

Huang Di

by Bryan Johnson

Historical Background

The Great Wall of China (known as Chang Cheng in Chinese), is not one wall, but is actually a series of stone and earthen fortifications that were built, rebuilt, and maintained between the 6th century BC and the 16th century. The Great Wall stretches for nearly 6700 km in total, and it is estimated that 2 to 3 million Chinese died while working on the construction of the wall over the centuries. The materials used to build the wall varied greatly depending on the century and the local resources that were available. Materials such as wood, rammed earth, stone and brick were all utilised in its construction. During its peak, more than one million men were required to guard the wall.

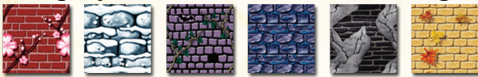
This game takes place during the most ambitious rendering from the time of Emperor Qin Shi Huang (approximately 220-200 BC). One of my goals in designing this game was to evoke the feel of the enormous amount of resources (human and material) used in the construction of the wall, as well as the essence of the Far East. In some of my early research, many sources noted the vast amount of criminal labour used. This was done for obvious reasons, as criminals are extremely cheap labour. I must say that I am quite happy with the way that it translated into the game.

Unfortunately, little remains from this time period. The vast majority of the brick and stone Great Wall as it is seen today is a product of the Ming Dynasty from 1368 to 1644.

Contents

4 province boards.

108 player wall blocks, 18 blocks per player.



12 emperor wall blocks.



24 role cards, 6 sets of 4 cards per player.



6 taskmasters.



1 emperor marker.



36 favour cards.



36 plaques.



12 buyback chips.



6 score track markers.



60 jade (green cubes) in denominations of 40x1 jade (small) and 20x3 jade (large); 100 jade in total.



50 Peasants.



65 Convicts.



6 player aids.

1 rulebook.

Setup

For two or three players, take two province boards, and place them edge-to-edge near the centre of the table. For four players, take three province boards and place them edge-to-edge near the centre of the table. For five or six players, take all four province boards and place them edge-to-edge near the centre of the table. Return any unused province boards to the box.

Each player selects a player colour. Place the 18 wall blocks of each player's colour in a resource area, away from the player. Place each player's score track marker on the score track. Place each player's taskmaster in the camp in the left-hand-most province. Return any unused colours of wall block, score track marker and taskmaster to the box.

Give each player one set of four role cards (one recruiter card, one resources card, one builder card and one taskmaster card). Return any unused sets of role cards to the box.

Give each player a player aid.

Give each player 12 jade. Use the remaining jade to form a jade stockpile.

Form a stockpile of emperor wall blocks, consisting of 12 blocks (2-3 players), 11 blocks (4 players), 10 blocks (5 players) or 9 blocks (6 players). Return any unused emperor wall blocks to the box.

Form resource stockpiles of plaques, buyback chips, peasants and convicts.

Shuffle the favour cards to form a deck. Deal 5 favour cards to each player. Each player examines their cards, keeps three in their hand, and returns the other two to the deck. Then reshuffle the deck.

