

= Liu Kang =

Liu Kang (Chinese : 刘康 ; pinyin : Liú Kāng) is a fictional character from the Mortal Kombat fighting game series from Midway Games , introduced as one of the original seven player characters in the 1992 first game as a Shaolin monk who enters the Mortal Kombat tournament to save Earthrealm (Earth) . Since his victory in the tournament , Liu Kang becomes the Mortal Kombat series ' hero as the champion and chief defender of Earthrealm guided by his mentor , the thunder god Raiden . He also becomes romantically involved with Princess Kitana , the adopted daughter of evil Outworld emperor named Shao Kahn .

Designed with special moves intended to be easier to perform than the moves of other characters , Liu Kang has appeared in many of the Mortal Kombat fighting installments , in addition to starring with Kung Lao as the title characters of the action @-@ adventure game Mortal Kombat : Shaolin Monks , and being among the eleven series characters representing the franchise in the crossover game Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe . Liu Kang has extensively featured in alternate Mortal Kombat media and official merchandise , serving as the primary protagonist of the two feature @-@ length films and the Malibu Comics comic book adaptations , in addition to supporting roles in other media such as the 1995 Mortal Kombat novel and the animated series Mortal Kombat : Defenders of the Realm . Critical and general reception of the character has been mainly favorable , although various aspects have been criticized .

= = Appearances = =

= = = In video games = = =

Introduced in the first Mortal Kombat game as a Chinese Shaolin Kung Fu fighting monk , Liu Kang 's main fighting style is Jeet Kune Do and he has experience with Kung Fu . He enters the tenth Mortal Kombat tournament in order to protect Earthrealm from being destroyed after having lost the previous nine tournaments . He defeats Grand Champion Goro and the tournament host , the nefarious sorcerer Shang Tsung , and emerges as the new Mortal Kombat champion . In the 1993 sequel Mortal Kombat II , Liu Kang finds many of his Shaolin brethren killed in a vicious attack by a horde of nomadic mutants led by Baraka under orders from the evil Outworld emperor Shao Kahn , Shang Tsung 's master . Enraged , Liu Kang decides to travel to Outworld to seek revenge , backed by friend and fellow Shaolin Kung Lao . At the tournament , Liu Kang fights Shao Kahn , eventually overpowering the emperor . In Mortal Kombat 3 (1995) , Liu Kang and his friends fight against Shao Kahn 's extermination squad which invaded Earthrealm . He once again defeats Shao Kahn , causing him and his forces to retreat back to Outworld .

In the events of Mortal Kombat 4 (1997) , Liu Kang discovers that his lover and ally , Princess Kitana , has been captured by the disgraced Elder God Shinnok 's forces , and begins gathering Earth 's warriors to defeat him . Liu Kang confronts Shinnok and once again emerges victorious with Kitana and her people having survived to the attack , but he is unable to commit himself to a relationship due to his duty as Earthrealm 's champion while Kitana has to remain in Outworld to rule her kingdom .

Liu Kang becomes unplayable for the first and only time in the Mortal Kombat series in 2002 's Mortal Kombat : Deadly Alliance , in which the titular partnership of Shang Tsung and fellow sorcerer Quan Chi join forces to kill him in the game 's introductory sequence . In the events of Mortal Kombat : Deception (2004) , an unknown party reanimates Liu Kang 's corpse and sends it on a murderous rampage , causing Liu Kang 's soul to attempt to control it . He returns as a playable character in this game , albeit in undead form and as a secret character that can only be unlocked by completing the game 's Konquest Mode . His spirit enlists the reformed ninja Ermac to try to save Kitana and his Earthrealm allies ? Johnny Cage , Jax , Sonya and Kung Lao ? who had all been killed by the Deadly Alliance and then resurrected by the Dragon King Onaga for use as his slaves . Though they successfully accomplish this task , Liu Kang is still unable to fully regain control of his

body in Mortal Kombat : Armageddon (2006) , where he is playable along with the entire series roster and in which it is revealed that Raiden had revived Liu Kang 's corpse in Deception . Liu Kang 's bond with Kitana had succeeded in keeping his power in check , with Nightwolf then assuming her position as Liu Kang 's " spiritual anchor " in attempt to find a way to reunite his body and soul , which he accomplishes in his ending . Liu Kang was among the many characters who were not given a biography for Armageddon , while in his own noncanonical in @-@ game ending , his body and soul reunite on their own before he confronts Raiden and defeats him in combat to become Earthrealm 's new protector .

