

YUAN-TI: SNAKE PEOPLE

The serpent creatures known as yuan-ti are all that remains of an ancient, decadent human empire. Ages ago their dark gods taught them profane, cannibalistic rituals to mix their flesh with that of snakes, producing a caste-based society of hybrids in which the most snake-like are the leaders and the most humanlike are spies and agents in foreign lands.

HUMANS TRANSFORMED

The people who became yuan-ti were one of the original human civilizations. Their society built great temples of stone and forged metal into armor, tools, and weapons. In their ceremonies they paid homage to the snake as the embodiment of the qualities they most appreciated. They developed a philosophy of separating emotion from intellectual pursuits, allowing them to focus their energy on personal advancement and expanding their territory. They believed themselves to be the most enlightened mortals in the world, and in their hubris they sought to become ever greater.

The serpent gods of the primordial world heeded the prayers of these people and hissed dark demands into their ears. The people tainted their souls by performing human sacrifices in the name of the gods, debased their flesh by cannibalizing their victims, and then performed a sorcerous ritual while writhing in pools filled with living snakes that enabled them to mix their flesh with that of serpents, becoming like the gods in body, thought, and emotion. Freed from the limitations of their human bodies, the yuan-ti used their new abilities to conquer new lands and expand their borders.

ONE RACE, MANY FORMS

The bodies of all yuan-ti have a mix of humanlike and snakelike parts, but the proportion varies from individual to individual. After the initial metamorphosis of the humans, their society quickly coalesced into a caste system based on how complete a person's transformation was. The vast majority of yuan-ti fall into three categories—abominations, malisons, and purebloods—while the mutated broodguards and exceedingly rare anathemas have their place in the hierarchy as well.

All yuan-ti can interbreed. Females usually lay clutches of eggs, which are stored in a common hatchery, although live births aren't uncommon. A mating between yuan-ti of different types almost always produces eggs that hatch into yuan-ti of the weaker parent, so most choose partners of the same type in the interest of maintaining the strength of their personal bloodline.

The yuan-ti have abandoned their humanity and consider non-serpentine humanoids to be lesser creatures, barely more civilized than common apes. Although some purebloods are able to reproduce with humans, most are disgusted by the idea and would do so only if seduction is necessary for a pureblood to preserve a role as a confidant or advisor in human society. The very rare offspring of such a union are always purebloods, although they may appear fully human at birth and for several years afterward.

The yuan-ti know rituals that can transform an individual into a more powerful type. The cost and time required to perform the ritual is prohibitive, and as a result most yuan-ti never get the opportunity to undergo such a transformation. Every use of the ritual must be modified to suit the individual undergoing transformation, and requires rare herbs, exotic magical substances, snakes, and one or more humans to be sacrificed and eaten as part of the procedure.

UNDERCOVER EMPIRE

The human civilization that gave rise to the yuan-ti was among the richest in the mortal world. It rapidly progressed in metalworking, using keen intellect and magic to discover the secrets of making steel. Its military shattered rival tribes and developed advanced tactics for fighting in forests and open plains.

The civilization grew into a cluster of allied city-states. Conquered neighbors were allowed to keep their leaders and culture so long as they paid tribute, swore allegiance to the victors, and incorporated their conquerors' serpent gods into their religions. These victories sent a constant influx of food, ore, and slaves back to the home cities.

The wealth of the empire allowed the ruling elite plenty of time to focus on intellectual pursuits. These nobles turned to philosophy and prayer, offering gifts of magic and animal sacrifices to their serpent gods, paying homage to the perfection of the ophidian form. The serpent gods taught the humans how to take on aspects of the snake, but the cost of the change was high, requiring many sacrifices for each person to be transformed. Entire households of slaves in one city-state were killed and eaten to create the first yuan-ti, and once the news of how to perform these rituals spread to other leaders, the call for slaves to fuel the process increased. As the serpent gods began to demand more and more sacrifices, the yuan-ti stepped up their raids on bordering settlements to meet this need.

The physical and magical prowess of the yuan-ti empire allowed the former humans to retain their holdings for several hundred years, until a combination of drought, attacks by enemies (including dragons and nagas), civil war, torpor among the serpent gods, and the development of iron weapons by some of their conquered enemies finally loosened the yuan-ti's hold over nearby lands. The serpent people withdrew to their fortified cities and underground temples, ceding the rest of their territory to their former minions. The yuan-ti crawled away and hid in a matter of weeks, all but disappearing from the world. Yuan-ti structures throughout the land were torn down to celebrate liberation from the

YE CANNOT GOAD ONE OF THE SERPENT FOLK INTO HATRED OR FEAR, OR EVOKE IN IT LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP. THEY MAY FEIGN SUCH THINGS TO COZEN YE, BUT WITHIN THEY ARE ALWAYS COLDLY, CALMLY CALCULATING.

