Legend of the Five Rings

THE ATLAS OF RokuGan





The Atlas of Rokugan

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Introduction

As she approached the High House of Light, Togashi Minami's breath became heavier, the stinging cold air of the mountains worsening her fatigue. Still, when she reached top of the stairs and the massive gates of the palace, she could not help but smile. She had been away for more than fifteen years, yet the High House of Light remained the same.

A monk sat in the middle of the main courtyard, meditating, seemingly oblivious to those around him. "Hikaru-san," she said, "you were here when I left, in this exact spot. How odd is it to find you in the same spot when I return."

The monk opened his eyes. "Not odd at all," he said. "I meditate here every day."

"But when did you return to the High House of Light?"

"Return? I never left our home."

Minami blinked. "You told me we would both go on a journey! I traveled the whole Empire in search of knowledge and enlightenment. I thought you were going to do the same."

"So did I," Hikaru replied. "I've been on a journey ever since you left. Only mine didn't take my body any farther than here."

Minami sighed. "Hikaru-san, I understand the journey of the soul... believe me, I do. I meditated almost every day during my travels. But there is a world out there which is more splendid and more astonishing than anything hidden in the corners of our own mind. It has so many lessons to teach us."

"Does it?" Togashi Hikaru cocked his head to one side. "Tell me more about this world of yours."

"I have seen all the provinces of our clan," Minami said eagerly. "I have seen how other samurai follow our ways without forsaking their status. I have prayed with the shugenja of the Phoenix Clan, imploring the Fortunes with words older than the Empire itself. I have seen the beauty of the Crane lands, where a single snowflake is a more valued treasure than gold. I have sailed the ocean to reach the Mantis isles, a place so full of life it seems as if the soil itself is growing. I have stood with the Crab on the Wall, contemplating the darkness which threatens to swallow us all. I have learned of deception from the Scorpion, who know all truth is illusion. I have seen the mighty armies of the Lion, where samurai abandon themselves to a cause greater than themselves. I have listened to the Unicorn tell their tales of lands even farther away, the lands of the gaijin. I have worked the land itself side by side with peasants, for whom clans and families are as distant as clouds in the skies."

Hikaru smiled warmly. "Thank you, Minami-san. You may tell me more of these experiences later, if you wish. However... do you know what is over there?" He pointed to a distant corner of the great palace's courtyard, shadowed by the surrounding temples.

"I do not," Minami answered.

"Me neither. Shall we find out together?"

Welcome to the Atlas of Rokugan

Welcome to the Atlas of Rokugan.

This is a project which has been long in the making. Maps have been published for the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG* before – maps of castles and provinces, maps of the Empire itself – but they are scattered across dozens of books published over the course of nearly twenty years. For anyone coming into the world of L5R today, tracking down these scattered maps can be a nightmare; the game has been crying out for a single book which would compile all of this information into one place.

As if that were not enough, the maps and their associated descriptions were made at different times and by different creatives teams working on different editions of the L5R RPG. Inevitably, all manner of inconsistencies and outright mistakes have crept into the depiction of the Empire's lands and strongholds. What happened to Shiro Gisu or Garden Under Shadow City, both described in the first edition of the L5R RPG and never mentioned since? Why did the Valley of the Centipede move hundreds of miles between the first edition of the game and the second edition? Where are Toshi Aitate and the lands of the Monkey Clan?

Now, at last, all questions will be answered and all discrepancies resolved. The Atlas of Rokugan has been a monumental project, as much a labor of love as a commercial work; we've poured our hearts and souls into it. We hope it shows in the finished product.

Now, like Minami and Hikaru... shall we find out what is over there?

The Map of Rokugan

Included with this tome is a map of Rokugan, granting us a bird's-eye view of the Empire. This map is very similar to how a map made by an Imperial Cartographer might look. It includes all of the lands of the Great and Minor Clans, important landmarks like cities and major towns, and could be a very useful tool in the hands of both players and GMs.

But exactly how accurate is this map?

Rokugan is a land where appearances are often valued over truth and accuracy. After all, truth is a subjective thing in Rokugani culture, and the precepts of honor and saving face are guiding principles to social interaction. This cultural attitude influences their cartography to varying degrees, and in many cases, the appearance of the map, and what it implies, is held in equal regard to its accuracy. They focus on the conveyance of relative information and impressions of appearance instead of a literal representation.

For instance, it is common practice in Rokugani Cartography to draw certain, "more important" locations as bigger than other, "less important" places, in spite of actual size difference. After all, no one would dare to imply that the keep of the humble Kitsune Family is more important than that of the Shinjo, even if Shiro Kitsune was technically larger. Thus, the bigger the locations appear on the map, the more important they are considered by the map-makers. In some cases, a location might appear to be gargantuan, taking perhaps a day or more to traverse. In actuality, these keeps and cities are much smaller than they appear on the map, but their size has been depicted as larger in order to appease their lords and avoid unintended slights to honor.

Furthermore, the technology available to Rokugani Cartographers is somewhat limited, which can sometimes result in errors. Imperial Cartographers rely upon triangulation methods and applying grids to surveyed lands to create approximate distances, methods that, while accurate, are not enough to create "perfect" maps. Many Rokugani Cartographers estimate distances based on how long it takes them to travel from one location to another, approximating one day's travel to covering a distance of 17,500 ken (20 miles), on flat ground. This often leads to discrepancies, at no fault of the cartographer.

Of course, the Great Clans also keep up-to-date maps of their own lands. For purposes of tax collection, border disputes, and saving face, every Great Clan employs cartographers to survey their lands. However, in times of war, accurate maps are considered liabilities. If an accurate map of one's own lands fell into the hands of an enemy clan, then that knowledge could be exploited. For this reason, maps made by the Great Clans are often made "accurate enough" to be relied upon, showing general proximities but not accurate distances, so that they are not terribly helpful to enemies or those unfamiliar with the terrain. Indeed, many clans purposefully include errors on their maps to discourage invaders.

The maps of the Great Clans also vary based on what each clan values. Lion maps might only include militarily important information, being completely devoid of their own farmlands. Crane maps might be valued as artistic pieces, depicting clouds to create a sense of vastness in lands that are perhaps not so vast. Much of how the Clans see the world are revealed in these maps.

The downside to this practice is that many Imperial Maps are constructed from maps surrendered by the Great Clans, leaving Imperial Cartographers to scratch their heads and try to fit them together. Naturally, they would not slight the honor of a clan by implying that their maps are inaccurate or wrong. Instead, they try to fit the information together as best they can.

The map included with this book is intended to be as accurate as possible, a useful tool for GMs and players. But it is not flawless. Many locations are relative instead of literal. However, it should be suitable for most purposes.

Do note that the map is not complete. Not appearing on the map are countless minor farming and trade villages, small ports, streams, estuaries, and other such locations. GMs are encouraged to populate their vision of Rokugan as they deem fit.








TORITAKA PROVINCE
TANI HITOKAGE
NANATSU HI OTAKU HOGEN
SHADOWLANDS MARSHES
HOKUFUU PROVINCE
MIZU-UMI SAKURA YUKI
THE TWILIGHT MOUNTAINS
KUDA PROVINCE
YOAKE PROVINCE
10 MILES
GARANTO PROVINCE
HISSORI PROVINCE
SUZUME HILLS
MIDAKAI PROVINCE
ADAUCHI PROVINCE
ISHIGAKI PROVINCE
ISHIBEI PROVINCE
KYOUKAN PROVINCE
KAILI KABE
IENIKAERU PROVINCE
SUNDA MIZU PROVINCE
THE TWILIGHT MOUNTAINS
KAILI KABE
JUNKEN PROVINCE
KINBOU PROVINCE
EARTHQUAKE FISH BAY
FIELDS OF THE MORNING SUN
THE TIDAL LANDMARK

The Lands of the Crab Clan

The lands Hida and his followers claimed at the dawn of the Empire are not by any means the most beautiful in Rokugan, nor are they the most fertile or resource-rich. Hida did not choose these lands for their value but for their proximity to the Shadowlands. As a result, the lands of the Crab are a hodgepodge of terrains and conditions, with the only unifying factor being their inhabitants. For that matter, the people of the Crab may seem outwardly to be as much a jumble of contrasts as their lands, for every family and every group is different. But all are focused on a single goal: the defense of the Empire.

The peasants of the Crab are a hearty breed, often larger and tougher than the peasants of other clans, and while they are extremely respectful of samurai they are not always as deferential to their Crab lords as might be expected. This is because they view themselves as junior partners in the clan's great struggle against the forces of Jigoku. Indeed, the peasants of the Crab are unique position in Empire in that their lords encourage them to learn to fight and defend themselves with the implements they use to farm. There have been several times in the history of the Crab that a battle with the Shadowlands was won because peasants turned out to fight and managed to distract or flank an enemy force.

Taken as a whole, the lands of the Crab are not particularly fertile. There are portions of the lands where productive farming is indeed possible, but in many provinces the villages are barely able to grow enough to sustain themselves. One food the Crab do have in plenty is fish, thanks to their proximity to Earthquake Fish Bay, and much of the food eaten by the Crab armies is dried or pickled fish. However, since the Crab field one of the largest armies in the Empire – rivaled in size only by the Lion – they face a perpetual food deficit. The Yasuki make up for this deficit through shrewd commercial dealings with the other clans. The principle Crab export is iron – the mines in Crab lands, especially in the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains, produce an abundance of fine quality iron ore. Moreover, since the Kaiu are able to forge that ore into magnificent steel, the export value of the metal is even higher than it might be otherwise. For their part, the Yasuki themselves export a variety of other goods both practical and luxurious, especially sake, which the Crab brew in abundance.

The Hida Provinces

Much of the Crab territory is a patchwork of forests, mountains, plains, and barren rocky uplands. There are a few places in the Crab lands where cherry blossom trees grow, where spring sees the hills covered in beautiful arrays of white and pink, but these are far more the exception than the rule. And there are some places so barren that all that grows there are stunted thorn bushes and brown weeds... not to mention the Kuni wastelands, where all forms of natural life have been purged, or the Tainted lands which have fallen to the Shadowlands over the centuries.

Natural animals in the Crab lands tend to be tougher and heartier versions of those found further north. Rabbits are larger and their fur tends to be a mottled brown to blend in with the landscape; deer are smaller and more skittish; boars and wolves are more aggressive. (It may be noted that while the Crab share the Empire's general distaste for red meat, they are pragmatic enough to make use of it rather than starve.)



The lands of the Hida are very like the Hida themselves: brutish, tough, intimidating, and often ugly. Although they do possess one province which is quite fertile and productive (the Garanto Province), the majority of their lands are dominated by rocky hillsides, sparsely forested plains, and the squat peaks of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. Their lands do have some very productive mines and quarries, however, and of course they can boast the strongest fortifications and castles in the Empire.

Garanto Province

Garanto is one of the largest Hida provinces and also their northernmost one, separated from the rest of the Hida lands by the Kuni territories. The name can sometimes be a source of confusion to Imperial tax assessors, since both the Phoenix and the Unicorn also have provinces named Garanto (much to the annoyance of the Crab).

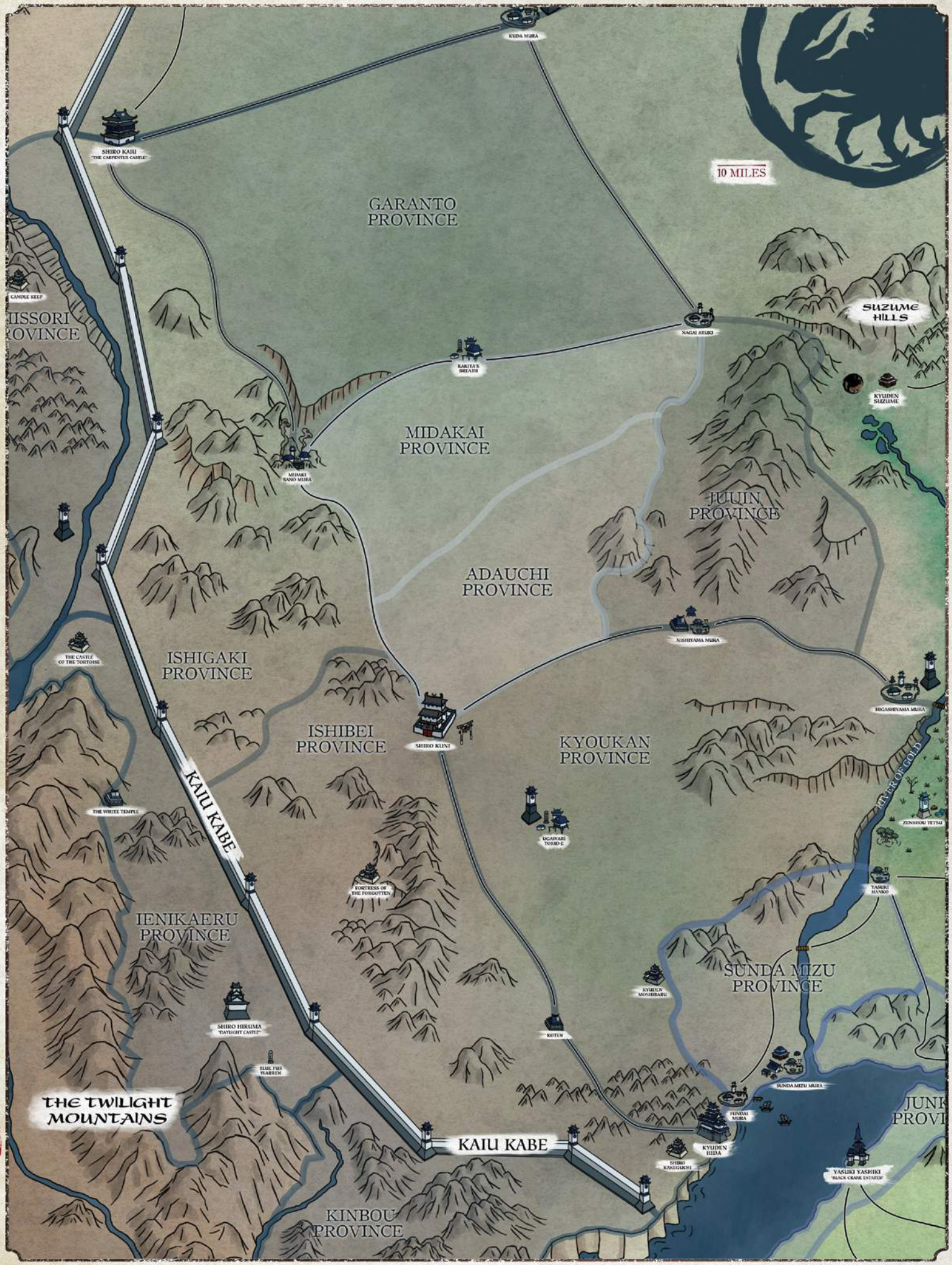
Garanto is the closest the Crab get to a 'bread-basket' province, containing the majority of the clan's rice paddies. Aside from that, it is a rather mundane place, isolated from the Shadowlands by the intervening Ishigaki Province.

Nagai Aruki

While most of those who trade with the Crab do so with the Yasuki or Kaiu, there are times when traders find they wish to trade directly with the Hida family. When this happens, they go to Long Walk City, on the eastern edge of Garanto Province. The city is home to most of the Kaiu-trained Hida craftsmen in the clan, and produces a variety of well-crafted items (mostly metalwork) as well as, oddly, unique blends of tea.

Long Walk City is built in the midst of the most fertile region of the province and is not only surrounded but actually permeated by rice paddies, which are flooded for most of the trading season. In response, the Crab have built a labyrinth of bridges throughout the city, and it can sometimes take an hour of walking to locate the bridges to get from one side of a neighborhood to the other. The bridges are the source of the city's name, and outsiders believe they express the Hida family's disdain for non-Crab.

Interestingly enough, while many Hida live in Long Walk City, the place does not have a samurai governor. Instead, a family of loyal ashigaru have been appointed as hereditary stewards over the city. Any time a high-ranking Crab official visits the city, the ashigaru family invite the dignitary to stay in their home (which is extraordinarily comfortable for a peasant's house) and act as his personal retainers while he stays, running


KUDA MURA
SHIRO KAIU
"THE CARPENTER CASTLE"
10 MILES
GARANTO
PROVINCE
CANDLE KEEP
ISSORI
OVINCE
NAGAI ASUKI
SUZUME
HILLS
KAKITA'S
BREATH
KYUDEN
SUZUME
MIDAKAI
PROVINCE
MIDAKI
SANJO MURA
JUUIN
PROVINCE
ADAUCHI
PROVINCE
NISHIYAMA MURA
THE CASTLE
OF THE TORTOISE
ISHIGAKI
PROVINCE
HIGASHIYAMA MURA
ISHIBEI
PROVINCE
SHIRO KUNI
KYOUKAN
PROVINCE
RIVER OF GOLD
KAIU KABE
THE WHITE TEMPLE
ZENSHOU TETSU
OGAWARI
TOSHO-E
FORTRESS OF
THE FORGOTTEN
YASUKI
HANKO
IENIKAERU
PROVINCE
SUNDA MIZU
PROVINCE
KYUDEN
MOSHIRARU
SHIRO HIRUMA
"DAYLIGHT CASTLE"
KOTEN
BLUE FUR
WARREN
SUNDA MIZU MURA
THE TWILIGHT
MOUNTAINS
FUNDAI
MURA
KYUDEN
HIDA
KAIU KABE
SHIRO
KAKEGUCHI
YASUKI YASHIKI
"BLACK CRANE ESTATES"
KINBOU
PROVINCE

The Great Carpenter Wall

The Kaiu Kabe is the single greatest piece of construction that has ever existed. A massive fortification, standing 100 feet tall and with foundations sunk nearly as deep, it runs from Earthquake Fish Bay in the east across nearly the entire southern border of the Empire. There are twelve towers spaced along the Wall, each of them a massive fortress unto itself. (When the Wall is first built to repel the army of the Maw, it is much shorter, but within a couple of generations the Crab expand it to cover the entire border.) The Kaiu work on it constantly, adding improvements, rebuilding damaged sections, and installing new siege engines. There are only a handful of gates in the Wall (all located in the towers), but a set of tunnels underneath allow Crab scouts, raiding parties, and even entire armies to pass into the Shadowlands as needed. Unfortunately, the tunnels can also be used by Shadowlands creatures to get in to the Empire, so the Kaiu are constantly adding new traps and modifications to the tunnel networks.

The easternmost tower on the Wall is known as the Watchtower of the East, and overlooks the waters of Earthquake Fish Bay. At various times it is administered by either the Yasuki or the Kaiu, and while it is only rarely a factor in the war on the Shadowlands, it has played a role in various skirmishes with the Crane.

Despite its strength, the Wall is not invulnerable. The Dark Lord Daigotsu manages to capture a portion of it during the Four Winds era, and the Destroyers also capture a large section of the Wall during their invasion a generation later. The Crab, true to their nature, always rebuild the Wall stronger than before.

his errands and conducting business on his behalf. In addition, the head of the ashigaru family travels to the residence of the provincial Governor every three months to report on the city's status and request whatever supplies might be needed for the future.

Ishibei Province

Ishibei is the southernmost Hida province, a rocky and desolate region dominated by the low, jagged peaks of the Mountains of Twilight. The province has only a modest commoner population, for its agricultural productivity is minimal at the best of times. The province is militarily important because it is the location of the Kaiu Pass, the easiest way to move troops through the mountains, which connects the border to the military center of Kyuden Hida in Kyoukan Province. Sometimes jokingly called "Little Beiden," it is one of the easiest passes to traverse in all of Rokugan... and also one of the most well-defended, since is integral to the defense of the Empire.

Here in Ishibei is where the great attack of the Maw's Horde was finally stopped in the eighth century, and here the Kaiu Wall was first built, then expanded to cover the entire border. From that day forward, this province's southern border is defined by the Wall and the River of the Last Stand (see the sidebars). To the east, the province abuts on Earthquake Fish Bay, while to the north it touches on both Ishigaki Province and the Kuni lands.

The River of the Last Stand

For centuries, the Saigo River flows placidly through the lands of the Crab, marking the division between the territories of the Hiruma and the Hida. All of that changes when the Maw attacks in the eighth century. The prodigy Kuni Osaku uses her magic to turn the river into a temporary barrier, holding the Maw's army at bay until the Crab can build the first version of the Kaiu Wall. Ever since, the river is known as the River of the Last Stand.

The Fortress of the Forgotten

A bleak castle, little more than a massively fortified barracks, located in the mountains of Ishibei Province. Built soon after the construction of the Kaiu Wall itself, this grim fortification serves as a resting place for the infamous Crab berserkers when they not serving against the Shadowlands. The Crab deliberately located it well away from the traders' road that parallels the Kaiu Wall, lest the bored off-duty berserkers wreck themselves with alcohol and opium.

The Twilight Mountains

The Twilight Mountains run along the southwestern border of the Hida provinces – which means, after the eighth century, that they follow the southwestern border of the Empire. The mountains are all fairly low peaks, with deep valleys between and numerous small settlements scattered about – primarily mining villages. The mountains are a rich source of iron ore for the Crab Clan, and they are willing to maintain the mining communities even in the face of constant threats from Shadowlands creatures, restless ghosts, and evil spirits.

In the late fourth century, a group of Crab samurai become lost in the mountains and eventually became the Boar Clan. See page 197 for details on their lost stronghold.

Ishigaki Province

Located immediately north and west of Ishibei Province, Ishigaki Province defines much of the Crab Clan's post-Maw border with the Shadowlands. Like Ishibei, it is an underpopulated region dominated by the low, rugged peaks of the Twilight Mountains. The Kaiu Wall runs along its southwestern border, continuing north into Yoake Province in Kaiu territory.

There are no major settlements or strongholds of note in Ishigaki Province – the Crab who dwell there do so at the Kaiu Wall, and the limited number of peasants inhabit the scattered mining villages in the mountains.

Juuin Province

The farthest inland of the Crab provinces, Juuin Province borders on both the Crane lands to the east and the Sparrow lands to the northeast. The province is dominated by the smaller mountain range known as the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains, which stretch through the entire province north-to-south. A major trade route called the Mountain Road pierces the mountains at the southern end of the province, while a smaller route – more of a path than a true road – crosses them farther north.

The mountains are home to many iron mines and several jade mines as well, all of which are vigorously exploited to supply the Crab war-effort. There is also a fairly extensive network of caves and tunnels within the mountains, which are notorious for becoming periodically infested with Shadowlands creatures.

Nishiyama Mura

West Mountain Village is a mid-sized Crab settlement on the west side of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. Originally founded because of a small jade mine nearby, the village is also used as an outpost and training ground for Crab troops in the summer months, but is completely inaccessible in the winter, when snow and ice close the single narrow, winding road which connects the village to the rest of the province.

In the twelfth century, the village gains Empire-wide fame as the home of Unari, one of the most famous Crab poets and authors of all time. A small monastery is eventually built there to house Unari's students, who soon teach students of their own.

Higashiyama Mura

East Mountain Village is a fortified town on the eastern edge of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. It is one of the few villages which guard the Crab-Crane border, and as such is well garrisoned and strongly fortified. However, the threat of war with the Crane is not the only reason for the town's strong defenses. The nearby caves in the mountains regularly become infested with all manner of Shadowlands creatures and evil spirits, forming a constant threat to the local region. The Crab do not know





where the monsters come from, but periodically conduct a large-scale hunt to clear the monsters out of the caves, buying a couple of years' peace.

Kyoukan Province

The seat of power for the Hida family (and thus for the entire Crab Clan), Kyoukan Province is home to the great fortress of Kyuden Hida as well as the clan's most sacred shrine, Koten. Its eastern border is defined by Earthquake Fish Bay; to the north are Juuin Province and the Kuni lands, while to the south and west lie Ishibei Province and the border with the Shadowlands.

Kyoukan has a fair amount of agricultural production and also has many fishing villages along the shore of the great bay. Nonetheless, due to the need to base huge numbers of troops here, the province must often import food.

Kyuden Hida

Kyuden Hida, the capital of the Crab Clan, is considered the most defensible fortification in the Empire, the closest thing to impregnable that mortal hands can crafts. Legends claim the castle was built by Hida Osano-Wo himself, who dragged bedrock to the cliffs above Earthquake Fish Bay. Kyuden Hida is where the majority of the Crab bushi who serve on the Wall are trained. It is also the personal residence of the clan's ruling family, making it the political and spiritual heart of the Crab. The main walls are over 180 feet tall, higher than any other fortress in the Empire save the great walls of Otosan Uchi. Its gates require ten men working together to open, and the castle always maintains a garrison of at least three thousand hardened veterans. Moreover, the castle also boasts the most advanced siege technology the Kaiu can devise, all thoroughly tested in battle before installed at Kyuden Hida.

From the eighth century to the twelfth, the giant fanged skull of the Maw hangs over the main gates, a gesture of defiance to the Shadowlands and a warning to the mortal enemies of the Crab that the clan is not to be trifled with.

At various times through the centuries, Crab Champions have added more features to the castle, including a private temple to Osano-Wo, later expanded and rededicated to include Yakamo and Kisada. The existence of this temple is known only to the Hida and those trained in their ways.

In the late twelfth century, for the first time in over a thousand years, Kyuden Hida's formidable defenses face an enemy who can overcome them: the Destroyers, led by the gaijin death-goddess Kali-Ma. When the Destroyers overrun the Wall and much of the Crab lands. Kyuden Hida stands as a thorn in their side, a staging area for raids into the occupied lands. Finally the Destroyers besiege the castle; the battle rages for months, with the Destroyers using catapults to hurl plague zombies into the fortress and wear down the defenders. In the end, attrition wins out; the Destroyers kill the defenders to a man and burn the castle. However, within a year the Destroyers are themselves defeated, and the Crab retake and rebuild their great stronghold. The new Kyuden Hida is stronger than ever – but it, and the clan, will forever bear the scars of that siege.

Koten

Koten is one of the few shrines within the lands of the Crab, and one of their most sacred places. In Koten, even the most brash and disrespectful bushi becomes silent and reverent. This great temple is the Crab Clan's version of the Hall of Ancestors, and is in fact modelled after that Lion holding. Both places are centered around long halls with niches in the walls for the remains of fallen warriors, along with places for their weapons to hang. Both have statues throughout which commemorate the deeds of great heroes. However, unlike the Lion's Hall of Ancestors, the niches and weapon racks in Koten are mostly empty. Many of the Crab Clan's greatest warriors do not leave remains behind; some are devoured by their foes, while others are Tainted and must be burned where they lie with no ashes sent home. As for weapons, the Crab are far too practical to consign good weapons to a temple when they can still be used to kill their enemies. Thus, many of the niches simply contain a plaque with the name of a deceased warrior.

The true heart of Koten is not the halls or the displays, but rather the monks who live there. It is said the monks of Koten remember every story about a Crab warrior they are told, and can recite all of them if asked. Most Crab bushi make a pilgrimage to Koten at some time during their life to tell the monks about the lost heroes with whom they served on the Wall. They tell the tales quietly, knowing that someday one of their companions will likely make the same pilgrimage to speak about them.

In the mid-twelfth century, the Fortune (and former Crab leader) Hida Kisada returned to mortal life. He chose to take up residence in Koten in order to stay out of the way of his descendants and avoid causing any division within the Crab. Years later, he was murdered at the temple by a team of assassins, and after this second death a shrine to the Fortune of Persistence was built within the walls of Koten.

Shiro Kakeguchi

Shiro Kakeguchi is the fortress home of one of the vassal families of the Hida, located almost exactly halfway between Kyuden Hida and the Great Carpenter Wall. The Kakeguchi family claims this is so any invasion will need to go through them before it can assault the home of the Hida. In truth, Shiro Kakeguchi serves as an outlet for tunnels built between it and Kyuden Hida, providing the Crab with a hidden strategic advantage over their enemies.

During the Destroyer War, Shiro Kakeguchi is taken after a short siege; its inhabitants collapsed the tunnels to Kyuden Hida to protect the fortress from an underground assault.

Kyuden Moshibaru

Kyuden Moshibaru, the home of another Hida vassal family, is located a day's travel north of Kyuden Hida on a rocky plain The road to get there is rough, and the plains suffer from winds so strong that the castle's roof often needs repairing. The Moshibaru family is where all new recruits to the clan (such as those gained in a Twenty Goblin Winter) are assigned. Life at Kyuden Moshibaru is not easy, but it is said the Moshibaru become some of the heartiest warriors in the Crab after spending a few years at the castle.

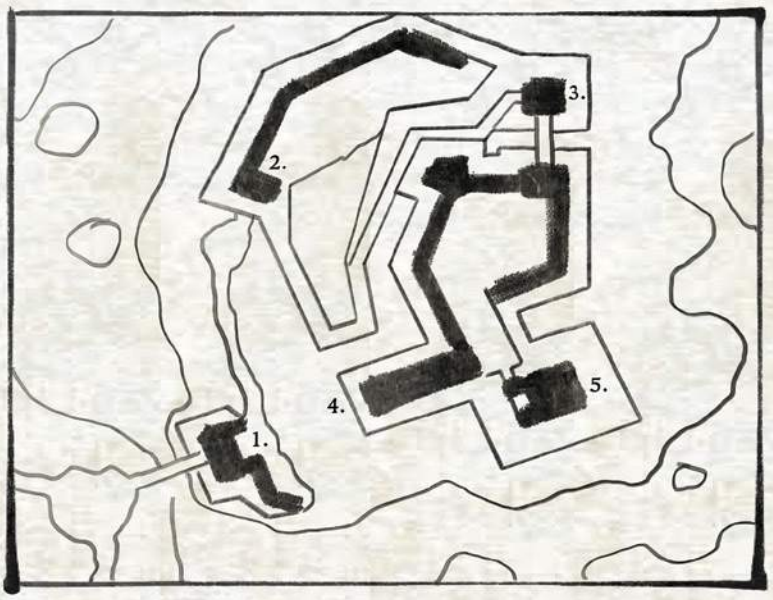
The population of the castle fluctuates, depending on how many recruits the clan has at a particular time. Since it serves no strategic purpose, the castle is largely untouched by the Destroyer War.

Ugawari Torid-e

Yet another vassal family's home, this one is unusual – the Ugawari are actually a vassal family of the Kuni, but their family seat is located in Kyoukan Province in order to maintain close proximity to Shiro Kuni. The duty of the Ugawari is to capture Shadowlands creatures for the Kuni to use in experiments, and their small keep reflects this: it comprises five stone towers linked by walls, and an underground maze of cells where captured Shadowlands monsters are kept until the Kuni need them.

Once in a while Crab bushi come to the keep to test their skills against the imprisoned creatures. A small group of merchants nearby have created a semi-secret gambling culture that places bets on these equally semi-secret training battles.

Kyuden Hida

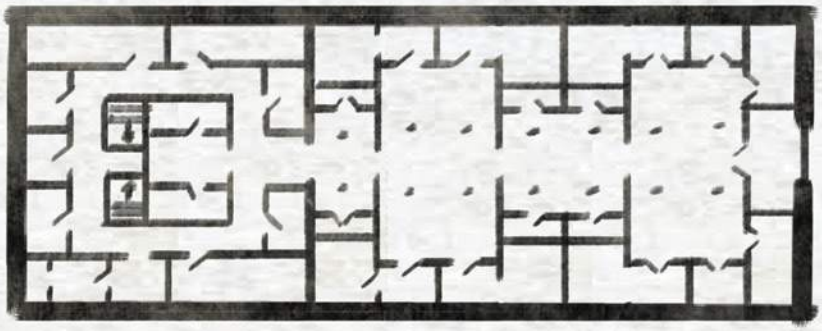


Map Guide

1. Main Gate
2. Lower Gatehouse
3. Upper Gatehouse
4. Main Barracks
5. Donjon

BARRACKS

1st Floor



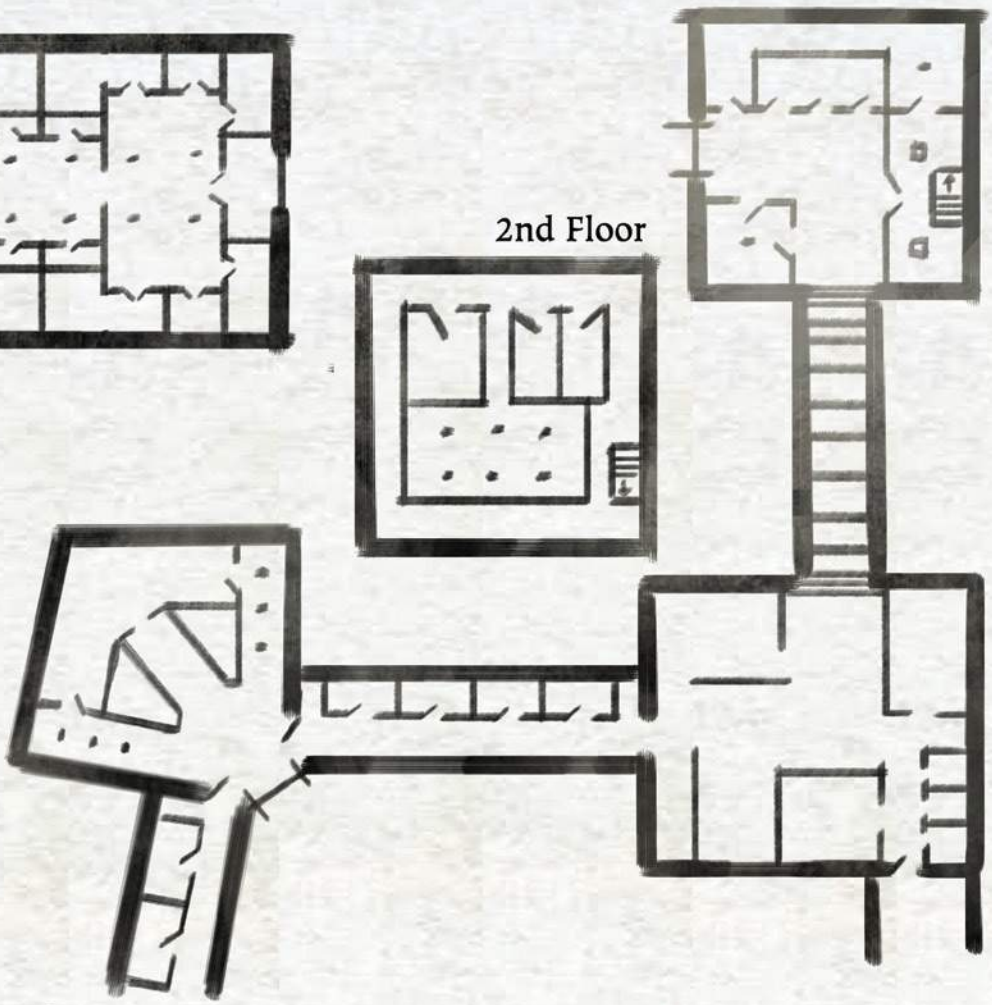
2nd Floor



UPPER GATEHOUSE

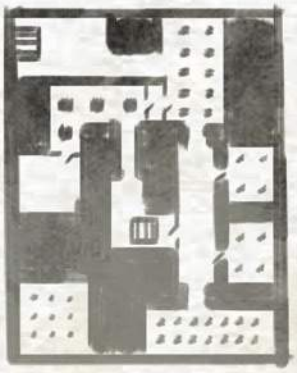
1st Floor

2nd Floor

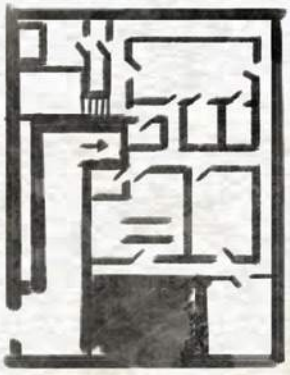


DONJON

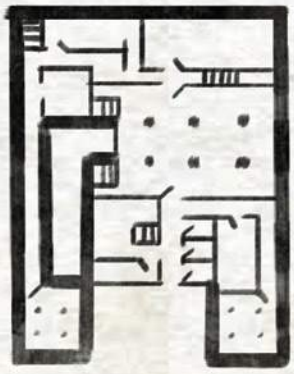
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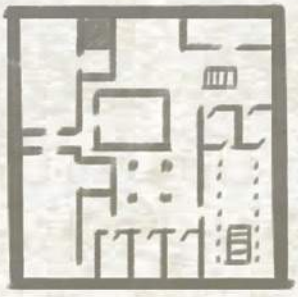
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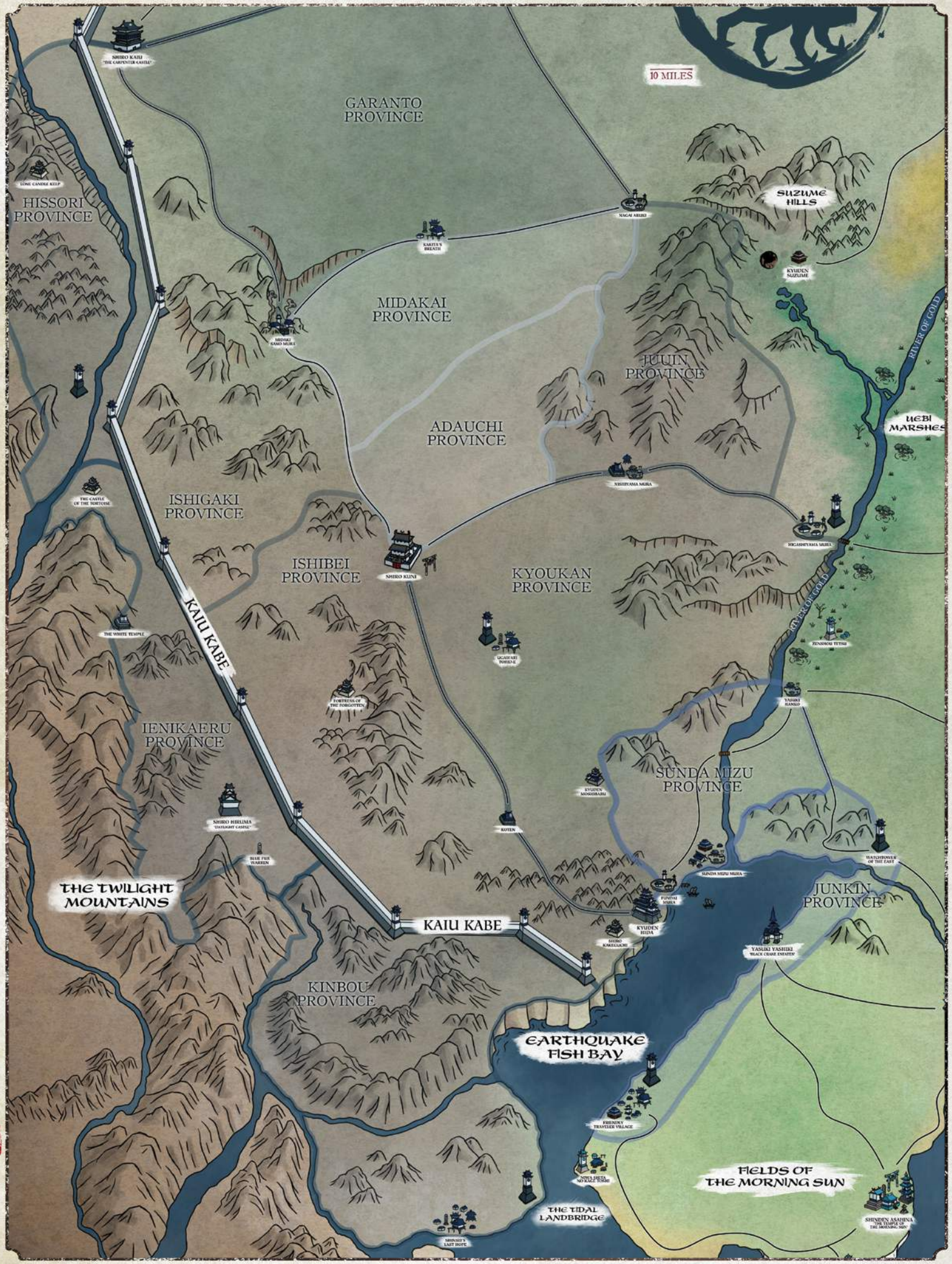
5.



6.



1. Basement / Dungeon
2. Offices
3. Meeting Rooms
4. Offices
5. Officers Quarters
6. Champions Quaters


10 MILES
GARANTO PROVINCE
HISSORI PROVINCE
MIDAKAI PROVINCE
JUUIN PROVINCE
ADAUCHI PROVINCE
ISHIGAKI PROVINCE
ISHIBEI PROVINCE
KYOUKAN PROVINCE
IENIKAERU PROVINCE
SUNDA MIZU PROVINCE
JUNKIN PROVINCE
KINBOU PROVINCE
KAIU KABE
KAIU KABE
THE TWILIGHT MOUNTAINS
EARTHQUAKE FISH BAY
FIELDS OF THE MORNING SUN
THE TIDAL LANDBRIDGE
SUZUME HILLS
UEBI MARSHES
RIVER OF GOLD
RIVER OF GOLD
SHIRO KAIU "THE CARPENTER CASTLE"
LONE CANDLE KEEP
KARITA'S BREATH
NAGAI ARUKI
KYUDEN SUZUME
MIDAKI SANJO MURA
THE CASTLE OF THE TORTOISE
THE WHITE TEMPLE
SHIRO KUNI
NISHIYAMA MURA
HIGASHIYAMA MURA
IGAIWARI TOHSAI
FORTRESS OF THE FORGOTTEN
TENSHOSI TETSU
YASUKI SANKO
SHIRO HIRUMA "TWILIGHT CASTLE"
BLUE FUR WARREN
KOTEN
KYUDEN MOSHOBARU
SUNDA MIZU MURA
WATCHTOWER OF THE EAST
FUNDAI MURA
KYUDEN HIDA
SHIRO KAKUGUCHI
YASUKI YASHIKI "BLACK CRANE ESTATES"
FRIENDLY TRAVELER VILLAGE
SHIRO SHIZU NO KAGE TOSHI
SHINDEN ASAHINA "OUR TEMPLE OF THE MORNING SUN"
SHINSEI'S LAST HOPE

Fundai Mura

Fundai Mura is a small port town on the western bank of Earthquake Fish bay, placing it officially within the boundaries of Kyoukan Province. It is the home of the Fundai vassal family of the Kaiu, the finest shipbuilders in the Crab clan, second in skill only to the Mantis. The town is a combination of port, market, and dry-dock, capable of building up to 24 kobune at one time; not surprisingly, life in the village is focused almost entirely on the shipyards.

Although Fundai Mura is a serious and practical place (like many Crab holdings), the lighter side of the Kaiu was expressed in its construction when they included oyster shells in the town's outer walls. As a result, the walls sparkle in the daylight, resembling sunlight reflecting off the ocean.

The Hiruma Provinces

For the first eight hundred years of the Empire's history, the three provinces of the Hiruma are known to be some of the most beautiful in Crab lands. They are the farthest south of any mainland provinces, and include semi-tropical forests and verdant fields. Hummingbirds are common and the rivers and lakes are crystalline and warm.

The Shadowlands invasion led by the Maw changes all of that. The vast army of demons and undead seeps through the lands of the Hiruma, capturing their castle and razing their villages. Everything is Tainted, becoming part of the expanded Shadowlands. For over three centuries the Hiruma have no lands to call their own, living as exiles in the lands of the Hida and training alongside the Shinjo in Unicorn lands.

Early in the twelfth century, after the Shadowlands are weakened by the defeat of Fu Leng at the Second Day of Thunder, the Hiruma finally succeed in retaking their lands. The Taint is purged from them in the same manner as the Kuni previously cleansed their own territory, leaving the Hiruma provinces spiritually safe but barren, unable to support life. All supplies for the rebuilt Hiruma holdings have to be brought in by caravan from the Crab lands, making survival precarious at best.

Hissori Province

The northernmost of the three Hiruma provinces, Hissori touches on its northern edge to the empty wastelands known as the Plains Above Evil. Used mainly as farmland during the earlier history of the Crab Clan, after its reclamation from the Shadowlands it becomes the site of Lone Candle Keep.

Lone Candle Keep

Shiro Hiruma is located in the southern core of the Hiruma lands, and was difficult for outsiders to visit even when the family was in its prime. Although the Hiruma do not especially want any visitors, after the reclamation of their lands they are forces to acknowledge the occasional need for diplomacy. They build Lone Candle Keep in the northern part of their lands in order to have a place to receive visitors which is not too terribly close to the Shadowlands.

Lone Candle Keep is the closest any Hiruma castle can get to being opulent, and while it is still a far cry from Yasuki Yashiki, it is at least a place that can receive visitors without causing shame to the Crab Clan. It is close enough to the Shadowlands that there is still a danger of attack, especially since (like all Hiruma holdings) it is located on the 'wrong' side of the Kaiu Wall. Although it is not as heavily fortified as other Crab castles, it is hardly indefensible, and the Shadowlands does not seem to have recognized its political significance.

Ienikaeru Province

The central Hiruma province, Ienikaeru is home to the family's primary holding of Shiro Hiruma, and was their main source of food during the eight hundred years before the Maw's attack. After the fall of the Hiruma lands, this province becomes the site of an endless series of grim, futile battles as the Hiruma try again and again to reclaim their ancestral home. After they finally succeed in this quest after the Day of Thunder, it becomes the focus of their ongoing war to maintain their lands and prevent the re-encroachment of the Shadowlands.

Shiro Hiruma

Shiro Hiruma (sometimes also known as Daylight Castle) is a physically small fortress, but has a long and storied history. Originally built during the dawn of the Empire, it was a spartan fortress whose sole purpose was to coordinate the Hiruma family's war against the Shadowlands. The castle stood off two different major Shadowlands attacks in the fourth century, and when the Maw finally took the fortress in the eighth century, it was a bitter struggle indeed. The defeat broke the back of the Hiruma family for a generation.

After the Hiruma retook the castle in the twelfth century, it was cleansed and rebuilt, with additional outlying fortifications to supplement its defense. Thereafter the Crab routinely station a very large portion of their armies in and around the castle, sometimes as many as 33 legions.

Both before its fall and after its recovery, the castle's physical design is very similar. The land around it is studded with defensive features: traps, pits, and locations designed to facilitate ambushes. The interior of the castle is utilitarian, with few decorations, and with only

enough living space for the daimyo's family and the most important retainers. The main troop barracks and storage chambers are all below ground. There is also a small temple within the castle's basement, dedicated to Osano-Wo and Hiruma himself; called the Candle Temple, it has the singular distinction in modern times of being the only portion of the castle that was never Tainted or despoiled. The creatures of the Shadowlands were never able to set foot within it, avoiding it as though it was crafted from jade.

The White Temple

Located in the northern region of Ienikaeru Province, the White Temple is built on the cleansed land after Shiro Hiruma is retaken in the twelfth century. The Temple is a place of both healing and research. While it falls under the authority of the Hiruma, and they protect the place, it is in practical terms a Kuni holding. Within its walls, Crab bushi are healed of grievous wounds while the Kuni perform research about the Shadowlands and the creatures which dwell there. The Temple is also the home of the largest shrine of Bishamon in the Crab lands, and many samurai make pilgrimages there to pray for the strength to fulfill their duties. The monks who live in the temple are all sohei and can serve as an extra line of defense should it be necessary.



Blue Fur Warren

Ten miles south of Shiro Hiruma is a series of tunnels and caves that are associated with the creatures call Nezumi. The tunnels are created by an unknown tribe of Nezumi while Shiro Hiruma is still controlled by the Shadowlands. In later years, the Crab and another tribe of Nezumi discover the abandoned tunnels and agree to share them, spawning the Blue Fur Tribe of Nezumi (blue because of the color of Crab armor).

When the Nezumi largely vanish from the face of Rokugan during the late twelfth century, the abandoned warrens became a set of underground supply depots for the Hiruma (and serve as a place of refuge when the Destroyers sweep through these lands).

The Shell of the Crab

The Castle of the Tortoise, referred to casually as the Shell of the Crab, is where the Kaiu test their siege weaponry and defenses during the early centuries of the Empire, long before the construction of the Carpenter Wall. While the Hiruma technically own the castle, it is controlled by the Kaiu. Its proximity to the Shadowlands ensures it is frequently attacked, allowing the Kaiu to test their methods in practical ways.

In the fourth century, the Shell is brought down by two traitors within its walls. When Crab troops retake it, they find it has become Tainted and raze it to the ground; the work conducted there is relocated deeper into the Empire. The cellars and foundations of the castle still exist somewhere within the Ienikaeru Province, although none have seen them in centuries.

Kinbou Province

The southernmost Hiruma province contains the portions of the Twilight Mountains that extend beyond Hida lands. Its border also touches the edge of Earthquake Fish Bay to the east. Before the fall of the Hiruma, this was known as their least valuable province for farming, although the mountains did produce some iron ore. Aside from small mining villages, the province's only holding of note was, and is, the place called Shinsei's Last Hope.

Shinsei's Last Hope

The origin of this unique settlement can be traced back to a story from the first century. Supposedly, a lone Crab scout discovered Shinsei, Shosuro, and Shiba in a small valley where they were beginning the trip back to Rokugan. Upon noticing the scout, Shinsei prophesized that so long as the Crab Clan protected the valley, it would remain pure of Taint... but if the Crab ever failed in their defense, the Empire would fall as well. The scout remained alone to hold the valley, but within a week others found him, and there they built a village.

Whatever the truth of this tale, it cannot be denied that Shinsei's Last Hope has remained free of Taint for all twelve centuries since that time. Located just off the shore of the Sea of Amaterasu (a single dock allows ships to come and go), the moderately-sized town is defended by a massive stone wall studded with blessed jade, glowing bright green as it continually wards off the forces of the Shadowlands. The lands within the wall are quite fertile, even able to raise tea, and the population enjoys a surprisingly pleasant existence despite being all but surrounded by monstrous horrors.

It is at Shinsei's Last Hope that the Crab stage their Twenty Goblin Winters, when ronin can win admittance to the clan by bringing back the heads of twenty goblins. It also serves as a base for scouts to conduct missions into the Shadowlands, but for the most part the Crab garrison here is defensive – the clan takes its duty to hold the village very seriously indeed. The rest of the Empire has surprisingly little knowledge of this place (perhaps because of its association with the Shadowlands, an unmentionable topic in polite company), although the Crane hero Yasuki Hachi did come here during the Second Yasuki War.

The Kaiu Provinces

The Kaiu lands include most of the more fertile agricultural regions in Crab territory, and as a result they resemble the rest of the Empire more closely than the lands of the Hida or Kuni. Their provinces also include a number of small forests which they carefully harvest for lumber.

Hokufuu Province

The northernmost of the Kaiu provinces, Hokufuu was for eleven centuries the most northern of all Crab territory, a status that finally changed in the twelfth century when the Crab absorbed the Falcon Clan. Hokufuu Province borders the Toritaka lands and the Shinomen Mori to the north and east, the vast Plains Above Evil to the west, and the other two Kaiu provinces to the south. The northernmost hills and peaks of the Twilight Mountains are also found here as the mountain range peters out.

Due to Hokufuu's great distance from the Shadowlands, the Crab long ago chose to make this remote province their main site of diplomacy; this decision was somewhat disrupted by the later admission of the Yasuki family into the clan, but the Crab are nothing if not stubborn, and thus many outsiders must still make the lengthy trek to Hokufuu Province in order to conduct diplomacy at Face of the East Castle.

Face of the East Castle

Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi rests on a large hill within sight of both the Shinomen Mori and the higher peaks of the Twilight Mountains. For the first three centuries of the Empire's history, Face of the East Castle is where the Crab Clan hold their diplomatic negotiations. Although the Yasuki take over some of that responsibility later on, there are some (notably the Crane) who prefer not to deal with the Yasuki, so Face of the East retains much of its original purpose. It is a more comfortable place than many Crab castles, though not so luxurious or garish as Yasuki Yashiki.

While the castle's location is more than somewhat inconvenient for visitors, it also means that Face of the East is one of the safest Crab castles – it is rare indeed for Shadowlands creatures to make it this far north and across the Twilight Mountains. However, there have been times when Shadowlands forces were active within the Shinomen Mori, and during those times the Crab had to relocate their diplomacy elsewhere, leaving the Face of the East virtually empty.

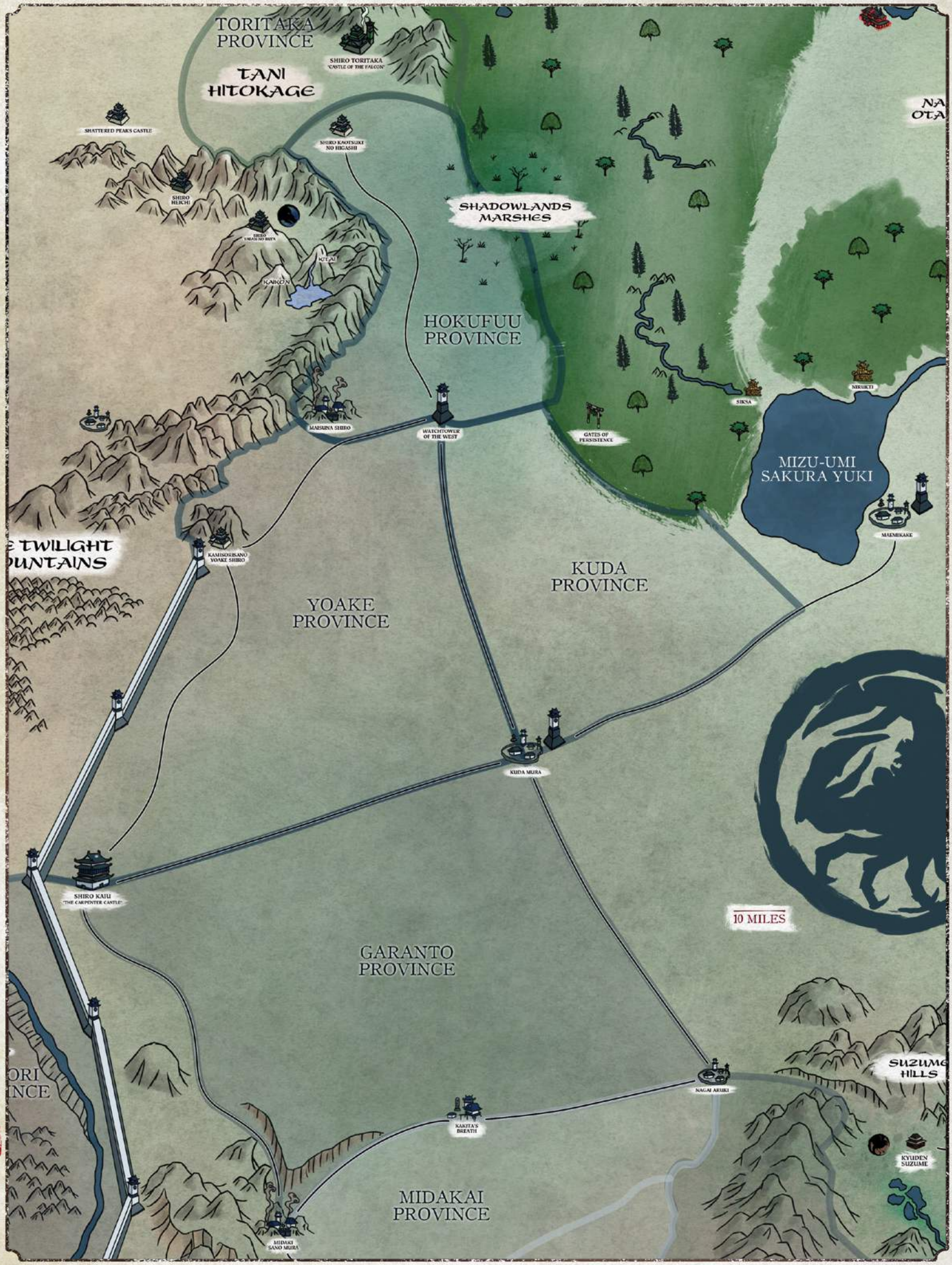
After the return of the Unicorn Clan to Rokugan, Face of the East gains a second role as a hub for trade between the two clans – especially since the Unicorn caravans can reach it directly without passing through the strict tariff inspections of the Scorpion lands. This gives rise to the Golden Carp Marketplace, a booming market in the town outside the castle; the market is notorious as a place to unload smuggled or stolen goods, so bandits and even pirates sometimes visit to sell their loot.

Maisuna Shiro

The home of the Maisuna vassal family of the Kaiu is one of the most beautiful stone constructions in the Empire. The Maisuna, like most vassal families, were granted a small keep when they attained their status in the eighth century, but they were not content with this and began to carve an enormous castle out of the stone of the nearby mountain. They have created (and continue to create) something that is more a work of art than a castle, but maintain a connection to the original small keep, stating that they are simply expanding upon what they were given.

Shattered Peaks Castle

A fortress built on the western edge of the Twilight Mountains, well away from the rest of Hokufuu Province (indeed it may actually lie outside the provincial borders), Shattered Peaks Castle was once known as Northern Watch Castle. It stood for centuries as a thorn in the side of the Shadowlands, serving as the final link in the clan's chain of northern defenses – a formidable structure that could block any foe who might try to outflank the Crab border.


TORITAKA PROVINCE
SHIRO TORITAKA "CASTLE OF THE FALCON"
TANI HITOKAGE
SHATTERED PEAKS CASTLE
SHIRO NAOTSUKI NO HIGASHI
SHIRO HEICHI
SHADOWLANDS MARSHES
KAIKON
HOKUFUU PROVINCE
MAESHINA SHIRO
WATCHTOWER OF THE WEST
GATES OF PERSISTENCE
SIKNA
MIRUKTI
MIZU-UMI SAKURA YUKI
MAEMIKAKE
KAMISORISANO YOAKE SHIRO
YOAKE PROVINCE
KUDA PROVINCE
KUDA MURA
SHIRO KAIU "THE CARPENTER CASTLE"
10 MILES
GARANTO PROVINCE
NAGAI ARUKI
KAKITA'S BREATH
SUZUME HILLS
KYUDEN SUZUME
MIDAKAI PROVINCE
MIDAKI SANO MURA

In the eleventh century, a vast force of Dark Moto rode on the castle. After a forty day siege, reinforcements arrived and the Moto retreated; the castle remained standing, though the mountain peaks surrounding it were broken and shattered. The Crab renamed the castle in honor of the successful battle.

Watchtower of the West

In contrast to the Watchtower of the East, which is merely a part of the Kaiu Wall, the Watchtower of the West long pre-dates that construction. It serves as a northern guard, looking for signal fires from the south from troops stationed to defend against Shadowlands attack. When such fires are spotted, troops based at the Watchtower march to reinforce the threatened locations.

After the building of the Carpenter Wall, however, the Watchtower of the West becomes essentially useless from a military perspective. The Crab re-task it as a place of shame; those assigned here are criminals, dishonored samurai, and those fallen deeply into disfavor. Modern Crab consider an assignment to the Watchtower of the West to be the greatest dishonor short of being outright made ronin.

Yoake Province

The southernmost of the three Kaiu provinces touches on the great Hida province of Garanto to its immediate south, and is home to several of the more important Crab holdings, including Kaiu Shiro itself. Like Garanto, it is an agriculturally productive province and its rice paddies and grain fields are responsible for feeding many samurai.

Kaiu Shiro

Legends elsewhere in Rokugan speak of the Great Carpenter Wall being built around Shiro Kaiu so that the two are indistinguishable. However, anyone who looks at a map knows the kaiu fortress is actually separate from the Wall itself (and indeed pre-dates it by nearly eight centuries). And while Kyuden Hida is revered by all Crab as the most impregnable fortress in the Empire, by the end of the twelfth century the honor of being Rokugan's only never-conquered castle actually belongs to Shiro Kaiu.

Shiro Kaiu's walls are so thick and so well built that they appear to be crafted from a single giant piece of stone. They are studded with siege engines of every type imaginable, and in modern times some of the catapults are so powerful that they can fling their deadly loads beyond the Great Carpenter Wall itself. In the center of the fortress is a great courtyard which contains the Great Forge, the largest and most sophisticated craftsman's forge in the Empire. Built around Kaiu's original forge from the dawn on the Empire, it is the place where the fabled Kaiu Blades are forged, along with innumerable other weapons, armors, and other devices of tremendous skill and quality.

It is rumored that below the castle are tunnels which lead directly to various parts of the Wall and perhaps even all the way out to the Shadowlands itself. It may safely be assumed that these tunnels, if they do exist, are some of the most heavily trapped places in Rokugan.

The fortress is home to the Kaiu Engineering Academy, the ancient and revered school of the Kaiu family, as well as the subsidiary dojo that teaches the Kaiu Siege Masters.

Razor of the Dawn Castle

Kamisorisano ano Yoake Shiro is the westernmost anchor point of the Crab's defense of the Empire. The fortress is built into a highly defensible location between two peaks of the Twilight Mountains, and looks onto the Plains Above Evil.

The Plains Above Evil are a vast barren place where even the creatures of the Shadowlands seldom deign to visit, and those few who do travel that far seldom make much a dent on Razor of the Dawn's extremely defensible position. As a result, the bushi of the Crab see Razor of the Dawn as a reservist posting. It is the place for those who need additional training or who have not completely recovered from injuries or illnesses.

In the twelfth century, the famous "dead eyes" berserker Hiruma Yogure founds the Dojo of the Razor's Edge at this castle to teach his personal variant on berserker fighting to students.

Despite its remote location, this fortress has fallen twice: once to the Shadowlands during the Clan War, and then again when the Destroyers attacked the Empire. Each time the Crab have defiantly rebuilt it.





Kuda Province

The easternmost of the three Kaiu provinces, Kuda borders unaligned territory to the north and east, and is an open, lightly settled region. Much of its territory is part of the Quiet Wind Plain, so named for the soft but steady winds that blow across it on almost every day.

Kuda Mura

The only major settlement in Kuda Province, Kuda Mura is village responsible for more food production than any other Crab holding. Located in the middle of some of the most fertile lands in Crab territory and surrounded by grain fields, the village is considered to be strategically vital to the clan despite its rather remote location. Kuda Mura is administrated by the Kaiu but there is always a sizable contingent of Hida assigned to defend it, especially due to the relative proximity of the eerie Shinomen Mori, not to mention the threat of bandits wandering in from the unaligned lands to the east.

Over the years, one of the teahouses in the village is converted into a "school" of sorts where the Kaiu study the ways of agriculture. Many advances in Rokugani farming can be traced back to this humble building in Kuda Mura.

Maemikake

The most remote and in some ways the most unusual of Crab holdings, Maemikake is a large village, large enough it could almost be considered a city. Located well outside the official provincial boundaries of the Crab Clan, many miles east of Kuda Province, the settlement is built on the shore of Mizu-umi Sakura Yuki, the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow. The icy lake is surrounded by cherry blossom trees, and every spring when they drop their blossoms, pilgrims arrive to watch the lake be covered in a "snow" of white petals.

The village's actual purpose is to harvest lumber from the wooded lands on the fringe of the Shinomen Mori. For most of its history the village is a Hiruma holding (and indeed is the only holding the family officially retains after the loss of its ancestral lands). However, when the Toritaka become part of the Crab, it is passed to their authority.

Kuni Provinces

The Kuni have never been a family prone to luxury, and many of their lands have been known from the dawn of the Empire as places with disgusting swamps, bleak moors, and muddy fields. However, the status of their lands changes dramatically in the eighth century when the Maw's forces attack. The majority of the Kuni lands become Tainted, and while the territory is recovered after the construction of the Kaiu Wall, the Kuni soon discover that the only way to remove the Taint is to purge all the other spirits from the land as well. Thus are born the Kuni Wastes.

The Wastes are barren and lifeless, a landscape of bleak gray earth without a single plant or animal. The land is dotted with small huts and caves in which the Kuni live and perform their experiments, often alone, or at best in small groups. Food and other supplies must be brought in to them, since it cannot be grown within the lifeless zone.

There are no villages within the Wastes – the few villages that survive in the two Kuni provinces are located in the minority of lands which escaped the Taint. In fact, within the Wastes there are no heimin at all, save for occasional personal servants.

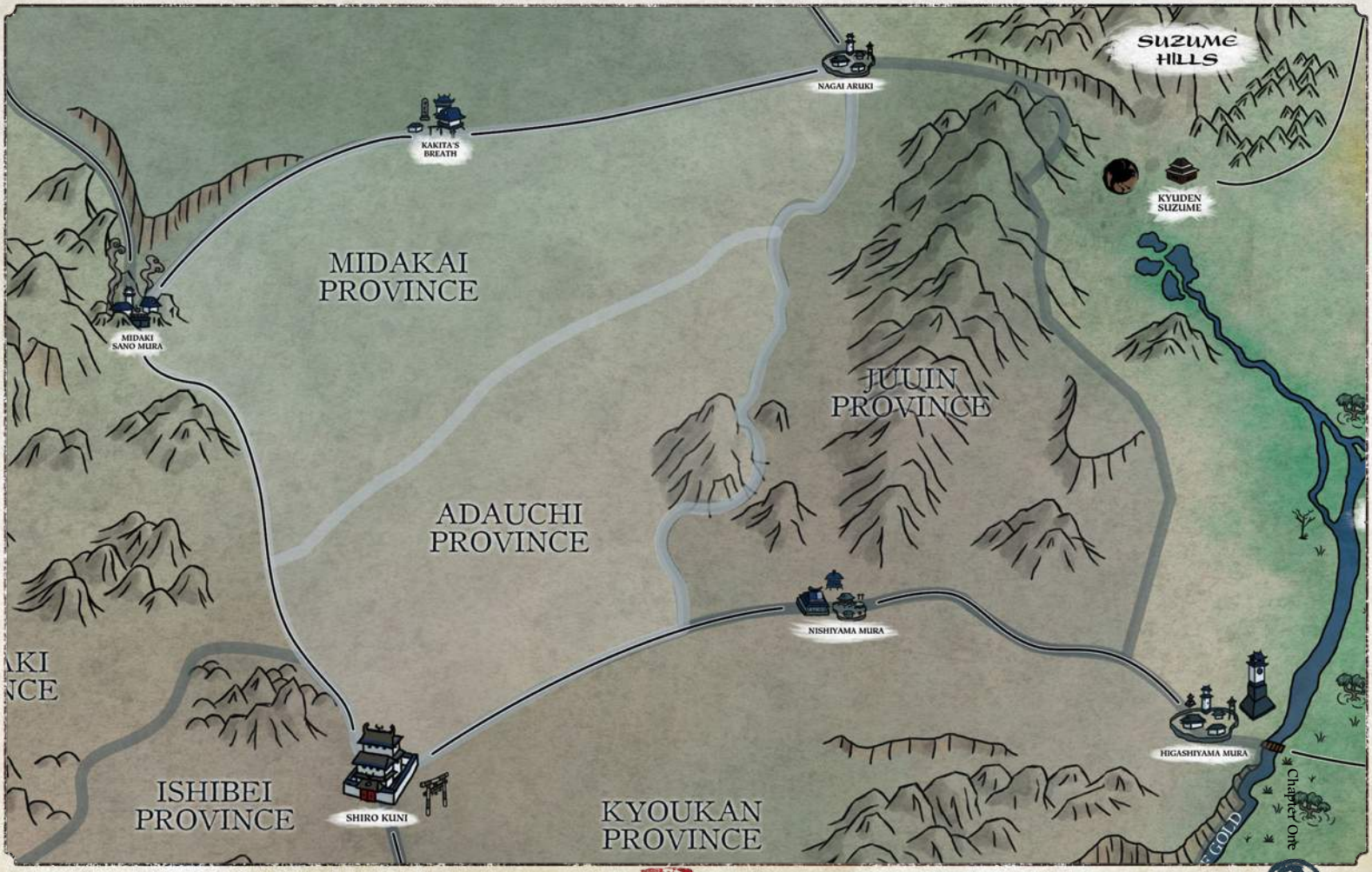
Midakai Province

The more northerly of the two Kuni provinces, Midakai borders the Hida province of Garanto to the north. It is most notable for being the location of the only two major Kuni villages to survive the Maw's Taint.

High Tree Village

Midaki sano Mura is located in the foothills of the Twilight Mountains, in the far northwestern corner of Midakai Province. It stands high enough in the foothills that nothing grows in the lands surrounding it; the town's peculiar name comes from the fact that fog often shrouds the hills, and at such times the only thing in the lower lands visible here is the top of the tallest trees.

The village supports the extensive networks of iron mines within the mountains. Many of these mines have been in operation since the first or second centuries,



winding ever deeper into the mountains. The locals dislike having to work in the sinister Twilight Mountains, where Shadowlands creatures often appear, and many of them eventually run away despite the penalties for doing so. The Kuni allow the workers to leave the mines for one week out of every month, and only this policy keeps the rate of attrition from being astronomical.

On the outskirts of the village is a deep chasm that the residents have named, simply, The Pit. The Pit seems to bottomless – the village has been dumping its waste stone and garbage into it for centuries, with no signs of it ever filling.

Kakita's Breath

The ironically named Kakita Bogu is a small village on the edge of a vast salt marsh; the marsh emits the foul stench that grants the village its name. This settlement exists for two reasons: first, so the Kuni can monitor the marsh and make certain it does not get infested with creatures from the Shadowlands; and second, because it is near the mines of High Tree Village. The peasants who live here are expert metalworkers and craft most of the common metal items used in the Crab lands – things like pots and pans, farm implements, kitchen knives, and so forth. The forges seem to ward away the worst of the marsh stench, so there is seldom a shortage of those willing to work them.

Adauchi Province

The southern Kuni province is the more bleak of the two, being composed almost entirely of the Wastes. It is home to Shiro Kuni, the family's only holding of note.

Shiro Kuni

Shiro Kuni, the Castle of the Land, is located just south of the Kuni Wastes on the border of the Hida family's Kyoukan Province, placing it nearly dead-center in the Crab lands. It is a sizable fortress complex, but lacks the high towers and keeps of other Crab castles, instead being essentially a giant fortified barracks. What is truly menacing about the castle is not its appearance but its reputation. While its location in the center of the Crab lands make the castle a perfect staging area for the clan's armies, and it is used as such, it is also home to the most important of the Kuni family's libraries and laboratories. Here the Kuni perform endless experiments and read all manner of questionable tomes, seeking the unique insight into the Shadowlands that has saved thousands of Crab lives.

After the creation of the Carpenter Wall, Shiro Kuni becomes a command center for the northern half of the wall (the southern reaches are commanded directly from Kyuden Hida), and a high-ranking Crab general is usually assigned here along with his staff and troops. The Kuni do not care so long as their experiments are left alone.

The castle has been besieged twice: once by the Shadowlands at the end of the eleventh century, a battle the defenders won, and a second time by the Destroyers, which resulted in the fall of the castle. It was reclaimed and rebuilt following the end of the Destroyer War.

The Barracks of the Damned

Just outside the walls of Shiro Kuni is an ugly, unadorned building which flies a single banner – a banner showing a black crab holding a finger of jade. This is where the Damned, those Crab warriors who have become Tainted but wish to continue fighting for the Empire, are housed and trained. The building is given a wide berth by all other Crab in the area, even though they know the contribution the Damned make in the battle against the Shadowlands. However, it does serve as a tangible reminder that even though darkness might take a warrior, he can still fight for the light.

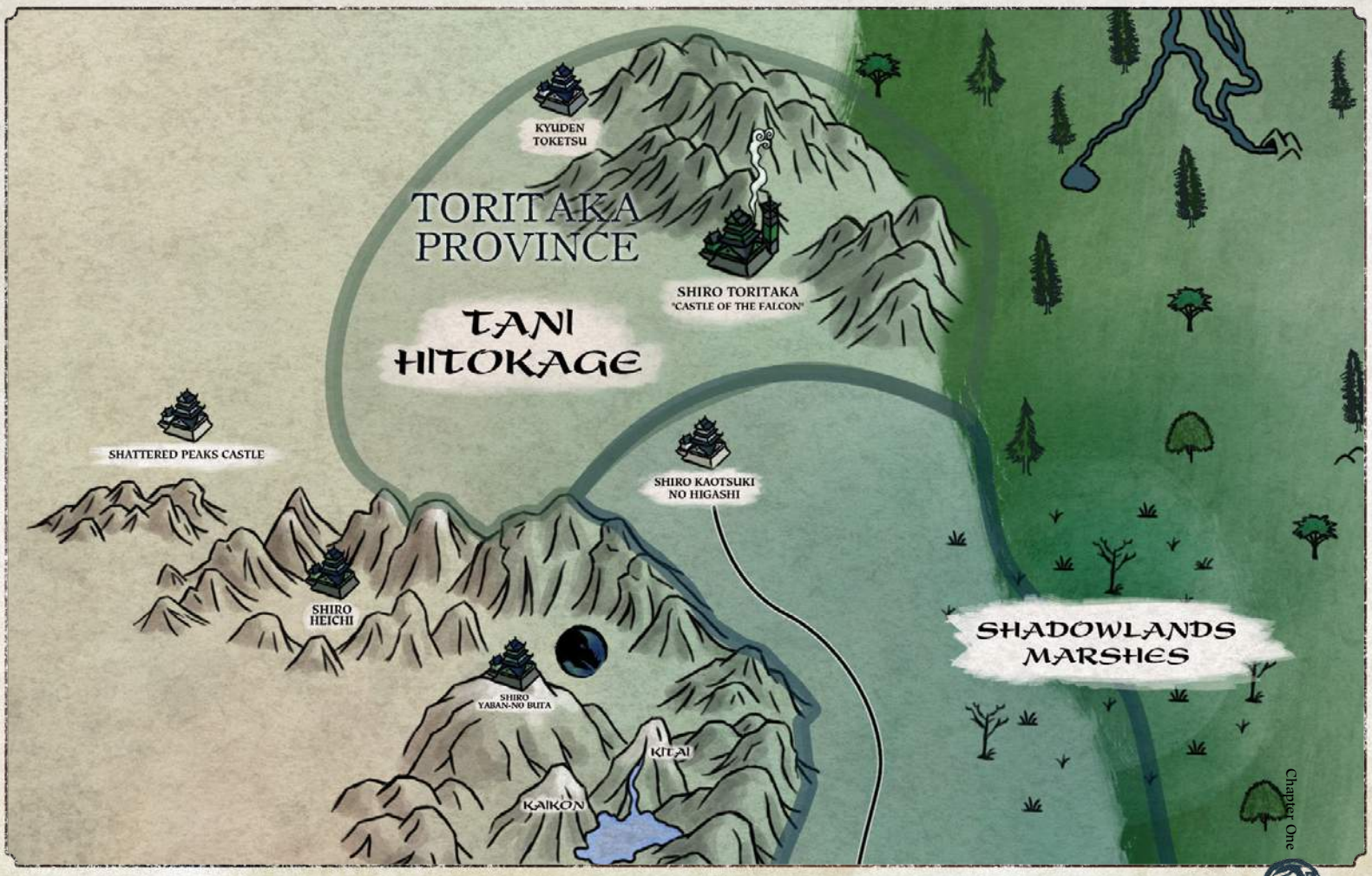
The Toritaka Province

For most of their history, the Toritaka are a Minor Clan, the Falcon. Their lands are found at the far northern edge of the Mountains of Twilight, close to the Shinomen Mori, and consist of a single valley and a considerable amount of forest and hillside. The lands of the Toritaka are known to be some of the most haunted in the Empire, and the people there are very superstitious.

Kyuden Toketsu

Kyuden Toketsu is built by a Yasuki merchant in the year 1050 as a place to retire in comfort. It is not until after the castle is built that he discovers a nearby monastery venerating the Crab hero Kuni Harike. The monastery becomes a draw for pilgrims, bringing prosperity to the area, and soon a good number of trade caravans begin using the castle and adjacent village as a stop on their trade routes. The castle is not without military value, being located just to the north of the Twilight Mountains and thus serving as another place to keep watch over the Plains Above Evil.





After the Toritaka join the Crab Clan in the twelfth century, Kyuden Toketsu is granted to them.

Tani Hitokage

The Valley of Spirits is the home of the Toritaka both before and after they join the Crab Clan. Located between the Shinomen Mori and the Twilight Mountains, the valley is an intensely spiritually active place, with vengeful ghosts rising as a result of untimely deaths and ancient spirits walking between the trees.

The valley is surrounded by a series of watchfires and lanterns which are designed to help keep the hostile spirits at bay. The few times during the history of the Empire when they were not lit, the valley was inundated with spirits and ghosts.

The actual home of the Toritaka is a very small and modest castle in the center of the valley. Its only distinctive feature is the large mews built off of the main keep, where dozens of falcons and other hunting birds are kept and trained.

The Yasuki Provinces

Located near Earthquake Fish Bay and mainly on a single peninsula just south of the lands of the Crane, the two provinces of the Yasuki are some of the richest in the Crab Clan. However, they do not produce as much food as the lands of the Kaiu or even the Hida family. Instead, the Yasuki grow things they can process and export – tea, flowers, and sake rice. Although they are for the most part far away from the Shadowlands, the Yasuki lands are still strongly garrisoned due to the frequent risk of war with the Crane Clan.

Junkin Province

The southerly of the two Yasuki provinces, Junkin is located along the eastern side of Earthquake Fish Bay, and is home to the family's core lands and their seat of power, Yasuki Yashiki. It is bordered to the east by the Asahina lands, and for much of the Empire's history the Daidoji settlement called Garden Under Shadow City looks down on it with hostility.

Earthquake Fish Bay

Earthquake Fish Bay is a vast bay in the southern Crab lands, bordering both Hida and Yasuki lands. (Prior to the First Yasuki War in the fourth century, it effectively serves as the border between Crane and Crab lands.) It is also the primary source of protein for the Crab Clan due to its perpetually warm waters being home to an enormous and diverse population of fish. Earthquake Fish Bay is located atop a line of (generally dormant) underwater volcanos, which is the source of its warmth and also – when they occasionally wake up – the source of the intermittent earthquakes which give the bay its name. Such earthquakes are usually followed by huge numbers of dead fish floating to the surface of the bay; these "earthquake fish" are considered an ill omen and are never eaten.

Most of the coast surrounding Earthquake Fish Bay is low plateau, with beaches of gravelly thick sand. Many fishing villages are found all around the Bay. The waters of the Bay are often a remarkable shade of blue due to the coral which grows close to the surface in many places.

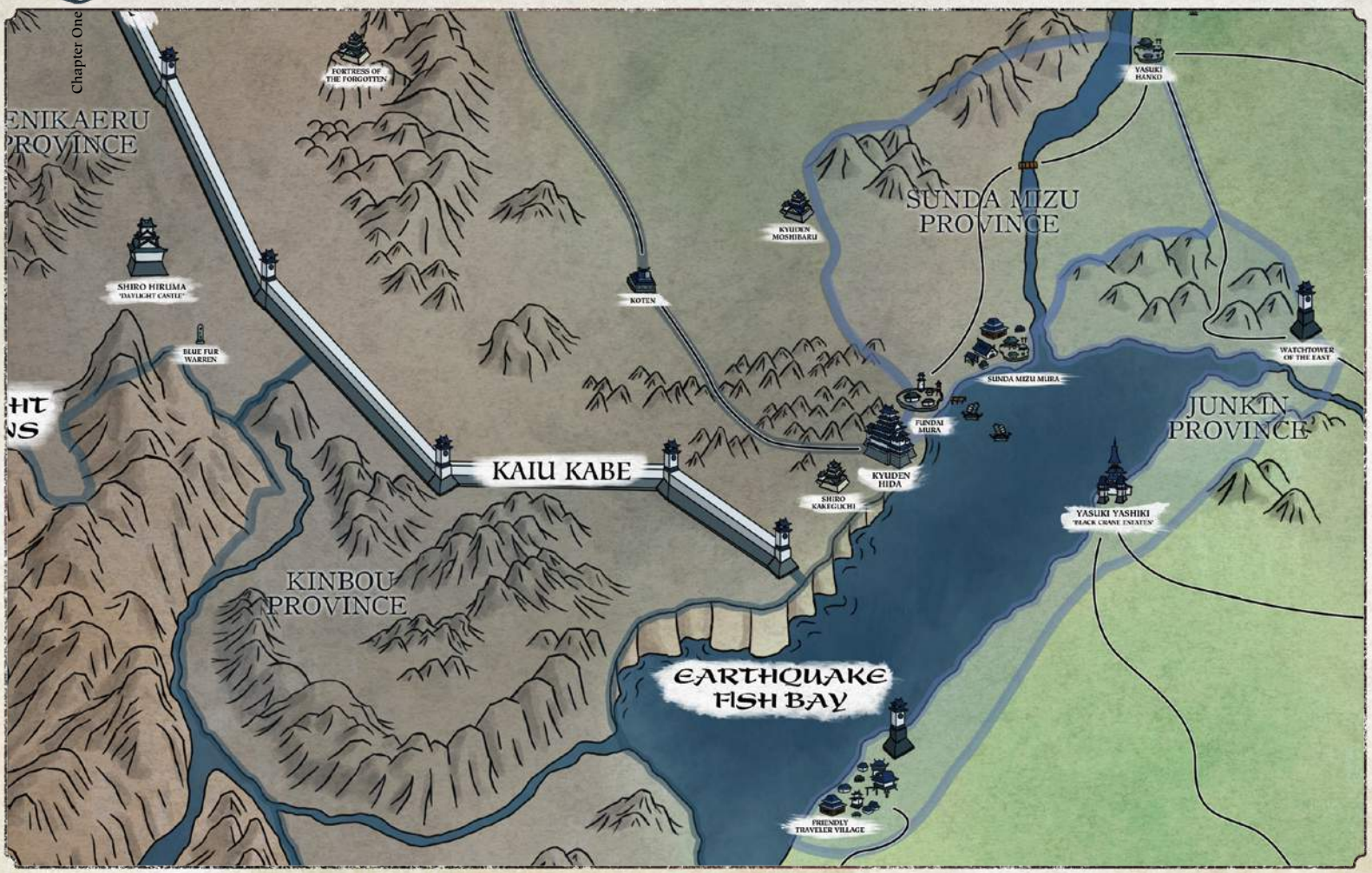
The Tidal Landbridge

The mouth of Earthquake Fish Bay where it enters the sea is known as the Tidal Landbridge because at low tide the water recedes enough to expose a sandy "bridge" of land connecting the two sides. The Tidal Landbridge has been the site of a few small battles between the Crab and the Crane, but more often it is visited by intrepid fishermen who rush in to collect the fish and shellfish that become stranded in tidal pools every day. A few of the Daidoji and Yasuki also use the landbridge to transport good between the lands of the two clans, though the trip across is not an easy one except in times of drought.