Along with Kung Lao , Liu Kang is the lead character in the 2005 spinoff action @-@ adventure game Mortal Kombat : Shaolin Monks . The game is a retelling of the storyline of the events leading up to Mortal Kombat II , and features the two Shaolin monks traveling to Outworld to find and defeat Shang Tsung , later ending in a fight with Shao Kahn and rescuing Kitana along the way . He is among the eleven characters representing the Mortal Kombat franchise in the 2008 crossover title Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe , which features fights between characters from the Mortal Kombat and the DC Comics universes . In this game , Liu Kang appears as the protagonist of the first chapter of the Mortal Kombat story mode . Tobias said that the fight he expected to see in the game was between Liu Kang and Batman as he noted their back @-@ stories to be very similar , due to fact , both Liu Kang and Batman are fought in Raiden and Superman 's chapters respectively , trying to snap their rage influenced respective leaders back to their sense from killing the leader 's respective arch @-@ enemies , Lex Luthor and Shang Tsung , reminding them that Dark Kahn is their true enemy .

In the 2011 Mortal Kombat reboot video game , Liu Kang reprises his role from the first three tournaments as one of Raiden 's chosen warriors . Raiden , who has visions from the future in which Shao Kahn remained as the last warrior , believes that Liu Kang is the warrior which his future self chose as the savior . As in the first game , Liu Kang succeeds in defeating Goro and Shang Tsung , though Raiden 's amulet continues to crack , unchanging the future .

During the second tournament , Liu Kang meets Kitana , and the two engage romantically with each other in this timeline too . It is during this tournament that Kang begins to doubt Raiden 's visions after he ordered him and Kung Lao not to rescue Kitana , and when Lao is killed by Shao Kahn . He seemingly kills Shao Kahn , and avenges his fallen friend . However , Kahn survives , and begins plotting to invade Earthrealm .

When Shao Kahn is preparing to invade Earthrealm during the third game 's events , Liu Kang is among Earthrealm 's protectors , and notices Raiden 's futile attempts to alter the future . He and Raiden visit the Elder Gods in order to put a stop to Kahn 's plan , but refuse to intervene , stating that Kahn 's invasion is not a violation of Mortal Kombat , but the merging of Earthrealm and Outworld is . When they return , nearly all of their allies are dead , murdered by a soul @-@ infused Sindel , and Liu Kang rushes to Kitana , only for her to die in his arms . This , coupled with Raiden 's failed attempts in changing the future , and his plan to form an alliance with the Netherrealm , causes Kang to deem Raiden insane , and decides to take on Shao Kahn alone . He arrives as Kahn enters Earthrealm , but Raiden attempts to stop him as he realized Kahn had to win and merge the realms in order to avoid the events of the future . Having enough of Raiden 's continued mistakes , the two fight , but Kang is defeated . As he attempts to shoot a fireball at Raiden , the thunder god uses his lightning to protect him , inadvertently electrocuting Liu Kang , much to Raiden 's horror . Rushing to his burnt body , Raiden pleads for his forgiveness , but Kang coldly says to the Thunder God : " You ... have killed us ... all ... " and dies . After Raiden defeats Shao Kahn with the help of the Elder Gods , and thus changing the future , he and the surviving warriors , Johnny Cage and Sonya Blade , leave and begin the restoration of Earthrealm , and he takes Kang 's body with him .

Liu Kang returns in Mortal Kombat X. In the game 's Story Mode , he was resurrected by Quan Chi and now serves him as one of the revenants until Sub @-@ Zero , Scorpion and Jax are revived . He fights both Jax and Raiden in Story Mode , which he blames Raiden for his death . At the end of the story mode , he and Kitana become the new rulers of the Netherrealm due to Quan Chi 's death and Shinnok 's defeat . A now darker Raiden brings them Shinnok 's disembodied head as a

warning for them not to attack Earthrealm .