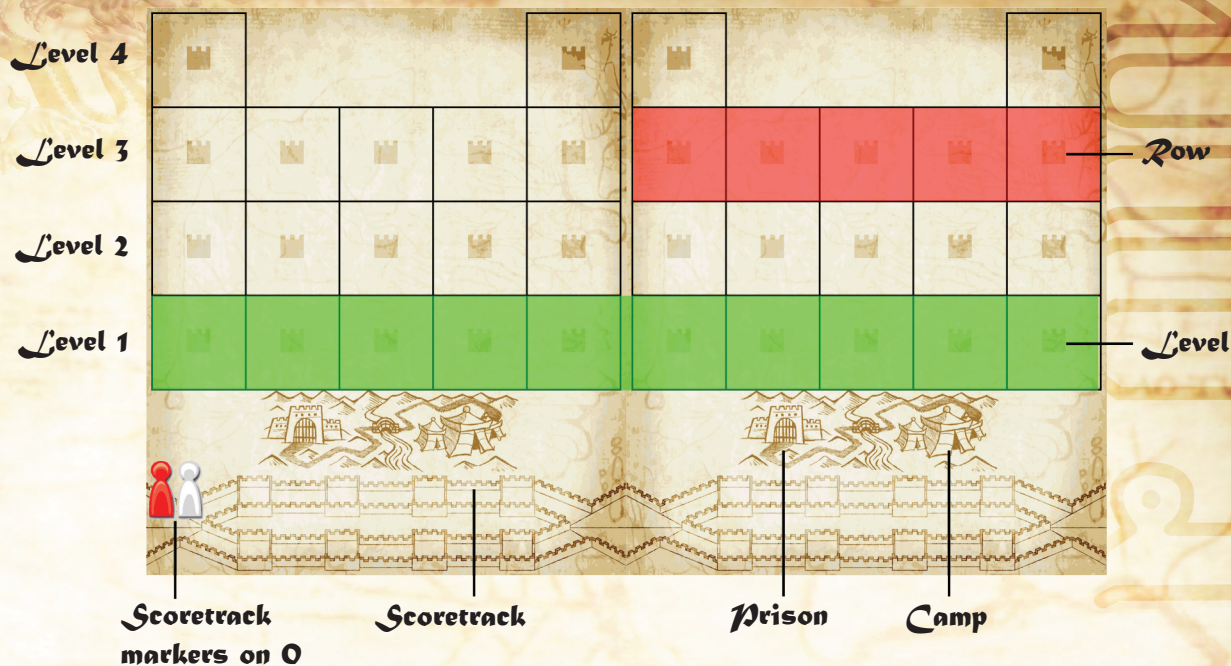
Setup Summary

Number of Players	2	3	4	5	6
Province boards	2	2	3	4	4
Emperor wall blocks	12	12	11	10	9
Starting jade each	12				
Player wall blocks each	18				
Favour cards each	Deal 5, keep 3, return 2				

Overview

Huang Di is played over a number of rounds. During these rounds, players take turns to perform actions in order to build the Great Wall of China.

The wall is spread across 2-4 provinces (depending on the number of players). In each province, 17 wall blocks are required to complete the wall – three rows of five blocks each, and then a fourth block at each end of the province to form a tower.



Each player has a taskmaster, who is in charge of building the wall. The taskmaster is always located in the camp in one of the provinces. All actions that a player can perform (with the exception of playing a favour card and placing an emperor wall block) must be performed in the province where the player's taskmaster is currently located.

The player selects the actions they wish to perform by playing role cards. Each role card contains a number of actions. Players play a role card and then select an action from the card to perform.

In order to help them build the wall, the taskmasters have the use of two types of worker – peasants and convicts. Some actions can use either type of worker, while others require a specific type. The workers which the player currently holds, along with the jade they've acquired and the blocks they've bought, are held in the player's supply.

As the wall is built, players earn points for their work. They can also earn favours from the emperor, by building specifically requested patterns of blocks into the wall.

When the wall is completed, or when the Mongols invade through the uncompleted wall, the game ends, and the player with the most points wins.

Rounds

The game is played in a number of rounds. Each round consists of three phases:

- The income phase. Players collect their income.
- The petition phase. Players bid for the petition of the emperor.
- The action phase. Players take it in turn to perform actions.

The Income Phase

Each player takes 3 jade from the jade stockpile.

In later rounds (but not in the first round), players may have played favour cards which allow them to take additional jade during the income phase. See "Favours" for details.

Example. Adam has played a Favour Card that gives him two additional income. He collects five income – three income as standard plus two for the Favour Card.

The Petition Phase

The players bid for the petition of the emperor.

Each player takes all their jade into their hands. They secretly divide the jade between their two hands, and place one hand, as a closed fist, in front of them over the table. This represents their bid. Players may bid any amount of jade, including zero or all the jade they hold.

Once all players have selected their bid, the amount held by each player is revealed.

In later rounds (but not the first round), players may have played favour cards which add to the petition bid. See “Favours” for details. Each player calculates the value of their bid by adding together the amount of jade in their bidding hand plus the amount which is added to their bid by their played favour cards. The player with the highest bid wins the petition of the emperor.

In the case of a tie, the player with the most jade in their bidding hand, ignoring played favour cards, wins the tie. If two or more players remain tied, the emperor marker is moved clockwise around the table from its previous position, until it reaches one of the players who remain tied. This player wins the petition of the emperor. The player who previously had the petition of the emperor cannot retain it in this way.

In the case of a tie in the first round, the tie is split randomly.

The player who wins the petition of the emperor discards the jade from their bidding hand into the jade stockpile, and places the emperor marker in front of them. The other players retain all their jade.

The player who wins the petition of the emperor takes one emperor wall block from the stockpile. They also move one jade and one convict from the resource stockpile to the prison of the province where their taskmaster is currently located.