—ELMINSTER



snake-bodied oppressors, and within a few generations the yuan-ti were all but forgotten by the new humanoid civilizations.

For over a thousand years after their empire fell, the yuan-ti remained ensconced in their hidden strongholds, biding their time until they were ready to strike again. Today, with their numbers greatly depleted and their enemies much stronger than in ages past, the yuan-ti know they can't resort to direct attacks in order to reclaim their rightful place in the world. Operating out of the subterranean ruins of their buildings in foreign lands, yuan-ti agents infiltrate enemy governments to discover weaknesses that their leaders can exploit. The yuan-ti look forward to the day when their empire rises again and spreads across the world like venom through the blood, as it once did.

Because their population is so small, the yuan-ti are aware they are vulnerable in open warfare. Instead, their current plans assume they will never rule outwardly in human society, so they gain influence by controlling enemy rulers—and those close to them—through blackmail, drugs, magic, and the subterfuge of disguised purebloods.

GODS OF THE YUAN-TI

The detached, intellectual nature of the yuan-ti doesn't lend itself to fervent or devout worship in the manner that others revere their deities. Nonetheless, they acknowledge a wide range of supernatural and divine entities. Some of these are true deities, some are primordial spirits as powerful as gods, and some are creatures of questionable origin.

In addition to the three primary deities discussed below, the yuan-ti worship over a dozen other "serpent gods"—lesser beings such as animal spirits, ascended heroes, divine servants of more powerful gods, and demon lords. Many of the cults devoted to these lesser gods are unique to a particular city, and followers of the three main yuan-ti deities usually consider these religious practices quaint rather than threatening.

DENDAR

The Night Serpent came into being before recorded history, spawned from the feverish dreams of the first intelligent creatures. She subsists and grows stronger by feeding on the fears that plague the folk of the world. Her followers believe that Dendar is a harbinger of the end of things, which will come when she amasses enough power to consume the world. Another legend concerning her speaks of an iron door to the underworld behind which she lurks; when the time is right, she will tear it down, then eat the sun, plunging the world into darkness before she finally devours it.

Yuan-ti worshipers of Dendar are led by nightmare speakers, malison warlocks that honor their deity through acts of terror and receive magical power in return. Rather than killing enemies, these followers of the Night Serpent prefer to threaten and torture them, the better to feed and strengthen the goddess. See chapter 3 of this book for more information on yuan-ti malison nightmare speakers.



CALM LONG-VIEW SCHEMERS, INNATE DECEIVERS,
AND IMMUNE TO POISON — YUAN-TI MAKE PERFECT
COURTIERS. AND, WORSE FOR THE REST OF US, RULERS.

— ELMINSTER

MERRSHAULK

Though the Master of the Pit is not conscious, neither is he entirely dormant. Mirroring the fate of yuan-ti in the world, Merrshaulk entered a deep slumber when the serpent folk left the surface and went into hiding in ages past. It is unclear if declining worship caused him to fall asleep, or if his prolonged torpor caused his worshipers to abandon him. Even in his compromised state, Merrshaulk grants spells to his clergy in response to their invocations. Rousing him for advice or direct intervention is possible, but requires many ritual murders to be performed in his name, and his return to consciousness lasts only a short time.

The leaders of Merrshaulk's worshipers, called pit masters, are malison warlocks that uphold and advance the age-old yuan-ti traditions. They sense that it has become easier to wake him in recent decades, and believe this to be a sign that he will soon fully awaken, shed his skin, and—renewed by transformation—restore the yuan-ti to their rightful place as masters of the mortal world. See chapter 3 of this book for more information on yuan-ti malison pit masters.

SSETH

In the last years before the yuan-ti empire collapsed, Sseth appeared to the serpent folk in the form of a winged yuan-ti. He promised to lead the yuan-ti away from the brink of defeat and back to the pinnacle of world domination in return for their veneration. Many of Merrshaulk's devout turned to the worship of the Sibilant Death, believing him to be an avatar of their deity. They granted him enough power to mount a brief recovery, but those actions were too little and too late to prevent the collapse of the empire. Sseth chose to rest and gather strength during the years of decline, as more and more of the yuan-ti adopted his worship.

GODS OF OTHER WORLDS

In worlds other than the Forgotten Realms, yuan-ti make pacts with deities of the pantheons presented in appendix B of the *Player's Handbook*. The following are suggested yuan-ti deities for each pantheon.

Greyhawk. Erythnul, Iuz, Tharizdun, Vecna.

Dragonlance. Chemosh, Sargonnas.

Eberron. The Fury, the Keeper, the Mockery, the Shadow, the Traveler.

Celtic. Math Mathonwy, Morrigan.

Greek. Ares, Hecate.

