see page 56) and cannot be slain without weapons blessed by the Grand Ancestor. It shrugs off any attacks by becoming non-corporeal and its only retaliation is to send dreams of overwhelming hatred against Khitai to any that attempt to plunder the temple. The dreams require a Will Saving Throw to ignore but grow stronger each week (reduce the Will ST by 1 for each week that passes) until the saving throw fails. At this point the dreamer is filled with an all-consuming desire to bring down the Great Wall and Purasnan provides the dreamer with insights into how this can be done. One of the plans is to free Ohman-Tus's entombed spirit and for it to lead the bamboo and bone monstrosities trapped in the wall against those who defend it.

THE SCROLL OF GOLDEN TALES

Ohman-Tus's name is mentioned in hushed tones in many cities. Regarded as a great traitor who would have destroyed the wall and left Khitai open to attack, few have any respect for him. Yet he is said to have hoarded a great treasure and the temple is a lure to treasure hunters and privateers.

Zhong-qi of Ruo-gen is a scholar and sorcerer who has studied heretical writings of Ohman-Tus and his collection of scrolls is almost complete. All he requires is a single scroll, the Scroll of Golden Tales, to finalise his library. Zhong-qi has no idea what the scroll contains but it is mentioned in several other scrolls written by Ohman-Tus and Zhong-qi is desperate to own it. He is therefore hiring troubleshooters to locate and enter the temple in a bid to find it. Zhong-qi offers a 1,000 dao reward for the return of the scroll plus a percentage of any other valuable items the characters might find in the old sorcerer's tomb.

Finding the scroll means first finding the tomb. The characters need to engage the help of the desert marches guides to do this, using persuasion of financial incentive to take them into the hills to its secret location. The guides will take the characters only as far as the entrance: they will go no further, whispering the name *kumo* if pressed for an answer.

The Scroll of Golden Tales is hidden in a secret niche within Purasnan's chamber. The niche has a DC of 28 to locate and removing the scroll causes Purasnan to manifest. The malevolent old kuei is reluctant to let the characters depart with the scroll and he summons 2d4 additional giant spiders, identical to the *kumo* detailed above, to attack the characters if they try to escape with the scroll in their possession.

If the characters do escape, they find the scroll is written in a code known only to Ohman-Tus but which can be deciphered by Zhong-qi. It is a complicated spell designed to open an un-closable breach in the Great Wall. Ohman-Tus never had time to use the spell – the God Emperor's soldiers got to him first – but the spell can be used by someone willing to place the whole of Khitai at risk of Hyrkanian invasion. Is Zhong-qi such a man? How would he use the characters in a dastardly scheme of such treachery? What would the characters stand to gain from betraying Zhong-qi to the God Emperor or the Wall Ministry?

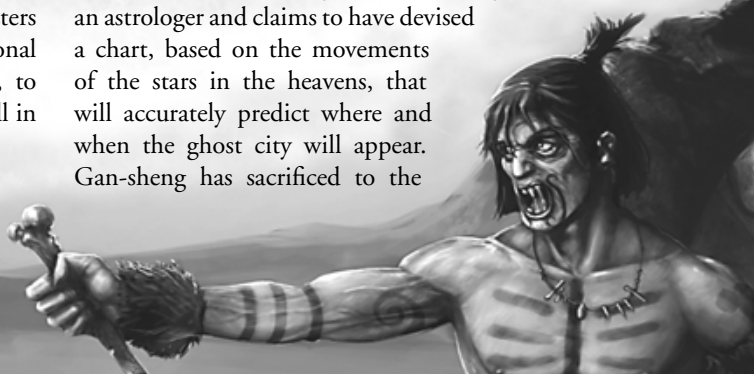
ESCAPE FROM THE SANDS

Whilst crossing the desert marches for whatever reason the characters are caught in a fierce sandstorm. The whirling sand chafes and cuts and drives the characters into the low hills to seek shelter. It lasts for 1d4 days and by sheer luck the characters stumble upon the temple of Ohman-Tus, which is the only shelter from the miserable (possibly sorcerous) storm.

This is a chance for the characters to investigate the temple, perhaps coming across the Scroll of Golden Tales (see above) accidentally and awakening Purasnan – who might seek the characters' help or make their lives miserable. One such possibility of an encounter with Purasnan is in the awakening of Ohman-Tus's captured spirit, which is trapped within the Great Wall along with countless others. A suitable host for Ohman-Tus's soul could be one of the characters or an occupant of the Great Wall – another sorcerer, perhaps; one of the Kang-Ka. Purasnan's scheme is for the characters to enable an enchantment he can teach them that will free Ohman-Tus's spirit which then occupies the host body and absorbs the unfortunate's own spirit entirely, condemning it to eternal misery. With a new body, Ohman-Tus is able to return to his temple, be reunited with Purasnan and to continue his strange vendetta against Khitai's safety.