The most famous incident at the Tidal Landbridge took place in the eighth century, when a Daidoji daimyo who was out hunting saw a Shadowlands threat on the far bank and rode across to help the Crab fight. It was this incident which caused the Crab Clan to name the Daidoji the "Iron Cranes."

Friendly Traveler Village

Aiso ni Ryokosha Mura is for most of the Empire's history a tiny and wholly unremarkable fishing and brewing village on the shore of Earthquake Fish Bay. That changes at the end of the eleventh century when the cunning dai-



myo Yasuki Taka helps the village to rise to prominence as one of the leading sake producers in the Empire. Taka's success in marketing "Friendly Traveler Sake" results in an economic boom, with the village growing considerably and acquiring multiple sake breweries, tea houses, geisha houses, and other amenities. Subsequently, during the Second and Third Yasuki Wars the Crab and Crane contest the village, but these struggles all end peacefully in order to avoid destroying the village's economic value.

Yasuki Yashiki

The Yasuki Palaces, sometimes called the Black Crane Estates, are an impressive complex which perches majestically on a cliff overlooking Earthquake Fish Bay. The castle is the place the Yasuki claimed as their home after they broke with the Crane. It is a testament to their wealth and trading acumen, a combination of beauty and pragmatism. The castle may seem a work of art when seen from a distance, but it is a Crab castle, and as such also has impressive defensive fortifications built into its splendor. Yashiki Yashiki boasts some of tallest and most impressive towers of any castle in the Empire, allowing it to watch over not only Earthquake Fish Bay and the Tidal Landbridge, but also the nearby Crane lands. However, it also has opulent gardens and expensive art lining its walls. In the center of the castle is a shrine dedicated to both Daikoku, Fortune of Wealth, and the first Yasuki.

Much diplomacy takes place in Yasuki Yashiki, but it is usually of a mercantile sort, focused on trade agreements and tariff disputes. Crane guests are never invited to Yasuki Yashiki, instead typically traveling to the remote Face of the East Castle.

During the Four Winds era, the Shogun Kaneka lays claim to Yasuki Yashiki and uses it as his personal castle for a time. After he swears fealty to the Phoenix, however, the Yasuki family reclaim it.

Sunda Mizu Province

The northern half of Yasuki lands encompasses the north end of Earthquake Fish Bay and the southern end of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. The River of Gold passes through these mountains and into the Bay, and this major trade route connects the Yasuki lands to those of the Scorpion in the north.

Sunda Mizu Province borders the Hida family's Kyoukan Province to the west, and some of its lands were originally a part of that province, while others were controlled by the Crane Clan. After the Yasuki joined the Crab in the fourth century, Sunda Mizu Province was created and granted to them in order to take advantage of their expertise in commerce.

Shiro Kano

In an out of the way portion of the northern Yasuki lands, a place with no strategic value, is the keep of the Kano vassal family. The keep itself is small and no more ostentatious than any other vassal family keep... but within are housed hundreds of exquisite works of art. The Kano family are talented artisans of the Crane Clan before the Yasuki join the Crab, and continue their tradition of excellent art after becoming Crab. Kano art is widely acknowledged to be some of the finest in the Empire, but few know where the family lives and works. The Yasuki like to keep it that way so that any war against the Crane will not result in their reclaiming the family. Sometimes members of other families are accepted for training by the Kano, but they are sworn to secrecy on the location of the keep.

Clear Water Village

The largest and most significant Crab port, located at the mouth of the River of Gold and looking out over Earthquake Fish Bay, Sunda Mizu Mura is actually a city – not to mention one of the oldest settlements in Rokugan. In modern times it is a major trading center, rivaling places like Ryoko Owari or Kyuden Doji in commerce, but still keeps its simple "village" name. Indeed, by the twelfth century, Clear Water Village's population approaches 10,000 people, and may be as high as 15,000 during the annual Great Trading Fairs which the Yasuki host there.

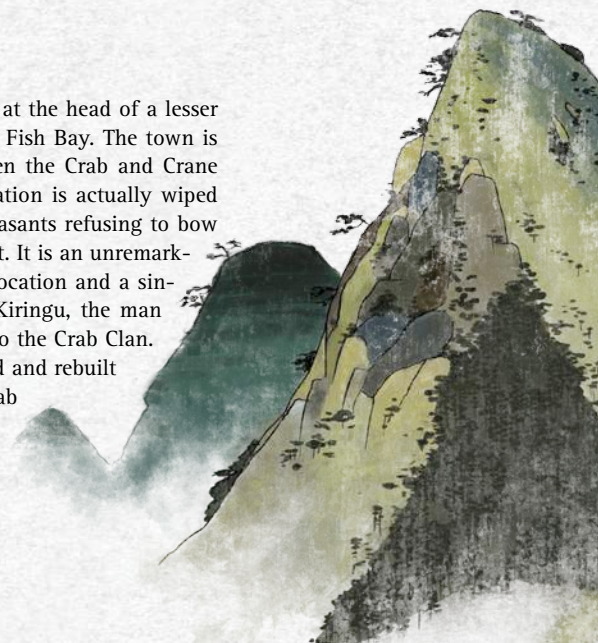
Originally founded by a follower of Hida in the first century, Sunda Mizu Mura falls under Crane control within a few generations, but returns to the Crab as a result of the First Yasuki War in the fourth century. The Crab add strong walls and fortifications, including the so-called Kaiu Wave Wall that protects the port from sea attacks.

The Governor of Clear Water Village is normally a member of the Yasuki family, but during times of war with the Crane Clan a Hida is sometimes appointed instead. Regardless, the Governors tend to look the other way from the city's more unsavory aspects, such as the various "red light" districts and innumerable gambling houses.

Although the city is known most for its commercial activities, it is also home to Sunda Mizu Dojo, one of the most ancient Crab bushi dojo. In fact, the founding of this dojo is attributed to the Kami Hida himself, who supposedly began the tradition of carving students' names into the dojo's stone walls. The city is also home to one of the Empire's oldest and most popular shrines to Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea.

Yasuki Hanko

Yasuki Hanko is a small village at the head of a lesser river which flows into Earthquake Fish Bay. The town is been a bone of contention between the Crab and Crane Clans for centuries, and its population is actually wiped out at various times due to the peasants refusing to bow when a new clan takes control of it. It is an unremarkable village save for its strategic location and a single shrine – dedicated to Yasuki Kiringu, the man who brought the Yasuki family into the Crab Clan. This shrine has also been destroyed and rebuilt many times as the Crane and Crab have variously lost and regained possession of the village.






KOSATEN PROVINCE
TAKUETSU PROVINCE
NANHAN PROVINCE
HAYAKU PROVINCE
OSARI MORI
MIZU-UMI NO FUKO
KAZUMIGETSU PROVINCE
AKA MIZU-UMI
OYOMESAN PROVINCE
GYOSHIA PROVINCE
KISHOU PROVINCE
ITOSHII PROVINCE
TSHUNE MORI
KOEIZEN PROVINCE
AKAGI MORI


AKAGI MORI
GOLDEN SUN PLAIN
EARTHSHAKE FISH BAY
FIELDS OF THE MORNING SUN

Chapter Two

The Lands of the Crane Clan

The lands of the Crane are a testament to the beauty and geographic diversity found within the Emerald Empire. It is said that the heartlands of the Crane, the fertile farms that are the basis of their wealth, were offered by Hantei himself to his favorite sibling, Doji. Whether or not this is true, the Crane live in a wondrous land, ripe with life and possibility. Lady Doji developed much of the Empire's tradition and culture, and her followers and children shared her vision of beauty. Samurai and heimin alike saw the bounty of the Crane lands and flooded in to swear fealty, and courtly civilization grew up swiftly, spreading from the ancient capital to the edges of the clan's territory within just a few years. The wealth of Crane taxes helped build Hantei's home itself; despite the vast amount of food, resources, and talented workers required for this effort, the Crane never seemed to lack for more. This bounty is a constant point of jealousy for the other clans, and enmity has festered over the centuries; the children of Doji are often called decadent and lazy by their rivals.

Crane lands are so extensive that nearly every landscape one can find in the Empire is seen within their provinces. Rolling hills lead up to ancient mountains, dividing the Crane provinces in half. Fertile plains, flowing rivers, lush forests, and wetlands teeming with life all extend inland from the single longest coastline in Rokugan. That coastline includes serene beaches, sheer cliffs, countless small islands, and many prosperous ports. Where other clans are defined by the singular nature of their domain, the Crane are a clan of diversity, born from the land itself.

If any single geographic feature could be said to define the Crane, it must be their coastline. The Crane control the coast of the Empire from Otosan Uchi all the way down to the Yasuki territory in the far south. Not even the island-bound Mantis possess as much oceanfront land as the Crane. North of the Spine of the World Mountains, the coast is mainly small beaches filled with pebbles – gray, purple, and black stones. These beaches blend seamlessly into the rolling hills and occasional low cliffs inland, and the lands here enjoy a temperate climate. The central Crane territory, around the Spine of the World Mountains, is far less hospitable. Jagged outcroppings, submerged reefs, and sheer walls of stone make it difficult to traverse the region by land or by sea. There are a few trails of safe water for skilled navigators, but the foolish and unlucky fill the ocean floor with their ships' wreckage. A unique

feature of this region is the juxtaposition of warm waters from the south and the cooler northern currents, which produce an abundance of unique fish species which can be found nowhere else. Southward, past the mountains, the white sand beaches of the southern Crane territories stretch for endless miles and often reach far inland. Marshes are common in the farthest south, and rainfall is abundant throughout the region; summers are humid, spring short but verdant, and the coast remains warm through most of the year.

Further inland, the fertile plains of the Crane boast fields more productive than any other clan. Rice, cotton, and wheat are supplemented by millet, rapeseed, silk, maize, and sorghum. Both above and below the mountainous divide which splits their territory, these farming regions are ubiquitous; although all of their territory is productive, the most fertile and profitable is a great plain in the north-central Crane provinces – made up of low hills and bountiful valleys, this region begins just northeast of the great Spine and spread across the heart of the Doji provinces. It is this great farming zone which is the key to Crane agricultural wealth, and as a result the heimin here are some of the best-treated in the Empire. In spring, an infinite array of flowers blossom in these fields, turning the ordinary farmland into an artist's paradise, a riot of color and beauty. Nor is this farming bounty the only resource of these lands – streams and small rivers, lakes and ponds all provide an inexhaustible supply of fish, shrimp, water chestnuts, lotus seeds, and other resources.

Although the Crane lands have many farms and settled regions, there are also relatively unused regions which are home to abundant wild game. Forests and open pastures alike are home to rodents, deer, and even wild horses. Predators include foxes, cougars, lynx, and occasionally wolves or lions. There are also tales of more exotic creatures, especially in the forests and mountains, although the Crane do not have the immense stock of supernatural legends found in the lands of the Phoenix or the Kitsune.

Commerce in Crane lands developed out of the agricultural wealth and veritable overabundance the clan enjoys. Rare is the year that a Crane lord is unable to provide his master with higher taxes than expected – while also maintaining a surplus in his own domain. Thus, the Cran heimin are rarely discontent and their lands remain harmonious. The Crane use their surpluses for trade, exporting their agricultural wealth in exchange for the iron, jade, and other such resources they are unable to easily produce for themselves.

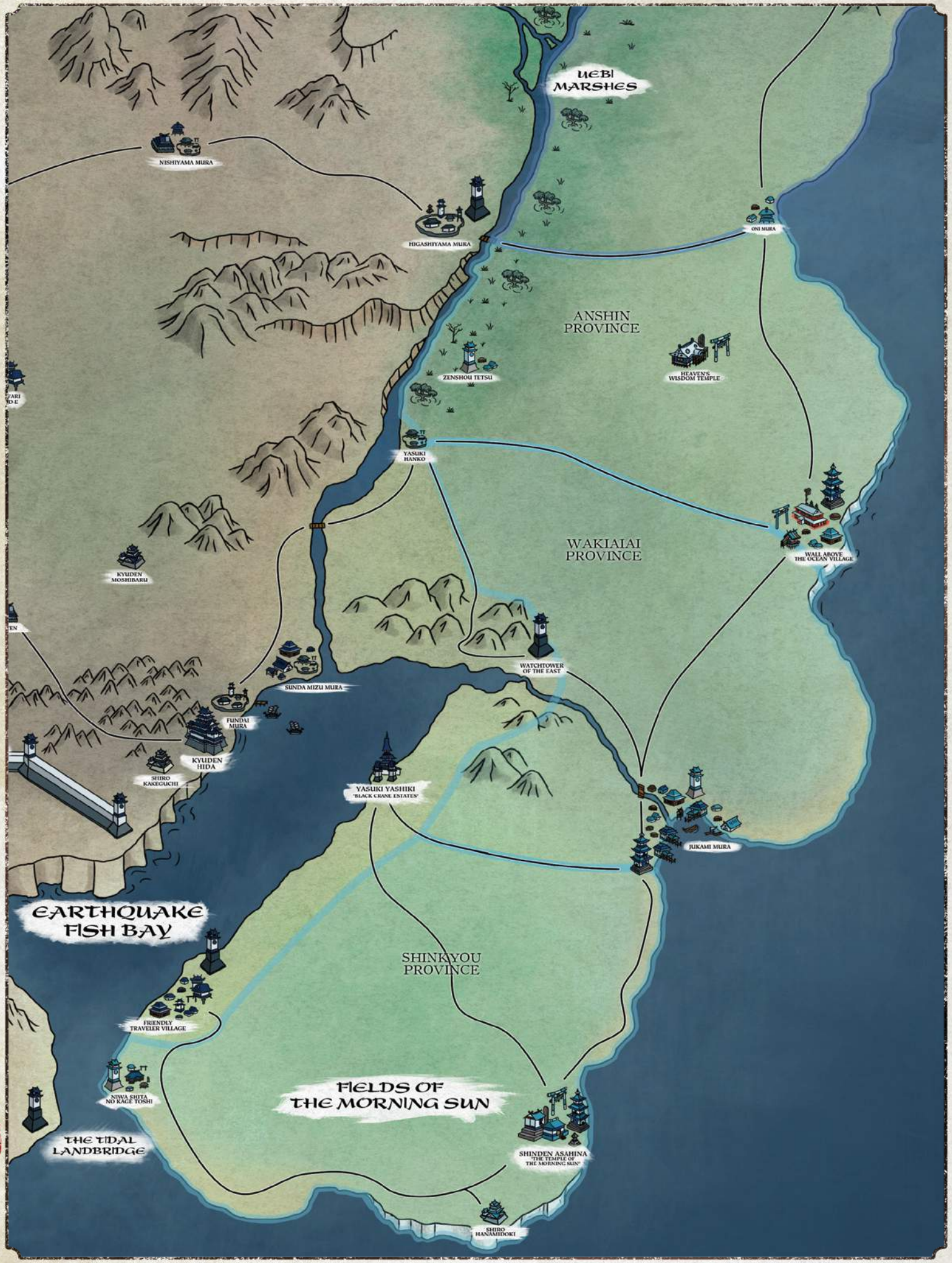
The borders of the Crane lands have been in flux since the earliest days of the clan. The frequent, at times near-constant, wars with the Lion has seen the central and northern Crane territorial borders ebb and flow, though the clan's negotiators are often able to regain what is lost on the battlefield. Mercantile clashes with the Mantis place limits on Crane control of the sea, especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The most significant reshaping of borders is of course in the farthest south, where the "Yasuki break" of the fourth century shifts a significant amount of land to the Crab clan and gives rise to a heritage of frequent warfare. In later centuries there is seldom a time when some portion of the Crane-Crab border is not in contention.

The Asahina Provinces

The Asahina lands are the furthest south of the Crane territories (after the departure of the Yasuki), and form an oasis of peace between hostile clans. Along the coast, conflict with Mantis pirates is intermittent but vicious when it occurs; to the west, relations with the Crab are even worse, poisoned by the Yasuki defection. But the Asahina lands themselves see little conflict, the family bound to peace and focused on the worlds of the spirits and the arts. The kami of Air favor the Asahina, and though this region of the Empire is famed for tumultuous winds and hurricanes, it is rare for their provinces to suffer damage.

The Asahina landscape is dominated by beaches and marshes on the coast and by farmlands to the interior. However, where other Crane regions focus on beauty and wealth, the Asahina instead emphasize serenity and calm. They are as productive as any other Crane region, but the Asahina daimyo often send their surplus to help poor regions of the Empire. So peaceful are these lands that many say it would be impossible to go to war in the Asahina provinces – this is obviously hyperbole, but it is true that these domains have seen less conflict than nearly any other region in the Empire.




UEBI MARSHES
NISHIYAMA MURA
HIGASHIYAMA MURA
ONI MURA
ANSHIN PROVINCE
ZENSHOU TETSU
HEAVEN'S WISDOM TEMPLE
YASUKI HANKO
WAKIAIAI PROVINCE
WALL ABOVE THE OCEAN VILLAGE
KYUDEN MOSHIBARU
WATCHTOWER OF THE EAST
SUNDA MIZU MURA
FUNDAI MURA
KYUDEN HIDA
SHIRO KAKEGUCHI
YASUKI YASHIKI "BLACK CRANE ESTATES"
JUKAMI MURA
EARTHQUAKE FISH BAY
SHINKYOU PROVINCE
FRIENDLY TRAVELER VILLAGE
NIWA SHITA NO KAGE TOSHI
FIELDS OF THE MORNING SUN
THE TIDAL LANDBRIDGE
SHINDEN ASAHINA "THE TEMPLE OF THE MORNING SUN"
SHIRO HANAMIDOKI



Travel along the coastal waterlanes is the preferred (and fastest route) through the Asahina domains, but the family maintains a strong network of roadways as well, especially near the Crab lands where the Daidoji must station their armies. Peaceful Traveler Way connects the northern lands of the Crane to the Asahina, while Skipping Stone Road travels south to the major settlement of Jukami Mura. The latter road is named for the arcing path it takes through the hillsides, and is well protected by mercenary troops hired by Jukami Mura. Asahina's Path leads from Jukami Mura to Shinden Asahina, and it is said this road was frequently walked by Isawa Asahina himself in the later days of his life... until he finally died on the road. The ground there has a small roadside shrine dedicated to his memory. Finally, the ironically named Route of Perfect Contentment follows a coastal route from Shinden Asahina into the Crab territory, passing through Garden Under Shadow City (until the latter's destruction during the Clan War) and ending at the Yasuki holding called Friendly Traveler Village.

Anshin Province

Located between the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains and the ocean, Anshin Province can be said to be a home to both radiant light and the shadow of darkness. Filled with shrines and temples, it in many ways is the perfect example of what other samurai imagine when they think of the Asahina lands. The province is by far the largest and most prosperous of the Asahina lands in terms of agricultural wealth.

However, Anshin is marred by its lengthy shared border with the Crab. The Daidoji maintain a strong garrison here in the keep of Zenshou Tetsu, but are constrained by the peace-loving Asahina – if any other family ruled here, history would likely have seen far more than three major Yasuki Wars.

Wall Above the Ocean Village

The settlement called Yama ue no ho ni Umi Mura sprouts like a flower amid a tumultuous landscape, located within the foothills just west of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. An ideal stopping-point between the more rural southern Crane territories and the wealthier cosmopolitan lands in the north, from its early days the village was known for its many small inns and sake houses, its friendly inhabitants, and a spectacular view of the ocean. As a result, the village's population and economy have grown tremendously over the centuries. Its large market offers all manner of both practical supplies and beautiful trinkets – jewelry, sumi-e prints, and even the occasional "blessed artifact."

In the earliest days of spring, the Wall Above the Ocean Village celebrates the return of life with a huge festival featuring dancers, music, and hanabi (fireworks). The expense of this is paid by the village itself from the surplus wealth it gains through trade. During this festival the shops remain open and even offer discounts to visitors to encourage future trade. Unsurprisingly, the worship of both Daikoku, Fortune of Wealth, and Hotei, Fortune of Contentment, are both prominent here, with large shrines supported by donations from the entire town (especially the wealthy merchants). No one skimps on these donations – to do so might invite the wrathful aspects of both Fortunes and ruin a lifetime of prosperity.

The oldest inn in town is the House of Spirited Peace. Built from a series of connected cottages and houses, the inn truly comes into its own during the reconstruction period after the Clan War. Its unique construction offers many separate rooms, each able to serve as a fully contained home for long-term travelers or a fine suite for those making a short stay.

Oni Mura

For most of the Empire's history, this is merely one of many ordinary Crane villages in the Anshin Province. However, in the early twelfth century a tragic event results in the so-called "Demon Village" becoming a deserted blight upon the otherwise beautiful landscape.

During the Clan War, an army of goblins and demons assaults the town, wrecking it so utterly that the land itself is reshaped. Villagers nearby grow sick and die, their minds filled with the madness of the Taint of Jigoku. Children are malformed, otherwise healthy and hale heimin fall dead from unknown maladies. The wise move away, believing the entire region to now be haunted. Some believe an oni still resides in the ruined village, waiting for a foolish but strong soul to claim for itself. Others think perhaps a hungry gaki spirit is trapped here, the soul of an Asahina who died during the Clan War and was later further corrupted by other events such as the War Against the Shadow and the War of Spirits.

Whatever the truth may be, the Asahina have been unable to purge the curse from this ruined village, and by the end of the twelfth century they have largely given up trying. The village continues to slowly decay, its huts broken and scattered by war, age, and weather. Only the most foolish dare to enter the town's crumbling walls, and more than one prideful ronin has ended his story here. The village's original name is forgotten, perhaps deliberately purged from Asahina records.

Zenshou Tetsu

Zenshou Tetsu is a Daidoji manned outpost within Anshin province, one of the closest waystations for the Crane military on the border of the Crab lands. In contrast to Garden Under Shadow City farther south, it is a small holding, primarily serving as a refitting outpost for scouts and a first line of warning in the event of invasion. In the face of a full-scale Crab invasion, Zenshou Tetsu will fall without even a whimper, but the invading force will find its advance fraught with danger at every step.

There is usually an Asahina shugenja posted to this holding, typically one with a less zealous focus on maintaining peace at all costs. Should the Crab (or any other army) invade this region, the shugenja is expected to use the Air kami to warn the rest of the clan.

Heaven's Wisdom Temple

Low hills rise up around this region onto a single open plain, high above sea level, almost as if it were created for its current purpose. Early Asahina recognize the region as the perfect domain to practice stargazing, astronomy, and astrology. Moreover, divinations reveal the site as blessed by the Fortunes, and some believe this proves it was the will of Heaven itself that the Asahina become adept at interpreting signs from the stars. Whatever the truth, the Asahina build Heaven's Wisdom Temple at the center of the plain: a place that is simultaneously a library, a home for monks, and a scholar's retreat.

The Temple possesses astral records dating back to the dawn of the Empire, many of them brought here after it is constructed. The libraries also contain many prophecies, both light and dark, those fulfilled and those waiting their turn. The monks here are divided into two general groups: former Daidoji-turned-sohei who protect it, and far more numerous scholarly monks, mostly retired from the Asahina family.

Wakiaiai Province

Much of Wakiaiai Province is marshland, hot and humid in the warm months, filled with fog in the winter. The land is nestled tightly between the endless ocean to the south and east, the Anshin province to the north, and the rocky Yasuki lands surrounding Earthquake Fish Bay to the west. Mantis sailors and disgruntled peasants often call this land the "armpit of the Crane" due to its humid climate and boggy stench, especially in the summer. Wakiaiai is a rural province with a relatively small total population, stuck between the two merchant strongholds of Jukami Mura and Yasuki Yashiki. Those who do live here are thus never far from the commercial life.

Jukami Mura

Jukami Mura, the so-called "Port That Never Sleeps," is a cornerstone of trade in the Asahina lands and the entire southern half of the Crane territory. When the Mantis Clan had yet to obtain Great Clan status, an embassy in Jukami Mura served as the key location for their mercenaries to hire out to the Crane. The city also serves as a nexus of trade between the Mantis, the Crane, and the Crab, connecting the coast to the Mantis isles by ship and to the Yasuki lands by both land and sea.

The Asahina welcome travelers and invite mercantile interests of all types, but this has its own costs. Over time, a sort of "Crab docks" has developed in the port, a district dominated by visiting Crab and Mantis sailors, mercenaries of all sorts, and criminals; over the centuries, this has become an entrenched problem in the town, and the Asahina call on the Doji to supply magistrates in an effort to restrain the worst abuses in the district.

For all its troubles with the "Crab port," Jukami Mura is actually a surprisingly peaceful town overall. This is due in large part to an unusual custom, one that would be outright refused in most other lands – the Asahina humbly "suggest" that all weapons be left outside the walls, in shops designed to clean and polish the blades. Samurai of high status can get away with simply "peace-knotting" their daisho, but even this draws annoyed glances from Asahina overseers. Only those with papers from an Imperial authority, or those approved by the Asahina personally, are given the right to carry weapons unrestricted within Jukami Mura. An interesting side-effect of this policy is the rise of back-alley jiujutsu rings and wrestling arenas where ronin, Mantis, Crab, and even a few angry Crane can let off steam and earn a few pieces of silver.



Shinkyou Province

Shinkyou Province is the heartland of the Asahina, home to the blessed Fields of the Morning Sun which hold both the home temple of the Asahina family and a prominent Temple of Jurojin. The family views this as a land of sacred peace, built from the combination of philosophical ideas, political enforcement, and the supplication of spirits who promote nonviolence. Each aspect feeds upon the other, and the Asahina consider their land to be the closest mortals can get to the ideals of Heaven. Heimin and merchants, ji-samurai, and the rulers of the province all share an ever-present sense of calm and serenity, a respect for life that makes the people of the Shinkyou some of the most pleasant to interact with in the Empire. Ironically, for much of its history this province is also home to Garden Under Shadow City, the largest Daidoji military stronghold in the southern Crane lands – a holding of necessity, required by the presence of the Crab lands nearby.

Shinkyou Province forms a peninsula, bounded on one side by Earthquake Fish Bay and on the other by the sea. A beach at the tip of this province connects it to the Crab Clan's lands by way of the famous Tidal Landbridge.

Shinden Asahina and Bunya sano Asahina

Isawa Asahina constructed his first stronghold on the Fields of the Morning Sun, making it far more a temple to the kami than a castle for men. The Fields themselves are sacrosanct, and no honorable man dares defile them with violence – the family believes it was partly the influence of this place which mollified their founder's fury and led him to embrace the path of peace. Here, more than any other place in Crane lands, peace enforces itself. The Asahina encourage both visitors and their own clansmen to journey to this place and meditate upon their surroundings. It is said that anyone who desires a peaceful solution to a problem, whether it be an external issue or their own inner turmoil, will find the answer here if they but look. All but the most aggressive or impious Crane attempt to make a journey to these temples at least once in their life, and the most pious Asahina do so every year.

Shinden Asahina is a temple complex rather than a castle, a place for theology, meditation, art, and study. None who have taken a life with their own hands are allowed to study here, nor is politics allowed to intrude; aside from those constraints, however, visitors are free to come and go as they please, and read any books they wish. The massive oak doors of the main temple have never been shut, and no other doors within are locked. The magnificent libraries contain many topics but are focused most strongly on the teachings of Shinsei, which the Asahina hold in great reverence. The walls of the temples are inscribed with stories of the Crane Clan, tales of peace and harmony, and parables from the Tao, but are never allowed to depict death in any form. Some claim the spirits within these stone walls come alive and share secret knowledge to those who are truly dedicated to the path of peace. Whether this is true or not, it would certainly take a lifetime of wandering within this complex to read and comprehend the carvings of every wall.

The Asahina's monastic creed puts them somewhat at odds with the luxury of their clan and the commerce which thrives elsewhere in their provinces. Shinden Asahina is a far more modest and restrained place than most Crane family holdings, but it does contain exquisite works of art of all types, for art is the Asahina's one true extravagance.



Garden Under Shadow City

The settlement called Niwa Shita no Kage Toshi is located in the far southern end of Shinkyou Province, watching over the border with the Crab Clan and the Tidal Landbridge. A settlement of modest size, it is dominated by a martial castle which contains a sizable garrison of Daidoji troops. The daimyo of the Daidoji family visits the castle regularly, often staying for as much as half the year.

Although Shiro Daidoji is the heart of the family's military knowledge and studies, Garden Under Shadow boasts its own impressive resources, most notable a series to tables built to replicate the terrain of the Crane lands. The tables show treelines, castle positions, rivers, and roads, and are updated once per year with information brought by the students of the Daidoji Scout School.

During the Clan War, this city and castle are burned to the ground by a Crab-Shadowlands army led by Hida Yakamo. The subsequent resumption of border conflict over the Yasuki family prevents the Crane from rebuilding the castle, and at the end of the twelfth century only a few scattered stones remain of a stronghold that stood for over seven hundred years.



Shiro Hanamidoki

Shiro Hanamidoki is a center for learning and understanding. Located in an unassuming region with no arable land, surrounded by hills which block access to other villages, its name comes from the small grove of cherry trees close to the castle, a singular and beauteous sight in an otherwise stark place. A library occupies the main floor of the castle, while over a dozen shrines fill every spare corner, allowing room for thought and prayer.

Hanamidoki is inhabited primarily by retired Asahina shugenja, theologians, peaceable philosophers, and healers. Very unusually, no servants are allowed – the scholar and monks themselves maintain the castle in all ways, viewing the humble labor as spiritually purifying. (A few selected eta are brought in to handle spiritually polluting labor.)

The Daidoji Provinces

The lands of the Daidoji are the exception to the general rule of the Crane territories. Instead of lands crammed fit to burst with enviable fertility and beautification, the five provinces of the Daidoji are stark and utilitarian. They exist for the dual purposes of providing the wealth that ensures well-fed soldiers and the defensible holdings that ensure survival for the remainder of the clan. The core of the Daidoji military is found in these lands, and it is not mere chance that Daidoji provinces are the physically largest part of the Crane territories. A knowledgeable general can see the true shape and development wrought on these provinces – the military "art" of the Daidoji, land shaped and formed to produce subtle yet profound effects on the battlefield.

The northern Daidoji provinces promote swift movement, defensible locations, and easy transportation of both mercantile goods and marching armies. Because of the Crane Clan's near-constant war with the Lion for over a thousand years, these northern lands see more martial presence and training than the rest of the clan's provinces combined. Travel in these provinces is almost entirely by road, with the route called Defender's Path connecting the major holdings and fortresses together. This road is well-maintained and easily travelled, allowing the Daidoji and Doji to easily send troops to aid one another in a time of war. Shinsei's Road, which leads from the Daidoji lands to those of the Matsu in Lion territory, is named for the old saying "not even the Little Teacher could bring peace to the Crane and the Lion" and is one of the most heavily guarded and patrolled roads in the Empire.

In the south, the Daidoji lands are somewhat more peaceful – the Crane face no major enemies here, and the Crab threat is in the Asahina lands. Agriculture and military training are the twin focuses here, though the swift movement of goods to and from the dozens of Crane ports is a major emphasis as well. Travel here is as often by sea as by land, and the roads appear to be mainly for commerce – but to those with a scout's eye, these roads are clearly designed for war as well. The Trail of Sorrow is the most prominent roadway here, connecting the Daidoji to the lands of the Kitsune family.

Kosaten Province

Kosaten Province teems with activity all year long, and its storied history seems to offer only moments of peace as brief stopping points on the way to war. The people of Kosaten share a border on both the north and west with the Lion clan, while to southwest the Spine of the World Mountains and the Three Sides River protect them from conflict with the Scorpion. When war with the Lion takes place, Kosaten Province is the first to experience the heavy sandals of the Matsu soldiers tramping upon its roads and fields. However, even during times of war the land is so rich that it never sees a short harvest. Temperate climate, fertile soil, and loyal heimin make Kosaten Province the jewel of the Daidoji holdings.

Kosaten Shiro

Kosaten Shiro is the preeminent military fortress of the Crane, though it cannot hope to rival the great fortresses of the Crab and Lion. Standing at the vanguard during the clan's seemingly endless wars with the Lion, Crossroads Castle is key to the clan's defenses, and is the site of constant military drills. The Daidoji hold this castle in the highest regard and it is the linchpin of much of their military strategy. From Kosaten Shiro, Daidoji saboteurs venture out to harass invading forces and wreak havoc on their supply lines; large numbers of conventional troops are also housed here, ready to take the field. For miles between here and the border the land is filled with traps, deadfalls, ambush sites, and similar defensive resources. Three Sides River and the Lake of Sorrows both act as water sources for Kosaten Shiro. The Daidoji have been known to exploit the superstitions and violent history of the Lake of Sorrows to deter their enemies, such as with soldiers camouflaged and hidden in fog


KITSU TOMBS
KAERU TOSHI
(FORMERLY BRITTLE FLOWER CITY)
KYUDEN KAKITA
THE KAKITA ACADEMY &
THE STEEL GARDENS
OF THE KENSHINZEN
WEST HUB
VILLAGE
TAKUETSU
PROVINCE
SHIRO
IWASAKI
TSUMA
KOSATEN
PROVINCE
NANHAN
PROVINCE
KOSATEN
SHIRO
SHIRO
ASHIDAKA
GIJI SEIDO
HAYAKU
PROVINCE
OSARI
MORI
MIZU-UMI
NO FUKO
SHIRO DAIDOJI
"SON OF THE CRANE CASTLE"
SHIZUKA
TOSHI
KAZENMUKETSU
PROVINCE
EYE
OF THE
NEEDLE
YUFUKU NA
HEIGEN TOSHI
RIVER OF THE
BLIND MONK
FANTASTIC
GARDENS
OF THE DOJI
KYUDEN DOJI
"SEEMED PALACES
OF THE CRANE"
AKA
MIZU-UMI
HOTEI
SEIDO
SAKANA
MURA
MUSUME
MURA
OYOMESAN
PROVINCE
KEEP OF
THE FORTUNATE
HUSBAND
KOERU
MURA
KYUDEN
ASHINAGABACHI
SEVEN FOLD
PALACE
QUIET STREAM
VILLAGE
CHINSEI
MORI
BENTEN
SEIDO

The architecture of the palace itself is no less military in nature. The castle is designed to shroud the area around it in concealing shadows, and its very walls radiate hostility toward attackers as if the stones themselves were waiting to kill. Considering the number of hideaways and murder holes embedded within those walls, this is not far from the truth.

Although Kosaten Shiro is above all a military holding, during in times of peace the Crossroads Castle lives up to its name by serving as an important link for the trade coming in and out of Crane territory from the west.

Hayaku Province

Named after the founder of the Daidoji family, Hayaku Province is perhaps the most secure location under Daidoji care. Nestled between the Nanhan province of the Kakita in the north and the Doji provinces of Oyomesan and Kazenmuketsu in the south and east, Hayaku is bordered on the west by the Lake of Sorrows and the River of the Blind Monk. This province is home to Shiro Daidoji, the family's seat of power and military academy, as well as to the booming trade settlement of Prosperous Plains City – thus, it encompasses both aspects of the family in a single place.

The bulk of the lush Osari Mori is found in Hayaku Province. The Daidoji cultivate this modest forest with great care, unwilling to lose such a vital resource.

Giji Seido

In the fourth century, a Crane castle in Daidoji lands stood for a single year before a band of insane ronin attacked and destroyed it. The castle was put to the torch, all inhabitants trapped inside and killed. Within a month, every single ronin was hunted down, captured, and executed... but the Daidoji could not bring themselves to rebuild on the site of such a tragedy. A single tower was built as a shrine to the dead, named Giji Seido, a place not visited by the Crane and virtually unknown to anyone outside the clan.

For over seven hundred years, a secret faction within the Daidoji Scouts called the "Harriers" operate from a set of tunnels and caves beneath this shrine. Their activities finally come to an end in the late twelfth century when the Clan Champion learns about the organization and orders it disbanded.

Prosperous Plains City

Yufuku Heigen Toshi is one of the largest trade centers in the Empire; its open air market is unrivaled in size, and even the hated Yasuki family maintains a significant presence here. Location is the key factor to this success, for Prosperous Plains City sits on the pathway between Kosaten Shiro, Shiro Daidoji, and Kyuden Doji – the most active trade route in Rokugan. Thousands of visitors pass through each month during the warmer months. The city sprouted from a tiny fishing village which was home to the lady Yasuki at the dawn of the Empire, and the wise woman's hut remained a popular shrine until the Yasuki defection to the Crab in the fourth century.

The main draw of the city is the huge marketplace, often called the Market of Kaze-no-Kami. Clamor, confusion, and frightful noise are the terms used by many visitors to describe this gigantic open-air market. It is named for the constant wind which blows through it, and the superstitious believe the market's chaos is actually pleasing to the Fortune of Wind. Most agree that windy days often see more visitors, resulting in better deals and higher trade.

Another major draw in the city is a temple devoted to Koshin, the Fortune of Roads – said to be that Fortune's single largest temple in the Empire. Its existence dates back to a small branch of the Daidoji family which aided in the construction of roads, established major trade caravans, and promoted awareness of commerce.

Tsangusuri Daigaku

Located within the walls of Prosperous Plains City, this is actually an Asahina resource – their school for the creation of the famous fetishes known as tsangusuri. The dojo was created for the Asahina by Kakita artisans, and accepts only Crane students who are approved by the Asahina masters. Students are expected to devote themselves to the pacifistic views of the Tao so that their skills are not exploited for war or cruelty.

Each year at the vernal equinox, the school holds an event called the Shower of Beauty Festival. This celebrates the most beautiful, original, and profound creations by its students over the last twelve months.

Shiro Daidoji

The home palace of the Daidoji family is regarded by the family with as much reverence as a holy site. With the possible exception of Kosaten Shiro, no other fortress holds more significance to the Crane. The castle is austere and intimidating, more like a castle of the Akodo than a Crane holding. It has minimal guest accommodations, just enough to cater to the needs of visitors from other Crane families; non-Crane visitors are few, for only those who must be intimidated by a show of strength are sent here for negotiations.

The one luxury Shiro Daidoji does boast is one of the most detailed and extensive libraries of military writing in the Empire, dwarfing those of all other clans save the Lion. The quantity and sheer variety of military knowledge in this library is staggering. The Daidoji even keep certain controversial documents on things like gaijin tactics, essays on the behavior of Shadowlands forces, and works on other non-human styles of war, much of which might be considered treasonous to the rest of the Empire. The Daidoji know that to keep such knowledge is dishonorable, but they believe their first duty to their clan is to be ready to defeat any and every possible opponent.

During the War Against the Darkness in the early twelfth century, Shiro Daidoji is destroyed by Goju saboteurs while the main strength of the family is away at war. The wealth of the Crane, however, allows it to be quickly rebuilt afterward.

Sabishii Province

Sabishii province is an eclectic region, including the Uebe marshes, the Akagi forest, and various open plains and farmlands. Each section of the domain is cut off from the rest by these terrain features, creating an atmosphere of isolation and even loneliness for the inhabitants.

Mura Sabishii Toshi

Lonely Shore City is located well inside Sabishii Province, isolated behind coastal hills and cliffs, making it difficult to find by overland travel. It is a major center for Crane mercantilism and naval strength, as well as the home to the infamous Daidoji Trading Council, so the Crane prefer that it receive the majority of its traffic by sea rather than by land. Diplomatic negotiations in this city tend to be trade oriented and are often quite ruthless, the Daidoji tending to be far less courteous than their Doji or Kakita brethren. The majority of all trade and diplomacy with the Mantis takes place here, for the Daidoji see the brusque Yoritomo style and flaunting of wealth as inappropriate for other Crane courts.

The Daidoji Trading House is said to be the heart of Mura Sabishii Toshi. It is an enormous conglomerate of connected warehouses, and while its central chamber is used to conduct business operations, visitors can easily get lost within the dizzying array of subsidiary rooms and buildings. Few if any non-Crane are allowed to wander through the tremendous rooms of the Trading House, and then only to impress them with the scale and scope of Daidoji power and wealth.

Kyuden Morehei and the Palace of the Sea King

In the fifth century, a vassal family called the Morehei builds a castle on a small island just south of Mura Sabishii Toshi. The Morehei are masters of the court, artisans and craftsman of renowned grace, and specially dedicated to Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea. They build a major shrine on the island and a huge statue of Suitengu stands on the coastline, guarding their home. For many years their home waters are blessed with comfortable weather and their wealth grows, turning their domain into a lap of luxury that even the Crane Champion visits from time to time. However, their island's isolation and small size leaves no room for territorial expansion, limiting the family's advancement.

Over time, the courtiers of the Morehei become obsessed with finding other ways to increase their stature, and the family begins to neglect Suitengu's temple. In the eighth century, the wrathful Fortune delivers a warning to the head of the family, Daidoji Yuo, in a fever dream. In his arrogance the daimyo ignores the vision, and three days later a tremendous earthquake rocks the island. The entire domain sinks beneath the waves, leaving only the gigantic statue to Suitengu above the water.

In the centuries after the fall of the Morehei, sailors come to refer to the statue as the "Sea King" and call the location the "Palace of the Sea King." Rumors spread of treasure beneath the waves, of Ningyo living in the halls of a mythical castle. Others say that Daidoji Yuo still haunts the drowned halls beneath the ocean, and anyone who takes so much as a single zeni from his cursed domain will be chased by his ghost for eternity.

Songbird's Cage

The ancestral home of the Hiramori vassal family is built in the sixth century after a shameful event known as the Foxfire War, an incident which the Daidoji never mention to outsiders. Located between the Akagi forest and the Uebe Marshes, and overlooking Mura Sabishii Toshi at the coast, this small castle contains a scattered array of deep tunnel complexes and camouflaged buildings. It serves as both the home and the primary training grounds for the Hiramori, who are rumored to specialize in smuggling, spying, and other covert and illegal activities. Due to their reputation the small keep draws more Imperial inspectors than any other in the Daidoji provinces, but thus far they have never discovered anything worthy of legal sanction.

Water Music Village

Water Music Village is located two days' walk north and east of Lonely Shore City, and is one of the few inland settlements in Sabishii Province. During the reign of Emperor Hantei XVII, a Crane poet named Kakita Saigyu visited a beautiful waterfall in this area. His poetry on the landmark was admired far and wide and created a steady stream of travelers who eventually founded the nearby village.

As a result of this history, Water Music Village – unlike the other small and isolated towns within Sabishii province – receives a steady flow of outside visitors, many of them of quite high fame or rank. Poets, painters, and other artisans both within in the Crane and from elsewhere regularly try to rediscover the beauty discovered by Kakita Saigyu.

Ichigun Province

Though Ichigun is perhaps the largest of the Daidoji provinces, it is also lowest in stature to those outside the family. Nearly every aspect of its importance is specific to the military role of the Daidoji family. It does boast many acres of croplands, growing both rice and grain, and the family uses those lands for troop exercises as well.

The Daidoji Training Grounds

This is the main location for the training of the Daidoji legions. The complex's so-called Great Barracks is capable of housing a truly staggering number of troops. Legions of men and women live in this holding, and only the finest and most ruthless of quartermasters are capable of seeing to its staggering logistical needs. Sake, tea, foodstuffs, and


AKAGI MORI
SABISHII PROVINCE
KYUDEN KITSUNE
UEBI MARSHES
SUZUME HILLS
GOLDEN SUN PLAIN
DAIDOJI TRAINING GROUNDS
KYUDEN SUZUME
THE DAIDOJI ESTATES
ICHIGUN PROVINCE
UEBI MARSHES
HIGASHIYAMA MURA
ONI MURA
ANSHIN PROVINCE
ZENSHOU TETSU
HEAVEN'S WISDOM TEMPLE
YASHIKI HANKO
WAKIAIAI PROVINCE
WATCHTOWER OF THE EAST
JUKAMI MURA

all the necessities of an army arrive here daily from all over Crane lands.

The Daidoji have also created a number of private shrines in this complex for their soldiers to spend time in contemplation. These many small temples are often attended by trained geisha to help the soldiers relax, though the family does not report this policy to the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

One other item of note about this place is the massive staff of professional gardeners sent here from the Kakita Artisan Academy. They oversee a staff of hundreds of peasants who maintain the fields around the Training Grounds in a pristine condition, preventing the regular training of thousands of soldiers from reducing this region to dust and mud.

The Daimyo's Estate

After the first Yasuki War in the fourth century, the Doji and Kakita families presented this estate to the ruler of the Daidoji in gratitude for his family's Daidoji's skill and ability. It is one of the finest private estates in all the Crane lands, replete with opulence and creature comforts that most samurai can only imagine. The estate is meant to be a home away from home, an oasis of relaxation for the lord of the Daidoji. With the Training Fields nearby, the daimyo is able to feel at ease while also being within easy reach of one of his family's major military centers.

The Doji Provinces

There are few places in the Emerald Empire as resplendent or as wealthy as the lands of the Doji. The Doji provinces are scattered up and down the coastline of Rokugan, split into northern and southern domains by the Spine of the World Mountains. They benefit from immensely fertile agricultural lands, managed by a peasant class that is rarely, if ever, restless or disgruntled.

The northern Doji lands are glamorous bastions of political power, maintained in a state of such cleanliness and beauty that outsiders sometimes view them as one vast garden. Samurai (especially courtiers) compete desperately for assignments to these territories, for it is here that the majority of the Empire's politics takes place. Travel in these lands relies on an extensive network of well-maintained roadways, most expanding off from the main route which connects Kyuden Doji and Koeru Mura by way of Daughter Village. This road is known for eleven centuries as Five Swords Road in honor of Doji Yasurugi's five great creations, but is renamed Hoturi's Hope after the Second Day of Thunder in honor of Doji Hoturi's sacrifice.

The southern holdings are a mix of farmlands, trading ports, and other resource-producing holdings. Ji-samurai and lesser Doji vassals are appointed here, striving always to prove themselves well enough to go to the north.





The family also controls ample lumber resources in the Osari Mori, cultivated for both artistry and construction. Travel and commerce in this region (and between here and the north) relies more often on ships.

Kazenmuketsu Province

For eleven centuries, an assignment to this province is the goal of every great courtier, Doji or otherwise. Bordered in the north by the Imperial lands which surround the capital of the Empire, and itself home to the capital of the Crane provinces at Kyuden Doji, Kazenmuketsu is the pinnacle of Rokugani politics. Although the importance of the province declines slightly in the mid-twelfth century when the Imperial Capital relocates to Toshi Ranbo, it remains hugely influential.

Unlike many other Crane provinces, Kazenmuketsu is rather heavily forested – it contains large sections of the Osari Mori, as well as the entire Aireru Mori and the Sokustel forest. It is also home to a smaller forest called the Needle's Eye which contains portals to the spirit realms, portals which open randomly during the full moon. During the reign of Emperor Hantei XXII, his young son runs off and spends the night in the woods; he later claims he was kept safe through the night by a silver fox. When he ascends to the Throne as Emperor Hantei XXIII, he proclaims the forest sacrosanct, allowing no harvesting or hunting within its boundaries. The Doji honor this proclamation through all the years after.

Kyuden Doji

All political power in Crane territories flows from the hub of Kyuden Doji. The Doji family governs its own extensive territories and its incredible network of alliances from here, with all the intricate artistry and infinitesimal detail for which they are famed. The original designs of this castle are said to have been laid out by Lady Doji herself, and the Crane have always sought to maintain her divine vision. The main keep is ten stories high (but only ten stories, lest they insult the Emperor by letting their castle rise higher), and perches atop a high coastal plateau above its supporting city. The rest of the plateau is covered by the glorious expanse of the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane, which are almost as well-known as the castle itself.

Kyuden Doji has no military dojo and hosts not a single Crane legion. It does, however, boast a veritable army of political bureaucrats, artists, and diplomats. The palace's guest quarters and facilities are lavish and open, warm and inviting, capable of supporting over a hundred honored visitors and their entourages. In fact, this palace has hosted more Winter Courts than any other location in the Empire except perhaps Otosan Uchi itself.

The Fantastic Gardens of the Crane

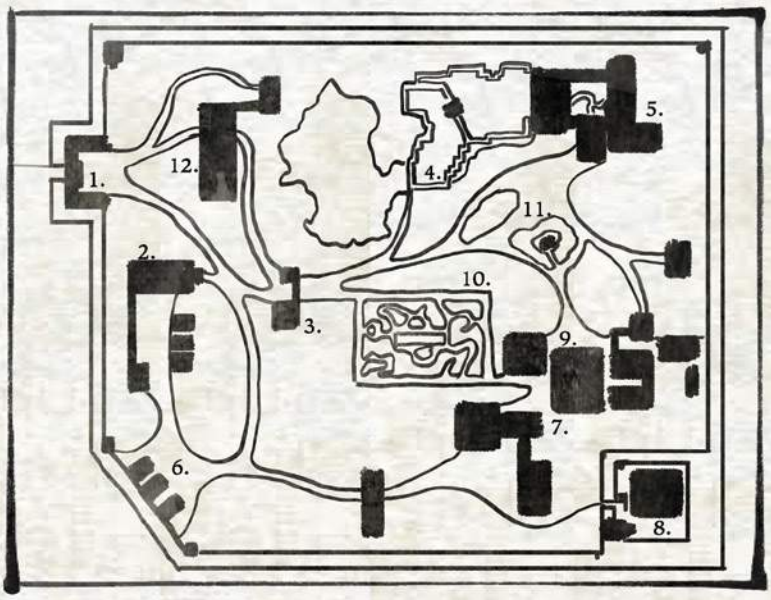
Originally Lady Doji's personal flower garden, the Fantastic Gardens of the Crane have expanded to the size of a small village, covering the entire top of Kyuden Doji's plateau. They are an amalgamation of every accepted artistic style, and include story gardens, sand and rock gardens, water gardens, and many other constructions. The Gardens are a veritable city in themselves, with tea houses, markets, sake houses, theaters, geisha houses and every other legitimate enterprise of entertainment imaginable. Each new building is added is such a way as to not disturb the Garden's pattern and beauty, and the entire complex serves as a massive tool for clan diplomacy. The Doji invite their guests into this spectacular maze to discuss treaties, arrange marriages, and settle long-standing disputes.

The Gardens are also home to a whole series of guest-houses for clan emissaries during Winter Court – including a massive guest-house for the specific purpose of housing the Emperor and his massive entourage. It is a measure of how often the Crane host the Imperial Winter Court, and how wealthy they truly are, that they can take the time and money to build a home-away-from-home for the Son of Heaven.

River of the Blind Monk

Located just south of Kyuden Doji, the River of the Blind Monk emerges from the Lake of Sorrows and streams southwest along the border between Kazenmuketsu Province and Oyomesan Province. It is named for an old monk who lives in a small shrine by the river bank. According to the stories, the monk will ferry anyone across who can answer a simple riddle. No one seems to

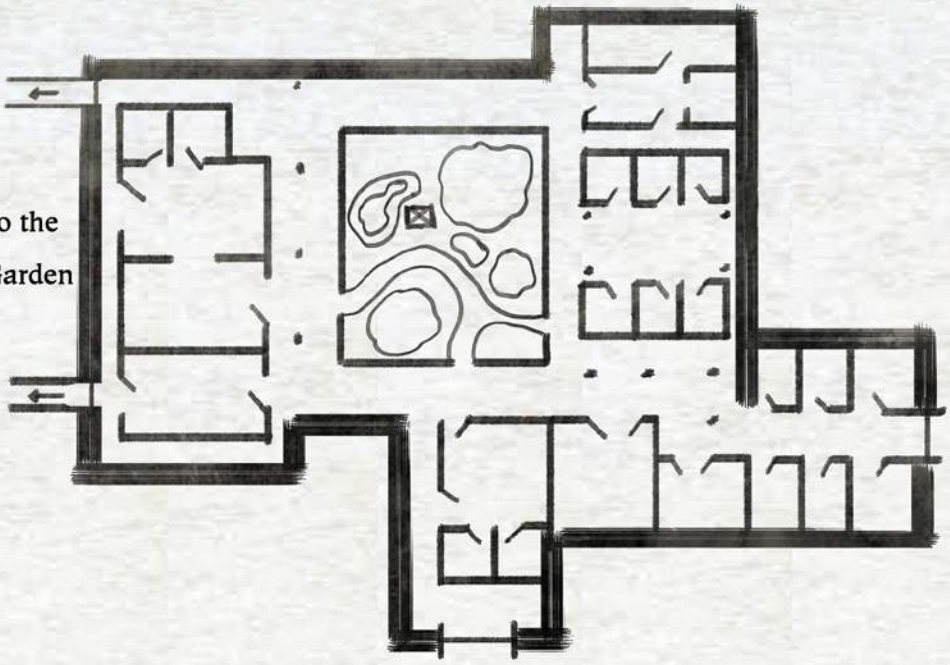
Kyuden Doji



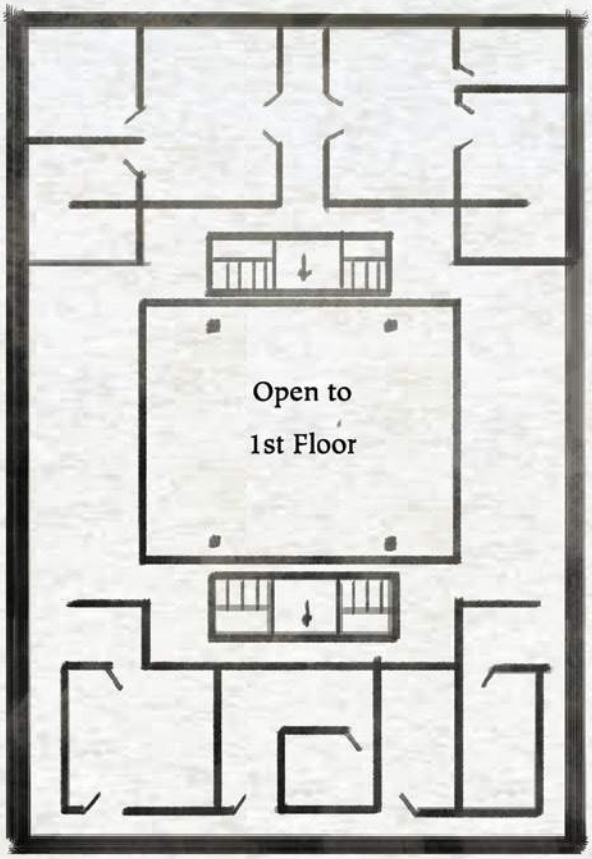
Map Guide

1. Gatehouse
2. Barracks
3. Bath House
4. Water Gardens
5. Imperial Guest House
6. Store Houses
7. Palace Grounds
8. Tenshukaku
9. Teahouse
10. Thousand Blossom Path
11. Koi Pond
12. Theatre

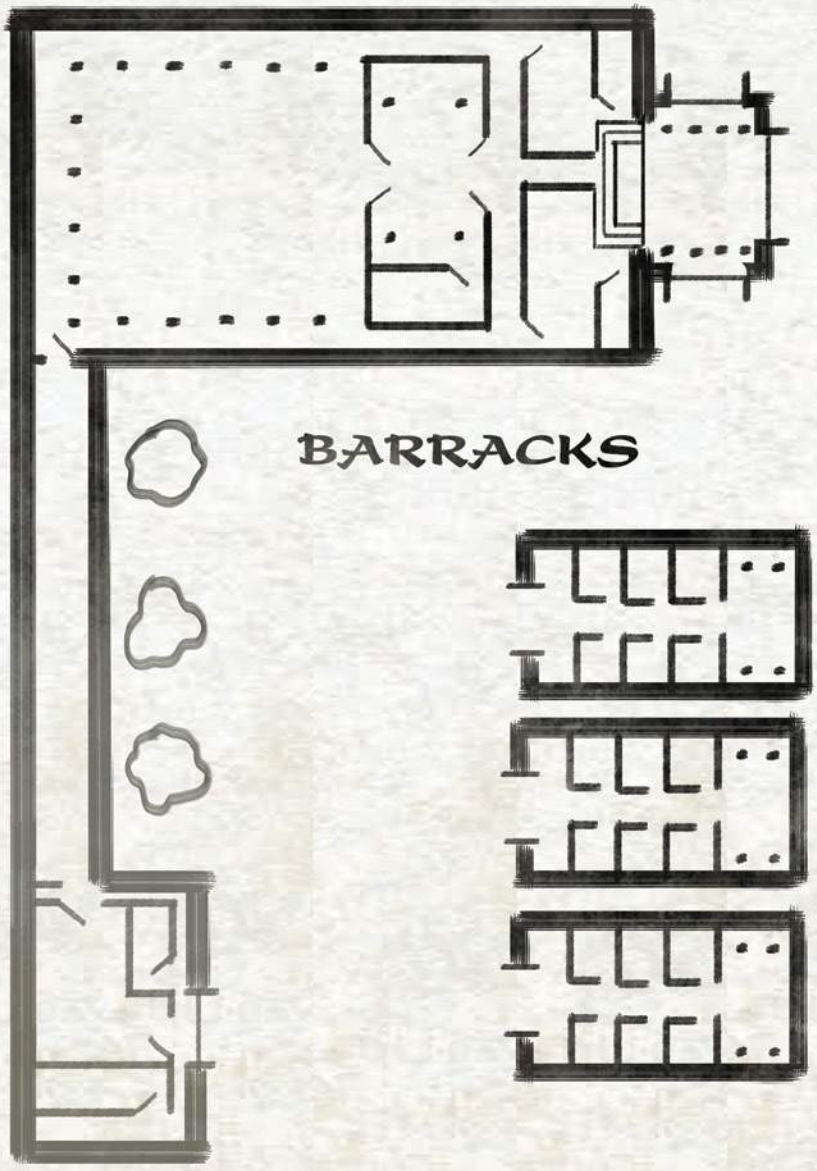
IMPERIAL GUESTHOUSE

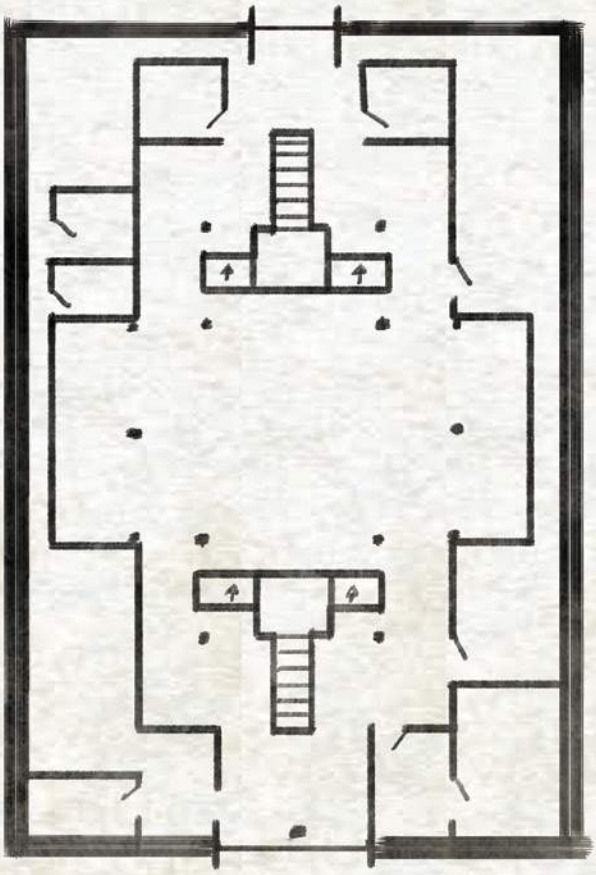


GRAND COURT



2nd Floor





1st Floor

know how long the monk has been there, or whether he is a mortal or a spirit; those who inquire too closely are answered only with a smile – or are thrown into the river if they become rude.

Kyuden no Kin

Located in the hills near the River of the Blind Monk is the site of Kyuden no Kin, built by Asahina Mifune as proof of his love for the Dragon samurai-ko Mirumoto Tanoshiko. She accepted his offer of marriage, but soon afterward bandits attacked the palace and Tanoshiko was killed. Mifune killed the bandits, but his grief drove him mad and he used unknown magics to transport the castle and everything it into the Void. The place where it once stood is now barren and lifeless; peasants claim that at night the place flickers with strange blue lights, and the screams of the bandits can be heard from beyond the edge of the world.

Shizuka Toshi

In a clearing near the heart of the Osari Mori, well-secluded and far from the bustling Doji markets stands the shadow of Kyuden Doji, the place called Shizuka Toshi. It is the home of the Doji Academy, where the courtiers of the Crane learn law, etiquette, and the political maneuvering for which they are famous. Students begin their education around the age of ten, training for at least four years and then remaining for up to three years after their gempukku. Even after they depart, the Crane grant their fledgling diplomats only the most simple assignments, typically within their own lands or the court of a minor clan. The Doji will not let their sterling reputation of excellence and perfection be damaged by an inexperienced student.

Oyomesan Province

Oyomesan is a personality with something of a split personality. Much of its territory comprises the mountain peaks of the Spine of the World, a rugged and lightly populated region that borders on the Tsuruchi lands and that boasts the presence of Benten Seido, the greatest temple to the Fortune of Romantic Love in the Empire. The lowlands north of the mountains, by contrast, are heavily populated and home to Seven Fold Palace, Daughter Village, dozens of lesser but prosperous ports and villages, and more fertile land than in many provinces twice its size. Politically, this region functions as a stepping stone for those in the southern Doji provinces who aspire to eventually reach the political center in Kazenmuketsu Province, a proving ground for them to show their mettle before attaining the magnificent court of Kyuden Doji.

Benten Seido

If Oyomesan Province as a whole is the key to the north, then Benten Seido is the gateway to Oyomesan itself. All of the seven Greater Fortunes are revered by all the Great Clans, but nowhere is there a more magnificent temple to Benten than here. This is not all that surprising, given how central a role love plays in Crane stories, poems, and other artistic pursuits (despite its obvious lack in most arranged marriages). The shrine is located in the easternmost peaks of the Spine of the World Mountains, reachable by a narrow pathway that branches off from Cold Winds Pass; the monks of the temple go out each night and litter the path with rocks and other debris – love is not easily attained, and neither is the shrine of love's Fortune. The temple itself is elaborately designed but modestly appointed, and staffed primarily by monks who were formerly Crane.

Supposedly, Benten Seido is built on the site where an ancient Crane Clan Champion forced his daughter to choose between her lover or her life. She leapt off the cliff, choosing death, but a massive gust of wind caught her and bore her to the nearby peak where her lover awaited. The Fortune's judgment could not be denied, and the two were married. To this day, lovers sometimes throw themselves from the cliffs, a practice which the monks seek to prevent since it usually ends in a grisly death.

For the Crane, Benten Seido is the dividing line between the elite northern holdings of the Doji and the clan's lesser southern lands. Those promoted from the southern lands are expected to pause and offer thanks to Benten as they pass through, while those demoted from the north seek guidance for their mistakes.

Musume Mura

Daughter Village is named in honor of Doji Mioko, the low-ranking maiden of the Doji who captured the heart of the first Hantei. The village is small but possesses an unparalleled view of the sea and a prosperous fishing industry. However, it is best known not for its fish but as the home of the Crane Clan's highly proficient nakado (marriage arrangers). The nakado here are famous for taking the best interests of all parties to heart in any marriage arrangement, honoring the success of Mioko and Hantei's marriage.

Unfortunately for the town, it has also developed a reputation for being full of unmarried women seeking husbands. This attracts single men by the dozens, along with disreputable vendors who cater to these visiting samurai – many of whom are selfish and lazy sorts who cannot get wives elsewhere. In an attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff, the town has placed the nakado residences high on the hills of the west side of town, allowing them to operate in dignity and peace; meanwhile, the wharf on the eastern shore is full of shady businessmen and lechers, rivaling the scum of Ryoko Owari Toshi.

Located off the shore from the village is the island where Hantei found Mioko. This now houses a small but

beautiful shrine dedicated to Hantei and his bride; its main attraction is a single jade tear shed by the Emperor when he asked Mioko to marry him.

Seven Fold Palace

The Kakita Artisan Academy maintains this separate dojo specifically for students of the Doji family who choose to study as artisans. Only courtiers of remarkable talent and promise are sent here to train, for the Doji have no wish to dishonor their Kakita cousins by sending them inferior students. For their part, the Kakita ensure the sensei they send to Seven Fold Palace are equal to the best in their main Kakita Academy at Shiro sano Kakita.

Itoshii Province

The Itoshii Province is a rocky and rugged land, comprising both some portions of the Spine of the World and many foothills and outlying peaks from that mountain range, as well as rugged plateaus and dangerous shoreside bluffs. There is only a modest amount of arable land and very few villages. Its only notable holding is Seawatch Castle.

Seawatch Castle

Seawatch Castle is located at a minor village in Itoshii province, its original purpose no longer remembered. Perched atop a high cliff, it has a clear view of the ocean, suggesting it was originally built to watch for pirate activity.

The castle gains some fame in later centuries when a young duelist angers his ambitious lord and is sent here to live out his life in obscurity. Instead of rotting away in shame, the bushi becomes one with the serenity of the ocean, embracing the ebb and flow of the tide. He meditates on the cliffs daily, and in his embrace of the void he finds perfection in his art. Late in life, he is granted a position as a sensei at the Kakita Dueling Academy, and his odd style – fluid rhythms mimicking the ocean waves – becomes very popular.

Umoeru Province

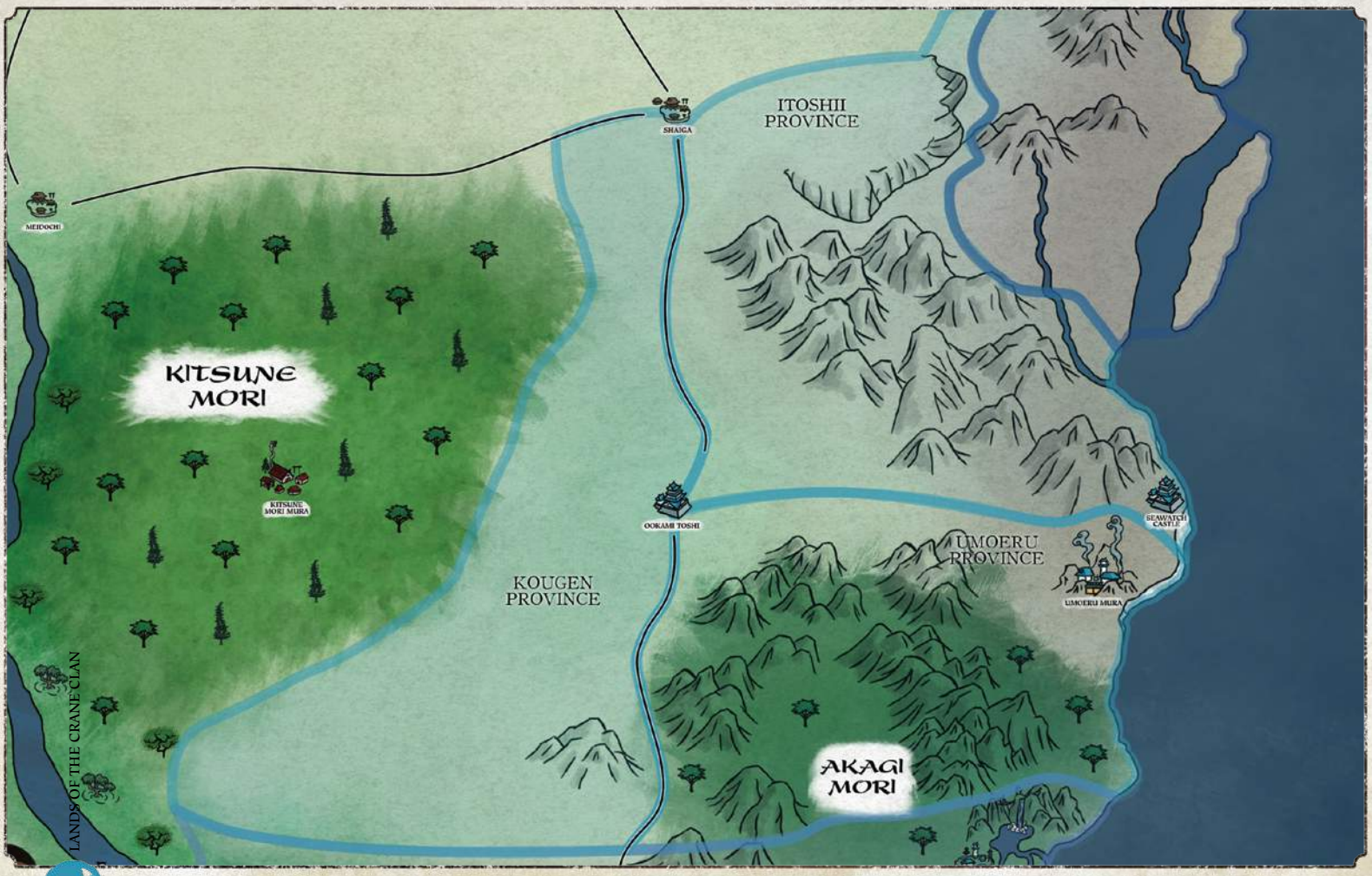
Similar to Itoshii province, Umoeru consists of rocky and rugged terrain, but has fewer high peaks and somewhat more human settlement. It is home to many small ports and fishing villages along the seashore, and these comprise its main value to the Doji family (along with some minor mineral wealth).

Umoeru Mura / Hayaku Mura

This coal-mining town is originally named Hayaku Mura after the founder of the Daidoji. It is a place of obscurity, connected to the inland Crane territories by a single narrow pass through the hills known as the Silk Pass (sometimes jokingly referred to as the "son of Beiden"). Aside from mining coal, the town also sometimes traded with unsavory Mantis merchants, those too poor or too sinister to go to better ports.

The town's history changes for the worse in the twelfth century. During the Clan War, a Crab raiding force burns the village to the ground. Thereafter, the place becomes a frequent victim of ronin bandits and natural disasters. Earthquakes, tsunami, hurricanes, and thunderstorms plague the region as if its very existence offends the very fortunes. The town's eta and heimin survive by burrowing their way into the piles of mine-rubble around the village, creating little "rabbit holes" which are very dangerous to live in – especially given the random earthquakes. The Crane rename it Umoeru Mura, "Rubble Village."

Umoeru Mura's main purpose is punishment. The Doji send their failures here – those who fail miserably but who warrant neither the harshness of exile nor the privilege of seppuku. Those who are sent to live in Rubble Village can never hope to leave, and the samurai of this place are known as some of the most miserable and contemptible people in Rokugan – creatures of petty sins and futile hopes. Indeed, the mere threat of being assigned to Umoeru Mura has sometimes motivated Crane samurai to rise up to true heights of glory.



Kougen Province

Physically the largest province of the Doji family, Kougen Province serves as the family's breadbasket. It enjoys plentiful rainfall and moderate temperatures most of the year, and the soil is fertile enough to raise nearly every crop the Crane might wish to plant. Kougen is a fairly secure province, since its only non-Crane neighbors are unaligned lands and the Kitsune territories. Only in truly major conflicts such as the Clan War does the province see true danger. There are innumerable farming villages scattered across Kougan Province, but only one holding of note, the fortress of Ookami Toshi.

Ookami Toshi

Wolf City is a rarity among Doji holdings: a defensive fortress, lacking all but the barest hint at artistry or decoration. In the eighth century, a Crane named Doji Yujiro voluntarily left the clan to pursue a vow of revenge against a Lion courtier named Matsu Kaoru. Yujiro knew the Lion had used poison to weaken the Crane Champion's son, resulting in his death during a duel in court. Although Yujiro was unable to attain the revenge he sought (Kaoru was killed in a battle with the Dragon Clan), his dedication impressed the Crane Champion, who welcomed the man back into the clan. Although he could not publicly acknowledge Yujiro's actions, he rewarded the man with this settlement, renamed Wolf City in honor of his time as a ronin.

The castle has a purely military focus, well-fortified and protected against any possible attack. However, its location is far away from any strategic points in the Crane lands. To attack Ookami Toshi would not only be foolish, but wasteful, and no clan has ever done so.

The Kakita Provinces

Kakita lands are attractive beyond all others, even when compared to other lands of the Crane. Over the centuries, as new Crane families and vassal lines form, it is usually the Kakita who give up their more distant holdings; once the Asahina are established, the Kakita are left overseeing a small number of provinces in disparate locations all over the Crane lands. They are wedged tightly between the other families, often bordered by impassable mountains or by the sea. The Kakita hold domains on the southern coast, in the temperate eastern fields near the Imperial domains, and stretched out all over the remainder of the Crane provinces. There is no political disparity between northern and southern lands with the Kakita, for all their lands are equally cultivated by the family's artistic pursuits. Even the rice paddies and fruit trees of the Kakita serve double-duty as artistic landmarks.

Like the provinces of the Daidoji and Doji, the Kakita provinces are split between the clan's northern and southern domains. The lands in the south see far more travel by ocean routes, but the Kakita maintain all their roads with the same eye for excellence they use in every other endeavor. In the north, one of the first lengths of the Emperor's Road connects the West Hub Village to Shiro sano Kakita, and throughout the Empire's history it has been one of the most well-used and resplendent roads in the Empire. In the south, the Path of Cold Winds connects the ronin of Valiant Daidoji Tower to Cold Wind City, the only overland connection to the Kakita's most valuable trading port. Finally, the Way of Silk sees the tremendous volumes of silk imported by the Kakita from the Mantis islands brought inland to the trading village of Aketsu.

Takuetsu Province

Takuetsu is the quintessential domain of the Kakita, home to their great seat of power in Shiro sano Kakita and the associated schools. In fact, when anyone outside the Crane thinks of lands focused on the arts, Takuetsu Province is what they picture. Though the province lies dangerously close to the lands of the Lion, every other border touches on either Imperial, unaligned, or other Crane territory. The Daidoji maintain a strong presence here in military outposts dotted across the lands, but the Kakita are duelists beyond compare and thus more than prepared to act in their own defense.

Shiro sano Kakita

Also known variously as the Kakita Dueling Academy or Kyuden Kakita, this extensive combination of castle, walled estate, and massive dojo is the breeding ground for nearly every major artistic achievement in the history of Rokugan. This includes, of course, the art of iaijutsu which Kakita himself pioneered. The Kakita artisans consider themselves the ideal to which all other artists must compare; their confidence borders on arrogance, but rightly so. Shiro sano Kakita is a place where courtiers, artisans, shugenja, and bushi all intermingle to produce the magnificent culture of Rokugan's samurai caste.

The halls of Shiro sano Kakita are dominated by the family's famous duelists, but artisans of all stripes and from all families of the Crane are also found here. There is always a smattering of students from other clans as well, each such person having traded valuable favors for the chance to spend even a single year under Kakita tutelage.

Not all is glorious, however. There is a curse upon the castle of the Kakita – one which everyone has heard about, though few are crude enough to bring it up in public. It is said a Grand Master of the Elements once told a Kakita daimyo to expect him as a guest, and the Crane threw open the palace gates to make ready. Days passed and finally the revered shugenja arrived, but just as he approached a sudden gust of wind slammed shut the gates. The Grand Master was angered at the insult and cursed the castle for its impropriety: any Crane born within the palace while the gates are closed is cursed never to draw steel lest they turn the blades of the Crane against one another. As a result, ever since that day the Kakita have made a point of leaving the castle gates open, lest the curse be triggered.

Only once in the Empire's history does Shiro sano Kakita come under attack. This occurs during the Clan War, when a Crab raiding army advancing from Beiden Pass manages to reach the castle, breach the walls, and set fire to the main keep. Fortunately, the Crab are unable to maintain their presence, and the damage is quickly repaired after the war – indeed, the Crane consider the repair of the Kakita palace to be one of their very highest priorities.

The School of Quiet Arts

While the Kakita duelists make up the majority of those enrolled in the Kakita Artisan Academy, the School of Quiet Arts is where the Empire's artistic culture is born, grown, and cultivated. It is the premiere dojo in the Empire for arts such as sumi-e, poetry, sculpture, painting, poetry, ikebana, and many others. The Crane believe the capability to understand the true beauty of life and replicate it with art is as vital to the soul of the Empire as a deadly blade. Many students depart after their first year, for the Kakita requirements are so stringent they refuse to accept even a tenth of their own family for further training.

The School of Quiet Arts is connected to the Kakita Dueling Academy by lengthy garden walkways lined with the creations of the artisans within. This makes the two structures appear as separate holdings that merely happen to be located within the same outer walls of Shiro sano Kakita itself.

Seido Kakita

This is the first and most revered shrine to Kakita: patron of the arts, master of the duel, husband of Doji, co-founder of the Crane Clan. Of moderate size, the shrine rests alongside the walkway between the two Kakita



artisan schools. Perfectly designed, opulent in decoration, the shrine is nonetheless somewhat hidden by the awe-inspiring sights found in the rest of Shiro sano Kakita's vast walled estate. Aspiring artisans do visit this place, often at night, in an effort to seek Kakita's guiding hand.

Kakita is not revered alone. Twin shrines to his twin children Yasurugi and Konishiko, who shared a soul of Thunder, are maintained within their father's sacred ground.

Shiro Iwasaki

Just south of Shiro sano Kakita is the small and obscure keep of the Iwasaki vassal family. The population of the castle and associated village is tiny, but dedicated. Their art is the training of geisha, and those who learn under the guidance of Iwasaki patrons are among the finest geisha in the Floating World.

The Steel Crane Forge

An hour south of Shiro sano Kakita, the Steel Crane Forged is sometimes called a "minor holding," but that refers only to its physical size. The vast majority of Kakita swordsmiths craft their weapons here, including the legendary Kakita Blades. Smiths from across the Empire make the pilgrimage here to learn, to witness, and just to step into the cauldron-hot domain of the Kakita forge. The samurai who work here are treated as holy men, and indeed their task is sacred to the Crane and to all samurai who follow the way of the sword. .

Doji Yasurugi, the legendary first-century smith who created five famous blades, was laid to rest here. Yasurugi's father Kakita spent a full day meditating at his son's shrine before his own death, and then ordered the entire thing torn down. At first his family could not comprehend this blasphemy, but Kakita told them the secret: during his meditation, Kakita heard Yasurugi's whispering voice tell him the ground beneath the shrine was now infused with the purity of his spirit. When they dug it up, Kakita dubbed the perfect mineral the Celestial Ore Vein, and every Kakita Blade made since has been strengthened with its touch. The Kakita believe this means Yasurugi's own soul touches every single sacred weapon.



Tsuma

Referred to as a minor village in official records, the town of Tsuma grows past the physical bounds of such a name by the seventh century, if not earlier. Prior to attaining fame, Tsuma is a fishing and farming town, located alongside a minor waterway called the Tangu River. The main features of the town are a medium-sized dojo of the Kakita school and a temple to the Seven Fortunes.

The town's obscurity ends when outsiders begin to notice the rather elaborate gempukku tradition at the local dojo. The set of competitions, traditionally ending in an iaijutsu tournament, draws the notice of the Hantei Emperors – the spectacle is highly entertaining, and Tsuma's closeness to Otosan Uchi allows the Imperial entourage to travel there easily. At his first visit the Emperor so enjoys the tournament that it becomes the main topic of conversation in the Imperial Court for weeks afterword. Within a few months, the other clans – Great and Minor – are soliciting the Crane for the right to send one of their own to this tournament. Thus is born the Topaz Championship, the single most prestigious gempukku ceremony in the Empire. Either the Emperor or one of his Chosen is always present at this tournament to bestow glory on its contests. The winner gains the title of Topaz Champion for a year (until the next tournament) and can usually expect to receive prestigious appointments, such as admission to the offices of the Emerald or Jade Magistrates or some other branch of the Imperial bureaucracy.

