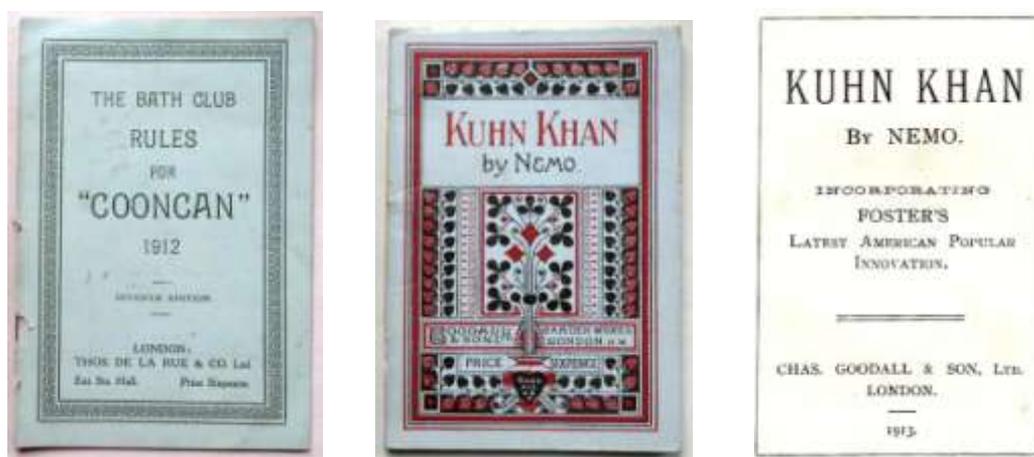


Kuhn Khan

By Tony Hall

There appears to be little information available about the early twentieth century card game Kuhn Kahn. It first appears in this form in 1912 – with a variety of sets produced by Goodall & Son accompanied by a booklet of instructions by “Nemo”. Nemo is less than helpful in identifying the origins of this rummy-style game, launching as he does immediately into a set of formal rules for play.

According to Wikipedia the game Conquian was an ancient game from Spain and/or Mexico. It was first described as Coon Can in 1887 and then in detail in R. F. Foster's Hoyle in 1897. I have a mini-book published by De La Rue in 1912 with the title The Bath Club Rules for “COONCAN” (seventh edition). This suggests the existence of six other editions in earlier times but I have so far been unable to trace them.



It is difficult not to assume that Nemo (whoever he was¹), through the good offices of Goodall & Son, remarketed this game under the newly spelt title Kuhn Kahn to give it a more exotic flavour.

I own several versions of the Nemo booklet published in 1912 (one with dark green hard cover) and 1913 respectively and have seen a third from 1913 “incorporating FOSTER’S latest American Popular Innovation”, whatever that might be! The game was advertised in Goodall mini-books from 1912 until 1922 (soon after Goodall was taken over by De La Rue) but I can find no later references.



¹ Nemo is the one nom de plume from the Goodall archive that M. H. Goodall does not reveal in his excellent account of his family history: The Family & the Firm, 1820-1922.

Michael Goodall (Page 36) pictures a version of the Nemo booklet entitled “Kuhn Kahn or Rum” but which I have not yet found.

It is possible that Kuhn Kahn was not particularly popular in an already over-crowded games market. One reason for its lack of popularity might be that it was designed to be played by 3 – 6 players! Odd when even four-person games were being amended to be playable by two!

I have three sets and have so far been unable to trace any variants of these, although they were produced in a variety of colours.

My first set is pictured in Mike Goodall’s book (see Page 52).



This is a textured cardboard box in green (although I have also seen them in blue and brown) comprising the basic Nemo booklet, scoring pad and two packs of cards. The writing of the name Kuhn Khan on the box is identical in all three boxes.



Interestingly, the cards in this version are not from Goodall but are Crown Playing Cards from De La Rue. They are of precisely the right vintage (early 1920s), they incorporate the modified Goodall Ace of spades and joker, so it is possible – even probable - that this set was issued with these cards soon after the Goodall takeover by De La Rue, and not long before production of this game ceased.

My second box is an up-market version from Goodall comprising a green “leatherette” case with brass fitting and green silk interior, a hard covered instruction booklet by “Nemo” (1912), two blocks of score sheets with pencils, and two packs of “Society” playing cards.



This version, which is obviously “right” and complete, does not feature amongst the illustrations in Michael Goodall’s book.

I have only recently acquired my third set. It is obviously from Goodall - Goodall cards and booklet, and same cover design, but a different size and shape to those above. As can be seen from the relative size of the booklet, the cards are medium-sized patience-style cards and the folding score pads are similarly reduced to half the size of the earlier ones.



It is possible, given that I can find no advertisement for Kuhn Kahn after 1922 that this version of the game was no longer promoted once Goodall & Son went out of business in that year, and after De La Rue decided which of the Goodall products to continue to promote. If anyone has more information about the game or it's presentation, I would be interested to hear.