THE GHOST CITY OF CHAMBA-RI

In Ruo-gen a band of pilgrims assembles ready to plunge into the Great Desert to await the appearance of Chamba-Ri. The leader of the pilgrims, Gan-sheng, is an astrologer and claims to have devised a chart, based on the movements of the stars in the heavens, that will accurately predict where and when the ghost city will appear. Gan-sheng has sacrificed to the





ancestors, offered prayers to many gods and spent years working on his chart: he is convinced it is accurate and so are those who follow him.

The characters might be pilgrims who share Gan-sheng's optimism; they might be mercenaries hired to guard the pilgrims from the predations of the desert folk. They might simply be curious. Or they could be working for Gan-sheng's rival, Joong-hsi.

THE RIVAL ASTROLOGERS

Joong-hsi is, like Gan-sheng, an astrologer but hailing from the city of Shaulun, is an ardent worshipper of Cheng-Ho, the moon goddess. He believes that only Cheng-Ho can predict the appearance of Chamba-Ri and that she will only reveal such knowledge to her faithful. Gan-sheng is certainly not a worshipper of the moon goddess and therefore whatever chart he has come up with must either be wrong or is a blasphemy against Cheng-Ho's name. Joong-hsi is not prepared to take a chance; he wants Gan-sheng humiliated. Joong-hsi has prepared his own, fake chart that he wants substituting with the one made by his rival. Thus, Gan-sheng will lead his pilgrims into the desert and find... nothing. Humiliation will follow and the pilgrims will drift away from Gan-sheng and become ripe for conversion to the ways of the moon goddess – Joong-hsi is certain of it.

If this plotline is used, Joong-hsi, newly arrived from Shaulun, actively recruits the characters to swap the charts. He meets them in opulent rooms in a rented Ruo-gen building. Joong-hsi is a low-ranking noble but wealthy enough to pursue his craft of astrology and with the means to have used the same cartographer who drew Gan-sheng's chart to draw the fake. He is willing to pay 200 dao to the characters to swap the charts and bring Gan-sheng's back to him, intact. He knows where Gan-sheng is staying and explains the task as a 'minor jest between friendly rivals'.

The characters need to find a way of gaining entrance to Gan-sheng's quarters, which are on the fourth floor of a pagoda temple dedicated to an obscure kuei that shares the same interest in astrology. This is the kuei to whom Gan-sheng has offered prayers and sacrifices and received, in return, valuable information on how to structure the chart of Chamba-Ri.

The most devout and faithful of Gan-sheng's followers dwell in the lower two storeys of the pagoda; the priests of the kuei dwell on the ground

and first floor. There is only a single staircase up through the pagoda and Gan-sheng's pilgrims are fanatical and protective of their leader, who will take them to the City of the Ancestors. The characters will need to find a way of getting past the priests and the pilgrims and then substituting the chart.

Gan-sheng sleeps with his chart clasped to his bosom. It is on a sheet of vellum wrapped in cloth of gold and stored in a leather scroll case. The scroll case is secured around Gan-sheng's neck with a leather cord and his sleeping arms are wrapped tightly around it when he rests. When awake and wandering around, making the final preparations for the expedition into the desert, the scroll case is slung around his shoulders and covered with a fine, crimson cloak.

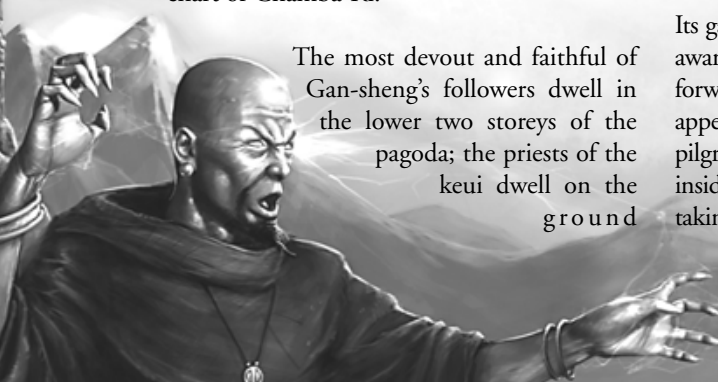
Using light fingers to steal the scroll case or its contents is vs a DC of 28. If caught, Gan-sheng raises the alarm, screaming to his pilgrims who come to his aid, six at a time, bearing staffs and staves to beat off any molesters.