Example: Adam has played a favour card which gives him two petition, and places three jade in his bidding hand. Bill has played no favour cards, and places four jade in his bidding hand. Charles has played two favour cards that together give him three petition, and places two jade in his bidding hand. Adam and Charles have both bid five in total, beating Bills bid of Four. Adam wins the tie-break, as he has more jade in his bidding hand.

Second Example: Before the next petition phase, Bill has now also played a Favour Card which gives him two petition. In the next petition bid, Adam and Bill both place three jade in their bidding hand. Charles does not place any jade in his bidding hand. Adam and Bill both have a bid of five, including three in their hand, so they are tied. Because Adam had the petition of the emperor last turn, this turn it passes to Bill.

The Action Phase

At the start of the Action Phase, all players take their four role cards into their hand.

Starting with the player who has the emperor marker in front of them and playing clockwise around the table, players take it in turns to perform one turn each, until all players have performed three turns during this action phase.

Each turn, a player performs the following steps:

- (a) Select an action to perform.
- (b) Perform the action.
- (c) Optionally, use buyback to repeat (a) and (b).

The player currently taking his turn is the active player.

Selecting an Action

The active player selects one of his role cards from his hand, and places it on the table. He then states which of the actions on the card he is performing.

Performing the Action

The player performs the selected action. For the details of how to perform each action, see “Actions in Detail”.

Buyback

If the active player selected the taskmaster role card to play, then he may choose to buy it back. He discards three jade into the jade stockpile, picks up the taskmaster card, and returns it to his hand.

Alternatively, if the active player holds a buyback chip, he may choose to discard it in order to buy back the role card he just played. He discards the buyback chip to the resource stockpile, and returns the role card he just played into his hand. A buyback chip may be used to buy back any role card, including the taskmaster.

If the active player chooses either of these buyback options, then he must now select another action to perform, and perform it, as described above. The new action may be the same as, or different to, the action selected originally, and may be on the same role card, or a different role card.

Example: Adam plays the Taskmaster Role Card, and moves his taskmaster to a new province. He then pays three jade, picks up his Taskmaster Role Card, and plays his Builder Role Card, and performs the Build Wall Action.

Second Example: Bill plays the Resources Role Card, and performs the Buy Blocks Action. He then discards a buyback chip, picks up his Resources Role Card, plays his Builder Role Card, and performs the Build Wall Action.

Third Example: Charles plays the Builder Role Card, and performs the Build Wall Action. He then discards a buyback chip, picks up his Builder Role Card, plays his Builder Role Card again, and performs the Play a Favour Card Action.

Having performed a second action, the active player may not select either buyback option again during this turn. Hence each player is limited to two actions per turn, and therefore six actions per round.

Because of the way buyback works, each player will always end each turn with one more role card played than at the start of the turn. Therefore the number of turns that each player has played this round can always be checked by counting the number of role cards that they have played.

Actions in Detail

The available actions are all shown in diagrammatic form on the role cards.

In general, where a diagram shows a hand, you must lose the items at the wrist end of the hand, and you gain the items at the finger end of the hand.

Where a number of items is shown as a tight collection, the actual number is variable. Where they are shown spaced out, it is always that number.

The actions are all summarised on the player aids.

Recruiter Card Actions (徵人人員)

徵募 (zhēng mù) - Recruit Peasants

The active player takes one convict from the resource stockpile, and places it in the prison of the province

where his taskmaster is located.

He then chooses to take between 1 and 5 peasants from the resource stockpile into his supply. Depending on the number of peasants taken, he pays an amount of jade to the resource stockpile, according to the following table:

Number of peasants	1	2	3	4	5
Cost in jade	0	1	2	4	7

Example: Adam chooses to take three peasants. He pays two jade, takes the three peasants, and places one convict from the resource stockpile into the prison in the province where his taskmaster is located.

收集 (shōu jí) – Collect 5 Convicts

The active player discards two peasants from his supply into the resource stockpile. He then takes five convicts from the resource stockpile into his supply.

貨幣 (huò bì) – Collect Jade

The active player collects three jade from the resource stockpile into his supply.

Players may have played favour cards that allow them to take additional jade during the collect jade action. See “Favours” for details.

Example: Charles chooses the Collect Jade action. He has a favour card which gives him two extra jade, so he collects five jade in total – three as standard, and two from his favour card.