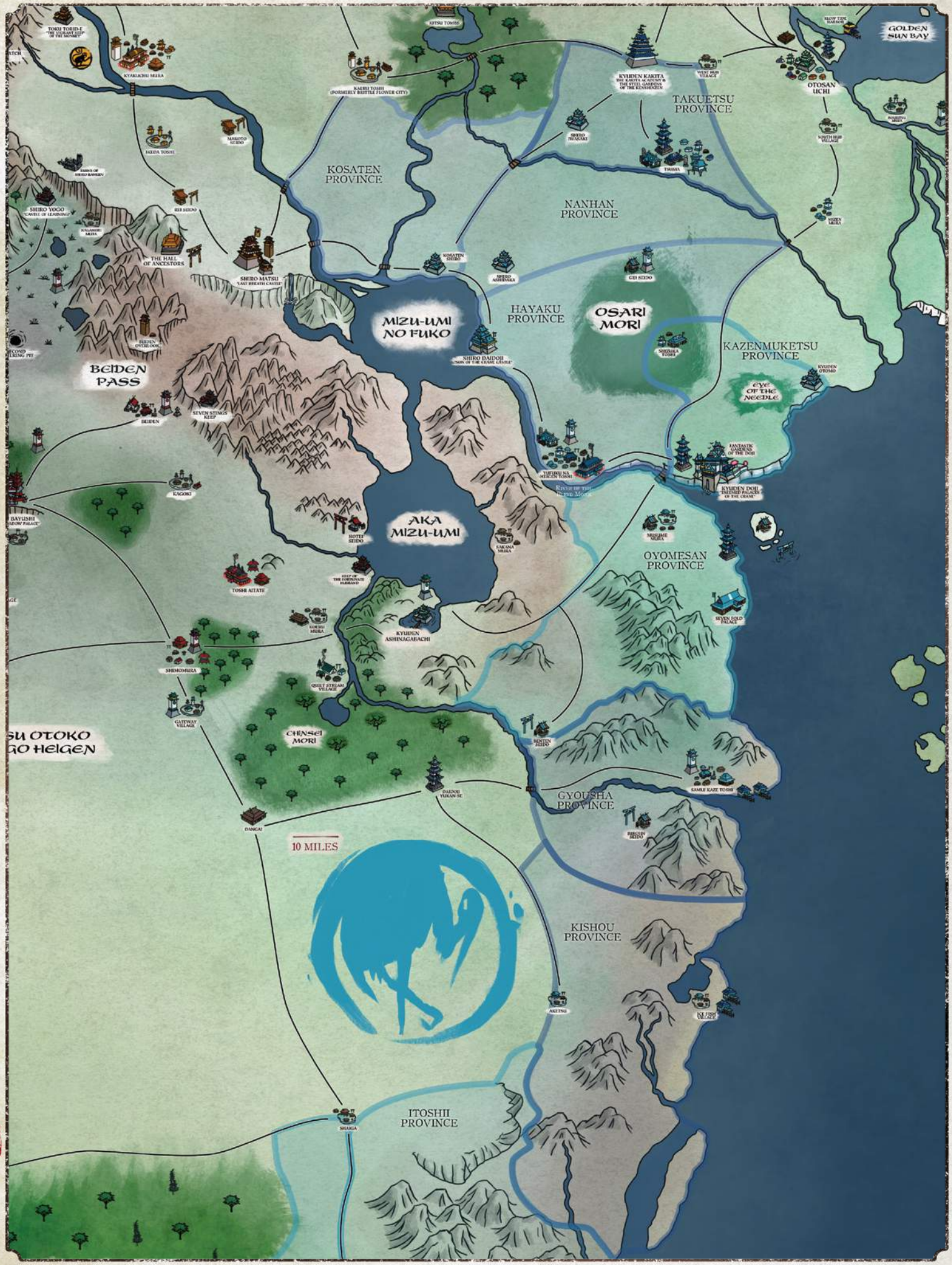
The success of the Topaz Championship has turned Tsuma into a bustling, hugely prosperous town. Despite being distant from the main roads, the village boasts a number of inns, sake houses, theaters, geisha houses, and other services to comfort and entertain its guests.

Nanhan Province

Though not as politically important as Takuetsu Province, Nanhan Province does serve as a sterling example of the exquisite care the Kakita lavish on their lands. Not a single inch of land goes to waste, yet less than half of it is cultivated for foodstuffs. Experimental gardens, new strains of traditional flowers, and well-tended animals (both domesticated and wild) populate this lush domain. Torii arches and shrines dot the countryside, and some of the finest inns, tea houses, and geisha houses may be found here as well. Most of the holdings here are small villages, with only Shiro Ashidaka as a major castle, but even if serves a storied and majestic purpose.

Shiro Ashidaka

Although most outsiders think of the Steel Crane Forge when Kakita blades are mentioned, the home of the Ashidaka vassal family is in many ways even more important to the art of swordsmithing. The Ashidaka are a family dedicated solely and entirely to the creation of Kakita blades, and their castle is likewise crafted to support that purpose. Located on the western edge of the


GOLDEN SUN BAY
TAKUETSU PROVINCE
KOSATEN PROVINCE
NANHAN PROVINCE
HAYAKU PROVINCE
OSARI MORI
MIZU-UMI NO FUKO
AKA MIZU-UMI
KAZENMUKETSU PROVINCE
EYE OF THE NEEDLE
BEIDEN PASS
OYOMESAN PROVINCE
CHINSEI MORI
GYOUSHA PROVINCE
KISHOU PROVINCE
ITOSHII PROVINCE
10 MILES

Kakita lands, just within sight of the snow-capped peaks of the Spine of the World Mountains, the Ashidaka castle serves as a waypoint for smiths of every Crane family.

In the heart of the castle is the family's greatest treasure: the stone on which the first Kakita blade was tested.

Gyousha Province

Located south of the Doji family's Oyomesan Province, Gyousha Province suffers from particularly capricious weather due to the combination of warm winds from the sea intermingling with the cold air coming down from the Spine of the World Mountains. In the summer, blistering heat may give way to sudden torrential downpours, while in the winter a blizzard might be followed by sudden beaming sunlight on the pristine snow. However, the Kakita prize these extremes of weather and seek out locations of such phenomena, seeing them as containing the transcendent beauty of nature in its purest form.

Samui Kaze Toshi

Cold Wind City hides within the southernmost outer foothills from the Spine of the World Mountains and stands atop a dizzying promontory peak. The city and its docks (Cold Wind Port) take their name from the freezing winter gales which roll down off the mountains. Indeed, it often looks as though these winds should send the entire city tumbling down the cliffs into the sea. Departure by land is difficult, downright impossible in the winter months. However, Cold Wind City serves as the chief way station for trade between the northern and southern Crane coastal ports, making it vital not only to the Kakita but to every seafaring merchant in Rokugan. Its docks constantly teem with merchant vessels from everywhere, and the city thus thrives despite an almost complete lack of useful farmland in its vicinity.

Jurojin Seido

This temple to the Fortune of Longevity was constructed to honor of the 97th birthday of Emperor Hantei XX. Kakita Yasuhime, daimyo of his family, and his sister (an Asahina shugenja) searched long for the perfect location to build this shrine, and finally found it in Gyousha Province.

The temple stands atop a natural artesian spring which wells upward from the ground right at the base of the shrine's statue. Its waters are acclaimed for healing any who drink of them while praying to the Fortune. Unsurprisingly, tourism and pilgrimages keep the temple monks



fed, but the Kakita daimyo always sets aside a stipend for the temple's upkeep as well.

Kishou Province

Kishou Province encompasses the vaunted Doji Plains, an expansive region of lush and fertile land covered with villages growing millet, rice, barley, vegetables, and the mulberry trees used to feed silkworms. The heimin here are masters of complex agricultural methods used to pull every possible ounce of crops from the soil; indeed, some would argue these heimin are more valuable to the Crane than the land itself. They work hard and loyally, they are more educated and talented than most peasants, and they have never been known to revolt. Life in Kishou and the Doji Plains is probably the best any peasant can hope for in Rokugan.

Kishou's outer borders touch on unaligned and Tsuruchi lands, and are protected by a scattering of small keeps and fortresses manned by the Daidoji. However, the military arm of the Crane operates here in only small numbers so as not to disturb the harmony of the Doji Plains.

Aketsu

Aketsu is a vital hub for trade between the merchant land routes and the port of Ice Fish Village. All cargo shipped to or from the coasts of the Crane will eventually go through Aketsu. These trade routes are protected by the ronin fortress of Daidoji Yukan-se (see Chapter 12, Unaligned Lands).

Ice Fish Village

Ice Fish Village is located just east of Aketsu, and nearly all traffic which goes to that western village passes through this domain. This village is founded to supplement the land-based food supply of the Kakita and Asahina, and is known for having nearly as many fishing boats as the number of peasants who live within its walls. Much less well-known is the Daidoji spy hub which operates in this town. Trade goods and foodstuffs are not the only things which travel into the Empire from this city, and the Daidoji make sure to collect any news which comes with the shipments.

The Kintani Valley

The river-valley called Kintani is not part of any Crane province, being instead located east of the Lion lands and just south of Phoenix territory, close to Toshi Ranbo. The events which led to the valley being a Doji possession are lost in the shadows of the Empire's early history, but the valley has been contested ever since, with all three clans believing that control of Kintani will in turn grant dominance of northern Rokugan.

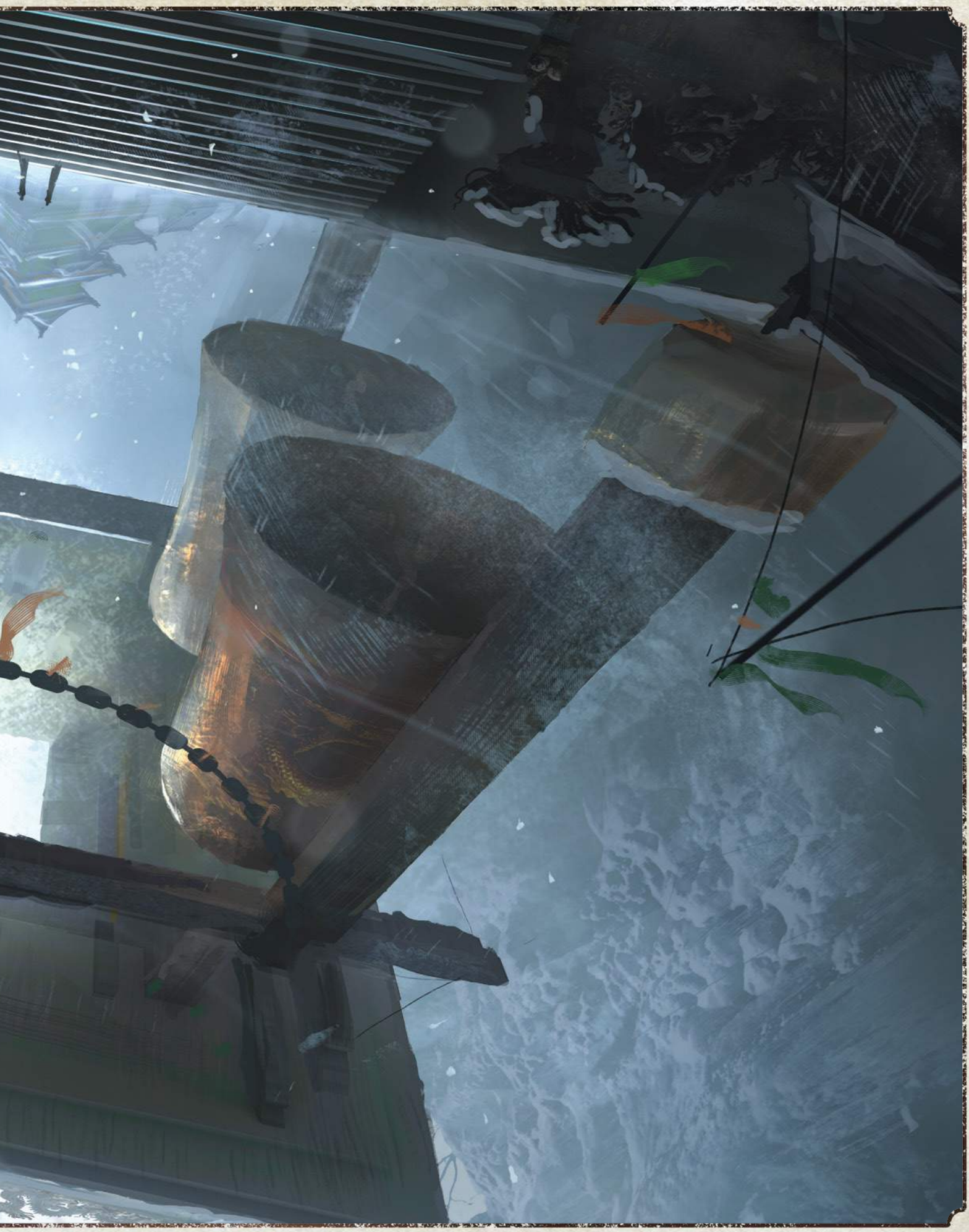
The valley is fertile, with a wide river, many rice paddies, and a dense population of heimin. For much of history, the Lion are able to keep the Crane contained within the valley by means of a castle called Shiro Kyotei, but in the earliest years of the twelfth century that holding is captured by an ambitious Crane lord, Tsume Retsu.

Shiro Kyotei

A visually impressive castle in the classic style, albeit of modest size, Shiro Kyotei is located atop a low cliff overlooking the Kintani Valley. Its inner keep houses the ruling family and their closest advisors. Originally constructed by the Lion vassal family called the Damasu, it is captured by Tsume Retsu and re-worked as a Crane holding, with abundant artwork and other aesthetic refinements.

The Tsume family's aggressive exploitation of their new holding makes it into a regional trade center, and a large village called Chikuzen grows up below its walls. The castle also serves as a military staging point each time the Crane launch a renewed assault on Toshi Ranbo.

After Toshi Ranbo becomes the new Imperial Capital in the mid-twelfth century, the military importance of Shiro Kyotei drops considerably, though it remains a trade hub. The castle's modest court becomes an important site for maintaining good relations between Crane and Lion, although some among the Lion are unwilling to forgive the Tsume for the extermination of the Damasu family line.






MUCHA PROVINCE
KOUSOU PROVINCE
TOSHIBU PROVINCE
KINENKAN PROVINCE
HEIGAN RYO KOKORO
SABISHII PROVINCE
WRATH OF THE KAMI
IRON MOUNTAIN
GAIEN PROVINCE
YAKEISHI PROVINCE
KYODAI NA TAIYO
KYODAI NA JOSHO SURU
SINJUTSU PROVINCE
KAITOU PROVINCE
SHINPI PROVINCE
KEISHI MEIYO NO TAN
10 MILES

Chapter Three

The Lands of the Dragon Clan

The Dragon lands are by far the most inhospitable of the Empire: colder than the Phoenix or Unicorn lands, more mountainous than the Crab territories. Merely to visit the home of the Dragon takes tremendous time and effort, and most Rokugani cannot even fathom the idea of living there. The Dragon did not choose their lands to facilitate their existence, but to maintain distance from the rest of the Empire. The Kami Togashi had always been introspective, gifted with tremendous insight but only in matters from which he was distant. When he chose the peaks of the Great Wall of the North as his abode, he did not gather samurai or heimin around him as his brothers and sisters had done. Rather, they trickled to the mountains on their own, called to his side for various reasons. Some wanted to learn from Togashi himself, while others thought isolation would suit their own purposes. Yet many just found they had no place in the Empire to call their own, and thought they could forge their own destiny among the frozen mountains. So while the Dragon never had a large population of samurai or commoners, those who came there did so willingly. As they pledged their loyalty to the Kami Togashi, those men and women knew they would need to work hard to survive, but also knew such work would teach them lessons for the future.

Although many clans have mountains within their borders or at the edges of their lands, the Dragon alone dwell in territory comprised almost entirely of mountains, with little in the way of plains to grow crops. The southernmost and westernmost Dragon provinces do have a small amount of plains and valleys, but even they quickly rise to become rugged mountain foothills. Like the rest of the Great Wall of the North, from which they are essentially a huge spur, the Dragon Mountains are among the steepest and highest in Rokugan, splitting the Dragon lands into dozen of small valleys. However, those valleys are surprisingly suitable for settlements, with many lakes, streams, and forests providing materials and making irrigation (especially rice paddies) possible despite the difficult landscape. (The stereotypical Dragon village is perched on the lower side of a mountain, with terraced rice paddies crowding every slope that will allow it.) The highest mountain peaks are frozen all year round, making them inhospitable for even the bravest of settlers. The redeeming feature of those mountains, however, is their

wealth in minerals. Iron from them has a high level of carbon, making it superb for steel in armor and weapons. However, the Dragon Mountains are most famous for their extensive gold mines. The fact that the clan least interested in material wealth has access to the largest reserves of gold in the Empire has often been taken as a sign that the Fortunes have a sense of humor. However little interest the Dragon may have in gold, they still mine it to trade it with other clans – overwhelmingly for food, since the clan finds it almost impossible to feed itself even in years of good harvest. This is a constant reminder for them that the material world is hard to shake off.

The geography of the Dragon lands makes them inherently difficult to access. Although this has prevented commerce from developing as much as in the rest of the Empire, it has also made the Dragon territory notoriously difficult to invade. Only a handful of roads enter the mountains – most notably to the south – and even those are not easy routes. Moreover, the Dragon lands exhibit mysterious spiritual properties, such that unwanted visitors often cannot find the roads at all, or cannot follow them to their destinations – the road instead endlessly loops back on itself. Only the Dragon themselves can reliably follow the routes into their lands without trouble. Of course, even once one makes it into the heart of Dragon territory, roads are rare and dangerous, particularly for those unfamiliar with mountain travel. Only one road, a long and winding route that passes through many remote villages, connects the rest of the Dragon lands to the citadel to the High House of Light, and it poses many of the same mysterious obstacles as the entrances; there are rumors of a secret shorter path which connects directly from Shiro Kitsuki to the High House of Light, but the Dragon nave never confirmed or denied these rumors. Pilgrims to Kyuden Togashi are encouraged to find their own way anyway, as preparation for the trials which await them. Finally, in the north of the Dragon lands the mountains rise even higher to become the Great Wall they are named for, and even the Dragon themselves find travel difficult. (A number of passes do exist which lead through the Great Wall of the North to the Yobanjin lands, but few Dragon samurai have knowledge of them.)

Near the center of Dragon lands are several large volcanoes. These often remain dormant for centuries at a time, but can also unleash tremendous devastation without warning if they are roused to fury. A positive side effect of this is the presence of many hot streams and steam vents, mitigating the cold in winter months. Nowhere in Rokugan is known to get as cold as the Dragon lands (some parts of Phoenix territory and Unicorn territory do receive more snowfall, but they do net get as bitterly cold as the Dragon mountains.) Stories of travelers freezing to death in the mountains are well known in the Empire and are not without a backing of truth. Although the Dragon have learned to survive in this harsh environment, among other things by hoarding charcoal and food well in advance and building durable warm homes, even they are unable to travel during winter. Most villages and even larger settlements and castles remain completely isolated for months. Spring in Dragon lands is what would pass for winter in many other parts of Rokugan, and snow can still fall during the early part of the season. Trained samurai and small merchant caravans are able to travel, but most folk still remain at home, and the varying weather can trigger landslides or flash floods in some areas. Summer is not as warm as in the rest of Rokugan, and the peasantry take advantage of this to catch up on work they were not always able to do in the spring. Summer does allow the Mirumoto to conduct military exercises, and is also a season favored by the Agasha (and later the Tamori) for collecting rare plants from the mountain tops. Finally, fall is probably the most pleasant season in Dragon lands. Although they receive a lot of light rainfall, the mild temperatures allow for travel nonetheless. The deciduous trees of the Kitsuki provinces take on beautiful colors during that season, making their lands popular with artists.



The borders of the Dragon lands have remained almost identical throughout all of their history, something rare indeed in the Empire. Set by the Kami Togashi in the earliest days of the clan, those borders have been fiercely defended by Dragon samurai ever seen. At the same time, the clan has never sought to extend those borders, despite the promise of more fertile lands only a few miles away. This attitude has puzzled the more warlike clans, such as the bordering Lion and later the Unicorn, but made relationships easier with more peaceful clans like the Crane and Phoenix. The Lion, in particular, fought with the Dragon several times, but although their successes were numerous, the terrain and the strange nature of Dragon lands prevented them from gaining any long-term success. However, even these conflicts are exceptions – most of the time, the Dragon have been left alone. And although they keep their lands safe from military invasions, the nature of their territory makes their outer provinces somewhat more porous to incursions of bandits

and dangerous incursions. This has occasionally been known to create tensions with other clans who perceive the Dragon as not doing enough to enforce the law. Even a few Shadowlands creatures, such as goblins and ogres, have been known to hide and breed in the mountains, the terrain making them particularly difficult to dislodge. And Yobanjin raids, while rarer than in Phoenix lands, are also harder to predict – the Dragon lack the knowledge the Phoenix have gathered about the Yobanjin, and the raiders are often gone before a counterattack can be mustered.

The Kitsuki Provinces

After the Kitsuki family is created in the ninth century, it was granted control of three southern provinces in the clan's territory which had formerly been ruled by the Mirumoto. The Kitsuki provinces are what most Rokugani think of when they think of the Dragon lands, and this is regarded with amusement by the Kitsuki themselves, who know very well their lands are the most hospitable in the clan. Of course, the roads of the Kitsuki provinces are just as notoriously difficult and mysterious to navigate as any others, and visitors usually require a guide from the family.

Shinpi Province

This former Mirumoto territory is home to many of the most important Kitsuki holdings and thus to the majority of the family's samurai. Physically, the province is bordered by Unicorn lands to the west, the Gaien Province of the Mirumoto to the north, the Kitsuki province of Kaitou to the east, and by the Dragonfly lands to the south, which form a buffer separating the province from Lion territory. Its location ensures it receives most of the Dragon Clan's guests, and while some visitors do go on to visit other clan fortresses, many of them stay with the Kitsuki themselves. In addition, the Dragonfly Clan's main stronghold of Kyuden Tonbo is actually located just within the official borders of the province, even though most of that Minor Clan's lands are farther south; this is due to the Dragonfly role as "gate keepers" for the Dragon Clan. The presence of both the Dragonfly and the Kitsuki means the inhabitants of Shinpi Province tend to be cultured, courteous, and well-learned, whether they are heimin or samurai.

Shiro Kitsuki

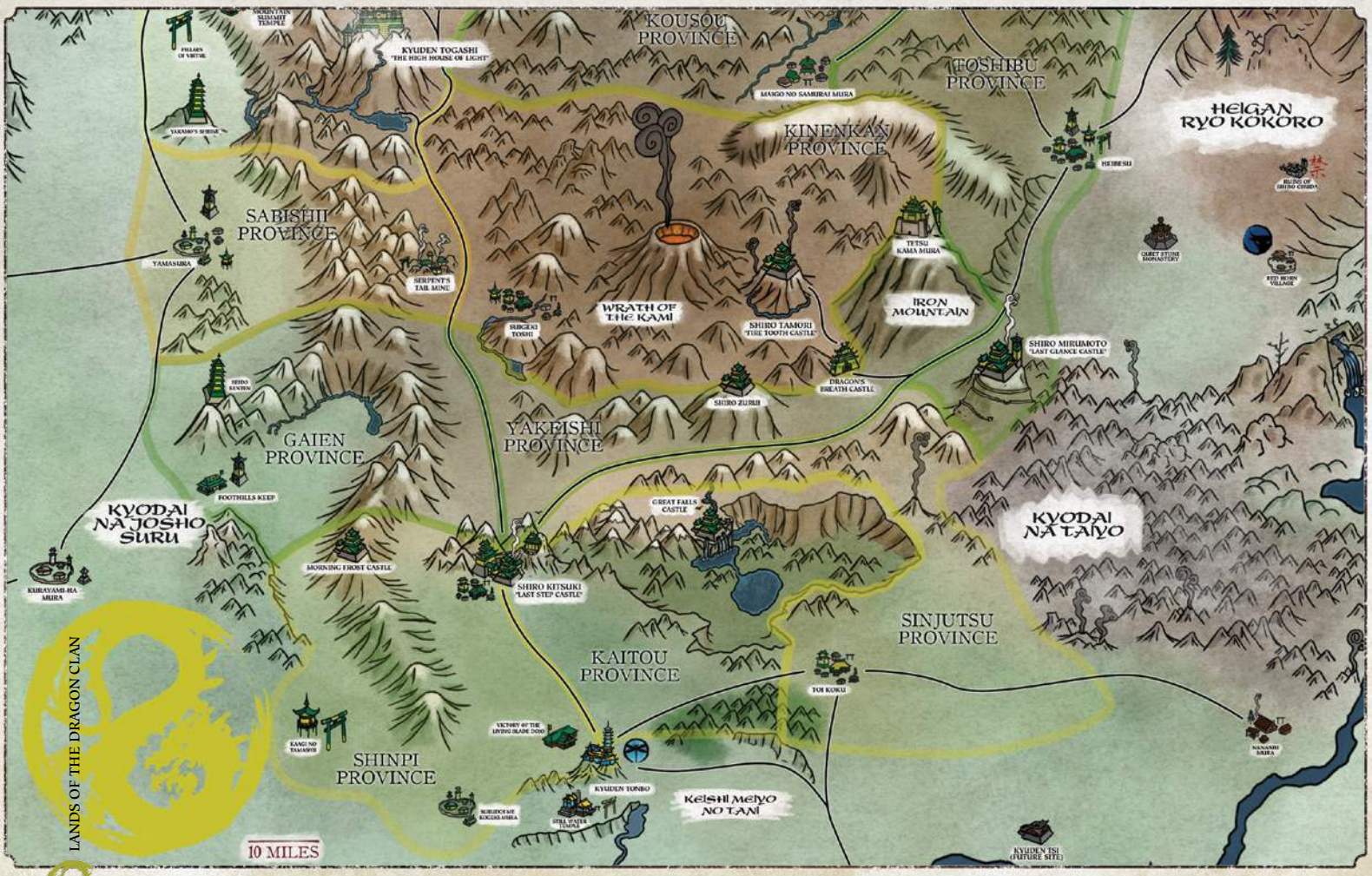
Also called the Last Step Castle (due to being both the main entry into the Dragon Clan's mountainous core territories and the final destination for many travelers), Shiro Kitsuki is the diplomatic center of the modern Dragon Clan.



Originally little more than a collection of towers and barracks under the direction of the Mirumoto family, the site was selected by Agasha Kitsuki in the ninth century as the seat of his newly founded family. Over the years the towers have been reinforced and expanded many times, and although Shiro Kitsuki remains a small castle by other clans' standards it presents a considerable challenge to any approaching army. With the mountains at its back and a clear line of sight to the south, Shiro Kitsuki locks the door to the rest of Dragon territory. However, its greatest importance is as the main place of diplomacy for the Dragon Clan, so while there is a permanent military presence it is kept largely out of sight from guests. Extensive quarters are reserved for ambassadors of other clans, and the rooms here are some of the most lavish in Dragon lands – which means they still look sparse to anyone but a Lion or Crab. Several rooms are reserved specifically for the Dragonfly Clan to facilitate the shared diplomatic work between the two clans.

Shiro Kitsuki also houses extensive libraries and well-equipped dojo, promoting martial and scholarly pursuits alongside political ones; indeed, from the viewpoint of the Kitsuki themselves, their studies of esoteric lore are often more important than negotiations.

The castle is the point of departure for those who wish to undertake a pilgrimage to Kyuden Togashi. Once such pilgrims manage to make it this far, the Kitsuki never deny them the opportunity to continue on toward their destination. Of course, this is a long and difficult journey even for highly trained bushi, and many such pilgrims need to be rescued after a few days of travel.



Kyuden Tonbo

Although the home of the Dragonfly is set within the borders of Shinpi Province, it is an independent palace. For more information, please see the entry on Kyuden Tonbo in the Minor Clans chapter, page 198.

Kaagi no Tamashii

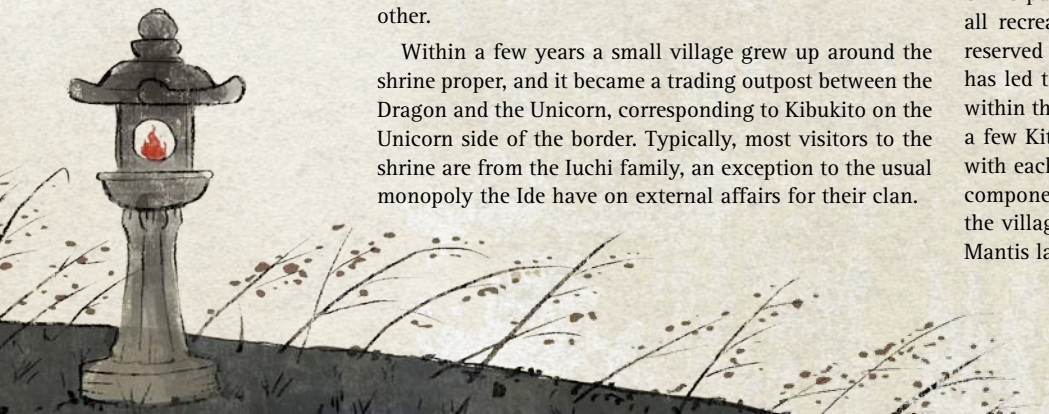
This was for many centuries a small abandoned shrine near the Unicorn border. Kaagi no Tamashii received its name in the twelfth century after the War Against the Darkness, when the Dragon sought to honor one of their fallen heroes. Kitsuki Kaagi had been one of the first samurai to learn the full truth about the sinister entity known as the Living Darkness, and his journals allowed the Dragon to be at the forefront of the conflict against that enemy. Because Kaagi had fought alongside Unicorn samurai against the Darkness, this site was chosen for his shrine in order to foster good relationships between the two clans, who previously had very little to do with each other.

Within a few years a small village grew up around the shrine proper, and it became a trading outpost between the Dragon and the Unicorn, corresponding to Kibukito on the Unicorn side of the border. Typically, most visitors to the shrine are from the Iuchi family, an exception to the usual monopoly the Ide have on external affairs for their clan.

The shrine is quite simple and traditional in design, honoring the spirit of Kaagi alone. The only unusual feature is the inclusion of crystal in its structure, since the Kitsuki wanted to preserve it against any future threat from the Darkness. Sightings of "ninja" in the surrounding lands are common enough that the Kitsuki also maintain a small but vigilant garrison at the shrine.

Keen Eyes Strike Village

Although on the surface this town is not unlike any other village one might find in Rokugan, Keen Eyes Village actually serves a unique function for the Kitsuki. While most of its inhabitants are simple farmers and tradesmen, a few are employed in a very strange activity: recreating crime scenes for Kitsuki students to investigate. This tradition stemmed from a desire to train young Kitsuki "in the field" but without relying on actual occurrences of crimes. For their gemppuku, the students of the Kitsuki are brought to the village to solve elaborate crime-puzzles, including witnesses and material clues, all recreated in a specific street of the village which is reserved for that purpose. The need for fake witnesses has led to the establishment of a modest acting tradition within the village, and while these are mostly commoners, a few Kitsuki samurai also dedicate themselves to the art with each generation. Similarly, the need for exotic crime components has helped develop mercantile activity in the village, and traders from as far away as the Crab and Mantis lands can sometimes be found here.



Keen Eyes Strike Village is also where the Kitsuki prepare some of the alchemical compounds used in their investigations, in collaboration with the Agasha (and later the Tamori).

The villagers themselves are generally thankful for the security and extra prosperity they gain from their unusual service to the Kitsuki; if they think their masters strange, they keep such opinions to themselves.

Morning Frost Castle

Originally built as a winter residence for the Mirumoto daimyo, Morning Frost Castle came under the possession of the Kitsuki family when it was included in the lands granted to the new family. Set upon one of the tallest peaks in the Kitsuki provinces, it takes its name from the especially cold local climate, with inhabitants reporting occasional morning frosts even during the summer season.

The castle has always been associated with training, its harsh location selected to provide adversity for students to overcome in order to strengthen themselves. Its rooms remain cold for most of the year, and the road to it is likewise steep and icy in all but the very warmest weeks of the year. The Mirumoto mostly trained warriors there, but since taking control of it the Kitsuki have used Morning Frost Castle for a very different purpose. Applying the same logic they use in many other aspects of their lives, the Kitsuki decided to create a school where prospective sensei are given lessons in how to teach their students. While this is a unique process in the Empire, it has served the Dragon well, and over time the other families have begun sending their own sensei to spend at least some time in Morning Frost Castle. Since the teachings of the Dragon Clan are often esoteric and mix a large range of disciplines, preparing sensei to teach the younger generation has been of considerable help to the clan as a whole. The legendary Mirumoto Master Sensei also most often dwell in Morning Frost Castle, lending the whole institution an aura of awe.

Great Fall Castle

A visually impressive fortress, built atop a waterfall pouring out of the mountains, Great Falls Castle is effectively ruled jointly by both the Mirumoto and the Kitsuki. While the lord of the castle is usually a Kitsuki, many Mirumoto soldiers are stationed there, and their commander works in tandem with the lord. Many Kitsuki refine their knowledge on kenjutsu by training with the Mirumoto, and the best among them go on to join the ranks of the justicars, magistrates who deliver justice by their own hand. Since the justicars seek to instill a strong sense of honor and discipline within their ranks, the castle is stark even by Dragon standards, with almost nothing in the way of decoration or comforts. However, the beauty of the location speaks for itself, and some visit in order to show appreciation through various works of art (although these are rarely kept on site). The remote location of the castle has also led to it being used as an arsenal for the Dragon Clan, with weapons and supplies stockpiled within its walls. Since the Dragon are the poorest Great Clan in the Empire, this is considered a vital duty, if not a glorious one.

Local stories claim the castle was originally built to control the flow of the waterfall, and was able to release torrents of water onto any invaders. However, this has never been confirmed, and the lords of Great Fall Castle keep their secrets.

Sinjutsu Province

Ideally positioned near the territories of the Lion and the Phoenix, and with easy access to Crane and Imperial lands, Sinjutsu has always been a center of trade for the Dragon. It is bordered by the Kaitou province to the west, by the Mirumoto provinces to the north, the region known as the Great Fall to the east, and the Lion lands to the south. Under the leadership of the Kitsuki, the province

Kaitou Province

Less prosperous than its neighbors, with a significant part of its lands occupied by inhospitable rocky hills, Kaitou Province is sparsely populated even by Dragon standards. Located to the east of Shinpi Province, it is bordered by the Kitsuki province of Sinjutsu to the north and east, and by the Lion lands to the south. A few small villages are found in the hills and a few samurai strongholds block access to the interior of the clan's lands, but the place is otherwise lifeless. Overall, inhabitants of Kaitou Province are taciturn and distrustful of strangers. While this has won them few friends outside their clan, some of the best Kitsuki investigators have come from the province, and its samurai usually show a stronger martial bent than the rest of the family.



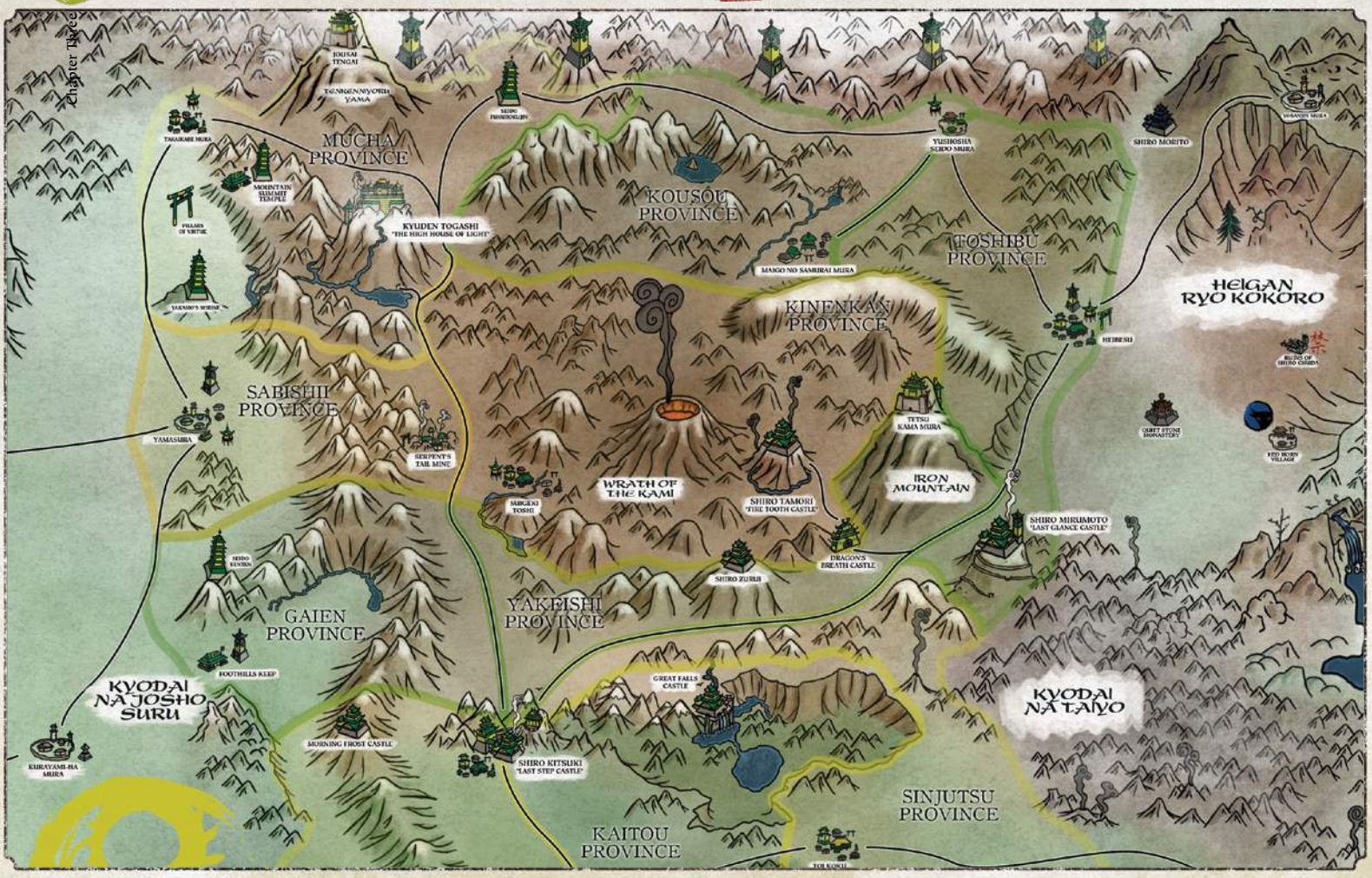
has flourished even more than it did under the Mirumoto, as they have stamped out corruption and even petty crime in their lands. Still, commerce is an unusual activity for Dragon samurai, and the rest of the clan tends to view the residents of Sinjutsu as overly worldly. Of course, this puzzles the other Great Clans, since they consider Kitsuki samurai from Sinjutsu to be just as eccentric as those from anywhere else.

Toi Koku

A small village by physical size, Toi Koku is nevertheless important to the Dragon as one of their main trading centers. While the Dragon as a whole have even less interest in matters of commerce than other clans, it remains a fact that their lands rarely if ever produce enough food for their entire population, so they are forced to trade for more rice. Several small outposts in this village house merchants from various other Great Clans, all of whom attempt to obtain the gold of the Dragon Clan at the best price. As a general rule, the Kitsuki only oversee the highest levels of negotiations, leaving all the details to heimin tradesmen. What they do interest themselves in is the rule of the law, and goods passing through Toi Koku are meticulously inspected to make sure they have been properly taxed and contain nothing illegal. In particular, the Dragon pay close attention to gaijin goods and items of magical nature, both of which are often sources of smuggling and associated corruption. Illegal activity can also take simpler forms, of course, as gold-laden caravans represent an easy target for bandits. Many merchants recruit ronin to protect themselves, and coupled with the proximity of Nanashi Mura (see the Unaligned Lands chapter, page 228), this has led to a constant flow of wave men in and out of the village. The Kitsuki are tolerant of mercenaries only so long as they behave according to the law, and ronin here quickly learn to stay on their best behavior.

The Mirumoto Provinces

As the largest family of the Dragon Clan by far, the source of most its military might, the Mirumoto oversee a large swath of lands with diverse purposes. Although their provinces are almost entirely mountainous, and as such difficult to exploit, the Mirumoto are a practical family and have been very efficient in settling and managing their lands. Visitors from the outside are often surprised at how many villages manage to subsist in such harsh territory.





Gaien Province

A quiet province located north of the Kitsuki lands, Gaien sees little trade or diplomatic activity, lacking any major settlements to support such things. It does boast a few military strongholds (the Mirumoto refuse to leave any of their lands undefended), along with a few farming villages in small valleys. The locals are considered quiet and polite by visitors. Samurai of Gaien Province often show great skill in the martial arts, which others say is due to their having literally nothing else to do but train.

Foothills Keep

Non-Dragon samurai might object to the name of Foothills Keep, since it is set in what anyone else would consider mountains rather than hills. However, the peaks north of it are much taller and steeper, so the Dragon see the name as appropriate. Foothills Keep was built to block the way into the Togashi Province, forcing opponents to take the easier but much longer road through the other Mirumoto provinces. As it stands, a direct invasion of the Togashi lands has never been attempted, and would be extremely difficult due to the landscape, but the walls of Foothills Keep make that option completely inconceivable. The castle's small size is more than compensated by its strategic position on a pass between two high, steep peaks, combined with impressive engineering (its walls rise much higher than might be expected for such a small fortress). An assignment to the Keep is considered a highly honorable duty, since it can only support a handful of samurai and those are required to be of the highest caliber.

Unlike many similar castles, the Keep is not supported by any nearby villages – the local land has little to offer to support habitation. A wagon train of supplies comes in once a week, and should it be cut off the garrison of the Keep would have little chance of surviving more than a few days.

Yakeishi Province

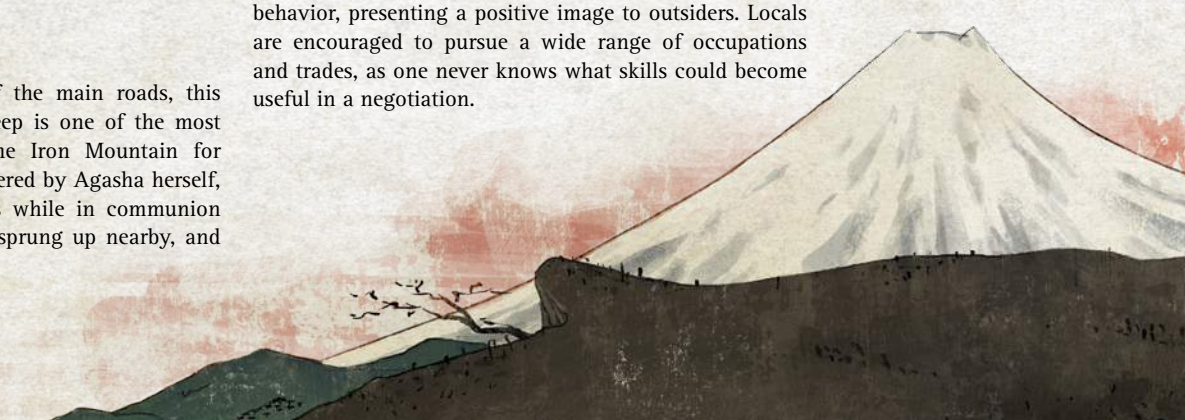
A vast province in the heart of Dragon lands, located between the Tamori province of Kinenkan to the north and the Kitsuki province of Sinjutsu to the south, Yakeishi is where most of the Mirumoto military strength is located. Spread across many castles and barracks, the armies are supported by many small farming villages along with some of the richest iron mines in Dragon lands. Samurai from Yakeishi province tend to be no-nonsense and practical, and even the heimin have a reputation for being hard working and tough as nails.

Tetsu Kama Mura

Although it is out of sight of the main roads, this village and associated military keep is one of the most treasured Mirumoto holdings. The Iron Mountain for which it is named was first discovered by Agasha herself, who detected its large iron veins while in communion with the kami. A village quickly sprung up nearby, and the mountain has been mined ever since. This has allowed the Dragon to provide the metal for most of their own swords and armors, a real benefit for a clan otherwise poor in resources. Tetstu Kama Mura is always bustling with activity, and the streets and buildings tend to be covered in dust at all times. It sees a constant flow of heimin who bring food and take away the iron ingots to be used in other places, but there are very few visitors from other clans – the trade it generates is almost entirely internal. Dragon magistrates carefully patrol the nearby roads, and have very little tolerance for suspicious activities. Due to both the dangers of mining work and the importance of the iron supply, several temples have been erected throughout the village and the nearby Iron Mountain. Several of them are dedicated to various Fortunes or the spirits of the departed, but some venerate the spirit of the mountain itself, which the locals consider akin to a minor Fortune. Although such a spirit has yet to manifest itself, the fact that new iron veins are always discovered when the previous ones dry out, coupled with the way Agasha originally discovered the mountain, are taken as clear signs of a spiritual presence.

Toshibu Province

The seat of the Mirumoto family's power, Toshibu Province expands past Shiro Mirumoto all the way to the northern border of the clan. Its eastern side touches the vast empty lands of the Dragon Heart Plain, while the Sinjutsu Province of the Kitsuki lies to the south. Since the Mirumoto family has always had tremendous influence over the affairs of the clan, this province has played a significant political role throughout history. As a result, its samurai hold themselves to the highest standards of behavior, presenting a positive image to outsiders. Locals are encouraged to pursue a wide range of occupations and trades, as one never knows what skills could become useful in a negotiation.



Heibeisu

Set on the eastern border of the province, Heibeisu is probably the largest Mirumoto holding not found within the mountains. Heibeisu is primarily a trading city and does most of its business with the Phoenix Clan, although it also sees Crane and Lion visitors. After the creation of the Ox Clan in the twelfth century, it also becomes an important trading partner for Heibeisu, alleviating the city's dependence on Phoenix business. Since the road leading back into the Dragon mountains is a difficult one, Heibeisu has developed into an almost autonomous city, with most resources and services available within it. Unfortunately, this also means the city is quite crowded, and since the various governors of the city have always refused to expand its borders, many buildings now have two or three stories to accommodate the population. Coupled with the amount of trade passing through the city, this has led to some problems with criminals, particularly petty thieves. On the military level, however, the city is well-fortified and the Mirumoto maintain a sizeable garrison at all times.

Possibly due to Phoenix influence, Heibeisu sports a large number of temples to a variety of Fortunes. The temple dedicated to Daikoku is a favorite of many, but so is the one to Bishamon, reflecting the double prevalence of trade and military activity. Both temples frequently host lavish festivals, leading parades through the crowded streets of the city, and a friendly rivalry has developed between the two groups of Brotherhood monks.

Shiro Mirumoto

The most impressive fortress in Dragon lands, Shiro Mirumoto has served a variety of purposes through history, and will probably continue to do so in the future. A military stronghold first and foremost, it is the most heavily defended castle in Dragon territory, and has been built to make the best use of the mountainous terrain around it. Shiro Mirumoto is also the command center for the armies of the clan, and extensive maps of the complex geography of the Dragon lands allow generals to allocate troops as they see fit.



Less than a mile away sits Iron Mountain Dojo, one of the most prestigious kenjutsu dojo of the Dragon (and some say, in the Empire). Thus, the highest ranked officers in the Dragon armies usually learn their skills near Shiro Mirumoto itself. However, due to the family's extensive influence over clan affairs, Shiro Mirumoto also hosts some diplomatic functions. Extensive quarters are reserved for visitors, but are considered drab by most courtiers, so envoys to Shiro Mirumoto tend to be warriors themselves – further intensifying the military-themed culture of the area.

Unlike castles in other regions, Shiro Mirumoto does not have a major city nearby – instead, a village is located near the castle, providing food and other services. Like many Dragon settlements, it is somewhat isolated and as such is carefully patrolled by Mirumoto warriors.

With all these military and political functions, it is easy to forget Shiro Mirumoto has a spiritual dimension as well. As the site chosen by the Thunder of the Dragon Clan himself, it is revered by all members of the clan. A large shrine within the castle honors Mirumoto's status as founding ancestor of his family, while smaller shrines in the nearby village are maintained by the Order of the Seven Thunders. The Mirumoto tend to be private about their spirituality, however, and most visitors pay little notice to their practices.

Kousou Province

Set right by the lands of the Togashi, Kousou Province is a harsh land, surrounded by mountains on all sides. It is sparsely populated compared to the rest of the Mirumoto provinces, with no cities of note and only small villages to work the land. Still, its inhabitants take pride in being the last line of defense of the Togashi family. The influence of the Togashi tattooed monks can be felt throughout the region, and many samurai of the Kousou Province shave their heads and get their skin tattooed to honor their friends in the Togashi. Monasteries are a frequent sight in the province, providing spiritual guidance and relief to travelers and locals alike.

Maigo no Samurai Mura

Lost Samurai Village takes its name from a group of samurai and heimin who were seeking the way to Kyuden Togashi to pledge their service to the Kami, but got lost along the way. Finding themselves stuck in an inhospitable valley, they made camp and somewhat managed to survive not only through the winter but through several years. When they were finally discovered by Togashi himself, he granted all the samurai fealty and placed the village under the protection of the Dragon Clan.

While it has always remained a small settlement, the village has survived despite the harsh landscape, growing small crops and fishing a nearby river. The villagers are proud of their heritage, and the local samurai can all trace their lineage back to the original band. More than any other Dragon settlement, Maigo no Samurai takes pride in independence and self-reliance; samurai there are taught to rely on themselves rather than on the outside world. This has turned them into skilled survivalists, a trait which the Dragon Clan armies have sometimes made use of over the centuries.

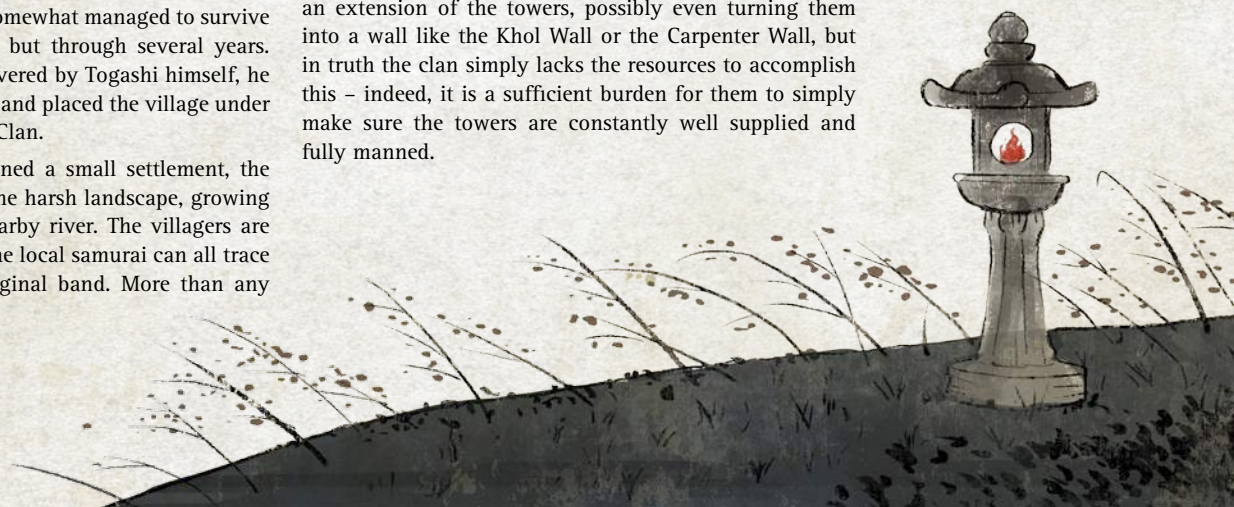
In the late twelfth century, the village becomes notable for housing a small population of Zokujin, who live mainly below ground but also make use of some surface buildings. After some initial tensions, Maigo no Samurai Mura adapts to its new inhabitants and learns much from them. The local samurai become familiar with the Zokujin network of caves and tunnels, using them to help patrol the region, while villagers harvest mushrooms and fish from them. The Zokujin gradually come to respect the humans and learn of their culture, even adopting some of their expressions and clothing. This odd blend of traditions would raise eyebrows in any other land, but in the Dragon Clan it is accepted as just another way of living.

The Northern Towers of Flame

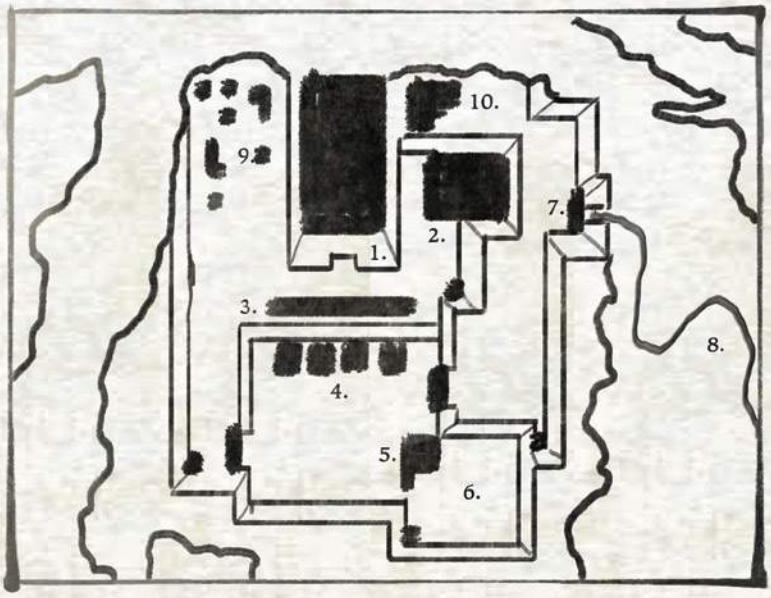
Although the northern borders of the Mirumoto provinces are always guarded against the threat of Yobanjin raids, no notable fortress is built there for the first eleven centuries of the Empire's history. That changes in the mid-twelfth century when the Dark Oracle of Fire is banished to Yobanjin lands. When he begins sending Yobanjin to assault the Dragon border, the clan constructs the Northern Towers of Flame to keep watch and help defend their mountain border.

The initial attacks proved to only be a prelude, and within a year the Army of Dark Fire launches a full assault on all of northern Rokugan. The Towers are destroyed during the initial weeks of the war, but did at least buy some time for the Dragon to rally their forces. After the war they were rebuilt to guard against any renewed attack.

There are five Towers of Flame, all built to be just barely within view of each other, allowing them to relay messages quickly. The Flame for which they are named is an enchanted fire, a gathering of blessed Fire kami and alchemical substances which burns without fuel and flickers when Tainted creatures approach. This allows the Dragon to be aware of any approaching servants of the Dark Oracle, as well as providing warmth and light to sentries. Although soundly built, the Towers cannot withstand a prolonged siege, and serve mainly as an early warning system. Some within the Dragon have called for an extension of the towers, possibly even turning them into a wall like the Khol Wall or the Carpenter Wall, but in truth the clan simply lacks the resources to accomplish this – indeed, it is a sufficient burden for them to simply make sure the towers are constantly well supplied and fully manned.



SHIRO MIRUMOTO

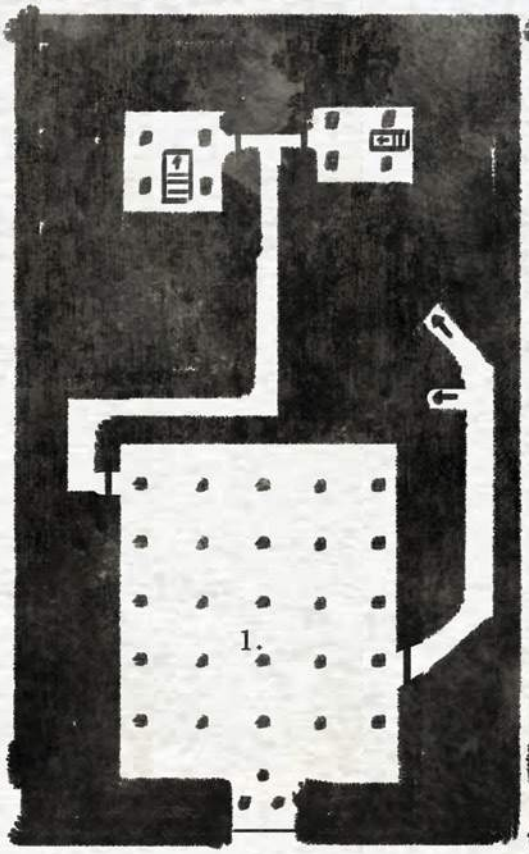


Map Guide

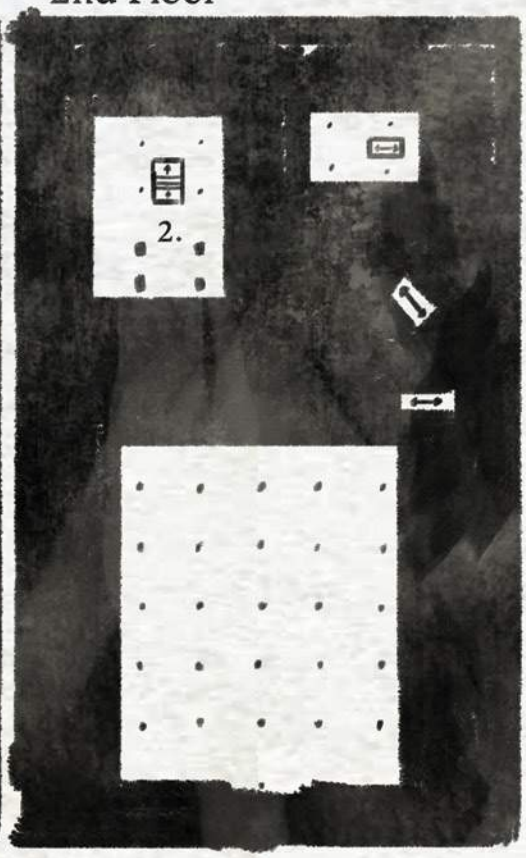
1. Tenshukaku
2. Barracks
3. Sensei's Quarters
4. Training Grounds
5. Tea House
6. Gardens
7. Main Gate
8. Mountain Pass
9. Store Houses
10. Stables / Storage

Shiro Mirumoto Tenshukaku

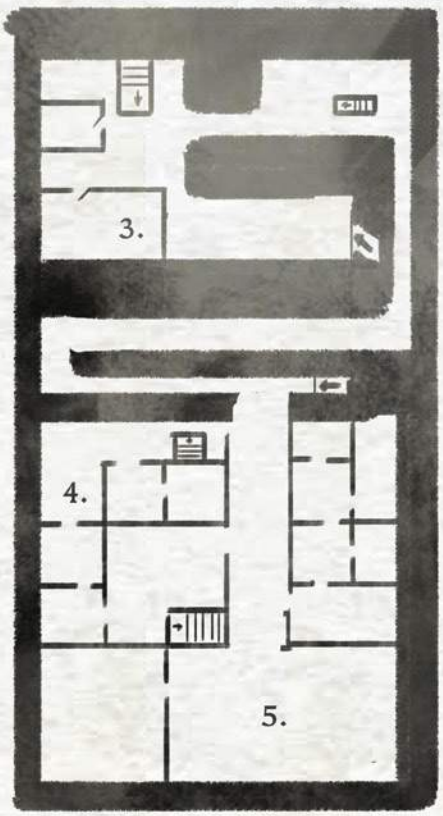
1st Floor



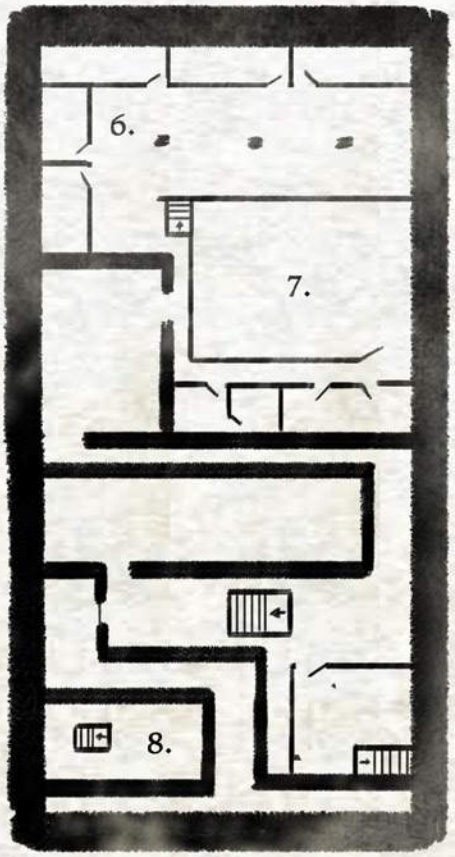
2nd Floor



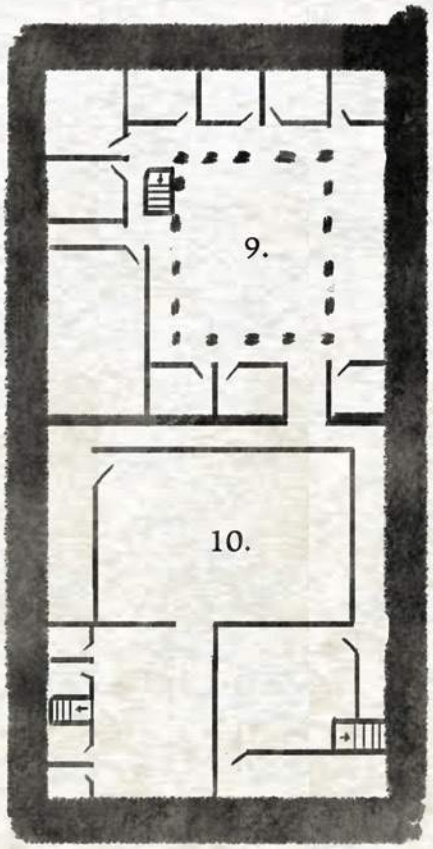
3rd Floor



4th Floor



5th Floor



1. Entrance Hall
2. Storage
3. Office
4. Dignitary Quarters
5. Balcony
6. Officer Quarters
7. War Room
8. Mirumoto Shrine
9. Daimyo's Dojo
10. Daimyo's Quarters



Champion Shrine Village

Yushosha Seido Mura is another small and remote village of the Dragon Clan, with no obvious notable features other than its location. However, that location – on the road from Heibeisu to Kyuden Togashi – allows it to survive and even to thrive after a fashion, as travelling dignitaries frequently stop for the night there. Thus, despite being a small settlement perched on the sides of rugged hills and mountains, the village boasts several inns and teahouses, even a single geisha house. The town's relative isolation and the rugged mountainous nature of the surrounding lands has also been put to use by the Mirumoto, who train the archery unit known as the Dragon's Flame here. Although their barracks are unremarkable, the unit is known for some of the finest Dragon archers and horsebowmen, and they conduct their training exercises in the surrounding lands. This provides further employment to local villagers, with many of them serving as fletchers or stablehands.

In the twelfth century, the village becomes famed as the supposed birthplace of Togashi Yokuni, the Dragon Clan Champion of the era, who frequently visits the village (though never speaking to the locals). Only a few Dragon samurai know that Yokuni, like all the other Dragon Champions of the Togashi line, is actually Togashi-no-Kami under an assumed name. After the truth is revealed with his demise on the Day of Thunder, the Dragon Clan builds a shrine to his memory in this village. The villagers themselves never learn the truth about the nature of Togashi Yokuni, and the Dragon leadership sees no reason to correct them. Brotherhood monks are assigned to maintain the shrine, which soon attracts rumors of celestial Dragons making appearances there in human form.

Tamori/Agasha Provinces

Throughout their history, regardless of whether they are known as the Agasha provinces or the Tamori provinces, these lands are never known to be hospitable. A maze of jagged peaks and narrow valleys, sometimes known as the Twisted Labyrinth, this part of the Dragon territory has very little in the way of farmlands or reliable roads, and villages are few and far between. Moreover, when most of the Agasha leave for the Phoenix Clan, the few who remain (soon renamed as the Tamori family) dismantle any non-essential holdings, leaving the area even bleaker and less attractive to visitors. Still, for the Agasha and the Tamori themselves, these lands are a fitting home where they can commune at length with the spirits of nature.

Sabishii Province

This province is unusual for sharing a name with another province elsewhere in the Empire – in the Crane lands, to be specific. Scholars attribute this to the extreme isolation of the Dragon Clan in the early centuries of the Empire's history – the Agasha would literally not have known that they were using the same name as the Crane. Sabishii is the western half of the shugenja family's lands and the only part of their territory which has roads out of the Dragon lands into the Unicorn lands. As such, it does have a fair amount of commercial traffic and occasional diplomatic visitors as well; however, neither incarnation of the family sees these as anything more than an unfortunate necessity. Many of the more warlike members of the family come from this province, often finding service in the armies of the clan.

Yamasura

A small trading town on the western edge of Tamori lands, Yamasura is probably their only significant holding which can be reached easily by visitors, for it is situated in the foothills which lead up to the true mountains of Dragon lands. It provides much-needed trade opportunities with the Unicorn, who are more than happy to offer a partnership. Neither the Agasha nor the Tamori seek luxuries or gaijin goods, but they do have need for simpler commodities like food and silk, offering in exchange the metals and crafts of their mines and forges (along with the occasional alchemical item). The relative accessibility of the town has also made it into a modest diplomatic venue, and the Governor frequently receives minor dignitaries whose business is not important enough to warrant a trip

to the family's seat of power in Kinenkan Province. To this end, Yamasura boasts a modest castle with guest quarters, just pleasant enough not to offend any visitors.

The town also plays a role in local law enforcement and border control, and is the headquarters of the Dragon magistrates and wardens operating in these lands. These samurai are notoriously efficient and intransigent, and crime in this province is usually at an extremely low level despite the small size of the family (and in contrast to the problems which sometimes afflict other Dragon Clan border regions). Finally, due to the spiritual nature of this family, the town has many shrines and temples, including several dedicated to respected figures of the law, such as Kakita, the first Emerald Champion, or Saibankan, the Fortune of Justice.

Serpent's Tail Mine

Discovered by a group of Agasha samurai in the fourth century, Serpent's Tail Mine is unique in the Empire in that it boasts both iron and gold veins in the same location. In fact, deep within the mine these two veins of metal coil around each other in a singular way which gave the place its name. The workers have even named the two coils Miko and Mako, seeing them as two embattled snakes. These workers live in a small nearby village; its food and supplies are brought in from other parts of the province at great cost. The value of the mine more than makes up for it, and the Dragon Clan has always been careful to mine only modest quantities of each material every year.

When the Tamori take possession of the mine in the mid-twelfth century, they set out to learn the origin of the two veins of metal, and explore further than anyone before. They discover a third vein, this one not of metal but of purest jade. The Tamori theorize this region was the site of a battle between a powerful kami of fire, which produced gold, and a kami of earth, which produced iron, until their collision created jade. While the Tamori have been unable to recreate the process, the mine remains a boon to them. They build a large shrine to appease these kami while the mining continues, and since the mine has been accident-free since the shrine was constructed, the Tamori believe their interpretations are correct.

Kinenkan Province

Set in the very heart of the Dragon Lands, surrounded by other provinces, Kinenkan Province is the seat of power and ancestral home of the Agasha, inherited by the Tamori in the twelfth century. The province is also notable for having the most volcanic activity of any region in the Dragon lands, and includes the awe-inspiring volcano called the Wrath of the Kami. Despite the difficulties of living in such a land, the Dragon shugenja have prospered here. Used to long hours of meditation and communion with the spirits, the local samurai often find themselves more comfortable with the kami than with mortal outsiders. The limited population of commoners are known for their piety, and nearly every village supports a temple or monastery.

Kyuden Agasha /Shiro Tamori

Built into the flanks of Fire Tooth Mountain, a mostly dormant volcano (it has only shown activity a handful of times in the history of the Empire), this has always been a place where Dragon shugenja can explore the secrets of the elements and honor the Fortunes. The castle's entrance is actually a series of twisting caves that wind through the side of the mountain; as a result, the castle has no guards, since access is impossible for anyone not familiar with these caves. Housed within these tunnels is the Mountain Home Dojo, physically the largest dojo in Dragon lands, where shugenja study magic, alchemy, and even martial arts.

Located in the castle proper is the Sacred Library, the collected wisdom of every family member since Agasha herself. The library is organized in a way that only the shugenja of the family can comprehend, and no outsiders are allowed into its various rooms. Visitors who seek information from the Sacred Library must ask one of the Dragon librarians to retrieve it for them, and no documents are ever permitted to leave the castle – even copying one requires permission from the family daimyo.

However, the family's most important asset – even more important than the library – is located in caves deep beneath the castle. These are the foundries where the shugenja experiment with forging, crafting, and the mysteries of alchemy.

The castle undergoes significant modifications after the transition from Agasha to Tamori. Less concerned about the possibility of hosting a Winter Court than with potential attacks from their disloyal kin, the Tamori add



fortifications, towers, and barracks to the palace, turning it into a genuine military castle. Other significant additions include much more extensive training grounds for military exercises, and a significant expansion of the forges below, as the Tamori focus more on crafting and less on alchemy than their predecessors.

A lesser-known new feature is a shrine dedicated to Tamori himself, set in a small room carved into the flank of Fire Tooth Mountain. The Tamori suffer the dubious honor of owing their family name to a Tainted madman, and those who pray at this shrine seek Tamori's redemption rather than his guidance; the shrine is rarely visited by anyone other than the family daimyo and his close family. Despite this questionable heritage, the Tamori are proud of their new family's accomplishments, and visitors are well-advised not to discuss the family history in public.

Suigeki Toshi

Originally known as the City of the Mountain's Anvil, this town has always been dedicated to the arts of the forge, something which the Agasha always found keenly interesting. (The Tamori intensify their study of forging techniques, both as a way to further connect with the Earth kami and to provide the clan with more potent weapons.) The modern name of Water Hammer City is attained in the mid-twelfth century when a monk named Haru discovers the so-called "water hammer technique," a process through which shugenja use water kami in the shape of a hammer to temper their metal. The results are exceptional, and blades forged here are famous for being both solid and flexible.

The town is notable for its cleanliness and piety, with several shrines that particularly honor the water kami and the Dragon of Water. (Some legends claim the main anvil in Haru's forge is actually a discarded scale of the Water Dragon, although this has never been confirmed.) At least once per season, the shugenja and monks here conduct a ritual of purification, washing the entire town with water, which greatly pleases the kami and makes them eager to lend their strength to the forging techniques. Even the peasantry find themselves rewarded through the blessings of water, for the local river provides many fish and irrigates the local rice paddies, allowing the town to be mostly self-sufficient (a rarity in Dragon lands). That a town focused on smithing should have a close relationship with Water instead of Fire or Earth is seen by visitors as yet another example of the Dragon Clan's oddity.

Dragon's Breath Castle

The Agasha never believed themselves to need anything in the way of defensive structures, isolated as they were in the middle of Dragon lands with the Mirumoto to defend them. The Tamori, however, disagree – perhaps due to the tumultuous times in which their family was created, or perhaps due to their insistence on self-reliance. Although they extensively fortified Shiro Tamori, they believed it was unwise to have no other line of defense, and selected a minor outpost on the Mountain's Path road to expand and improve. The result was Dragon's Breath Castle, a formidable stronghold barring the way to the family's ancestral home.

Unlike Shiro Tamori, Dragon's Breath Castle has no purpose except defense and was built accordingly. Experts in siege warfare from the Mirumoto armies were consulted during its construction, and in the Dragon Clan agree the result is a sound castle. It includes extensive storehouses to withstand prolonged assault, and tunnels to evacuate or to strike out at invading forces. But its most formidable weapon is the presence of Tamori shugenja who train specifically for war, and numerous battle spells can be found in the library within the castle.

Togashi Province / Mucha Province

It should not come as a surprise to anyone that a family as unorthodox as the Togashi oversees only a single province. Variously referred to as Togashi Province, Mucha Province, or simply the Heart of the Riddle, this territory includes the highest mountains in the Dragon lands, and has only a very small population (although this does mean the local peasants can support themselves with farming). More than in any other Dragon province, Mucha is place of mystery and enigma; reality itself seems to work against any unwanted visitors, with paths and landmarks seemingly changing by the minute, making a true mapping of these lands impossible. The local settlements are equally strange, forming a sum of many bizarre and idiosyncratic settlements; a visitor never knows what to expect moving from one to the other.

Furthest Fortress

If an enigma could take the shape of a castle, it would probably look somewhat like Jousai Tengai. Built of local materials, it is difficult to spot even for those who knew where it is located on the side of Tenkenniyoru Yama, the second-largest mountain in Rokugan. Few samurai ever have a reason to be so far into the Dragon Lands, much





less to seek this particular stronghold. Although it is technically a stronghold of the Togashi family, Furthest Fortress is traditionally manned by members of all Dragon families, including the Kitsuki and Tamori after they are founded. As far as they all know, the reason for the existence of the fortress is a puzzle which is yet to be solved.

From within the fortress' walls, a staircase spirals into the mountain through a great tunnel. At the end of this staircase is a set of great steel doors, sealing the way into a mysterious vault. The doors are sealed with a complex lock that combines physical, magical, and alchemical components, creating a puzzle which none have been able to solve. As far as the Dragon know, the doors have never been opened, although some believe the Dragon Clan Champion always knows the secret of both the contents of the vault and the way to open it. Others believe no one at all has ever solved the Final Riddle (as it is sometimes called).

The families of the Dragon have a variety of different theories as to what the vault contains. The Togashi think nothing is in it, and thus solving the mystery of the doors would be reward enough for anybody who managed such a feat. The Mirumoto believe a powerful celestial Dragon resides within, a forgotten member of the Celestial Court who followed Togashi to the mortal world. The Kitsuki theorize it contains a collection of writings penciled by the various Dragon Clan Champions, to transmit their wisdom to whoever finally discovers them. The Agasha believed it contained the true secrets of the kami, the ways in which magic and alchemy can be combined into a single art. Finally, the Tamori warn that the vault contains an immortal oni which was deemed easier to trap than to destroy. The truth remains unknown, and the Togashi allow any Dragon samurai to try opening the vault; only a select few from other clans are permitted to try.

The High House of Light

Also known as Kyuden Togashi (and briefly, on a few occasions in the twelfth century, as Kyuden Hitomi or Kyuden Hoshi), the High House of Light is the home of the legendary tattooed monks. More of a great temple than a palace, the High House of Light is built atop a steep mountain in the northwestern part of the Dragon lands. There is no simple way to access it, and for most visitors it is the destination of a long and arduous pilgrimage.

Surrounding the castle are a reach of serene gardens, maintained by the monks of the keep. Due to the harsh climate of the mountains, only the hardiest plant life is cultivated here, and meditation gardens of rock and sand are common. The monks will often replicate the surrounding mountains in the gardens, making of them a bird's-eye view of the surrounding lands. The gardens are vast and maze-like, even working down the mountain in places, a reflection of the labyrinthian nature of the High House itself.

The stronghold is full of shrines, offering veneration to every Fortune from the greatest to the most obscure. The very highest towers of the castle are simple meditation chambers, built to be open to the elements, where the tattooed monks meditate daily. Below these towers is the main level which boasts mighty temples to the great Fortunes, the celestial Dragons, and the founding Kami. As one descends into the lower levels of the castle, hewn from the living rock of the mountain, one encounters not only storerooms and other practical chambers but also innumerable smaller shrines to more obscure deities, eventually leading to tiny rooms deep within the mountain rock where the most notorious and least known spirits such as the Fortune of Torture are venerated. All of these places are tended by the tattooed monks, and worship – like all things in the High House of Light – is very unregulated, with monks praying at all times of the day and night.

As one could expect from a monastic family, the residential parts of the House High of Light are very simple and spartan, located mainly in the lower levels. While there are slightly better quarters reserved for guests, samurai rarely ever come so far into the Dragon lands, and those who do are usually expecting to study with the monks rather than to enjoy the normal amenities of diplomacy.

Although all this is known, different visitors to the High House of Light have nonetheless reported wildly different experiences, from a dark and foreboding castle to a welcoming place full of humor and celebration. One of the most notable occurrences of this was in the sixth century when the Lion Clan actually marched an army all the way to the base of the mountain – where they were greeted by terrifying manifestations of the Elements.

Some attribute this changeable nature to Togashi himself, or simply to the singularly magical and supernatural nature of the Dragon lands. Another theory is that the throne room of the High House of Light connects directly to a portion of Tengoku known as the Dragonlands, where the Elemental Dragons dwell; their influence seeps out in the countryside and sometimes completely overtakes Kyuden Togashi, leading it to take on wildly different appearances. Whatever the truth may be, the Dragon Clan does not say.



Pillars of Virtue

A sacred site for the tattooed monks of the Dragon Clan, the Pillars of Virtue are a simple sanctuary composed of a torii arch set in front of three great stone spires. The three pillars are topped by statues of monks who were supposedly the first three to receive tattoos from Togashi. They taught the first generation of tattooed monks before disappearing in the mountains when they felt their time had come.

Tattooed monks come to the Pillars to meditate on the three basic tenets of their order: wisdom, morality, and discipline. The pillars are seen as a spiritual anchor for the monks, who otherwise are left to pursue their own individual ways. Only rarely are outsiders brought to join the monks in their meditations, and to be invited to do this is a sign of great respect. The actual spires have been hollowed out over the years, to allow monks to remain meditating within them for days at a time if they deem it necessary. (Also, due to the distance between the Pillars and any other settlement, monks can be forced to stay there by the weather.) Oddly enough, while monks have been known to disappear after going to the Pillars of Virtue, no dead body has ever been found within any of the three spires. Some actually claim the three founders return and take those monks whose life ends at the Pillars.

Takaikabe Mura

A strange village which is well away from roads and major settlements, Takaikabe Mura is notable as a haven for the families of dishonored samurai. This would already make it unique in itself, but what is even stranger is that these families seem to find their way to the village by themselves.

When a samurai is dishonored his family suffers shame by association and are often made ronin and expelled from their lands. While some settle into the life of wave-men, a few of them wander north until they reach Takaikabe Mura, where they remain. It is a surprisingly peaceful place, if marked by melancholy, and local tradition dictates no one is ever asked why they joined the village. This slow but steady influx of samurai allows the village to enjoy a strong level of protection against bandits and other such threats.

The Togashi take a hands-off approach to Takaikabe Mura, and for the most part the inhabitants are peaceful and loyal to the Dragon Clan. The samurai population is a mix of outright ronin and of disgraced individuals who still claim their family name, although none claim allegiance to other clans. Displays of arts are a common way for the samurai to give an outlet to the pains of their past, and the village is graced by many works of sad beauty.

In modern times, the village also boasts a shrine called Togashi's Seat, built around a stone where Togashi Yokuni meditated for several weeks before leaving to fight on the Second Day of Thunder. Oddly enough, the Togashi family takes no part in taking care of the shrine, leaving it to monks of the Brotherhood and the local samurai.

Fukurokujin Seido

Quite possibly the largest temple dedicated to the Fortune of Wisdom in the entire Empire, Fukurokujin Seido is perched on a high peak on the edge of the Togashi lands, making it somewhat more accessible to outsiders than other holdings in Mucha Province. Originally built in the sixth century, it is made in a sturdy and simple style and in modern times remains outwardly identical to when it was founded – the monks always repair it in the original style. The interior, however, is quite another matter – all visitors to the shrine are asked to donate something crafted with their own hands, so paintings, sculptures, and all manner of crafts adorn the interior of the temple. While some of these items are simple wood carvings or scrolls, others are true works of art, and the collection attracts many visitors who stay in the adjacent village, called Fukurokujin Mura.

The monks here are famed for their age and wisdom, and are comprised of a mix of Brotherhood and Togashi monks, with the Brotherhood overseeing the monastery itself while the Togashi are understood to have sway over the nearby lands.

Unfortunately, the regular visits of artisans and other wealthy pilgrims has led to Fukurokujin Mura supporting rather unsavory activities such as gambling and drunkenness, with many neighborhoods rife with crime. This chagrins the Togashi, but they have found it quite difficult to stamp out these criminal activities; it does not help that they decline to seek help in the matter from the other Dragon families. The presence of Scorpion samurai in the village is often seen as proof of their involvement with the criminal problem, but no one has ever proven a connection.

Mountain Summit Temple

Rather than any specific Fortune or religious philosophy, Mountain Summit Temple is dedicated to the study of martial arts. While the degree to which the Togashi involve themselves with hand-to-hand combat varies from one individual to another, no one can deny they have produced some of the greatest masters of the art in the Empire's history, and many of those trained in Mountain Summit Temple. Built atop the highest peak of Mount Toma, it was founded by a sensei of Kaze-do whose teachings focused on movement rather than on striking one's opponent. The tattooed monks who train here tend to be of a more martial nature, often members of the Kikage Zumi order, or serving as temple guardians or even within the armies of the Dragon Clan. Samurai of other clans who manage to reach the Temple are sometimes accepted as students, but only if they manage to defeat one of the tattooed monks in unarmed combat. Those who succeed and train in the temple are usually respected as masters of the martial arts in their own clans.