If the characters manage to substitute the map and avoid detection, Joong-hsi is jubilant and offers the pay the characters 500 dao more to accompany the pilgrimage and witness, on his behalf, Gan-sheng's humiliation. If they do, then the pilgrimage takes six days to reach the edge of the Great Desert and a further four to reach the area indicated on the false map. The Games Master should decide if Chamba-Ri appears or not: remember, its appearance is based on ancestral whim, not really astrological movements. Should it not appear, Gan-sheng realises that the chart he has is fraudulent and using his expert rhetorical skills, whips his crowd of pilgrims into a raging frenzy, vowing to hunt-down Joong-hsi and take bloody revenge for insulting the ancestors. The characters may have to escape quickly and decide if they will help Joong-hsi escape from the baying mob...

CHAMBA-RI'S APPEARANCE

Perhaps Chamba-Ri appears to the pilgrims. If so it shimmers into existence amongst the rocky dunes as the full moon beams overhead, its ethereal spires awash with silver and shimmering gold. The pilgrims prostrate themselves, awestruck and rise only when the city has fully manifested.

Its gates swing open as though in welcome and observers are aware of movement within. Gan-sheng leads his followers forward in a rough phalanx towards to open gate. Hazy figures appear in the opening and bid some form of welcome to the pilgrims as they approach; then, as the last of them disappears inside, the gates close and the city shimmers out of existence, taking the pilgrims with it and leaving no trace.



If the characters accompany the pilgrims and gain access to Chamba-Ri, what do they find within? Is this truly a city of the ancestors or is it an unearthly charade designed to harvest human souls? Are the inhabitants kwei of some benign or malevolent intent or are they creatures, like Yogah, from a far-off corner of the universe? If they are ancestors, what do the characters see and learn? Is this a place of peace or torment? Are they released unscathed elsewhere in the world?

Chamba-Ri has many secrets that you, as the Games Master, should determine. Perhaps its secrets remain that forever – or perhaps the characters are in a position to learn and use them in future adventures.

IN PO-SHA'S WAKE

The Wall Ambassador, Po-Sha prepares to travel to Paikang to deliver the Wall Report at the Jade Council. Preparations are immense and consume a considerable amount of time: heralds are sent ahead of the procession to alert the villages that the mighty Po-Sha will be gracing them with his presence and to make sure they are ready to welcome him. The annual pillage of the half-starving villages has begun.

The characters are part of the entourage, either as soldiers of the Great Wall drafted-in to act as bodyguards or mercenaries hired to act as outriders and heralds. At the centre of the 500-person procession is the huge palanquin of Po-Sha, born on the back of an elephant. Inside the whale of a man watches the world saunter by, attended by his personal physicians and selected whores who attend to his repulsive needs whilst the physicians lance his boils.

At each village Po-Sha visits and banquet must take place. By rights every member of the entourage must be fed, but the villagers can barely scrape together enough food to satisfy Po-Sha's vast appetite. Custom dictates that the rest of the entourage pretends not be hungry, to prevent the villagers' food supplies from being exhausted.

However at one village Po-Sha takes exception. He demands that everyone in the entourage eat and eat as well he is eating. It is clear that doing so will leave the villagers destitute for the remainder of the season, but Po-Sha does not care. Anyone who does not eat or protests, is ordered to be whipped: Po-Sha's personal bodyguards, every bit as corrupt as their corpulent master, are only too happy to administer the whippings.

How the characters handle this situation is going to depend on skill and cunning. If they refuse to eat, they will be whipped; Po-Sha's bodyguards are a sadistic, murderous rabble hired from various mercenaries

groups that frequent the Wall. They take pleasure in their work, especially beating other soldiers. The characters might be in a position to use persuasion or intimidate skills (DC20 – 25) to avoid a confrontation, can take the fight to the bodyguards (there are 12 of them) or comply and contribute to the villagers' misery.

Should the characters choose to fight the bodyguards then they are making a stand the villagers appreciate. If they defeat the bodyguards (use statistics for City Guards, page 357 of the *Conan rules*) then Po-Sha's wrath at being disobeyed is immense: but he does not punish the characters directly. Instead, orders are given to some of the other soldiers (about 100 accompany the entourage of advisers, scribes, scholars and junior Wall Ministers) to select ten villagers and crucify them. The soldiery has no choice but to comply; Po-Sha's word is law and if they disobey, then a similar fate awaits them.

When the entourage leaves, the villages have been drained of food. The looks on their faces tell of anticipated hunger in the season to come. However they have an opportunity for revenge; in the hills above the village are bandits who scour the roads leading across the Rolling Plains to Paikang. Word is sent of Po-Sha's atrocities and an ambush planned.