帶來 (dài lái) – Collect from Prison

The active player takes all the jade and convicts from the prison in the province where his taskmaster is currently located, and places them in his supply.

Resource Card Actions (資源)

石場 (shí chǎng) – Quarry Blocks

The active player takes one convict from the resource stockpile, and places it in the prison of the province where his taskmaster is located.

He then chooses to take between 1 and 5 wall blocks of his colour from the resource stockpile into his supply. Depending on the number of blocks taken, he pays an amount of jade to the resource stockpile, according to the following table:

Number of wall blocks	1	2	3	4	5
Cost in jade	0	1	2	4	7

繪製 (huì zhì) – Collect Jade

The active player collects three jade from the resource stockpile into his supply.

Players may have played favour cards that allow them to take additional jade during the collect jade action. See “Favours” for details.

This is the same as the Collect Jade action on the Recruiter Role Card.

繪製 (huì zhì) – Draw Favour Cards

The active player draws five favour cards from the top of the deck. He examines them, keeps two, and returns the other three to the bottom of the favour card deck.

The three cards returned must be three of the five cards drawn. The player cannot return cards from his hand.

Builder Card Actions (建築者)

建立 (jiàn liá) – Build Wall

The active player takes one convict from the resource stockpile, and places it in the prison of the province where his taskmaster is located.

The active player chooses whether to build one or two blocks of the wall. If he chooses to build two blocks of wall then he must pay one jade to the resource stockpile. He must have the blocks to build in his supply.

The active player selects where to build the block or blocks. The location or locations selected must conform to the following rules:

- The location must be in the same province as the active player's taskmaster.
- There must not already be a block in the location.
- If it is a level 2 block, then there must be a level 1 block directly below it.
- If it is a level 3 block, then there must be a level 2 block directly below it.
- If it is a level 4 block, then there must be a level 3 block directly below it.
- If it is a level 4 block, then it must be in one of the end columns of the province.

The active player may choose to build two new blocks such that one is directly above the other.

For each block, the player must assign a number of workers to build the block from his supply, according to the following table:

Level	1	2	3	4
Number of workers	2	4	6	8

Each worker may be a peasant or a convict. If two blocks are to be built, then the workers for both blocks must be assigned simultaneously.

All the convicts and half the peasants that are assigned to building the wall are killed, and are returned to the resource pool. If the number of peasants assigned to building the wall is odd, then the number killed is rounded up.

The active player places his new block or blocks on the wall.

Example: Adam selects the build wall action. He places one convict from the resource stockpile into the prison in the province where his taskmaster is located. He chooses to build two blocks, so he pays one jade to the resource stockpile. He places one block on level 2 and one block on level 3 in the province where his taskmaster is located. He shows seven peasants and three convicts to build the wall. He discards four of the peasants and all three convicts into the resource stockpile, and returns the other three peasants to his supply.

玩耍 (wán shuǎ) – *Play a Favour Card*

The active player selects a favour card from his hand, and lays it on the table. The pattern on the favour card must match a pattern of blocks in the wall. The blocks forming the pattern must all meet the following criteria:

- They must be of the active player's colour.
- They must not contain a plaque.
- When the card is orientated such that the bottom of the card is aligned with the bottom of the wall, the pattern must be in the same orientation on the wall as on the favour card.

The active player then selects one of the blocks that forms the pattern, and places a plaque on it.

The pattern of blocks in the wall does not have to be in the province where the active player's taskmaster is located, and the pattern may straddle two provinces.

For the effects of played favour cards, see "Favours".

移動 (yí dòng) – *Remove Block*

The active player selects a block in the wall to remove. The block must meet all of the following criteria:

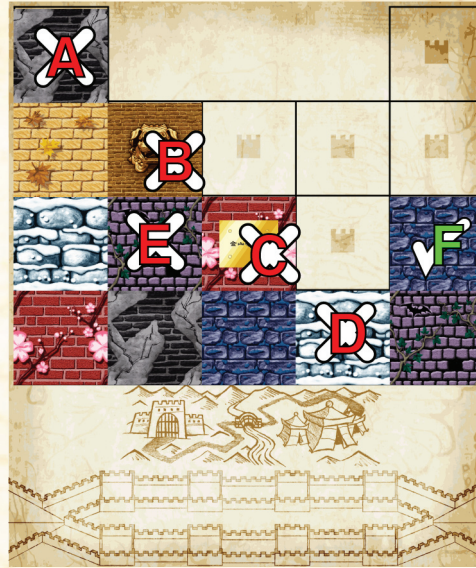
- The location must be in the same province as the active player's taskmaster.
- It must not be an emperor's block.
- It must not belong to the active player.
- It must not contain a plaque.
- The row containing the block must not be complete.
- It must not be a level 4 block.
- There must not be another block directly above the block to be removed.