Egyptian. Apep, Set.

Norse. Hel, Loki.

His most devout followers, known as mind whisperers, use their god-given magic to emulate Sseth's tactics and principles. They strive to succeed by offering an alternative choice to contesting viewpoints or plans, and in so doing they exude an air of self-importance that gives them a less than savory reputation among yuan-ti that follow other gods. See chapter 3 of this book for more information on yuan-ti malison mind whisperers.

SERPENT GODS

The yuan-ti's dispassionate attitude toward religion is especially evident among the powerful yuan-ti that take one of the lesser serpent gods as an object of worship. The worshiper of a serpent god pays homage not out of respect or fear, but because it aspires to emulate the entity, beseeching it to reveal the secret of transcending mortality. Then, once armed with that knowledge, the yuan-ti sets out to supplant its deity and become a new serpent god.

The serpent gods don't wish to be brought low, or to be bled of power as Merrshaulk was, so they mollify their worshipers with pronouncements that hint at what the supplicants seek. The truth is never easy to ferret out, but rarely an exceptionally clever yuan-ti succeeds in attaining divine form and vanquishing its benefactor. This cannibalistic pressure from mortals means that the lower ranks of the serpent gods experience a change every century or so, although often it is the newest yuan-ti godling that falls prey to the next one's ambitions.



YUAN-TI RELICS

STRUCTURED SOCIETY

The goal of every yuan-ti is to transform itself into the ideal combination of snake and humanoid. This attitude is reflected in yuan-ti society by a caste system, with status predicated on where a particular form of yuan-ti lies along the ladder of transformation.

The basic form of yuan-ti society is a pyramid with abominations at the top, malisons in the middle level, and purebloods at the base. The outliers are the anathemas, the most powerful yuan-ti of all, and two castes that lie beneath all yuan-ti: broodguards and slaves.

Statistics for yuan-ti anathemas, yuan-ti broodguards, and new kinds of yuan-ti malisons appear in chapter 3. Two new malison variants are presented in the “Yuan-ti Malison Variants: Types 4 and 5” sidebar in this chapter.

YUAN-TI ANATHEMAS

The exceedingly rare yuan-ti known as anathemas look much like abominations, but larger, with clawed hands, and six snake heads sprouting from where the head should be. Each anathema is the product of a unique ritual that alters its original abomination form, increasing its size, power, and intelligence. Other yuan-ti treat anathemas like demigods, and they naturally assume a leadership position over all others in the area.

An anathema's aggressive presence brings about a transformation in a yuan-ti city, pushing it to become more warlike and expansionistic. The anathema directs the yuan-ti to wage small-scale wars on humanoids, usually through proxies such as cults and allied creatures, and uses these conflicts to gather riches and slaves until it has enough resources to establish the yuan-ti as the rulers of a region.

YUAN-TI ABOMINATIONS

Mostly ophidian, but with humanlike arms that can wield weapons and use tools, abominations closely resemble the perfect form that the serpent gods envisioned. Absent the presence of an anathema, yuan-ti abominations are the leaders in most yuan-ti cities.

YUAN-TI MALISONS

The various kinds of malisons are imperfect compared to abominations but still a step above humankind in the eyes of the serpent gods. Malisons tend to be receptive to religion, seeking insight about how they can improve toward the serpent ideal, and many of them become leaders in the worship of one of the serpent gods.

YUAN-TI PUREBLOOD

The most numerous of the yuan-ti, purebloods are also the most humanlike, exhibiting only one or two snake-like features such as slitted pupils or patches of scales on the skin.

In yuan-ti cities, purebloods are treated fairly but live in an environment where their wants and needs are eclipsed by those of the malisons and abominations.

Because purebloods can easily pass as human, their most important function is as agents of the yuan-ti in the outside world. They can live incognito among humans as diplomats, infiltrators, and spies. Because they get



FROM CALIMSHAN AND THE LAKE OF STEAM
OUT ALONG THE TRADE ROUTES TO CROSS THE
WORLD, YUAN-TI POISONS AND POTENT LIQUORS
ARE COVERTLY SOLD. BEWARE! SOME OF THE
LATTER SLOWLY AND SUBTLY BRING IMBIBERS
UNDER THE SWAY OF THE NEXT PUREBLOOD
SERPENT-SPY OR YUAN-TI MALISON TO MEET
WITH THEM UNLOOKED-FOR.

—ELMINSTER



to wield power and influence while playing such roles, some purebloods surround themselves with luxury in their human guises and then become resentful when they have to return home and live under the caste system again.

YUAN-TI BROODGUARDS

The devolved creatures known as broodguards are created by feeding humanoids a special elixir, which gives them scaly skin and a compulsion to follow orders. Because their minds are crippled by their transformation, broodguards are less useful than slaves for many tasks, but because of their unwavering loyalty they make capable guardians for yuan-ti eggs.