The temple structure itself is impressive to anyone who travels far enough to view it: a series of interconnected buildings and towers built onto the side of the mountain, with hundreds of feet of emptiness below them. Tattooed monks at Mountain Summit Temple are encourage to develop their athletic abilities in conjunction with their spiritual powers to attain inhuman levels of skill. It is not uncommon to see monks jump from one tower to the other, or practice their balance on the edge of arches or walls, with hundreds of feet of empty space below them.

A village in a nearby valley supports the monastery with food and a few other necessities. It is usually not guarded by samurai, but on the one occasion that bandits once tried to attack it, they were subdued by the peasants – who are trained in the basics of self-defense by the monks of the temple. Since then, the village has been left well alone, and the inhabitants are content with their simple existence.

The Refuge of the Three Sisters

Located somewhere in Mucha Province in a sub-range of mountains known as the Dragon's Teeth is the mysterious place called the Refuge of the Three Sisters. This is a shrine to Onnotangu, Lord Moon, tended by three seemingly immortal old women. Some accounts describe the shrine as a cave, while others say it is marked only by a simple torii arch next to a cluster of ancient trees. The nature and appearance of the Sisters themselves is likewise a mystery – all agree they appear to be old woman, but some stories credit them with always spinning thread on endlessly whirling spinning-wheels, while others depict them as engaging in a variety of Rokugani arts such as painting and playing the samisen. Are they old women gifted with immortality by Lord Moon, or are they ghosts or spirits of some kind? Dragon scholars who have studied the question believe the Sisters are spirits dwelling within mortal bodies; when one of their vessels dies, the spirit possesses a new one, who then travels to the Refuge to join the other two.

The Refuge can only be found by those who actively seek it – it is impossible to stumble across it by accident. Pilgrims must locate the so-called Climb of the Moon, an arduous and dangerous route, and ascend it to the shrine. The Sisters are able to look into both the future and the past, and can pass that knowledge on to those willing to pay the kharmic price for knowing it – many tales speak of those who sought out the Sisters' riddling answers, only to meet with ruin.

The Size of Rokugan

So how long does it take to travel from one place to another? Just how big is the Empire, anyway?

The truth is, in an objective sense, Rokugan isn't very big. At most, the Emerald Empire is about 900 miles north-to-south, and between 500-600 miles across at the widest point. As far as Empires go, that's pretty small. To compare, Japan is nearly 2000 miles north-to-south; China is over 3000 miles wide at its widest point, and over 3400 miles north-to-south. England is about 400 miles long and 300 miles wide at the widest point; to say, "Rokugan is about twice the size of England" wouldn't be too far from the truth.

Such a high population jammed into such a relatively small area helps explain the complex social system that Rokugan has developed. All the norms and social rituals are a natural way of coping with such crowded spaces. Even with densely populated cities, farms and small villages are evenly spread throughout the landscape in all directions. Since the primary mode of travel for samurai is by horseback, they can cover a good distance. Usually travelers will encounter a village every day. In truly vast, rocky, or remote areas, like Dragon or Unicon lands, it might take two or three.

At Rokugan's founding, Imperial Maps were commissioned and endorsed by the Emperor himself. As centuries passed, and better mapmaking methods were developed, cartographers and samurai lords alike were hesitant to contradict him. Thus, any revisions to the official maps have come slowly, cautiously, and at the discretion of the Imperial Families. Wise visitors to important courts will have excuses prepared for "unexpected delays" in travel, and wise hosts will accept these excuses without question.

As a rule of thumb, travelers on foot can cover about 15 miles a day, assuming good weather and relatively flat ground. Sticking to roads, this increases to 20 miles a day. Traveling on horseback should double the distance traveled. Of course, this varies based on weather, terrain, and other factors.








KELSHE MORYO NO TANI
OIKU PROVINCE
EIYU PROVINCE
GISEI PROVINCE
HAYAI PROVINCE
KOKORO NEZUBAN MORI
KITANI VALLEY
SHIRANAI PROVINCE
IKOTA PROVINCE
RUGASHI PROVINCE
HENKYOU PROVINCE
KOKORO PROVINCE
DAIRIKI PROVINCE
GUNSHO PROVINCE
RENGA PROVINCE
KEN-RYU PROVINCE
FOSHI PROVINCE
SHIMIZU PROVINCE
CHUUGEN PROVINCE
GAKKA PROVINCE
TONFAJUTSEN PROVINCE
YOJIN PROVINCE
HELGAN NO OTAKU
HEIGEN PROVINCE
KAERU PROVINCE
AZUMA PROVINCE
YAMA PROVINCE
10 MILES
MIZU-UMI NO MUKO
OSARI MORI
BEIDEN PASS

Chapter Four

The Lands of the Lion Clan

To an outside observer, the provinces of the Lion share such similarity with one another that it can be difficult to tell when one has crossed from eastern to western lands. A thousand years of land management and troop drill means little in the way of true wilderness still exists. However, the Lion do not dislike this sameness; the similar structure of their provinces means each feels like home. And where there are differences between provinces, these are the result of historical traditions dating back to the very founding of the clan, recorded assiduously in the records of the Ikoma.

One thing all Lion territories share is their immense size. This is fortunate for the Clan of Akodo since they have the single largest population of any Great Clan, and the Matsu are the largest family by a significant margin. Thus, the Lion require a massive supply of food.

The central provinces belong to the Kitsu, protected by the territories of the bushi families. The agricultural productivity in these lands is astronomical, and the Lion claim the pious nature of the Kitsu is the cause. (Of course, it probably also helps that these provinces are largely spared from the constant troop movements in other regions.) The endless rolling plains have nearly all been transformed into rice paddies or fields of buckwheat and barley. There are no major mountains or forests, few major waterways, and the weather is temperate with frequent rainfall.

The western Lion provinces are flatter and more open than those of the central domains, but show somewhat more physical diversity; the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains and the strange peak that is Lookout Mountain break up the monotony of an endless sea of grass, while the Three Sides River and its subsidiary branches allow for rapid transport of goods. Most of these lands are still used for farming, but the regions which border closely on Unicorn lands are set aside for grazing and pastures, home to the Matsu family's Ikeda vassal family and the Ikoma Wardens.

The eastern Akodo lands are hilly in comparison to the rest of Lion territory, but flat when compared to the Empire as a whole. Farming here focuses on supplementary items, rice paddies being the exception rather than the rule. In addition, the only significant forest within the Lion lands is found here, and the Akodo oversee it carefully. Most of the eastern provinces share a dangerous border with the Crane and thus significant amounts of territory here are left unexploited, reserved for troop movement and training.



The Akodo Provinces

Across the vast Plains of Battle are the ordered provinces of the Akodo – clean, efficient, and under a constant watchful eye. Facing east towards Otosan Uchi and the Phoenix and Crane lands, these endless grasslands are ringed with outposts, militant villages, hirajiro (small fortresses), way stations, and constant military patrols. The Akodo lands are organized by the greatest military minds in the Empire, with governors who can eke out production rivaling the resplendent Doji provinces with nowhere near the quality of land, while still having room to spare for huge troop maneuvers and war games.

Henkyou Province

Henkyou Province is the smallest Akodo province and also the safest. Located on the western side of the Heart of Vigilance Forest (Kokoro Nezuban Mori) and surrounded on all sides by other Lion lands, Henkyou boasts the largest number of both samurai estates and peaceable villages. Many of the Akodo family's most prominent shrines are nestled safely within the borders of Henkyou Province, where they reside unmolested through most of history.

Shiro no Shinin

The Castle of the Dead is a minor outpost a mere day's ride west of the Kokoro Nezuban Mori. The castle is abandoned during the twelfth-century disbandment of the Akodo family and becomes a favored shelter for the huge number of Lion Deathseekers during that era. When the Akodo are restored after the War Against the Darkness, Shiro no Shinin is granted to the Deathseekers as their new official base. They use the castle to meditate on their dishonor and hone their skill in battle against one another. There are no sensei at this castle, merely veterans who teach their younger counterparts and prepare them to destroy the enemies of the Lion before going on to their next life.

Ken-ryu Province

The Ken-ryu lands are the standard to which all other Akodo provinces aspire. This is because Shiro Akodo, the ancestral castle of the first family of the Lion, resides here. This domain produces the finest governors and land-managers in the Lion provinces, and its orderly farms, orchards, and estates are the pinnacle of Akodo achievement.

The southernmost lands of the Lion belong to the Matsu, who have domesticated every square inch of their territory. This region possesses some outward semblance of wilderness, but to a keen eye the cultivated truth shines through. Farming takes place in even the most infertile regions, for Matsu bellies are plentiful. The Matsu border with the Spine of the World Mountains is home to the clan's one major economic asset – the richest veins of copper in the Empire. Since this metal is quite versatile and used widely across Rokugan, it grants the Matsu some leeway in trade and makes it easier for them to import the food they need to supplement their domestic production. .

Lion lands are not known for their variety of flora or fauna, but there is more to the open plains than grass. Small shrubs, stout trees, and a dizzying array of flowers sprout across the land thanks to regular rainfall and temperate climate. In the plains, herd animals such as deer, horses, and oxen are at least moderately plentiful, and this region is also home to wild lions – predators which would be hunted elsewhere, but here are tolerated (and occasionally domesticated) as the physical symbols of the clan. Near the waterways and at the edges of the Spine of the World Mountains, the animal and plant life becomes more abundant and varied; wild cougars, wolves, and bears prey on goats, stags, and various small game.





Shiro Akodo

Were it not for its massive size, Shiro Akodo could easily be mistaken for a holding of lesser importance. The structure is almost wholly free of decoration, serving as a direct physical example of the Akodo family's disinterest in politics, art, and even guests. Aside from military visitors, the Akodo rarely host guests and never invite political allies or enemies here without the most pressing need. The Akodo family prefers not to mix administration of its provinces with the study of war, and thus uses Shiro Akodo as its primary government installation, while the War College is housed at the Castle of the Swift Sword in Kitsu lands.

On the foundation stone of Shiro Akodo is a carving of the words which the Kami Shinjo spoke about her brother: "Akodo is not practicing the Art of War, but defending the Art of Peace." The Akodo believe the purpose of their martial lives is to guard the peace of the Empire, and their near-ascetic lifestyle is merely another example of this principle. The only notable decorations in the castle are the captured banners and other trappings of great Lion victories. Moreover, after the Akodo are disbanded and then restored in the twelfth century, their new daimyo has all these honors removed, declaring that henceforth the Akodo will decorate only with new victories. This leaves the castle even more bare and spartan than before.

One of the seven shrines to Bushido in Lion lands is located at Shiro Akodo. Yu Seido, the shrine to Heroic Courage (a virtue the Akodo hold especially dear), is overseen by monks comprised exclusively of retired Akodo samurai.

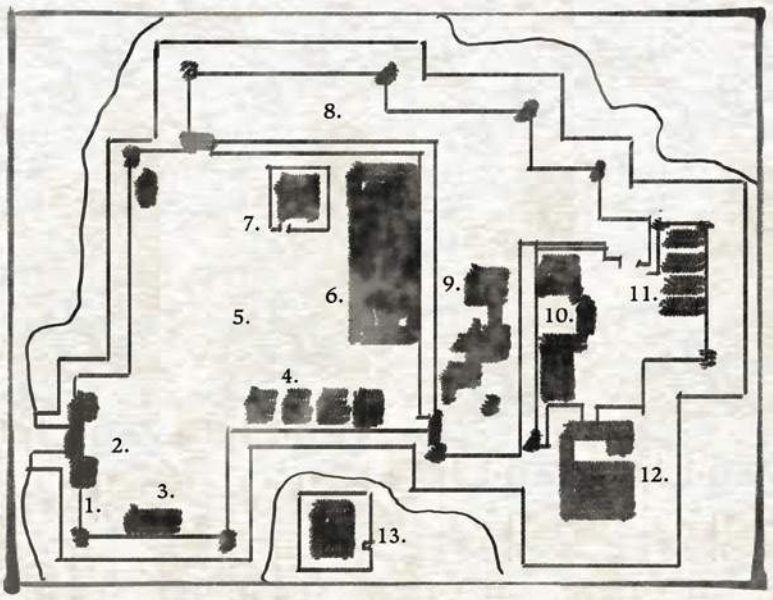
Kokoro Province

Kokoro Province has traditionally been the Akodo territory most likely to see war and thus the most likely to host the other armies of the Lion, especially the Matsu. Made up of equal parts forest and open farmlands, Kokoro is also home to a major border with the Crane, a border which is quite volatile for most of the Empire's history. After the Imperial capital is moved to Toshi Ranbo in the mid-twelfth century, this province becomes home to the Lion armies which defend it.

Ninkatoshi

Permission City is one of the easternmost fortifications of the Akodo. It begins its life as a humble farming village, but as near-constant war with the Crane continues for generations Ninkatoshi grows into a center for border enforcement and a first line of defense against Daidoji guerilla warfare. An assignment here is seen as a tremendous honor, even during times of peace, for at any

SHIRO AKODO

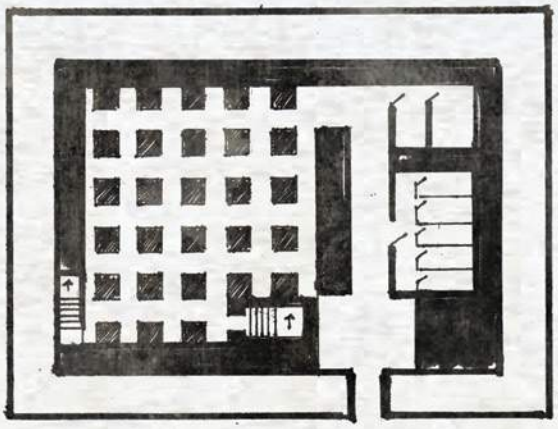


Map Guide

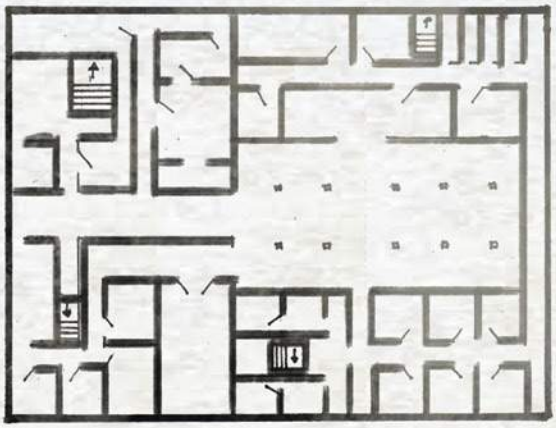
1. Main Gate
2. March of Uma-Jirushi
3. Courtiers' Quarters
4. Store Houses
5. Parade Grounds
6. Barracks
7. Officers Tower
8. Reserve Camp Grounds
9. Heart of the Katana Dojo
10. Akodo Dojo
11. Reserve Store Houses
12. Tenshukaku (Keep)
13. Yu-Seido Shrine

Tenshukaku

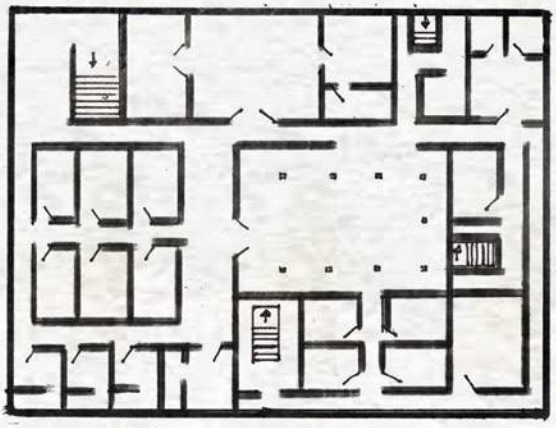
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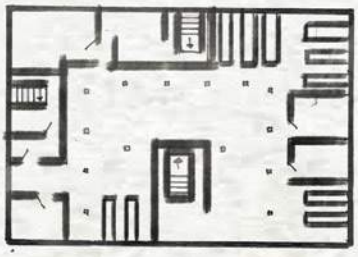
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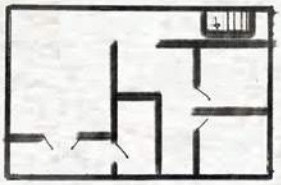
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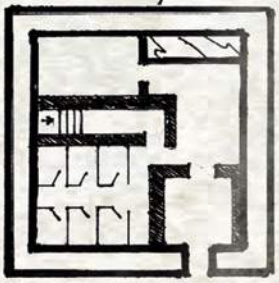
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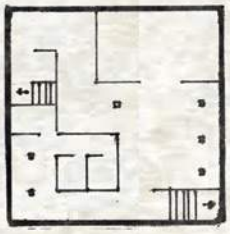
1. Entry / Foundation
2. Great Hall
3. Imperial Quarters
4. Archives
5. War Room
6. Daimyo's Loft

Yagura

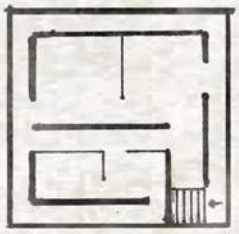
Entry



Living Quarters



Observation Balcony



moment the ire of the Lion might be roused. Prior to the twelfth century, the village's fortifications are significant but its size is relatively small; however, once Matsu Tsuko becomes Clan Champion during the Clan War, the village becomes the main staging point for her war efforts and expands into a city full of geisha houses, blacksmiths, and other such supporting resources. After the Four Winds era, Ninkatoshi serves as one of the chief outposts in defense of the Imperial City of Toshi Ranbo.

Seizuka Shiro

Situated halfway between Ninkatoshi and Toshi Ranbo, the seat of the Seizuka vassal family is built in the year 1155. It serves as the primary stopping place for all traffic going from the south to Toshi Ranbo, and can also function as a military staging point should armies be required to move against the Imperial City. The Seizuka family serve the Akodo as mapmakers, and their castle is always active, members of the family keeping odd hours as they constantly update the maps of Lion lands.

Kokoro Nezuban Mori and Kokoro Nezuban Seido

The Heart of Vigilance Forest is the chief source of lumber in the Lion lands, and is therefore regulated down to the smallest branch, not a single scrap wasted. Because of its relatively large size, the forest has many easy hiding places for bandits and ronin, and at several points in history it has been home to at least one branch of the infamous Forest Killers otokodate.

In the early days of exploration, Lion woodsmen discover an ancient shrine in the forest, a crude structure amounting to little more than a stone altar located in a natural clearing. No historian or Kitsu shugenja is ever able to identify the ancient markings, but heimin in the region assume it is the shrine of some long-forgotten Fortune. Some have also credited it as a shrine to Kuroshin, the patron of Agriculture, Kenro-ji-jin, the patron of Soil, or Yama-no-Kami, the Fortune of Stone. Regardless, the shrine does have some supernatural guardian, since a samurai who ordered a nearby tree cut down fell ill and died soon after. The peasants offer regular gifts in appeasement of whatever Celestial deity reigns here.

Oiku Province

Oiku is the northernmost province of the Akodo, with the River of the Drowned Merchant at its apex; just on the other side of the river are the lands of the Dragonfly and Dragon Clan. It is known chiefly for the city which gives it its name.

Oiku

For much of history, Oiku is a fairly ordinary town known chiefly for being home to Jin Seido, one of the seven shrines to Bushido. This shrine espouses the virtue of Compassion, and while the Lion do not ignore this virtue, it is not by any means the most revered tenet in Lion philosophy. As such, it is served by no more than a dozen monks at any given time, usually old retired bushi who have seen too much bloodshed in their lifetimes.

In the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, the city of Oiku transforms into what is probably the most prestigious assignment in Akodo lands, since it serves as a staging point for the constant give-and-take conflict with the Crane at Toshi Ranbo. Later, when the Akodo family is disbanded, it becomes a hardship posting for disgraced bushi and incompetent warriors. After Toshi Ranbo becomes the Imperial City, Oiku once again realizes its potential and becomes a truly glorious assignment; to be placed here is to be trusted as one who might need to rush to the aid of the Emperor's home.

Renga Province

The Renga lands are the breadbasket for the Akodo family, and the province is named for a strain of red-brown wheat which only grows here; its appearance can remind the viewer of either blood or clay, depending on one's mood. Renga is the one of the southernmost territories of the Akodo, and shares borders on all sides with other Lion lands. In addition to Renga Mura, this province is home to the private estate of the Akodo daimyo, a place of meditation and relaxation rarely used during times of war.

Renga Mura

Home to the Katai vassal family, this village is located just south of the Heart of Vigilance Forest. The Katai are in charge of the collection of timber from the forest, and they are so dedicated in their work that not a single structure in the town is made of wood. Instead, every building is built from smooth red stone excavated within the



province. Because of the vital importance of the village's timber harvesting, the Akodo ship food into this province and the heimin here enjoy a more comfortable life than those in most Lion provinces, serving largely without the need for overseers.. During summer, when the timber harvesting is at its peak, the town is empty of all save the old and very young. In winter, however, this place is full of life and laughter as the peasants spend time with family and friends.

The House of the Steadfast Oak serves the town as its main source of recreation. It offers tea, sake, a few geisha, and good food. The House grants free services to the magistrate of the town, partly from respect and partly to discourage the samurai from looking too hard at the back rooms where the wealthier villagers gamble, partake of opium, and indulge other such unsavory vices.

Renga Torid-E, or "Brick Keep," is the largest building in the village. Hardly befitting the name of keep, it serves more as the sole samurai residence in the town. Over the years a dojo and outlying buildings are added, but it never truly becomes a military stronghold.

Shimizu Province

Shimizu Province is the southernmost of all the Akodo provinces, an open region comprised mainly of farmland, with the usual array of outposts and waystations dotting the land. However, to the trained eye, these military structures are not purposed to defend the province, but instead designed to keep out all trespassers. Shimizu province has a dark and lurid past, unspoken of in polite circles. The province gains it name in the year 743 when a Lion named Akodo Shimizu saves the Emperor from mahotsukai. Shimizu is granted a vassal family as his reward, and the Akodo appoint him as ruler of this province; he builds a castle named Shiro Shimizu as his seat of power.

Unfortunately, several generations later the Shimizu family itself succumbs to the lure of maho when it is led by a greedy and vain daimyo named Tamayu. He lusts after the prized holdings of his neighbors, and launches a military campaign of conquest that ends in defeat. Unwilling to face the consequences of failure, Tamayu secretly embraces maho and summons an oni to gain the power to defeat his neighbors, winning many victories. Eventually, Tamayu's great-great-great grandson Ohoshi, an honorable teenage boy, learns the family's dark secret. He walks 50 miles to report the truth to the Akodo lords, and returns years later – now calling himself Akodo Giri – at the head of a cleansing army. Not one member of the Shimizu escapes his righteous fury, and once the last of them are dead, he commits seppuku himself, ending the line.

The ruins of Shiro Shimizu are barred to entry by outsiders, and the only visitors allowed are Kuni Witch Hunters, Asako Inquisitors, and Jade Magistrates (when they operate).

The Ikoma Provinces

Despite the relatively diplomatic nature of the Ikoma family, their shared borders with the Dragon and Unicorn mean they are always prepared for war. As with most Lion territory, the majority of the Ikoma provinces are comprised of rolling hills and plains with few other territorial features. The region surrounding Kyuden Ikoma itself is called the Venerable Plains of the Ikoma, a place dotted with scores of small villages along with a few modest castles focused heavily on overseeing the area's agriculture. Instead of the massive military bases of the Akodo and Matsu, Ikoma lands are protected with a network of smaller towers and fortifications spaced out across the land, connected by signal towers and way stations for rapid mobilization in a crisis.

The Ikoma do raise modest moderate herds of horses (mainly Rokugani ponies) for their wardens and scouts as well as for the Ikeda vassal family.

Eiyu Province

The Eiyu lands follow the line of the River of the Drowned Merchant in the north, just across from Dragonfly and Dragon territory. Situated between the City of Honor's Sacrifice and the Castle of the Swift Sword, the northern portions of Eiyu province see high traffic and frequent military exercises. The rest of the province is more typically Lion, serving agricultural needs.

Mura sano Eiyu ni Suru

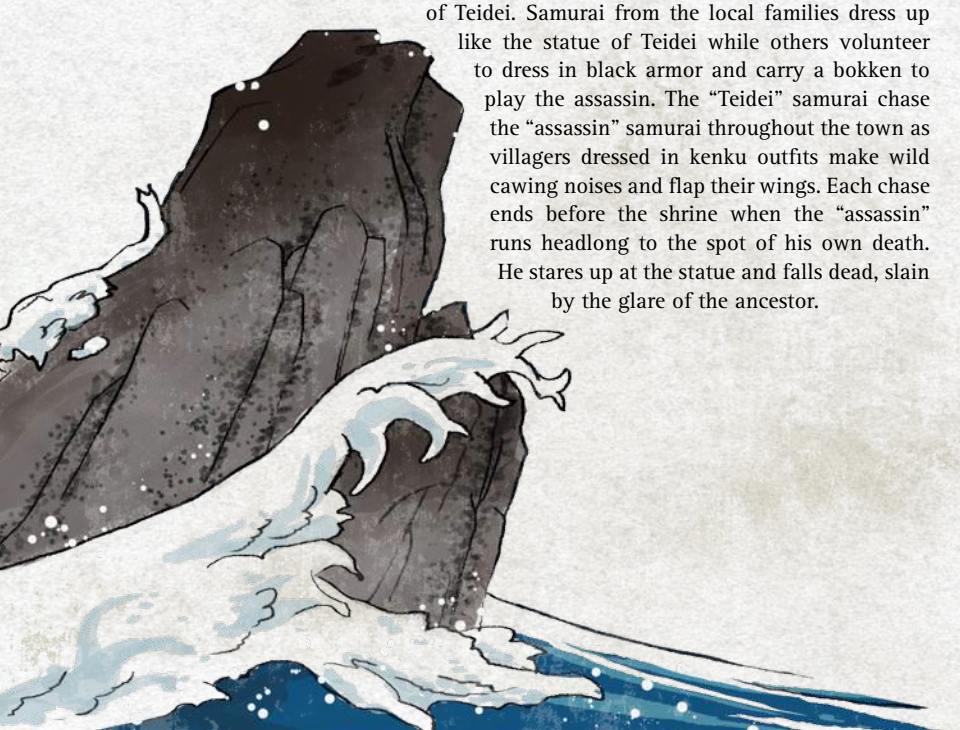
The Village of the Reinstated Hero is the singular place of note of Eiyu Province, but its legendary tale and the presence of Chugo Seido attracts visitors from across Lion lands. The town's name comes from a tale of an Ikoma samurai named Teidei who became ronin when his master was killed. While searching the Empire for the truth behind his lord's death, he was taken under the wing of a Kenku teacher named Kozue. Years later, he discovered the assassin was none other than his lord's own brother; Teidei tracked the assassin to this village, called him out in an honorable duel, and cut the man down. However, the assassin's blade was coated in poison; Teidei spent a whole day kneeling before the body, meditating, while he fought off the effects of the venom. At sunrise, the Ikoma lord arrived and proclaimed Teidei's valor for all to hear. With the barest hint of a smile, Teidei drew forth his wakizashi and performed the three cuts with the daimyo as his second.



The town has a teahouse called the Inn of the Hero which is said to be where Teidei saw the face of the assassin for the first time. Without revealing his name, he used a ruse to sit with the man, pretending to drink heavily and then "confiding" his mission to seek his master's killer. He then excused himself and stumbled, mock drunk, out of the room and into the street. The dishonorable samurai followed him, seeing easy prey, and the ensuing duel took place then and there. To this day the table where this took place is believed to be haunted and is given a wide berth by visitors to the inn.

Chugo Seido, the shrine to Duty, is a large enclosed pagoda housing the daisho of Ikoma Teidei. Outside, a massive statue of the man holds a sword in both hands, cutting across the left shoulder. The eyes glare down at the spot where his lord's brother died, and the effect makes a visitor feel as if Teidei will strike again in an instant if his foe should rise from the ground. The monks here are said to venerate Bushido more than the Tao, and encourage visitors to record their beliefs on the concept of Duty for others to discover.

On the fifth day of the month of the Rooster, the village holds the Festival of the Wandering Hero in honor of Teidei. Samurai from the local families dress up like the statue of Teidei while others volunteer to dress in black armor and carry a bokken to play the assassin. The "Teidei" samurai chase the "assassin" samurai throughout the town as villagers dressed in kenku outfits make wild cawing noises and flap their wings. Each chase ends before the shrine when the "assassin" runs headlong to the spot of his own death. He stares up at the statue and falls dead, slain by the glare of the ancestor.



Gisei Province

The original name of this province is recorded in the Ikoma histories, but was changed in the second century to honor Ikoma Arimi and the City of Honor's Sacrifice. After the return of the Unicorn, this province becomes the site of significant military traffic and many additional fortifications are built. However, during times of peace with the Unicorn, this province also serves as the chief avenue for trade with that clan.

Toshi no Meiyo Gisei

The original name of the City of Honor's Sacrifice is lost to all but the most obscure historical scholarship; it was renamed in the late second century to honor the death of Ikoma Arimi. A samurai-ko of remarkable skill, beauty, and intelligence, Arimi also had jealous enemies who sought to ruin her in the eyes of her lord. They discovered she had a secret lover named Matsu Makoto and exposed this betrayal to her lord, Ikoma Masahiro. Arimi petitioned for the right to perform seppuku to redeem her family's honor, but Masahiro believed she was not sincere and shamed her further by giving her a wooden blade to perform the ritual. Undeterred, Arimi committed seppuku anyway, putting to rest any doubts of her honor and shaming Masahiro, who immediately shaved his head and retired. Meiyo Seido was erected in her memory, and the village and province were renamed for her deed.

Meiyo Seido, the Shrine of Honor, is built only a year after Arimi took her life. An image of the woman stands in open display behind the shrine, and zealous pilgrims visit to throw stones at the statue – symbolizing both their disgust at Arimi's transgression and their veneration for her subsequent cleansing of her shame. The monks encourage the practice and even allow samurai to privately confess their own transgressions before doing so.

After the ninth century, the City of Honor's Sacrifice serves as the chief hub of trade with the Unicorn and a major military fortification in times of war. Also, the most famous geisha house in all the Lion lands, the House of the Morning Dew, resides within its walls. Long has this house served as a peaceful respite for Lion who need to unwind. For the omoidasu of the Ikoma who venerate their founder, this house is as much a religious retreat as it is a domain of pleasure. To those in the know, the House of the Morning Dew also has a shadier reputation as a place where anyone can find a suitable companion, no matter their preferences or desires. The more questionable minority within the Ikoma family – the so-called Lion's Shadow – employ a small group of ronin to keep the peace here and secretly use the geisha to gather information for their spy network.

Firefly Plains Trading Grounds

Located to the west of the City of Honor's Sacrifice, the Firefly Plains are the first stop for Unicorn trade caravans before moving inward to other points in the Empire. The Trading Grounds which spring up here each time the Unicorn visit are managed by the most tolerant of Ikoma

vassals, allowing the strange Unicorn wares to be sold under watchful eye. Less honorable items can sometimes be found here, but the Ikoma maintain a vigilant guard and do not tolerate violence or outright illegality.

Gunsho Province

Gunsho is the southernmost province of the Ikoma and borders both the Spine of the World Mountains and the Three Sides River. The chief threats to this province are Scorpion infiltrators and saboteurs from across the mountains. For this reason the Ikoma assign their best wardens and guards to the waystations here, all of them well-trained in detecting forged documents. The entire province lives up to a harsh standard not seen in the rest of Ikoma lands and indeed in few other Lion territories at all. This is because Kyuden Ikoma, the sole Lion castle able to host a Winter Court, is located here. The Emperor may potentially choose to visit in any year, so the entire land must be maintained at all times completely prepared for his visit.

Kyuden Ikoma

Sacred Watch Palace is a world of dreams for both the story-lovers and the historians of the Empire. Simple and ascetic in its overall décor, the palace is nonetheless ever-prepared to host the Emperor's Winter Court and is not without its luxuries, albeit of a strictly proper and restrained sort. The castle itself is surrounded on all sides by the Venerable Plains of the Ikoma, as fertile a province as any in the Empire (save perhaps some in the Crane lands). The palace also hides aspects of its face from the public. Ikoma was a consummate warrior, canny negotiator, and fantastic storyteller, traits openly espoused by his descendants; however, Ikoma was also a heavy drinker, rough-spoken and brusque, ruthless in the exploitation of weakness, and an unrivaled lover of geisha. Certain aspects of the city around Kyuden Ikoma cater to these tastes in honor of their lord, but the Ikoma do not flaunt them.

The glory of Kyuden Ikoma is the vast Ikoma Libraries. This structure is to the Lion what the Kaiu Kabe is to the Crab. Every scroll, every word kept here must be irrefutable, for these records are the standard to which every other library in Rokugan is compared. In the War Against the Lying Darkness, nearly everything here is destroyed or distorted, and the Ikoma spend years afterward scouring every corner of the Empire to rebuild their histories.

Hidden in the shadow of the Ikoma palace is an innocuous building of ancient design. The Chambers of the Lion host secret meetings between the prominent lords of the Lion, held under the cover of mundane revelry. Omoidasu maintain regular parties in the spirit of Ikoma himself, too small to draw attention, but big enough that a few non-descript individuals can get lost in a back room to discuss vital affairs of state.

Ikoma's Eye is the name for the urbanized area outside the gates of the palace. The name is attributed to an old saying of Akodo: "If something is worth seeing, then Ikoma's eye has already found it." Here the Ikoma host travelers, diplomats, guests of the Lion, and occasionally the crowds of an Imperial Winter Court. The eyes and ears of the Ikoma observe all their guests as they wander these streets. Loyal Lion servants, merchants, and paid spies report back any items of interest to their lords. Moreover, because the city is a major stopover for both the Unicorn and Dragon on their way to the rest of the Empire, the family is able to keep well abreast of the activities of both those clans.

Murame Toshi

Due northeast of Kyuden Ikoma is the home of the Murame vassal family. Created after the restoration of the Akodo family in the twelfth century, the Murame are those Ikoma who favor military and strategic prowess over the diplomacy and more common pursuits of the family.

Ikota Province

Ikota Province rests comfortably within Lion territory, surrounded by other Ikoma and Kitsu lands. Rarely threatened in even the most major wars, Ikota is primarily dedicated to farming, history, and in later years, the Great Hall of Records.



The Great Hall of Records

The Great Hall is built in the latter half of the twelfth century after a Unicorn army attacked Kyuden Ikoma and threatened the sacred histories. Daimyo Ikoma Korin oversaw construction and proclaimed the location to serve multiple purposes. It would be a backup of records from the Ikoma Library, but would also be a symbol of the importance the Lion place on history and the need for it to be safeguarded against all enemies. The structure is built with the most recent advances in military defenses, making it one of the most secure fortifications in all Lion lands.

Shiro Kyube

Home of the Hosokawa vassal family, Shiro Kyube is the second largest structure in Ikota Province (and the largest until the construction of the Great Hall of Records in Ikota province. The Hosokawa serve the Ikoma as scribes, collating data for their parent family for submission into the Ikoma libraries. The heimin of this village are literate, skilled in scroll making, and take pride in the orderly service they provide their masters. Chiseled beneath a stone in the center of the tone is a quote from the family's founder: "Truth is shaped by the witness."

Shiranai Province

A nondescript province for much of the Empire's history, Shiranai's status changes dramatically after the Unicorn return to Rokugan. With a border abutting on the Unicorn territories, Shiranai becomes the most dangerous location in Ikoma lands, for the Ide family believes the province falls within their ancestral homelands. The Ikoma Wardens, the Lion's Shadow, and the military and strategic leaders of the family all consider this province the likely first target in any war with their Unicorn neighbors. Thus, unlike the rest of the Ikoma provinces, military movements and war games take place here regularly, limiting the available farmland to tightly controlled areas.

Lookout Mountain and Shiranai Toshi

Lookout Mountain is a lone pillar of earth rising out of the open plains of the Lion lands. Unknown to most, it was actually created in the Empire's earliest history by the Phoenix artifact known as Isawa's Last Wish, though the Lion see it as a sign of the Fortunes' favor to their clan. The mountain is riddled with copper veins, and thus serves the Lion as both an economic asset and as a vital defense against invading forces.



Located at the base of the mountain, Shiranai Toshi – Darkness City – is the first outpost build by the Lion Clan after the departure of Shinjo and the Ki-Rin. As the scouts of the Ikoma traverse their lands they receive a vision and search for this site; when they arrive, they are thrown to the ground by the earthquake which lifts Lookout Mountain from the very foundations of the world. The Lion immediately construct Shiranai Toshi, named for the shadow of the great mountain which covers the location for more than half the day.

One of the most successful smithies in Lion territory is located in Shiranai Toshi. Known as the Blazing Sun, named after its many fine works of copper and gold, the smithy was founded by one of the original Ikoma settlers of the land, a man named Ikoma Jonetsu.

In modern times, frequent war with the Unicorn results in the Lion Champion banning all Unicorn from this city. A generation later, the Warden Stables of the Ikoma are relocated here to pursue studies of mounted warfare against the Unicorn foes.

Nishi no Shiro

Western Castle is a Matsu holding built in Ikoma territory in the late ninth century. It is located at the juncture of the Firefly, Drowned Merchant, and Three Sides Rivers, so all river traffic to and from the Unicorn lands passes through this holding. This allows the Lion to maintain a careful eye on their potential enemy at all times. The sentries here can see the walls of the City of the Rich Frog in the distance (see page 238).

The Kitsu Provinces

Much like a shugenja on the battlefield, the Kitsu provinces are protected on almost all sides by other Lion domains. Located in the central and north-central lands of the clan, the Kitsu provinces extend from the Drowned Merchant River in the north to Tonfajusten in the Matsu lands in the south. They extend westward across Crossing Plains Way and stop just before Kyuden Ikoma. Finally, Rugashi and the Akodo lands protect the Kitsu in the east. With rare exceptions, these lands are dominated by the vast open plains of the Lion. Military maneuvers are far less common among the Kitsu, so most of the territory is used for farming in one manner or another. Hundreds of small shrines and temples dot the land, all well-maintained by Kitsu shugenja, their acolytes, and monastic orders of retired samurai.

Dairiki Province

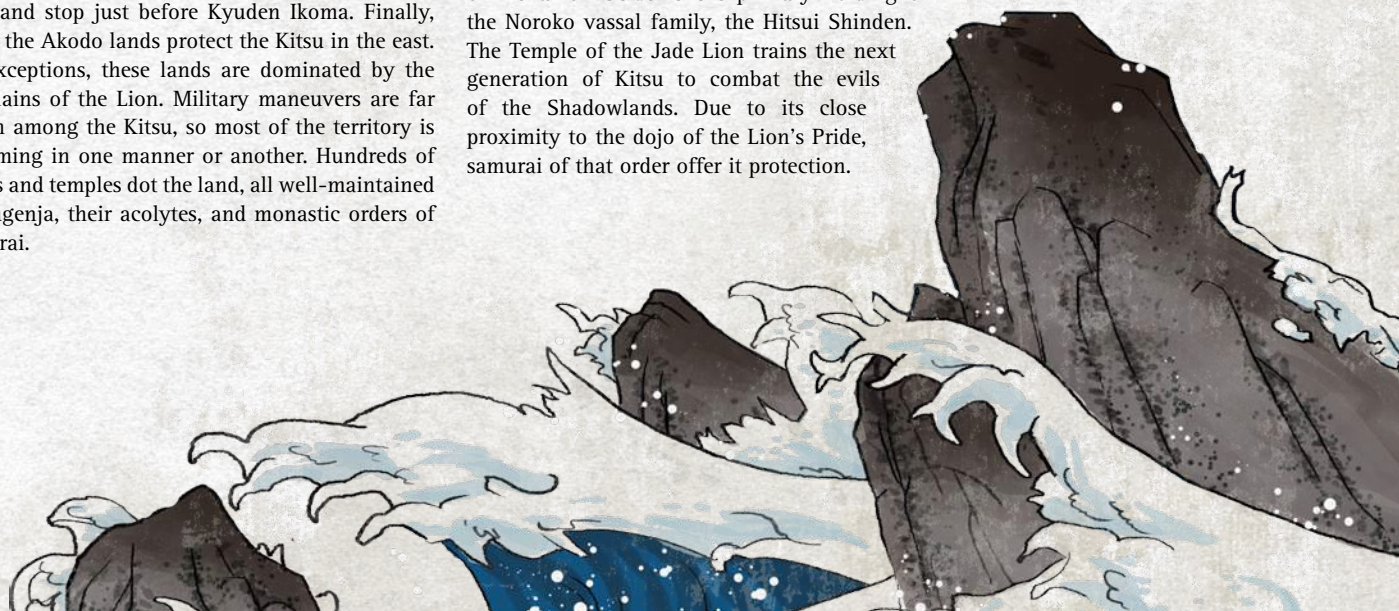
Much like the rest of Kitsu lands, Dairiki Province is populated almost entirely by farmlands, small shrines and temples, and occasional waystations for the soldiers who patrol the domain. Bishamon Seido lies on the southern border with the Matsu family and is surrounded by the largest collection of major shrines to the ancestors of any Lion province. Because of its central location, Dairiki is the least likely of any Lion territory to be attacked by an outside force. Additionally, the Kitsu are relatively benevolent taskmasters, so peasant unrest is minimized here compared to other Lion regions. Altogether, Dairiki Province is the most peaceable region in all of Lion lands.

Bishamon Seido

Each Great Clan boasts a major temple to one of the Seven Great Fortunes within its lands, and the Lion are no different. Though it lies within the Kitsu lands, Bishamon Seido borders the domain of the Matsu, a physical combination which mimics the spiritual and physical power the Fortune of Strength represents. Great warriors from every clan revere Bishamon, but no other clan boasts a temple even half the size of the one in Dairiki Province. The Kitsu family considers it their holy purpose to staff this temple, and the resident Brotherhood monks are joined by well over a hundred Kitsu priests. Many of the monks are themselves former members of the Lion Clan, with the largest number coming from the Matsu.

Bishamon Seido serves dual roles as both temple and a dojo, for its compound houses the elite all-female Matsu unit known as the Lion's Pride. In addition, sohei monks of the Fortune of Strength train here non-stop. The temple is also a storehouse of military supplies which cannot be stored in nearby Tonfajutsen.

A few other locations lie in the shadow of Bishamon Seido, drawing power from its strength. Matsu Itagi, the Lion Champion who once proclaimed himself stronger than the Shadowlands itself, is revered at a shrine here as a physical manifestation of the Fortune of Strength. Nearby, a large watchtower is used by the Kitsu to perform a special prayer vigil, the Ceaseless Vigil Watch, every time the Lion armies march to war. Lastly, just south of Bishamon Seido is the primary holding of the Noroko vassal family, the Hitsui Shinden. The Temple of the Jade Lion trains the next generation of Kitsu to combat the evils of the Shadowlands. Due to its close proximity to the dojo of the Lion's Pride, samurai of that order offer it protection.



Blue Chrysanthemum Village

Located ten miles north of Bishamon Seido, this village is home to a shrine to Benten, the Fortune of Romantic Love – the only shrine to that Fortune in the Lion lands. The shrine has its source in events from the tenth century, when the samurai Kitsu Kozu and Doji Echiko die in defense of their love – a love they embrace despite their clans being at war with one another. The Lion Champion who dooms the couple is shamed when Kozu obeys his lord by wiping out the city of his beloved... and then committing seppuku in protest. The Clan Champion retires and then builds the shrine in memory of the couple. Upon his death, the former Champion's ashes are spread around the shrine and from this ground sprout chrysanthemums of a blue shade.

Foshi Province

Foshi Province holds little of note beyond great stretches of farmlands and the single city which shares its name. During times of conflict with the Crane, this region experiences heavy incursions by Daidoji raiders; the Crane see the area as a breadbasket for the Lion and, because of the smaller military of the Kitsu, as more easily attacked by small raiding forces. In fact, the Crane have been known to salt the farmlands and foment dissent in the populace.

Foshi

The city of Foshi borders the Akodo lands and is the largest settlement in the Kitsu lands. Twice the size of Rugashi, Foshi is a military domain, ruled with the pure efficiency only Lion strategists can provide. The lands surrounding this city are completely packed with rice paddies, fruit orchards, and giant granaries. The Kitsu pray over the granaries to try to ensure the harvested food lasts as long as possible. Tiny collections of homes dot the landscape of Foshi, not so much actual villages as merely disparate collections of familial residences. Thousands of troops are scattered across the waystations of this domain to stymie the saboteurs of Crane or Scorpion armies.

Hayai Province

Bordering the Drowned Merchant River in the north, Hayai province is the only Kitsu domain not protected on all sides by the other Lion families, making it the most likely to see hostile engagement by other clans. Foolish commanders see the Kitsu shugenja as easy targets and try to strike against the Lion in this province, only to realize their mistake when the full might of the Castle of the Swift Sword comes down upon them.

Like other Kitsu domains, Hayai province is home to a variety of shrines, temples, and minor religious holdings. And again like other Kitsu domains, all free space not given over to religious structures or troop movements is occupied by farms and food production.

Shiro sano Ken Hayai

The Castle of the Swift Sword is actually far more of an Akodo holding than a Kitsu one. Though governed by the Kitsu family, the primary purpose of the castle is to serve as the cornerstone for the northern and western defenses of Lion lands. While Shiro Akodo is the Akodo family's seat of power, Swift Sword is its heart and soul, home to the famous Akodo War College. Each year hundreds of bushi are trained here to become officers, both at the tactical level and the strategic. Shiro sano Ken Hayai is thus an absolutely vital castle to the Lion Clan, home to elite guards, commanders, and administrators of all ranks and types.

Deep beneath the castle lies a Kitsu holding known as the Shrine of the First Five. This structure once resided in the foothills of Dragon lands where the Kitsu race lived, but the remaining five Kitsu moved here as part of their oaths of loyalty to Akodo One-Eye. Only those Kitsu samurai of the utmost honor are chosen to serve here, and a few gifted students are granted the right to administer this tiny room in the lowest basement of the castle. It is a place full of the power of all five Elements, and in the entire history of its existence not a single non-Kitsu has ever been granted entry.

After the twelfth-century death of Kitsu Motso, the only Lion Champion from the Kitsu family, a small dojo is created in his memory at Shiro sano Ken Hayai. Golden Spider Dojo teaches those rare few Kitsu who seek to engage in physical warfare, training them to serve as tactical advisors and leaders, as well as instructing the shugenja among them in the use of battle magic. The dojo's name comes from an old Lion superstition that spiders are lucky creatures, with the golden color of course stemming from the prominent hair and eye color of the Kitsu race.

Rugashi Province

The shrines of Rugashi primarily serve those Lion whose purpose in life led them to glory not on the field of battle, but in the domains of the court: negotiations, diplomacy, and commerce. Though small, Rugashi Province produces more foodstuffs for the Lion than some provinces half again its size.

Rugashi Toshi

The city of Rugashi serves as the pivotal point of trade between Shiro sano Ken Hayai and Ninkatoshi. Like the spokes of a great wagon wheel, roads from Rugashi lead out to every corner of the Lion lands. All trade done by the Lion passes through Rugashi and every legal activity and product can be found here. Rugashi is most busy during the spring and fall seasons. During spring, merchants and

courtiers aggressively negotiate prices for the coming season. In the fall, Imperial tax collectors and agents of the Imperial Treasury fill the city with their activities. Rugashi tolerates no violence, since it is disruptive to the vital trade the city provides. Armed conflict is never allowed within the city walls and violators are punished with extreme harshness.

Rugashi is home to a unique sub-holding called Hano Sake. Sometime between the eighth and ninth centuries, a greedy Mirumoto named Hano instructs his merchants to infiltrate the city to take advantage of its low tariffs. The family takes root and operates successfully on all levels, buying and selling food, clothing, and any other legal product which turns a profit. They avoid strategies which put other families at risk and their conservative values make them one of the longest-lasting merchant families the Lion lands. Long since disconnected from their Dragon progenitors, the Hano family also specializes in a unique brand of sake from which their estate takes its name.

Additionally, Rugashi is home to a singular holding of inestimable value: Toratama's Silver Heaven, a shop tended by monks of Daikoku which sells clothing, sculptures, and silver jewelry to the elite upper class.

Gi Seido

Because of the sheer quantity of other shrines in Kitsu lands, Gi Seido is the only one of the seven Lion shrines to Bushido located in their domain. The small shrine to Honesty and Justice is located a few miles from Shiro sano Ken Hayai and is built from the same ancient stones which make up the substructure of that castle. Monks here tend to be former Ikoma magistrates and wardens. Though the original tiny shrine was built in the first century, the relative poverty of the Kitsu prevented it from expanding to match the other seven shrines until many centuries later. Crane samurai are fond of mocking the Lion by saying they "forgot there were seven virtues in Bushido; when they remembered they finally built the shrine."



The Matsu Provinces

While the Heigen no Otaku, or Plains of Battle, spread across much of the Lion lands, it is here in the Matsu provinces where the true meaning behind that name takes shape. The Matsu lands are filled with farmlands, orchards, and other food production, but these locations are tightly controlled and take a back seat to the sprawling grasslands set aside for troop maneuvers and mock battle. The Matsu lands border the Spine of the World Mountains to the west and therefore serve as the front line in any war against the Scorpion. Furthermore, the Matsu share their eastern border with Daidoji provinces in the Crane, and again stand as first in line to face those enemies. The aggressive warriors of the Matsu family would have this no other way, but the near-constant threat of warfare has shaped their land considerably. More than any other Lion provinces, Matsu territories are heavy with outposts, minor fortifications, castles small and large, and roaming patrols. Few places in the Empire are as tightly monitored as the Matsu lands, and the spies of the enemy are abundant and clever.

Azuma Province

In times of war with the Crane, Azuma Province stands at the forefront of the war effort. Forays into neighboring Daidoji lands jump off from here, and the province maintains a constant watchful eye against the saboteurs of that family. In times of peace, Azuma's inner territories provide abundant rice and wheat for the Matsu family.

Kyakuchu Mura

The only halfway significant settlement within Azuma Province is Footnote Village, which grows from its humble beginnings into a major military checkpoint during the Clan War. Imperial Legions also use the village as a staging ground for monitoring the Scorpion lands. Although the village's significance declines after the Clan War, it does still serve as a stop between the larger fortresses of Kenson Gakka and Shiro Matsu.

Within the village is a notable tea and geisha house known as the Emerald Lily. The house reaches the height of its popularity during the time of the Four Winds, when Toturi Tsudao was known to visit it while in the region.

Chuugen Province

There are few easily traversable paths in this portion of the Spine of the World Mountains, making the potential for Scorpion spies far less likely. This has allowed Chuugen Province, more than any other Matsu lands, to exist in relative peace. Appointment here is unappealing to the battle-minded family and tends to fall on those lower in the pecking order or those whose skill in battle is meager at best. These lands have fewer military stations than any other Matsu domain, and there are literally no major fortifications and no settlements larger than a village. Chuugen Province's only positive aspect to the Lion is its high agricultural productivity. Soybeans, sorghum, wheat, sugar beets, flax, cotton, sesame seeds, millet, and rice are all grown here in abundant quantities.

Gakka Province

On the western side of Matsu lands, Gakka Province shares a portion of its border with the lands of the Scorpion. Though separated from the Scorpion by the Three Sides River and the Spine of the World Mountains, Gakka overlooks a number of small passages through the mountains, passes which the Lion monitor constantly for Scorpion aggression. Due to its size and location, Gakka is split about evenly between farmlands and lands used for troop movements.

Gakka Province is named for its one prominent holding, Kenson Gakka, but this was not always true. Prior to the sixth century, that castle was known as the Castle of Honor, and this province was named Meyo.

Kenson Gakka

The castle known as Humility's Lesson is not always so named. Until the sixth century, it was called the Castle of Honor, but in that era a lightning assault by a Scorpion Champion named Bayushi Tsuya captured the fortress, which Tsuya renamed Lion's Shadow in open mockery of the Lion. The Matsu were quick to retaliate, sending the full strength of their armies against the small Scorpion force and wiping them out to a man. The speed of the assault and the brutal slaughter of every Scorpion within the Lion lands spurred the Matsu daimyo to rename the structure Humility's Lesson. Some believe she did so as a warning for the Scorpion, but others suspect she probably considered the "lesson" to be her own.

Kenson Gakka serves a vital strategic role, supervising outposts and watch towers along the Spine of the World Mountains that gaze upon the small passes known as the Shadows of Beiden, ever-ready for the next Scorpion attack. From here, the Matsu can stage major assaults across the mountains into Scorpion lands or defend against similar assaults from the Clan of Secrets. Kenson Gakka commanders have a tradition of keeping their troops here for only five year rotations in order to combat the infiltration tactics of the Scorpion.

The Scorpion never attempt to replicate their sixth century attack, and the castle's relative peace (and attendant boredom) has given rise to a tradition of healthy competition within the garrison. These competitions are nearly always martial, though some focus on the acumen of the mind and the ability to pierce the twin veils of illusion and deception.

Kenson Mura, or Humble Village, surrounds the castle. It is home to the provincial governor's estate, and it populace is comprised mainly of those who serve the needs of the Matsu soldiers – servants, weaponsmiths, armorers, sword polishers, and entertainers. Every year, just after planting season, a grand event called the Festival of the Humble Turtle takes place here. A military parade begins in the town and ends at the parade grounds of the castle. The finest Matsu units march in the parade, wearing sashimono with the mon of the Lion. At the end they place their banners in a perfect upright row, snapping in the breeze, while dozens of games of chance, martial competitions, and tests of intuition and awareness take place. In the evening there is a grand feast which includes the heimin of the village.

Yaruki Jukko no Tera

The ancient Temple of Courageous Reflection lies just within sight of Humility's Lesson near a bend in the Three Sides River. Surrounded by a grove of trees, this temple may well have pre-existed the fall of the Kami and was originally dedicated to the unnamed deities of that time. Later it is converted into a temple to Shinsei, though it also appeases the local kami. Shugenja who visit note an unusual ease in reaching out to the kami, their spells enhanced by ancient pacts. The forested region around the temple has been the site of hundreds of disappearances over the years, and the Kitsu suspect it is connected to the Realm of Animals.

Heigen Province

The Heigen lands are the true heart of the Matsu territory, an eternal sea of grasslands swaying in the breeze. Every feature of the Matsu provinces is represented in some shape or form in Heigen, the land so all-encompassing it could swallow whole the smaller regions of other clans. Though hundreds of military fortifications dot the lands of Heigen, most of them are quite small – Shiro Koritome is the only major holding

Shiro Koritome

Built in the fifth century, Shiro Koritome is home to the preeminent archer family of the Lion, one of the most respected Matsu vassal families. The castle is as large as the homes of some Minor Clans, and sits on a huge parcel of land surrounded by squat watchtowers. Every one of the defensive buildings is connected to the main castle by a network of walkways, rope bridges, and bamboo ladders. This allows the talented Koritome archers to move swiftly from place to place, using their archery skill and speed to defend against much larger forces. The Koritome are so specialized and so well-known for their skill that their parent family, the Matsu, comes to them to train instead of the reverse.

The town outside the castle is known as Koritome Toshi, a place of bowyers and fletchers whose crafts are the envy of other Great Clans. Even the Scorpion, Unicorn, and Phoenix seek to commission the services of these heimin, a practice the Lion sometimes allow depending on the political circumstances at any given time. The Mantis, however, never visit Koritome Toshi, and scoff at the idea that the artisans here can match the work of the Tsuruchi.

Kaeru Province

Kaeru Province shares a border with the Daidoji province of Kosaten, and is primarily occupied by forestlands. The Matsu patrol this region at all times, ever alert for the spies and saboteurs of the Daidoji. Two locations of major note within Kaeru Province are Captured City and the sacred Kitsu Tombs.

Captured City / Brittle Flower City

This city is for most of its history a Crane settlement called Brittle Flower City, a prosperous trading city, waypoint for caravans, and a source of considerable tax revenue. It contains the vaunted Bazaar of a Hundred Fortunes, one of the largest open-air markets in Rokugan, taking up more than a third of the city's total area. This wealth combined with its location on the Lion border makes Brittle Flower City a tempting target and it changes hands between the two clans many times.



Shortly before the start of the Clan War, Lion Chanpion Matsu Tsuko captures the city yet again and this time renames it "Captured City," symbolizing her intention to keep it for good. The city is subsequently troubled by numerous peasant revolts due to the heimin citizens' preference for Crane masters. However, by the end of the twelfth century the city has not yet left Lion hands.

The Kitsu Tombs

Although the Tombs are a Kitsu holding beyond dispute, they are located in Matsu lands because this is the burial site of the First Five, the last remaining members of the ancient Kitsu race. By tradition, only Kitsu are interred here, though the shugenja family sometimes extends the offer to the glorious dead of other Lion families. The Matsu protect this domain with more ferocity than even their own holdings, refusing to allow any threat to the site of the clan's most sacred ancestors.

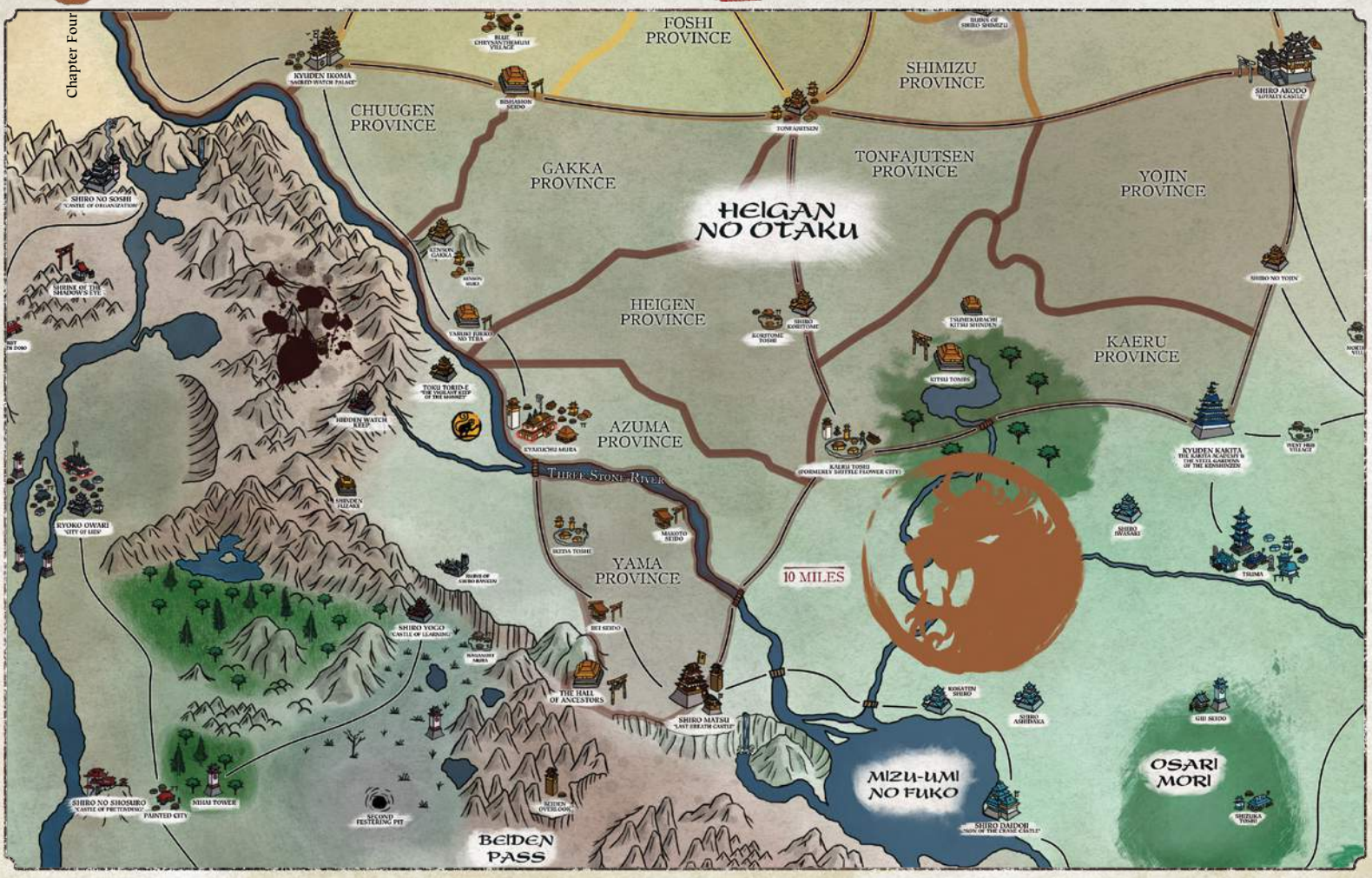
The Tombs are surrounded by serene gardens and a small lake. Shrines dedicated to the founders of each Lion family and the clan's other glorious ancestors dot the landscape. A massive torii arch stands over the entrance to the Tombs themselves, and those few outsiders allowed to enter swear they feel a powerful tingle in their spine when they pass through. The Tombs are home to powerful nemuranai and ancient rituals, a source of tremendous mystical power to the Kitsu. Far below the earth, at least three stories down, reside the urns of the First Five and a ritual site where the Kitsu lords reach out into every other Spirit Realm.

Tsumekurachi Kitsu Shinden

The Temple of the Lion's Claw is home to the Ise vassal family of the Kitsu, an ancient family who blend the wisdom of their parent family with the fury of the Matsu. Their grounds are often confused for a temple to Osano-Wo, as the monks here train in both the fighting arts and the study of the kami and Fortunes. Located just north of the Kitsu Tombs, the Lion's Claw is an amalgamation of a fortress, a library for prayer scrolls and records of the Spirit Realms, and a dojo for the Ise warriors.

Tonfajutsen Province

The Tonfajutsen Province forms a central crossroads for troop movements and trade within all the Lion lands, especially those of the Matsu. It is a line of reinforcement, defense, and preparation for protracted warfare against the Crane and a support location for other engagements. The roads of Tonfajutsen are designed for rapid troop movement, and hundreds of heimin are devoted to maintaining these pathways for their lords.





Tonfajutsen and Crossroads Castle

The city of Tonfajutsen is located in the heart of the province from which it takes its name. At the heart of the city, in turn, is Crossroads Castle – also known as Central Castle – a simple unadorned fortress set amid a perfectly ordered cityscape. The castle and town are dedicated entirely to gathering, sorting, and distributing the tremendous volume of supplies required for the Lion armies to operate. Not a single ounce of rice or barley, not one arrow, not a single item of note passes through Tonfajutsen without being accounted for. The city is known for its legions of quartermasters, officers who pore over every report and devour information like others eat food. Forgery and falsified documents are nearly impossible to pass under the watchful eyes of the trained samurai in this domain, and those caught trying usually meet with very grisly ends.

Due to the lack of natural defenses in this region, Central Castle relies entirely on man-made fortifications and its substantial garrison. However, the massive supplies here allow it to most over 5,000 troops without much strain. Interestingly, the heimin of this province are treated with somewhat more respect than elsewhere in Matsu lands; they are unofficial deputies aiding their samurai masters in their great work, and have adopted the name "The Handles" after the tonfa they each carry.

Yama Province

Originally known as Hamana Province after one of its early governors, this land initially gains the nickname "Yama" due to its proximity to the Spine of the World Mountains, and it eventually supplanted the original title. By far the most notable location in this domain is Shiro Matsu, seat of the Matsu family's rule and power, but the region is also home to a dizzying array of outposts, watchtowers, military waystations, and training grounds. This leaves little land for farming, but the Matsu heimin use every last available piece. They must work extra hard because the proximity of the mountains means winter takes longer to thaw here.

After the destruction of Beiden Pass in the War of Spirits, Yama Province sees far less open warfare, but the Matsu refuse to reduce their garrisons here. They contend that the smaller passages through the Spine of the World are just as dangerous, especially when dealing with a deceptive neighbor like the Scorpion.

Shiro Matsu

The Matsu family cares nothing for diplomacy, nothing for art or delicacy or commerce. Some would claim they also care little for courtesy, and certainly Shiro Matsu is notorious for its stark ascetic décor and the blunt attitudes of its masters. Courtiers from the Doji, Bayushi, or Phoenix consider an assignment to Shiro Matsu to be an outright punishment. The Matsu family home is certainly not designed with the welfare of guests in mind. For example, each morning guests are awakened by a violent and cacophonous noise as hundreds, sometimes thousands, of young samurai train in the courtyards outside.

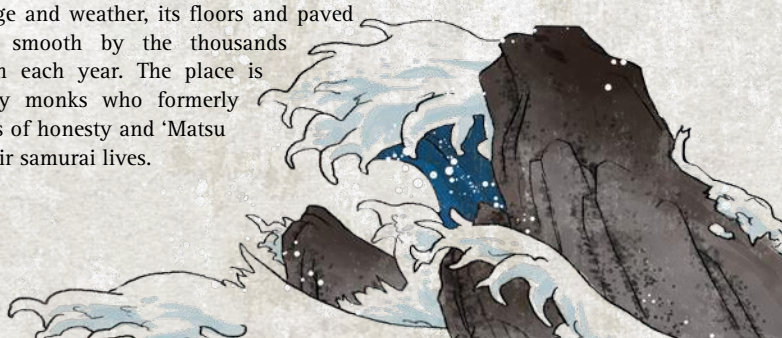
The structure itself is immense, the main keep standing over a hundred feet tall, the outer stone walls looming nearly forty feet high. The caste and surrounding area are capable of housing nearly 100,000 troops. In truth, if the Matsu wished it they could easily upgrade their home to meet the requirements of a Kyuden, but the very design of the castle proclaims to all that this has never been the family's goal.

The city of Shiro Matsu Toshi, the largest settlement in Lion lands, surrounds the castle. It boasts thousands of heimin craftsmen, farmers, and workers, all serving the needs of the Matsu. Samurai of the Akodo, Ikoma, and Kitsu families have their own holdings here, and sensei from nearly every school in the Lion Clan have dojo here as well. Numerous shrines are found within the city as well, including not one but two shrines of Bushido, dedicated to Makoto and Rei.

Makoto Seido

The Matsu adhere to a far more traditional notion of Sincerity than the 'twisted pathways' held by other clans. Matsu do not believe in lies or deception, no matter what the reason for them. They say what they mean, in full honesty, without reservation. Decriers of the Lion may call them brash, violent, and antisocial, but no one has ever claimed the Matsu do not speak their minds.

With this in mind, it is not really all that surprising that Makoto Seido is located in the Matsu lands. The ancient shrine, a massive stone structure, is covered with the marks of age and weather, its floors and paved grounds worn smooth by the thousands of visitors seen each year. The place is administered by monks who formerly served as pillars of honesty and 'Matsu sincerity' in their samurai lives.





Rei Seido

It is rumored that Rei Seido was forced on the Matsu by an Akodo Clan Champion who sought to bring some civility to the family. The Matsu obediently built a shrine to Polite Courtesy, but placed it in an out of the way location outside the walls of Shiro Matsu, sheltering in the shadows of Spine of the World Mountains. It has fallen into obscurity and disrepair in the thousand years since its construction, and the monks here are not accustomed to actual visitors. Few Matsu ever visit the shrine, and even then only because they are so pious they feel they must pray at every one of the seven shrines to Bushido.

The Hall of Ancestors

No matter how distant or obscure, all Lion have ancestors whose ashes reside in this sacred shrine. In a land of shrines, a land where countless holdings are dedicated to the heroes and events of the past, the Hall of Ancestors stands above all others. It is a sacred site where all the greatest heroes of the Lion are interred. The finest priests of the Kitsu hold domain here, the family unwilling to assign the task to any lesser soul. All Lion samurai make a pilgrimage to this location at least once in their lifetime, unless duty or death prevents it. Command of the defense of the Hall traditionally falls to the second-oldest child of the Matsu daimyo. This person, the Defender of the Hall, faces a profound spiritual burden as well as a martial one, and is aided in this endeavor by retired Lion serving as monks of the Brotherhood.

Built into a hill a few miles from Shiro Matsu, the Hall is a gigantic structure, and each major family has its own enormous branch dedicated to its own ancestors. Each hallway is filled with the likenesses of heroes who will never be forgotten, with ancient scrolls and items of remembrance, and with hundreds of looming statues whose gaze bores down on their visitors. Open to any samurai who shows respect, the Hall sees more non-Lion pilgrims than any other shrine, library, or temple in their lands.

Beiden Overlook

This holding is a lookout post on the southeastern end of Beiden Pass, only three miles from the Scorpion Clan's Beiden Province. In point of fact, the outpost technically falls within Scorpion lands, but the Clan of Secrets rarely seeks to contest the claim because of the vast Matsu army located nearby. There is no keep and no walls – the structure would fall easily to even the weakest Scorpion assault. However, its purpose is not to stand against an assault, but merely to grant early warning. To this effect, the Matsu place the fastest horses in their stables here, along with the finest riders. Samurai assigned to Beiden Overlook feel blessed to be entrusted with the most dangerous duty in all the Lion lands.

Ikeda Toshi

Barely larger than a simple farming village, Ikeda Toshi is an outpost of civilized land in the center of largely unsettled Lion territory. Few samurai and nearly none of the heimin ever leave the isolation of this town, and they are infamous for their sheltered and reclusive nature. The unusual closeness between the samurai and peasants in this town can leave a foul taste in the mouths of Lion from other domains, but the lords of this city favor such interaction. The city has a remarkably low crime rate, nearly no violent crimes, and peasant revolts here are only legends.



Yojin Province

Hotly contested through its entire history, Yojin Province is the starting point for almost every war against the Crane. The province is ripe and fertile, producing abundant food in times of peace, and possesses a well-constructed network of outposts and defenses. In times of war, its border fortifications – especially Shiro no Yojin – change hands with the whims of the commanders in the field.

Shiro no Yojin

The Castle of Vigilance is less than a day's ride from Otosan Uchi, and through most of Rokugan's history this makes it one of the most strategically important fortresses in the Empire. Moreover, its position on the Crane border means it switches hands almost as often as Toshi Ranbo to the north. At one point in the eleventh century, it falls into the hands of the Crane along with much of the Yojin Province. Lion armies march to avenge the slight, an unstoppable force the Crane know they cannot defeat; instead, they bar the gates and then commit suicide, throwing themselves from the castle's parapets. This becomes known as the Night of Falling Stars, and the Lion reference it whenever they feel the need to cite 'Crane cowardice.' The Crane, of course, view the story differently, but regardless of viewpoints, the Matsu hold the province and castle tightly thereafter.

Shiro no Yojin is not a popular assignment after the Night of Falling Stars. The entire top floor of the castle, over eighty feet above the ground, is believed to be haunted by the ghosts of the Crane who died, and hardly a week passes without some sign of their unquiet spirits.

Travel Distance per Day

Below is a basic estimation of how far the typical player character or party of samurai can travel in a day, for the benefit of GMs incorporating travel into their campaigns. These are only estimates, as many factors can change things wildly. They are presented as a general rule of thumb.

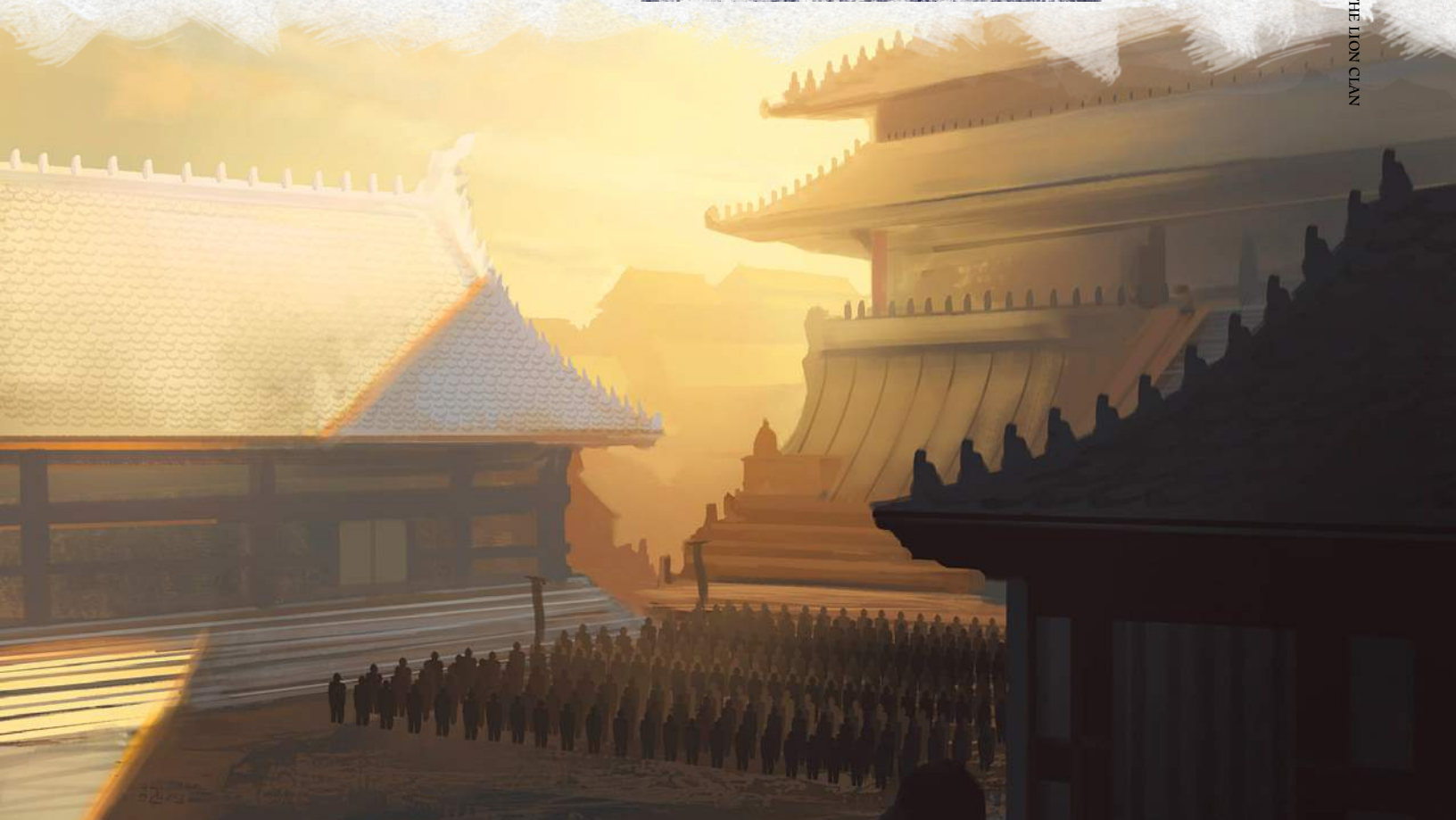
Terrain	By Foot	By Horse
Flat Road	*20 miles per day*	*40 miles per day*
Hilly Road	*15 miles per day*	*30 miles per day*
Rocky Road	*10 miles per day*	*15 miles per day*
Grasslands	*15 miles per day*	*30 miles per day*
Hilly Land	*10 miles per day*	*20 miles per day*
Mild Forest	*10 miles per day*	*20 miles per day*
Thick Forest/Jungle	*6 miles per day*	*12 miles per day*
Mountains	*6 miles per day*	*10 miles per day*
Marshlands	*5 miles per day*	*10 miles per day*

Heavy Rain / Wind - Halve the distance covered

Snow / Flooding - Quarter the distance covered

Utaku Warhorse - Add 5 miles to distance covered

The GM may also wish to adjust travel times based on the party's skills. For instance, increasing the travel distance per day by one mile per level of Tracking, or granting a bonus to someone with the Know The Land Advantage.








KITSUNE MORI
10 MILES
BAY OF DARK WATER
AKA MIZU-UMI
ENZAN PROVINCE
ASHINAGABACHI PROVINCE
CHUUHAN PROVINCE
CHINSEI MORI
DOURO PROVINCE
10 MILES
SHAIGA PROVINCE
THE MOUNTAINS OF REGRET
TOSHI NO OMOIDOSO
YAMA SANO AMATERASU
VALLEY OF THE CENTIPEDE
KIKEN NO ROKA
(TREACHEROUS PASS)
KYUDEN MOSHI NO MACHI
ARATANA DENTO
THE PALACE OF THE BREAKING DAWN

The Lands of the Mantis Clan

No clan occupies lands and resources as diverse as those of the Mantis. Because they were formed from several pre-existing Minor Clans, they incorporate territory ranging from rugged mountains to flat coastal plains; on any given day, one portion of the Mantis lands could be covered by snow while another is steaming under a tropical sun. Initially, three families – the Moshi of the Centipede Clan, the Tsuruchi of the Wasp Clan, and the Yoritomo of the original Mantis Clan – joined together under the banner of the new Great Clan of the Mantis. A fourth family, the Kitsune of the Fox Clan, were added some years later. Each of these Minor Clans contributed the lands they occupied at the time of their assimilation. Moreover, revisions to Imperial law in the twelfth century dictate that the Mantis have at least technical jurisdiction over any lands in Rokugan not otherwise allocated to a Great Clan. If these so-called "unaligned" lands are considered as well, then the Mantis actually hold sway over what may be the largest area of territory in the Empire.

The Lands of the Yoritomo Family

The lands of the Yoritomo are some of the most unusual in the Empire, and differ greatly even from those of the other Mantis families. The volcanic island chain known as the Islands of Silk and Spice appear to be a continuation, beneath the ocean, of the Spine of the World Mountains, the range that divides Rokugan into its northern and southern halves. This island archipelago stands apart from mainland Rokugan not only geographically, but also has a substantially different climate. While the mainland is generally temperate, with seasons defined by hot summers and cold, harsh winters, the Islands of Silk and Spice are semi-tropical. This warm character is further enhanced by the emanations of volcanic heat from their bedrock. As a result, these rugged islands are largely covered in

exotic forests – rainforests near the coasts, giving way to thick jungle in the interior regions, traversed by many small winding rivers. The lush vegetation is thick with exotic flowering plants and alive with the chatter of colorful birds and strange animals. True to the islands' volcanic nature, their beaches are often covered with thick black sands, while hot springs and volcanic fumaroles bubble on the surface. Earthquakes and even volcanic eruptions, while not common, are frequent enough that the inhabitants of the archipelago have learned to remain wary of even small tremors, keeping watch for the possibility of landslides, damaging tsunami, or even lava flows. They have also incorporated design features in their buildings to help minimize damage from earthquakes and facilitate reconstruction when the ground settles back into quiescence.

At the dawn of the Empire, the island chain that would become known as the Islands of Silk and Spice was uninhabited. The only "settlers" were koumori, bat spirits that originated in Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals, who fled the mainland to avoid the war that erupted between Fu Leng and the Empire. Almost a century later, the first humans arrived in the archipelago: disaffected members of the Crab Clan, led by Kaimetsu-Uo, one of the sons of Hida Osano-Wo. It was Kaimetsu-Uo who named the islands the Islands of Silk and Spice, after two particularly notable commodities found there, and founded the Mantis Clan.

In the centuries that followed, the Mantis became accomplished mariners, eventually spreading throughout the island chain and establishing well-traveled shipping lanes to mainland Rokugan. It quickly became clear, however, that the Mantis would have to approach life on their islands differently than the other clans on the mainland. There was little arable land, so the Mantis turned to the sea for most of their food – fortunately, the warm waters around the islands proved bountiful. Ashore, the Mantis learned to supplement their seafood diet with various fruits, vegetables, and spices harvested from the forests and jungles. When these commodities made their way to the mainland, demand soared, and the Mantis found themselves in the enviable position of having a near monopoly on highly sought-after products – spices in particular, but also exotic woods, semi-precious and precious stones, and even more specialized materials such as coral and pearls. Because many of these are available in only small quantities, they have maintained their value and still command high prices even in modern Rokugan.

Although many settlements have been founded throughout the Islands of Silk and Spice, the most important is Toshi no Gotei, ancestral seat of the Yoritomo family and the center of its diplomatic and commercial power.

The Island Provinces of the Yoritomo Family

The Islands of Silk and Spice comprise an archipelago of several hundred islands. However, only a few – less than twenty – are of appreciable size. The largest of these, Shima no Kinu, the Island of Silk, is several hundred square miles, while smaller ones such as Tempest Island are only a few tens of square miles. The vast majority of the islands are often less than a square mile, and many are really little more than rocks that protrude above the ocean surface. To assist with navigation and avoid hazards such as reefs and shoals, the Mantis have thoroughly mapped the locations of all the islands in the archipelago; however, the interiors of many of them remain largely unexplored.

For administrative purposes, the Mantis divide the Islands of Silk and Spice into a number of "provinces":

Gotai Province, closest to mainland Rokugan.

Koutetsukan Province, to the northeast of Gotai Province, and the northernmost of the provinces.

Kaze Province, to the east of Gotai Province.

Tokigogachu Province, to the southeast of Gotai Province, and the easternmost of the provinces.

Inazuma and Irie provinces, both to the southwest of Gotai Province, with Inazuma being the westernmost of the provinces.

Maigosera Province, south of Inazuma and Irie provinces, and the southernmost of the provinces.