The active player must assign a number of convicts to destroy the block, according to the following table:

Level	1	2	3
Number of convicts	1	2	3

All the convicts that are assigned to destroying the block are killed, and are returned to the resource pool. The removed block is returned to the player's supply.

Example: Bill chooses to remove a block from the wall. He removes one of Adams blocks from level 2 of the wall, in the province where his taskmaster is located, and returns it to Adam. He returns two convicts from his supply to the resource stockpile.



- (A) This block cannot be removed because it is on level 4,
- (B) This block cannot be removed because it is an emperor block,
- (C) This block cannot be removed because it has a plaque on it.
- (D) This block cannot be removed because it is part of a complete row,
- (E) This block cannot be removed because it has another block above it,
- (F) This block can be removed.

Taskmaster Card Actions (工頭)

工頭 (gōng tóu) – Move the TaskMaster

The active player moves his taskmaster to the camp in any other province.

重複 (chóng fù) – Repeat a previous role

The active player selects a role card that he has already placed on the table, due to having played it in an earlier turn of the round.

He pays an amount of jade equal to the “repeat role cost”, according to the following table:

Role Card	Repeat Role Cost
Recruiter Card	1
Resource Card	2
Builder Card	2

He then selects an action from the selected role card, and performs that action.

Example: Charles has previously played his Builder Role Card. He plays his Taskmaster Role Card, and uses the Repeat Previous Role to pay 2 jade and perform the Build Wall action on his Builder Role Card.

Second Example. Adam has previously played his Builder Role Card. He plays his Taskmaster Role Card and moves his Taskmaster to a new province. He then pays 3 jade to pick up his Taskmaster Role Card. He then plays his Taskmaster Role Card again, and pays 2 jade to perform the Build Wall action on his Builder Role Card.

Third Example: Bill has previously played his Builder Role Card. He plays his Taskmaster Role Card, and using the Repeat Previous Role action, he pays 2 jade to perform the Build Wall action on his Builder Role Card. He then pays 3 jade to pick up his Taskmaster Role Card. He then plays his Taskmaster Role Card again, and pays 2 jade to perform the Build Wall action on his Builder Role Card again.

Emperor Blocks

The player who wins the petition of the emperor receives an emperor wall block at the start of the round. This player may place this wall block on the wall at any point during one of their three turns during the round, subject to the following restrictions:

- There must not already be a block in the location.
- If it is a level 2 block, then there must be a level 1 block directly below it.
- If it is a level 3 block, then there must be a level 2 block directly below it.
- If it is a level 4 block, then there must be a level 3 block directly below it.
- If it is a level 4 block, then it must be in one of the end columns of the province.

Placing the emperor wall block on the wall is not an action, it is done in addition to one of the player's normal actions. Furthermore, it does not cost any workers or any jade in order to place it, and it can be played in any province.

Example. Charles places the Emperor Block on level 3 of the wall. He then immediately plays his Builder Role Card, and builds one of his own blocks on level 4, directly on top of the Emperor Block he just played.



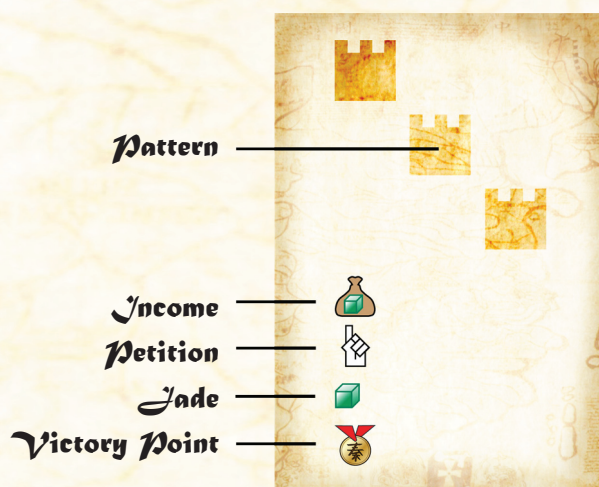
Black Player (Charles) to play

If the player fails to play the emperor wall block during one of his three turns in the current round, then they lose the wall block, and it is returned to the box. It is a legal play to select the Build Wall action to build two blocks, build one block, then place the emperor block on top of it, and then place the second block on top of the emperor block.