The ambush occurs at night when the entourage has made camp. Eighty mounted bandits armed with bows and spears waits until the camp is quiet and then stages an attack. The charge is loud, brief and bloody. The bandits ride through at speed targeting horses, foot troops and Po-Sha's elephant. The characters have an opportunity to engage with this enemy for 1d3 rounds of combat but then the bandits break and ride away. Po-Sha's beloved elephant lies dead. Po-Sha is bereft.

The entourage must take turns in carrying his palanquin. It takes forty people to do so and a rota is arranged so that no one falls through fatigue. This slows the progress of the entourage significantly and leaves it open to further bandit attacks. The bandits follow the procession at a discreet distance for over a hundred miles, launching attacks at random intervals. They lose some warriors but the entourage too suffers casualties. Eventually the captain of the soldiery can stand no more; when Po-Sha sleeps, he summons the characters.

They are to seek-out the bandits and discover what must be done to end the attacks. Locating the bandits is not difficult – they follow a mile or so behind the procession and do not mask



their position. A small force, displaying truce insignia, will be greeted, albeit gruffly. What they want is simple: Po-Sha's head in return for the misery inflicted on the village and others like it over the years. If this does not happen, they say, attacks will continue and their own numbers will be strengthened by other bandit gangs. 'We will pick you off one at a time,' the bandit leader says. 'Po-Sha will be last, and we will make him suffer. Kill him for us and the gratitude of the villages along the roads shall be yours.'

Murdering a Minister of the Imperial Court is a capital offence but it is clear the bandits mean what they say. If this is reported back to the captain of the guard, he is silent for a long time but eventually agrees that it should be done. 'Po-Sha is a monster,' he says wearily. 'The bandits will kill all of us if we don't find a way of doing this.'

KILLING PO-SHA

The best way to assassinate Po-Sha and get away with it is for the murder to look like an accident or look like it happened during a bandit attack. Po-Sha is always surrounded by his 12, loyal, cut-throat bodyguards who, if they have had an altercation with the characters already are spoiling for a further fight. Po-Sha is too arrogant to believe he will be assassinated but his bodyguards are wiser than he and they keep a vigilant watch. Some form of distraction is going to be needed if the characters are to get close enough to the minister if they are to do this deed.

The characters need to consider their options carefully and make their plans. The bodyguards do not leave Po-Sha's side. At night six of them are always in attendance whilst the others rest; during the day, all 12 travel around the palanquin (but never carry it). There are occasions during the day where the guard is dropped a little – if a river or piece of treacherous ground is to be traversed for example, where the bodyguards must retreat a little to give those carrying Po-Sha room to work.

- ✱ The palanquin is an enormous, sturdy wooden framework topped by an opulent covered tent. Po-Sha rests within it on silk cushions. At night his physicians attend at the same time as his whores; the tent rocks and heaves at the groans and pleasurable moans as different kinds of treatment are administered. There is therefore the option of co-opting one of the physicians or one of the whores into the conspiracy; either could deliver a toxin via food or drink, although Po-Sha has a taster for everything passing his lips.

- ✱ If a physician is approached, a persuasion or equivalent test is needed to get the medical man onto the character's side against a DC of 25. If the characters fail, or are not discreet in their approach, he could warn Po-Sha of the plot, which would bring the full weight of the bodyguards and the soldiery down on the characters. This would divide the guard into those loyal to Po-Sha and those, like the captain, who are against him. Civil war amongst the entourage is inevitable and even if the characters prevail, they would become outlaws hunted by the Imperial Army.
- ✱ Another option is one of the whores. Certainly bribe-able, the girls are repulsed by Po-Sha's demands and his grotesque body. A persuasion against a DC of 20 is needed here but the whores will remain silent if the persuasion fails: they do not want to make trouble.

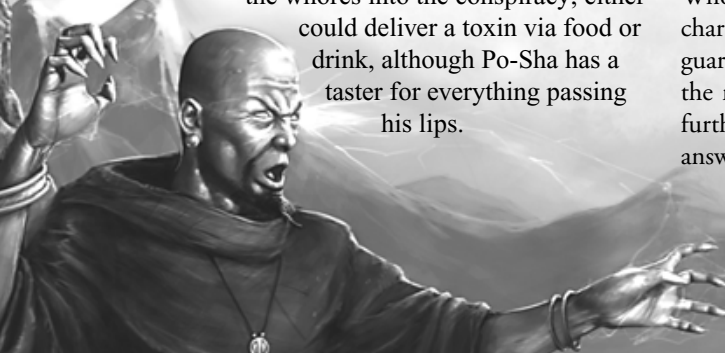
ONWARD TO PAIKANG

If Po-Sha is not killed, then the bandit attacks increase in frequency and ferocity. Over 200 die as the attacks are performed strategically and surgically. This is punishment – not robbery. The attacks only cease when the entourage is in sight of Paikang's borders where the Imperial Army patrols but the damage is done already and Po-Sha will be forced to account for the loss of so many.