Broodguards are technically slaves, but because of their loyalty and the expense of the potion that creates them, they have slightly higher status than common slaves—meaning that a pureblood is more likely to give a suicidal order to a slave than to a broodguard.

SLAVES

Every yuan-ti settlement has a number of other creatures under its control, including intelligent humanoids, charmed or trained beasts, and even undead or conjured minions. Regardless of their nature, all are treated as slaves: no creature that is not a yuan-ti is fit for anything other than menial labor and subservience. Slaves that fail to follow orders or lag in their duties are dispatched or turned into broodguards.

EMOTIONLESS EVIL

During their ascension ages ago, the yuan-ti freed themselves from the yoke of their human emotions. Now they view the world from a pragmatic and dispassionate perspective. They understand emotional connections in a detached, intellectual way, and recognize that these feelings in others can be exploited through bribes, favors, or threats.

As creatures devoid of emotion, yuan-ti exhibit behavior and use tactics that exemplify that outlook (or lack of one). Whether in combat or in daily life, the following principles guide the yuan-ti in all they do.

OTHER LIVES ARE CHEAP

Yuan-ti put little value on humanoid lives, even those of their own slaves and cultists. They would poison children to carry out a threat against their parents, or turn one person into a broodguard in order to show her family the consequence of resistance. They might refrain from provoking others' feelings if doing so could adversely affect the yuan-ti's plans, but they understand humanoid psychology well enough to know that they can get away with this casual disregard for life almost anytime.

Furthermore, in the yuan-ti caste system, a greater yuan-ti's life is worth far more than a lesser one's. Weaker citizens are expected to lay down their lives to protect their betters. Leaders rely on this zealotry in their plans, and although they don't needlessly waste the lives of purebloods on futile actions, most strategies include a fallback option in which mobs of purebloods and slaves are thrown at opposing forces in the hope of allowing the malisons and abominations time to escape.

SURVIVAL FIRST

Yuan-ti are likely to retreat or flee from conflict if they don't believe they have a reasonable chance of success. This reaction isn't out of cowardice, but practicality—yuan-ti value their own lives much too highly to risk them when the odds aren't in their favor. A short retreat might be just the thing to reach a better tactical position, find allies, or to allow the yuan-ti the opportunity to study their opponents and implement better tactics. Any enemy who chases a group of fleeing yuan-ti might be on the victorious side of a rout or could be heading into a trap; if the enemy has been encountered before, it is

YUAN-TI MALISON VARIANTS: TYPES 4 AND 5

A malison is a yuan-ti that has a blend of human and serpentine features. Three different types of malisons are described in the *Monster Manual*, and two rarer types are described here. Type 4 and type 5 malisons are the lowest-ranking members of the malison caste, and neither type is venomous in its yuan-ti form.

For a type 4 or type 5 malison, use the **yuan-ti malison** stat block in the *Monster Manual*, but replace the Malison Type trait and the monster's action options with the following:

Malison Type. The yuan-ti has one of the following types:

Type 4: Human form with one or more serpentine tails

Type 5: Human form covered in scales

Actions for Type 4 or Type 5

Multiattack (Yuan-ti Form Only). The yuan-ti makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Bite (Snake Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Scimitar (Yuan-ti Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Longbow (Yuan-ti Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

likely that the yuan-ti have prepared a special ambush at the end of the pursuit.

CAPTURE, NOT KILL

The objective of the yuan-ti as a race is to conquer and enslave others; they don't espouse the sort of evil that calls for them to butcher or eradicate all who oppose them. In keeping with their goal of domination, the yuan-ti would rather capture potentially useful opponents than kill them. They use many methods for capturing enemies, such as poisoning, knocking out an opponent instead of making a killing blow, throwing nets, using magic such as *suggestion*, or restraining them in the coils of a giant snake.

To force their compliance, enemies might be brainwashed, charmed, tortured, or transformed into broodguards. Those that prove intractable still have their uses, either as sacrifices to the gods or as food.

DEPEND ON DECEIT

Yuan-ti have no sense of honorable combat. They are naturally stealthy, and if they can sneak up on enemies, either in an ambush or to murder them in their sleep, the yuan-ti will do so—and they actually prefer these tactics to open warfare. Because abominations and malisons can change into the shapes of snakes, they can keep their presence hidden and get into places their normal forms couldn't enter.

Their immunity to poison gives all yuan-ti a tactical advantage in dealing with other creatures. A pureblood serving as a food taster for a royal family could poison a meal and declare it "safe" after taking a bite.

