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# Chung Kuo

by DAVID WINGROVE

BOOK 5:  
BENEATH THE  
TREE OF HEAVEN

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A DELL TRADE PAPERBACK

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BVG

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for Peter Hammill, in admiration.

Senses dimmed in semisentience, only wheeling through this plane, only seeing fragmented images,  
prematurely curtailed by the brain, but breathing, living, knowing in some measure at least the soul which  
roots the matter of both beauty and the beast. . . .

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House of Ch'in built the Wall to keep them apart,  
House of Han has to keep the beacons alight,  
Beacons alight and they never go out  
For these expeditions have never an end:  
In the line, hand to hand, they'll die the same,  
The horses will fall, call to Heaven their pain,  
The crows and the kites pick their riders' guts  
And fly to dead trees with the bits in their beaks. . . .

—Li Po, *We Fought South of the Walls*,

EIGHTH CENTURY A.D.

Life is cheap, flesh plentiful.

—COMMON SAYING, 2210 A.D.

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To Robert Carter, best of friends and historical novelist supreme, may *Talwar* reap the huge rewards it deserves. And to Andy "The Slut" Muir, thanks for the tapes and see you in the downstairs bar of Moon on the Green!

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To my darling wife, Susan, and to my beautiful girls, Jessica, Amy, and Georgia, much love and thanks for making my life so rich.

Writing a multivolumed novel like this involves a lot of sitting and thinking, and what would I do without the background of music? This time out special thanks go to Tangerine Dream, I.Q., H. E Zinker, Tranceport, and the Guo Brothers.

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## General Introduction

**Chung Kuo.** *The words mean "Middle Kingdom," and since 221 b.c., when the first emperor, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, unified the seven Warring States, it is what the "black-haired people," the Han, or Chinese, have called their great country. The Middle Kingdom—for them it was the whole world; a world bounded by great mountain chains to the north and west, by the sea to the east and south. Beyond was only desert and barbarism. So it was for two thousand years and through sixteen great dynasties. Chung Kuo was the Middle Kingdom, the very center of the human world, and its emperor the "Son of Heaven," the "One Man." But in the eighteenth century that world was invaded by the young and aggressive Western powers with their superior weaponry and their unshakable belief in progress. It was, to the surprise of the Han, an unequal contest, and China's myth of supreme strength and self-sufficiency was shattered. By the early twentieth century China—Chung Kuo—was the sick old man of the East: "a carefully preserved mummy in a hermetically sealed coffin," as Karl Marx called it. But from the disastrous ravages of that century grew a giant of a nation, capable of competing with the West and with its own Eastern rivals, Japan and Korea, from a position of incomparable strength. The twenty-first century, "the Pacific Century," as it was known even before it began, saw China become once more a world unto itself, but this time its only boundary was space.*

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## The War of the Two Directions

**I**t had begun with the assassination of the T'ang's Minister, Lwo Kang, some thirteen years earlier, the poor man blown into the next world along with his Junior Ministers while basking in the imperial solarium. The Seven—the great Lords and rulers of Chung Kuo—had hit back at once, arresting one of the leading figures of the Dispersionist faction responsible for the Minister's death. But it was not to end there. Within days of the public execution, their opponents had struck another deadly blow, killing Li Han Ch'in, son of the T'ang, Li Shai Tung, and heir to City Europe, on the day of his wedding to the beautiful Fei Yen.

It might have ended there, with the decision of the Seven to take no action in reprisal for Prince Han's death—to adopt a policy of peaceful non-action, *wuwei*—but for one man such a course of action could not be borne. Taking matters into his own hands, Li Shai Tung's General, Knut Tolonen, had marched into the House of Representatives in Weimar and killed the leader of the Dispersionists, Under Secretary Lehmann. It was an act almost guaranteed to tumble Chung Kuo into a bloody civil war unless the anger of the Dispersionists could be assuaged and concessions made.

Concessions were made, an uneasy peace maintained, but the divisions between rulers and ruled remained, their conflicting desires—the Seven for Stasis, the Dispersionists for Change—unresolved. Among those concessions the Seven had permitted the Dispersionists

to build a starship, *The New Hope*. As the ship approached readiness, the Dispersionists pushed things even further at Weimar, impeaching the *tai*—the Representatives of the Seven in the House—and effectively declaring their independence. In response the Seven destroyed *The New Hope*. War was declared.