He lays all blame at the door of the characters, finding a series of excuses and lies to make them accountable for the bandit attacks. The characters can try to argue against the weight of Po-Sha's word but in the Imperial Court a minister is always believed over commoners. The characters can argue a good defence and even find they are supported from within the entourage (although many stay silent for fear of similar treatment) but the characters are likely to find themselves imprisoned for gross disobedience, placing a Minister at risk and encouraging banditry. The sentence is 100 lashes each in the main square of the Imperial Palace.

However, the night before the sentence is to be carried out, the characters, languishing in squalid dungeon cells beneath the Imperial Barracks, find their cell door swinging open. Something unseen steals in and, one by one, shackles are snapped, leaving the characters free to escape.

Who helped them? How was it invisible? How will the characters escape from an Imperial Palace teeming with guards, ministers and the assembled kings of Khitai? Will the mysterious benefactor make contact again or provide further aid? Such questions are for the Games Master to answer as this scenario extends into a campaign, pitting the



characters against Po-Sha, who is now a sworn enemy. Yet he too has enemies within the Imperial Court who would see an assassination attempt against him succeed – and the characters may not be out of the frame for this task yet.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

New Year approaches. On the streets of Paikang (or any other town or city), young and beautiful youths from all ranks of society are going missing – eight in total. The characters are hired to find out why and where they are.

In a village many miles distant, on the eastern coast, an ancestor-venerating sorcerer has had a vision that, on New Year's Eve, the monster Nian will attack the village. Nian attacked 50 years ago and ate over 100 people – half the village. There have been no attacks since then but with this vision, which the sorcerer is convinced is a gift from the ancestors, the horror is very real. In his dream the sorcerer has seen the answer: a sacrifice. Eight virginal youths – four boys and four girls – must be brought to the village and sacrificed as the moon rises over the water. Only then will Nian find some other hapless settlement to plague.

The characters either know one of the kidnap victims or are hired by the family of one. All the kidnappings took place at night and there are no outward signs of a struggle. There is no ransom demand. However in each case the stench of sulphur is heavy in the area and consulting any scholar, priest or sorcerer reveals that sulphur traditionally accompanies the manifestation of a kuei.

The coastal sorcerer has summoned a lesser kuei to bring the eight sacrificial victims to the village and the kuei has complied. The eight young people are now locked into a cramped cage and venerated by the terrified villagers who want to honour these innocents who will give their lives to save hundreds. The characters can trace the source of the kuei through ancestor placation and consultation or through a priest or sorcerer who will do likewise for a fee. In a vision or other sign, the characters see the village on the coast. They have four days to get there – and travelling as fast as they can, they will arrive on New Year's Eve, mere hours before the sacrifice is to take place.

The village consists of 90 – 100 huts, just inland from the coast. It has a population of 400 or so, all fishermen. A simple, superstitious village like countless others along the Khitai coastline. The sorcerer, Kam-fong, is a scholar who moved here to be close to one of the temples on the cliffs overlooking the village. He is close to the ancestors, especially of this site and they have offered the warning of Nian's impending attack. The villagers remain

in their huts when the characters arrive; when questions are asked the village headman grows angry and tells the characters to leave. 'We are cursed!' He says. 'You cannot help us!'

The sacrificial victims are held in the cage in the ancestors' temple on the overlooking cliff. Once a temple to the sea dragon, it has long been a shrine to those who died at Nian's hands, 40 years ago. Kam-fong is an intense priest who makes no apology for the kidnap and reveals that a kuei servant from the underworld brought the young people here. 'Either they die or hundreds more will die. It is a sacrifice. They will join the ancestors and we will worship their memories,' he says.

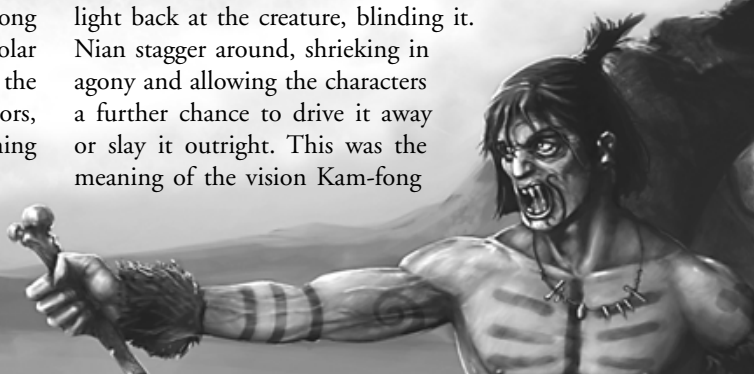
If the characters attempt to free the eight victims, they are faced with several hundred enraged villagers who will stop at nothing to prevent their sacrifices from being taken from them. The intention is to sacrifice them just before the moon reaches its zenith – the traditional time for Nian to attack.