SERPENT CULTS

Some humans believe that not only are the yuan-ti superior to humans and worthy of emulation, but they are also the blessed emissaries of the serpent gods. From these entwined beliefs are born the serpent cults, groups of devout mortals who serve the yuan-ti either directly or in foreign outposts. Fanatical in their ideals, these cultists are willing to die for the yuan-ti and their gods, whether from an enemy's weapon or at the point of a sacrificial knife.

The yuan-ti use the cults devoted to them as a steady supply of willing minions and sycophants. Many yuan-ti establish or encourage cults to gather the special herbs and magic they need to perform the ritual for evolving into a more powerful form. And just as the yuan-ti have rituals to transform their own bodies, they have a ritual that can change a human into a pureblood. They sometimes use the promise of this ritual as an enticement for power-hungry followers or a reward for their most devoted cultists.

In civilized society, cultists ingratiate themselves into the local populace, usually by promising perfection of the flesh (sometimes including the healing of afflictions), freedom from the ideas of sin and guilt, and hedonistic delights to those who join the cult. The leader of a cult is usually advised by a pureblood that relays orders and information between the cult and a yuan-ti city.

PHYSICAL VARIATIONS

No two yuan-ti look exactly the same. Both the snake-like and the humanlike portions of a yuan-ti's anatomy exhibit a wide variety of shapes and colorations. Because a yuan-ti's appearance is mostly inherited, in small settlements all the yuan-ti look somewhat alike, while larger settlements see more intermixing, which produces a wider range of results.

YUAN-TI SNAKE BODY TYPE

d20	Snake Body Shape
1–5	Thick
6–15	Normal
16–20	Sleek

YUAN-TI HUMANOID SKIN COLOR

d20	Humanoid Skin Color
1–4	Dark brown
5	Green-brown
6–9	Light brown
10–15	Medium brown
16	Pale brown
17–18	Red-brown
19–20	Yellow-brown

YUAN-TI SCALE COLOR

d100	Scale Color	d100	Scale Color
01–06	Black	49–51	Blue and gray
07–12	Black and brown	52–54	Blue and yellow
13–18	Black and green	55–60	Brown
19–23	Black and red	61–66	Brown and green
24–26	Black and white	67–73	Green
27–30	Black and yellow	74–79	Green and tan
31–36	Black, gold, and red	80–84	Green and white
37–42	Black, red, and white	85–90	Green and yellow
43–45	Blue	91–96	Red and tan
46–48	Blue and black	97–00	Albino

YUAN-TI SCALE PATTERN

d20	Scale Pattern
1–5	Mottled
6–7	Random
8–10	Reticulated
11–15	Speckled
16–20	Striped

YUAN-TI TONGUE COLOR

d6	Tongue Color
1	Black
2	Blue
3	Orange
4	Pale
5–6	Red

There are legends of certain yuan-ti infiltrating human cities and forming deadly covert societies that sell drugs and spell scrolls, blackmail merchants, and influence kings. But lacking any proof, I can't believe such tales.

—Volo

YE SHOULD.

—ELMINSTER

YUAN-TI EYE COLOR

d6	Eye Color	d6	Eye Color
1	Blue	4	Red
2	Brown	5	Tan
3	Green	6	Yellow

YUAN-TI SNAKE HEAD SHAPE

d20	Snake Head Shape
1–5	Broad and rounded
6–9	Flattened
10–11	Hooded
12–15	Slender
16–20	Triangular

TYPE 2 MALISON: ARMS

d10	Malison Type 2 Arm*
1–4	Cluster of small snakes
5–9	One large snake
10	Scaly humanoid with snake head for a hand

* Roll once for each arm.

TYPE 4 MALISON: LOWER BODY

d20	Malison Type 4 Lower Body
1–7	Human legs and large snake tail
8–10	Human legs and multiple small snake tails
11–16	Scaly human legs and large snake tail
17–20	Scaly human legs and multiple small snake tails

PUREBLOOD CHARACTERISTICS

d20	Pureblood Characteristic
1–3	Fangs
4–5	Forked tongue
6–9	Scaly arms and hands
10–11	Scaly face
12–15	Scaly torso
16–18	Serpentine eyes
19–20	Roll twice, re-rolling results of 19 or 20

UNUSUAL ABILITIES

The variety among yuan-ti doesn't end with their physical characteristics. Some of them are born with powers that are unusual or even unique among their kind. High-ranking yuan-ti might have one or more of the following abilities, either replacing or augmenting what a normal yuan-ti can do.

TRAITS

You can customize a yuan-ti by giving it one or more of the following traits.

Acid Slime (Abomination, Anathema, or Malison Only). As a bonus action, the yuan-ti can coat its body in a slimy acid that lasts for 1 minute. A creature that touches the yuan-ti, hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it, or is hit by its constrict attack takes 5 (1d10) acid damage.