===== Design =====

Liu Kang was originally going to be a Japanese character called Minamoto Yoshitsune , but Mortal Kombat co @-@ creator and character designer John Tobias stated that the staff could not " deal with the name . " According to Tobias , Liu Kang " was originally going to be a traditional monk ? bald and in robes ? but he wound up resembling Bruce Lee . " As stated on his Mortal Kombat : Armageddon bio card , Ed Boon mentioned that Liu Kang was designed to be the most easily " accessible " character , meaning that both casual and experienced gamers could play as him with little difficulty . According to Tobias , Liu Kang was purposely the only character that voiced his finishing move in the original game , and was " the best " in the first sequel . Liu Kang was the only character in the first game whose finishing move (Fatality) did not explicitly murder his opponent , and also without the background dimming . This was because Liu Kang was depicted therein as a Shaolin monk , who in general have strict beliefs regarding killing and murder . However , starting with Mortal Kombat II , he was given gory Fatalities as he was thereafter depicted as a renegade monk who decided to grow his hair back , and who had " strong Shaolin beliefs , but was no longer a part of the Shaolin monks . " In response to rumors that Liu Kang would die in Mortal Kombat II and therefore not make it into Mortal Kombat 3 , Boon said , " It 'd be like doing part three of Star Wars and not having Luke Skywalker in there . You don 't do that . " His eventual death caused Dan Forden , the music composer of the series , to make a " funeral song " for Liu Kang as he felt saddened for his death . The track titled " Liu Kang 's Tomb " would be used in Mortal Kombat : Deception in the arena that shows his tomb .

Liu Kang was played by Ho Sung Pak in the first two games , and John Tobias stated in an interview that he originally intended for the character to be a traditional bald monk , but the actor refused to shave his head . In the first game , Liu Kang was modeled after Bruce Lee , as he had short hair and went shirtless , with a threadbare outfit of only black pants and white shoes . In Mortal Kombat II , his outfit was enhanced with red stripes , and now included a red headband , black shoes , and studded wristguards (the intro of MKII shows the younger version of the character defeating Shang Tsung in the background , while the updated character is in the foreground) . In Mortal Kombat 3 , his hair was considerably longer , with the only alteration to his outfit being thin black leg strips wrapped above his ankles in order to give him a " sleeker " look for the game . He was given a red tank top in addition to his usual costume in Mortal Kombat 4 , but his alternate outfit was blue and featured him shirtless again . His wardrobe from the third game was carried over into Deception and Armageddon , but due to his resurrection , his skin was ash gray , and he wore hooked chains around his wrists . This form is also known by fans and Mortal Kombat producer Shaun Himmerick as " Zombie Liu Kang " . Nevertheless , his alternate outfit for both games featured him as a living person in order to contrast his undead form . In Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe , he sported a slightly altered version of his third costume , in addition to a championship belt adorned with the Mortal Kombat dragon emblem . Although Liu Kang 's design in Mortal Kombat : Shaolin Monks remains similar to his Mortal Kombat II one , Himmerick said that it was the most revised one from the game , along with Kung Lao 's .

===== Gameplay =====

Liu Kang specializes in kicks , with his most common move being flying across the screen and connect with a kick to the opponent 's torso . Another such move is the " Bicycle Kick " in which Liu Kang flies across the screen with a series of multiple kicks to the opponent 's torso resembling pedaling a bicycle , hence the name . A different kind of his signature abilities is the " Dragon Fire " : with it Liu Kang sends a fiery flame in the shape of a Chinese dragon across the screen out of his hands at his opponent . After Mortal Kombat II , he gains the ability to perform this while crouching and in the air , same for Deception and Armageddon . The developers made Liu Kang immediately selectable in Mortal Kombat : Unchained , the PlayStation Portable port of Deception , as they noted

that unlocking him in Deception had proved difficult .