Toshi no Gotei

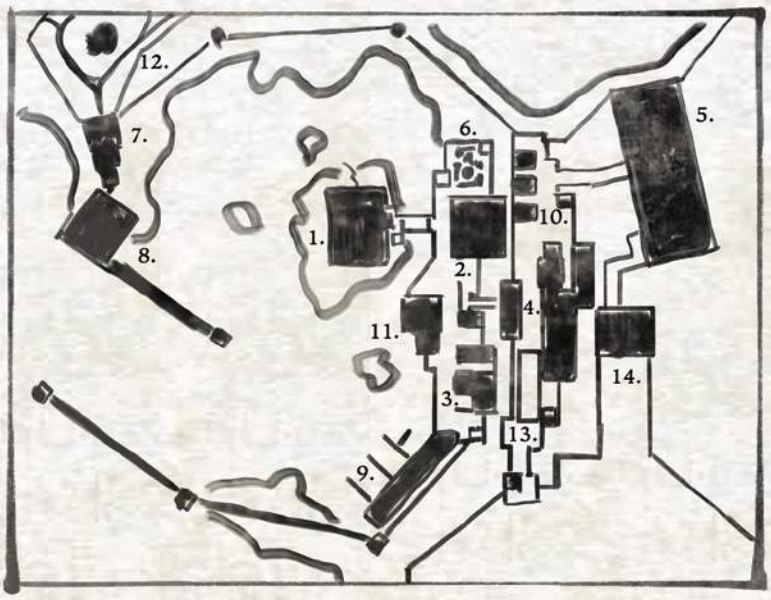
Toshi no Gotei is by far the largest and most important holding in the Mantis islands, located on Shima no Kinu, the Island of Silk, by a sheltered bay on the island's western side. In modern times it is one of the largest cities in Rokugan, probably exceeded only by Ryoko Owari and the Imperial Capital (which, irrespective of its actual size, is always defined as the largest city in the Empire).

Toshi no Gotei was originally founded in the first century as single defensive keep, with the rather ambitious name of "Kyuden Mantis." It was located on a rocky coastal plain adjoining a large bay that provided a sheltered harbor, an ideal location for both observation and defense, and a ready supply of fresh water from small watercourses flowing out of the island's interior. Over the ensuing centuries, the original settlement grew steadily. At some point in the fifth or sixth century, the name of the original keep – now a grand palace – was changed to Kyuden Gotei, while the city itself was named Toshi no Gotei.

The great palace of Kyuden Gotei, which dominates the city, is a direct reflection of the Mantis Clan itself. It is elaborate, even ostentatious, clearly demonstrating the Mantis are more than willing to indulge their own tastes regardless of conventional Rokugani standards. The castle is constructed of stone colored dark green and rusty red, all of it quarried from the island; is timbered with rich


KOUTETSUKAN PROVINCE
KOUTETSUKAN
GOTEI PROVINCE
TEMPEST ISLAND
KYUDEN GOTEI
10 MILES
KAZIE PROVINCE
KAMETSUBO KEIDO
INAZUMA PROVINCE
HAYAMA
JORI KAIDO
SOUTEN JINJA
TOSHI NO YOUSEI HAKUOU
JIRIE PROVINCE
BAY OF DARK WATER
TORIGOGACHU
TORIGOGACHU PROVINCE
THUNDER DRAGON BAY
MAIGOSHIRA PROVINCE
MAIGOSHIRA KEIDO
KYUDEN KOMORI

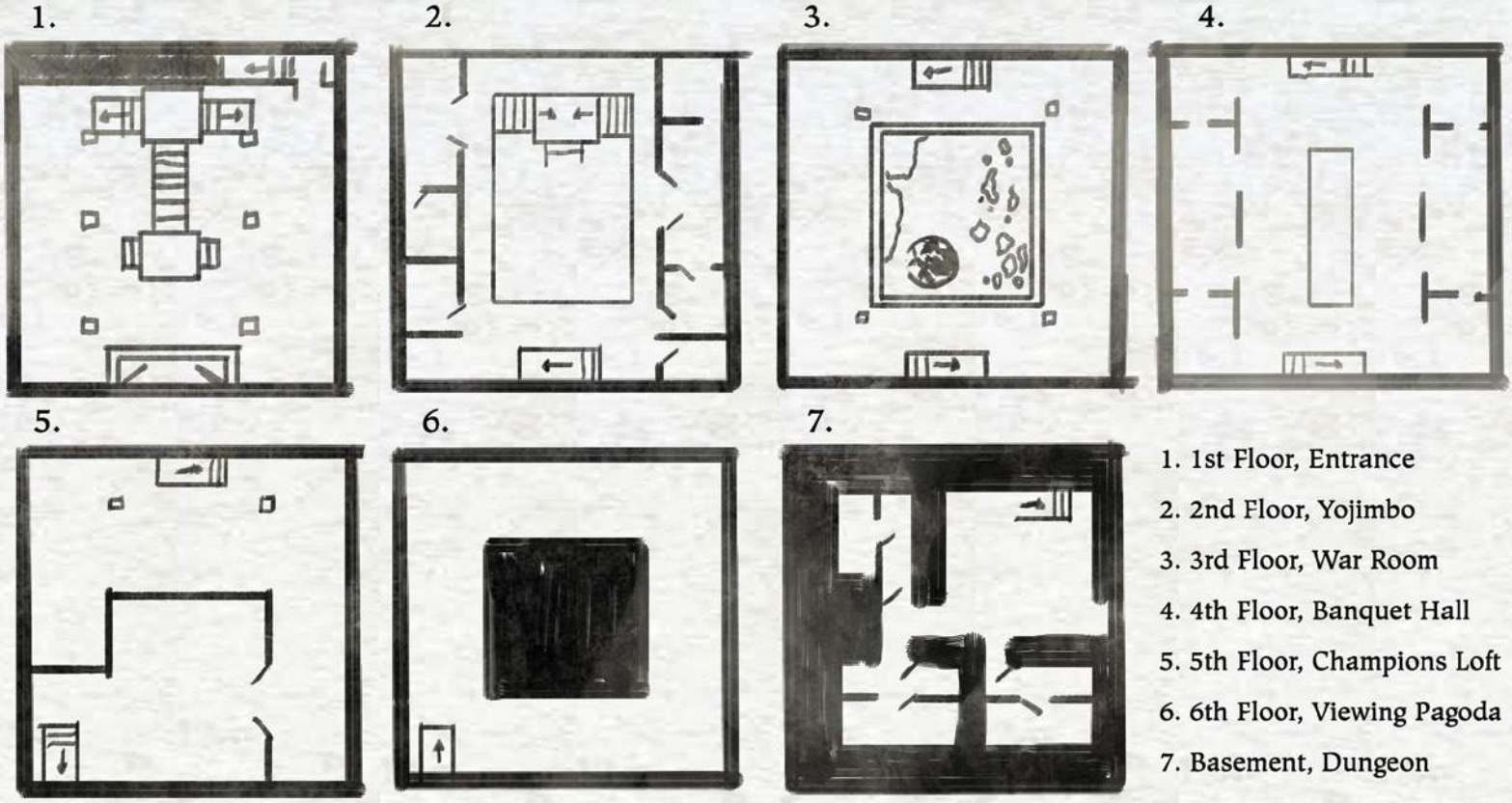
Kyuden Gotei



Map Guide

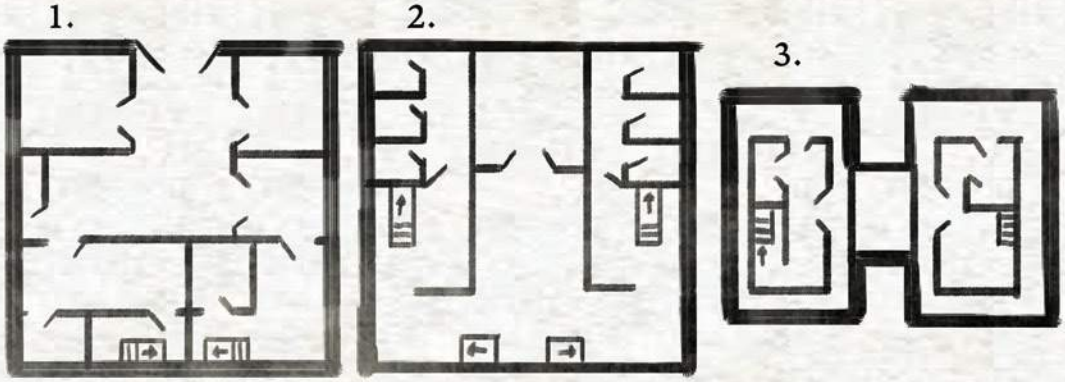
1. Tenshukaku
2. Dignitary Quarters
3. Kitchens / Dining Hall
4. Dojo / Barracks
5. Heaven's Bank
6. Opulent Carp Fountains
7. Shrine to Osano-Wo
8. Lighthouse
9. Private Harbor
10. Store Houses
11. Bath House
12. Path of Thunder
13. Parade Grounds
14. Golden Masugata

TENSHUKAKU



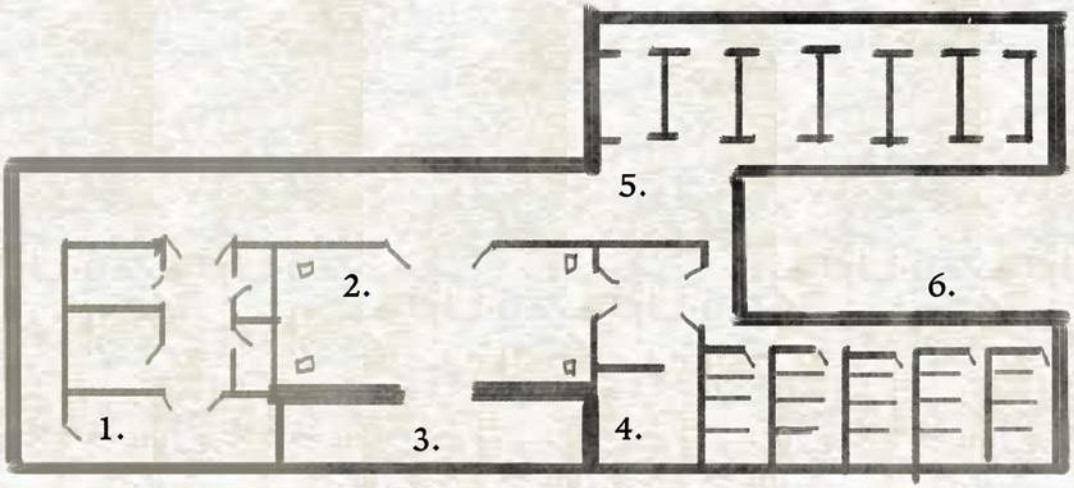
1. 1st Floor, Entrance
2. 2nd Floor, Yojimbo
3. 3rd Floor, War Room
4. 4th Floor, Banquet Hall
5. 5th Floor, Champions Loft
6. 6th Floor, Viewing Pagoda
7. Basement, Dungeon

DIGNITARY QUARTERS



1. 1st Floor, Retainer Quarters
2. 2nd Floor, Dignitary Quarters
3. 3rd Floor, V.I.P. Lofts

DOJO / BARRACKS



1. Offices
2. Dojo
3. Armory
4. Sensei's office
5. Officers Quarters
6. Ji-Samurai Quarters

A Typical Fishing Village

While the major holdings of the Yoritomo are described here, there are many small and often isolated fishing villages scattered throughout the Islands of Silk and Spice. A typical such village can range between as few as fifty people to as many as several hundred, mostly heimin, living in small houses made of some combination of wood and stone, depending on what materials are most plentiful. The village headman will live in the largest house; if the village is particularly large, strategically-located, prosperous, or otherwise important, a Mantis Clan samurai may also reside there as the village magistrate (this is often a form of punishment for clan samurai who have misbehaved in ways that warrant censure but fall short of seppuku or exile). Otherwise, magistrates will visit the villages periodically to collect taxes and address outstanding disputes among the inhabitants.

Characteristic of all these villages, of course, is their connection to the sea. Larger villages may have an actual dock or wharf; smaller ones will usually use a convenient beach where fishing boats can be grounded for unloading a day's catch or for routine maintenance. Most villages construct their own boats; however, there is a practical limit to the size and complexity of what a small village can build, so larger villages will often function as a "shipyard" for a group of smaller ones. Each village will also have one or more structures for the storage and processing of fish – particularly katsuobushi, a form of dried, fermented, and flaked fish commonly used to make soups and stews – as well as other types of seafood such as shellfish and seaweed. Villagers also collect foodstuffs from landward, such as fruits, nuts, and berries, since the semi-tropical jungles are rarely short of such things.

Rarely, a village may enjoy an additional degree of prosperity thanks to other sorts of bounties. The discovery of rare types of coral, or of oyster beds that provide pearls, can make a village quite affluent. Landward, veins of gold, precious stones, spices, or the successful cultivation of silk worms can also bring prosperity. Of course these things also attract the attention of the tax collectors, and will likely lead to the assignment of a full-time magistrate to the fortunate settlement.



exotic woods, roofed in burnished copper, and decorated with banners and sculptured works of stone and wood reflecting both Rokugani and gaijin sensibilities. Inside the walls it is even more elaborate, decorated with semi-precious and precious stones, rare metals like gold and silver, riots of flowering plants, and numerous colorful birds and lizards in gilded cages.

Kyuden Gotei also has its share of secrets. Most notable is the presence beneath the castle of numerous caves and tunnels, thought to be artifacts of the volcanic activity that shaped the islands. Only a few Mantis, primarily the Storm Legion – the elite personal guard of the Clan Champion – know how to navigate these winding passages, which provide surreptitious ways in and out of the palace as well as concealed locations for nefarious activities such as smuggling. Deep beneath the castle is Heaven's Bank Hold, the primary repository of the Mantis Clan's physical wealth. Access to this place is confined to the Clan Champion, the family daimyo, and the handful of staff and guards assigned to it. This is due to more than mere security concerns, strict though those may be; it is also because many of the treasures in the Hold are of gaijin origin, obtained from the Ivory Kingdoms or even the far-off lands of the Meranae and Thrane. While the acquisition of such gaijin artifacts is less of an issue in modern times, for most of Rokugan's history possession of such things is highly illegal.

During the Mantis Clan's thousand-year existence as a Minor Clan, Toshi no Gotei served as the focus of the clan's politics and diplomacy. It was here that Yoritomo's Alliance – the alliance of Minor Clans that played such a key role in the Clan War – was born. After their ascension to Great Clan status, the Mantis diplomatic efforts largely shifted to the mainland, particularly to the Imperial Capital, but Toshi no Gotei remains the seat of Mantis economic and military power. Both the Storm Legion and the Yoritomo Elite Guard are barracked here, and it is home to the primary dojo of the Yoritomo bushi, training them not only to fight but also to sail the clan's ships. One of its annual traditions is the kobune competition known as "The Race." Mainly intended to train and test sailors, The Race sometimes also serves as a formal means of settling disputes between Mantis samurai (in place of the more common iaijutsu duel). The city's harbor, meanwhile, is the headquarters of the Mantis navy. At least one of the three (and, in the late twelfth century, four) fleets known as Storms is always based here.

The city of Toshi no Gotei has several other notable locations aside from the clan's military assets. There are innumerable tea houses and restaurants in the city, most of them focusing on the seafood which is the core of the Mantis diet. Among the foremost such establishments is the Sea Eel's Smile, one of the foremost sushi houses in Rokugan – and one of the very few that dares to serve fugu, a meal derived from a highly venomous pufferfish. The city is also home to many temples and shrines, for the Mantis are superstitious even compared to other Rokugani. The greatest temple here is dedicated to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth – given the Mantis views on wealth and material acquisition, it is not surprising that this one of the Empire's three largest temples to this Fortune.

Tempest Island

This small island, located north of Shima no Kinu in Gotai Province, is also the northernmost of the major islands in the archipelago. Due to its exposure to the north, it is ravaged by frequent strong winds, rough seas, and tsunami, so for most of the Empire's history it was an uninhabited island. However, during the Clan Wars in the twelfth century, a young Yoritomo shugenja was shipwrecked here. Before he was rescued, he claimed to have a vision from the Fortunes which led him to build the Tempest Island Temple. This became the main dojo for the shugenja of the Yoritomo family, particularly for the group known as the Storm Riders, the most elite shugenja of the Mantis fleet. The shugenja studying here undertake their training while fully exposed to the fury of sea and wind, on the theory that if they can harness the kami while the spirits are in such a roused and violent state, they can do so anywhere and at any time.

Toshi no Inazuma

The City of Lightning is located on Shima no Koshinryo, the Island of Spice, in Inazuma Province. The city has always been specially dedicated to Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, ever since it was founded by a group of Mantis samurai early in the second century. They spent the night on the island and dreamed of a future world in which the Mantis were prosperous and powerful, then were awoken by a bolt of lightning striking among them. Believing the dream and the lightning were both sent by Osano-Wo, they established a temple to the then-new Fortune at the place where the lightning had struck.

In the ensuing years, a small city grew up around the temple to Osano-Wo (the temple itself is one of the largest and most extravagant in Rokugan, exceeded only by the sacred Shinden Osano-Wo on the Plains of Thunder). Because the area is subject to frequent storms, lightning strikes are common, particularly in the summer. The monks of the Temple are able to anticipate the night when lightning will be at its peak and perform a ritual, the Thunder's Kiss Kata, timing great shouts with the flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. More practically, the monks have learned that metal rods in high places will attract the lightning, presumably because of some cryptic relationship between the kami involved; in any case, this has prevented damage to the Temple, and even reduced the fires which used to threaten the nearby city.

In keeping with the religious character of the Mantis, there are also important temples here to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth, Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea, Isora, the Fortune of the Seashore, and Natsu-Togumara, the Fortune of Travel and Experience.

One particularly notable aspect of Toshi no Inazuma is the extent to which it is an "open" city. Few are turned away, and this includes gaijin. Accordingly, it is not unusual to see travelers from the Ivory Kingdoms here and, for a time in the fifth century, even Meranae and Thrane. Of course, the Mantis do not advertise this to outsiders.

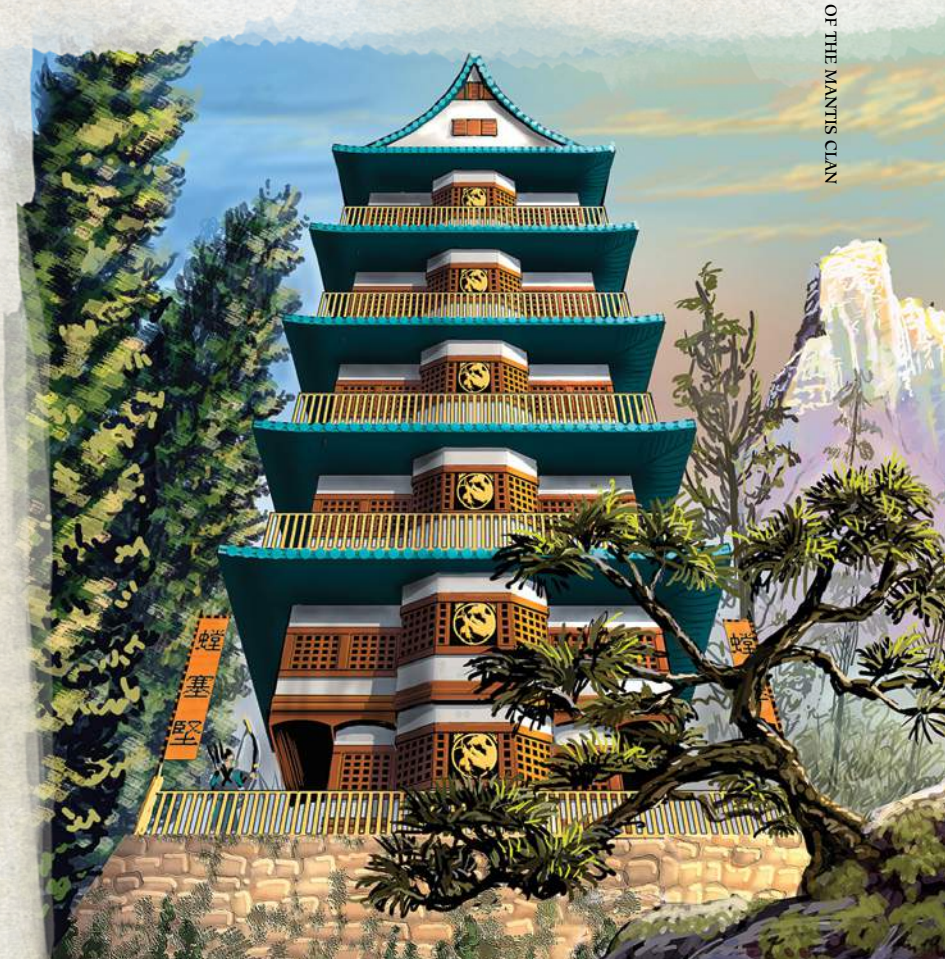
Just north of the city is Souten Biko (Beautiful Dawn Port), the major port of Shima no Koshinryo. This is the home of the Watanabe, a vassal family to the Yoritomo, known throughout Rokugan as accomplished ship-builders. They use the wide beaches of Souten Biko to construct as many as a dozen kobune at once.

Dojo Raiden

Located about forty-five miles north of Toshi no Inazuma on the same island, Dojo Raiden is believed to be the oldest of all Mantis dojo, and traces its traditions back to Kaimetsu-Uo himself. The current physical location of the dojo was founded in the seventh century. Dojo Raiden is quite is unusual among Rokugani schools in that it teaches a broad range of practical subjects beyond martial skills; students here are also taught the ways of commerce, history, and geography, topics which other clans would consider more appropriate for a scholarly or courtly education. However, more refined subjects such as fine arts – referred to in the dojo as "Crane Virtues" – are firmly ignored.

Haiyama

Near the center of Shima no Koshinryo is Ashen Mountain, formed in the ancient past by countless volcanic eruptions resulting in a tall, jagged peak with a crater at its summit. A crystal-clear lake fills the crater, water of surpassing purity, and the Mantis consider this to be a sacred place. It is commons for pilgrims to make the arduous climb and spend many days in meditation beside the lake, seeking visions and wisdom from the Heavens.





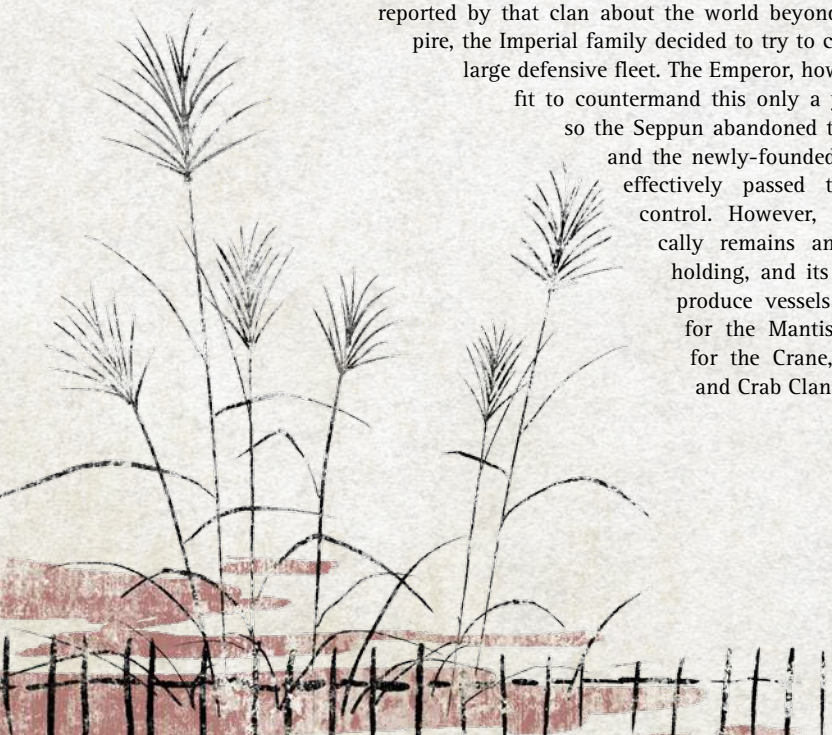
Distant Turtle City

Technically, this is not a Mantis holding, but rather one belonging to the tiny Tortoise Clan. Located on a small island just off the coast from Toshi no Inazuma, the settlement was founded in the twelfth century after the Mantis attained Great Clan status. Its purpose was to show the bond of friendship between the Mantis and the Kasuga had not diminished despite the latter's refusal to join the former's ranks.

Despite officially being a Kasuga holding, Distant Turtle City is populated mainly by Mantis. However, the Tortoise do find it useful as a place for their ships to stop and resupply before and after their secret voyages to gaijin lands.

Koutetsukan

Like Distant Turtle City, Iron Turtle City is technically not a Mantis holding – it was originally founded by the Seppun family. It is located on a smaller island northeast of Shima no Kinu, an island largely the product of a volcanic eruption in the ninth century. In response to the return of the Unicorn Clan to Rokugan, and the dangers reported by that clan about the world beyond the Empire, the Imperial family decided to try to construct a large defensive fleet. The Emperor, however, saw fit to countermand this only a year later, so the Seppun abandoned their plans and the newly-founded port city effectively passed to Mantis control. However, it technically remains an Imperial holding, and its shipyards produce vessels not only for the Mantis but also for the Crane, Phoenix, and Crab Clans.



Kaimetsu-Uo Seido

The Shrine of Kaimetsu-Uo, revering the founder of the Mantis Clan, is located in Kaze Province, on the eastern side of the archipelago. The shrine originated when a group of Mantis sailors found Kaimetsu-Uo's body on a drifting ship, surrounded by dead pirates, and resolved to construct a shrine to his memory on the first land they sighted. The monastic Order of Kaimetsu-Uo makes this shrine its main headquarters, and Mantis bushi aspiring to be recognized as great warriors will often undertake a pilgrimage to Kaimetsu-Uo Seido in order to challenge these monks to (non-lethal) unarmed combat. Defeating the monks brings great honor and glory as the bushi's fighting prowess is widely acknowledged.

When Yoritomo ascended to rule of the Mantis Clan, he traveled to this shrine and sought Kaimetsu-Uo's blessing on his efforts. Because of the great wealth, prosperity and – ultimately – ascension to Great Clan status which the Mantis achieved under Yoritomo, it is widely believed Kaimetsu-Uo did indeed grant the blessing Yoritomo sought. Indeed, some modern tales rather oddly claim that Yoritomo actually constructed the thousand-year-old shrine himself, which shows how highly the Son of Storms is venerated by the present-day Mantis Clan.

Tokigogachu

This small fishing village, located on an island east of Shima no Koshinryo in Tokigogachu Province, is best noted for the elaborate festivals held here, complete with fireworks and parades. The village is quite prosperous, not only due to rich fishing grounds nearby, but also because it lies adjacent to some of the little arable land available to the Mantis, allowing it to grow both rice and barley – commodities of great value in the rest of the Islands. Accordingly, even after paying taxes the village can afford to put on the lavish celebrations which have become its tradition. Legends claim more than one Emperor has visited the village incognito during one of its festival celebrations, particularly the New Year's Festival. Of course, no Emperor would openly visit such an obscure place, so the tales can never be confirmed.

In the late twelfth century, after the Jade Sun replaces Lord Yakamo in the Heavens, a temple is constructed here to the new Sun. The Dragon of Jade shows its favor by causing every stone in the temple to turn to jade, and it is in this sacred place that Empress Iweko I is married to her consort, Akodo Setai.

Tokigogachu is located near Wan no Asaguroi Mizu, Dark Water Bay, a body of water reputedly haunted by ferocious creatures who dwell beneath the waves. Superstitious sailors claim that only by throwing rice overboard are ships allowed to cross the bay unmolested. There may actually be some truth to this; a lost Naga city is believed to exist somewhere beneath the waters among the islands in Tokigogachu Province. Perhaps the followers of Kaimetsu-Uo clashed with some of the creatures known as Naga Abominations in the Empire's early days, giving rise to the stories of danger lurking beneath Dark Water Bay.

Thunder Dragon Bay

This remote bay located on a minor island in Tokigogachu Province opens onto the broad endless ocean that stretches eastward to the horizon, passing beyond the knowledge of even the Mantis Clan. The Sun rises from beyond this ocean each day, and for a thousand years it was known as the Umi Amaterasu. In the twelfth century, as the Heavens face turmoil and change, the name is changed to the Umi Yakamo, the Sea of Lord Sun... and then to Umi Hisui Yoake, the Sea of the Jade Dawn.

Because of its secluded location facing this endless ocean, as well as its treacherous reefs, Thunder Dragon Bay is of little value as an anchorage. For most of history it is an unnamed bay that even the Mantis see little value in save as an emergency shelter for ships caught in storms. However, late in the twelfth century that changes dramatically. When the Elemental Dragons choose to cast out all mortals from Tengoku who are not Kami or Emperors, the Thunder Dragon believes that Yoritomo should remain. Accordingly, it sacrifices a portion of its own divinity, allowing him to remain in Tengoku as the Mantis Kami. As a result, it is cast into Ningen-do, landing in the ocean and eventually coming to reside in this specific bay. When Mantis Champion Yoritomo Naizen discovers this, he dispatches the bulk of the Mantis fleet to protect the now-vulnerable Dragon and renames the anchorage as Thunder Dragon Bay. Eventually, the Thunder Dragon assumes human form and lives among the Mantis, but the Bay retains its name and is considered a sacred place by the modern Mantis Clan.

Maigosera Seido

The Shrine to Lost Sailors is located in Maigosera Province in the southernmost reaches of the Islands of Silk and Spice. It consists of a simple torii arch rising from shallow water, along with a nearby tower where a bonfire is always kept burning by the monks who tend the place. The Shrine is a monument to all those who have been lost to the sea, not in battle but from storm and misfortune – a somber and humbling reminder to the Mantis that no matter how skilled they may be as mariners, the sea is always their master. The perpetual fire is a beacon to guide all those lost souls back to the Empire where they might find peace.

The Island of Lost Wilderness and Kyuden Komori

This small island, located south and west of Maigosera Seido in Maigosera Province, is mostly covered in thick jungle inhabited by vicious animals and strange spirits. It was considered uninhabitable until the twelfth century, when a small shrine to Osano-Wo and an accompanying village were built there. The small number of settlers soon learned that caves on the island led to portals into Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. Many animal spirits, most notably the bat-spirits called koumori, entered Ningen-do through these caves and viewed the human settlers with suspicion and often outright hostility.

After the death of the Mantis Champion Yoritomo Aramasu, one of his chief advisors, a shugenja named Yoritomo Komori, came here to live as a monk at the shrine to Osano-Wo. Later, for services to the Emperor, Komori was granted permission to form his own Minor Clan, and the Mantis granted him the Island of Lost Wilderness. Komori subsequently entered into an agreement with the bat spirits, agreeing to protect and honor them in exchange for allowing his followers to expand their holdings upon the island. Thus was born the Bat Clan and its modest (but grandiosely titled) stronghold of Kyuden Komori. The entirety of the small clan lives in that holding and the village nearby.

The Mantis Islands and the Imperial Colonies

The Imperial Colonies, established in the ruins of the former Ivory Kingdoms after they were destroyed the gaijin goddess Kali-ma and her followers, are not described in this Atlas. However, in the late twelfth century when the Mantis became responsible for overseas trade and travel with the Colonies, the holdings in the southern reaches of the Islands of Silk and Spice experience considerable growth. These would be both the last ports of call for convoys departing Rokugan for the Colonies, and the first ports they would reach upon returning. Both Toshi no Inazuma and Kyuden Komori would likely be affected. The former, already a busy port, would see a dramatic increase in traffic and trade. The latter, previously small and isolated, would also experience a major upswing in shipping and a concurrent influx of people.





Broken Wave City and Kyuden Kumiko

Broken Wave City (also known as the City of the Broken Wave) and the castle of Kyuden Kumiko are found on Kaigen's Island, an island created by Isawa Sachi, the Phoenix Clan's Elemental Master of Earth, during the last major battle of the War of Fire and Thunder – a conflict between the Mantis and Phoenix Clans in the mid-twelfth century. Prior to that time, the island simply does not exist; afterward, the Mantis lay claim to it immediately began construction of a new fortification, Kyuden Kumiko, named after their recently-deceased Clan Champion.

Located on the shore of what comes to be known as the Bay of Thunder, Broken Wave City grows up around this new fortress and eventually comes to occupy most of Kaigen's Island. Construction on the harbor, known as Seven Seas Port, began in the year 1167, with quays made of stone rather than the more typical wood. Since the new city must import virtually every commodity it needs, including food, lumber, and even fresh water, the docks are quite large – and become even larger when the Third Storm of the Mantis fleet is based there, giving the clan a strong military presence only a few miles from the northern coast of the Rokugani mainland.

Broken Wave City quickly develops its own vibrant character, constantly expanding and turning into a major a hub for commerce and trade with the Phoenix and Crane. Those who settle here are very proud of their accomplishments in developing the barren rocky island, whose surface was once a portion of the sea floor. By the dawn of the thirteenth century they have even managed to cultivate some rice paddies, and believe the island will soon be able to free itself of dependence on imports of food.

Due to the unusual physical nature of the island, it was clear from the beginning that complex defensive works would not be required. Kyuden Kumiko itself is the only structure on the island designed with traditional fortified walls. Otherwise, watch-towers provide surveillance across the island and out to the surrounding sea, providing early warnings for the island's true defense – the Third Storm, a fleet more than sufficient to defeat any threat before it could ever make landfall.



The Lands of the Moshi Family

The Moshi and their clan, the Centipede, originated in the early fourth century when a sensei of the Phoenix named Isawa Azami visited a remote valley in the Mountains of Regret. The valley, then known as Tani Senshio after the many centipedes that lived in its soil, was fertile but isolated, barely accessible from land or sea, and neither the Phoenix Clan nor the Imperials had seen any value in claiming it. Azami had no sons but eleven daughters, one of whom, Isawa Moshi, was given visions by Amaterasu while exploring a towering mountain at the northern end of the valley. She changed her name to Moshi Azami and became the leader of her people, giving rise to a tradition of matriarchy among her descendants. The Moshi particularly revered Amaterasu, Lady Sun, whose rising each day was spectacularly framed by the peaks at the seaward end of the Valley. Eventually, the Empire recognized her and her followers as the Centipede Clan.

For most of their existence, the Moshi remained truly isolated from the rest of Rokugan. The Valley of the Centipede is surrounded on three sides by the rugged peaks of the Mountains of Regret; at its southeastern end, it falls directly into the sea over a series of steep cliffs. Access to and from the Valley required either a laborious trip through a single narrow mountain pass or a sea voyage ending in a difficult and sometimes dangerous climb up from the water's edge. Over time, enterprising fishermen constructed a cumbersome series of rope-and-pulley contraptions to bring their catches up to the Moshi. Later, when the Moshi joined the Mantis Clan in the twelfth century, access to the Valley was greatly improved by construction of a trail called Amaterasu's Climb that led up the cliff from the seaside. Until that time, however, the Valley received few visitors and developed slowly, creating a serene and unhurried existence for those living there.

The Valley is a broad, shallow depression in the Mountains of Regret, with a single river flowing down the center which originates in the high peaks at the Valley's northwestern end. While there are occasional waterfalls and rapids, the river – called the Course of Lady Sun – usually meanders through broad, fertile floodplains. At the southeastern end of the Valley it tumbles over the cliff into the ocean in a series of spectacular waterfalls. The Moshi cultivate a variety of crops along the Course, aided by the fertile soil and plentiful rainfall, but almost entirely for their own use; there is very little trade between the Valley and the rest of Rokugan, for the devout Moshi seek little beyond their own immediate needs.

The Moshi territory is not divided into provinces, since the Valley forms a single whole and the Imperial bureaucracy sees no need to complicate its tax records by sub-dividing the territory. There are, however, several locations of note within the Valley of the Centipede.

Yama sano Amaterasu

The Mountain of the Sun Goddess is a towering, snow-capped peak rising at the Valley's northwestern end. It was upon its high slopes that Isawa Moshi received her visions from Amaterasu, and the mountain is held sacred by the entire Moshi family. A small shrine to Amaterasu, the so-called Touching a Miracle Shrine, stands on the summit. The Shrine is layered with gold and surrounded by twelve crystalline globes placed in the pattern of the heavenly constellation known as the Centipede. The Shrine and its globes catch and refract sunlight so brightly that sailors can sometimes use their distinctive gleam as an aid to navigation. The Shrine is generally unoccupied, although Moshi initiates from Amaterasu Seido will occasionally climb the mountain to clear snow from the Shrine and otherwise tend to it.

Amaterasu Seido

This great Shrine to Lady Sun actually predates the official founding of the Centipede Clan, having originally been built to memorialize and revere Amaterasu's visitation to Moshi Azami upon the heights of Yama sano Amaterasu. It was constructed close to the foot of the Mountain of the Sun Goddess in the northwestern valley.

The shrine is a bright and airy building, four stories tall; servants and initiates occupy the bottom floors, with higher-ranking acolytes and the masters living on the upper floors. A solar observatory on the third floor governs the Moshi calendar, while on a raised platform is the legendary Hand of the Sun Goddess. It is said that this device, consisting of a series of mirrors and other apparatus, was described to the Moshi founder by Amaterasu herself when construction of the Shrine began. It distributes light throughout the entire interior of the Shrine; more notably, it is said that any creature placed directly in the focused sunlight on the Hand's platform will be healed of all wounds and ills and fully invigorated. (Whether this is true or not is a matter of debate.) On the fourth floor, the Moshi matron herself provides instruction to the most promising students, while the most advanced of the Shrine's shugenja perform their observances and rituals.

After the death of Amaterasu and her replacement as the Sun by Lord Yakamo, the Moshi experienced a religious crisis. Although their devotion to Amaterasu does wane somewhat, they continue to venerate her in the manner of a beloved ancestor or lost family member. The later ascension of the female Jade Sun eases the Moshi family's crisis somewhat, but while they do recognize and revere the new sun goddess, the focus of the Shrine's veneration remains on its departed namesake.

Kyuden Moshi no Machi

Kyuden Moshi, located near Amaterasu Seido at the base of the Mountain of the Sun Goddess, is the ancestral seat of the Moshi family. Close by is the town that is the principal holding of the Moshi, called Kyuden Moshi no Machi. Both castle and town are quite small by the normal Rokugani standards for a clan's principal holding, but the town is notably clean and orderly, a reflection of the Moshi themselves.

The palace of Kyuden Moshi sits uphill from and overlooks the town, accessible only by a narrow, winding mountain trail. The palace has low walls, ill-suited for any serious defense, and its gate is just a torii arch sporting a golden disk representative of the sun. (It is said that any who stand beneath the arch while the sun is in the sky are incapable of telling any lies.) Thus, Kyuden Moshi is not by any measure a military fortress; it relies on its remote location and the surrounding terrain for protection. The main keep rises only four stories high, with the lower floors functioning as a library, place of study, and court. The upper floors are the apartments for senior members of the Moshi family, including the daimyo – who is always a woman, and also known as the Matron. On the highest roof, accessible only from the Matron's apartments, is a wooden platform holding the Moshi's most sacred object, the Eye of the Sun Goddess. This large, faceted crystal globe can be used to generate a powerful beam of purest sunlight, capable of incinerating whatever it touches. True to their generally peaceful character, the Moshi consider its use an absolute last resort... and so far, it has never been used.

Just south of Kyuden Moshi, near the single mountain pass which leads out of the valley, is the so-called Yamabushi Renshuuba, the Mountain Bushi Training Ground. It was built after the Moshi joined the Mantis Clan, to assist in more actively defending the valley, and comprises a dojo, barracks, and related buildings surrounded by a stout wooden palisade. Thus, besides training the family's very limited number of bushi, Yamabushi Renshuuba also functions as a modest fortress to secure the valley against an overland attack. Although the pass through the Mountains of Regret is narrow, tortuous, and only open for a few months during the summer, it does create a potential vulnerability that the Mantis wish to control. Yamabushi Renshuuba ensures that anyone crossing the pass must do so under the watchful eyes of the Moshi garrison.

Aratana Dento

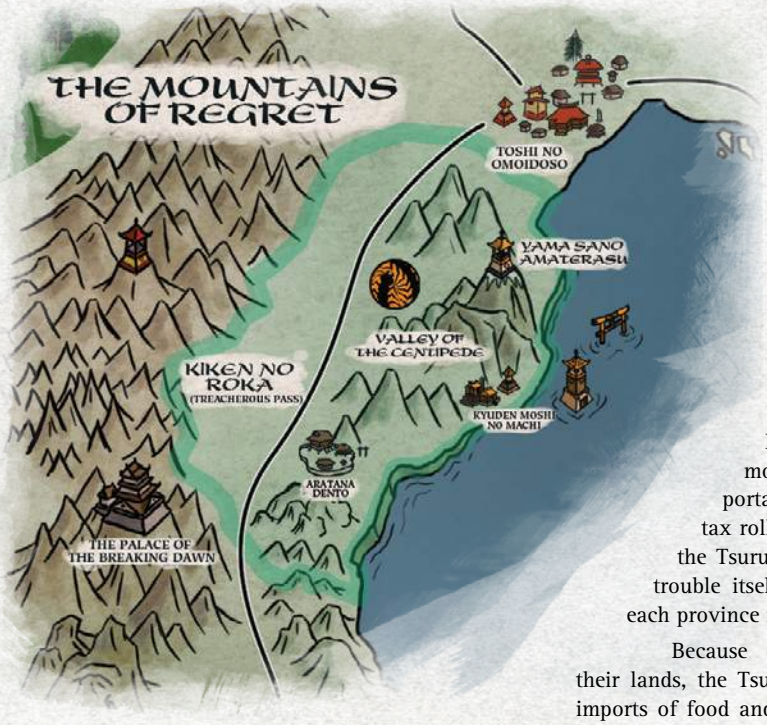
The town of Aratana Dento ("New Tradition"), like Yamabushi Renshuuba, is a twelfth-century addition to the Moshi holdings. It is located at the opposite end of the Valley of the Centipede from Amaterasu Seido, both literally – it is at the southeast end of the valley, overlooking the sea – and philosophically. Aratana Dento arose from the philosophical schism that began to divide the Moshi family after the death of Amaterasu. When Amaterasu was replaced by Yakamo as the Sun, the Moshi found themselves questioning their role in the world, and indeed the nature of the world itself. Those who believed it was time adopt a more progressive approach to living their lives and interacting with the rest of Rokugan soon gravitated toward a small settlement that had been established at the seaward end of the valley. Originally this had simply been a waystation where those travelling to and from the valley could pause for rest. In the years after the death of Amaterasu, however, those Moshi who had chosen to move away from the family's old ways gravitated here, leading to the settlement becoming known as New Tradition.

While it is not a large community, Aratana Dento thrives, continuing to welcome those who visit the Valley of the Centipede. As a result, there is much mingling of new and outside ideas with the established ways of the Moshi. The family's majority of traditional members tend to have a dim view of Aratana Dento, passing through the holding quickly or even avoiding it altogether.

The Temple of Kaze-no-Kami

In the mid-twelfth century, after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Tsuruchi family constructs this temple to the Fortune of Wind in the Valley of the Centipede. To some this seemed odd, since the Tsuruchi have never been a particularly religious family and were not previously known for close relations with the Moshi family. The explanation given in public was that since archery is profoundly affected by the winds, it was only reasonable to show proper reverence to the Fortune of Wind, and the Valley of the Centipede was a more suitable location for such a shrine than the rocky and inhospitable Tsuruchi territories. Once built, the temple became a place of study and learning, variously involved in teaching students from the Order of Osano-Wo, the Order of the Thousand Fortunes, and even Tsuruchi bushi.





The truth behind the temple's founding was that its first abbot, Tanari, was in fact the retired Tsuruchi, who had been wounded in the last battles of the War Against the Lying Darkness. It was Tanari who broadened the temple's purpose from worship to include scholarship and learning.

The temple suffered a crisis when Kaze-no-Kami was slain by Fu Leng during the Dark Kami's assault on Tengoku in the year 1159. It fell into obscurity for several years afterward, but regained some of its stature when Tanari became the head of the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

The Lands of the Tsuruchi Family

The provinces of the Tsuruchi family are largely located in the Spine of the World Mountains, although they do extend into the plains to the south. They are also generally infertile, being either the barren rock of the mountains and their foothills, or dry sandy flatlands. The Tsuruchi family was founded at the beginning of the twelfth century when Tsuruchi, the son of Lion and Scorpion parents, was betrayed by both of these clans. Gathering loyal followers, he stormed and seized Kyuden Ashinagabachi, the Castle of the Wasp, which he claimed as his birthright. After an investigation by the Emerald Champion, it was decided he had committed no wrongdoing, and he was allowed to form a Minor Clan, the Wasp. The Emerald Champion granted the new clan specific permission to serve as bounty hunters for his office, rooting out wanted criminals in exchange for payment.

Thanks to the work of Imperial surveyors, the lands granted to Tsuruchi had already been divided into several provinces. Ashinagabachi Province is the northernmost, located in and adjacent to the Spine of the World Mountains. To the east, occupying the foothills of the mountains, is Enzan Province, while Chuuhan Province is to the south. Douro Province is east of Chuuhan, bordering on the Crane lands and the Three Man Alliance Plain, while Shaiga Province is the southernmost. In fact, these provinces are nothing more than administrative divisions, important to the Imperial bureaucracy for the tax rolls but with little practical meaning to the Tsuruchi themselves. The family does not trouble itself to appoint separate governors for each province in the manner of larger clans.

Because of the largely infertile nature of their lands, the Tsuruchi quickly became dependent on imports of food and other essentials from other clans – and because of their bitter enmity with the Scorpion, this generally meant the Crane. They paid for this with the revenues from their bounty hunting, essentially selling themselves in return for the commodities they needed.

Kyuden Ashinagabachi

This castle was originally known Shiro no Uragiru, a Scorpion castle nestled in a valley on the southern edge of the Spine of the World Mountains near the Lake of Silent Dreams. The road to the castle winds through the mountains, overlooked by step cliffs that allow archers to fire upon those below with impunity. After Tsuruchi seized the castle and claimed it as the seat of his new Minor Clan, he renamed the fortress Kyuden Ashinagabachi, the Castle of the Wasp.

Every member of the Tsuruchi family undergoes their gempukku, known as Tsuruchi's Test, in Kyuden Ashinagabachi's dojo. The Hunter of Men Dojo which trains the family's specialized bounty hunters is also located here.

In the late twelfth century, one of the last major battles of the Destroyer War is fought here. Despite the Destroyer's best efforts, they are unable to breach the passes to seize the remote fortress, and it emerges from the conflict largely unscathed.


KAGOKI
AKA MIZU-UMI
HOTEI SEIDO
YUFUKU NA HEIGEN TOSHI
SAKANA MURA
ENZAN PROVINCE
KEEP OF THE FORTUNATE HUSBAND
TOSHI AITATE
KOERU MURA
KYUDEN ASHINAGABACHI
ASHINAGABACHI PROVINCE
SHIMOMURA
QUIET STREAM VILLAGE
CHUUHAN PROVINCE
GATEWAY VILLAGE
CHINSEI MORI
DOURO PROVINCE
BENTEN SEIDO
DAIDOJI YUKAN-SE
10 MILES
DANGAI
SHAIGA PROVINCE
AKETSU
SHAIGA



Shaiga

The village of Shaiga is located adjacent to Three Man Alliance Plain, south of the Spine of the World Mountains. It is a quiet Tsuruchi holding populated entirely by heimin. Founded early in the twelfth century, shortly before the Clan War, it accounts for most of the Tsuruchi family's limited food production. However, the heimin of Shaiga also surreptitiously mine a modest gold deposit located near the village, carefully avoiding the interest of Imperial tax collectors. As a result, this village is far more significant to the Tsuruchi family's success than it may first appear.

In the mid-twelfth century, Shaiga is also the location of a dojo established by a man named Otoya, formerly Hida Otoya, a veteran of virtually every major conflict that had embroiled the Empire up to that time. Here he trained select individuals in the ways of war; his most notable student was a young man named Kaneka, eldest but illegitimate son of Emperor Toturi I. However, Otoya was not a man known for being able to remain long in one place, and within a few years he moved on and his dojo was closed.

Shaiga village was overrun during the Destroyer War by the same force that subsequently attacked Kyuden Ashinagabachi. It was rebuilt afterwards and resumed both its public role as the main source of food for the Tsuruchi family and its covert role as a source of gold.

Gateway Village

Located on the border between Tsuruchi and Scorpion lands, Gateway Village is the headquarters and primary base of the Tsuruchi Wardens. While their primary role is to secure the border, the Wardens use the opportunity to improve their skills in horsemanship, hunting, and tracking. Many of the most successful Bounty Hunters have spent time among the Wardens. This included Tsuruchi Nobumoto, a respected bushi and bowman who eventually became daimyo of the Tsuruchi when the direct heir to the family line perished.

Aside from its strategic location, Gateway Village is otherwise unremarkable. The surrounding land is largely infertile, so the population is small, consisting mainly of those involved in watching for Scorpion intrusions and other such threats.

Quiet Stream Village

Another small and unremarkable settlement, Quiet Stream Village is adjacent to a forest called the Chinsei Mori. Wood from the forest is of exceptional quality for the construction of both bows and arrows, and the village's main claim to fame is the skill of the bowyers and fletchers who provide the Tsuruchi with the vast majority of its archery needs. Archers from other clans greatly desire bows and arrows from Quiet Stream Village, but with the Tsuruchi controlling the village, only a few are allowed to be exported at expensive prices.

After the Tsuruchi join the Mantis Clan, a new dojo called the Dojo of Dancing Steel is established here by Tsuruchi Tozuken, a Wasp samurai whose crippling injuries prevented him from serving in battle. Tozuken taught a fighting style that came to be known as the Tsuruchi Kenkyaku or, more simply, the Tsuruchi Swordsman. Younger Tsuruchi who chose the way of the sword over that of the bow embraced this new fighting style, creating a philosophical schism in the family's identity – those loyal to the Dancing Steel Dojo saw Bushido as more important than Tsuruchi's Code of the Wasp. Hoping to end the controversy, Tozuken retired to a monastery, leaving one of his students as new master of the dojo. This blunted some of the divide, but did not altogether heal it.

Sakana Mura

This tiny holding is located on the shores of Aka Mizu-umi, the Lake of Shining Glass. Ostensibly it is a fishing village; however, given the lake's reputation for being haunted ever since the Battle of the Hour of the Wolf – an event which turned the lake's water crimson with spilled blood, leading to it being renamed Red Lake – the fisherman gave up their livelihood here and left. What remains is essentially a sentry outpost, guarding against the possibility of a waterborne attack by the Lion across Red Lake. In modern times this may seem improbable, but in the years immediately after the Wasp Clan's founding, Tsuruchi himself believed the Lion had betrayed him and would do so again.



Houritsu Mura

The Village of Law, built in the late twelfth century south of the ruins of Otosan Uchi, is the modern headquarters of the Tsuruchi magistrates and Bounty Hunters in the eastern and southern Empire. Following the Battle of Toshi Ranbo in the year 1169, the Mantis Clan Champion, Yoritomo Naizen, foresaw that the empty Imperal Throne and the aftermath of the battle would bring chaos and discord to the Empire. He wanted Mantis magistrates to be at the forefront of maintaining law and order, and ordered the construction of this village in otherwise unaligned territory. Houritsu Mura also served to further expand Mantis influence on the Rokugani mainland by establishing a permanent presence in a new region.

The Temple of the First Wasp, dedicated to ancestor worship, is located in Houritsu Mura. While many assume this temple's name is a reference to Tsuruchi, it is in fact a reference to a Crane magistrate, Doji Ietomi, who devoted himself to bringing a murderer from the Otomo family to justice despite the man's formidable political powers. The Mantis – and especially the Tsuruchi – see Ietomi as a paragon of duty, and revere him and other prominent magistrates regardless of their clan of origin.

The Lands of the Kitsune Family

The Fox Clan is generally considered the first Minor Clan officially founded in Rokugan, originating from a conflict between the Lion Clan and the small remnants of the Ki-Rin Clan left in Rokugan after the Kami Shinjo left to explore beyond the Empire's borders. When the Lion expelled these Ki-Rin from their lands, they travelled south into the forested lands near the Spine of the World Mountains. However, the Lion continued to press them until the Emperor granted them the status of a Minor Clan and decreed that no Great Clan could make war upon a Minor Clan without Imperial permission. The Ki-Rin were granted the lands in and around the Kitsune Mori forest, and soon assumed a new name taken from that forest – the Kitsune family of the Fox Clan.

The Kitsune lands comprise a single province, the Kakusu Province, and most of them are covered by the dark sprawl of the Kitsune Mori. This is an ancient and mysterious woodland, said to be haunted by spirits from both Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals, and Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. In order to live in this place, the Kitsune samurai were forced to hunt in the forest – a shameful practice to most Rokugani samurai, who find the eating of red meat distasteful – and to gather both food and medicines from under its shadowy canopy. Over the centuries, the Kitsune have grown away from their roots in the Ki-Rin, developing a unique character of their own. In particular, they learned to exist in harmony with the forest, forming spiritual and even familial bonds with the creatures that lived there, particularly the kitsune fox-spirits who taught them about the woodlands.

In modern times, the Kitsune have cultivated more land around the forest, allowing them to reduce – but by no means eliminate – their reliance on its bounty. In contrast to the Tsuruchi and the Moshi, the Kitsune did not willingly join the Mantis Clan, but instead were forced to do so out of self-preservation when their clan was threatened by the forces of the Shadow Dragon.

Kyuden Kitsune

Kyuden Kitsune is not a very large castle, and is unusual in being constructed almost entirely of stone. Most Rokugani castles use significant quantities of wood in their construction, but the Kitsune family abhors the cutting of trees, so the only wood used in their palace was harvested from either deadfall or from particularly sick or damaged trees of the Kitsune Mori. The resulting structure and its surrounding community could easily have become dour and forbidding as a result, but the Kitsune invested much effort in ensuring this was not the case. The castle is designed to be light and airy, with many windows and other apertures, and the interior is decorated in themes reminiscent of nature in general and the woodlands in particular. A side-effect of this is that the resulting structure is much less capable of military defense than similar Rokugani holdings; however, Kyuden Kitsune's location inside the Kitsune Mori makes it difficult to approach with any sort of large armed force. Moreover, the character of the forest itself – rife with spirits, almost all of whom look with favor on the Kitsune – provides a unique additional protection against any would-be attacker. In fact, up until the Shadow Dragon's assault in the late twelfth century, Kyuden Kitsune had never been threatened at all.

The settlement surrounding Kyuden Kitsune likewise reflects the character of the forest and its topography. Many dwellings and buildings are scattered throughout the Kitsune Mori, some well away from the Kyuden itself. It is said that secret trails and even tunnels connect all of the Kitsune's homes and other buildings, and may even extend beneath much of the Kitsune Mori itself. The Kitsune themselves are mute on the extent to which this is true, or if it is even true at all.

Other Holdings of the Kitsune

The Kitsune have no other formal holdings. As noted, many of them live in scattered locations throughout the Kitsune Mori, and in modern times, several small villages have been established by the family in farming areas surrounding the forest. The Kitsune also have many sacred locations within the great forest, often marked with torii arches, small shrines, or statues of small white foxes with many tails. Some of these locations are recent, marking places where members of the family have had significant interactions with the spirits of the Kitsune Mori. Others, however, date back to the earliest days of Kitsune settlement, and their original purpose is lost to time.








KOUGEN PROVINCE
YOSHINOU PROVINCE
KINKAKU PROVINCE
GARANTO PROVINCE
EN-JU PROVINCE
AOIJIROI PROVINCE
HEIGAN RYO KOKORO
MORI SAWA
MARYOKU PROVINCE
SHIRINA PROVINCE
KYUUKAI PROVINCE
NEJIRO PROVINCE
10 MILES
MOGEN PROVINCE
BAY OF THUNDER
BACHIATARI PROVINCE
KAIGEN'S ISLAND
UKABU PROVINCE
NANIMO PROVINCE
TANIMA SANO FUTATSU TAISHO
ENJAKU PROVINCE
ANSHIN PROVINCE
MIHARI PROVINCE
OMOIDASU PROVINCE
HAIMAATO PROVINCE
THE MOUNTAINS OF REGRET
KINTAMI VALLEY

Chapter Six

The Lands of the Phoenix Clan

When the Kami Shiba decided which lands to settle with his nascent clan, he set his eyes to the northeast of Rokugan. Those were not the most fertile lands in the new Empire, and they suffered from harsh winters and relative isolation (bordered by mountains on two sides and the ocean on a third). However, Shiba already knew his clan would never be a large one. The samurai who had flocked to his banner were few, and tended to be more scholarly than those following his siblings. It seemed unlikely to Shiba they would ever see radical increases in numbers and thus would not need to claim large or prosperous lands. Moreover, their knowledge would allow them to make the most of what they found. Moreover, once the Tribe of Isawa joined the clan, the gift of magic more than made up for any material shortcomings in their territories. Thus the Phoenix prospered in their remote corner of the Empire.

The Phoenix lands are primarily plains, with only a rare few hills to break their monotony. The vast majority of the major Phoenix settlements can be found on these plains, along with most of the population, who follow the traditional Rokugani model of small agricultural villages cultivating the land. However, the sameness of the Phoenix lands does have one very large interruption: the Mori Isawa, easily the second largest forest in the Empire (exceeded only by the Shinomen itself). The Isawa Mori is dominated by evergreens, retaining thick foliage all year long despite the bitter winters. While not as mysterious or dangerous as the Shinomen Mori, Isawa Mori is nonetheless known as a place of tremendous spiritual power and corresponding enigma, home to many otherworldly beings and peculiar legends. While only a few Phoenix samurai dwell within it, the Isawa Mori has shaped the clan in many ways.

Two mountain ranges also define the Phoenix landscape; the Great Wall of the North closes off the northern border of the clan's territory, but an offshoot of that range extends south within the Phoenix borders, forming a barrier between their lands and the near-vacant Dragon Heart Plain. Although sparsely populated, these Phoenix Mountains are popular with several monastic orders and are home to many shrines and temples, as well as a few lesser clan holdings. On the other hand, the small mountain chain known as the Mountains of Regret which forms the clan's southern border is avoided by most, for it is both treacherous and populated by many dangerous beasts. Only a single passage, the so-called Treacherous Pass, traverses this range.

The Phoenix are one of three clans with an extensive coastline. However, much of it – particularly in the northern regions – is comprised of jagged rocks and cliffs,

inhospitable to settlement. Still, the Phoenix made the most of what they have, and fishing villages can be found in all of the rare spots where openings appear in the cliffs, as well as in the more hospitable southern portion of the coast. Overall, the coast sees only modest commercial traffic, especially when compared to the Imperial and Crane lands further to the south. On the other hand, the same cliffs and reefs which make the coast difficult to exploit also make it hard to use as an invasion route; only the Mantis have ever experienced success in such efforts, and only at great cost in lives and resources.

Due to the mountains that surround them on several sides, the Phoenix provinces are accessed by only a handful of roads; this gives the Phoenix considerable control over movement of both trade and troops into their borders. This is especially useful to this clan since it has less military manpower than any of the other original Great Clans (although in modern times the Mantis are probably smaller). Commerce with the Phoenix lands passes through two main avenues. The first is the Drowned Merchant River, which finds its source in the Phoenix lands and flows west toward the lands of the Dragon, Lion, and eventually Unicorn. The river acts as both a source of fresh fish and a way for the Phoenix to trade with those inland clans. Banditry can be a problem, however, since the lands between the Dragon and the Phoenix are sparsely populated and often home to outlaws. A slower but safer route is the inland road which connects to the Phoenix settlement of Nikesake, a road dutifully patrolled by Shiba bushi. Many tradesmen only travel so far as the Shiba provinces anyway, since they are the southernmost and most easily accessed, leaving the Isawa and Asako with the quiet they relish. Of course, this also means that during the rare invasions of Phoenix lands the Shiba always bear the heaviest cost. While they are honored to serve as the protectors of the Phoenix, they sometimes wonder if the Isawa would more often commit to martial efforts if their own lands were more directly threatened.



As noted earlier, the climate of Phoenix territory is infamous for the harshness of its winters. The temperatures in the area reach some of the lowest levels found in Rokugan, on par with the mountainous regions of the Dragon and Crab territories. Plains and mountains alike receive a prodigious amount of snow, and travel comes to a complete stop during most of the season. Of course, the Isawa can simply use magic when winter travel is needed, so while the peasantry is definitely isolated during winter, the clan's samurai can travel and communicate if need be. Spring also comes later in Phoenix lands than in most of the rest of Rokugan; among other things, this means the cherry blossom trees there are the last to flower, drawing samurai from across the Empire to witness the fortuitous event. On the negative side, the heavy snowfalls mean the spring can often see flash floods as the snows melt. Summer is milder in Phoenix lands than in most of Rokugan, which some see as a metaphor for Phoenix pacifism – the "season of war" is shorter and less marked for them than for other clans. Autumn is cooler than elsewhere, with almost constant rain – albeit usually light enough not to disrupt the harvest.

Although the Phoenix are known as pacifists, their borders have seen violence all too often throughout their history. The plains of their southwestern provinces are dangerously close to the territory of the bellicose Lion, and have seen more battles than any other regions in the Phoenix lands. During the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, however, this was mitigated by the Lion-Crane conflicts over the settlement of Toshi Ranbo; in fact, while it was under Crane ownership the Phoenix provided it with a crucial supply line, both as a show of support to the Crane and to turn the attention of the Lion away from themselves. When it became the Imperial capital at the end of the Four Winds era, Toshi Ranbo became even more of a buffer against the Lion, since they would never want to be seen marching troops too close to the Emperor's city.

In contrast to the Lion border, the southeastern edge of the Phoenix lands are guarded by the Mountains of Regret and border on Imperial lands, hardly likely to present a danger. After the destruction of Otosan Uchi, however, this border becomes less safe and much more heavily guarded. The western border of Phoenix lands is also warded by mountains, and few samurai patrol that region during most times since the reclusive Dragon rarely manifest interest in their neighbor. Two notable exceptions are the fall of the Snake Clan, which saw radical action from the Phoenix armies, and the so-called War of Fire and Snow, when machinations of the Dark Oracle of Fire drove the Dragon and Phoenix to war.

The eastern coastlands are well-guarded by the presence of Shiro Shiba, and the friendship between Crane and Phoenix meant that for centuries the Shiba had no fear of a maritime threat. However, the growing maritime power of the Mantis over the centuries became an increasing concern for the Phoenix, eventually leading to several

major conflicts in the twelfth century. The emergence of Sachi's Anvil, a small Mantis island right off the Phoenix coastline, further cemented the need for coastal security.

Although no samurai live north of the Phoenix, the Yobanjin barbarians dwell in and beyond the mountains there, and unpredictable raids make the northern border intermittently dangerous. Generations of tranquility (and even covert trade) will sometimes lull the Phoenix into a false sense of security, only for the Yobanjin to capitalize on this weakness.

The Asako Provinces

The Asako are a small family by most standards, and their provinces are sparsely populated. Set in the eastern part of the Phoenix lands, they receive relatively little traffic or commerce... which is just as the Asako prefer it. Although only a fraction of the Asako are part of the secret henshin order of monks, the influence of that mystical group can be felt throughout the family, and as a result the Asako favor the beauty of peaceful natural settings. Cascades, mountains, and forests of tremendous beauty are scattered throughout the Asako provinces, often in isolated places watched over only by a small shrine.

The En-Ju Province

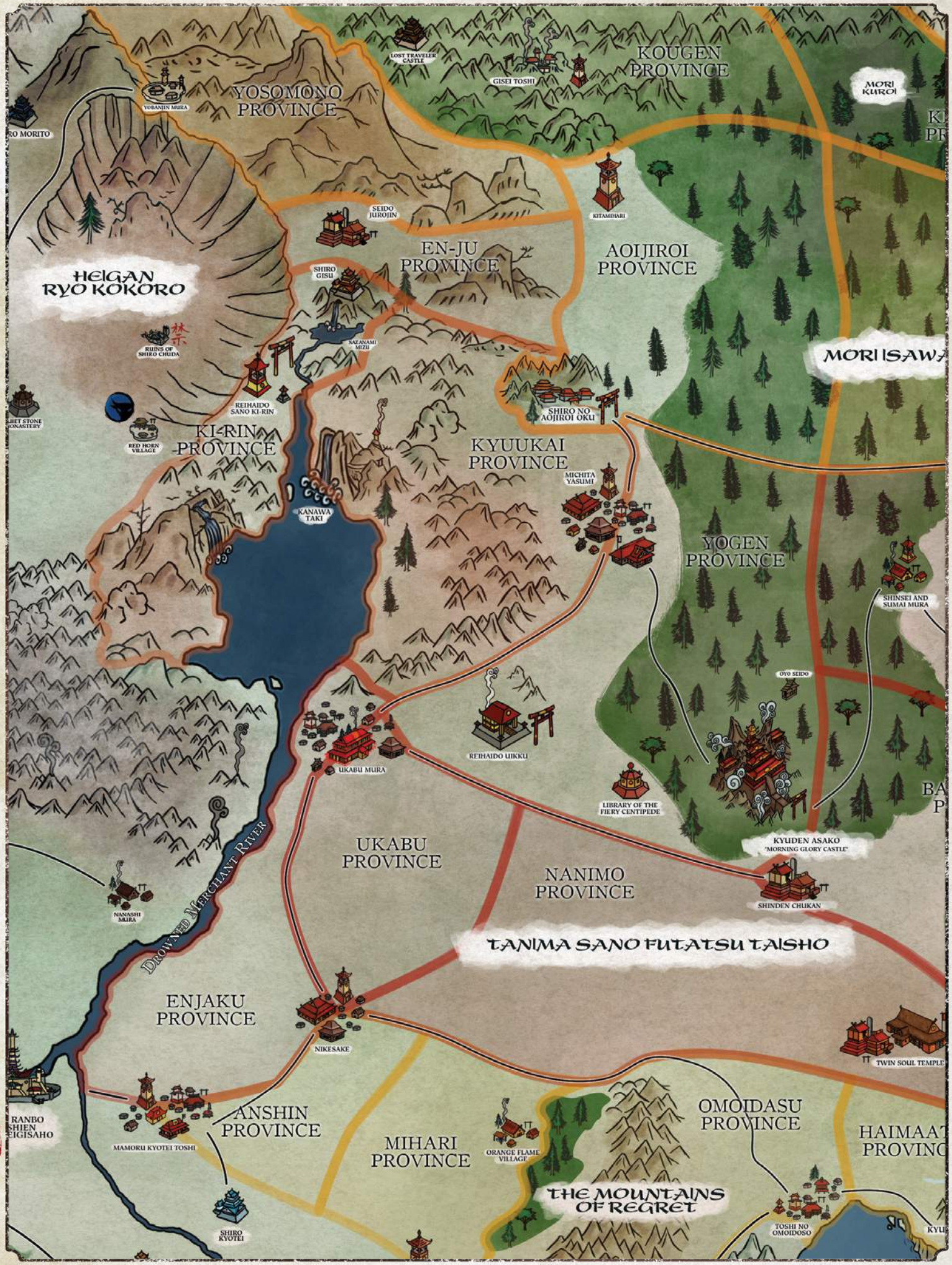
The northernmost province of the Asako, En-Ju is almost entirely mountainous, and seems to have little in the way of value or resources to offer. However, this isolation makes it popular with the Brotherhood's monastic orders, several of which have monasteries within the province (along with the Henshin order itself). Historically, the province is noted for having shared a border with the lands of the Snake, and its isolated quietude was greatly disturbed when the armies of the clan marched through on the way to the Five Nights of Shame. After the Chuda are disbanded, the Phoenix Inquisitors establish a presence in En-Ju in order to maintain a vigil over the cursed lands of the former Minor Clan, looking for any signs of renewed corruption.

Seido Jurojin

Easily the second-largest holding in all the Asako provinces, Seido Jurojin is both the largest and the oldest shrine to the Fortune of Longevity, having been built in the ancient days of the Tribe of Isawa before the Phoenix Clan even existed. Gifted to the nascent Asako family when the clan first formed, the shrine has always exerted a strong influence on the family. It is a center for the healing arts, a topic which draws the three main branches of the Asako family together: shugenja, henshin, and scholars.

Set among high cliffs, the shrine is originally almost inaccessible, but the Asako eventually build a road which would allow pilgrims to reach it more easily. The journey still remains arduous, though, particularly since it is often undertaken by sick and elderly persons seeking the mercy of Jurojin. Many perish before reaching the great temple, and smaller shrines to the departed may be found dotted about the landscape around it. Those who do reach the Shrine, however, can meet with the Empire's foremost experts in matters of health. The most pious, honorable, and needy might even be able to convince the Asako to let them enter the inner chambers of the shrine where the (often quite elderly) monks devoted to the Fortune can pray for their recovery. Jurojin himself has been rumored to walk the halls of the shrine, so it is easy to understand why such a privilege is reserved to only a few, and none but the Asako are allowed to decide who is fit to receive it.

In times of war, the shrine has been known to house refugees and wounded soldiers, even those from the ranks of the enemy. Such outsiders are not permitted to carry any weapons, not even the daisho, and must remain within the shrine until the conflict has passed. Such is the Phoenix devotion to pacifism – they will heal their enemies, but will not allow them to resume waging war.


LOST TRAVELER CASTLE
GISEI TOSHI
KOUGEN PROVINCE
MORI KUROI
YOBANJIN MURA
YOSOMONO PROVINCE
RO MORITO
KITAMIHARI
SEIDO JUROJIN
EN-JU PROVINCE
AOIJIROI PROVINCE
HELGAN RYO KOKORO
SHIRO GISU
SAZANAMI MIZU
RUINS OF SHIRO CHUDA
MORI ISAWA
REIHAIDO SANO KI-RIN
SHIRO NO AOJIROI OKU
RED HORN VILLAGE
KI-RIN PROVINCE
KYUUKAI PROVINCE
MICHITA YASUMI
KANAWA TAKI
YOGEN PROVINCE
SHINSEI AND SUMAI MURA
OYO SEIDO
REIHAIDO UIKKU
UKABU MURA
LIBRARY OF THE FIERY CENTIPEDE
KYUDEN ASAKO "MORNING GLORY CASTLE"
UKABU PROVINCE
NANIMO PROVINCE
DROWNED MERCHANT RIVER
NANASHI MURA
SHINDEN CHUKAN
TANIMA SANO FUTATSU TAISHO
ENJAKU PROVINCE
NIKESAKE
TWIN SOUL TEMPLE
ANSHIN PROVINCE
MAMORU KYOTEI TOSHI
MIHARI PROVINCE
ORANGE FLAME VILLAGE
OMOIDASU PROVINCE
THE MOUNTAINS OF REGRET
SHIRO KYOTEI
TOSHI NO OMOIDOSO

The Ki-Rin Province

Named after the isolated shrine of the Ki-Rin located within its mountains, this western province is a mix of mountainous terrain and river valleys, the waters of which flow to the south to join into the Drowned Merchant River. While underpopulated compared to most other provinces in the Empire, the Ki-Rin Province does have a few villages and strongholds of note, exploiting the wealth of fresh fish from the rivers or mining the rich silver veins hidden within the mountains. After the return of the Unicorn Clan, this province becomes a popular destination for some of their samurai, particularly the Shinjo, who hope to catch a glimpse of the legendary Ki-Rin itself.

In the late twelfth century, some of the plains on the western edge of this province become the lands of the Ox Clan, which publicly annoys the Phoenix but privately relieves them from the burden of patrolling the remote area.

Shrine of the Ki-Rin

Reihado sano Ki-Rin is a remote mountaintop shrine dedicated to one of the most mysterious creatures in Rokugan. The Ki-Rin is a poorly understood being (or possibly several beings). What little is agreed upon is that it is a creature of Heavenly origin and great moral and spiritual purity. It has only appeared in the mortal realm a handful of times in recorded history, always as a portent before events of momentous importance. The Kami Shinjo was said to be able to turn into a Ki-Rin, much like how Togashi could take the form of a Dragon, and this is the source of the shrine's popularity with the Unicorn Clan. The shrine is built on the site where a Ki-Rin appeared, right before the clan of Shinjo (then called the Ki-Rin Clan) left Rokugan on its journey into the gaijin lands.

The shrine is difficult to access, located high atop a mountain and reached only by a single road that often becomes an actual staircase. However, it does receive a fair number of visitors throughout the year, particularly during the Festival of the White Orchid, a special shugenja tournament hosted periodically by the Phoenix Elemental Masters. The rest of the year, the shrine is tended by a mix of Brotherhood and Asako monks. They are a unique group who follow many Fortunist rites but also have special prayers and rituals of their own based on the nature of the Ki-Rin. They are known among the Phoenix for being some of the most knowledgeable monks regarding Celestial creatures, and are often consulted for issues involving the ryu, fushicho, and other such Heavenly beings.

Physically, the shrine is for the most part a modest collection of monastic buildings and peasant huts. The main temple pagoda is not particularly large, but boasts a huge solid-gold statue of the Ki-Rin. A special tournament field is maintained outside the shrine, and it is on this field that the Festival of the White Orchid occurs.

Shiro Gisu

The only notable Phoenix stronghold in the Ki-Rin province, Shiro Gisu is located in the Phoenix Mountains about a half-day's travel northeast from the Shrine of the Ki-Rin. It is perched on a high mountainside overlooking a modest lake called Sazanami Mizu. The lake is fed by a beautiful waterfall known as the Firebird Falls, and the castle is designed to offer splendid views of both the falls alongside and the lake below. From the lake, the minor River of Northern Snow winds southward to join into the larger Drowned Merchant River.

Shiro Gisu is a relatively small castle but is designed with court in mind, boasting a variety of interior and exterior gardens and several libraries. Although it is not large or prominent enough to host an Imperial Court, it is nonetheless an important location for Phoenix diplomacy; those guests who are not prominent enough to attend court at Kyuden Asako or Pale Oak Castle, but are nonetheless too significant to risk insulting, are instead invited to spend the winter in Shiro Gisu.

Kyuukai Province

Kyuukai Province is another mountainous Asako province, but does open out into fertile plains on its eastern side, where many villages flourish. As the province which is home to the largest city in Asako lands, Kyuukai is probably the most crowded of the family's lands... at least from their viewpoint. Travelling samurai from other clans generally find the province to be peaceful and quiet.

Michita Yasumi

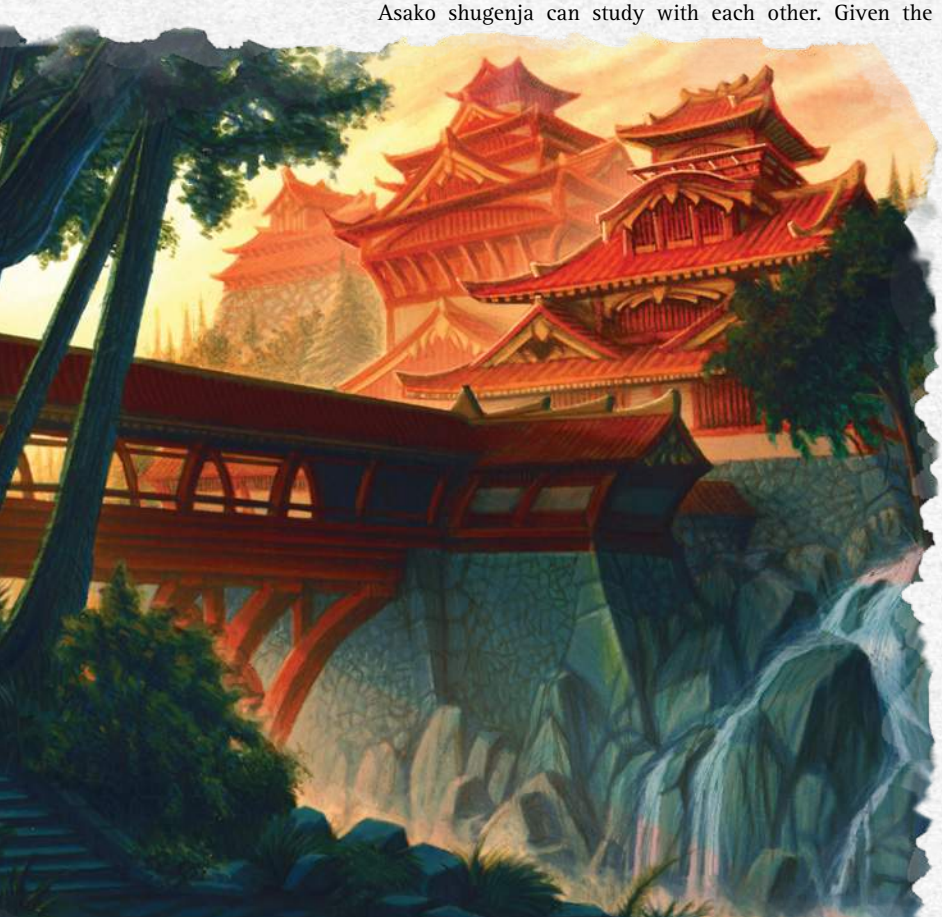
Hopeful Rest City is an oddity in the Asako lands: a large commercial city in a land ruled by mystics and scholars. In truth, it developed into such a place due only to its location, since goods from the rest of the Empire must pass



through Kyuukai Province on their way to the Isawa-ruled northeastern lands of the Phoenix. Since these trade routes fell within the Asako borders, a city inevitably arose to facilitate it. Despite requests from the Isawa and the Shiba, the Asako are reluctant to redraw their provincial borders, so this trade center remains within their lands.

Hopeful Rest City is thus something of an inherent contradiction: a trade center with a prosperous merchant class, but ruled by samurai who maintain a strictly traditionalist attitude toward commerce. The merchants here carefully refrain from publicly displaying their wealth, and the large marketplace at the center of the city does not even have a name despite being the beating mercantile heart of Michita Yasumi – sometimes called the "Invisible Market" or "Yasumi's Shadow." However, it would be a mistake to think the Asako disdain prevents them from keeping an eye on the market's activities. Their traditionalist attitude extends to the law, so smuggling, graft, racketeering, and theft are all strictly punished. Thus, while small amounts of Yobajin goods can be purchased here on the black market, the merchants are very careful who they sell to and what they offer least they attract the wrath of the Asako. Inquisitors also frequently inspect the market, and those who deal in magical substances are rarely heard from again.

The second point of interest in Michita Yasumi is the Kanjiro Library, something in which the Asako do take much pride. Constructed in the ninth century on the orders of governor Asako Kanjiro, the library serves both as a general repository of knowledge and as a spell research facility. Although the Isawa have far superior facilities, the existence of the Kanjiro Library allows Asako shugenja some degree of autonomy from their Isawa rivals. There is a small shugenja school adjacent to the Library where Asako shugenja can study with each other. Given the location of Michita Yasumi on a major trade route and the welcoming nature of the Asako family, the school has become popular with outsider samurai trying to learn the ways of Phoenix magic. The Asako are known to provide tutelage to a handful of visiting shugenja every year, enough to encourage other visitors to keep trickling in. The presence of so many shugenja has also turned the Library into a temple of sorts, and small shrines (typically Shinseist) are scattered throughout this district of the town – a considerable contrast to the bustling commercial interests of the central market.



Yogen Province

Yogen is the largest province in the Asako lands and home to the family's seat of power, but it has only about the same population as Kyuukai and is, if anything, less wealthy. Of course, nearly half of the province is covered by the Isawa Mori, so settlement has been limited to the plains. Kyuden Asako itself is far smaller than Shiro Shiba and Kyuden Isawa, and would probably remain largely unnoticed by the rest of the Empire if not for the beauty of its surroundings. Nonetheless, several Imperial Winter Courts have occurred within its halls, and as a result the roads of Yogen Province tend to be quite well maintained.

Kyuden Asako

The ancestral home and ruling seat of the Asako family, Kyuden Asako (also known as Morning Glory Castle) is famous throughout the Empire for its unique natural beauty. Set at the edges of the Isawa Mori on a black stone promontory rising above the treeline, the bleached stone walls of Kyuden Asako reflect the light of the rising sun every morning, granting its second name of Morning Glory Castle. Due to its relative small size and remote location, Kyuden Asako is not viewed as a worthwhile target of military conquest, and even during the bleak days of the Clan War the castle was spared the destruction which afflicted other parts of the Phoenix lands. As a result, security is minimal, and this combined with its beauty and isolation makes Kyuden Asako one of the most peaceful locales in the Empire... exactly as its founder wished.

This peacefulness has been noticed by more than one Emperor, and Kyuden Asako has been host to several of their Winter Courts. The flood of guests and servants who accompany an Imperial Court can push the resources of this small palace to its limit, but the Asako are nonetheless greatly honored to be selected. Besides, they welcome a Winter Court as a chance to sow the seeds of peace between the other clans.

The Library of the Fiery Centipede

Located a few miles from Morning Glory Castle, the Library of the Fiery Centipede is actually a holding of the Moshi family of the Mantis Clan, despite being located in Phoenix territory. Built in the ninth century to foster the exchange of knowledge between the Moshi family and the

Phoenix Clan, the library is the most complete repository of knowledge regarding Elemental Fire to be found in the Empire; even the Masters of Fire have occasionally studied there.