Chameleon Skin. The yuan-ti has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

Shapechanger (Pureblood Only). The yuan-ti can use its action to polymorph into a Medium **giant poisonous snake**, or into a Large **constrictor snake**, or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the size change noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It doesn't change form if it dies.

Shed Skin (1/Day). The yuan-ti can shed its skin as a bonus action to free itself from a grapple, shackles, or other restraints. If the yuan-ti spends 1 minute eating its shed skin, it regains hit points equal to half its hit point maximum.

ACTION OPTIONS

The following action options are restricted to certain kinds of yuan-ti.

Bite (Pureblood Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage. If the pureblood uses Multiattack, it can make two melee attacks, but can use its bite only once.

Polymorph into Snake (Abomination or Malison Only; Recharge 6). The yuan-ti targets a creature it can see within 60 feet of it. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be transformed into a Tiny **poisonous snake**, as if affected by the *polymorph* spell. The save DC is the same as that of the yuan-ti's Innate Spellcasting ability.

Snake Antipathy (Abomination or Malison Only; Recharge 6). The yuan-ti targets a creature it can see within 60 feet of it. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or feel an intense urge to avoid snakes and snakelike creatures (including yuan-ti), as if affected by the antipathy effect of an *antipathy/sympathy* spell. The save DC is the same as that of the yuan-ti's Innate Spellcasting ability.

Sticks to Snakes (Abomination or Malison Only; Recharge 6). The yuan-ti transforms a pile of sticks, arrows, or similar-sized pieces of wood into a **swarm of poisonous snakes**. The swarm acts as an ally of the yuan-ti and obeys its spoken commands. The swarm remains for 1 minute, after which it turns back into the original materials.

ROLEPLAYING A YUAN-TI

Yuan-ti are emotionless, yet feel completely superior to humanoids, in the same way that a human can feel superior to chickens or rabbits—in a matter-of-fact, completely objective way that doesn't brook any second-guessing. To a yuan-ti, there are only three categories of creature: threat, yuan-ti, or meat. Threats are powerful creatures such as demons, dragons, and genies. Yuan-ti are any of their own kind, regardless of caste; although a rival yuan-ti might be dangerous, and a weak or dead one might be potential food, it is first and foremost one of the true people and deserving of some respect. Meat includes any creature that is neither a threat nor a yuan-ti, possibly useful for a base purpose but not worthy of other consideration.

Most yuan-ti consider it beneath themselves to speak to meat. Abominations and malisons rarely communicate directly with slaves except in emergencies (such as for giving battle orders); at other times, slaves are expected to constantly be aware of the master's mood, anticipate the master's needs, and recognize subtle gestures of hands, head, and tail that indicate commands.

Only purebloods—which walk among humanoids and therefore have to learn how to speak to them civilly—practice interacting with meat-creatures. Much of their training involves suppressing their innate annoyance at having to speak to lesser beings as though they were equals, or being obliged to kowtow to a humanoid ruler as if the pureblood were merely an advisor. Pureblood spies feel a sort of aloof contempt toward meat-creatures, but they can affect a pleasant tone, and speak to such creatures with a silver tongue that disguises their true feelings.

Under normal circumstances, yuan-ti are always calmly deferential to those of higher rank. They tend to be curt and formal with those of lower rank, for the differences between them aren't a source of anger or disgust (emotions that the yuan-ti don't feel anyway), merely a fact of the natural order, and their culture long ago realized that treating the lower castes with a measure of detached respect prevents rebellion and advances the cause of the entire race.

YUAN-TI PERSONALITY TRAITS

d8	Personality Trait
1	I see omens in every event and action. The serpent gods continue to advise us.
2	I have very high standards for food, drink, and physical pleasures.
3	I prefer to be alone rather than among other creatures, including my own kind.
4	I sometimes become consumed by philosophy.
5	I believe I am superior to others of my caste.
6	I am driven by wanderlust and want to explore lands far from our cities.
7	I am interested in modern human culture, even as primitive as it is.
8	I await the day when we again conquer lands by force, as we did in the old times.

YUAN-TI IDEALS

- | d6 | Ideal |
|----|---|
| 1 | Greed. I display my wealth as a sign of my power and prosperity. (Evil) |
| 2 | Aspiration. I strive to follow the path toward becoming an anathema. (Evil) |
| 3 | Unity. No leader shall put personal goals above those of our race. (Any) |
| 4 | Kinship. My allegiance is to my caste and my city. Other settlements can burn for all I care. (Any) |
| 5 | Inspiration. My actions set an example for the lesser castes to emulate. (Any) |
| 6 | Power. Everything I choose to do is determined by whether it will make me smarter and stronger. (Evil) |