Favours

Players can play favour cards using the “Play a Favour Card” action on the builder role card. Favour cards that have been played are displayed on the table, and give the player who played them a combination of the following rewards:

- Additional income. During the income phase, the player receives additional income on top of the three income that they receive as standard. The amount of additional income is specified on the played favour cards.
- Additional petition. When bidding for petition, the player receives an automatic addition to his bid. The amount that is added to the bid is specified on the played favour cards.
- Additional jade. When taking the collect jade action, the player receives additional jade on top of the three jade received as standard. The amount of additional jade is specified on the played favour cards.
- Victory Points. The player scores points as specified on the played favour cards. When the player plays the favour card, he moves his score track marker along the score track by the number of spaces specified on the favour card.



The victory points on a Favour card are awarded only once when the card is played. The other effects of played favour cards are cumulative. So if a player has played two favour cards, one of which gives an additional 1 income, and the other gives an additional 3 income, then the player receives an additional 4 income, which adds to the basic income of 3 to make 7 income in total.

Mid-game scoring

Completing a row

When the active player builds the fifth and final block in one of the first three rows of the wall, the row is completed. For building the block that completes the row, the active player immediately receives a buyback chip.

As soon as the row has been completed, the player whose blocks are most common amongst those that make up the row is identified. That player is awarded a number of points according to which level the row is on, as follows:

Level	1	2	3
Points	3	6	10

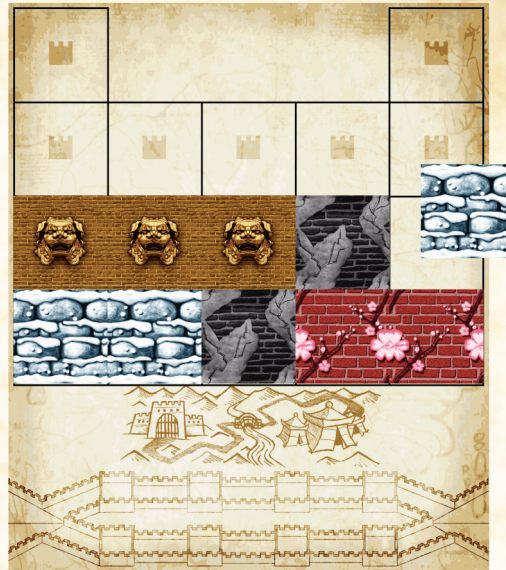
The player moves his score track marker along the score track by the number of spaces specified. If two or more players have an equal number of their blocks in the row, then all players involved in the tie score the full number of points specified in the table above. The number of emperor blocks in a row does not affect the scoring of a completed row.

Example: Adam plays the fifth block into the first row. He immediately receives a Buyback chip. He and Bill both have two blocks in the row, while Charles has one block. Adam and Bill both score three points.



Adam(Red), Bill(White), Charles(Black)

Second Example: Bill plays the fifth block into the second row. He immediately receives a Buyback chip. He and Charles have one block each in the row. The other three blocks are all Emperor Blocks. Bill and Charles each score six points.



Building a level 4 block

When the active player builds one of his blocks at level 4, he immediately receives five points. He moves his score track marker 5 spaces along the score track. Note that players do not score any points for building an emperor block at level 4.