The Library is a sturdy structure of gray stone, three stories tall with no windows. Magical wards protect it from intrusion and – not surprisingly but somewhat ironically – from fires that might otherwise damage or destroy the documents and scrolls stored there. Small openings in the roof admit sunlight, which is distributed through the interior for illumination by a system of mirrors similar to that used by the Moshi in their own lands.

Shinden Asako

Few outside the Phoenix suspect the existence of Shinden Asako, and fewer still have ever set foot on its secret grounds. Built deep within the Isawa Mori, Shiden Asako is the only formal dojo of the henshin, where a select chosen few from the family learn the secrets of the Path of Man. Connected to Michita Yasumi by a single narrow trail, Shinden Asako is built from natural stone and easily blends into its surroundings. Magical wards combine with its out of the way location to ensure no one stumbles upon it by chance. Here the henshin novices undergo their training, a form of instruction not entirely unlike that seen in most Brotherhood monasteries. The teaching focuses on esoteric practices to awaken the soul, while also learning to influence the kami through the so-called "mysteries" and "riddles."

The shrine is an ascetic place, barely more comfortable than a monastery, with just enough amenities for the Asako to consider themselves to be living as samurai. Smaller shrines are located around the central complex, dedicated to a variety of Fortunes, ancestors, and Celestial beings; many of these were built by individual Asako for personal reasons. Shinden Asako has only a modest library, but some of the writings kept there are said to have been penned by Lady Asako herself. While these writings do not cover the Path of Man itself, they are still seen as a treasure of the family, recording their founder's ideas on the place of man in the universe.

The Shrine of Uikku

Reihaido Uikku is located in the middle of the large plain which comprises the western half of Yogen province. No road connects it to any village or city, and the land around it is rocky, making it difficult to reach even on horseback. However, those who accomplish the long walk are rewarded with one of the holiest sites in the Empire.

This shrine was built to commemorate Uikku, the child prophet and prodigy who was first discovered in the Asako lands. Able to recite the Tao of Shinsei by heart in his early years, Uikku is best remembered for the increasingly dire prophecies he made before his death just eighteen years later. The shrine serves a dual purpose as a repository for his knowledge and a tribute to his spirit, and the Phoenix hope their prayers bring comfort to what was in life a tormented soul. Attentive visitors will notice a rather impressive security detail, particularly for an Asako holding, with Shiba bushi patrolling both the halls of the shrine and its surrounding lands. Those are the Defenders of Uikku, an order of samurai pledged to defend Uikku's prophecies against those who might exploit them for dishonorable purposes. The Defenders also closely study the final eight prophecies known as Uikku's Dooms, a set of apocalyptic predictions about the Empire and each of the Great Clans. Whether the Dooms can ever truly be averted is uncertain, but regardless, the Defenders of Uikku and the monks who maintain the shrine are among the Empire's greatest experts in the study of prophecy and divination.

The Agasha Provinces

For most of the Empire's history the Agasha are a Dragon Family, and the provinces they later come to oversee are the charge of the Shiba family. GMs running games set prior to the Hidden Emperor era should treat these provinces as Shiba possessions, and make note of the changes to the various holdings therein.

When the Agasha fled their clan and swore fealty to the Phoenix, the Isawa granted them the four least-wealthy Shiba provinces, thereby giving them a home while minimizing the insult to the Shiba. These four provinces had limited farmlands, coastlines blocked by reefs and cliffs, and were closed off to the south by the dangerous Mountains of Regret. However, the Agasha were happy to get any territory at all, and their inhospitable new lands were actually somewhat of an improvement over their former mountainous home in the Dragon lands. Also, they had always been a somewhat isolationist family, focusing on magical studies rather than hosting visitors, so their new home fit their nature well.

Anshin Province

The Anshin province is the only one in the Agasha lands which can be termed prosperous. It is dominated by a modest but fertile plain, and its villages produce the majority of the Agasha food supply. Given its economic importance and its location at the southern border of the Phoenix Clan, the Anshin province is heavily patrolled by the Shiba despite it no longer officially being under their rule. The Agasha do not object to this, appreciating the support of their new clan – particularly since they have few bushi of their own to secure their borders.

Honored Treaty City

Named after a peace treaty between the Lion and the Phoenix, Mamoru Kyotei Toshi is the southernmost city in Phoenix lands. The land around the city is the most fertile in the province, and usually produces enough rice for the Agasha to export a modest surplus to neighboring regions. This means the city is usually bustling with visitors and economic activity, quite unlike most other Agasha holdings.

True to their isolationist nature, the Agasha relinquish some aspects of administering the city to the other families. The Shiba handle security and maintain a sizable barracks within the city, while Isawa representatives ensure the taxes are properly collected. Still, the governor of the city is always an Agasha, and the magistrates who protect the city against criminal activity are usually Agasha as well.

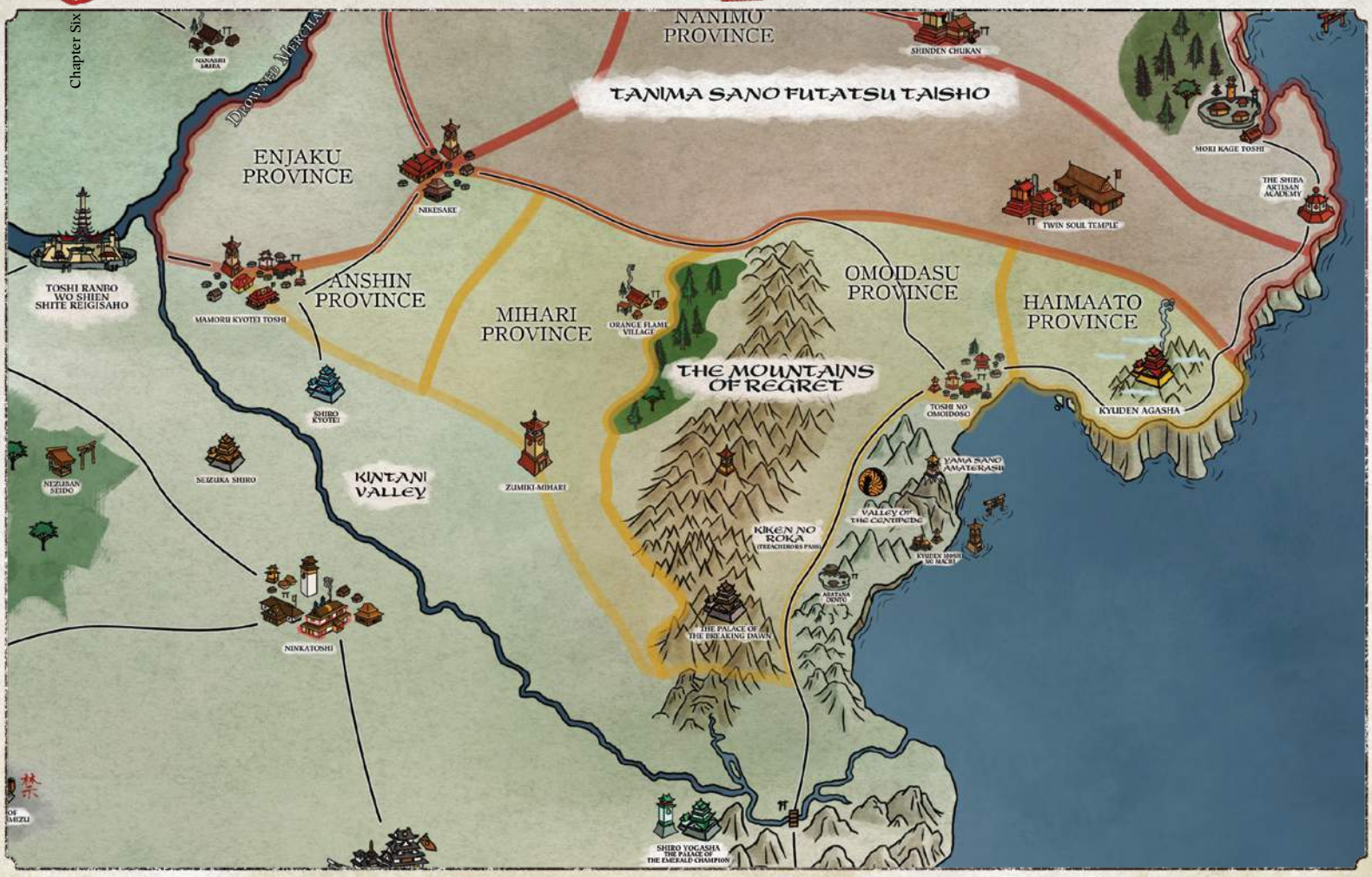
Due to its history the city often serves as a diplomatic meeting-point between the Lion and the Phoenix. Over the centuries, the Phoenix have found that reminding the Lion how their honored ancestor once agreed to peace on this very spot is a sure way to gain their ear. The city's location also means Lion samurai do not have to go deeper into Phoenix territory to conduct their diplomacy, which generally suits them quite well. Still, the two clans have very different attitudes, and to discourage Lion guests from any unseemly violence, one of the Shiba Governors ordered the construction of a dojo exclusively for the use of Lion guests. Such visitors frequently make a point of measuring themselves against Shiba bushi on the practice floor, and while this can be tiresome to the Shiba it is seen as a much preferable to more overt forms of aggression.

Mihari Province

The Mihari province, like the Anshin province, is dominated by plains. However, much of its soil is rocky, particularly in the regions closer to the Mountains of Regret, so any economic exploitation of the province is limited and requires arduous work. Settlements are few and far between, usually limited to small villages. However, these villages do provide the near-perfect isolation for Agasha shugenja to experiment in solitude. It is not uncommon for a single Agasha samurai, sometimes not even accompanied by personal family, to live in these small nondescript villages.

Zumiki-Mihari

Any visitors passing by this lone watchtower at the southern edge of Mihari province would probably not pay it much attention, thinking it just another border guard post. However, Zumiki-Mihari serves a unique purpose for the Phoenix. To the South of it lies the ancestral lands of the Otomo family; while they have no military strength of their own, the Otomo wield tremendous political influence





in the courts, and like nothing more than meddling in inter-clan affairs – including those involving the Phoenix. The tower was built with a simple and specific purpose: to observe the Otomo lands and gather as much information on their activities as possible. Although this is quite literally spying, the Phoenix prefer to see it as a form of preventive reconnaissance, knowing all too well a single Otomo courtier is as dangerous as a whole army.

While the tower has a good vantage over the neighboring plains of the Otomo, its true potential is unlocked by magic. The spells of the Phoenix allow them to monitor events much farther than the mere eye can see. This is one rare area in which the various families of the Phoenix cooperate unconditionally, as they all know how irksome the Otomo can be.

The Phoenix assume the Otomo know about the tower – after all, the Imperials' own information network is quite extensive. However, they have refrained from any public accusations against the clan, and the Phoenix therefore quietly continue their spying.

Orange Flame Village

For most of history, this settlement is a minor village in the Shiba provinces, eking out a meagre living from the rocky soil. When the Agasha take possession of Mihari province, they discover why the soil here is so exceptionally unproductive: it is rich in minerals, harmful to plant growth but very useful for Agasha alchemy – especially the creation of hanabi (fireworks). They immediately put the villagers to work at mining these useful minerals, and within a few months they are able to celebrate with a huge fireworks display, culminating in a beautiful orange phoenix.

Since then, the once dormant village has become a dynamic settlement, with almost all villagers involved in creating fireworks. From the mining of the components to the crafting, packaging, and distribution of the rockets, the whole village takes part in its new trade – closely overseen by the Agasha, of course. To celebrate their newfound prosperity, the village holds a festival once a year on the anniversary of that first fireworks display, always culminating in the recreation of the famous orange phoenix. The villagers have come to see this particular firework as the direct symbol of their good fortune, so much so that they have renamed their home in its honor and refuse to even mention the former name. The Agasha who rule the area are happy to indulge this superstition since it helps ensure the local peasants are loyal to their new masters. The Agasha themselves, meanwhile, see their production and sale of fireworks as proof of the value they bring to the Phoenix Clan.

Omoidasu Province

The lands of the Omoidasu province are almost completely within the Mountains of Regret, so managing them is a thankless task for the Agasha. The Mountains are treacherous to travel, prone to flash floods and landslides. Furthermore, it is believe some Shadowlands creatures nest in caves beneath the mountains, for ogres and goblins are spotted within the peaks almost every year. As if that were not enough, bandits often find the mountains to be the perfect place to settle in their hidden camps. The Agasha rarely venture in the mountains unless absolutely necessary, although they sometimes place magical wards on the Treacherous Pass, the main route through the range.

Still, the province is not entirely worthless; it does encompass a small coastal region just north of the mountains which is home to several small fishing villages and a single notable port city.

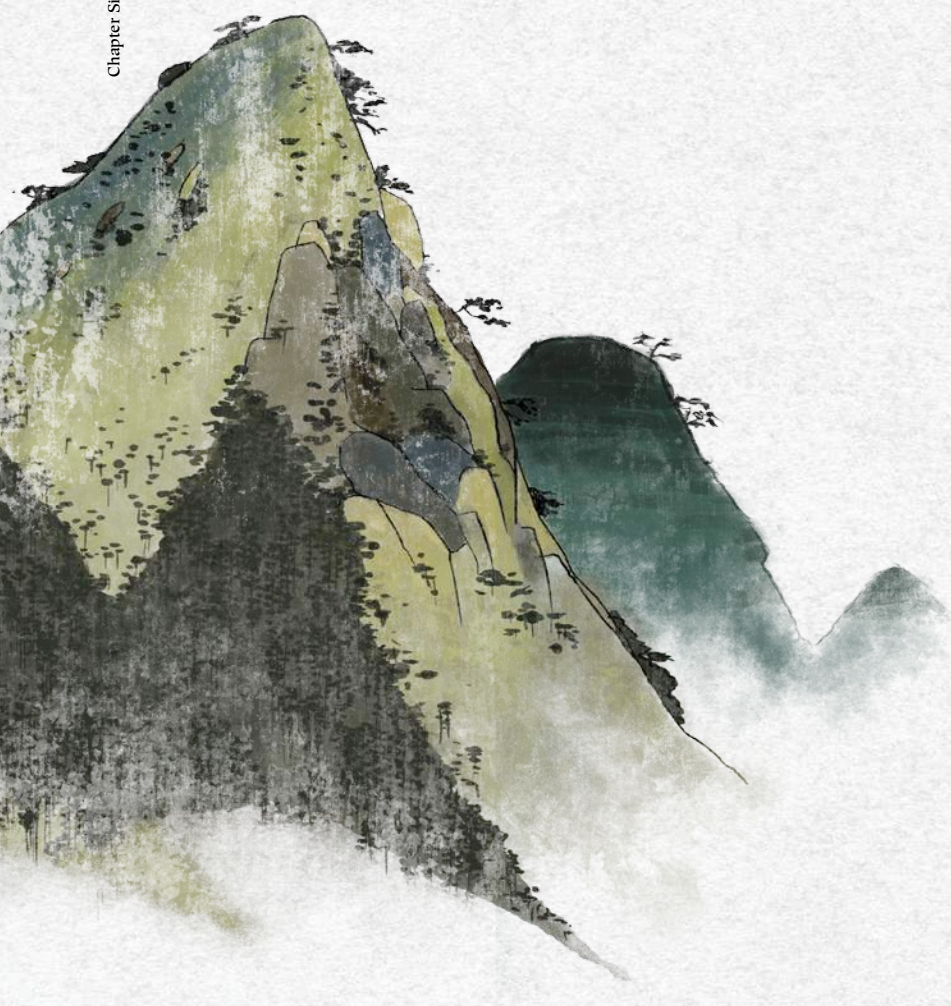
The City of Remembrance

This coastal settlement was once called the City of Suffering, due to a curse placed upon it by a powerful maho-tsukai which would allow him to return from death. Supposedly the entire council of Elemental Masters and the Jade Champion had to join forces to defeat him, but no mention of this infamous tsukai can be found anywhere else in the Empire. Regardless, the city's name was changed after the legendary hero Matsu Hitomi died there. A shrine to her memory was built in the city and is now a frequent destination for Lion pilgrims. The locals make sure to maintain the shrine with the utmost reverence, fearing that failing to do so for so much as a single week would draw the wrath of Hitomi's spirit.

In modern times, irrespective of these and other superstitions, Toshi no Omoidasu is a prosperous port city and accounts for the vast majority of the Omoidasu province's limited wealth. Due to its position at the southern edge of the Phoenix coastline, the city attracts many Mantis samurai and traders, especially after the creation of Kaigen's Island off the coast. While the Mantis and the Phoenix have never harbored much love towards each other, the importance of commerce often overshadows such tensions. Moreover, as latecomers to the Phoenix Clan the Agasha do not have a particularly strong distaste for the Mantis, making them well suited for handling such dealings. Mantis visitors usually keep to the waterfront in order to avoid too much interaction with the Phoenix, and several inns and teahouses there cater almost exclusively to them; the district has acquired a definite "Mantis flavor" over the years.

Haimaato Province

Of all the provinces ceded to the Agasha, Haimaato is perhaps the least valuable. Its coastline is almost entirely useless, bordered by high cliffs, and its land is only moderately fertile at best, supporting villages but no major town or city. Perhaps it is this very lack of development that leads the Agasha to choose this province as their new seat of power. While the rest of the province has not changed much from its previous state, the presence of Kyuden Agasha means the region now teems with shugenja, many of them conducting magical experiments in their own homes.



Kyuden Agasha

The castle which would one day become known as Kyuden Agasha was originally a very minor Phoenix stronghold, overlooking a portion of the coast from well above the cliffs. Although well defended by outlying walls and several watchtowers, its deep within the Phoenix lands and atop the cliffs protected it from any attack, and its history was both peaceful and obscure.

When the Agasha settled in the region, they kept the defensive structures but rebuilt their interior of the castle into a much more comfortable place, worthy to be called a palace. Crane tapestries and Mantis silks were among the luxuries the Agasha added to the structure, perhaps in part to ease the pain of having abandoned their ancestral homes. The castle also became a showcase for their alchemical knowledge, with strange colorful lanterns lighting the halls at all times of the day and pleasant incense wafting perpetually through the air.

Much of the family's true interests lie below the castle rather than within it. After taking possession of the stronghold, the Agasha discovered a previously overlooked network of caves beneath and quickly put these to good use. The family's crafting foundries, their greatest contribution to their former clan, were rebuilt in a large cave which opened onto the seaside cliffs. No tunnel was built to the surface, however, so smiths must either climb down to the opening on their own or use their magic to traverse the cliffs; either option is considered to help prepare the body, mind, and soul for the arts of the forge. In addition, deep beneath the surface the Agasha created mighty laboratories to continue their experiments with alchemy and multi-Elemental magic. These laboratories include sleeping quarters, food reserves, and other basic amenities, but guests are never permitted to visit them – they are the greatest secrets of the Agasha, not lightly shared with even the most trusted of friends. As a result, a visitor can stay in Kyuden Agasha at the same time as dozen of prominent Agasha shugenja, yet never meet any of them. This may help account for the castle's repute for quietness and peace, a repute further enhanced by the formidable magic and deadly alchemical devices which reinforce the castle's physical defenses.

Kyuden Agasha receives relatively few visitors due to the family's lack of political influence (even compared to the rest of the Phoenix Clan), though all guests who do arrive are well treated and find their stay peaceful and pleasant. As its name implies, the castle is theoretically capable of hosting an Imperial Winter Court, but none has ever taken place there and the Agasha seem to have no ambitions to claim such an honor.

The Shiba Provinces

Stretching in a vast swath from the southwest to the eastern coast of the Phoenix Clan's territory, the Shiba provinces are what allow the Phoenix to thrive and succeed as a Great Clan. Their fertile plains are well populated by heimin and produce the majority of the clan's food, often with a modest surplus for export. Since the Shiba provide almost the entire military strength of the clan, protecting even those lands which do not fall under their direct rule, their ability to feed and supply their bushi is vital to the clan's safety. Still, the Shiba remain Phoenix, and while their focus may be more practical than the other families, their provinces are still replete with shrines and temples, if in smaller numbers than in the Isawa or Asako territories.

Enjaku Province

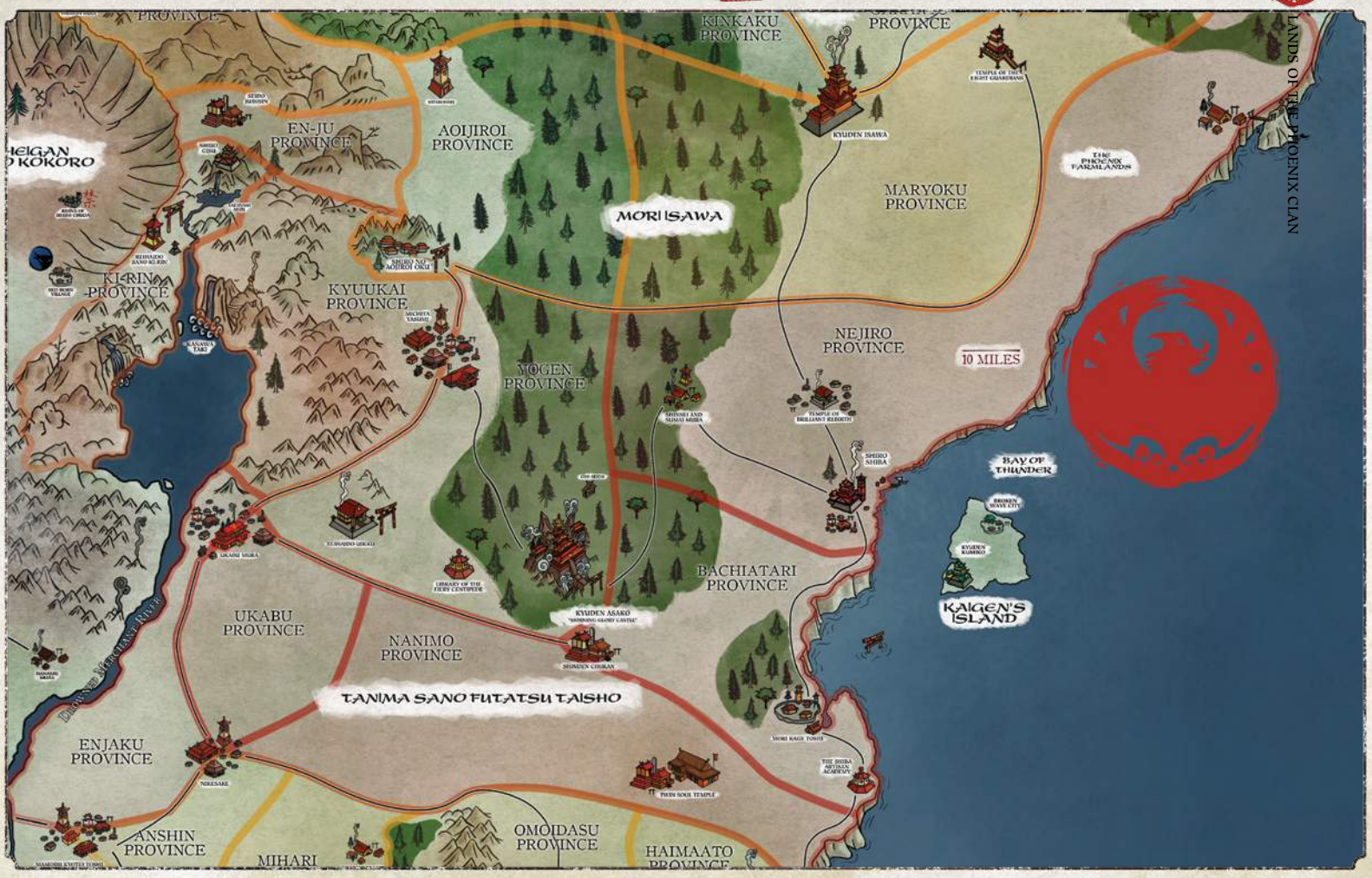
As one of the southernmost and most easily accessed Phoenix provinces, Enjaku is characterized by both prosperity and security. Many of its small towns offer inns, sake houses, and tea houses for travelers. At the same time, its position as the "doorway to Phoenix lands" makes it a crucial strategic area, and a significant portion of the Phoenix army is usually stationed there. Shiba magistrates are also quite active in the region, securing the border against criminal activities to preserve the tranquility of provinces farther north.

Nikesake

Initially a small but prosperous town in the Shiba lands, Nikesake came to prominence in the fourth century as the home of Isawa Asahina – the Phoenix shugenja who would go on to found the Crane Clan's fourth family, creating a permanent bond between the two clans. Since then, Nikesake has been used to foster diplomatic relationships between the Crane and the Phoenix. Although the strength of such relations has ebbed and flowed over the centuries, the two clans are usually close, united both by a belief that peace is preferable to war and by a love for the Empire's culture and spirit.

The Crane actually maintain an embassy in the city, located in a former Shiba magistrate outpost. From the outside, the building looks much as it did when the Shiba used it, but the interior is most definitely Crane in nature, adorned with the finest artwork and luxuries one could ever wish for. Indeed, the Crane ambassador often hosts lavish parties to ingratiate himself with the Phoenix, and these are so popular that influential Phoenix daimyo or even Elemental Masters sometimes make Nikesake their permanent home.

Nikesake is also home to a famous library of philosophy, the so-called Blue Tiled Room. This began in the fifth century as the private library of a city governor named Asako Itsuo; fascinated by philosophy, he gathered works on the topic from across the Empire, seeking the views of



every clan and every monastic order. His son carried on the tradition, his nephew after him, and so on down through the generations. The sages of the library eventually opened a school for courtiers who shared their love of philosophy, where teachers and students hold weekly open discussions on all manner of philosophical topics. Visitors are welcomed, and are encouraged to contribute to the conversations (so long as proper etiquette is followed). Rumors claim that even a few heimin have been permitted to join the debates. Rumor also claims the scholars of the Blue Tiled Room do not confine themselves to discussing Rokugani philosophy, and may actually be among the most knowledgeable translators of gaijin languages in the Empire.

Perhaps as a result of the presence of so many rich, scholarly, and politically prominent individuals, Nikesake is also a tremendous center of trade, much more so than one might expect for its relatively small size. The Crane are the city's main partner in commercial affairs, but Nikesake also deals with the Lion, the Dragon, the Unicorn, and a variety of smaller partners. The city is thus quite open and welcoming to all... but the roads in and out are carefully patrolled by the Shiba, who fully understand the value of Nikesake to the clan.

Ukabu Province

Ukabu province is typical of the Shiba lands: prosperous but somewhat quiet. The border with the Dragon has only been endangered a handful of times throughout the Empire's history, so it is much less heavily patrolled than the southern border, making the atmosphere in this province quite relaxed. Temples and monasteries are more frequent in this province, so visitors are fewer and tend to have more spiritual interests than those who travel through Enjaku province.

Ukabu Mura

Although its name would indicate it is a mere village, Ukabu Mura is in fact one of the largest cities in Shiba lands, retaining its original appellation for the sake of tradition. Ukabu Mura receives many samurai who are passing through this province on the way to more prestigious destinations, such as Kyuden Isawa or Shiro Shiba, and thus focuses on being a welcoming place with a more refined and artistic aspect than Nikesake. This has led it to become one of the Empire's greatest centers of the art of the geisha. Eager to maintain their reputation as pious and honorable samurai, the Shiba make certain to allow only the finest such establishments in Ukabu Mura; the geisha who officiate there are artists of the highest caliber, not mere courtesans or thinly disguised spies. Geisha from Ukabu Mura can demand the highest prices, and would be considered the stars of their houses in almost any other city. The city's most prestigious geisha house in modern times is named the House of the Evening Star, so called after a legendary Shiba hero whose soul became a star in the Celestial Heavens.

A curiosity of Ukabu Mura is the shrine to Agasha Kitsuki, founder of the Dragon Clan's Kitsuki family, who died in Ukabu Mura while conducting his last investigation. The Dragon have long asked the Phoenix to let them oversee the shrine (sometimes asking with considerable vehemence), but the Shiba refuse to cede control of any of their land to outsiders. They do, however, allow Dragon samurai to visit freely to pay their respects to their ancestor. Once the Agasha join the Phoenix, some of them also discretely attend the shrine, revering Kitsuki as one of their own even though they are no longer Dragon.

Nanimo Province

The largest province controlled by the Shiba family, Nanimo province is punctuated by countless villages which grow a wide variety of crops. Due to the extent of the plains, the Shiba also use it to conduct war exercises, and the sight of hundreds of troops in Phoenix red-and-orange marching through its lands is a reminder that the Empire's smallest and most peaceful Great Clan is hardly defenseless. The Valley of Two Generals, where a legendary battle was fought between the Lion and the Crane, is found in this province and attracts many samurai who wish to pay their respects.

Twin Soul Temple

This seemingly innocuous temple, found on a simple path linking two minor villages of Nanimo province, is in fact home to one of the most honored warrior traditions within the Phoenix Clan. Twin Soul Temple is where samurai are trained to join the Order of Chikai, the highest rank of Phoenix yojimbo, who go on to protect the Elemental Masters, the family daimyo and Clan Champion, and the most vital holdings of the clan. The standards of the Order are so high that only a handful of samurai in each generation manage to join it, meaning a single dojo is more than enough to handle all training. The reason why a temple was chosen, however, is so that shugenja can be trained in tandem with the bushi who will guard them. Even if the bushi does not end up joining the Order, or the shugenja does not go on to become a daimyo or Elemental





Master, the pair is usually so attuned that they remain together for the rest of their careers. As a result, the temple is a strange mix of influences, combining training facilities for bushi, scroll libraries for shugenja, and shrines which honor the ancestors of the entire Phoenix Clan.

Many of the most prestigious Phoenix samurai from all of the clan's families have passed through these halls, training and studying. However, Twin Soul Temple is not well-known outside the Phoenix Clan, and in truth its sensei would prefer to keep it that way since their students are so vital to the clan's safety. Needless to say, with sensei of the Order of Chikai on hand, no breach of security has ever occurred in the Temple, nor is one likely to take place in the future.

Bachiatari Province

Bachiatari province offers a variety of landscapes, from the edges of the Mori Isawa to the rocky Phoenix coastline. However, since the Shiba tend to give a wide berth to the forest and only part of the coastline is exploitable, Bachiatari is less productive than the other Shiba provinces. Some of the best warriors of the clan do hail come from it, for they see their lands as the last line of defense before enemies would reach Shiro Shiba itself. Thus, samurai from this province prefer to serve in the army rather than as individual yojimbo.

Mori Kage Toshi

Forest Shadow City was once a small but prosperous seaside town of the Phoenix, known for the nearby forest where trees grew taller than any of the buildings, keeping them in a pleasant shade. A maritime trade center, exchanging ships with Otosan Uchi and the Crane lands, it was one of the gems of the Shiba Provinces. Alas, the city's luck failed in the eighth century when the Governor of the town broke his engagement with the daughter of the Agasha daimyo (at the time, of course, the Agasha were still a Dragon family). The daimyo laid a curse upon the city.

Soon the forest grew ever taller, ever darker, and vines crept over the Governor's castle. A mysterious fog drifted through the streets and shadows could be seen moving through it. Soon the inhabitants had disappeared without a trace, and the castle and other buildings quickly fell into ruin. Unbeknownst to anyone at the time, the Agasha daimyo's rage had attracted the attention of the Living Darkness, the insidious avatar of Nothing, and its power had fueled the curse. Although the vengeful daimyo was later summed for judgment by the Dragon Clan Champion (and never seen again after that day), the city's dark fate could not be easily altered. Even the Elemental Masters could not save the city, finding themselves confounded by the bizarre nature of the curse (at the time, no one knew about the Living Darkness and its unique powers).

Since then the ruined city has been avoided by almost everyone, shrouded in rumors of ghosts, Shadowlands creatures, and yet stranger things lurking there. The fog around the city twists perception and seems to have a will of its own; even those brave enough to attempt a visit are often unable to find their way there... or unable to leave once they arrive.

In the late twelfth century, after the Hidden Emperor era reveals and defeats the machinations of the Living Darkness, the curse on the city was declared removed. Uncertainty remains, however, and even without the strange fog the place is sinister and dangerous. Lacking any certainty as to whether destroying the city would finally cleanse the area, the Shiba continue to keep it off-limits, and even in the modern era it is usually left well alone.

The Shiba Artisan Academy

Secluded on a scenic but otherwise unimportant region of the Phoenix coast, the Artisan Academy is a small settlement but one of great importance to the family. Very early in the history of the Empire, it became apparent war would not be the only pursuit of the Shiba family. Although as martially skilled as any bushi, the Shiba also soon became involved in more peaceful activities such as religion and the arts – indeed, only the Crane embraced such studies more quickly than the Shiba. As the Empire grew, some Shiba samurai wished to devote themselves entirely to their arts instead of serving in the armed forces of the clan. The Clan Champion, seeing both the practical and the spiritual value of a strong artistic tradition, agreed to this and ordered the founding of the Artisan Academy.

This institution shares many traits with the older and more prestigious Kakita Artisan Academy, and in fact many Crane artists have been sponsored over the years to teach at the Shiba Academy. But while the Kakita pursue beauty and political influence in tandem, the Shiba look mainly for inner peace and for ways to foster harmonious relations with their fellow samurai. As such, their Academy can be somewhat reminiscent of a temple, with many rooms dedicated to meditation and prayer. However, the wonderful paintings and sculptures adorning every hall and room are a luxury which would look out of place

in any monastery. Indeed, the Academy is sponsored by many of the clan's wealthiest samurai, providing it with every material good it might need and thus allowing its teachers and students to focus entirely on their art.

Visitors to the Artisan Academy are fairly rare and always carefully screened to prevent any contamination by worldly affairs. However, those who do gain admittance are always treated to the best hospitality the Phoenix can offer.

Nejiro Province

The northernmost province of the Shiba family, Nejiro is both the location of Shiro Shiba, the family's seat of power, and the Shiba province closest to Kyuden Isawa. As such, the province receives few outside visitors other than Phoenix samurai, since anyone visiting the Isawa merely passes through. Many of the best yojimbo of the Phoenix come from this province, since they grow up used to the idea of serving the Isawa above all.

Shiro Shiba

Undoubtedly the most formidable fortress in Phoenix lands, Shiro Shiba stands as a sentinel over both the nearby sea and the other provinces around it, its tall watchtowers allowing its troops to quickly spot any approaching enemies. Although far from the largest military stronghold in the Empire, particularly compared to the fortresses of the Crab and the Lion, Shiro Shiba is more than sufficient for the Phoenix, and can also house a large portion of the surrounding heimin population in times of crisis.

The castle is notorious for its seemingly haphazard layout. The Shiba have added countless additional walls, towers, gates, and other improvements over the centuries, resulting in what seems like a sprawling, confusing maze to outsiders. In fact, the walls have expanded so much that by the tenth century they include much of the city outside the castle. The Shiba, of course, are well used to navigating it, and even their heimin are familiar with the outer rings.

Although the real power of the Phoenix Clan resides in Kyuden Isawa, Shiro Shiba is an important spiritual center in its own right – after all, it was once home to a Kami. The Shrine of Champions is one of its holiest structures, dedicated to all the Phoenix Clan Champions since Shiba



himself. Due to the unique method of succession in the Phoenix, in which the Soul of Shiba is transferred to another samurai upon the death of a former Champion, many individual Shiba samurai can count a Champion as one of their ancestors, a source of pride and brotherhood.

Shiro Shiba does not receive nearly as many visitors as other Phoenix Clan strongholds, due to both its more northerly location and its essentially military function. Those who do visit are more often than not merely passing through on their way to Kyuden Isawa. This suits the Shiba perfectly, however, since it allows them to monitor the flow of visitors to Isawa lands and ensure no traveler presents any risk to their charges.

Shinsei and Sumai Mura

This oddly named village is one of the oldest in Phoenix lands, and in the early days of the clan became famous for its large burly warriors – hence the name of Sumai Mura. However, shortly before Shinsei left for the Shadowlands with the Seven Thunders, he actually lived in the village for two months. That brief stay turned it into a center of peace and introspection, a stark contrast to its previous martial existence. The villagers wanted to rename their home, but Shinsei insisted he had only improved on what was already there, and so the place came to be known as Shinsei and Sumai Mura.

Pilgrims came to visit this village from all across the Empire, eager to learn where the Little Prophet once taught. Early on, a tradition arose for visitors to bring a stone from their own home and leave it in the village; the reason for this custom was unknown for a long time, but then a Master of Earth used the stones to build a shrine and discovered that they fit perfectly with each other. Since then, this shrine to Shinsei's memory has become one of the most famous and revered in the Empire, visited by pilgrims from both the samurai caste and the common people. A small order of reclusive monks maintains the shrine, spending hours each day meditating on the Tao.

Although the shrine is the most famous aspect of the village, Shinsei and Sumai Mura also maintains a small dojo for sumai wrestlers, one of the few such places in Phoenix lands. However, even the wrestlers are known to behave in a courteous and peaceful manner, and thus Shinsei's teachings hold true.

Temple of Brilliant Rebirth

This is a modern holding, built near Shiro Shiba in the days following the Clan War in the early twelfth century. At the end of the war, this place was a refugee camp built by displaced villagers from the nearby provinces. However, thanks to the workers' diligence, what was once a mere campsight grew into a small village centered around a beautiful temple. Shiba Tsukune, the Champion of the Phoenix Clan at the time, was impressed by their efforts, particularly after they rejected offers of help so as to spare the rest of the clan from expense. When the villagers dedicated their efforts to her, she in turn declared the temple would honor the souls of fallen Phoenix soldiers, and named it the Temple of Brilliant Rebirth. This may well have been a premonition on her part, for in later years Tsukune ascended to the Heavens to become the Fortune of Rebirth.

Although the temple was initially dedicated to all samurai of the Shiba family, over the years it has grown more focused on Tsukune herself. Many monks of the Order of Rebirth can be found here, maintaining the temple and venerating the Fortune. Samurai from all over the Phoenix lands come to pray to Tsukune in hope of a good reincarnation for their kin, their friends, or even themselves. Many of the highest lords of the Phoenix Clan have commanded their funerals be held at the Temple of Brilliant Rebirth, further marking it as a holy site for the clan.

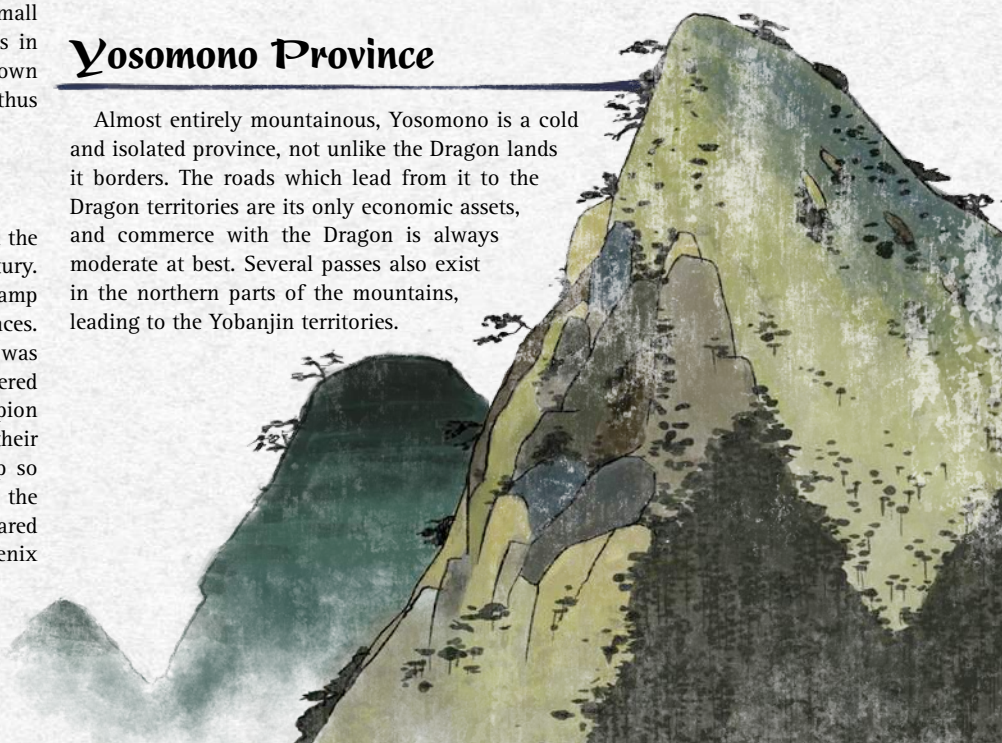
Despite this fame, the village around the temple remains largely unchanged, a small and pious settlement. Due to knowledge acquired out of necessity during the Clan War, many of the villagers are unusually skilled in medicine, and during time of war the clan will often send heimin refugees here for care.

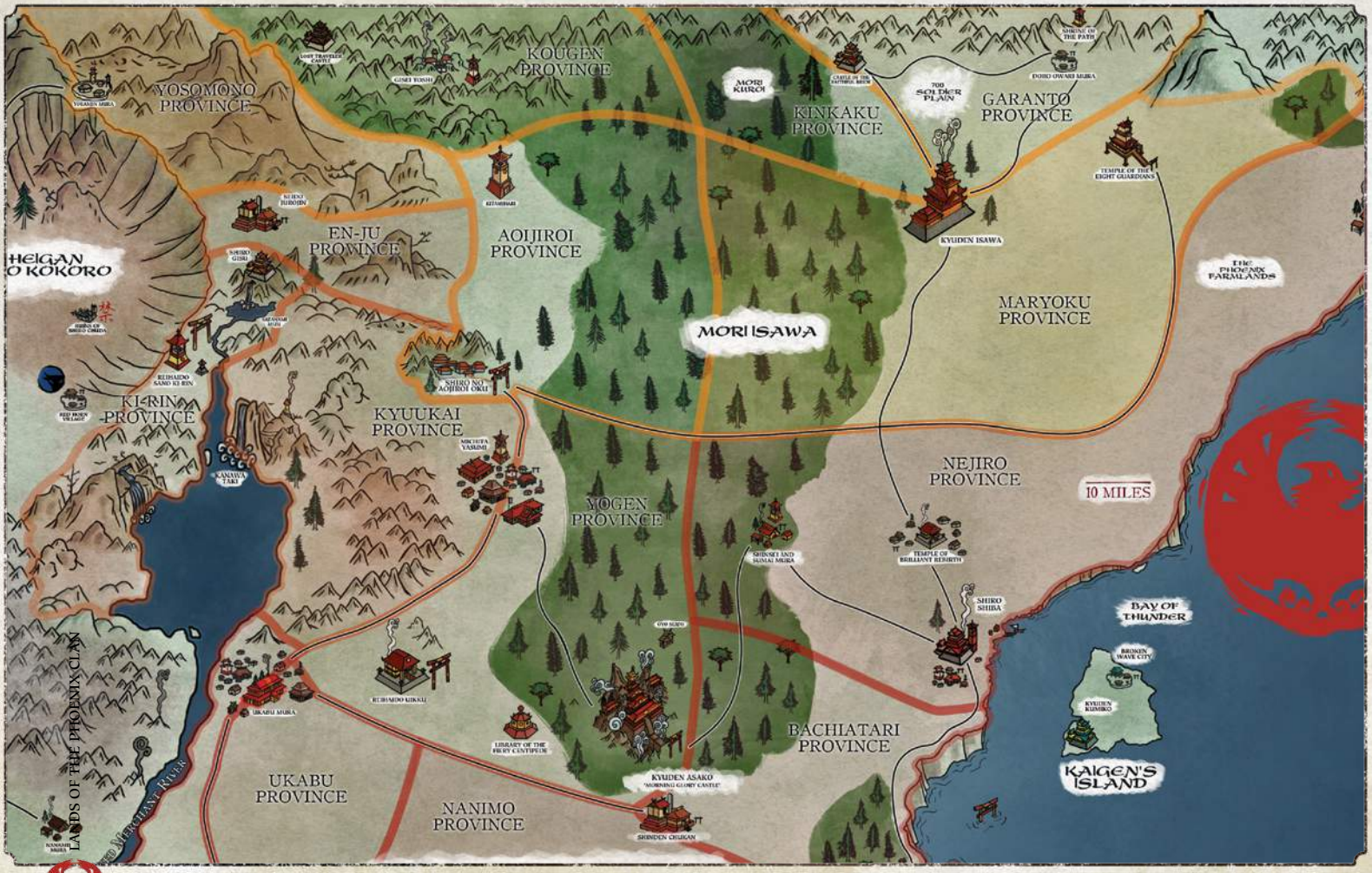
The Isawa Provinces

Encompassing most of the northern regions in Phoenix territory, the Isawa provinces are difficult to access, being isolated by mountains, forests, and the sea. Their climate is the harshest found in the Phoenix lands, with winter snowfall higher and more persistent than most of the Empire. Despite these conditions, however, the provinces are quite prosperous – the magic of the Isawa allows them to ignore many such mundane obstacles. Since they constitute the northern border of the clan, the Isawa provinces are also the ones who most often suffer (and occasionally, profit) from proximity to the Yobanjin territories.

Yosomono Province

Almost entirely mountainous, Yosomono is a cold and isolated province, not unlike the Dragon lands it borders. The roads which lead from it to the Dragon territories are its only economic assets, and commerce with the Dragon is always moderate at best. Several passes also exist in the northern parts of the mountains, leading to the Yobanjin territories.





Yobanjin Mura

A carefully guarded secret of the Isawa family, Yobanjin Mura is a unique settlement in the Empire. While most dealings between the Yobanjin and the Emerald Empire have been violent, the Isawa have always been curious about their northern neighbors, and created this village with the intention of establishing trade relations. The plan was successful, and the village became home to a mix of daring Rokugani merchants and amiable Yobanjin traders. As the village grew, many of these intermarried, resulting in a population uniquely able to deal with both sides. While trade with gaijin has been frowned upon (and often outright illegal) during most eras, the Isawa have found a loophole in Rokugani law: "trade" is defined as the equitable exchange of goods, so they make sure the Yobanjin are paid less than they deserve, thus making it not "trade" by strict interpretation of law. Furthermore, since the Yobanjin were once tribes who dwelt in the Empire proper, some among the Isawa consider them altogether different than gaijin, more like distant cousins in need of enlightenment.

Regardless of any such rationalizations, the village has been a boon to all involved. The Yobanjin obtain Rokugani crafts, food, and clothing, while the Isawa acquire knowledge and exotic substances in return. Since the village is entirely run by peasantry (to provide the Isawa with plausible deniability if needed), it has enjoyed a great degree of autonomy, making its inhabitants careful to preserve the secret of its existence lest it came under any sort of unwanted scrutiny. Most of the inhabitants are bilingual, and consider themselves neither Rokugani nor Yobanjin, but something unique. Their clothes and architecture reflect this situation, being a mix of traditions one would more readily associate with the Unicorn than the Phoenix.

Kougen Province

Set between the Great Wall of the North and the Mori Isawa, Kougen has little to offer to any visitors except from a few isolated monasteries and shrines. A few towers and guard posts are scattered through the area, to prevent Yobanjin invasions and warn travelers against progressing further into the desolate mountains.

Gisei Toshi

To many in the Empire, the city of Gisei Toshi is nothing but a legend, the fabled first city of the Empire where Shiba knelt and sacrificed his pride so Isawa would become the Phoenix Clan Thunder. It was one of the holiest sites of the Isawa, home to the oldest known temple of the Seven Fortunes. The city was believed destroyed after an incident involving the Last Wish, a powerful and little-understood magical artifact. However, the Isawa used this opportunity to hide Gisei Toshi from outsiders, going along publicly with the story of its destruction while rebuilding the damaged city in secret. Moreover, they weaved complex enchantments around it so it would be

The Artifacts of Gisei Toshi

A full listing of the magical artifacts kept in Gisei Toshi would take a book of its own, but the following are some of the more notable examples:

Yajinden's Scrolls: Asahina Yajinden was Iuchiban's greatest lieutenant, infamous for the cursed magical items he created, including the terrible Bloodswords. Like all shugenja, he kept extensive notes on his work, and when he was defeated those notes were collected by the Phoenix and brought to Gisei Toshi. Over the centuries, shugenja handpicked by the Elemental Masters have consulted Yajinden's Scrolls in an attempt to learn ways to undo his creations, but they have met with very limited success. It is a credit to the vigilance of the Phoenix that none of these shugenja ever succumbed to the temptation of maho, since the scrolls also contain a plethora of blood spells.

Flying Carpet: This gaijin artifact was purchased through Yobanjin merchants, but is believed to come from the distant city of Medinaat-al-Salaam. While it looks like a mundane (if beautiful) carpet, when the correct word of command is uttered it becomes firm enough to support passengers, and flies through the air at great speed. To the great surprise of shugenja who have examined it, the kami of air seemed pleased with lending their strength to the item. Some have proposed that the effects could be replicated by Rokugani shugenja, but as yet no one has figured out how to do so.

Isawa Morihono's Cipher Scrolls: Isawa Morihono was a Master of Air during the eighth century who was convinced the Asako and Shiba kept secrets from the Isawa. Although this was true to some extent, his paranoia greatly exceeded the reality. When he came across scrolls coded by the Asako, Morihono became obsessed with developing a way to decipher them. The result was a series of scrolls which, when laid on top of any text, would translate it into plain Rokugani. Ironically, the only texts Morihono's Scrolls could not decipher were the Asako ones themselves. His creation remains secured in Gisei Toshi, for the Isawa fear what they could be used for in the wrong hands.

Tadaka's No-Dachi: This blade once belonged to Crab Clan Champion Hida Tadaka, who died after rescuing Lion Clan Champion Matsu Itagi from the Shadowlands. For a time his no-dachi was considered a treasured possession, worn by several heroes of the Crab Clan. It later became apparent, however, that the blade attracted Shadowlands creatures – its desire for vengeance was so great that it called for them. The Crab Clan Champion discretely arranged for the Phoenix to secure the blade in their own lands in exchange for being allowed to study it. The Isawa have yet to find a way to prevent the blade from calling Shadowlands creatures without also ridding the no-dachi of its potent magical abilities. Whether thanks to the magical protection of Gisei Toshi or the distance from the Shadowlands, the calls of the blade seem to remain unheard. Still, the Phoenix hope to be able to fix it and return it to the Crab one day.

The Winter Eagle: Found in Mori Isawa by a shugenja who was tracking a Yuki no Onna, the Winter Eagle looks like an ice sculpture of a raptor bird, but never melts even in the warmest temperatures. While it remains inanimate for most of the year, it comes to life every winter, when it is able to fly like a regular eagle. The Phoenix do not know what to make of it, but have learned not to anger the creature, who can exhale a deadly freezing breath and has shown limited ability to control the weather around itself. As long as it is supplied with fresh meat, however, it is fairly tame, and even seems to show signs of intelligence. Its origins remain unknown.



impossible to find for anyone but those they wanted to visit. Thus the city faded from the Empire's memory... while for the Isawa it became a sanctuary where they could continue their most dangerous magical research. The most potent of awakened magical items (with the notable exception of the Last Wish itself) were hidden there, both so they could be thoroughly studied and to protect the rest of the Empire from them.

Knowledge of Gisei Toshi is restricted to the five Isawa Elemental Masters, a handful of chosen subordinates, and those who live in the city itself. Very few of its inhabitants (and none of the peasants or Shiba samurai who live there) are ever allowed to live, ensuring its location and existence remain secret. Since the city is self-sufficient and absolutely secure, most residents do not overly resent their isolation. After all, where else would they have the chance to study the greatest magical secrets of the Empire and to pray at a temple over a thousand years old?

Kinkaku Province

Comprised mostly of the northern part of the Mori Isawa, Kinkaku province has but a handful of villages and no city of note. Although the landscape and weather certainly make settlement harsh, the main reason for its emptiness is the part of Mori Isawa some call Mori Kuroi, the "dark forest." A portion of the forest which was never truly tamed, it is the home of spirits and strange creatures which take a dim view of mankind. Even the shugenja of the Isawa know better than to provoke these, and this part of the forest is given a wide berth.

Garanto Province

Set at the extreme northeast of the Phoenix Clan's territory, Garanto is a quiet and peaceful province. Its small villages are kept prosperous by the blessings of the Isawa, which allow them to endure the harsh winters in isolation. The distance from the rest of the Empire has spared Garanto from almost all wars, but it has unfortunately been frequently targeted by Yobanjin raids, taking advantage of its lack of any real military defenses.

Aoijiroi Province

Bordered by the Asako provinces, Aoijiroi shares their natural beauty but is more densely populated and exploited. Wood from Mori Isawa and rice from the plains fill the Isawa coffers, and since it is surrounded on all sides by Phoenix territory, the province is generally considered quite secure.

Pale Oak Castle

One of the most beautiful castles in Phoenix lands, Pale Oak Castle is favored by the Isawa as the site of their Winter Courts. (They prefer Kyuden Isawa, the seat of their magical knowledge, to remain more private.) However, since Pale Oak Castle is both a beautiful and a holy location, few guests have ever complained about spending a winter there.

Pale Oak Castle takes its name from a tree which grew on the site where Emperor Hantei XVII was buried – supposedly because his wife, while a Crane, had been born in the castle. The oak tree grew to be one of the largest of its kind, and its bark is believed to have miraculous curative properties. Seen as a symbol of holiness, the beautiful tree inspires tranquility in observers, making the castle an ideal place for peaceful negotiations. This attitude is reinforced by the Isawa, who hang minor nemuranai around the castle to further instill a sensation of serenity and peacefulness. Beautiful displays of magic are also an attraction of the court, and young Isawa shugenja are encouraged to attend and compete with each other to delight the guests with their efforts.

Given how prestigious Pale Oak Castle is, there should be no surprise that it is under tight security at all times. Several squadrons of Shiba bushi, assisted by talented Isawa shugenja, ensure that both guests and the sacred tree are safe at all times. However, this security detail remains discreet so visitors will feel at ease.

Asahina Seido

Located midway between Hopeful Rest City and Pale Oak Castle, Asahina Seido is constructed in the year 363 as a tribute to the alliance between the Isawa and the fledgling Asahina family. Its architecture is testament to the renown of both Shiba and Kakita artisans. The inhabitants are primarily monks who are former Isawa or Asahina. Though known for its art and historical

significance, the temple is most famous for being the site of several major peace treaties between warring clans. It is said the spirits of the two peace-loving families watch over the documents and their signatories.

Maryoku Province

The seat of power of the Isawa, and by extension of the Phoenix Clan as a whole, Maryoku is thus almost certainly the single most important province of the Phoenix Clan. Many villages exploit the lands blessed by the Isawa, while others harvest wood from Isawa Mori and turn it into the paper from which the holiest of spell scrolls are made. But more than anything the province is home to temples of all kinds and sizes, many of which also serve as schools for young shugenja to learn the secrets of their art.

Kyuden Isawa

Undoubtedly the largest shugenja temple in the Empire, Kyuden Isawa is the home of the legendary Elemental Council. It is a formidable structure surrounded by dozens of lesser temples, shrines, and libraries, themselves supported by a city of heimin who provide paper, food, and other services. Unsurprisingly, the whole city is carefully guarded by the Shiba. The power of the Masters is the best defense, however, and only a very large scale military invasion could ever hope to threaten Kyuden Isawa. Access to the vast libraries of spell-scrolls is strictly regulated, and only those with the proper approvals are allowed to study here. Few outside the Isawa are even allowed to visit the city, much less be taught at any of its temples. The Isawa claim this is because they are conscious of how dangerous their power can be to those improperly prepared, but outsiders prefer to accuse them of pride and secrecy. On the other hand, to be invited to the court of Kyuden Isawa is a sign of absolute trust from the Phoenix, and is only reserved to their closest allies.

The meeting chamber of the Masters is located underground, deep below the palace, and is one of the holiest and most ancient places in Phoenix lands. It is guarded by elite Shiba samurai from the Order of Chikai, as well as by the countless enchantments placed by the Masters over many centuries. Other notable locations in Kyuden Isawa include the temples of the Tensai orders, each set near natural features which reflect the nature of their respective Elements. Indeed, the presence of so much magical and religious activity has attracted the attention of many powerful spirits, and even Celestial beings such as ryu or houhou may occasionally be sighted here. Needless to say, the local peasantry feel particularly blessed and are devoted to both the Fortunes and the Phoenix Clan.

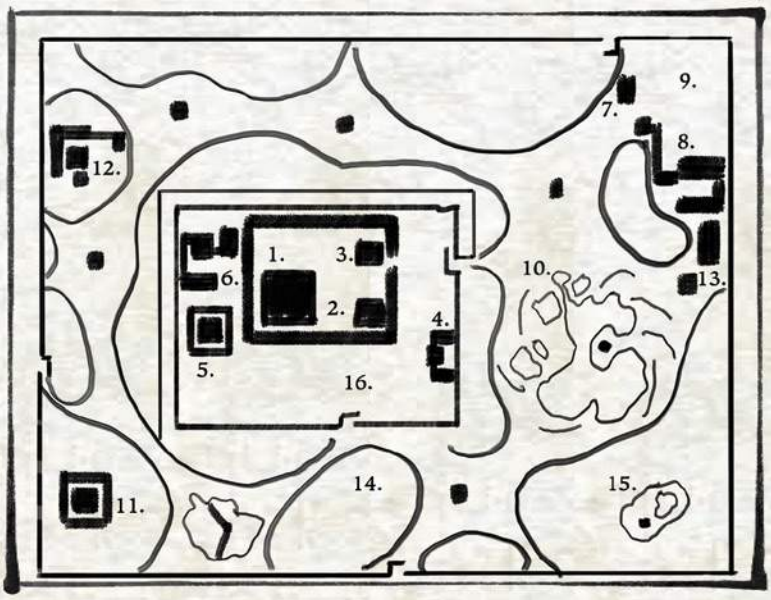
Temple of the Eight Guardians

In contrast to ancient Kyuden Isawa, the Temple of the Eight Guardians is built in the late twelfth century in honor of the appearance of the Fire Dragon during the Winter of Red Snow. The temple complex is specifically dedicated to the Dragons of Tengoku – the Celestial Dragon, the Thunder Dragon, the Jade Dragon, and the five Elemental Dragons. (The Obsidian Dragon, seen as a sinister entity, did not receive a shrine of his own.) The eight individual shrines are dedicated not only to the Dragons themselves, but also to the principles they embody, such as courage for the Thunder Dragon and fertility for the Earth Dragon. The very structure of the Temple echoes the Dragons as well, as each shrine's construction was assisted by magic. The walls of the Temple of the Water Dragon seem to be made of everlasting ice, for example, while the Temple of the Fire Dragon always radiates heat.

Although the Temple of the Eight Guardians was built by the Isawa, it has become one of their greatest collaboration with the Agasha. Not only did the Agasha bring their own knowledge of Dragons and Oracles when they joined the clan, but one of theirs, Agasha Miyoshi, became the first Dragon Channeler. Those rare but powerful shugenja are able to directly draw on the power of the Dragons to cast their spells, a recent phenomenon but one the Phoenix have been researching eagerly. Miyoshi was often seen praying and teaching at the temple, and all Channelers frequently visit it, working together to unlock the full potential of their gifts. The school recruits from both the Agasha and the Isawa, who both help maintain the Temple in return, and has helped create stronger bonds between the families.

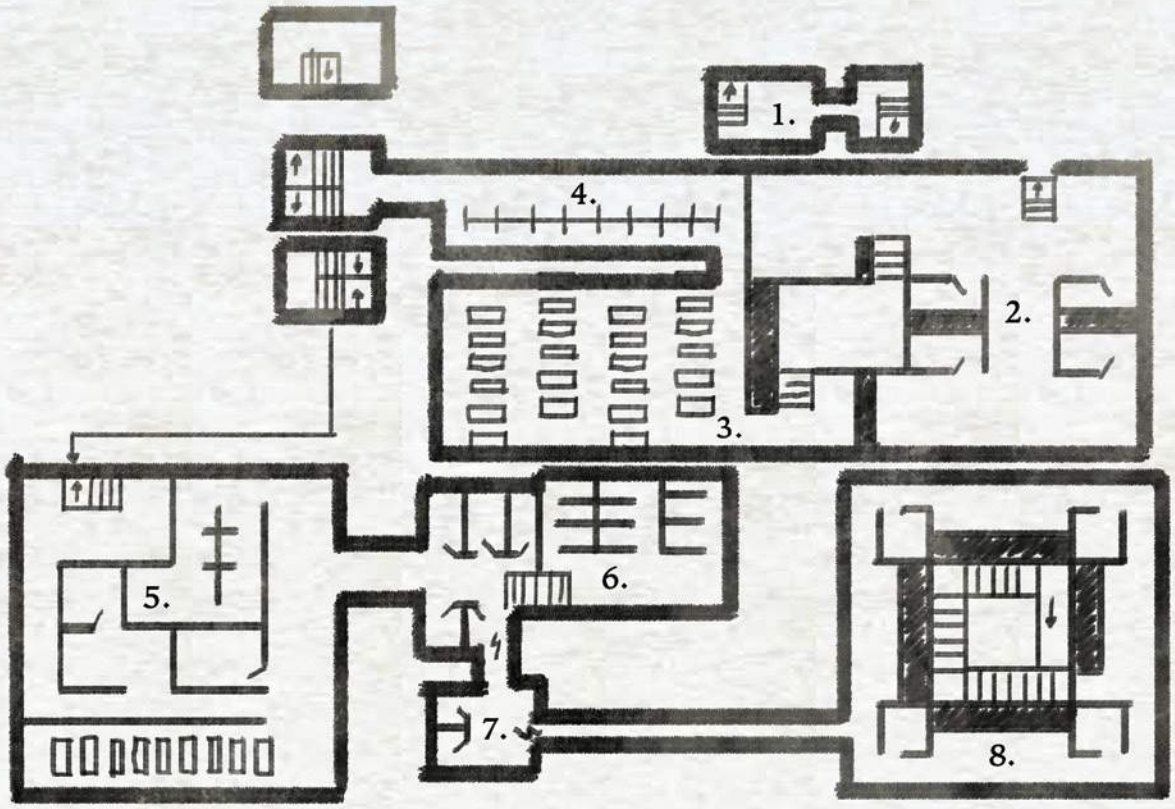


Kyuden Isawa



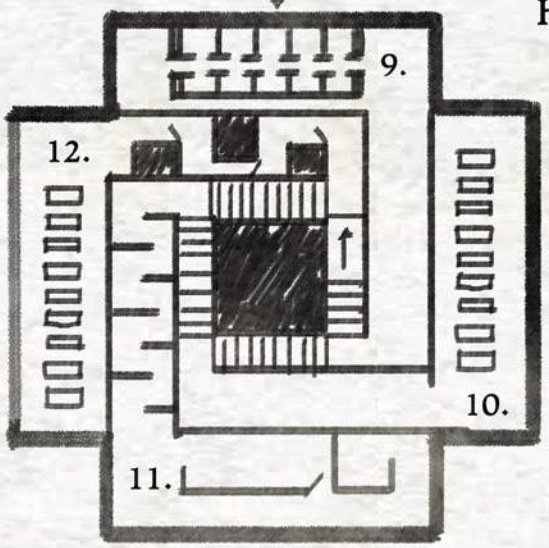
Map Guide

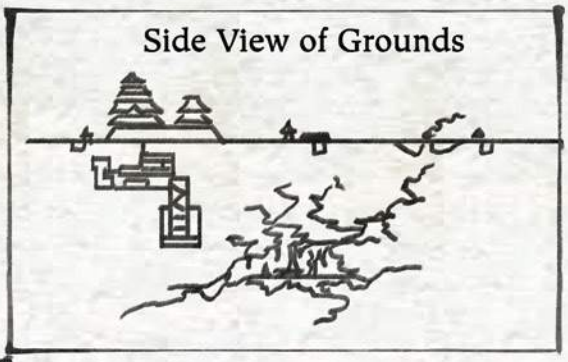
1. Library Resplendent
2. Tenshukaku
3. Shiba Yagura
4. Hall of Honored Guests
5. Library Ethereal
6. Hall of Aspirant Youth
7. Healers Station
8. Hall of Novitiates
9. Training Grounds
10. Harmonious Wheel
11. Library Corporeal
12. Barracks
13. Store Houses
14. Garden of No Mind
15. Grove of the Five Masters
16. Cherry Blossom Path



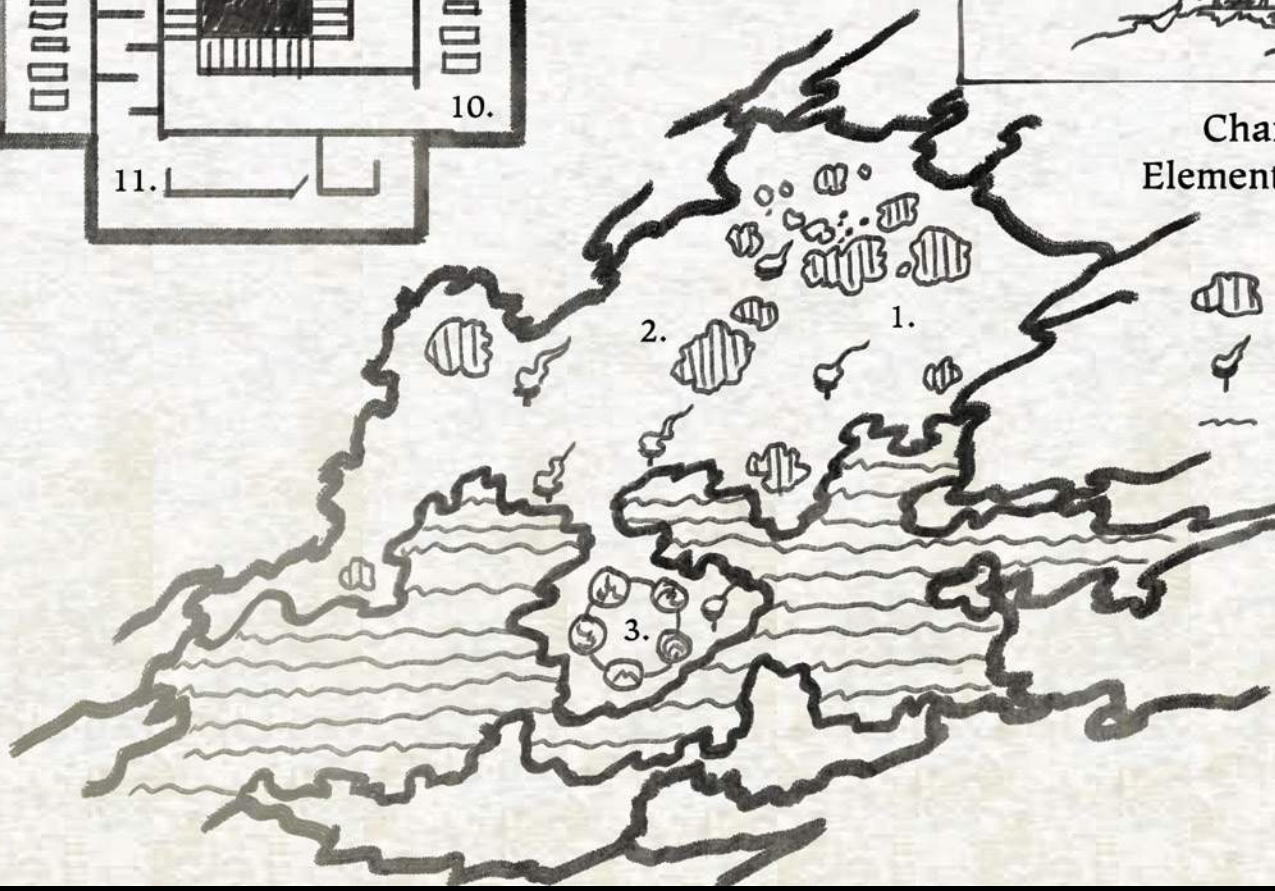
1. Entrance
2. Guardhouse
3. Lore Repository
4. Study
5. Study Long-Term
6. Store Rooms
7. Secret Passage
8. Grand Descent
9. Study
10. Forbidden Repository
11. Black Scroll Study
12. Black Repository

Hidden Library





Chamber of Elemental Mastery

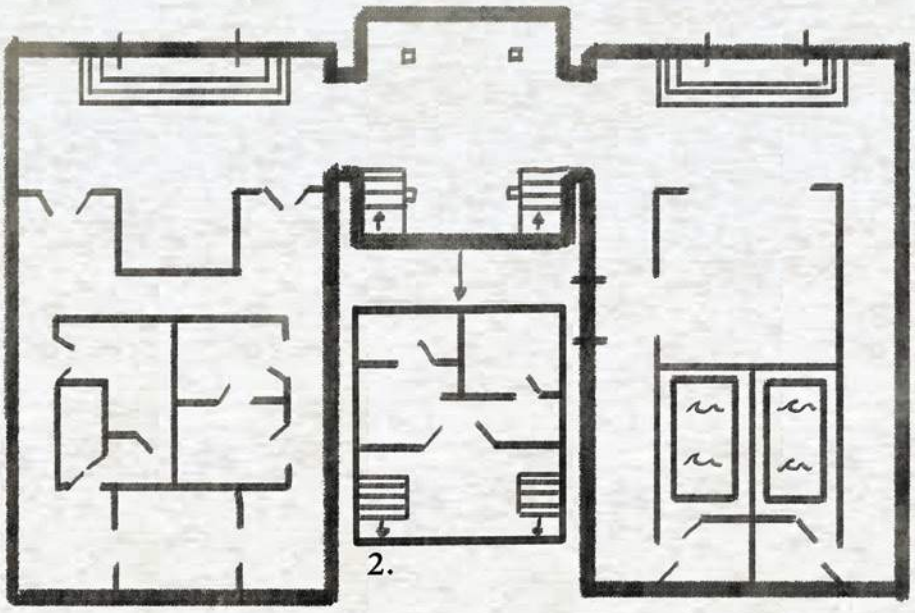


Stalactite / Stalagmite

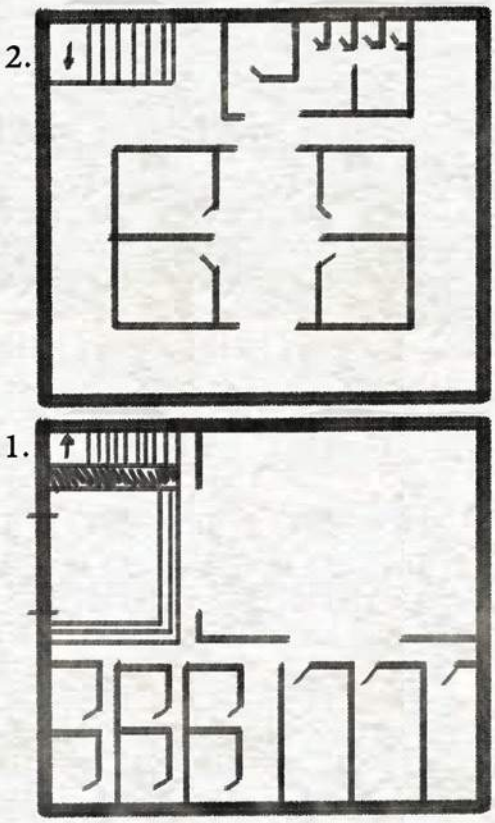
Torch

Water

1. Stone Garden
2. Great Column of Names
3. Council Ring

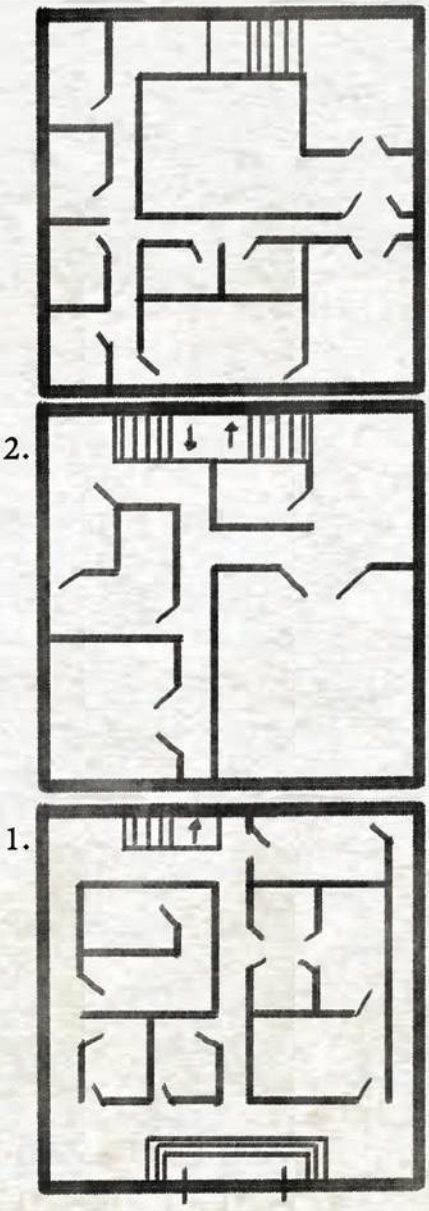


Hall of Honored Guests

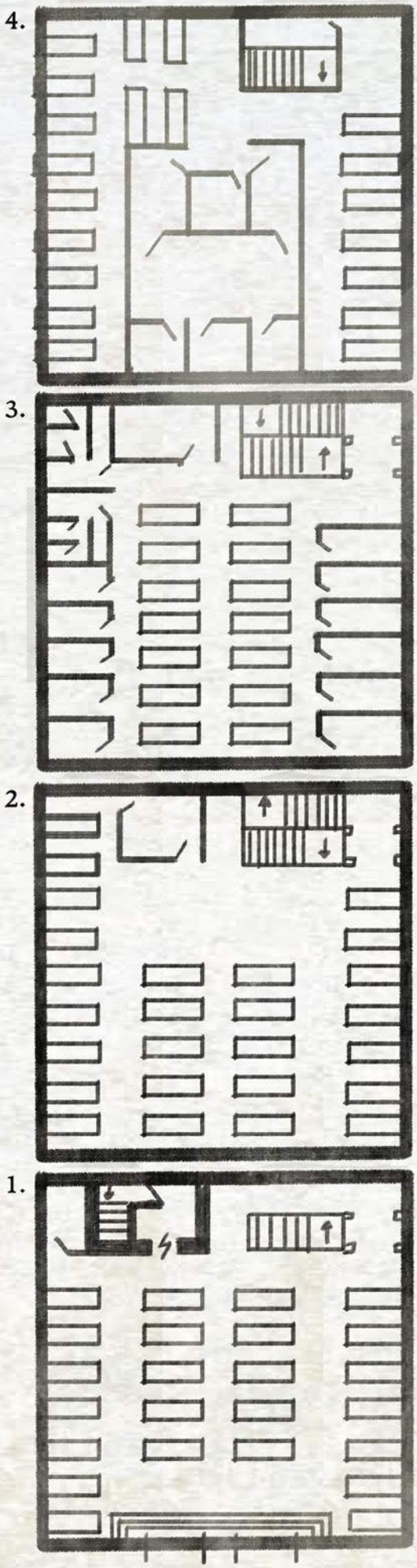


Shiba Yagura (Tower)

- Up 1 Floor
- Down 1 Floor
- Stairs
- Reinforced/Stone Wall
- Shoji / Wooden Wall
- Entry Way
- Pillar
- Secret Entrance



Tenshukaku (Keep)



Library Resplendent








KYUDEN IKOMA
"SACRED WATCH PALACE"
SHIRO NO SOSHI
"CASTLE OF ORGANIZATION"
AYEI PROVINCE
POKAU
SHRINE OF THE SHADOW'S EYE
KINBOU PROVINCE
HIDDEN WATCH KEEP
KYUDEN CHUSA
SHINDEN HAZAKE
10 MILES
YUMA PROVINCE
RYOKO OWARI
"CITY OF ASH"
RYOKO PROVINCE
KAKUSHIKOTO PROVINCE
SHIRO YOGO
"CASTLE OF LEARNING"
FUKITSU PROVINCE
THE HALL OF ANCESTORS
SHIRO MATSU
"LAST BREATH CASTLE"
SHIRO NO SHOSHIRO
"CASTLE OF PREPARING"
PAINTED CITY
NIHAI TOWER
SECOND FESTERING PIT
BEIDEN PASS
BEIDEN
SEVEN STINGS KEEP
KAWA PROVINCE
KUNIZAKAI PROVINCE
BEIDEN PROVINCE
HOWLING FIELDS
KAGOKI
KYUDEN BAYUSHI
"SICK AND SHIELDING PALACE"
NEZUBAN PROVINCE
HOTEI SEIICI
CHUUOU PROVINCE
HIZOKU PROVINCE
TOSHI AITATE
SHINKOSSHOKU KAGE NO KYUDEN
SHIHAI
SHIMOMURA
KYUDEN ASHINAGABACHI
GATEWAY VILLAGE
MITSU OTOKO
RENGO HELGEN

The Lands of the Scorpion Clan

The boundaries of the Scorpion Clan are traditionally well defined, being set by the Seikitsu Mountains to the north and east and the River of Gold to the west. Their southern provinces border on a mixture of unincorporated and sparsely populated regions, including the territory of several Minor Clans. Until the events of the tumultuous twelfth century, this permeable southern boundary saw conflict only infrequently, and the lands of the clan tended to be among the most peaceful in Rokugan. With the Plains of Thunder to the west across the River of Gold (and the distant barrier of the Shinomen Forest beyond that), and only Beiden Pass allowing passage through the Seikitsu Mountains on the east, enemy armies have usually had a certain amount of difficulty approaching the lands of the Scorpion. In the twelfth century, the destruction of Beiden Pass and its replacement by Seikitsu Pass changes the direction of travel but leaves the situation otherwise unchanged.

While not so verdant as the lands of the Unicorn, Crane, and Lion, the Scorpion provinces are still among the more productive lands in the Empire, and while they are more sparsely populated than some of the other clan territories, they are heavily farmed and domesticated. The vast majority of the Scorpion lands are a mixture of largely featureless plains and low, rolling hills; everywhere one encounters small farming villagers, contoured slopes, rice paddies and crop fields. The overall tone is of a land carefully supervised and manicured by the clan who rules it. The saying that the land feels almost 'too quiet' is not uncommon among visitors, often accompanied by the suggestion that the very hills and plains have eyes that watch a traveler every step of the way.

Of course, much of this is a deliberate image fabricated by Scorpion policy and rumormongering. Fear of the Clan of Secrets has created a widespread belief among outsiders that their lands are patrolled by unseen servants, and whispers of 'ninja' abound, especially among the common folk. In truth, such paranoid rumors are only partially justified. There are indeed eyes throughout Scorpion lands, keeping careful tabs on events and reporting them back to their superiors, but they are primarily commoners who report to their lords. For the most part, the clan treats visitors with the same courtesy as anyone else, and indeed must do so in order to conduct trade and diplomacy. Scorpion nefariousness is used elsewhere, in the courts or on the battlefield, and the typical traveler experiences nothing more sinister than the tendency for the lands to be almost eerily quiet.

Wildlife and game are present, but larger animals are fairly rare (small game and rodents can be found in plenty). Likewise, very few large natural predators are encountered, aside from occasional foxes that rove north from other territories. This changes as one approaches the foothills



of the Seikitsu range, especially in the more sparsely populated provinces of the Soshi and Yogo; there one can encounter fair numbers of deer (who are believed to be sacred to Jurojin, Fortune of Longevity) and occasional predatory animals such as wolves or cougars. These foothills are far more rocky and craggy than the majority of the clan's holdings, and also fairly heavily forested. As the lands ascend higher into the mountains, they become largely inhospitable except for occasional narrow valleys, and there are large areas of the Soshi provinces especially that are completely desolate and uninhabited. Moreover, even the small valleys can be completely cut off by snow during the winter, their populations forced to learn self-sufficiency and frugality to endure their isolation for four to five months of the year.

In contrast to the sense of safety, order, and hospitality found in the main Scorpion lands and settlements, outlying villages often come across as quite insular and stand-offish to outsiders. Some of this is simply due to their relative isolation, but in part it is also a result of policy. The Scorpion find isolated holdings to be useful assets for their more unsavory practices, and teach minor vassals to maintain secrecy and accept only those visitors they are told to expect. It is in these remote places, not the eerily peaceful main roads, where 'accidents' happen to those who snoop into matters best left alone. After all, the forests and mountains can be treacherous, full of natural hazards.

As a general rule, Scorpion samurai do not prefer to live in the countryside, and a greater proportion of the population dwells in larger towns, castles, and cities than in almost any other clan. Interestingly, this gives the impression to visiting dignitaries that there are many more Scorpion samurai in the Empire than there actually are, since most outsiders assume that for every city samurai there will be many rural ones. This also means the sinister reputation of the Scorpion is felt much more firmly within their cities and castles, as it always feels like one is faced with a sea of crimson and black masks as far as the eye can see.