Liu Kang 's first finishing move is the Fatality " Shaolin Uppercut " ; he performs a butterfly kick (often mistaken for a cartwheel) on his opponent , before hitting an uppercut that knocks them into the air for several seconds . In Mortal Kombat : Shaolin Monks , there were two versions ; one where the victim explodes to pieces upon impact and the original , in which the opponent is torn to pieces upon falling to the ground . In another signature Fatality , he morphs into a large dragon , chomping the upper body of his opponent . This Fatality was turned into an Animality in Mortal Kombat 3 and back into a normal Fatality in Mortal Kombat 4 . In the Game Boy and Game Gear versions of Mortal Kombat II , the dragon torches the opponent with fire instead . The series ' composer and co @-@ designer John Vogel noted it to be his favorite Fatality due to how much Liu Kang 's appearance changes . Another famous Fatality of Liu Kang has him vanish and a Mortal Kombat arcade game machine drop down and crush his opponent . According to GameSpy 's MK2011 walkthrough , Liu Kang " inflicts better damage " than Kung Lao " by jumping around like a lunatic and kicking the crap out of everything he sees . "

= = = Other appearances = = =

Liu Kang was the hero of the comic book adaptation of the Mortal Kombat series Malibu Comics . In the first miniseries , Blood and Thunder , his backstory was mostly kept intact as a Shaolin monk out to restore the tournament to their righteous owners , with the only difference being that he was not the chosen one to defeat Goro , which instead fell on twin monk brothers named Sing and Sang , two original characters created specifically for the comics ; after they are killed by Goro in the third issue , Liu Kang becomes the Shaolin 's only hope in defeating Shang Tsung . The following miniseries , Battlewave , stated that Liu Kang won the first tournament after defeating Goro , which never appeared in the first miniseries . He returns to his normal life as an architect in Chicago , having left the Order of Light before the events of the first series . However , he suffers from constant attacks by an unknown force of ninjas and later receives help from Johnny Cage 's bodyguard Bo when Goro ambushes him in an office building . Eventually he decides to travel to Outworld , realizing that he cannot avoid Mortal Kombat .

Liu Kang is the primary hero of both Mortal Kombat movies , where he is portrayed by Robin Shou . Director Paul W. S. Anderson wanted Liu Kang 's character to be " really engaging " and chose Shou , noting his skills with martial arts . In the first film , he takes part in the tournament out of guilt over his brother 's death at the hands of Shang Tsung (portrayed by Cary @-@ Hiroyuki Tagawa) , and defeats Tsung in the final battle . As a result of the film 's style the relationship between Liu Kang and Kitana is more of a metaphysical than a romantic nature . Shou , along with Talisa Soto (Kitana) , was one of only two actors to reprise their roles in the sequel , Mortal Kombat : Annihilation (Keith Cooke , who played Reptile , returned as well , but as the new Sub @-@ Zero) . In the sequel , Liu Kang joins the Earthrealm warriors to stop Shao Kahn 's menace . In the animated film Mortal Kombat : The Journey Begins , serving as a prequel to the first film , Liu Kang appears as one of the main characters .

Liu Kang is also one of the lead characters in the 1996 animated series Mortal Kombat : Defenders of the Realm , voiced by Brian Tochi . He is not the protagonist therein as opposed to the game storyline , instead sharing this role with several other Earthrealm heroes .

Liu Kang appears in the 2013 's second season of the web series Mortal Kombat : Legacy , portrayed by Brian Tee . Liu Kang in Legacy is portrayed as an anti @-@ hero and fighting on the side of Outworld rather than that of Earthrealm in the web series . In this version , he is shown to have left a monastery to live a normal life working at a diner with a fiancée . After watching a pair of thieves kill her in a robbery attempt , he becomes consumed with anger and revenge , and further distances himself from Kung Lao and the ideals that were taught to him . After working as a freelance assassin for a few years , he is approached by Shang Tsung , who convinces him that humanity is not worth protecting and asks him to join the realm of Outworld in the upcoming Mortal Kombat tournament , which he agrees to . During the tournament , he easily subdues Johnny Cage and Kurtis Stryker before being confronted by Kung Lao , who is surprised at his old friend 's change

of allegiance .

In 1996 , Toy Island published a Liu Kang action figure which had a white shirt . Two Liu Kang action figures from Shaolin Monks were released by Jazwares . Apart from being flexible , both figures included different types of weapons such as swords and axes .