The five-year "War-That-Wasn't-a-War" left the Dispersionists broken, their leaders dead, their Companies confiscated. The great push for Change had been crushed and peace returned to Chung Kuo. Or so it briefly seemed, for the War had woken older, far stronger currents of dissent. In the depths of the City new movements began to arise, seeking not merely to change the system, but to revolutionize it altogether. One of these factions, the Ping Tiao, or "Levelers," wanted to pull down the great City of three hundred levels and destroy



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The transcription of standard Mandarin into European alphabetical form was first achieved in the seventeenth century by the Italian Matteo Ricci, who founded and ran the first Jesuit mission in China from 1583 until his death in 1610. Since then several dozen attempts have been made to reduce the original Chinese sounds, represented by some tens of thousands of separate pictograms, into readily understandable phonetics for Western use. For a long time, however, three systems dominated—those used by the three major Western powers vying for influence in the corrupt and crumbling Chinese Empire of the nineteenth century: Great Britain, France, and Germany. These systems were the Wade-Giles (Great Britain and America—sometimes known as the Wade system), the Ecole Française de l'Extrême-Orient (France), and the Lessing (Germany).

Since 1958, however, the Chinese themselves have sought to create one single phonetic form, based on the German system, which they termed the *hanyu pinyin fang'an* (Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet), known more commonly as *pinyin*, and in all foreign language books published in China since January 1, 1979, *pinyin* has been used, as well as now being taught in schools along with the standard Chinese characters. For this work, however, I have chosen to use the older and to my mind far more elegant transcription system, the Wade-Giles (in modified form). For those now used to the harder forms of *pinyin*, the following (courtesy of Edgar Snow's *The Other Side of the River*, Gollancz 1961) may serve as a rough guide to pronunciation.

*Chi* is pronounced as "Gee," but *Ch'i* sounds like "Chee." *Ch'in* is exactly our "chin."

*Chu* is roughly like "Jew," as in *Chu Teh* (Jew duhr), but *Ch'u* equals "chew."

Tsung is "dzung"; ts'ung with the *ts* as in "Patsy."

*Tai* is our word sound "die"; T'ai—"tie."

Pai is "buy" and *P'ai* is "pie."

Kung is like "Gung" (-a Din); *K'ung* with the *k* as in "kind."

*J* is the equivalent of *r* but slur it as "rrrun."

H before an s, as in *hsi*, is the equivalent of an aspirate but is often dropped, as in "Sian" for *Hsian*.

Vowels in Chinese are generally short or medium, not long and flat. Thus Tang sounds like "dong," never like our "tang." T'ang is "tong."

a as in father e—run eh—hen *i*—see *ih*—her *o*—look ou—go u—soon The effect of using the Wade-Giles system is, I hope, to render the softer, more poetic side of the original Mandarin, ill served, I feel, by modern *pinyin*.

This usage, incidentally, accords with many of the major reference sources available in the West: the (planned) sixteen volumes of Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe's *The Cambridge History of China*; Joseph Needham's mammoth multivolumed *Science and Civilization in China*; John Fairbank and Edwin Reischauer's *China: Tradition and Transformation*; Charles Hucker's *China's Imperial Past*; Jacques Gernet's *A History of Chinese Civilization*; C. R. Fitzgerald's *China: A Short Cultural History*; Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper's *The Art and Architecture of China*; William Hinton's classic social studies, Fanshen and *Shenfan*; and Derk Bodde's *Essays on Chinese Civilization*.

The version of the I Ching or *Book of Changes* quoted from throughout is the Richard



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# Glossary of Mandarin Terms

aiya! —common exclamation of surprise or dismay.

ch'a —tea.

chen yen —"true words"; the Chinese equivalent of a mantra.

ch'i —a Chinese foot; approximately 14.4 inches.

ch'i —"inner strength"; one of the two fundamental "entities" from which everything is composed. Li is the "form" or "law," or (to cite Joseph Needham) the "principle of organization" behind things, whereas *ch'i* is the "matter-energy" or "spirit" within material things, equating loosely to the *pneuma* of the Greeks and the *prana* of the ancient Hindus. As the sage Chu Hsi (a.d. 1130-1200) said, "The It is the *Tao* that pertains to 'what is above shapes' and is the source from which all things are produced. The *ch'i* is the material [literally instrument] that pertains to 'what is within shapes,' and is the means whereby things are produced. . . . Throughout the universe there is no *ch'i* without li, nor li without *ch'i*."

**Chieh Hsia** —term meaning "Your Majesty," derived from the expression "Below the Steps." It was the formal way of addressing the Emperor, through his Ministers, who stood "below the steps."