Whether or not the characters prevent the sacrifice from going ahead, Nian does appear as prophesied and, driven by hunger, begins to lay-waste to the village. The sacrifice means nothing to it – its hunger must be satiated. The characters are now in a position to become heroes to the village by engaging Nian and either driving it away or killing it.

SECRET OF THE EIGHT

If the battle with Nian is going badly – and the monster does not stop – the eight sacrificial victims, of alive, have a part to play. As New Year's Eve becomes New Year's Day, the moon glows brighter and fuller. As Nian tears through the village a beam of brilliant moonlight lances down and strikes the eight young people, dividing into separate beams if they are dispersed.

One by one the eight is filled with the power of Cheng-Ho, the moon goddess. They come together and, joining hands begin to dance in a circle in front of Nian. The dance is hypnotic and the monster pauses in its carnage giving the characters chance to make unopposed strikes against it. As the dance reaches its final steps the eight turn to face Nian, open their eyes and mouths and spurt moon light back at the creature, blinding it. Nian stagger around, shrieking in agony and allowing the characters a further chance to drive it away or slay it outright. This was the meaning of the vision Kam-fong





experienced: not to sacrifice the eight but to bring them together so that Nian would be driven away.

Aftermath

The characters may have helped avert mass carnage. They may also have saved the lives of the eight innocents. Certainly the villagers are in their debt and see the error of their ways. Prayers are offered to both the ancestors and the moon goddess and the characters are feted.

None of the eight recall their experiences save a smell of silver and the music of heaven in their ears. Returned to their families, unscathed, brings the characters further praise and reputation. And, if Nian has been slain, the news reaches the Imperial Court where they will be summoned by the God Emperor himself to recount their story.

MARGIN OF WATER

In the Kambuljan Marches, the warlord Sung mocks the God Emperor.

Having overthrown the demonic Dagger Princes, Sung and his 100 magical companions launch raids against the merchant caravans. Valuable trade with Kambuja is threatened. Sung challenges the God Emperor.

The God Emperor is tired of Sung and seeks to remove him from the marches permanently. To this end he calls to him the 10 sorcerers of Ruo-gen, Paikang and Shu Chen. Ancient texts are consulted, demons summoned. To destroy Sung's power the 100 Companions must be returned to their magical graves. Then Sung will be powerless. The scrolls and demons offer help; a weapon is produced. A weapon that will neutralise the 100 Companions. A hundred slaves and criminals are sacrificed and the powerful kwei bring forth the fabled Dragon Lotus, which grows only in the Underworld. Crushed to a powder it compels all who inhale its dust to separate body and soul, the soul returning to its natural state. Four sorcerers are condemned to Hell when they accidentally inhale the Dragon Lotus powder.

Yet how to deliver the powder to the companions? The God Emperor needs loyal people. People who can be compelled. People who may have

threatened his ministers or who have a reputation for slaying monsters.

Enter the characters...

The characters have been engaged by the Seven Counsellors of the Imperial Court, on the God Emperor's behalf, to travel to the Kambuljan Marches with the express intention of defeating a bandit lord who is challenging imperial rule. This warlord, Sung, commands a large bandit force and has the support of 100 companions who lead smaller bandit gangs. Sung and his companions meet once per year in a secret location which is unknown to the Seven Counsellors. The characters' task is straightforward, if dangerous: gain Sung's confidence, attend the annual gathering and then scatter the contents of a hide bag into the air around the meeting.

The hide bag contains the dragon lotus weapon. Gaining Sung's trust is going to be the hardest part but the rebel seems to welcome the disillusioned of Khitai and so the characters must feign disloyalty and disaffection with the God Emperor (they will be forgiven!). In return they will be pardoned for *any* crimes they have committed and will be paid 100 gold from the God Emperor's personal coffers.

The Kambuljan Marches are a miserable, wet expanse of lowland separating Kambuja and Khitai. Merchants between the two countries fear the territory and Sung's raids but have no option but to brave the dangers if they are to sell their goods. Conversing with anyone who has travelled the region reveals that Sung's attacks are swift, well-planned but not always murderous. Many merchants have simply been stripped of their goods and then released; those who have been captured have been well-treated and released after a few days. Only those who resist with violence receive it in return. Sung is described as a 'nobleman without noble blood'. His companions are described as a wily group of men with supernatural powers.