YUAN-TI BONDS

- | d6 | Bond |
|----|--|
| 1 | I will see our empire rise again and, in so doing, win the favor of the serpent gods. |
| 2 | I am enamored with the culture and trappings of another society and wish to be part of it. |
| 3 | I respect my superiors and obey them without question. My fate is theirs to decide. |
| 4 | I have an interest in an unsuitable mate, which I can't suppress. |
| 5 | I respect and emulate a great hero or ancestor. |
| 6 | An enemy destroyed something of value to me, and I will find where it lives and kill the offender. |

YUAN-TI FLAWS

- | d6 | Flaw |
|----|--|
| 1 | I feel twinges of emotion, and it shames me that I am imperfect in this way. |
| 2 | I put too much credence in the dictates of a particular god. |
| 3 | I frequently overindulge in food and wine, and I am impaired and lethargic for days afterward. |
| 4 | I worship a forbidden god. |
| 5 | I secretly believe things would be better if I was in charge. |
| 6 | If I could get away with it, I would gladly kill and eat a superior yuan-ti. |

YUAN-TI NAMES

Yuan-ti names have meanings that have been passed down through the generations, although spellings and inflections have changed over time.

Some yuan-ti add more sibilants to their birth names to create an exaggerated hissing sound, based on one's personal preference and whether an individual's anatomy can more easily pronounce the name in this altered form. An adopted name of this sort is recognized as a variant of the birth name, rather than a unique name unto itself. A yuan-ti might refer to itself by its birth name, by its adopted name, or (especially among pure-bloods) by a name it borrows from the local populace.

The Yuan-ti Names table provides yuan-ti birth names suitable for any campaign.

YUAN-TI NAMES

d20	Name	d20	Name
1	Asutali	11	Shalkashlah
2	Eztli	12	Sisava
3	Hessatal	13	Sitlali
4	Hitotee	14	Soakosh
5	Issahu	15	Ssimalli
6	Itstli	16	Suisatal
7	Manuya	17	Talash
8	Meztli	18	Teoshi
9	Nesalli	19	Yaotal
10	Otleh	20	Zihu

YUAN-TI CITIES

Most yuan-ti cities were built during the height of their empire centuries ago. Since they no longer have the vast number of expendable slaves necessary for large work projects, the yuan-ti content themselves with maintaining these ancient places rather than building new ones for their needs. Although these sites are hundreds or even thousands of years old, they don't look or feel primitive—the yuan-ti empire was once very advanced, and although it has declined, its culture is still thriving on a smaller scale.

Because the yuan-ti were previously human, their architecture reflects human ideas about art and beauty. Over time this perspective was skewed toward the concept that the snake is the perfect form, so serpents are a common theme in their aesthetic.

The major buildings in a city usually have four sides and a sloped or staggered pyramid-like exterior. It is customary for stone buildings to have a series of tiles or carvings of snakes encircling the ground level at head height. These features are sometimes trapped or

CANNIBALISM AND SACRIFICE

The ritual that produced the first yuan-ti required the human subjects to butcher and eat their human slaves and prisoners. This act of cannibalism had several ramifications. It broke a long-standing taboo among civilized humanoids and set the yuan-ti apart from other civilizations as creatures not beholden to moral values. It corrupted their flesh, making the yuan-ti receptive to dark magic. It emulated the dispassionate viewpoint of the reptilian mind, a trait the yuan-ti admired.

Today, cannibalism is practiced by the most fervent of yuan-ti cultists, including those who aspire to transform into yuan-ti themselves. In yuan-ti cities, the activity persists in the form of human sacrifice—not strictly cannibalism anymore, but still serving as a repudiation of what it is to be human and a glorification of what it is to be yuan-ti.

Yuan-ti don't have a taboo against eating their own kind; a starving yuan-ti would kill and eat a lesser without a second thought, and a group of them would choose the weakest among them to be killed and eaten. Under normal circumstances, however, they bury or cremate their dead rather than eating them, but a great hero or someone of status might be ritually consumed as a form of tribute.



magically warded to prevent anyone from climbing the building's exterior. Interior walls usually have floor-level holes or tunnels that a Medium or Large snake could pass through, allowing the yuan-ti's serpentine pets, as well as abominations and malisons in snake form, to bypass human-style doors for convenience or in order to respond quickly to invaders. In well-traveled areas, ramps replace stairs, making it easier to snake-bodied yuan-ti to move between levels.

A yuan-ti settlement usually has a paved plaza, and major roads are also paved. Fountains, gardens, and carved, freestanding columns are common elements. Six-foot-high walls high divide the community into city blocks or districts, with open arches allowing traffic to pass through.

Yuan-ti lairs in human settlements are nothing like the accommodations in their own cities. Because these locations are used mainly by humanoid purebloods and cultists (or were built by humanoids and taken over by yuan-ti), stairs and humanoid architecture are the norm. Each of these sites resembles the headquarters of a spy ring, a thieves' guild, or a hedonistic cult rather than the outpost of an evil empire bent on cannibalism and world domination, but it usually has a sacrificial slab tucked away in a corner for special events.