**ch'in** —a long (120 cm), narrow, lacquered zither with a smooth top surface and sound holes beneath, seven silk strings, and thirteen studs marking the harmonic positions on the strings. Early examples have been unearthed from fifth-century b.c. tombs, but it probably evolved in the fourteenth or thirteenth century b.c. It is the most honored of Chinese instruments and has a lovely mellow tone.

**ching** —literally "mirror"; here used also to denote a perfect GenSyn copy of a man. Under the Edict of Technological Control these are limited to copies of the ruling T'ang. However, mirrors were also popularly believed to have certain strange properties, one of which is to make spirits visible. Buddhist priests used special "magic mirrors" to show believers the form into which they would be reborn. Moreover, if a man looks into one of these mirrors and fails to recognize his own face, it is a sign that his own death is not far off.

**chung** —a porcelain *ch'a* bowl, usually with a lid.

**ch'un tzu** —an ancient Chinese term from the Warring States period, describing a certain class of noblemen, controlled by a code of chivalry and morality known as the *li* or rites. Here the term is roughly, and sometimes ironically, translated as "gentlemen." The *ch'un tzu* is as much an ideal state of behavior—as specified by Confucius in his *Analects*—as an actual class in Chung Kuo, though a degree of financial independence and a high standard of education are assumed a prerequisite.

**Hei** —literally "black"; the Chinese pictogram for this represents a man wearing warpaint and tattoos. Here it refers to the genetically manufactured (GenSyn) half-men used as riot police to quell uprisings in the lower levels.

**hsiao jen** —"little man/men." In the *Analects*, Book Xiy Confucius writes: "The gentleman gets through to what is up above; the small man gets through to what is down below." This distinction between "gentleman" (*ch'un tzu*) and "little men" (*hsiao jen*), false even in Con-fucius's time, is no less a matter of social perspective in Chung Kuo.

**Hsien** —historically an administrative district of variable size. Here the term is used to denote a very specific administrative area: one of ten stacks—each stack composed of thirty decks. Each deck is a hexagonal living unit of ten levels, two li, or approximately one kilometer, in

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## In Times to Come . . .

WHITE MOON, RED DRAGON, the sixth volume in the *Chung Kuo* saga, opens on Mars where, four years after the destruction of the Nineteen Cities, Hans Ebert, the "Walker in the Darkness," gathers the Osu to face a new threat from the edge of the Solar System and to prepare them for a return to Chung Kuo after their centuries-long exile.

On Chung Kuo itself the three remaining T'ang—Li Yuan, Tsu Ma, and Wei Tseng Li—struggle to maintain the status quo in what remains of their once-vast empires. Li Yuan, particularly, has serious problems, and his long guerrilla war against Stefan Lehmann, "the White T'ang," head of the underworld and de facto ruler of the lower levels of his great City, is about to enter a new and more devastating phase.

For Gregor Karr, Li Yuan's newest General, there are troubles enough coping with an ever-deteriorating situation, yet his greatest problem is in struggling with his own conscience, as he finds himself ever more disturbed by the actions he is forced into taking to attempt to prop up his Master's ailing regime.

For Kim Ward, finally freed from his contract as a Commodity Slave with the great SimFic Corporation, there is the question of what to do with his talent, while for his beloved Jelka, daughter of the aging Marshal Tolonen, the prospect of making her own way in life—now that she is to finally come of age—leads to a difficult choice between loyalty to her father or following the course of her heart. Taking advantage of the uncertainties of the times, Karel Pasek, a religious fanatic and member of the Black Hand terrorist organization, stages a bloody coup and begins to turn the organization into a vehicle for his own fanaticism. Yet he is not totally unopposed. Emily Ascher, onetime Ping *Tiao* member and estranged wife of the American businessman Michael Lever, continues to fight against a system which, she believes, has blighted so many ordinary peoples' lives: a fight which is to see her lose almost everything.

Down in the Clay—that dark wasteland beneath the great City— things are stirring once more as a single powerful man, the Myghtern, "King Under the City," fashions a kingdom from the chaos and, with help from his Above allies, threatens to embroil the Western Island (Britain) in war.

For Ben Shepherd, living in close proximity to the Clay, this is an opportunity too good to miss. With his first "shell" about to be launched onto an unsuspecting public, Ben takes a huge risk and enters the Clay, trawling for new material for his next great work of art.

But time is running out for the great Han empire of Chung Kuo, and after a long war of attrition with its enemies—Warlords and Triads— Li Yuan and his cousins must face their last great challenge as DeVore returns with a vast army, determined to destroy his old opponent and subjugate the whole Earth.

Yet as Apocalypse threatens, Li Yuan is given a gift—a gift of stones foreseen some two decades earlier on the day of his betrothal to his first wife, Fei Yen.