Completing a level

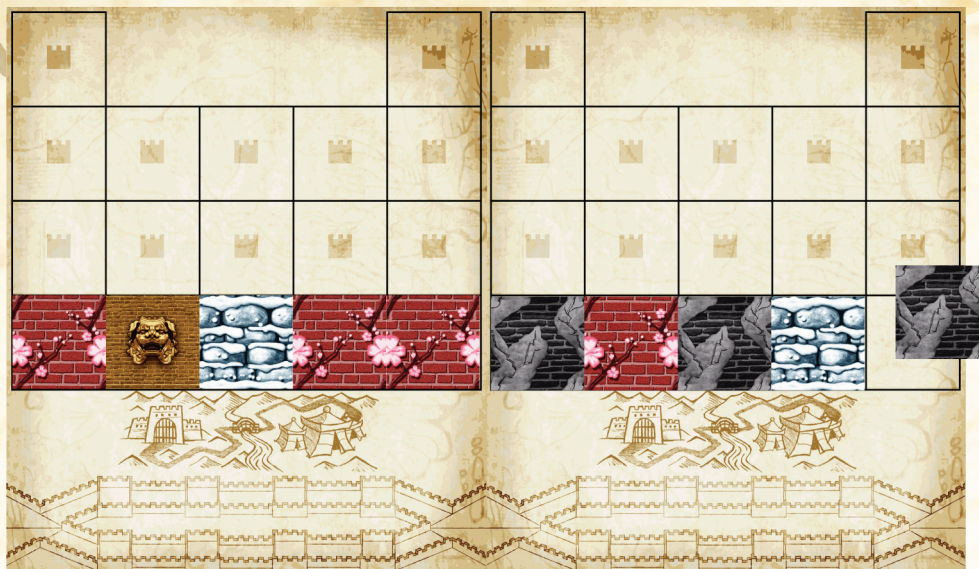
When a level of the wall has been completed across all rows, the player whose blocks are most common amongst those which make up the level is identified. That player is awarded 10 points. The player moves his score track marker 10 spaces along the score track.

If two or more players have an equal number of their blocks in the level, then all the players involved in the tie score 10 points each.

The number of emperor blocks in a level does not affect the scoring of a completed level.

Note that the completed level bonus applies to all levels of the wall, including level 4.

Example: Charles plays the last block on the first level. He immediately receives a Buyback chip, as he has completed the row. The row is then scored. Charles has three blocks in the row, while Adam and Bill have one each. Charles therefore receives three points. The whole level is then considered. Adam has four blocks in the level, Charles has three and Bill has two, so Adam receives 10 points.



Adam(Red), Bill(White), Charles(Black)

End of the Game

The game ends in one of two ways.

If a player builds the last block of the wall, then the wall is completed, and the game ends as soon as the player has finished performing their current action. The player who built the last block of the wall receives all the jade and convicts from all the prisons into their own supply.

Alternatively, if at the end of a round, there are no emperor blocks remaining in the resource stockpile, then the Mongols invade, and the game ends immediately. Thus the game is limited to between 9 and 12 rounds (depending on the number of players).

End-game scoring

When the game ends, it is recommended that the players check that their score on the score track is correct, before performing the end-of-game scoring.

If the game ends before the wall is completed, then all uncompleted rows and levels are scored as if they had been completed. See “Mid-game scoring” for details of how rows and levels are scored.

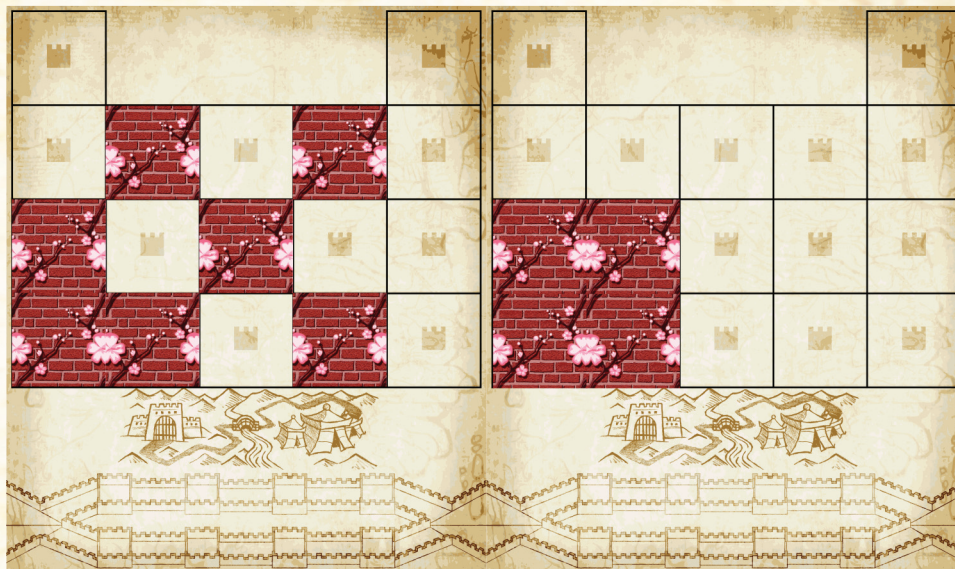
At the end of the game, players score additional points as follows:

Each player counts the number of buyback chips they have in hand. These are scored according to the following table:

Buyback chips	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
Points	0	1	3	6	10	15	21