On arrival in the marches, making contact with Sung is a difficult process. Many poor villages scatter the region, tucked away in sheltered valleys, built on stilts to avoid the flood waters. The people are friendly enough but very wary of strangers. They act hospitably but when mention of how to find and join with Sung is mentioned, silence falls.

Even if the characters go searching Kambuja's hills they find no sign of bandit camps. Sung and his men are very good



at hiding their location and signs of passing. The characters cannot find Sung, but he finds them.

Quite out of the blue, either whilst the characters relax in one of the villages or whilst they make camp in the hills whilst searching for the outlaw, they find themselves surrounded by 50 masked warriors. The bandits wear scarves to cover their noses and mouths and do not speak. The characters are stripped of their weapons, blindfolded and led, on foot, deep into the hills and then into a well-concealed valley they have not found in their previous reconnaissance. If the characters put up a fight, they find themselves engaged with warriors of level 6 – 10 – highly competent swordsmen and brutal with it.

In the valley is a cave complex, completely undetectable unless one knows exactly where to look for it. This is Sung's camp and he is waiting for the characters, accompanied by 20 + 1d20 of his magical companions (who all appear to be normal, scruffy looking bandits but have a certain aura of importance and destiny about them).

Sung is polite but terse. If the characters have come to join him in the struggle against tyranny, then they are welcome! The God Emperor and the Imperial Court ignores the suffering of the common people when it could do so much. Good men prepared to fight for the cause of the common man are always welcome in the Marches. However, if this is some form of trap – and the God Emperor has sent many warriors to trap Sung before – then they will be discovered and dealt with as traitors. Which means death. Sung gives each character the opportunity to state his position and to tell the truth. He has Sense Motive at +20, so keeping their intentions a secret will prove tricky.

The characters can gain the following from Sung's demeanour, with appropriate Skill Tests such as Sense Motive and Appraise.

- ✱ He has a noble, chivalrous bearing about him. He commands respect and loyalty but does not seem to demand it.
- ✱ He speaks truthfully and plainly. It seems he can be trusted.

- ✱ The villagers of the Marches speak fondly of Sung. He does not prey on them and would seem to support them.
- ✱ He is a man of destiny and power; the Ancestors have him marked for a clear purpose.

The characters' reactions to Sung therefore depend on what they deduce from him. Any character who confesses the God Emperor's plan openly is not cut down. Instead, Sung steps forward and embraces him before looking into his eyes. 'Having confessed the truth, you are now on the Ancestral Road which sweeps before us all. There is a place for you here.'

Any who lie are cast out of the camp, stripped of weapons, and taken back into the marches. They are told that foolish tricks are futile and to return to the God Emperor with this message.

If the characters manage to evade revealing their true purpose then they are welcomed into Sung's group but treated with certain wariness.

Sung's bandits are an eclectic mix of Marches locals and bandits dispersed from other areas of Khitai. All of them look upon Sung with the same reverence on looks upon the God Emperor; there is none of the mistrust or petty rivalry evident in other bandit gangs. This is not so much a gang of opportunist thieves but an outlawed, organised, private army.

The characters are assigned to one of the companies led by one of the 100 Companions. Each companion maintains a company of about 100 men and each has his own camp hidden across the Marches. The 100 Companions are mythically incarnated warriors – kuei, possibly and quite possibly a part of the ordering of the universe and so invested with talents ordained by the Source of All Things itself. Choose or roll the Companion's divine power on the table, nearby. Sung's power is to unite and command respect and loyalty; his destiny is to oppose the God Emperor and fight tyranny.



POWERS OF THE 100 COMPANIONS

The 100 Companions have sorcerous gifts but are not sorcerers. Each has one power, rolled randomly on the following table:

1d20	Ability
1	Incredible speed: 60ft per combat round
2	Incredible jumping capability. Can launch 100 ft into the air
3	Completely immune to physical attacks save silver weapons
4	Natural Damage Reduction of 5 points
5	Can regrow any severed limb
6	All Fort Saving Throws gain +10
7	All Reflex Saving Throws gain +10
8	All Will Saving Throws gain +10
9	Versatility Feat (Triple Threat Range)
10	Superior Damage: all attacks inflict an additional 1d6 damage
11	Parry Defence +10
12	Dodge Defence +10
13	Initiative +10
14	Base Attack +10
15	Become invisible for 1d6 Standard Actions. Attacking causes invisibility to drop
16	Transform into a wolf, tiger or antelope (takes a standard action to complete)
17	Howling scream that inflict 1d8 damage
18	Breath of the wind. Create a whirlwind just by blowing – Wind has a DC of 25 for resistance purposes (knockback, etc)
19	Acute Vision – can see through solid objects including armour and stone
20	Roll twice

IN THE COMPANY OF SUNG

Accepted into Sung's outlaws, the characters spend the next few weeks being taught the ways of the Marches.