Particularly in their cities, yuan-ti rely on poison traps to keep intruders, spies, and rebellious slaves out of sensitive areas. Traps are commonly placed on door locks, chests, and fake objects designed to attract looters. One insidious delivery method uses blocks of special incense to fill a room with poisonous faint smoke that disguises the presence of the poison until it takes effect.

PYRAMID TEMPLE

In a typical yuan-ti city, one of the busiest and most prominent buildings is the temple complex that houses yuan-ti and their followers while it provides facilities for worship, sacrifice, and all the other hallmarks of daily life. The accompanying map is an example of such a location.

CULTIST LEVEL

The lowest level of the temple includes sleeping and living quarters for favored or high-ranking cultists, as well as a shrine and a separate temple where the cultists can conduct their own ceremonies. The area has two ground-level entrances that are always well concealed and usually trapped, plus a guard room nearby that offers additional security.

PUREBLOOD LEVEL

Beginning with the second level, the accommodations in the rest of the temple are meant for yuan-ti only, and access is limited accordingly. Purebloods live and work on this tier, which features cages for slaves, special quarters for the current slave master, and a centrally located torture chamber. A pair of staircases offer access to the next level up.

ABOMINATION LEVEL

The yuan-ti at the top of the social hierarchy reside in the most insulted level of the pyramid, within quick

YUAN-TI TEMPLE

LEVEL 5: TEMPLE MOUNT



LEVEL 3: ABOMINATION LEVEL



LEVEL 2: PUREBLOOD LEVEL



LEVEL 4: MALISON LEVEL



SIDE VIEW



- LEVEL 5
- LEVEL 4
- LEVEL 3
- LEVEL 2
- LEVEL 1



LEVEL 1: CULTIST LEVEL

□ = 10 FEET

striking distance of the levels above and below. On this level, substantially sized quarters for abominations are laid around the perimeter of the temple's largest chamber, a hall where the entire population of the place can assemble.

MALISON LEVEL

Of all yuan-ti, the malisons have the strongest proclivity for worship of their deities. As such, they occupy the uppermost residential level in the pyramid, one step below the mount. This level contains a library where the yuan-ti store the knowledge of their transformation rituals, and a chamber where those rituals are performed.

TEMPLE MOUNT

At the apex of the pyramid, reachable by ascending the exterior steps from ground level but not through an interior staircase, is a plateau surrounded by viewing areas. The center holds an elaborately decorated altar, where many a sacrifice meets its end as yuan-ti witnesses pay homage to their gods.

ALLIES AND MINIONS

Yuan-ti have been controlling and manipulating lesser creatures for hundreds of years. They enslave beasts and intelligent creatures to serve them and guard their homes, and they blackmail, enchant, or enthrall others to be their agents in humanoid lands.

RANDOM YUAN-TI SERVANTS

Yuan-ti employ a variety of creatures as spies and protectors. The Yuan-ti Agents table lists groups of creatures that work for the yuan-ti, representing their masters' interests. Agents of the serpent folk might roam the countryside on a specific mission or operate secretly inside a humanoid community. The Yuan-ti Protectors table includes creatures that serve as guardians either within a yuan-ti city or in a yuan-ti hideout inside a humanoid city.

YUAN-TI AGENTS

d100	Agents	d100	Agents
01–20	4d6 cultists	51–60	1d4 nobles
21–30	2d6 cult fanatics	61–72	1d4 priests
31–34	2d4 doppelgangers	73–86	2d6 scouts
35–50	2d10 guards	87–00	1d4 spies

YUAN-TI PROTECTORS

d100	Protector(s)
01–10	1d3 bandit captains and 3d10 bandits
11–12	1d6 basilisks
13–18	4d6 constrictor snakes
19–26	1d6 cult fanatics and 4d10 cultists
27–28	3d10 flying snakes
29–35	3d6 giant constrictor snakes
36–45	3d6 giant poisonous snakes
46–50	2d6 gladiators
51–55	2d6 guards
56–58	1d2 hydras
59–60	1d3 medusas
61	2d6 mummies*
62–63	6d10 poisonous snakes
64–68	2d6 priests
69–70	4d10 skeletons
71	1d2 stone golems
72–81	3d6 swarms of poisonous snakes
82–91	4d10 tribal warriors
92–97	2d8 veterans
98–00	4d8 zombies

* The mummies are the undead remains of yuan-ti malisons or purebloods. Each has the statistics of a normal mummy.



The pyramids, plazas, and fountains were all made of stone and decorated with snake carvings. All of it felt old—as old as an elven city—and foreboding in its strange beauty.

—Volo