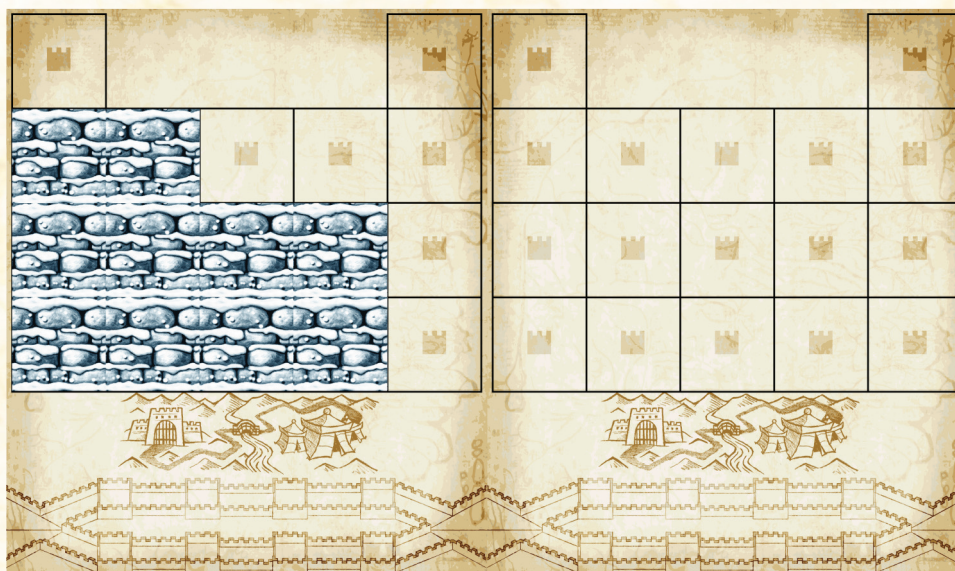
Each player counts the number of their blocks that they have built in each province. In the province in which they have built the least of their blocks, they receive five points for every one of their blocks which they have built.

Example: Adam has seven blocks in one province and four blocks in the other. He scores five points each for the four blocks in the second province – 20 points total.



Adam(Red)

Second Example: Bill has ten blocks in one province and none in the other. He scores no points for blocks in his least occupied province.



Bill(White)

Each player counts up how much jade they have in their supply. The player with the most jade receives 5 points. In the case of a tie, all players involved in the tie score 5 points.

Each player counts up how many workers (peasants and convicts) they have in their supply. The player with the most workers receives 5 points. In the case of a tie, all players involved in the tie score 5 points.

Example: Charles has six peasants and three convicts. Adam has two peasants and two convicts. Bill has one peasant and eight convicts. Charles and Bill both receive five points.

Each player moves their score track marker along the score track according to the number of points they score in each of these four categories. The player with the highest score is the winner. In the case of a tie, the winner is the player who built the most of their blocks in the wall. If it is still a tie then the game is tied.

Variants

The game can be made more friendly by having one more province board than recommended, or more cutthroat by having one less province board than recommended. However, you should not play with less than two province boards, or with more province boards than players.

Designer Notes

Huang Di came together in a way that is very unusual for me. In fact, I was not even thinking about game design when I started getting the ideas for it. I was working the night shift at my normal job in early 2005 and our floor at work has square patterns on it. On this particular night, I began thinking of the various patterns I could make with the squares. The next night, I found myself doing the same thing, and when I got home I began drawing the patterns out on graph paper and somehow felt inspired enough to base a game design around that. This is also strange because the pattern building aspect of the game is not the main feature of the game. I realize I could have chosen nearly any theme for this game such as the Great Pyramids, Roman Aqueducts, you name it. But I wanted to touch on a theme that was not used many times already by other designers. Of course, after designing Huang Di, a few other Great Wall of China themed games have been released!

Credits

The designer wishes to thank the following people for their playtesting, contributions, and/or support in this project: Lisa Johnson, Ian Johnson, Seana Miller, Dan Granquist, Ken Lawrence, Chrissy Lawrence, Jay Borden, Scott Robinson, Tony Sorrentino, Rick Goodman, Al Fitzgibbon, Phil Alberg, Dave Bernazzani, Cathie “Miss Kitty” Arcisz, Quentin Hall, Todd Hadley, Nate Jokel, Eric Yanofsky, Angelia Heroux, Jon Wandke and Kevin Goldenbogen and of course, my family. Very special thanks to Ed Carter and Cambridge Games Factory.



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