= = Reception = =

The character has received mostly very positive response by gaming publications . His relation with Kitana was ranked fourth in IGN 's list of best video game couples in 2006 . GameSpot featured him in their 2009 poll for the title of " All Time Greatest Game Hero " , in which he lost to Yoshi . UGO Networks ranked him as 94th on the 2008 list of top heroes of all time , noting his role in the Mortal Kombat series as well as character depth . In 2012 , GamesRadar ranked him as 51st " most memorable , influential , and badass " protagonist in games , adding that while " Sub @-@ Zero and Scorpion may get most of the fanfare " , Liu Kang " can shoot fireballs , whoops and hollers just like Bruce Lee , and pioneered the Animality with his dragon @-@ transformation fatality--it ? s no wonder that Liu Kang ? s the chosen champion of Earthrealm . " In 2014 , Jack Pooley of What Culture ranked him as the second greatest ever fighting game character .

Like all the characters from Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe , Liu Kang was selected to be a playable character based on his popularity . Jesse Schedeen of IGN said that " it just wouldn 't be right having a game without [Liu Kang] , " noting him to be as fierce as the DC Universe characters in this game . In 2010 , GamePlayBook ranked Liu Kang as the second best Mortal Kombat character , commenting that " his nimbleness and fighting expertise make him an ideal pick " and how he is as good as zombie as when he was alive . In 2011 , Bright Hub ranked Liu Kang as the second best character in the series . In UGO 's 2012 list of top Mortal Kombat characters , Liu Kang was given first place . In 2013 , he was ranked as the fifth @-@ top Mortal Kombat character by Jon Hamlin of The Game Scouts for his popularity and " being incredibly important to the Mortal Kombat universe . " That same year , the readers of Dorkly voted him the series ' sixth greatest character .

Upon his death in Deadly Alliance , IGN 's Jeremy Dunham noted that Liu Kang was killed as the series needed " ' starting over ' mentality " , as he regarded Liu Kang as the series ' strongest character . Complex remarked that the Mortal Kombat developers " finally found their groove again with Deadly Alliance , which began by snapping Liu Kang 's neck . " Game Informer listed his death in their article about " characters that died under our watch " calling it a " shock " as Liu Kang was stated to be one of the " most loved " characters from the series .

His redesign in Mortal Kombat : Deception was praised by GameSpot for being one of the best ones from the title , and was featured in GamesRadar 's list of the " greatest zombie triumphs " in 2009 , but was also ranked as the ninth @-@ worst Mortal Kombat character by ScrewAttack in 2011 . Additionally , GamesRadar used Liu Kang as an example of a stereotype of gaming heroes who reveal an evil alter ego that ruins the character 's appealing traits , and considered him to be " a little like the Shaolin version of Goku , in that he 's saved his world countless times and come back from the dead even more frequently . " GamesRadar featured him the article about " kickass Bruce Lee clones " citing his similarities with Bruce Lee and with one of his shouts featured in famous quotes .

= = = Gameplay and finishing moves = = =

Liu Kang 's famous finishing move of turning into a dragon was ranked by ScrewAttack as the second best in the series , referred to as the most iconic Fatality in Mortal Kombat II , but his cartwheel Fatality from the original Mortal Kombat was ranked by ScrewAttack as the second worst in the series . Liu Kang 's dragon Fatality has also been listed as one of the best Fatalities from the series by both Game Informer and UGO in 2010 , as well as by Complex in 2013 . On the other hand , his Fatality in which he throws a Mortal Kombat arcade were pointed by both Game Informer and GamePro as one of the worst from the series , even as GamesRadar listed it among the reasons of Liu Kang being " boss " .

Some video game publications criticized his gameplay and shouts while others noted him to be entertaining . IGN 's Douglas Perry wrote that he preferred Liu Kang over Kung Lao as a playable character in Shaolin Monks because of his " intuitive fighting moves , " adding that his shouts were " annoying " yet " strangely pleasing . " GameDaily also complained about his voice , saying that " Liu Kang screams out like a chicken , " and GamesRadar wrote that " the strange squeals he emits during his trademark Bicycle Kick move are unforgettable . "