One last matter of note on the Scorpion lands is that while they possess enough food production to ensure the clan is self-sufficient, there is a lack of many specialized resources. Iron, gold, silver, jade, rare woods, spices and the like are found in only very low quantities in these territories, and those which do exist are often sneered at by other clans as being of inferior quality. Thus for most of their history the Scorpion are not known for being a particularly wealthy clan. That changes in the ninth century, when the Unicorn Clan brings back a plant called "poppy" and reveals that it can be refined into the drug known as opium. The Scorpion are granted the right to grow and process opium for medicinal purposes, and the lands around the city of Ryoko Owari are soon filled with poppy fields. Officially, the medicinal opium trade is modest, producing only limited income... but an amazing amount of the drug is smuggled illicitly into other clan territories, at immense profit.

Long before the new resource of opium is available, however, the Scorpion are known for possessing a different sort of resource: human talent. The clan makes a practice of training specialized retainers, aides, and commoner artisans for a variety of skilled tasks. The most famous of these are the Shosuro acting troupes and the infamous Scorpion-trained geisha that populate the finest houses of entertainment throughout the Empire, but to assume these are the only human resources the Scorpion possess would be foolish indeed. Specialists of all varieties are the stock and trade of the Scorpion, and they have constructed a network of informants around the entire Empire. In the end, who needs iron or gems when one possesses the most valuable resource of all – information.

The Bayushi Provinces

The four Bayushi provinces form the heartland of the Scorpion territory, the source of most of its food production and the center of its political and military power. Of all the Scorpion lands, these provinces conform most closely to the image of a strangely quiet and safe place.

Kunizakai Province

One of the 'bread-basket' provinces of the Scorpion, Kunizakai is the heart of the Bayushi territory. It is a highly domesticated region, heavily trafficked and densely populated (more so than most Scorpion lands), albeit lacking any particularly noteworthy geographical features. Most of it is a mixture of plains and low hills with occasional stands of trees, and farming villages are scattered everywhere. Although the province is well outside the River of Gold's floodplain, it does benefit from a series of tributary rivers and streams flowing down from the Seikitsu Mountains, and thus enjoys a mixture of irrigated and dry-earth cultivation, the latter


HELGAN NO OTAKU
AN'EI PROVINCE
KINBOU PROVINCE
YUUMA PROVINCE
RYOKO PROVINCE
KAKUSHIKOTO PROVINCE
FUKITSU PROVINCE
KAWA PROVINCE
KUNIZAKAI PROVINCE
BEIDEN PASS
BEIDEN PROVINCE
NEZUBAN PROVINCE
CHUUOU PROVINCE
HIZOKU PROVINCE
HOWLING FIELDS
MITSU OTOKO RENGO HELGEN
CHINSEI MORI
10 MILES
KYUDEN IKOMA "SACRED WATCH PALACE"
BLUE CHRYSANTHEMUM VILLAGE
BISHAMON SHRINE
TONFARITSEN
MONASTERY OF THE FIVE KINGS
SHIRO NO SOSHI "CASTLE OF ORGANIZATION"
POKALI
SHRINE OF THE SHADOW'S EYE
FIRST BREATH DOJO
KENSON GAKKA
KENSON MURA
HIDDEN WATCH KEEP
SHIMPEN FUZAKE
KORITOME TOSHI
SHIRO KORITOME
KAERU TOSHI (FORMERLY BRITTLE FLOWER CITY)
RYOKO OWARI "CITY OF LIES"
IKEDA TOSHI
MAKOTO SEIDO
RUINS OF SHIRO BANKEN
REI SEIDO
SHIRO YOGO "CASTLE OF LEARNING"
NAGANORI MURA
THE HALL OF ANCESTORS
SHIRO MATSU "LAST BREATH CASTLE"
SHIRO NO SHOSHIRO "CASTLE OF PRETENDING"
PAINTED CITY
NIHAI TOWER
SECOND FESTERING PIT
BEIDEN OVERLOOK
BEIDEN
SEVEN STINGS KEEP
SHIRO KURAISHI
KAGOKI
GINASHTRA
KYUDEN BAYUSHI "SILK AND SHADOW PALACE"
HOTEI SEIDO
KEEP OF THE POSTHUMOUS HUSBAND
TOSHI AITATE
SHINKOSHOKU KAGE NO KYUDEN
KOERU MURA
KYUDEN ASHINAGABA
SHUTAI
SHIMOMURA
QUIET STREAM VILLAGE
GATEWAY VILLAGE

particularly common in the hilly regions. Regardless of location, however, very little of the land is uncultivated. The province boasts only one major settlement: the clan's ruling seat of Kyuden Bayushi.

Kyuden Bayushi

Impressive in almost any estimation of the word, Kyuden Bayushi is intended as a testimony to both the strength and the hospitality of the Scorpion Clan. The castle sits atop a low plateau in the southwestern corner of the province, and the plains which surround the citadel are wide and flat, with barely any trees in sight; thus, it is effectively impossible to conceal the approach of an invading army. Only infrequently has war ever come to the footsteps of the palace. Moreover, anyone who ascends to the plateau to visit the castle must navigate the so-called Bayushi Labyrinth: a seemingly normal hedge-maze that actually is a constantly-shifting puzzle, filled with secret entrances to the tunnels below the palace. Life-long servants of the Bayushi are accustomed to the shifts and changes in the maze's pathways in this area, but new guests require a guide, making them dependent on their hosts to enter and leave. (One of the favorite games of court at Kyuden Bayushi is to test the guests by seeing who can traverse the maze more quickly.) Below the plateau, at the entrance to the maze, is a sizable town that provides supplies, amenities, and services for the castle.

Naturally, the Bayushi Labyrinth also serves a more sinister purpose than mere games. Scattered throughout the maze are deadfalls, spiked traps, magical wards, trained assassins, and armed guards (ostensibly serving as both guides and caretakers). These defenses are well concealed and are normally kept inactive, but when the castle is under attack the maze transforms into a deadly trap for any foes seeking to close in on the main keep.



Kyuden Bayushi itself is one of the most opulent and extravagant such palaces in the whole of the Empire. Its main keep, estates, and vast garden dwarf even those of the Otomo and are only moderately less ostentatious than the main palaces of the Doji and the Yoritomo. Accommodations are of the highest caliber, and the servants are known for being superbly skilled and unfailingly courteous. Even sworn enemies of the Scorpion have commented that they have never been treated quite so well as when they were guests at Kyuden Bayushi. As a result, numerous Imperial Winter Courts being held within the castle walls; though Kyuden Doji has certainly hosted more, it is widely assumed that the Bayushi are not far behind.

A singular peculiarity of Kyuden Bayushi is that the interior has very few permanent walls. The vast majority of the palace's chambers and halls are constructed from movable panels and shoji screens; this allows the Scorpion to re-arrange their castle's layout at will, and they are fond of doing this overnight – forcing their guests to navigate a new route every day. This often results in visitors being late to important meetings and events, embarrassing them and putting them at a disadvantage before negotiations even begin.

The Bayushi Gardens, while not as impressive as the palatial estates of the Doji (nor as deadly as the Shosuro gardens) are nevertheless vast and beautiful, taking up a sizable portion of the plateau. They include an artificial lake, innumerable flowers and sculpted trees, many ancestral shrines dedicated to various public heroes of the Scorpion Clan, and a variety of private corners where guests can meet and converse. Of course, the Scorpion have arranged the design and layout so they can eavesdrop on such theoretically private conversations.

The physical location of Kyuden Bayushi atop its plateau seems to be one based on military advantage, but some outsiders have noted that there are other places in the province which might actually have been better choices. The true reason for this location is known to very few even within the Scorpion Clan. Below the plateau is a network of tunnels, a maze of passages and secret chambers where many of the most sacred (and dangerous) treasures of the clan are kept. And deep within those tunnels is the Sleeping Lake, a sacred body of water which is somehow connected to the afterlife. For a thousand years, the soul of the Kami Bayushi appeared there, searching for his lost follower and true love Shosuro. Although this search was finally resolved during the War Against the Darkness, the soul of Bayushi is still known to appear in the lake, observing his descendants from afar, judging their actions, and occasionally – very occasionally – offering guidance.

Traitor's Grove

Located just south of the plateau of Kyuden Bayushi is a seemingly innocuous little patch of trees that is actually one of the most sinister and unpleasant places in the Empire. Few understand the nature of this isolated forest, the only copse of trees of any size within easy travel of the castle. The forest is carefully (if unobtrusively) guarded,



and nobody but the Scorpion is ever allowed to venture into this place. Traitor's Grove is a place of punishment, and one like no other. The Scorpion despise Bushido as a whole, but they demand one thing from their samurai – absolute loyalty to the clan. Those who violate this principle are considered the worst criminals and traitors imaginable, and suffer a unique form of execution: they are bound to a tree, held there not only with physical restraints but with magic, while their crimes are recited and then a ceremonial dagger is plunged into their chest. When the ritual is complete, their soul is bound to that tree, never to travel to Meido for reincarnation. Their personal effects are left hanging from the tree like a macabre fetish.

This terrible punishment was first used in the year 545 to seal the soul of Bayushi Tesaguri, who sold three of the Black Scrolls to the Phoenix Clan. Since then, dozens of others have joined him in eternal punishment within Traitor's Grove. It is believed among the Scorpion that the souls will remain bound so long as the trees remain alive, and so far none have ever died.

Those who tend to the sacred duty of watching over the grove are known as the "Ghosts of Traitor's Grove." Stealthy and skilled caretakers, they watch over the health of the trees and report any strange behavior by the spirits or by outsiders.

Traitor's Grove is obscure, but its purpose is not entirely unknown to the greater Empire. Although the average samurai has most likely not heard of it, those with political rank, wide experience, or scholarly knowledge are likely aware of the terrible punishment the Scorpion impose on those who betray them.

Honor's Lesson Dojo

Originally located within Kyuden Bayushi itself, the dojo of Honor's Lesson is the home of the Bayushi Bushi School. In the twelfth century, the Scorpion defeat in the Clan Coup led to the Imperial Legions burning Kyuden Bayushi to the ground (they never found the hidden tunnels beneath). Once the Scorpion are restored as a clan in the wake of the Second Day of Thunder, they begin slowly rebuilding their holdings, a process that takes many years. It is during this time, at the command of Clan Champion Bayushi Yojiro, that Honor's Lesson Dojo is relocated into its own holding a few miles away from Kyuden Bayushi.

The "modern" version is a clean, open, well maintained facility that serves as a sort of public face for the instruction of the clan's best and brightest. In this way it is a kind of misdirection, a deliberate public refutation of the clan's normal image of shadowy secrets.

Shiro Kuraishi

Shiro Kuraishi is a recent castle, built in the aftermath of the Clan War when the Scorpion enlisted the fealty of a bandit family called the Rokugo. Sworn as vassals of the Bayushi, the Rokugo handle many of the clan's most illicit (and profitable) ventures, allowing the Bayushi to maintain a more normal and law-abiding public image – an important thing during that era, when the other clans had not yet fully accepted the return of the Scorpion.

The Rokugo family established this innocuous castle as its base of operations. It is located a few hours' ride from Kyuden Bayushi, hidden by hills and a small forest of ash trees, and does not appear on any map. Hidden sentries guard all paths leading to the castle, ensuring no one visits the home of the Rokugo without permission.

Hizoku Province

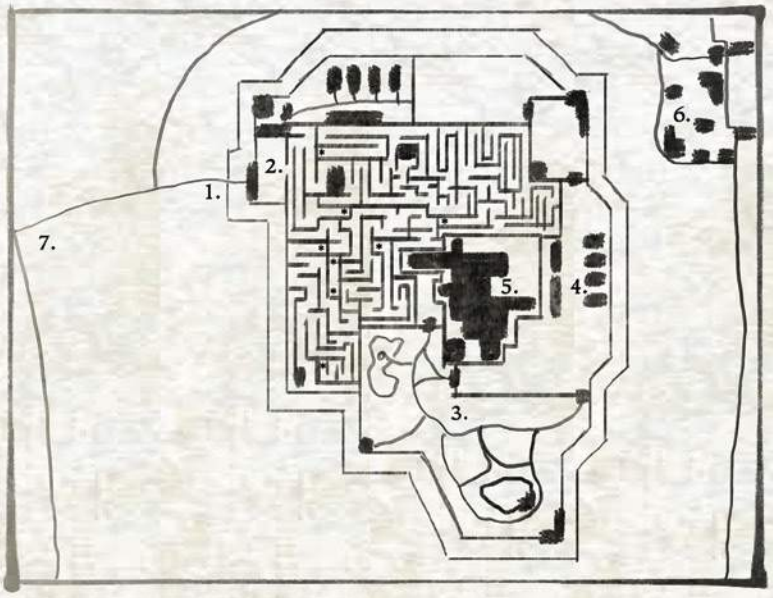
Unlike Kunizakai Province, Hizoku Province is far more sparsely populated with samurai, although there are peasant villages all through the region. The province is a nearly featureless floodplain that runs along the River of Gold to the west, borders Chuuou Province to the east, and touches the edges of unaligned and Minor Clan lands to the south. With no real external threats, the province has no notable fortifications or military garrisons, and the general tone of life is almost serene.

Very little ever transpires here, and there are no sites of historical or religious significance. In fact, the territory is considered so boring that the provincial Governor generally maintains his personal estates at Kyuden Bayushi and sends retainers to check on the territory during tax season. There are many peasants here who see a samurai at most once a year. Flora and fauna here are thoroughly domesticated and controlled, and visitors have described the region as one endless rice paddy. Despite this, the Scorpion make sure the roads are well-maintained.

Shutai

The one notable exception to Hizoku's peaceful nature is the village of Shutai, a den of iniquity and at times a base for bandit activity throughout the region. The Scorpion turn a blind eye to this so long as the bandits conduct their raids across the borders to the south and west, leaving the Scorpion peasants unmolested. Though this has never been a formal arrangement, the bandits generally are wise enough to recognize the value of the situation. Occasionally, when the bandit activity generates too much criticism of the clan, the Scorpion will suddenly and ostentatiously clean them out of Shutai... but they always return within a decade or so.

Kyuden Bayushi



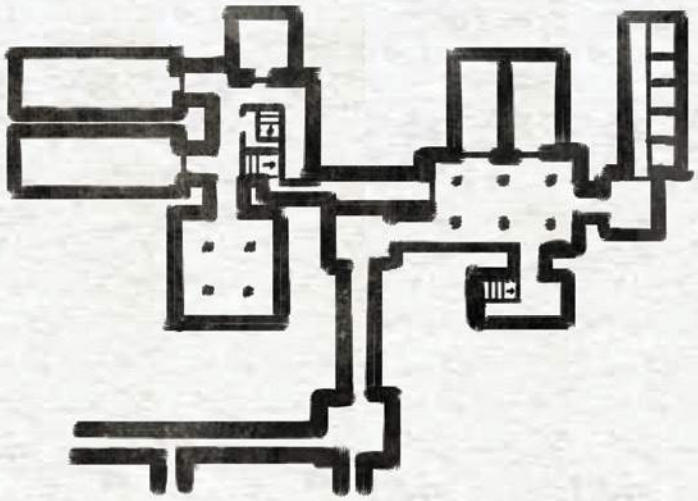
Map Guide

1. Main Gate
2. Bayushi Labyrinth
3. Gardens
4. Barracks
5. Tenshu Complex
6. Riverfront Docks
7. Crossroads

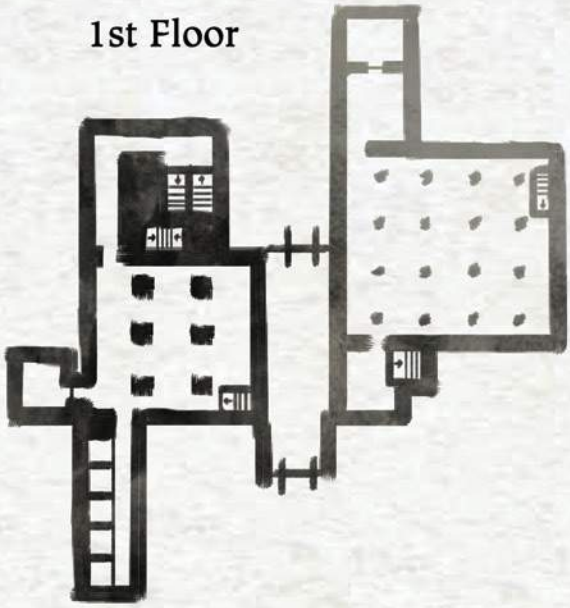
* = Secret passage entrance/exit. This Labrynth is full of secret underground tunnels that only select few loyal Scorpion know.

BAYUSHI CASTLE

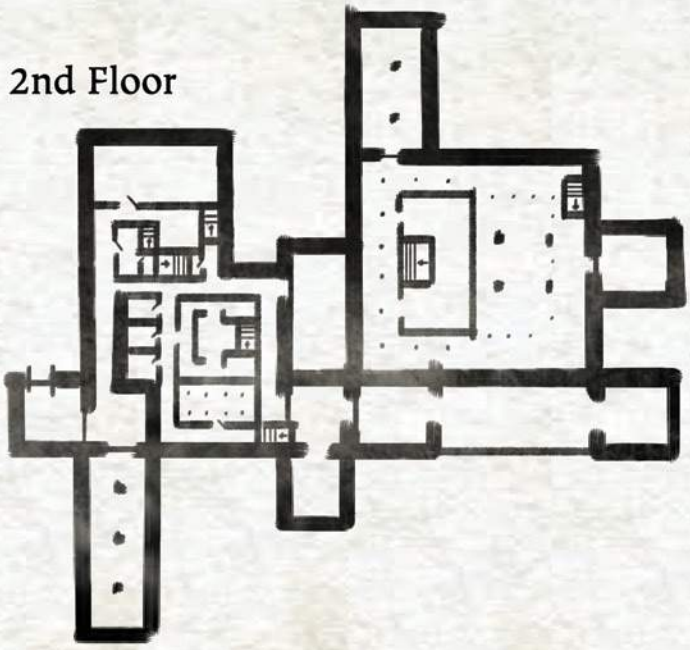
Basement



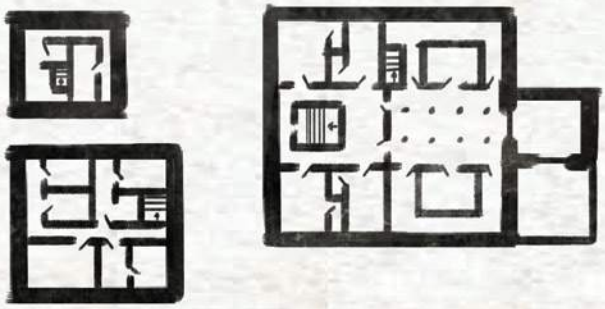
1st Floor



2nd Floor



3rd Floor



4th Floor



5th Floor



6th Floor



Basment: Labyrinth Entrances / Cell's / Storage

1st Floor: Storage / Cell's / Passages

2nd Floor: Main Floor Entrance / Great Hall

3rd Floor: Guest Quarters / Guard Quarters

4th Floor: Dojo / Dignitary Quarters

5th Floor: Champions Quarters

6th Floor: Balcony

Palace of Crimson Shadows

Located several miles south of Kyuden Bayushi on open plains, this holding is primarily a training facility for Bayushi courtiers. It has a refined design and artistic design, with a wide-open and inviting interior, every chamber and corridor lined with red lanterns. The Scorpion designed it as a possible second location for hosting the Imperial Winter Court, and while it has never been used for that purpose, it has served as host for many regional Winter Courts.

Nezuban Province

Quiet and unassuming, Nezuban is for over a thousand years a quiet and peaceful province abutting the Red Lake (Aku Mizu-Umi), its only notable feature the presence of the great Hotei Seido. It is adjacent both to Beiden Province in the north and Chuuou Province in the west, while its eastern edge touches on the Red Lake. The region is far more heavily wooded than most others in the Scorpion lands, and supplements Chuuou Province as a source of lumber and charcoal for the rest of the clan. Likewise, most Scorpion paper production is done within this territory, and several of the villages here are devoted primarily to this craft. There are rice and grain farms in the province, but considerably fewer than in the rest of Scorpion lands, and the overall peasant population is considerably lower than in the other Bayushi lands.

For most of the Empire's history, this province is ruled from Shiro no Uragiru, a keep that guards the southeastern border of the Scorpion Clan. That status changes dramatically at the end of the eleventh century when the ronin Tsuruchi captures Shiro no Uragiru, renaming it Kyuden Ashinagabachi and making it the stronghold of his new Wasp Clan. (Later, of course, it is absorbed into the Mantis Clan.) There are some proposals with the Scorpion to build a new castle to replace Shiro no Uragiru, but traditionalists refuse to recognize the permanent loss of the original castle, while the pragmatic note the lack of a good defensive location anywhere else in Nezuban Province. This does not change until after the Destroyer War in the late twelfth century (see below).

Hotei Seido

The Empire's most famous shrine to the Fortune of Contentment is small but quite luxurious, famed across Rokugan as a place where every artform is welcomed. Famous artisans often pick this shrine as the place to spend their retirement, and as a result the place boasts a magnificent selection of sculptures, paintings, and scrolls. The art here is said to be both the simplest and most profound in the Empire: simple ink paintings of birds and insects that capture the creatures' true essence, haiku that are both playful and immeasurably profound, and gardens which bring serene peace to those who visit them.

The shrine is located in a scenic mountain landscape, perched on a low cliff above the waters of Aku Mizu-Umi. A huge torii arch with its footings set within the lake itself overlooks the temple complex. By Imperial decree, the shrine is exempt from taxes, making it without direct benefit to the Scorpion Clan (although they do gain some wealth from the traffic of pilgrims in and out of the province). However, when the clan is disbanded after the failure of the Scorpion Clan Coup, many Scorpion refugees use the shrine as a place of shelter.

Keep of the Fortunate Husband

In the aftermath of the Destroyer War, traditionalist voices in the Scorpion finally lose out in the debate over Nezuban Province. It helps that the Wasp founder is long dead and his successors are protected by the wealthy and powerful Mantis Clan, making it unlikely the Scorpion can ever reclaim Shiro no Uragiru. As a result, the Keep of the Fortunate Husband is established to the southeast of the Shrine to Hotei. Ostensibly tasked to 'guard the path of Hotei' from any possible incursions from the Second Festering Pit (see page 165), the choice of name is nonetheless a clear reminder of the Scorpion Clan's eternal anger over Tsuruchi's deeds. Small and not particularly well-garrisoned, the Keep's purpose is to serve as a sacrificial delaying buffer if the Mantis ever make a serious foray into Scorpion lands. However, in keeping with its 'official' public role, the garrison does patrol the province vigorously, and bandit activity here becomes minimal to nonexistent.



Chuuou Province

Stretching from the Beiden Road in the north to the edge of Three-Man Alliance Plain to the south, Chuuou is a higher-altitude province focused more on farming grain than on rice – traditional rice paddies are found only along the eastern tributary rivers feeding into the Mantis lands. Forests are more prevalent in this province, which serves as the Scorpion Clan's main source of lumber and charcoal. None of these forests are very large or dense, especially when compared with places like the Kitsune Mori or the Isawa Mori, but the quality of the wood is solid and there is enough to supply the clan's needs. Wildlife is also more common here than elsewhere in the Bayushi lands.

A notable oddity of this province is the road known as Summer's Kiss. Although the region usually sees heavy snowfall in winter, this road between Kyuden Bayushi and the southern border is always clear of snow and easy to travel no matter the season. Peasant tales offer all manner of explanations for this phenomenon, ranging from snow maidens to legends of the Oracle of Fire. Even the shugenja of the Yogo and Soshi families are stumped by the effect, and the kami seem to find their curiosity almost humorous, as if somehow enjoying a private joke at their expense.

Shimomura

The so-called Frost Village, named for its cold winters, is home to numerous inns and other diversions for travelers entering and leaving Scorpion lands; to the south lie the territories of the Mantis, several Minor Clans, and the Crane, so traffic tends to be heavy. Despite its location on the border, the village is not heavily fortified or garrisoned, which seems odd to outsiders. However, Shimomura stands at a high enough elevation that it has a full view of the Three-Man Alliance Plain to the south, giving ample warning of any possible attack. (Not to mention that Summer's Kiss Road is always open, allowing Scorpion armies to arrive quickly at need.)

Toshi Aitate / Sekkai Yurri

This settlement, the only large town in Chuuou Province, is located on a hillside two day's ride southeast of Kyuden Bayushi, about midway between that castle and the border town of Shimomura. For most of its history it is known as Sekkai Yurri, the City of Limes and Lilies, and is home to a large and prosperous silver mine – the only major silver mine in Scorpion lands. As a result, it is notorious as a pit of corruption, inhabited by miners and gamblers, plagued by crime and violence, and generally avoided by outsiders.

The city's fate and name change in the early twelfth century when the miners hit an underground river. The resulting flood not only completely drowns the mine but also ruins half the town. In response, the provincial Governor – a man named Bayushi Zenasaru – decides to change the town's purpose. Renaming it Toshi Aitate, the City of the Open Hand, he re-opens the many teahouses and gambling dens – but now they are run by Scorpion magistrates. The city becomes a place where samurai (and the occasional wealthy commoner) from all across Rokugan can indulge their vices safely, under the protection of Scorpion law enforcement, and with the profits going into Scorpion coffers. The city gates are kept closed during the day; each evening they open to admit visitors, and every visitor purchases a mask to wear while in the city – everyone here, even commoners and eta, wears a mask to ensure anonymity. The road that passes through the city is renamed the Street of the Fortune's Smile within the walls, and along its length are all the town's business establishments – gambling dens, tea houses, geisha houses, and so forth. The city is also home to a major temple to Daikoku.

During the Clan War era, Toshi Aitate is razed by the Imperial Legions, but is quickly rebuilt afterward. Indeed, outsiders note (with a mixture of scorn and amusement) that the Scorpion rebuild Toshi Aitate more swiftly than many of their more prominent clan holdings.

The Shosuro Provinces

The three Shosuro provinces are located on the western side of the Scorpion lands, defined by the River of Gold. They are among the richest of Scorpion lands, encompassing the notorious city of Ryoko Owari, but also have a sinister repute as the homelands of the Shosuro family. More than any other part of the clan's territory, it is these provinces which give rise to the folktales of constant surveillance and menacing plots.

Ryoko Province

Ryoko Province is the most densely populated region in the entirety of the Scorpion Clan's territory; this is due in large part to the presence of the vast metropolis of Ryoko Owari Toshi, but even discounting the city, the rest of the province is extremely well-trafficked and packed with peasants and samurai alike. Where Kyuden Bayushi represents the political rule of the clan, there is a sense in which this province represents the 'heart' of the clan.

Like the Kawa province to the south, it is situated entirely along the low-laying floodplain of the River of Gold, and most of its territory is covered in rice paddies and poppy fields. The roads here are patrolled heavily to ensure the absolute safety of both trade caravans and samurai guests. Peasants are expected to behave with the utmost of humility in all dealings with samurai, more so than in any other province in Scorpion hands. Anyone visiting the province can clearly see the importance the clan places on Ryoko Owari, an importance that if anything grows after the rise of the Seikitsu Pass in the mid-twelfth century – after that time, virtually all overland trade between the northern and southern Empire passes through here.

For a full discussion of Ryoko Owari Toshi, see Chapter 14.

Kakushikoto Province

Adjacent to the eastern border of Ryoko Province, Kakushikoto could not be more different from the two lowland Shosuro provinces. Comprised entirely of hill country, with abundant forests and only modest farmlands, Kakushikoto contains some of the few successful mining operations of the Scorpion Clan. The province is considerably smaller than most and runs along the northern edges of the Bayushi and Yogo lands, resting against the Spine of the World Mountains. On the surface, the region has a quiet and almost sleepy feel that might lull a visitor into the belief that very little ever occurs here. As with many things in the Scorpion Clan, this is a false image, for Kakushikoto is home to the stronghold of Nihai Tower, otherwise known as "Shosuro's Heart." It is here, in these remote hills and forests, that the secret order of Shosuro assassins – the shinobi or "ninja" – are trained. And it is from here, for over a thousand years, that select numbers of the Shosuro were taken away by the Lying Darkness, as part of the ancient bargain which Shosuro made with that sinister force.

Kakushikoto is also home to another secret of the Scorpion Clan, one never discussed by any but the highest echelons of the clan's leadership: the Kochako. A vassal family of the Shosuro, the Kochako live in remote villages and hidden tunnels deep within the hill country of this provinces, secretly serving as the watchdog for the clan. Their task is to find and destroy internal threats to the Scorpion, to be the 'watchers of the watchmen' who operate unsuspected by the rest of the clan. Many of those brought to the Traitor's Grove owe their capture to agents of the Kochako or to intelligence gathered by them, although few ever realize it.

As noted, Kakushikoto Province does have some natural resources, notably an assortment of mines for iron, copper, and other minerals. The resources here are not so pure or well-regarded as those found in other clans' holdings, but there is enough wealth in these rolling hills to ensure the region is profitable to the clan. An added bonus is that these mining operations serve as an excellent cover for the construction of Kochako structures and the expansion of the tunnels underneath Nihai Tower.

Nihai Tower

Located at the southwestern edge of the province, this structure sits atop hills high enough to permit a clear view of Shiro no Shosuro and of much of the Shosuro and Bayushi lands. This makes the castle a strategic communication point between the clan's major holdings as well as a central location for mobilizing the armed strength of the Shosuro family in times of crises. However, the castle's significance is far greater than this simple military role. It is called Shosuro's Heart, but the broader Empire generally takes this as a historical reference to the Shosuro family originally basing its operations out of the tower and surrounding area until Shiro no Shosuro could be built. Even when the Imperial Legions devastated the Scorpion lands after the failed twelfth-century Clan Coup, the tower was considered barely worthy of consideration; its main battlements were burned, the remaining garrison put to the sword, and the place was otherwise ignored.

But Nihai is, in fact, one of the most important strongholds in the Scorpion lands.

When Nihai Tower was built in the early decades of the Empire, extensive tunnels were dug below it, with the goal of ultimately connecting all of the holdings of the Scorpion through underground passageways. Soldiers and messengers from Nihai can appear "from nowhere" throughout the province and the adjacent provinces as well. Thus, Nihai Tower is the true source of the belief that the Scorpion have eyes everywhere in their lands. No one else has ever learned of the tunnels that snake out from within the tower, of the hidden barracks and storehouses below ground, the secret dojo and libraries, the training chambers of the Shosuro assassins. The tunnels of Nihai spread like a spider's web over a vast expanse of the Scorpion Clan's holdings, perhaps as much as a third of their total territory.

Kawa Province

The public seat of power for the Shosuro family, the Kawa Province is located just south of the Ryoko Province, and like Ryoko it lies along the fertile banks of the River of Gold. It is flat and in many respects featureless, yet leaves visitors with the constant and pervasive feeling of being watched (a feeling made all too real by the neighboring Nihai Tower). The majority of this clan's territory is covered in rice paddies and grain fields, producing the food to maintain the clan. Banditry is nearly unheard of within this province, for the family will not allow its lands to house any disruptive elements. Though no official sources speak of a high magistrate presence in the territory, it is a well known among ronin that this is a place that anyone who opposes the Scorpion simply disappears, and it is best to not linger for long unless one has business with the family.

Shiro no Shosuro

Although it is not quite so opulent as the palace of the Bayushi, Shiro no Shosuro is nevertheless an impressive castle and one that many guests of the Scorpion have found truly memorable. Situated alongside the River of Gold at the edge of the Kawa Province, the stronghold is a port of call for ships passing up and down the river, and one of the primary destinations before one reaches the far southern lands of the Crane and Crab. As a result, the Shiro serves as a main defensive point against any naval incursion from the south, and is home to most of the Scorpion Clan's own ships and shipwrights.

Shiro no Shosuro is famous for its alchemical and medicinal creations, along with some of the finest sake distilleries in the Empire. Though the Yasuki would argue that their libations are of finer quality, the Shosuro seem to have a knack for experimentation that gives rise to some of the most unique drinks in Rokugan. Of course, many



will whisper that other more sinister libations are also created within these walls, ranging from illegal narcotics to outright poisons, but none would ever state such things publicly.

The castle itself is home to the notorious Shosuro Gardens, tended by the Tokagure vassal family. By Imperial decree, the Gardens are allowed to grow plants of poisonous nature, ostensibly for the production of antidotes and research in identifying all known dangerous plants. As a result, the Gardens boast the widest and most exotic assortment of plants in the Empire, and are well known to include every poisonous plant that can grow on Rokugani soil. As a result, they are wilder and less manicured than most Rokugani gardens, and guests are always warned not to touch the blooms. Every year, accountings of the plants maintained and collected by the clan are sent to the Emerald Magistrates for inspection.

While the Shosuro Gardens ostensibly exist to assist in the defense against poisons, it is a well-known (if never admitted) reality that the Scorpion are experts at the creation and use of toxins. The Tokagure vassal family provides small doses of the toxins it creates in the gardens to the leadership of the clan, and these are used when necessary to dispose of the clan's enemies. However, many of the Shosuro prefer instead to rely on poisons created in their own private gardens, allowing this facility to maintain the surface appearance of obeying the law.

In the twelfth century during the aftermath of the Scorpion Clan Coup, the Eighteenth Imperial Legion razes Shiro no Shosuro and puts the notorious Garden to the torch. It is said the noxious fumes that rose from the blaze were deadly enough to cause the deaths of one in five of the soldiers and force the temporary retreat of the troops. However, the family managed to carefully sequester samples of all the plants, allowing the Gardens to be restored after the clan's reinstatement.

The Silken Smile Theater

The Shosuro are known Empire-wide for their actors, and there is no other playhouse in Rokugan quite as famous as the Silken Smile, located in the city right outside Shiro no Shosuro. Founded in the year 231, the Theater has been the premier site for innumerable famous plays and has been visited by Clan Champions and Emperors alike. Only the finest of Scorpion actors are allowed to work here, and to have one's plays performed in these halls is proof that one's work is of the highest caliber (or at least appropriately scandalous). In fact, the Silken Smile is so well-known that many plays include direct references to it in their scripts.

The Silken Smile is one of the few Scorpion holdings to survive the burning of the city by the Imperial Legions in the early twelfth century. A cousin of the Hantei line, Otomo Banu, was a patron of the arts with a strong love of the theater, and he used his personal influence to force the Legions to spare the structure – not once but twice, repeating his intervention when the Scorpion Clan was exiled briefly into the Burning Sands.

The Painted City

Located on the road between Shiro no Shosuro and Nihai Tower, this large town exists for the sole purpose of maintaining the Shosuro Butei Academy. The entire city is, in fact, a sort of adjunct to the Academy itself. Every 'resident' is a student-in-training or an instructor, given roles to perform for specified amounts of time, playing out stories spanning the course of a season. The focus of their collective studies are immersive, students only very rarely 'breaking character,' instead living their entire time for the season as the person they have been assigned to play. Every year, structures within the town are changed to create a new 'city,' and every season a new 'play' is assigned to the inhabitants. Outsiders are often bewildered by their visits to the Painted City, since it seems to be a completely different place each time.

Ginasutra

Located just to the west of the River of Gold, the village of Ginasutra serves as a way-station for pilgrims traveling into the Plains of Thunder in order to visit Shinden Osano-Wo. The village makes a considerable profit by selling practical supplies, incense, religious items, and other such goods to the pilgrims. The Shosuro uphold law in the village but otherwise leave it to its own devices.



Located just outside the village, however, is a shrine dedicated to Shosuro, the Scorpion Thunder. For most of the Empire's history, this shrine suffers from a peculiar aura of disquiet stemming from the then-unknown fact that Shosuro was not dead but rather imprisoned in the Dragon lands after being half-corrupted by the Lying Darkness. After Shosuro's soul is finally freed at the end of the Hidden Emperor era, however, the atmosphere here becomes much more pleasant.

The Howling Fields

For the first eleven centuries of Rokugan's history, this is simply another section of farmland in the Kawa Province. However, after the death of Lord Moon in the early twelfth century, an ominous howling begins to be heard in the region. The hatred, rage, and bitterness of the dead god lingers in this place, which becomes known as the Howling Fields. The local peasants cannot understand how a dead Fortune can still influence the living world, and the stress of the constant malign influence results in high levels of drunkenness and insanity among them.



The Soshi Provinces

The three Soshi provinces are known for being both small in area and extremely rugged and inhospitable in terrain. Pushed up against the northern barrier of the Spine of the World Mountains, they are characterized by rugged hills, rocky lands, thick forests, and low populations. Of course, from the viewpoint of the Soshi family itself, this is not a bad thing – the family is deeply secretive, and prefers to keep its activities out of sight even from its fellow Scorpion.

Kinbou Province

Kinbou Province is arguably the only province in the entirety of the Soshi lands that qualifies as hospitable; it is the 'bread-basket' of the Soshi lands, to the extent that they have one. The northern half of the province is a place of rugged hills, heavily wooded, but dotted with occasional fertile valleys. The southern half of the province is lowland and boasts a fair number of rice paddies near the headwaters of the River of Gold. Despite this, Kinbou Provice is still fairly sparsely populated and one of the more obscure regions in the Scorpion territories, with very little of note about it.

Pokau

The only settlement of any note within Kinbou Province, the village of Pokau was originally little more than a minor farming village near the northeastern borders of the Scorpion Clan. After the return of the Unicorn, however, Pokau slowly began to grow in importance, both as a trade link with the new clan and as the hub through which the Scorpion Clan funnels its new opium smuggling network.

When Seikitsu Pass was expanded into the main route through the Spine of the World Mountains in the mid-twelfth century, Pokau suddenly found itself promoted to a major trading hub – the only one of note in the Soshi lands. Combined with the boom created by the covert opium-smuggling trade, the result was that the former village blossomed into a small city.

First Breath Dojo

Located south of Pokau, the First Breath Dojo serves as a training facility for those Soshi who do not possess any talent in working with the kami. While the family's leadership considers it to be of secondary importance at best, the dojo does offer an opportunity for outsiders to see a "Scorpion dojo" without discovering any of the true secrets found in other Soshi facilities.

Shrine of the Shadow's Eye

For most of the Soshi family's history, this shrine was a minor holding dedicated to magical research. However, in the early twelfth century it briefly becomes a center of the Scorpion Clan's efforts to purge the Lying Darkness from its ranks. The shugenja at the Shrine perish in that conflict and it is abandoned for a generation.

In the year 1151 the Scorpion rediscover the half-ruined shrine and it becomes the center for their research into how to recreate tejina ('ninja' magic) without the influence of the Living Darkness. The shrine is located deep within the hills, with only a few foot trails leading up to it, and traps along the path make it almost impassible to approach without a guide. Below the shrine, hidden underground, is a three-room complex where the most dangerous research is conducted, in chambers warded with crystal, jade, and magic.

An'ei Province

Much like Kinbou Province, An'ei Province is geographically split into two distinctive northern and southern halves. The southern part of the province abuts the River of Gold and is largely indistinguishable from the lands across the river in Kinbou. It boasts the remainder of the farming and food production of the Soshi family, and is dotted by numerous small villages of little importance. The northern half of An'ei is mostly mountains, with no real roads and only a few inhospitable and treacherous paths winding through the area. This bleak region is lacking even in plants and animals, in many places amounting to nothing more than bare rock and empty moors; evergreen trees are the only ones found here, and even they disappear as one ascends into the peaks. Travel must be aided by skilled guides to avoid mishaps and accidents. That people live within this region at all is a testimony not only to their tenacity but to their wish to be left alone... and it is in this land that the Scorpion built Shiro no Soshi.

It is widely rumored by those who have visited this area that the road systems are almost as unnerving and difficult to navigate as those in the highest Dragon peaks near the vaunted High House of Light. However, where in the Dragon lands this is a feature of the strange mystical nature of that region, in An'ei Province the reality is more sinister: the paths are guarded with the illusion magic that is the specialty and mainstay of the Soshi shugenja. Thus, without guides who know the proper paths to take and where the current spells have been placed, it is possible to become lost for days or even weeks within the treacherous passes. Deaths from falls, rockslides, or simple starvation are a hazard for anyone who explores this region on their own. Earthquakes are not unheard of, though rarely of sufficient scale to damage the well constructed clan holdings that are actually kept here.

The only truly convenient form of access to Shiro no Soshi is to follow the River of Gold up to its headwaters near the stronghold. Such river traffic is closely monitored and controlled by the clan, of course. Little in the way of trade flows into or out of this region of An'ei Province, although the southern zone exports grain and rice in equal measures. Still, trade is quite limited here (in contrast to Pokau to the southwest) and the Soshi actively try to keep traffic and business to the minimum necessary. Indeed, if the Soshi truly had their way, both this province and neighboring Yuma to the southeast would be forgotten entirely by the Empire at large, perhaps even by their brethren elsewhere in the Scorpion Clan.

Shiro no Soshi

Standing at the headwaters of the River of Gold, Shiro no Soshi, the Castle of Organization, is a visually impressive citadel but an extremely difficult one to visit. As noted, the roads that lead to it are veiled in illusion, and the waters up the upper River of Gold are not easily navigable. Naval traffic must stop short of the actual castle at a small village below, after which visitors must travel up the steep embankments towards the cleft in the mountains which houses the castle proper.

Standing seventy feet up from the rocky protrusions that make up its foundation, Shiro no Soshi is an intimidating structure of high towers and spires. Its foundations were laid with the assistance of the Kaiu, their engineers ensuring the structure could withstand not only earthquakes but also the bitter winds of the high mountains. Its design is oriented vertically rather than laterally, with six internal levels above ground (and two below) in the main keep, while the narrow towers rise even higher. The top levels of the towers allow sight as far as the Unicorn and Lion lands, so the Soshi are aware of any troop movements near their lands.



Shiro no Soshi is not a place one visits without having serious business with the Soshi. While they are gracious enough hosts, they take unkindly to uninvited visitors and find excuses to send them on their way. This is because all of the most secretive magical research of the Scorpion Clan takes place in this castle and its surrounding territories; in a clan already known for its holding of secrets, this castle has more than most. Still, for those who do visit, the interior is surprisingly pleasant, if somewhat ascetic (in the manner of many shugenja-ruled castles). Warm light issues from nemuranai lanterns in every corner, and guest chambers offer privacy and comfort. There is only a minimal garrison of troops, since the magical defenses and harsh terrain do far more than any actual defenders could do for defense.

The location and geography make Shiro no Soshi one of the more defensible positions in the Empire, and in fact it has only been attacked twice – once in the year 953 by the Unicorn Clan, and once in the year 1124 by the Imperial Legions after the Scorpion Coup. The first assault failed; in the second instance, the Soshi burned the castle themselves before the Legions could break in.

The Dojo of the Closed Eye

The primary and most respected dojo of Soshi shugenja in the Scorpion lands, the Dojo of the Closed Eye is an imposing structure located within the heights of the Spine of the World Mountains, a short distance from the castle itself. The dojo is razed in the year 1124 when the Imperial Legions attack, and is later rebuilt in the shadow of the actual castle, adjacent to the village that serves as the castle's port.

Unlike other dojo of the clan's shugenja, the Dojo of the Closed Eye has always had a tradition of being an exclusively Soshi school. Exceptions are very rarely made for particularly talented air priests from other families in the clan, particularly during the rebuilding period in the twelfth century, but generally speaking all of the graduates are Soshi by birth, intensely loyal to the family.

Hidden Moon Dojo

Shiro no Soshi is publicly known to have only one dojo, the Closed Eye. The Hidden Moon Dojo is a secret known to no one outside the clan (and to very few outside the Soshi) – it is where the Soshi have spent a thousand years studying the ways of "tejina," shadow magic, the power of the Nothing. The Hidden Moon is not found within the walls of Shiro no Soshi, but instead is in a distant and remote ravine of the Seikitsu Mountains, guarded by shinobi and magical illusions.

Of course, even this physical structure of the Hidden Moon Dojo is as much a lie as anything else in the path of tejina. The school has no formalized structure other than sensei and students, and its teachings are spread amongst many locations, many small dojo in hidden corners of the Soshi provinces. Throughout the thousand years of the Soshi family's secret bargain with the Lying Darkness, these dojo are suffused with the subtle evil of Shadow, and each year a few students are taken away to become faceless Goju.

After the War Against the Darkness exposes the corruption of the Hidden Moon Dojo's teachings, the organization is officially disbanded and then secretly retasked to find ways of using the power of Shadow without succumbing to its dangers.

Yuma Province

Yuma Province is considered by most to be barely a province at all; its population is considerably smaller than that of the rest of the family's holdings, and nearly half of the region is comprised of a spur of the Seikitsu Mountains that juts out into the northern Scorpion territory. The extremely limited amount of arable land results in a lack of any significant settlement, and cartographers and Imperial tax assessors have sometimes wondered whether or not there is any purpose in actually retaining the region's status as a province. Still, the Scorpion prefer to keep the region administratively separate from the rest of the Soshi lands. For much of the Empire's history, this region is the site of the Scorpion Clan's most secretive shinobi dojo and training grounds, and the Governor assigned to rule over it is always chosen carefully.



Hidden Watch Keep

The only notable stronghold in Yuma Province is Kakusu Keikai Torid-e, a small fortress with a sister-fortification across the mountains, on the very edge of Lion lands, called Heaven's Crossroads. These paired fortresses keep close watch on Lion troop movements, ensuring that the various minor passes in the area do not become avenues for sneak attacks or spy infiltrations.

The Yogo Provinces



The Yogo are the smallest family in the Scorpion Clan, for obvious reasons – their infamous curse makes it difficult for them to expand their ranks through marriage. They control only two provinces, one of which is of limited value due to its poor-quality land and extensive wilderness regions. For much of the Empire's history, however, the Yogo family's control of Beiden Province grants it both wealth and influence.

Fukitsu Province

Almost entirely comprised of rugged, lightly-wooded hill country, Fukitsu Province is the core territory of the Yogo family. Shoved up against the edges of the Seikitsu Mountains and with desolate marshes in the lower elevations, the province is incapable of sustaining any sort of real industry. It is not necessarily completely inhospitable, but it is poor land for farming and generally not considered pleasant to visit. Its people are insular and do not look with kindness on non-Scorpion visiting their lands. Wildlife is left largely to its own devices, leading to large populations of wild animals even close to human settlements. Moreover, the marshes are notable for spawning poisonous reptiles and amphibians in abundance. Those who have also visited the Sparrow lands claim that Fukitsu Province is second only to that Minor Clan's territory as a most unpleasant place to live.

The toxic animals in the marshes and forests are among the few "resources" found here (other than the mystical knowledge of the Yogo themselves); in addition to snakes and frogs, this region is also known for a surplus of poisonous spiders. There are many small villages tucked away in different valleys which specialize in harvesting different kinds of poisons from the local wildlife, which they pass on to their Yogo masters.

There is only one major road in the province (which leads to Yogo Shiro) and few major strongholds. Even during the height of Beiden Pass' use as the crossroads of the Empire, this adjacent province simply did not qualify as a strategic holding that would require a large garrison or extensive fortification.

Yogo Shiro

The Castle of Learning is the family seat of the Yogo, and is an imposing but visually unoriginal structure. It is not positioned at any sort of strategic location, and in fact is built in one of the worst pieces of land in Scorpion territory – fitting, given the bad repute of the family. The surrounding wooded hills are interspersed with squalid marshland, and the cleared zone around the castle has barely enough space for the cramped and unpleasant village that tends to its material needs. Indeed, so cramped is the area that even the village eta live within sight of the samurai, and the faint odor that comes from their dwellings and leatherworking facilities permeates the air.

Samurai, commoners, and eta all consider Shiro Yogo a terrible place to live... but a relatively safe one. Although Yogo Shiro has been assaulted a handful of times in history, most enemies simply stay away, seeing the castle as too unpleasant a place to try to conquer. Likewise, bandits cause no trouble in the area because there is so little worth stealing.

The Yogo do not hold court within their halls, and spend their lives here conducting their magical research in private seclusion. The castle is essentially a self-imposed exile, a punishment that the Yogo inflict upon themselves as a suitable answer for their family curse. Since the curse dictates that to love is to betray, the Yogo deprive themselves of anything they could possibly love or value, surrounding themselves with squalor and decrepitude. Perhaps surprisingly, suicide rates in the stronghold are extremely low; this may be because many Yogo believe the curse will follow them kharmicly into their next life.

The only regular visitors to the castle are members of the Kuni Witch Hunters and the Asako Inquisitors, along with occasional members of the Hidden Moon Dojo of the Soshi. Their presence became more frequent later in the twelfth century, as the Yogo seek penance for the crimes of their daimyo Yogo Junzo in the Clan War. However, even in earlier centuries when years might pass between visits, these two groups were generally the only ones who sought out Shiro Yogo's limited hospitality. During the post-Coup era, Shiro Yogo was razed along with most other Scorpion settlements, and when the clan was restored some outsiders thought the family might rebuild in a more pleasant location. However, such was not the case; the Yogo insisted on restoring their castle in the exact same bleak locale as before.



Shiro Yogo is home to the family's Whispered Secret Dojo, and is the center of Yogo Ward Magic research. Neither of these are considered by outsiders as a reason to visit the keep willingly. In truth, Yogo Shiro is a place which perpetually shows that the Yogo would prefer the Empire simply forget they exist until the rare moments they are actually needed.

Naganori Mura

This small village, hidden away in the mountains of Fukitsu Province's northernmost regions, is the ancestral home of the Naganori vassal family. It is named after the founder of the family, Yogo Naganori, and occupies itself with producing low-grade steel from a small iron mine nearby. All of the Yogo family's meager steel and iron needs are supplied by this single remote village.

Beiden Province

For most of the Empire's history, Beiden Province is one of the most prosperous regions in the Empire (a stark contrast to neighboring Fukitsu Province). The province sits astride the route from both Beiden Pass and its lesser neighbor Shamate Pass, which together form "the crossroads of the Empire." Immense amounts of travel and commerce pass through the region, and the road leading from Beiden Pass to Kyuden Bayushi is the most well-maintained in the entirety of the Scorpion lands. Despite the hilly and rough country, this province is kept quite secure by large military garrisons and aggressive patrolling, ensuring the safety of all those passing through.

All of this changes in the mid-twelfth century when Beiden Pass is destroyed during the final battle of the War of Spirits. The smaller Shamate Pass is a broken, narrow, and treacherous route that is used primarily by smugglers and the occasional traveler in a hurry; it simply cannot match the booming commerce of Beiden. Thus, the province goes practically overnight from thriving to impoverished. And with the subsequent appearance of the Second Festering Pit at the end of the Destroyer War, outsiders have even more reason to give the region a wide berth.

Beiden

The small city located just south of Beiden Pass is for centuries the linchpin of the province's commercial success. Dragon, Phoenix, and Lion merchants base themselves in the city, and countless more travel through. Due to its location near the pass, the city sees more war and conflict than most other settlements in Rokugan – any war between Scorpion and Lion inevitably features troops moving through Beiden Pass. Despite this, the city thrives, and is home to a temple devoted to Tengen, the Fortune of Literacy.

After the pass is destroyed, Beiden becomes a quiet and peaceful place, somewhat to the relief of the local peasants. Many houses and other structures are abandoned as merchants leave, samurai are redeployed elsewhere, and craftsmen seek more prosperous places to sell their skills. However, the Yogo deliberately encourage smugglers using the Shamate Pass to base themselves in Beiden, and as a result the town never completely goes away.

Kagoki

The only other notable center of population in Beiden Province is Kagoki, a town that serves as a trading hub to the south and as a diplomatic enclave on the rare occasions that the Yogo wish to negotiate with the larger Empire. , it remains a sizable city and a connecting point with the Shrine to Hotei in Bayushi lands.

Seven Stings Keep

Located east of Kagoki in the foothills of the Seikitsu Mountains, this small castle has a view of Beiden Pass and is the traditional home of the Scorpion Clan's most capable military commanders. It boasts seven outlying watchtowers and the main keep houses diagrams and reproductions of battles, army movements, and terrain for all the clan's potential enemies. Although it is located in Yogo lands, the Keep is primarily a Bayushi holding, and the Yogo family generally leaves it to handle its own affairs.

The closure of Beiden Pass in the twelfth century reduces the strategic importance of Seven Stings Keep, but it retains some value as a defensive position in the event of conflict with the Mantis or Crane lands to the south.

The Second Festering Pit

In the late twelfth century, a major event takes place in Scorpion lands that drastically alters the geography of the region and forces correspondingly drastic action from the clan. A small region within the Yogo family's Fukitsu Province, just at the boundary of the Bayushi lands, becames irrevocably corrupted by the rise of Daigotsu as Dark Lord of Jigoku and the deaths of the Kali-Ma and Fu Leng. A new portal to Jigoku, literally a new Festering Pit comparable to the one at the heart of the Shadowlands, is created by this event. Although the Scorpion and the Crab act quickly to contain the Pit and prevent the Taint from spreading, otherworldly presences and unnatural flora and fauna still appear from time to time.

The Scorpion Wall

In the year 1175, the Scorpion and Crab sign the Treaty of Odashi, under whose terms the Crab agree to help the Scorpion build and defend a multi-layered wall around the Second Festering Pit. The Scorpion Wall becomes a military enclave staffed by a combined force of Crab and Scorpion soldiers; these forces, from clans which spent a thousand years treating each other as bitter enemies, are expected to live and fight together against whatever threats might emerge from the Pit. Even in times of the most venomous inter-clan warfare, the Treaty of Odashi has held, from simple raw necessity.

Though the Second Festering Pit is considerably smaller than the original Pit where Fu Leng crashed through the earth, it is nonetheless a deadly threat to the Empire. So far, the portal has remained stable instead of growing in size (as many feared it would), but it is nonetheless a raw source of evil and corruption that squats like a bloated toad in the heart of Scorpion lands. All life within the Scorpion Wall is twisted beyond imagination, feral and deadly.

Geographically, the Scorpion Wall is located at the edge of the foothills to the Spine of the World Mountains: the northern part of the Chuuou Province of the Bayushi and along the border of the Beiden Province of the Yogo. The construction of the Wall forced the rebuilding of the road from Kyuden Bayushi to the city of Kagoki, pushing it further south.

The fortification is actually comprised of two separate walls. The outer wall ensures the Crab who are stationed within are not privy to the secrets of a foreign clan while they live here (in a specially-built settlement called Himitsu Mura, or "Secret Village"). The lower inner wall separates the defenders from the monsters within. Villages have sprung up along the southern and northern edges of the outer wall, predominately inhabited by Scorpion and Crab samurai along with their retainers. These individuals maintain a constant vigil against potential incursions into the Empire.

The Ruins of Shiro Bankeni

In the early twelfth century, after the Scorpion lands are razed, the Daidoji family of the Crane build a castle near the ruins of Yogo Shiro. Their intent, apparently, is to claim these lands for their own clan, within two years the entire garrison dies of the Wasting Disease, the plague unleashed when Yogo Junzo opens the Black Scrolls. Fears that the disease may linger cause the Crane to abandon the castle, which soon falls into ruin.

When the Scorpion reclaim their lands, they choose to leave the ruins of Shiro Banken in place – perhaps as a warning, though whether the warning is to themselves or to others is a matter for debate. In any case, no one visits the ruins without very good reason.

The surrounding territory thus far shows no sign of active corruption. However, the Kuni and Yogo occasionally find small traces of Taint within the local flora and fauna, usually after the rare escape of an oni or other powerful entity from within the Pit. On these occasions, an immediate lockdown occurs and the entire area is swept for any sign of the Taint; all Tainted creatures and plants are immediately destroyed.








SCORPION'S PATH
HAISHO PROVINCE
KOURYO PROVINCE
SENSEKI PROVINCE
AISHOU PROVINCE
MIZU-UMI RYO
TSURIAI PROVINCE
KOUBAKU PROVINCE
KYODAI NAJOSHO SHIRO
KI-RIN'S PATH
DRAGON'S HEART FOREST
HEIGEN YAMA
MANAKA PROVINCE
10 MILES
BUGAISHA PROVINCE
ISEI PROVINCE
ZENZAN PROVINCE
KAYABE PROVINCE
IKOKU PROVINCE
UJIDERA PROVINCE
SHINTEN PROVINCE
GARANTO PROVINCE
KAIHI PROVINCE
ENKAKU PROVINCE
KIKA NO HANABIRA MIZU-UMI
EHITSU PROVINCE

Chapter Eight

The Lands of the Unicorn Clan

The Unicorn lands are often considered to be wild and unsettled, much like the clan that rules them. In many ways they can be seen as existing simultaneously within and beyond the Empire, merging traditional ways with strange foreign influences.

Most of the Unicorn territory is a vast expanse of grasslands, rolling plains, and gentle hills, interrupted by three great lakes. From north to south, the Dragon Lake, Chrysanthemum Petal Lake, and White Shore Lake provide water and fresh fish for the clan. The clan's borders with the rest of the Empire are partly defined by two major rivers, the River of the Lost Valley to the north and the Firefly River to the east. Meanwhile, the Great Wall of the North mountains define the clan's northern border. To the southwest, the Unicorn border on the vast expanse of the Shinomen Forest, while to the west they touch on the edges of the Burning Sands. In the twelfth century, the Unicorn begin defining that western border through the construction of the so-called Khol Wall, an extensive chain of fortifications intended to defend against potential gaijin incursions. Indeed, the Unicorn find themselves with no lack of foreign threats to watch for and defend against. In addition to the Burning Sands to the west and the Shinomen Mori to the south, they also face incursions from Yobanjin to the north. After the War of Dark Fire in the late twelfth century, the Unicorn become even more careful in their watch over the Empire's borders.

A sizable number of Unicorn – at least a third, and perhaps as much as half – keep to the nomadic traditions developed during their eight centuries of travel beyond the Empire: living in tents, herding flocks of animals across the wide plains, and only gathering together for festivals or when summoned by their daimyo. Visitors to the Unicorn lands often find it a disorienting experience, since once away from the major holdings and river valleys there are no standard villages surrounded by rice paddies, no roads, and very few permanent structures of any kind. To the Unicorn this means the freedom of wide-open spaces to travel across, but other Rokugani see only an untamed and empty wilderness.

The Unicorn lands are further noted for their lack of forestation. The few modest forests within their borders either have spiritual significance or are specifically maintained as sources of wood for crafts and construction. Unicorn peasants are largely forced to do without charcoal, instead relying on dried animal dung and peat for heating and cooking.

Lands of the Ki-Rin / Lands of the Lion

When Shinjo left in the first century to explore the world beyond the Empire, only a handful of her followers remained behind. Within two generations, these Ki-rin were displaced from their lands by the Lion, eventually resettling near the Kitsune Mori and becoming the Fox Clan. The Ki-Rin lands were placed under Lion control, and for most of the next eight centuries these lands were administered by the Matsu family. The Matsu settlements were generally located near the rivers and lakes, and while sparsely populated they produced a great deal of rice and other foodstuffs for the Lion Clan.

With the return of the Unicorn and the restoration of the former Ki-Rin lands to these "outsiders," the Lion Clan and especially the Matsu family faced a generation of hardship as they adapted to their suddenly shrunken resources. While this is not well remembered by those from other clans, the legacy remains with the Lion, and a significant part of the pervasive animosity between them and the Unicorn Clan can be traced to the ownership of the Ki-Rin lands.

Because of this history, older maps of the Empire do not show the Ki-Rin/Unicorn lands as distinct from those of the Lion. In fact, even after the Unicorn returned, many of the official maps of the Empire used Lion place names for geographical features and villages rather than those of the Unicorn Clan. It was not until a concerted effort by the Miya in the tenth century that the official Imperial maps were brought in line with the Unicorn names for things within their land.

The Unicorn peasants do grow rice in their fertile riverlands, as well as fields of barley, millet and oats, and even rye in the northernmost regions. These grains are grown almost entirely for internal consumption and payment of taxes, with little to no exports. However, the Unicorn (alone among all the Great Clans) also use animal herding as a major source of food and other resources, most of which will never leave their lands. Even in modern times, animal products such as leather or cloth woven from animal hairs are seen as distasteful to samurai and only slowly growing in acceptance among the lower castes.



Unicorn samurai and peasants alike tend show their gaijin heritage in their appearance – they are often stockier, broader of face and build, than the average Rokugani, with more copious facial hair. This foreign derivation is most pronounced among the peasant herders of the Unicorn clan and the warriors of the Moto family, and least visible among the Shinjo and Ide families. Within the clan, such oddities of personal appearance matter not at all, but to the people of the wider Empire these foreign features are visible proof of how the Unicorn still remain outsiders, even after more than three centuries in Rokugan.

The Ide Provinces

As is appropriate for this family of diplomats and merchants, the Ide control the southern border of the Unicorn. The Eijitsu Province lies on that border, while the Garanto Province is to the north, deeper in Unicorn lands. They are close to the lands of the Imperial Miya family and the Soshi provinces of the Scorpion Clan, though the Shinomen Forest to the southwest often makes for a less friendly neighbor.

The Ide lands are renowned for their unusual flora. Ide traders have brought back many specimens of useful plants from various foreign places, and while their attempts to cultivate them have met with mixed success, some have escaped from the gardens and fields where they were first planted. Aside from that, however, the Ide lands often seem less alien to other Rokugani than the rest of the Unicorn territories, having more farmlands than most and displaying less of the clan's notorious nomadic lifestyle.

Eijitsu Province

This Ide province is bordered to the west by the Enkaku Province, to the north by the Ide family's own Garanto Province, and to the east by the mountains of the Ujidera Province. Beyond the southwestern border stands the Shinomen Mori. Ejitsu contains a number of religious and spiritual sites, such as Chrysanthemum Petal Lake and the great Shrine to Jurojin, making it the destination of many pilgrimages from the rest of the Empire. The Ide try to make travel easy and enjoyable for such pilgrims, while their merchants try to make a profit from these visitors.

Chrysanthemum Petal Lake

The northern part of the Eijitsu province is dominated by Mizu-umi Kiku Hanabira, Chrysanthemum Petal Lake, named after the carpets of chrysanthemums that line the lake's shores. The beauty, charm, and serenity of this lake of flowers is renowned throughout the Empire, drawing visitors from every corner of Rokugan to view them and imbibe the spiritual harmony of this place. It is said the first chrysanthemum was planted here during the seventh

century by Emperor Hantei XVII, who was mourning the loss of his son. It has become an Imperial tradition for the Emperor to visit this lake at least once, preferably during the annual Chrysanthemum Festival, to renew his connection to the Celestial Heavens with a silent prayer. This visit traditionally ends with the Emperor removing a perfect snow-white chrysanthemum petal from the lake's surface; legend states this perfect petal is a powerful curative if consumed by one of Imperial blood.

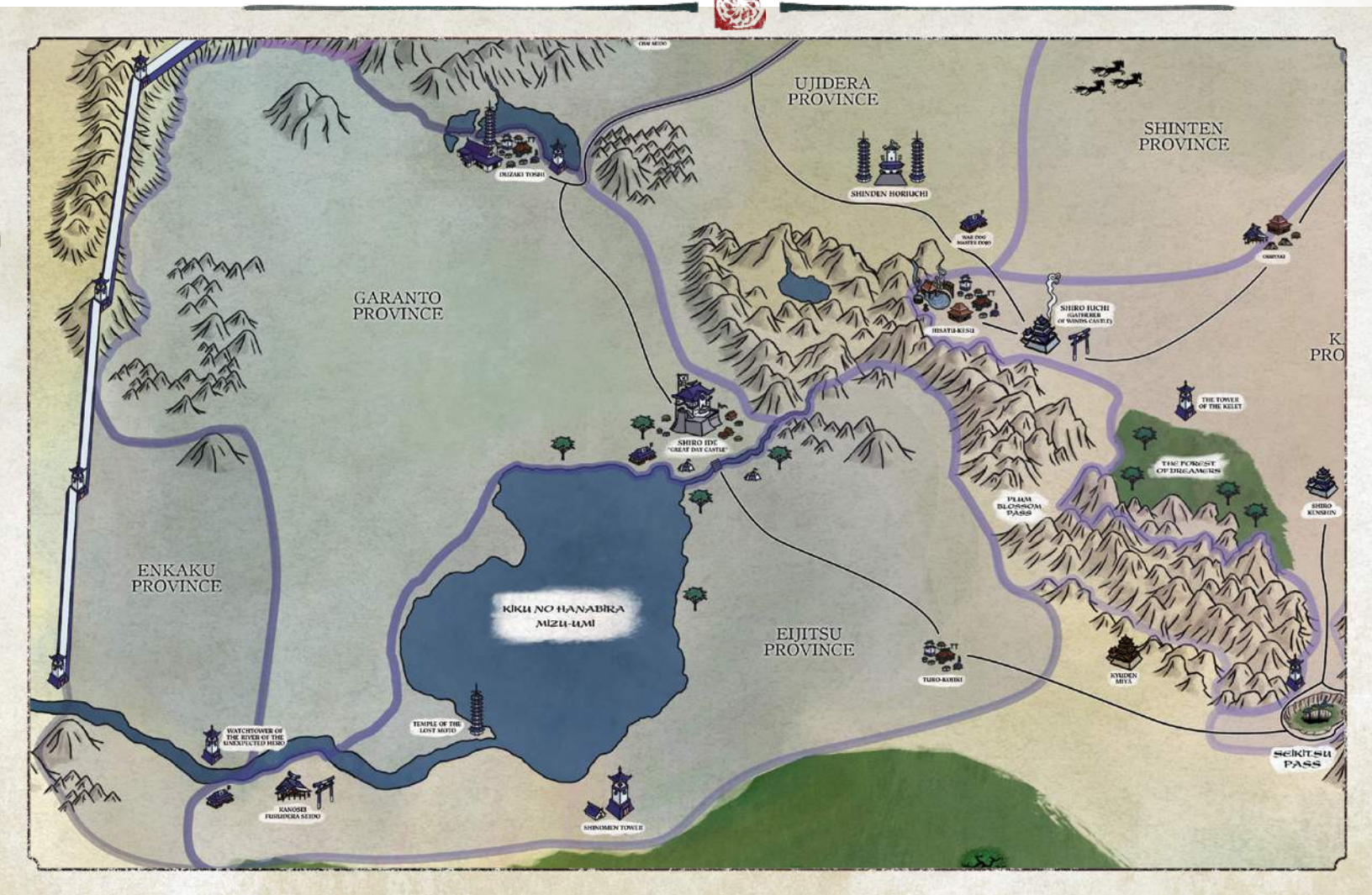
Temple of the Lost Moto

This foreboding temple was built in the ninth century after the majority of the Moto family fell to the Shadowlands. It stands on the western shores of Chrysanthemum Petal Lake, and from a distance looks more like a fortress than a temple, its thick stone walls painted a stark white. Its interior is equally white and unadorned, decorated only with the white masks of the Moto, remnants of the time before the family was nearly ruined by the leadership of Moto Tsume. Although the fallen Dark Moto were largely destroyed in the twelfth century, the temple was retained as an eternal reminder of the shame and tragedy which formerly assailed the family.

Only those from the Moto family are allowed to join this temple's monastic order, and one of their main tasks is to remember the names of all the Moto who have fallen to the Shadowlands. These monks are only allowed to leave the temple grounds during the Chrysanthemum Festival, joining in those festivities before returning to their ascetic duties. Most daimyo of the Moto make a yearly pilgrimage to this temple, usually timed to the anniversary of Moto Tsume's departure into the Shadowlands, to pray for the strength and wisdom to lead the Moto away from the darkness of the past. On occasion, an Utaku Battle Maiden is also ordered to undertake a pilgrimage to the Temple of the Lost Moto as a reminder that even those of the highest bravery and best intentions can fall.

Turo-Kojiri

This holding is a village in name only, for Turo-Kojiri's prosperity has propelled it to the size of a large town. Located in a fertile valley on the main road running from Shiro Ide to the wider Empire, Turo-Kojiri has some of the best land for rice in all the Unicorn territories, and the area is intensely cultivated. The village is also home to smiths who produce weapons for the Unicorn clan, working iron from deposits in the mountains of Ujidera Province, and using charcoal produced from the scrub trees growing on those same mountains. The combination of plentiful food, weapon production, and a location near Shiro Ide has made the town quite prosperous and a popular destination for ronin seeking work as caravan guards or yojimbo. In the twelfth century, a notable number of ronin come to live here after the Clan War, settling in what becomes



known as the Wave District. That neighborhood houses several ronin dojo and a variety of businesses catering to wave men and mercenaries.

The Shinomen Watchtower

This fortification was built to monitor the Shinomen forest, and by chance this placed it near the Naga city of Iyotisha. As a result, it was one of the locations in Rokugan to notice the re-awakening of the Naga at the beginning of the Clan War, allowing the Unicorn to be among the first to react to that momentous event.

The fortification consists of a simple tower with stone lower levels and an open wooden upper structure. It is actually one of the tallest buildings in Rokugan, although the Unicorn are careful not to let it be officially listed as exceeding ten stories (the height of the Imperial Palace). The top level of the watchtower serves as an observation platform and can also be used to signal other Unicorn strongholds with flags or, at night, fires lit in brass braziers. The lower levels of the tower are built to withstand attack and contain quarters and supplies for a hundred men.

When the Naga are awake, the watchtower serves as a meeting point between the two cultures. After the Clan War, the outer works surrounding the tower are expanded to hold the headquarters and barracks of the Eighth Imperial Legion, which was organized to utilize cavalry and shugenja in a manner similar to Unicorn armies. The tower was captured and burned by the forces of the Dark Naga at the end of the twelfth century, but was rebuilt within a generation; at that time, the wooden levels are plated with sheets of bronze to protect them against such assaults in the future.



Jurojin Seido

There are many shrines to Jurojin, the Fortune of Longevity, and the greatest of them is located in the Crane lands. However, the shrine found in a valley southwest of Shinomen Tower is unique among all those dedicated to this Fortune. It is believed to be one of the oldest shrines in the Empire, perhaps even older than the Kami themselves.

Below a great waterfall stands a tall stone column, circled by a staircase carved from the stone itself. At the summit of the column, a claw-like stone carving encircles a mysterious sphere of violet light; this is called the Light of Jurojin, and it is said that those who gaze into it are able to find their happiest memories even or see visions of the future. Each person's vision is unique and for them alone, no matter who else may be looking into the Light at the same time. Naturally, this site is the destination for many pilgrims in all seasons, though the greatest number arrive in spring and summer. Four monks pledged to Jurojin tend the shrine year-round, blessed with long lives in exchange for their service to the Fortune; content in their duties, they ask no recompense from the visitors, though they also do not refuse any gifts.

Temple of the Kanosei Furudera

This small temple dates from the sixth century, when these lands were still ruled by the Matsu. Located west of the modern Shinomen Tower and overlooking Chrysanthemum Petal lake, the modest temple serves as home to the Kanosei Furudera Dojo, which teaches a ronin order of priests aligned with the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The shugenja of the Kanosei Furudera Order are known for working closely with the peasantry, seeking out and training those born to non-samurai families who have the ability to speak with the kami (a policy that sometimes puts them into conflict with the Phoenix Clan). The Order's open attitude and concern for the peasantry did not meet with much approval from the Lion, but the Unicorn are known for being more attuned to the needs of the common folk, and members of the Kanosei Furudera are welcomed within their lands.

Garanto Province

The homeland of the Ide is Garanto province, safely nestled within the Unicorn lands. It is framed to the north by the province of Zenzan and by mountainous Ujidera to the east, while Chrysanthemum Petal Lake divides it from Eijitsu Province to the south. The western edge of the province is defined for many years by the edge of the Empire itself, but later that becomes the Moto family's Enkaku Province and the Khol Wall.

The southern and eastern parts of Garanto, where rivers and streams flow, are fertile and intensely cultivated, while the northern and eastern regions provide excellent grazing land for horse herds. No part of the province is allowed to lie fallow for long, since the Ide family is always in need of more resources and trade goods to fulfill its mercantile duties to the clan.



The Iuchi Provinces

The two main Iuchi provinces are in the southeast of the Unicorn lands, and are widely known for their lush and rolling grasslands. Both Kaihi Province and Shinten Province are home to vast herds of horses but very few people; outsiders consider them the wildest of the Unicorn provinces, and it is certainly true that they are home to considerable amounts of wildlife.

The Iuchi also control one other region, the mountainous Ujidera Province, which is among the loneliest and least-populated of the Unicorn lands.

Kaihi Province

The province in the southeastern corner of the Unicorn lands borders the Shinten Province to the north and the mountains of Ujidera to the west, while to the east and south it touches the lands of the Lion and Scorpion. The Lion border is defined by the Three Sides River, which serves as a welcome defense again that clan, while the Scorpion border is found at the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains.

Shiro Iuchi

The seat of the Iuchi family, sometimes known as Gatherer of Winds Castle for the often violent winds that sweep over the plains from the nearby mountains, is actually the oldest castle in Unicorn lands. It was originally established as the Gatherer of Wind dojo in the dawn of the Empire, before the Ki-Rin left Rokugan to explore the outside world. The original stronghold was left abandoned when the Ki-Rin departed, but was rebuilt and expanded soon after their return eight centuries later.

Shiro Ide

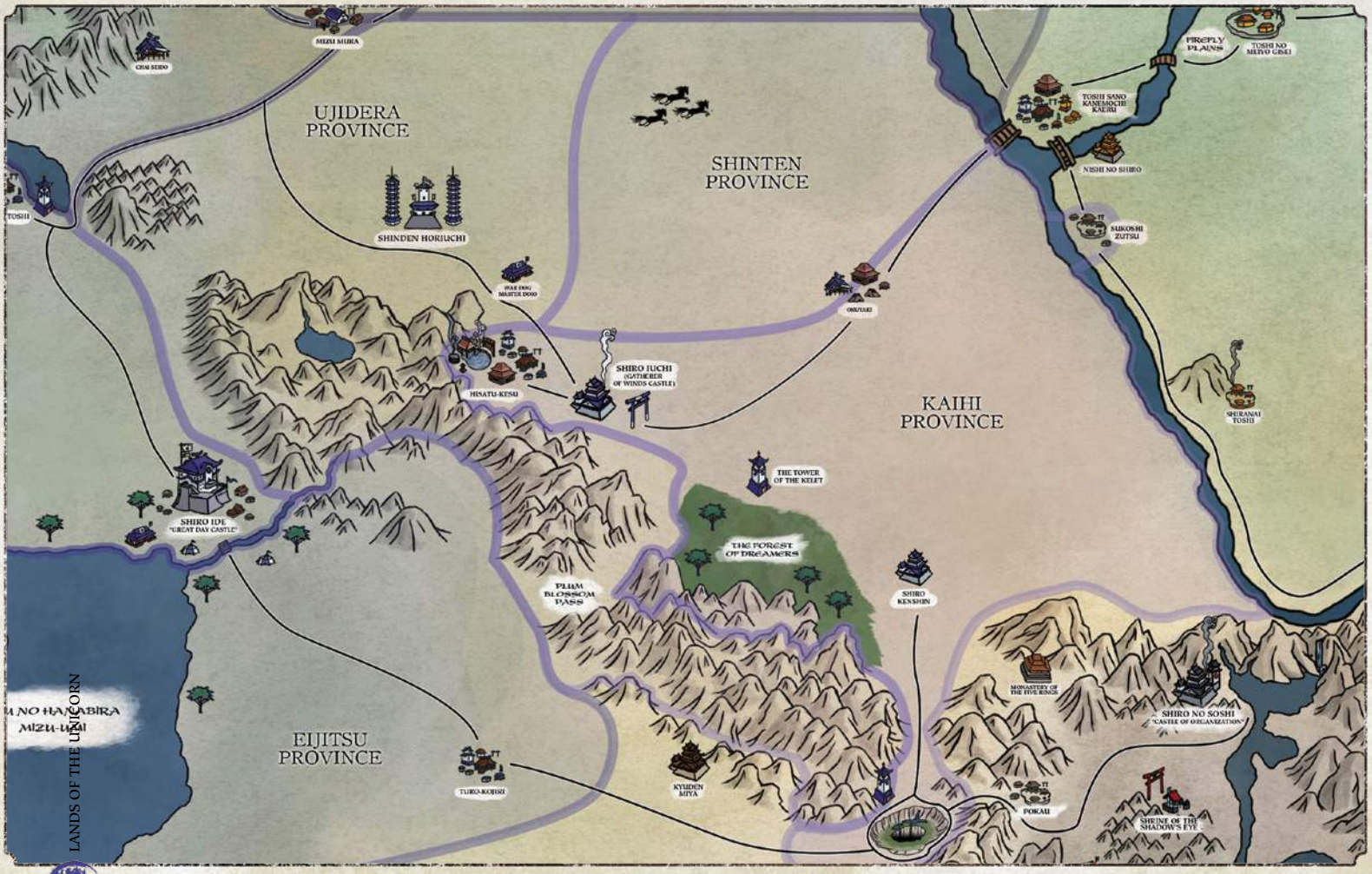
The imposing walls and towers of Shiro Ide, sometimes known as Great Day Castle, rest on the northern banks of Chrysanthemum Petal Lake, allowing the lake to form a beautiful backdrop for the frequent negotiations hosted there. Shiro Ide was the first stronghold built after the Unicorn returned to Rokugan, and uses a mix of traditional and gaijin styles and construction techniques. Intended to showcase the glory of the Unicorn to the rest of the Empire, it is acknowledged to be one of the most stately and beautiful castles in Rokugan. The castle comprises eight main levels above ground and one below; its main keep is surrounded by a considerable number of outbuildings as well as one of only two known shrines to Uzume, the Fortune of Dance. It is also an open secret that the fortifications of the Ide family's primary citadel are poorly placed, designed for appearance rather than military necessity. The castle would be extremely vulnerable to a proper siege, but the Ide refuse to change the original design, placing beauty above practicality. After all, they are a family which promotes peace and understanding, not war.

Shiro Ide is home to a number of schools associated with the Ide family. Within the castle proper may be found the Gentle Guard Dojo, which teaches the ways of courtly games to the Ide Emissaries, and the Falling Leaf Dojo, which trains shugenja from the Ide family. Nearby on the shores of Chrysanthemum Petal Lake is the Calm Heart Dojo, the center of the Ide Emissary school itself. A branch of the Single Strike Dojo, which teaches the Ide dueling style, is also housed in a very traditional set of buildings nearby. A grove of cherry trees separate these two schools, though the students often mingle when they are away from their lessons.

Duzaki Toshi

Duzaki Toshi is a small city on the northeastern edge of Garanto Province, and is home to the private estates of many notable Unicorn, even sometimes including the Shinjo and Utaku family daimyo. The Ide promote the calm and tranquil nature of the city as another place suitable for the negotiation of treaties and alliances, especially those within the Unicorn clan. After the Moto displace the Shinjo as rulers of the Unicorn, however, Duzaki Toshi loses much of its prestige and influence to Shiro Moto, though it remains an important part of the Unicorn Clan's internal trade network. Inter-family negotiations that do not involve the Moto directly are still often conducted here before the results are presented at court.

When the Moto reorganized the Unicorn armies, the Dojo of the Left, the primary dojo of the Junghar Army, was established in Duzaki Toshi. As a result, sensei from all of the major Unicorn bushi schools moved to the city, and as many as four legions of the Junghar are assigned to the city at any given time. The walls of the city were also strengthened, and the combination allows it to serve as a reserve area and staging ground for all the Unicorn armies.



The castle is heavily fortified, surprisingly so for the seat of a shugenja family, with a great central watchtower offering a commanding view of the surrounding plains and defying any enemy to approach unnoticed. Crab visitors often remark on how well built the walls are, but the interior is surprisingly comfortable and welcoming, containing a vast collection of artworks both Rokugani and gaijin. The Iuchi welcome guests, and many find themselves returning here again and again after they once enjoy Shiro Iuchi's hospitality and friendly atmosphere.

The Gatherer of the Winds Dojo, the primary temple for the Iuchi shugenja school and its various traditions and specialties, is located in Shiro Iuchi. The dojo's foundation stones are the same ones placed by Iuchi himself before the Ki-Rin left the Empire. Deep within the temple, at the very heart of the dojo, is a collection of books, scrolls, and other artifacts of knowledge from the foreign lands visited by the Unicorn on their travels; only the master sensei of the dojo may enter it.



The Forest of Dreamers

The only break in the rolling plains that surround Shiro Iuchi is the small patch of woods known as the Forest of Dreamers. It is an accursed spot, one the Iuchi have failed to destroy but have managed, at least, to contain. It is said those who venture into the forest's shadowed depths find themselves trapped in nightmarish sleep from which they never awaken, their spirits forever trapped among the dark trees. The Iuchi have surrounded the dark wood with a trench and layers of magical wards, and entry is punishable by death. Despite all these precautions, the forest still attracts those seeking to embrace the Taint, and no less than three cults have used the blood-soaked heart of the forest for dark rituals.

The Tower of the Kelet, a lone fortification home to the Battue vassal family, is located just north of the Forest of Dreamers and watches over it.

Hisatu-Kesu

Hisatu-Kesu is a sprawling village on the northwestern border of Kaihi Province. It thrives on access to steam vents in the nearby mountains, using them to heat bath-houses that are famous across the Empire. After the destruction of Beiden Pass in the early twelfth century, Hisatu-Kesu becomes an even more popular tourist destination, growing to the point that the local magistrates are unable to maintain control; the town becomes known as a center

Seikitsu Pass, the Great Crater, and the City of Night

For most of its history, Seikitsu Pass was a difficult and rarely-used way to cross the Spine of the World Mountains. It was, however, often visited by Lion samurai on warrior pilgrimages, for it was the location of Akodo-no-Kami's final battle.