They gain the skill Geography (Kambujan Marches) at three ranks. They learn more about the tactics of their commanding Companion, gaining Knowledge (Sung Bandits) at 3 ranks. They also learn that whatever

wealth is stolen from the merchants who venture through the Marches is divided first amongst the villages and poor of the region and then amongst the 100 companies. The companies move about frequently, watching for merchant caravans. When they raid, they aim to intimidate but not kill unless in self-defence. Any character that uses indiscriminate violence is reprehended by the commanding Companion and then given short shrift by the other members of the company.

There is a clear code of honour amongst these thieves. They do not speak of any kind of grand struggle, simply of

righting certain injustices when they arise. Any merchants or caravans raided are treated with terse respect and only the wealthy are targeted. Lone merchants of the lower classes are left alone and on occasion, even given guide through the Marches and safe passage.

There is scope for noble adventure here but finally, the gathering of the 100 Companions and Sung is due. Each Companion brings with him ten men from his company to act as an honour guard. The meeting is held in the ruins of one of the castles of stone and bronze that once belonged to the Dagger Princes. It takes the form of a three-day conference where tactics are discussed, merchant raids assessed and account taken of all the wealth that has been dispersed. Each day ends with a modest feast and drinking. There is a sense of deep camaraderie amongst Sung's company and amongst the 100 Companions.

If the characters disperse the dragon lotus amongst the Companions then one of the feasts is the best time to do so. The dragon lotus is a powerful, magical narcotic that strips each Companion of his ability and separates his soul from the body, causing it to return to captivity. Such an action renders the 100 powerless, their mortal bodies being left behind as though sleeping. The Companions' men are enraged and the characters, unless they have made their plans very carefully, can expect to be attacked by those who remain. Sung himself is unaffected and can fight (he is a Level 20 soldier with all commensurate abilities). If the characters flee, they are pursued through the Marches by the remaining bandits. If captured, the characters are taken, shackled, to Sung, who is saddened by their treachery and

commands they be put to death for their dishonour. If they escape, Sung seeks revenge against both them and the God Emperor, sending his best bandits, two for each character, in pursuit of them wherever they happen to go in Khitai or beyond. The pursuit will be long and ceaseless: Sung will have his justice.

If Sung himself is killed, then his reign in the Marches is ended and whilst it becomes safe for merchants, the villages of the region suffer. Merchants exploit the villages and some return to take revenge for Sung's theft, leading to misery and penury for the Marches people.

Any betrayal of Sung should leave a lasting impression on the characters; only the hardest-hearted bastard cannot fail to be moved by Sung's nobility and quest for justice.

However, if the characters do not carry out their plan and remain with Sung (or leave without carrying out the God Emperor's plan) then they become trusted members of the organisation. In time Sung is forced to fight the God Emperor's armies when they come to seize the Marches by force and Sung and the Companions (and the characters) wage guerrilla war through the bleak hills and valleys of the rain-lashed Marches, attempting to preserve their way of life from the ambitions of the Imperial Court and the injustices (for right or wrong) that follow in its wake. A reward for loyalty might be to make one or all of the characters, a Companion should any of the 100 fall: the Source of All Things ensures its universe is ordered at all times and part of that order is continuity and equilibrium. The characters, with Sung, can be a part of that order.



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khitai

BEYOND THE GREAT WALL LIES MIGHTY, INTRO-
SPECTIVE KHITAI, PROTECTED BY THE 9,000
GODS AND DEMONS; HOME TO EMPERORS, SOR-
CERERS, TEMPTRESSES, WARRIORS, THIEVES AND
OUTCASTS. THERE, AMONGST ITS JUNGLES AND
HUNGRY DESERTS, SIMPLE PEOPLE EKE A LIVING
WHILST AROUND THEM THE RICH GROW FAT AND
EVER MORE NEGLIGENT. AROUND, ABOVE AND BE-
LOW, THE GODS WATCH AND ALLOW THEMSELVES
TO BE DRAWN FORTH, SO THAT THEY MIGHT
HAVE SOME INFLUENCE IN THIS SELF CONTAINED
WORLD OF JUNGLES, HIDDEN TEMPLES AND
TWISTED SOULS.

STEP BEYOND THE GREAT WALL AND SEE FOR
YOURSELF THE HIDDEN LANDS OF KHITAI. WITHIN
THESE PAGES YOU WILL FIND THE LAND'S HISTORY,
HEROES, VILLAINS, DESTROYERS AND SAVIOURS.
NEW CHARACTER PROFESSIONS, NEW MAGIC, NEW
GODS AND NEW WAYS AWAIT.



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