It was not until the mid-twelfth century, after Beiden Pass was destroyed in the final battle of the Spirit Wars, that Seikitsu Pass's importance began in increase. Yakamo, Lord Sun, decided the time had come to open and cleanse the path where Akodo had died. At his command the Dragon of Fire smote the area, sending a fiery meteor from the sky that seared a gap in the mountains, creating the Great Crater.

The newly widened Seikitsu Pass immediately became disputed territory between the Lion and Unicorn, but the Unicorn were able to seize control of it and fend off the Lion both militarily and in the courts. However, while Unicorn control the Pass, the area remains in a precarious legal state. It is technically Imperial land, though administered by the Unicorn; cleverly, the Unicorn divert a portion of the revenue generated from the pass to both the Miya family (to fund the annual Imperial Gift) and the Otomo.

Seikitsu Pass is overseen by a military governor, appointed directly by the Unicorn Clan Champion. The Great Crater dominates the pass; years after its creation, the crater continues to radiate heat and issue steam and smoke, the legacy of the Fire Dragon's touch. There are two routes around the crater: the Sun's Arc Way, which is lit by the Sun through most of the day, and the Way of Night, which remains in shadow even at noon. Built within the crater itself is a small monastery called Souin Kureta which is dedicated to the mikokami, the Elemental spirits of the Great Crater and its surroundings.

Everyone who passes through Seikitsu Pass sees the Great Crater and in it the reflected power of the Celestial Heavens... never knowing that beneath their feet is another legacy, the City of Night. Supposedly, this ancient city of green and violet crystal was constructed by the five ancient races: the Kenku, Kitsu, Ningyo, Trolls, and Zokujin. By order of the Khan, the existence of the city has been kept secret so its mysteries and artifacts would belong to the Unicorn alone. Word did leak out to certain members of other clans and to at least one member of the Imperial house, but so far none have used that information against the Unicorn. Moreover, after several unfortunate incidents involving the artifacts found in the City, the Khan ordered a halt to all explorations. There is no telling what secrets may yet be found below the Great Crater.



The Tragedy of the Horiuchi Family

The Horiuchi family existed for less than four generations. All of its short existence fell within the twelfth century of the Empire, which saw the family established, grow, and win honors. It was then destroyed in a plague created by the Ebon Daughter, an agent of Kali-Ma, during the Destroyer War and vanished from Imperial records soon after. While not all of the family was killed, as some were away from their ancestral lands, the Unicorn Clan Champion decreed the Horiuchi name had become an evil omen. The handful of Horiuchi who survived the cleansing were ordered to either swear fealty to other Unicorn families or keep their name and let it die with them.

During its short existence the Horiuchi family was given the Ujidera Province as its home. Before and after the Horiuchi, the Ujidera Province was part of the Iuchi lands.



of vice and corruption. One section, nicknamed Northern Owari after the Scorpion Clan's infamous City of Lies, falls almost entirely under the sway of criminal gangs.

Okuyaki

The village of Okuyaki is notable for being one of the few permanent settlements in the central part of Kaihi Province. While there are some grain fields here, most of the populace is transient, with only a small number residing permanently to tend the fields, the local shrine, and the inn that serves those crossing the Iuchi plains. Okuyaki is watched over by a small detachment of Unicorn samurai who resent their duties, considering the posting only one step up from outright punishment duty.

Shiro Kenshin

The small castle of Shiro Kenshin is the home of the Kenshin vassal family. Their estates are located to the southeast of Shiro Iuchi, near the Seikitsu Mountains, where they can keep watch on the southern border and Seikitsu Pass itself.

Sukoshi Zutsu

For most of history, this small village was an unimportant place on the road to the City of the Rich Frog. That changed in the mid-twelfth century, during the War of the Rich Frog, when it became the primary forward staging base for the Unicorn war effort. It also gained fame (or perhaps infamy) as the place where the Unicorn Khan, Moto Chagatai, slew the Lion Champion Matsu Nimuro in personal combat.

After the war, the village was ceded to the Unicorn, who called on their friendship with the Crab to have Kaiu engineers fortify it against future attacks. Thus it is now an extraordinarily well-defended place, despite being only modestly more populated than in the past. Although it is adjacent to Kaihi Province, it is governed by a Moto military commander, and the village is little more than support for the large Unicorn garrison stationed there.

Shinten Province

This central province has one of the mildest climates in the Unicorn lands and is famous as a winter grazing spot for the clan's horse herds. Shinten's borders are shared by Ikoku Province to the north, by Ujidera Province to the west, and Kaihi Province to the south. Lion lands are on the far side of the Firefly River, which forms Shinten's eastern boundary.

Apart from farming villages and watchtowers along the banks of the Firefly River, there are few permanent settlements in Shinten. However, there are small shrines and prepared campsites all across the plains, waiting to be used for the winter by families bringing their herds to safety; many samurai from other families have negotiated long-term agreements with the Iuchi to use parts of the province to winter their herds. The Iuchi welcome these visitors, and their shugenja roam across the winter plains helping with problems both spiritual and physical. Ide merchants and emissaries also crisscross the plains during this time, making deals and learning the news from the rest of the Unicorn lands.

Ujidera Province

This mountainous province is south of Ikoku and Zenzan Provinces, with the eastern side touching the northern edge of Scorpion lands, while the western side touches the Ide provinces and the southern edge overlooks Kyuden Miya. It is the site of Iuchi Pass, also known as Plum Blossom Pass, a small and difficult pass crossing the Spine of the World Mountains. Iuchi Pass joins Shiro Iuchi and Turo-Kojiri; it is narrow and easily defended. Legend states that Togashi-no-Kami attained enlightenment in this pass by eating a plum, but oddly, plum trees refuse to grow here. The mountains are a modest source of timber for both the Ide and the Iuchi, and hold a handful of iron mines worked by the Ide, but these resources are modest; Ujidera is a sparsely populated province, not much visited.

Shinden Horiuchi

In the early twelfth century, an unusual set of circumstances lead to the creation of a new Unicorn family, the tiny and pious Horiuchi. This small fortified temple to Inari, Fortune of Rice, was built in northern Ujidera Province to provide a home for the new shugenja family. It was a harmonious place, peppered with smaller shrines to the other Fortunes, and all guests were welcome. A key part of the grounds was Kojiin Horiuchi, the orphanage

of the Horuichi, where orphans created by war or disaster were brought to be raised and given the chance to join the Horiuchi.

Tragically, during the Destroyer War the entire complex is burned to the ground to try to halt the spread of a plague. The ruins become a pilgrimage site for those seeking purpose or who wish to remember the kindness shown them by the extinct Horiuchi; monks and pilgrims alike slowly rebuild all the lesser shrines here, but the core structure of the temple is left untouched in honor of those who died with it.

The Temple of Child's Innocence

In the aftermath of the Clan War, a structure called the Temple of Child's Innocence is built a few miles from Shinden Horiuchi. The Brotherhood monks who found the temple seek to aid the Horiuchi in the teaching and socialization of their orphans, and come to be known as the Order of Innocence. They teach the orphans about the Tao, but also teach useful skills and some martial arts. Sadly, the Temple of Child's Innocence is also destroyed during the Destroyer War and is not rebuilt; surviving members of the Order of Innocence eventually find homes among other sects of the Brotherhood.

War Dog Master Dojo

On the edge of Ujidera Province closest to Shiro Iuchi, lurking in the foothills, is a rough and tumble cluster of buildings that is home to the War Dog Master Dojo and the dogs they train. It is not the most well-regarded or well-financed of dojo, but manages to survive and, in a manner of speaking, even to thrive. The dojo's distance from the Horiuchi temple allows it to escape the devastation visited on them, and after the Destroyer War the dojo continues as it always has – which is to say, mostly ignored until its war dogs are needed.

The Moto Provinces

The main Moto provinces – Ikoku, Kawabe, and Zenzan – are flat, with almost none of the low hills found in other areas of the Unicorn lands. They also have the largest proportion of the population living in a nomadic lifestyle. Even in Rokugan, the Moto cleave to the wandering ways of their ancestors, mastering the animals on the plains and honing their skills and endurance as formidable riders and raiders. The southern Moto province of Enkaku, the only one of their four provinces not part of the traditional "clan heartland," was created by the Khan when the Desert Moto returned to Rokugan at the end of the Hidden Emperor era. It is the anchor of the clan's southern defenses and is the most highly militarized of the Unicorn provinces.

The Clan Heartland

The family that rules the Unicorn Clan also rules the so-called "clan heartland" – the provinces of Ikoku, Kawabe, and Zenzan, some of the most fertile and productive lands the Unicorn control. From the ninth through the early twelfth centuries, these provinces are controlled by the ruling Shinjo family and form the core of their lands and wealth. However, after the Moto displace the Shinjo at the end of the Hidden Emperor era, these three provinces are passed to Moto control, drastically curtailing the power of the Shinjo. The peasants of these provinces remember the Shinjo with affection, viewing that era as a "golden age" before the coming of the Moto.

Prior to the return of the Desert Moto, there are not actually any Moto provinces; the family's disgrace and near-destruction in the Shadowlands leaves its numbers so diminished that the Clan Champion cannot justify giving the Moto a province of their own to rule, nor can they boast of a castle as their seat of power. In fact, during that time their only dojo is located in the remote holding of Bugaisha.

Enkaku Province

This is the newest province in the Unicorn lands; until the return of the Desert Moto, the lands to the south of the River of the Unexpected Hero were part of Eijitsu Province, while the lands north of the river belonged to Garanto Province. The Ide who ruled these lands relied on a mixed garrison of Ide troops, mercenary ronin, and the occasional troop of patrolling Otaku to watch over this empty region and man the one major fortification, the Watchtower.



When the Desert Moto returned, the Khan created Enkaku as a military province. He found the idea of a family of merchants acting as the southern shield of the Unicorn laughable, even though it was a task they had successful managed for over three centuries, and insisted on giving that task to his own family instead. (The Ide took the philosophical view that if the Moto wished to pay for the expense of maintaining that wasteland, they were not going to complain.)

The Eijitsu and Garanto provinces form Enkaku's eastern borders and serve as its link to the rest of the Unicorn lands. To the south lie the vast uncharted forests of the Shinomen Mori, to the west are the gaijin lands, and the northern border is hemmed in by the Seikitsu Mountains. Only a handful of herders and hunters make their home in Enkaku; it is a harshly militarized place that shields the Unicorn from the threat of the Shadowlands. No one would call it welcoming.

The River of the Unexpected Hero runs west to east through this province, terminating in Chrysanthemum Petal Lake. The river's name comes from an incident when a Shadowlands force ventured across the plains to despoil the lake. A farmer on his way to the Chrysanthemum Festival spotted a group of goblins and, alert to the danger, ran to warn others. No one believed the farmer until he chanced upon an Ide patrol, who he convinced with his obvious sincerity. The Unicorn were able to intercept the foul creatures the river was renamed in honor of the brave peasant.

Watchtower of the River of the Unexpected Hero

This fortification is the only place of significance in the otherwise largely barren expanse of Enkaku Province. The watchtower is constructed from a dark blue local stone, giving it a distinctive appearance as it stands sentinel in the middle of the vast open plain. It is only as tall as the stone-built lower section of the Shinomen Watchtower, but is still high enough for sentries to look over the plains for miles. The tower's broad base contains barracks, armories, and storehouses for the soldiers stationed here. Originally, the garrison here was comprised of Ide troops, but in the twelfth century they were replaced with an entire legion of Moto, nicknamed the Unexpected Legion; its purpose was to monitor both the Shadowlands and the Shinomen Forest and blunt any attack coming from either. There are more Unicorn samurai permanently stationed at the Watchtower of the River of the Unexpected Hero than at any other Unicorn Clan fortification. Given the nature of their foes, the garrison troops drill constantly, leaving the lands around them worn and lifeless from the endless beat of cavalry hooves. After construction begins on the Khol Wall, the Watchtower serve as the wall's southern headquarters.





Ikoku Province

Ikoku, the eastern part of the Unicorn heartland, is sometimes called the Field of the Winds for the sharp winds that sweep across its plains. Its northern border is defined by the Utaku lands and its western by the Kawabe Province. In the south, the Shinten and Ujidera provinces mark its boundaries. Across the river to the east are plains that adjoin the Dragon territories.

Shiro Moto

Shiro Moto is first constructed after the return of the Desert Moto, and its creation symbolizes the transformation of the Unicorn Clan to a new era of Moto leadership. The castle uses a mixture of gaijin and Rokugani designs, and while none would call it beautiful, it is certainly imposing. The citadel is burned to the ground by the Lion Clan in the late twelfth century (during the era known as the Race for the Throne), but is quickly rebuilt afterward. The Dojo of the Center is located here, training Unicorn soldiers in the style of offensive warfare favored by the Moto. The elite Moto White Guard also has it primary barracks here, said to resemble an ascetic monastery more than a conventional samurai barracks.

The Temple of Death

On the edge of the White Shore Plain, just within sight of Shiro Moto, the Khan orders the construction of this dour and foreboding temple to the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, the Moto gods of Death. It is a massive temple complex, housing the training grounds for the priesthood of the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, as well as a library compiling the legends and stories of the Unicorn clan and the Lords of Death (including many gaijin works accessible only to Unicorn scholars). The huge central shrine is surrounded by ten giant statues of the Lords of Death. Visitors from outside the Unicorn, and sometime even Unicorn from outside the Moto, report a sensation of being watched and weighed while on the grounds.

Toshi no aida ni Kawa

In contrast to Shiro Moto and the Temple of Death, the City Between the Rivers is an ancient holding that actually pre-dates the return of the Unicorn to Rokugan. Once the clan lays claim to it, it becomes a major trading hub and later a center for Unicorn diplomacy. Located at the juncture of the Sleeping River and the Firefly River, it is well-fortified and uses the water barriers as part of its formidable defensive system; only once in history has an invasion force moved against the Unicorn by travelling up-river, and it was such a dismal failure that no clan ever tried such a thing again.

Within the walls of the city are warehouses and trading posts, organizing the goods which the Unicorn import from the rest of Rokugan. After the return of the Moto, the city also becomes a center for diplomatic negotiations, hosting embassies from the Imperial families and the other Great Clans. It also functions as a proving-ground for Unicorn courtiers before they are sent out beyond their homeland.

Mura nisa Kawa Nemui

The Village by the Sleeping River is a settlement located on the banks of its namesake river, right alongside one of the more common overland routes into Unicorn lands. It is known for its humble but clean inns and teahouses, thriving on the trade and travel which passes through.

Watarimono

A small trading village located on the roads leading to Shiro Moto. Watarimono is used as winter quarters for the Moto herders and is only sparsely inhabited the rest of the year.

Kawabe Province

This province is dominated by White Shore Lake – the land of the province is almost entirely lake shore. Kawabe is bordered on the north by Manaka Province, on the east by Ikoku Provine, and on the south and west by Zenzan Province.

Shiroi Kishi Mizu-umi

White Shore Lake is quite possibly the largest body of fresh water in the Empire, and is named for the white sands found on its shoreline. Some believe the sands have medicinal properties, and there are legends of a Ningyo city at the bottom of the lake. After the Unicorn form an alliance with the Naga in the second half of the twelfth century, they forbid anyone from trying to find the sunken

city, and those who disregard their orders seldom return – causing some to believe an Orochi lurks in the lake-bottom.

Mizu Mura

Laketown is a prosperous village on the southern edge of White Shore Lake; it thrives on fishing and on gathering freshwater pearls from the lakebed. It is the oldest settlement of the Unicorn Clan, having been originally established by Ki-Rin samurai who stayed behind when Shinjo left the Empire. When they were expelled from these lands to become the Fox Clan, the Lion took possession of Mizu Mura and ruled it until the return of the Unicorn in the ninth century.

The local temples are known for their lore about the legendary Ningyo, lore they will share with those swear to cause no harm to the inhabitants of the lake. The local fishermen drop some of their pearls into the lake in secret ceremonies, donating them to the Ningyo in the belief that this will ensure good fishing; they are very protective of the Ningyo and have a variety of superstitions about them.

Mizu Mura's central location also makes it the preferred place for the Ide to maintain their Great Caravan Store, where they keep their caravan wagons and draft animals in between the trading seasons. During the spring and fall, when the caravans arrive and depart, the town enjoys a festive atmosphere.

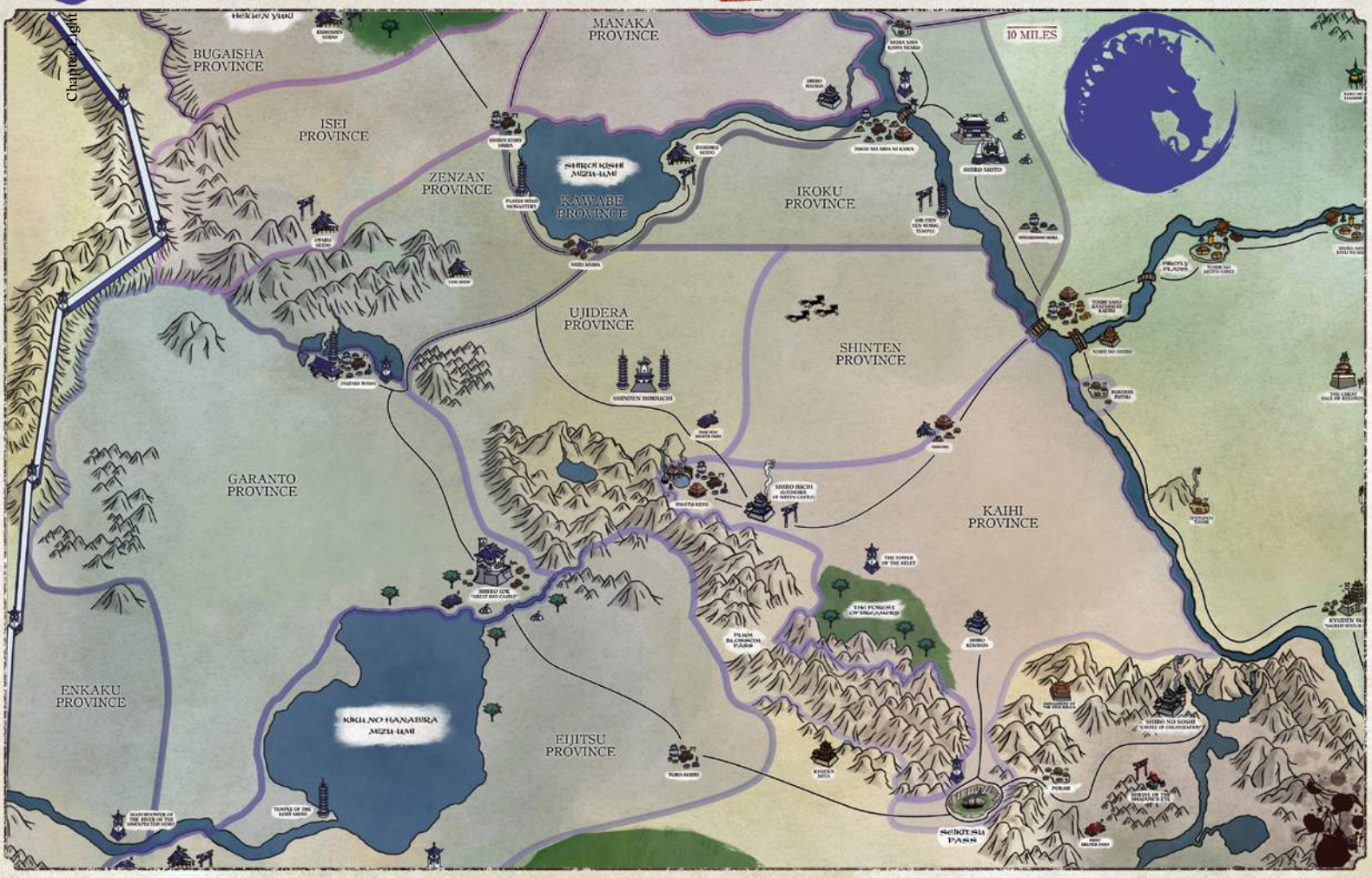
Shiroi Kishi Mura

White Shore Village is located on the northern shore of White Shore Lake, nearly opposite from Mizu Mura. It is renowned as one of the serene beauty spots of Rokugan. The governors of the province have always been wise enough to husband this beauty, carefully managing all construction in this village and its surroundings. Shiroi Kishi Mura attracts artisans and poets from across the Empire, and is an especial hive of activity in the late summer when these artisans are sought as guests for upcoming Winter Courts.

The House of Beauty and Grace, a refined teahouse, is the artistic heart of this community and is regarded as the ideal place to "see and be seen." The Ide and Shinjo families have both been quite skilled at using this town to keep track of upcoming artistic trends and exploiting those to their advantage. However, after the Moto ascend to rule of the clan, this advantage is not used nearly so effectively.

Daikoku Seido

This is the wealthiest, and thus by definition the best, of the shrines dedicated to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth. It is decorated in a mixture of traditional and foreign styles; critics say the foreign styles predominate, and this may result in slightly fewer pilgrims coming from outside the Unicorn lands, but the clan does not seem to care overmuch. The monks of Daikoku Seido are masters



of practical crafts, and thus have a wide variety of ways to part pilgrims from their koku. However, they are also expert financial advisors, and their mercantile acumen is sought out by merchants from all corners of the Empire.

Zenzan Province

This is the westernmost province of the Unicorn Clan heartland, and boasts fine fields for grazing, though the winter snows can be impressive as well. Zenzan's borders are defined to the north by Isei Province, with Kawabe Province to the east, Garanto and Ujidera provinces to the south, and a narrow western border touching the edge of the Empire.

Plains Wind Monastery

Located along the eastern border of the province, this monastery is devoted to the worship of Kuroshin, the Fortune of Agriculture, and widely known (at least in the Brotherhood) for being a place of piety and hard work. However, after the events of the Four Winds era in the mid-twelfth century, the monks here sought to adopt the worship of the gaijin Lords of Death, setting off much bitter debate in the Brotherhood. The monks of Plains Wind were nearly ostracized until Totori III recognized the foreign gods as having a rightful place in the Celestial Order and peace was restored. To act as a bridge between the Moto Death Priests and the rest of the Brotherhood, the monks of Plains Wind added the worship of Emma-O to their portfolio as well.

Chai Seido

Moto Chai is remembered in the Unicorn Clan as one of the greatest horsemen who ever lived. Living in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, he served the clan as a skirmisher and scout, and innumerable tales of his prowess have been passed down into the modern era. One story tells of Chai riding his steed full gallop while hanging so far underneath the horse he was obscured by the tall grass around him; another tale speaks of him using an Uma-Yari to pole-vault his way over a hedge and escape from pursuing gaijin.

After the Moto lay claim to Zenzan Province, they build Chai Seido to memorialize one of their family's greatest heroes. The Onshigawa vassal family of the Moto maintain a small estate near Chai Seido.

The Khol Wall

These defensive works are begun under the direction of Khan Moto Chagatai, helped by a gift of resources (both workers and materials) from Crab Champion Hida Kuon. The Khan wishes to fortify the western border of the Empire to guard against any possible attack from the gaijin lands or the Shadowlands; he dreams of extending the wall all the way down to join the Carpenter Wall in a single fortification. Work begins in the year 1265 under the direction of Kaiu Umasu, the daimyo of the Kaiu family.

Western Zenzan Province serves as the initial organization point, and a dojo is built there for the Kaiu to train Unicorn engineers. The buildings of this dojo are plain and utilitarian, since no one is expected to stay too long, and it is encircled by several types of walls and earthworks. The Kaiu train the sensei of the dojo in a stripped-down, focused curriculum of wall construction and maintenance. However, when the Destroyer War strikes, the Crab are forced to end their contributions and leave further construction entirely in the hands of the Unicorn. As of the dawn of the thirteenth century, the Khan's ambition of a wall protecting the entire western border remains unrealized.

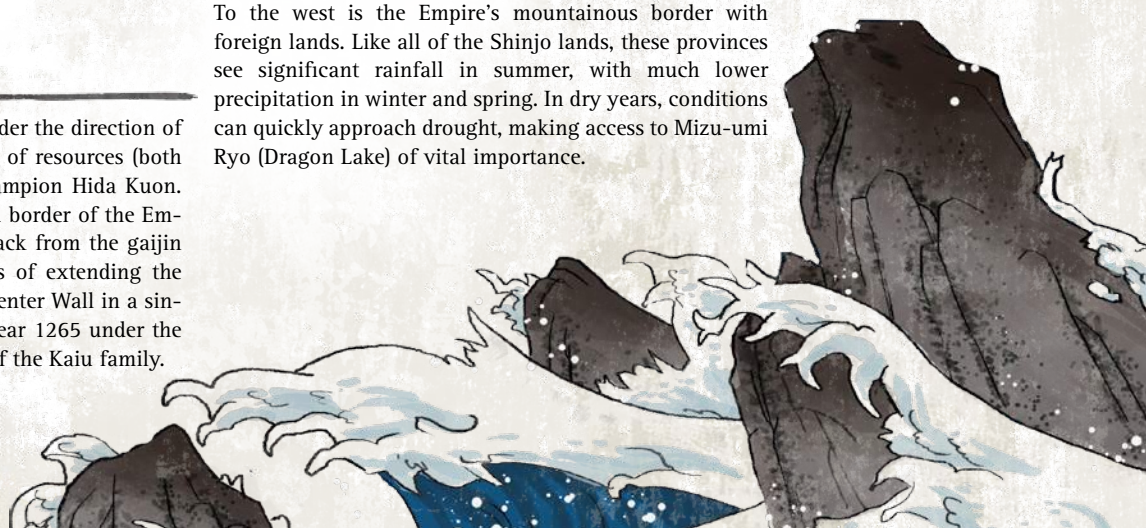
Unlike the Carpenter Wall, the Khol Wall is designed to slow and channel attackers, not to stop them outright. It is neither as high nor extensive as the Crab fortifications, and makes more extensive use of natural elements such as mountains and streams to strengthen its defenses. Much of the Khol Wall is simple stone-faced turf, reinforced with timber; signal towers are placed to rapidly convey messages up and down its length, and couriers are kept at the ready to alert the Unicorn armies in an emergency. However, service on the Khol Wall is not welcomed by most Unicorn samurai, and their numbers are usually bolstered by ronin and ashigaru.

The Shinjo Provinces

The Shinjo family's traditional holdings comprise the four northernmost provinces of the Unicorn lands: Aishou, Bugaisha, Haisho and Kouryo. The lands are good horse-rearing country and both barley and rye are extensively farmed. From the ninth through the early twelfth centuries, the Shinjo also control the Clan Heartland, but even in that era their political center is in these provinces, especially Aishou and Kouryo.

Aishou Province

Aishou lies in the middle of the Shinjo provinces, bordered in the north by Haisho Province, to the east by Kouryo Province, and by Bugaisha Province in the south. To the west is the Empire's mountainous border with foreign lands. Like all of the Shinjo lands, these provinces see significant rainfall in summer, with much lower precipitation in winter and spring. In dry years, conditions can quickly approach drought, making access to Mizu-umi Ryo (Dragon Lake) of vital importance.



Oshindoka Toshi

The largest city of the Shinjo lands was founded by Shinjo Inejiro, a relative of the Unicorn Clan Champion, in the early tenth century to demonstrate his love for Kakita Umeki. Umeki was the daughter of Kakita Konyo, the master sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy; Konyo disdained the Unicorn Clan's barbaric ways and had forbidden a betrothal. Inejiro built Umeki to show the Kakita that the Unicorn embraced the ways of the Empire. Impressed by this dedication, Konyo retracted his harsh words and agreed to grant Inejiro's request as soon as the city was complete. Matsu Hajime, a rival who sought Umeki's hand purely for political reasons, accused the Kakita of breaking their promise to the Lion and used the excuse to attack the Crane, and Umeki died during the opening stages of the campaign. Heartbroken and vowing vengeance, Inejiro led the Shinjo cavalry into Matsu lands where they hunted down and killed those responsible for Umeki's death. The construction of Oshindoka Toshi was halted during this time, but once Umeki was avenged, the city was finished with the aid of the Kakita. To honor Inejiro's fallen love, an image of Kakita Umeki graces the city's main gate.

For the first two centuries of its existence, Oshindoka Toshi was something of a model city, carefully built in the finest Crane-influenced style... but only barely inhabited, with a limited population of crafters and administrators, plus some transient herders and merchants. However, after the return of the Moto and the displacement of the Shinjo family from the clan heartland, many Shinjo families relocated to Oshindoka Toshi, making it much more of a proper city.

The major industry in Oshindoka Toshi is woodworking, with craftsmen taking lumber from Dragon Heart Forest and then exporting finished wood throughout Unicorn lands. The city is also home to major grain storehouses, serving as a food reserve for the Unicorn Clan. There is also a secretive group of diamond cutters who work in the city, following training and traditions brought back from the gaijin lands; they hide their craft from outsiders, and the Unicorn prefer to have the other clans believe their diamonds are exotic items from beyond Rokugan.



Mizu-Umi Ryo

The Dragon Lake is vital to the Unicorn both for the practical reasons (providing water to the network of farming villages that dot its shores) and for its spiritual significance: the lake is said to be the home of the Water Dragon's heart. The Shingon monks of the Shrine of the Water Dragon enact a daily ritual to keep spiritual pollution at bay and the lake pure, and have done so ever since the first century. Visions and sightings of the Water Dragon occur with some frequency on the shore of the lake, and occasionally a questing pilgrim will take a boat out on to the lake in the hope of attaining spiritual communion. A surprising number of such pilgrims do not return.

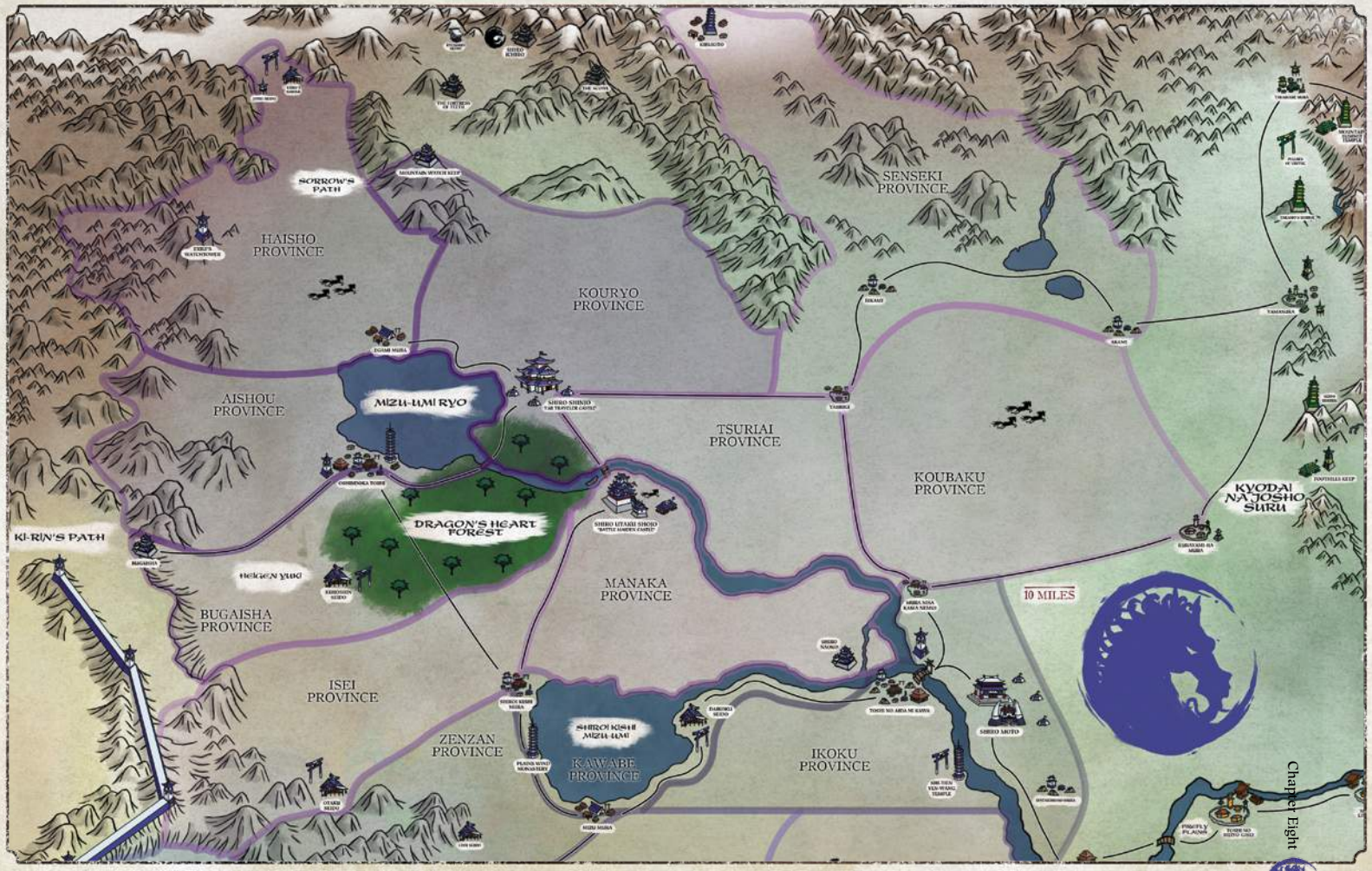
Some rumors also claim a sunken Naga city is located within the lake, attaching the name Nagashi Naga Toshi to it. It is not known whether this is true or not, but if such a city does exist, it is likely to be far better preserved than other Naga settlements outside the Shinomen.

The Three Unfortunate Villages

On the south-eastern shore of Dragon Lake are three villages whose history dates back to the second century, when the land was held by the Lion. Often subjected to bandit raids in their early days, the three villages are fortified and have a tradition of Brotherhood-trained budoka (armed peasants) for self-defense. When the Unicorn returned, the villagers refused to leave and swore fealty to the Unicorn in return for being allowed to continue living as they have done. They fish the lake for sustenance, and pay their taxes primarily in dried fish. Visiting these villages can be like stepping back in time to the early Empire, as these isolated people maintain traditions from their earliest history relatively undisturbed by outsiders.

Bugaisha Province

This province is the southernmost Shinjo land outside of the Clan Heartland, bordered on the north by the Aishou Province, the east by the Manaka Province, and on the south by the Isei Province. The western edge is defined by the Great Wall of the North Mountains that mark the border of Rokugan. Bugaisha Province is named after the Fortress of Bugaisha, also known as Outsider Keep, which lies on the far western edge of the Empire.



Bugaisha

Outsider Keep sits at the very edge of Rokugan, looking out on the empty wastelands that eventually give way to the Burning Sands. Until the return of the Desert Moto, it was the site of the Moto family's Vindicator dojo, where they trained for their never-ending fight against the Shadowlands. After the construction of Shiro Moto, the new Moto dojo located there became the family's dominant bushi school, but the Vindicator dojo remains at Bugaisha.

Outsider Keep is a dumping ground for samurai who have dishonored themselves in some way, who are dangerous but controllable, or who have offended the wrong people. It is the end of a samurai's career to be assigned here. Still, military efficiency is maintained even if certain other aspects of discipline slip; the samurai of Outsider Keep learn to rely on each other because they have no one else to call on. The Unicorn assigned here will often supplement their numbers with ronin mercenaries who are treated nearly as well as the Unicorn themselves. After all, they understand what it is like to be looked down upon by others.

Aside from these unhappy samurai, Bugaisha is primarily home to merchants, both from the Empire (mostly Unicorn and Scorpion) and from foreign lands. These disparate groups mingle freely with the Unicorn soldiers, who might occasionally be mistaken for traders themselves as they barter with the passing merchants – they have learned to provide for themselves, as they are often neglected by the rest of the clan.

Those who have visited Outsider Keep often say it is the most foreign place in the Empire, a place where gaijin mix openly with Rokugani merchants, where ronin and foreign guards exchange stories, and the Unicorn garrison watches it all with indifference as long as fees and taxes are paid. Foreigners are not allowed within the fortification after nightfall, and have their own tent city that waxes and wanes in size with the coming and goings of caravans.

The situation in Bugaisha changes somewhat after the Empire establishes the Colonies in the former Ivory Kingdoms. The Unicorn establish the Ki-Rin's Path, an overland route from the Empire to the Colonies, and the Rokugani terminus of the Path is in Bugaisha. As a result, it sees a significant expansion in its size, though it remains a "hardship post" for Unicorn samurai.

Dragon's Heart Forest

The largest forest in the Unicorn lands – indeed the only real forest there at all – the Dragon's Heart is the clan's primary source of wood. While the majority of the forest is in Bugaisha province, its resources are controlled by Oshindoka Toshi. The Governors of both provinces jointly manage the forest and share its revenue, but the Governor of Aishou receives the largest share of the koku. On the other hand, the Governor of Bugaisha never lacks finished wood for projects.

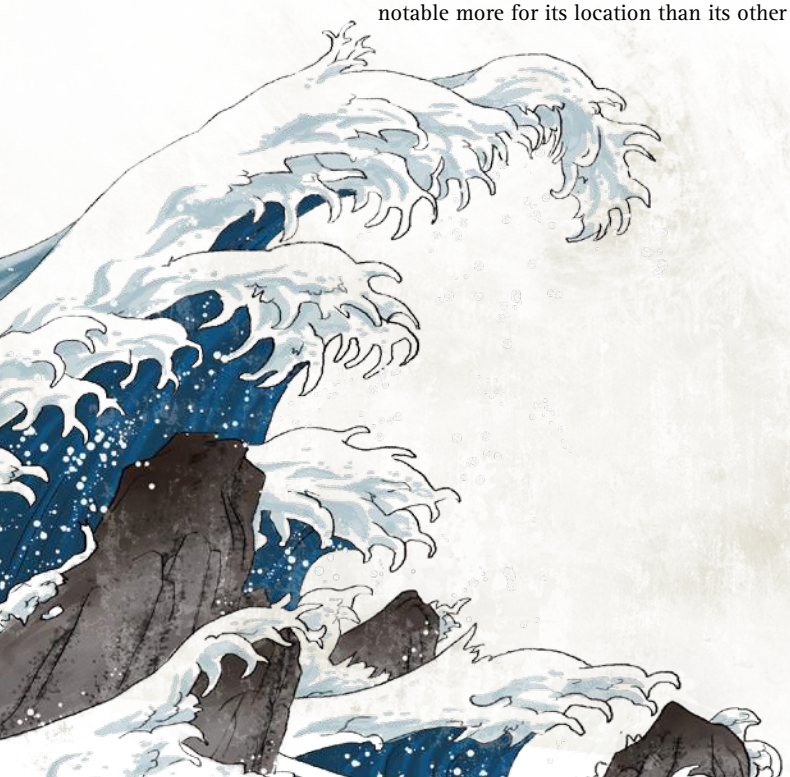
The parts of province that are not forest comprise the vast Heigen Yuki, the Snow Plain, named prosaically after the snows that come off the mountains during winter. In isolated areas in the Heigen Yuki, approached through a variety of semi-hidden routes, are the open-pit diamond mines of the Unicorn Clan, their true location known only to a few in the Shinjo and Ide families. These mines are worked primarily by lower-caste criminals who never leave them; the Unicorn treat them well as long as they work hard, but those who try to escape are hunted down and crucified, serving to remind the others why it is better to work hard. The overseers and samurai assigned here are rotated out every two or three years to ensure they do not become worn down by the harsh job and isolation.

Kuroshin's Shrine

The spiritual center of Bugaisha, located at the eastern end of the Snow Plains, is a temple made from wood harvested from the Dragon's Heart Forest. It is dedicated to Kuroshin, the Fortune of Agriculture, and every year an offering of grain or a small statue of Kuroshin is sent to the shrine from every Unicorn settlement. This shrine is considered quite important to the Unicorn, though it ranks behind Daikoku Seido (and in modern times, behind the Temple of the Lords of Death as well). The monks and nuns of the shrine are known wherever they travel in the Unicorn lands by their pale saffron robes, with Kuroshin's name embroidered over their heart.

Haisho Province

Haisho is among the northernmost points in the Empire, with both its northern and its western borders defined by the edge of Rokugan. Haisho shares its other two borders with other Shinjo lands, to the east the Kouryo Province and in the south, Aishou. The mountains – a portion of the Great Wall of the North known colloquially as the Mountains of Exile – dominate bleak Haisho province, which is notable more for its location than its other features.



Egami Mura

This is the largest settlement in Haisho, a large sprawling town devoted to the raising and training of horses, ponies and – strangest to other Rokugani – camels. While tradition says that only the Unicorn are allowed to ride the horses trained here, merchants come to Egami Mura from across Rokugan to buy horses from the Shinjo. Even if the horses being sold are not prime Unicorn-raised mounts, they are still among the best available and the Shinjo family gains considerable wealth from this trade. Unlike most cities in the Empire, the buildings of Egami Mura, especially the stables, are constructed primarily of stone to minimize the risk of fire. The largest of them, the famed Red Eagle Stables, is as large as Shiro Shinjo and the security nearly as tight, with a squadron of the Shinjo Elite Guard tasked to watch over them. After the Otaku Stables are burned during the War with the Shadow, the Red Eagle Stables are further fortified by Crab engineers

Kanashimi no Komochi

Leading north from Egami Mura is the infamous Sorrow's Path, also known as Exile's Road and many other names. During the exodus of the Ki-Rin at the dawn of the Empire, it was known as the Trail of Woe, and during the era of the Toturi Emperors it was called either Dishonor's Path or the Scorpion Road. The road is very well maintained, though it is not often used; it is travelled only by Shinjo patrols, the rare caravan taking an unusual route... and the even rarer exile. Those samurai who commit a certain class of dishonorable crimes are sentenced by the Emperor to travel Kanashimi no Komochi and leave the Empire, never to return to Rokugan. The areas on either side of the road are kept clear of any trees or brush for a good distance, ensuring there is nowhere for an exile to hide. A unit of Shinjo horsebowmen serves as escorts to those who travel the road, ensuring that those doomed to leave the Empire do not try to turn back.

Exile's Watchtower

The Shinjo troops who watch over the Exile's Road are stationed at this fortification, from which one can survey a broad stretch of the Kanashimi no Komochi. The patrols from this watchtower also serve as the first line of defense against Yobanjin raids, and after the construction of the Khol Wall they provide a mobile reserve to reinforce the Wall's defenses as needed. The watchtower itself is directly attacked only once, during the War of Dark Fire, when some of the burning Yobanjin are able to damage the exterior but fail to destroy the place.

Exile's Shrine

At the end of Sorrow's Path, just before it passes from the Empire, is the Exile's Shrine, the last chance for an exile to pray on the sacred soil of Rokugan. This temple is surprisingly complete, containing small shrines to all of the major Fortunes and ancestral lines. The few monks who serve at Exile's Shrine are usually volunteers from the Four Temples Order or their successor the Ten Thousand

Temples. The monks keep a careful record of those who leave and who they pray to before departing; once a year an Imperial auditor arrives to collect these records and return them to the Imperial archives.

Shrine to Jotei

Near the Exile's Shrine is the Shrine to Jotei, the Fortune of the Morning Dew, sometimes known as the Reverse Fortune. This is the only known shrine to this obscure Fortune anywhere in the Empire. Rarely, the pure-hearted but foolish, the ignorant yet good intentioned, will find themselves at the Shrine to Jotei, where the Fortune offers advice to these chosen souls – helping them to find their destiny and, hopefully, gain a bit of wisdom along the way.

Kouryo Province

This Shinjo province is defined to the west by Haisho Province, to the south by Aishou and Tsuriai, and to the east by Senseki Province. The Great Wall of the North Mountains form the northern border of the province and the Empire. Part of the Dragon's Heart Forest falls within Kouryo province, and though the wood is processed in Oshindoka Toshi, profits are divided between both Governors.

Kouryo is the site of Shiro Shinjo, the seat of the Shinjo family's power, and thus for three hundred years it is the political and military heart of the Unicorn lands. After the Moto assume the rule of the clan, Kouryo's importance drops sharply, although it remains the heartland of the Shinjo family.

Shiro Shinjo

Far Traveler Castle was originally established as a stronghold for the Ki-Rin who remained in Rokugan, and was then seized by the Lion and used as a forward base for defense against gaijin raiders from the north. As the frontier stabilized, the castle was allowed to fall into disrepair. When the Unicorn returned, the Shinjo claimed the stronghold and extensively rebuilt the fortifications using techniques learned in their foreign travels. The resulting three-sided castle with its distinctive round towers is unique in Rokugan and considered one of the strongest citadels in the Empire.

The utilitarian exterior conceals an inner castle full of luxury. The wealth of the Unicorn ensures a magnificent place to visit or live, filled with treasures and comforts from across the world. It is said that even a frequent guest to Shiro Shinjo always finds new things, even in areas they know well, so extensive and richly appointed is the castle. Visitors drop sharply after the Shinjo are purged from the rule of the clan, but at the same time the humble Hare Clan establishes an embassy alongside the much diminished Great Clan presence; it is an open secret that the Hare are there to aid the Shinjo in ensuring the Kolat are forever driven from their ranks.

Within the castle is the Shinjo dojo, for many generations the largest dojo (at least by numbers of students) in Unicorn lands. While the dojo is based inside the castle, the students and teachers spend much of their time out on the plains mastering the equestrian arts. The dojo is notable for the diversity of schools taught there and its welcoming attitude to students who come from beyond the Unicorn Clan. No other dojo has so many students from outside its own clan, and it is one of the ways the Shinjo build influence in the Empire – through friendship and shared experience.

The citadel itself is surrounded by a city which in turn is surrounded by an outer wall. The city is fairly small for much of its history, but once the Desert Moto return it is flooded with displaced Shinjo families who had previously resided in the Clan Heartland. As a result the city expands considerably, spilling beyond the walls – which proves a source of vulnerability during the War of Dark Fire. The city itself was almost destroyed by the fighting and fires of that war, but is later rebuilt with a second outer wall to encompass the entire town.

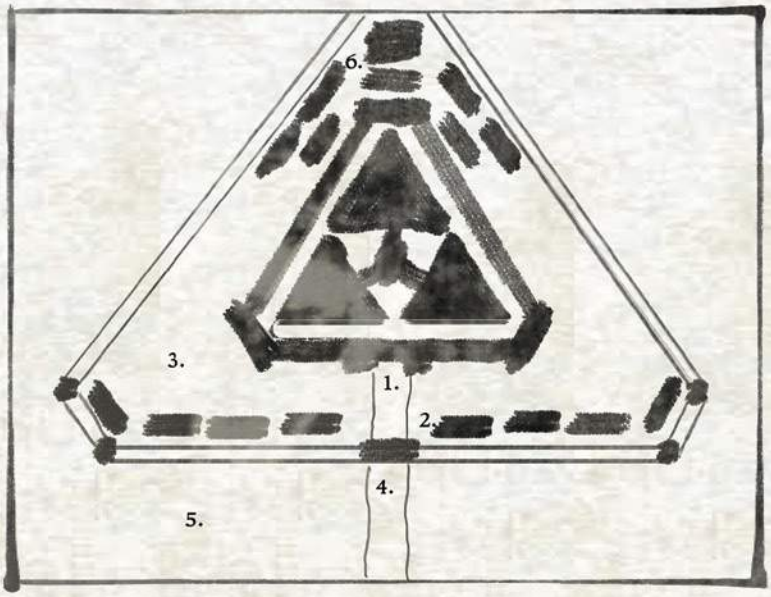
Immediately to the northwest of Shiro Shinjo is an unremarkable low fort, its walls heavy with moss. This unassuming place is the training dojo for the Shinjo horsebowmen. It is unlikely any traveler will merely stumble across it, and the Shinjo prefer it that way.

Mountain Watch Keep

In the far north of Kouryo Province, the Unicorn build a new stronghold after the War of Dark Fire: Mountain Watch Keep, which maintains a garrison, patrols, and a large number of fleet messengers at the ready should any new Yobanjin incursions threaten the land. The garrison is tasked with spotting and delaying any such incursions while the couriers warn the main Unicorn forces and allow them to respond.



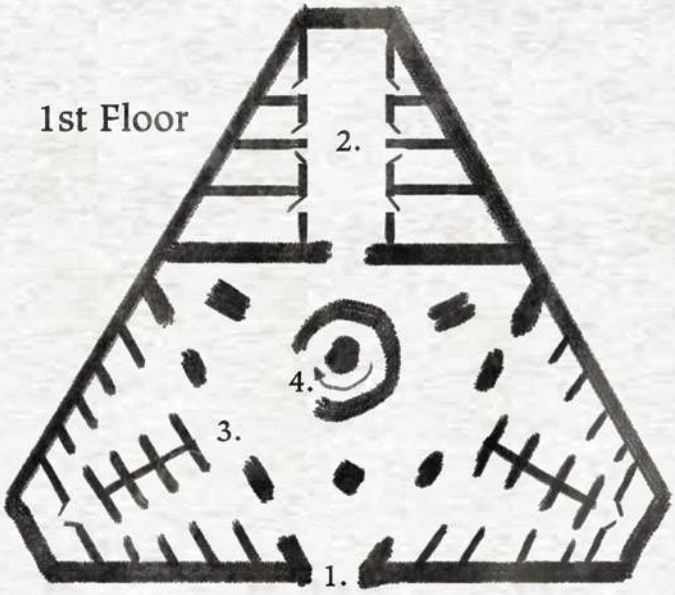
SHIRO SHINJO

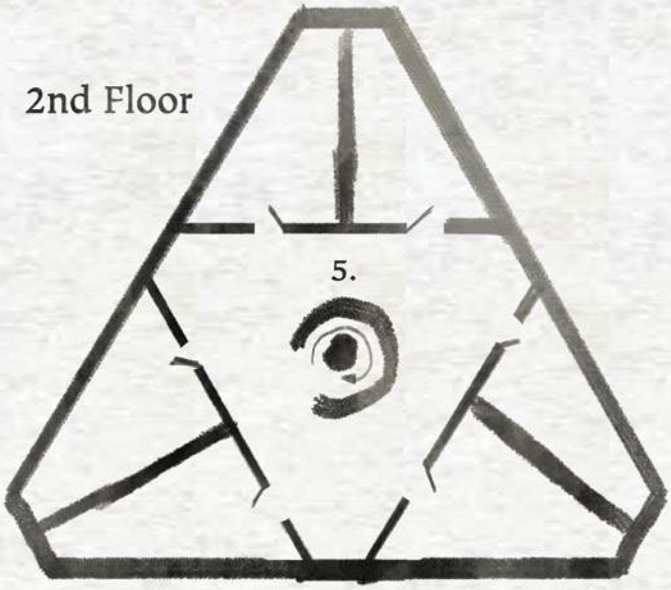


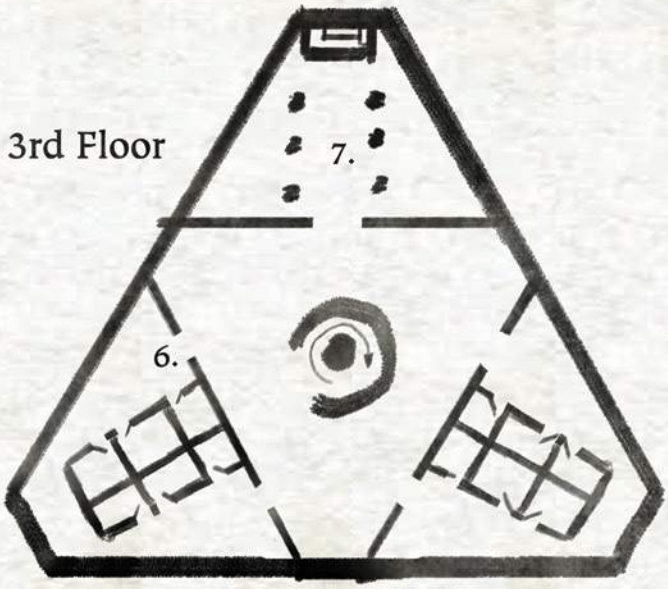
Map Guide

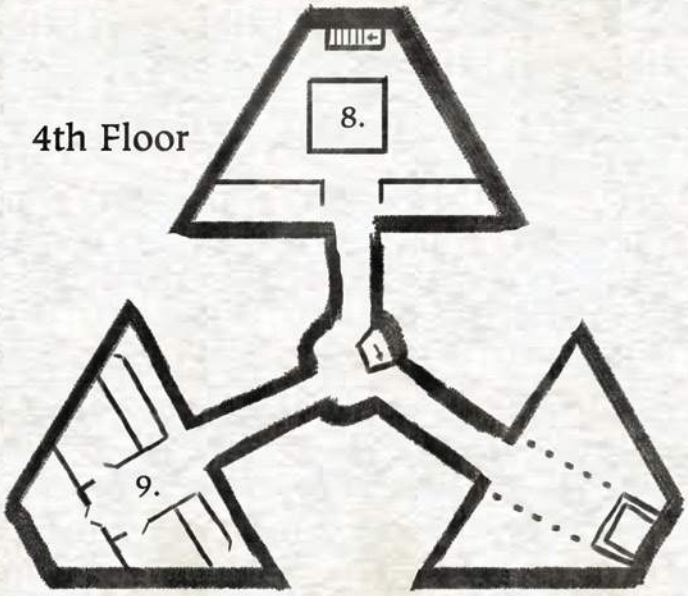
1. Tenshukaku
2. Stables
3. Yurts / Barracks
4. Main Gate
5. Training Fields
6. Storage

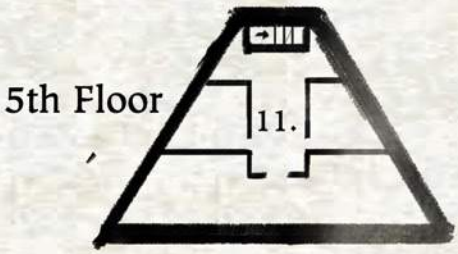
Shiro Shinjo Tenshukaku











1. Entrance
2. Holding Cells
3. Stables
4. Spiral Ramp
5. Storage
6. Dignitary Quarters
7. Dining Hall
8. War Room
9. Officer Quarters
10. Shinjo Shrine
11. Daimyo's Quarters

Otaku/Utaku Provinces

The northeastern part of the Unicorn lands, the five provinces of Isei, Koubaku, Manaka, Senseki, and Tsuriai, are ruled by the Otaku family – renamed Utaku early in the twelfth century. These wide plains are open and nearly featureless, with few natural resources other than grasslands. Of course, since horses are even more vital to the Utaku than to the other Unicorn families, this is not a bad thing. The only exception to this physical pattern is Tsuriai Province, with its mountain valleys full of farms.

Isei Province

The westernmost of the Utaku provinces has the Bugaisha Province to its north, while to the east is Manaka Province and to the south, Zenzan Province. The western border is the edge of the Empire among the mountains, later further defined by the Khol Wall. This lonely and underpopulated province is home to the most sacred location of the Utaku family: Otaku Seido, the shrine dedicated to the family's founding Thunder.



Otaku Seido

Although the Utaku change their name in the early twelfth century, the shrine of their founder still bears the original name of the clan Thunder, lest they give offense to her spirit. Bringing weapons onto the grounds of Otaku Seido is prohibited, and even the Clan Champion respects this injunction when visiting. The inner shrine itself is forbidden to all except females of the Utaku lineage. Candidates for the Battle Maidens are required to spend the night before their gempukku in the shrine, hoping for guidance from the heroic ancestors. At the center of the inner shrine is the Thunder Shrine honoring the first Otaku and her descendent Otaku Kamoko; it contains many artifacts of the two Thunder's lives, and radiates a supernatural calm. Only the most honored among the Utaku are allowed entrance to this sacred place.

In the mid-to-late twelfth century, the Heaven's Breath Dojo is constructed on the edge of the grounds of Otako Seido, serving as a dojo for all the Utaku family schools. The dojo also serves as a waypoint for shiotome traveling to or from service on the Khol Wall, allowing them to rest, exchange news, and seek spiritual guidance at the shrine before moving on.

Koubaku Province

This province is surrounded to the north and west by other Utaku lands, while to the south is the Moto-ruled Ikoku Province. To the east are the lands of the Dragon Clan. Koubaku Province is dominated by Heigen Kori, the Ice Plain. In winter, Heigen Kori is a field of snow and ice; in summer, it is an equally desolate moor, used by the Utaku as a place to practice battle maneuvers where they cannot harm crops or herds. The roads that pass around the Ice Plain are nicknamed the Circle of Thunder for the thunderous echoes of the Battle Maidens' mounts as they charge across the plain.

Dark Edge Village

Kurayami-ha Mura is the only settlement of note in Koubaku Province. It is famed as the site of the first Emerald Championship and considered to have the finest dueling fields in the Empire. The village gets its

name from the fall of the shadows from the mountains, which brush the edge of the tournament grounds but never cross them. When these lands were ruled by the Lion, the Emerald Championship was always held here, but after the Unicorn returned to the Empire the other clans began agitating to have the tournament relocated to neutral ground. As a result, at the end of the tenth century the Emerald Championship was moved from Dark Edge Village to Shinden Osano-Wo on the Plains of Thunder. Since then, Kurayami-ha Mura has slowly declined in importance. However, the Ide do maintain the dojo of the Calm Heart duelist school here, the younger students of which often act as guides for visitors to the village

Just outside Dark Edge Village is the Shrine to the Emerald Champion. Initially built by the Crane to honor Kakita, the shrine has become a symbol of Imperial power and continuity. Outside the main shrine are three statues representing Kakita, Hantei, and Osano-Wo, all looking toward Otosan Uchi. Scores of smaller shrines to all of the successor Champions radiate out from them.

Manaka Province

Manaka is the most central of the Utaku provinces, surrounded by Bugaisha and Isei to the west, Kawabe to the south, Ikoku to the east, and Tsuriai to the north. It is another province of plains and grass, perfect for the powerful horses of the Utaku cavalry.

Shiro Utaku Shojo

Battle Maiden Castle is originally called Shiro Otaku Shojo, but is renamed in the twelfth century along with the rest of the family. Sometimes called the Utaku Palaces, it is a strong castle combining the best of foreign and traditional architectural techniques. The city around the castle is protected by concentric walls, using the same style of construction as the citadel itself. While not as opulent as other family capitals, it is still beautifully appointed on the interior. Yet the true jewel of Shinjo Utaku Shojo is its vast stable complex, so large that they have their own set of walls and dedicated guards. (The loss of the stables to fire during the War with the Lying Darkness was one of the most serious blows ever struck against the Utaku, though they rebuilt and redoubled security afterwards.) Unlike most of the other Unicorn family capitals, the Utaku do not encourage or invite guests. Even other Unicorn sometimes feel unwelcome among the proud Utaku.

Within the castle is the dojo that teaches the Shiotome, the Battle Maidens, though much like the Shinjo they spend a great deal of their time mastering riding and other equestrian skills on the Utaku Training Grounds to the west of the city. The secrets of the Battle Maiden school were not actually written down and formalized until after the Unicorn returned to Rokugan and built a physical dojo; before that time, the secrets were a tradition handed down directly from master to student, mother to daughter.

How the Unicorn Travel

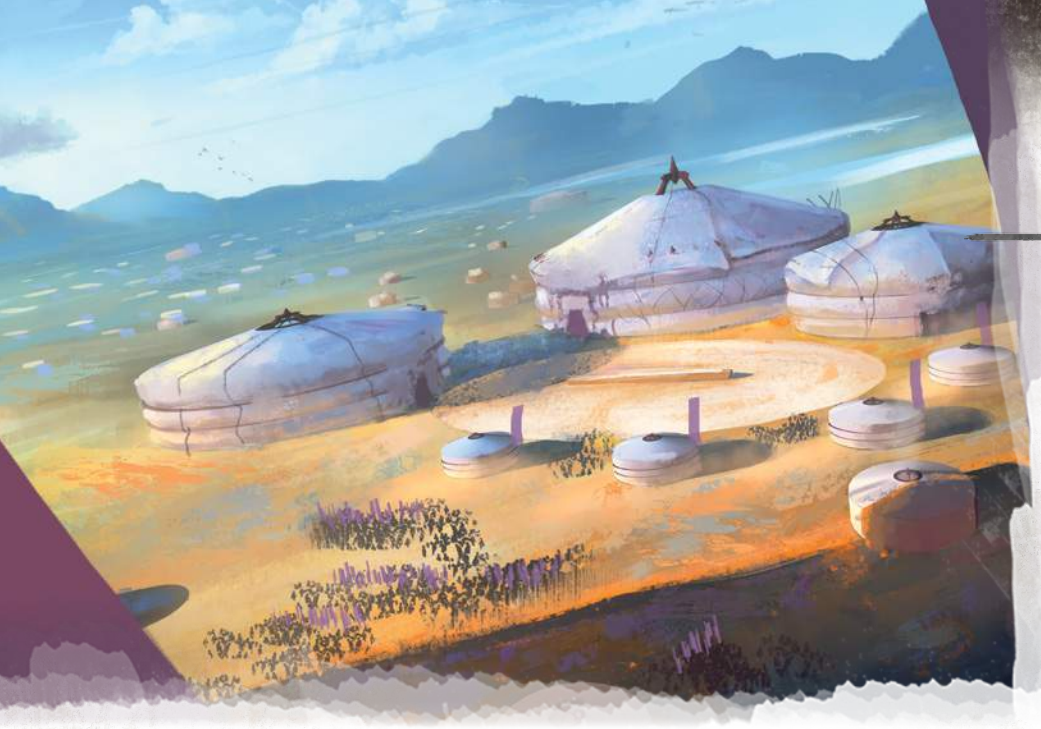
The Unicorn lands are mostly flat, and their hills are gradual and rolling. They have many wide open spaces, which is suitable for their horses to roam and run freely and for their nomadic populations to wander the lands. In these lands, settlements are farther apart than in other places within the Empire. There are villages and towns that trade often, and yet there will be no roads connecting them. The land is sparse of paths, roads, and trails. How is it that the Unicorn can maintain such swift travel between these locations?

Naturally the answer pertains to Unicorn horses. While mounted travel is common in the Empire, it is especially so in the lands of the Unicorn. Unicorn travelers cover more ground thanks to the excellence of their horses, and also thanks to other traveling tricks they learned from abroad.

For instance, Unicorn scouts will often travel with not just one horse, but with three or four at a time. When one horse tires from carrying the samurai, he will switch the horse with another, allowing a brief canter and then resuming the previous pace. This means that the scout is almost always riding a "fresh" horse, allowing him to cover far more ground. It is methods like this that allow Unicorn travelers to deliver messages with startling speed, and for the Unicorn armies crossing the Empire to cover far more ground than one might normally expect.



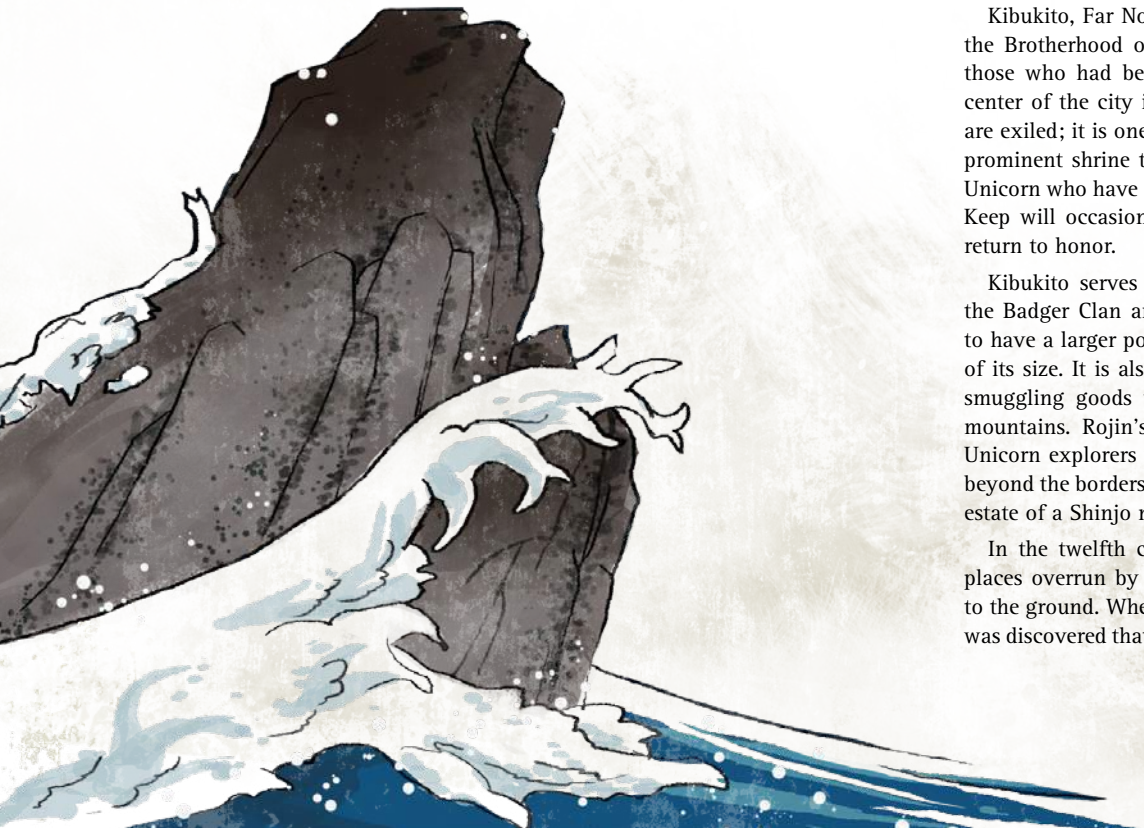




Over the River of the Lost Valley to the south is the Mounted Infantry Dojo, where the Unicorn infantry (predominantly Utaku men) are taught. Within the Utaku stables themselves is the World's Balance Dojo, which teaches every skill needed to raise, train, and heal horses. The prestigious Utaku stablemasters come from this dojo, as do some of the Empire's best equestrian acrobats.

Shiro Naoko

The small fort of Shiro Naoko, to the southeast of Shiro Utako Shojo, is the home of the Naoko vassal family. Built on the shell of a ancient Lion fort, it retains some of its original martial appearance. Since the Naoko family keep to the nomadic ways of the Unicorn, the castle is only occupied by a small garrison, a handful of functionaries, and those too old or sick to travel the plains.



Senseki Province

Senseki is the northernmost of the Utaku provinces and the most unusual, being primarily mountains and valleys rather than the plains found in of the rest of their lands. To the north of this province are the Great Wall of the North Mountains which form the border of the Empire; to the west is Kouryo Province, the Utaku provinces of Koubaku and Tsuriai are to the south, and the lands of the Dragon Clan form the eastern border. Shinseki Province suffers from bitter winters, and while the mountain soil is fertile it is also difficult to work; still, it is heavily farmed because the rest of the Utaku provinces have only limited food production. The Utaku take pains to emphasize how harsh and difficult life is in Senseki province, since they would prefer others not realize this province of short summers and long icy winters is the main source of the food that feeds the Utaku legions.

Akimi and Bikami

The southern anchors of Senseki Province are the so called "twin villages" of Akami and Bikami, located on the eastern and western sides of the province respectively. Both are large towns that share similar layouts and similar roles as storage for grain reserves. Both villages are also destroyed by the Army of Dark Fire in the late twelfth century, only to be later rebuilt with additional defenses. The peasants of these towns are numerous, loyal, and hard-working, and as such are often recruited as ashigaru when the Unicorn have need of such.

Kibukito

Kibukito, Far North Village, was founded by monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei as place for the families of those who had been banished from the Empire. At the center of the city is a temple for the souls of those who are exiled; it is one of the few temples in Rokugan with a prominent shrine to the obscure Fortune of Redemption. Unicorn who have disgraced relatives assigned to Outsider Keep will occasionally visit to pray for redemption and return to honor.

Kibukito serves as a point of contact and trade with the Badger Clan and the Dragon Clan. As such, it tends to have a larger population of outsiders than other towns of its size. It is also rumored to be used occasionally for smuggling goods to and from the Yobanjin across the mountains. Rojin's Wanderers, a quasi-official band of Unicorn explorers who seek useful resources for the clan beyond the borders of the Empire, operate from the nearby estate of a Shinjo noble.

In the twelfth century, Kibukito was one of the first places overrun by the Army of Dark Fire and was razed to the ground. When the town was rebuilt after the war, it was discovered that the underground archive of the temple

had largely survived, and this providence was considered a blessing of the Fortunes. A new town wall and other defenses, such as watchtowers, were added to shield the village against any future attacks from the north.

Tsuriai Province

This Utaku province is nestled between Kouryo and Senseki provinces in the north, with Koubaku to the east, Ikoku and Manaka to the south, and the Shinjo lands of Aishou and Bugaisha to the west. Tsuriai is primarily open plains and little used or visited by outsiders.

Yashigi Village

Yashigi Village was founded when a man named Otaku Yashigi found a previously unknown network of tunnels containing jade deposits. The village was built to mine the jade, and the Unicorn assigned troops to the area to keep it secure. To outsiders, Yashigi Village appears to be merely a pleasant resting spot for to or from Shiro Shinjo; it is a simple and clean settlement, with a beautiful view of the northern mountains. However, Yashigi Village has long suffered from frequent earthquakes. Seeking to mitigate the harm from these events, the villagers built Earthquake Temple, dedicated to Kyufoki no Kami, the Fortune of Earthquakes. The temple has had some success, but earthquakes are still more common here than they are elsewhere.

Like most Unicorn settlements in this part of the Empire, Yashigi Village is razed during the twelfth-century invasion of the Army of Dark Fire, but is rebuilt afterward.







The Lands of the Minor Clans

Rokugan's Minor Clans generally have only the most limited territory. Even the largest of them have lands amounting to less than a single Great Clan province, and often little more than a single valley and one modest stronghold. In most cases there is not even an official provincial name for a Minor Clan's lands – they are recorded by the Imperial cartographers simply as "the lands of Clan X."

For purposes of simplicity, this chapter limits itself to the lands of Minor Clans which have their own distinct territories and are not absorbed into Great Clans. Thus, the lands and major holdings of the Falcon Clan are in the Crab chapter, while the Wasp, Centipede, Fox, and Bat Clans are found in the Mantis chapter.

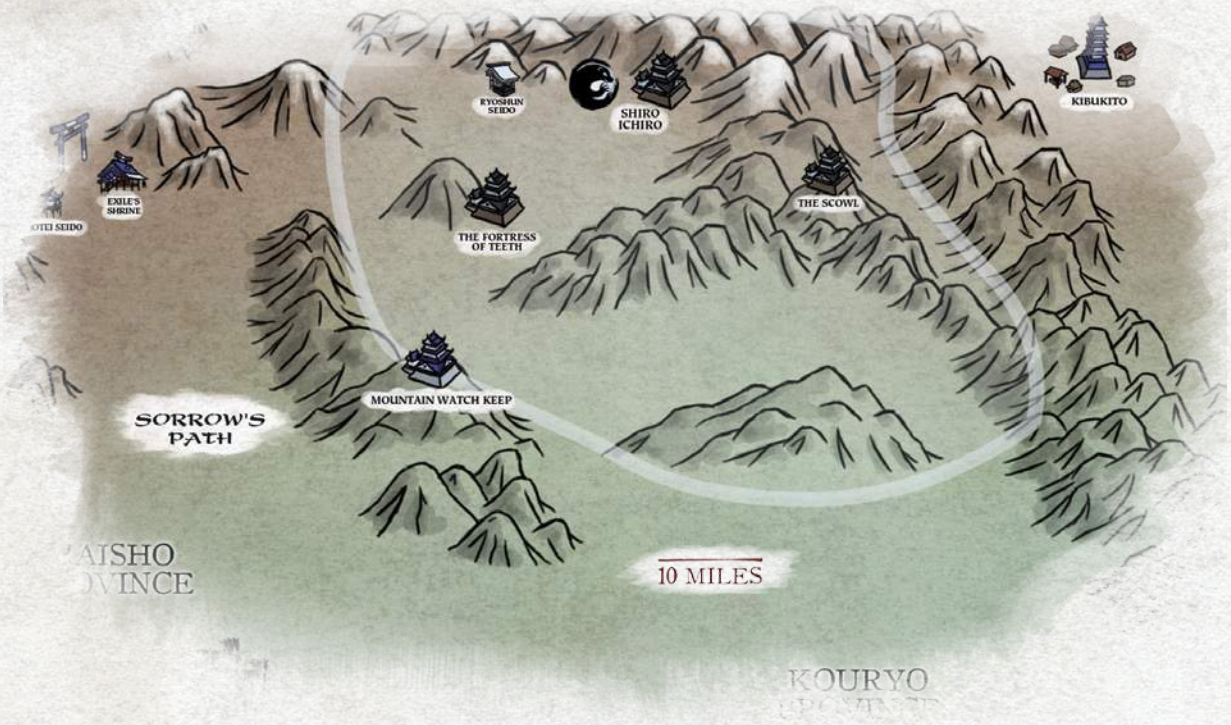
Lands of the Badger Clan

Perhaps no clan lives in as harsh a landscape as the Badger Clan. The peaks of the Great Wall of the North Mountains are covered in snow year-round, the region is tectonically active, and there are even some active volcanoes in the region (although happily only one inactive volcano is located within the Badger lands). The harsh terrain leaves little room for farms, but snowmelt and springs are commonplace, so what little arable land they have is able to produce enough to fill most of the clan's needs. The majority of such food is grown around Shiro Ichiro itself, but handfuls of small farms support each lesser fortress. The mountain streams also contain some fish, and the Badger keep chickens as well.

The Badger lands are all but sealed off from the rest of the Empire, accessible only from the Path of Woe, the single trail which ascends from the Unicorn lands and passes through the Great Wall of the North into the gaijin lands. Between these two points lie the Badger lands and all of their military fortresses. To invade from the outside world, an attacker must go through each and every strongpoint, a challenge only met once – by the Army of Dark Fire in the late twelfth century.

The Claws of the Badger

At the start of the Path of Woe, overlooking the sloping path out into the rest of the world, is the Claws of the Badger – an intimidating fortress which straddles the road with a massive gatehouse. This is the grim visage that Rokugan projects to those from outside its borders. Second only to Shiro Ichiro itself in terms of manpower, this fortress is nonetheless not expected to hold against attack – like all the lesser fortresses of the Badger, it is meant to be a 'speed bump' to delay an invasion and allow the Empire to rally its forces. This is the duty the Badger have taken on themselves ever since their second-century founding, since their numbers are simply too few to hold against a determined attack.



Like almost all Badger fortresses, the Claws of the Badger is utterly indefensible from the south. This is both because the Badger's duty does not envision any threat from within the Empire, and because they do not want any fallen fortress to then become a strong-point against the Empire's counterattack.

The Fortress of Teeth

This holding is located in a section of the Path of Woe where the pass winds its way gently up a slope between two steep rock walls. The Fortress of Teeth takes its name from the numerous giant boulders mounted atop its wall and on the surrounding slopes, resembling huge monstrous fangs. These boulders are actually carefully balanced to allow them to be easily rolled down on attackers in the pass. When the fortress is fully manned, all of the Teeth can be unleashed within a single hour.

Like most Badger holdings, the Fortress of the Teeth has only the most limited food production – a few small fields of buckwheat and soybeans, and a single copse of plum trees. The fortress does have a brewery for making plum wine, one of the Badger Clan's few minor exports.

Like all the Badger castles, the Fortress of Teeth is destroyed by the twelfth-century rampage of the demon called Hideo no Oni. Since it is a key point in the defense of the Path of Woe, it is the first Badger castle to be rebuilt later – only to be destroyed and rebuilt once again due to the War of Dark Fire.

The Scowl

As noted above, there is a single dormant volcano in the Badger lands, and built into its jagged side is a fortress the Badger call the Scowl. It has many openings looking down on the Path of Woe below it, and the samurai posted here are trained in throwing stones and hurling nage-yari. There are hidden steam pockets and hot springs all over the area, and the local Badger samurai have carefully created paths which cross over or around these obstacles to enhance their defenses with boiling water or triggered avalanches. The fortress itself is comfortable all year round, heated by hot springs and steam vents. There are also a few fields nearby which grow buckwheat, soybeans, and vegetables (the latter able to thrive due to the warmth of the hot springs).

The Scowl is destroyed by Hideo no Oni, but is fully rebuilt before the attack by the Army of Dark Fire. During the War of Dark Fire the castle is heavily damaged and eventually evacuated, but a second rebuilding effort gets underway as soon as the Destroyer War is over.

Shiro Ichiro

The seat of the Badger Clan is built into a forty-foot rock face, high on a mountain slope overlooking the Path of Woe. Escape tunnels in the mountain lead to hidden routes out of the Badger lands. The slopes of the hill below are covered in terraced farmlands and a reservoir built into the mountainside stores water for irrigation during dry seasons (and can also be used to unleash a flood against invading foes).

Shiro Ichiro is destroyed by the rampage of a demon called Hideo no Oni during the early twelfth century, and does not begin reconstruction until the year 1166. The rebuilding efforts are interrupted by the attack of the Army of Dark Fire and the castle is not fully restored until a generation later.

The Shrine of Ryoshun

For most of the Empire's history, the Badger outwardly ignore the existence of this tiny stone temple nestled in a minor valley. By making no acknowledgment of it, they keep it safe from any outsiders who might disturb the resting place of the Tenth Kami. Unfortunately, this policy means that all knowledge of this shrine is lost in the attack of Hideo no Oni in the twelfth century. It is almost fifty years later before the true nature of the shrine is rediscovered.

During the assault by the Army of Dark Fire, the Shrine of Ryoshun is destroyed, but a single Badger samurai manages to escape with a fragment of the shrine's sacred central pillar. Years later, after the defeat of the Destroyers, the Badger build a new shrine around the original site, along with a small fortress to watch over the place.

The Lands of the Boar Clan

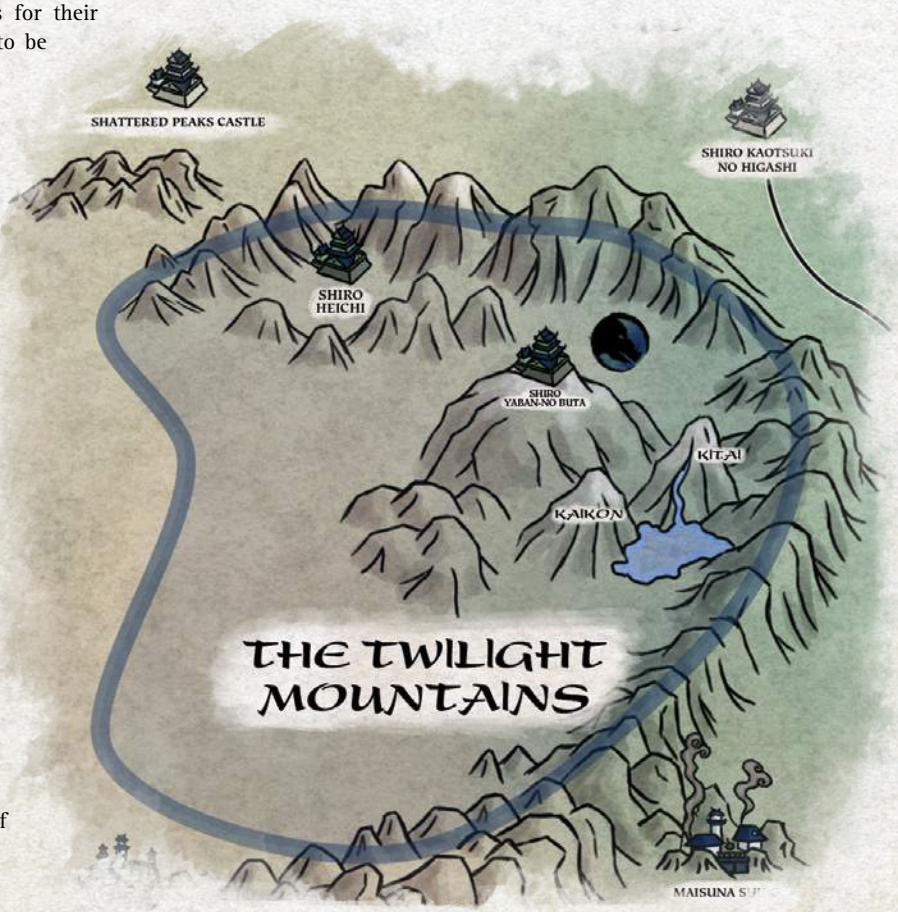
Nestled in the Twilight Mountains within the lands of the Crab Clan, the tiny domain of the Boar is quite uninviting to visitors. The mountains here are lower than those in the Empire's major ranges, and have more fertile lands, but nonetheless many Boar villages are set in paces no other clan would ever consider. Of course, a major reason for this is that the Boar rely on mines rather than farms for their prosperity. Boar mines are rich and Boar armor smiths quickly became famous for their work, allowing any shortfall in food to be easily overcome.

Shiro Heichi

Shiro Heichi is the center of the Boar Clan's lands and power during the Minor Clan's brief existence. The castle's design takes advantage of its mountainous location, resulting in an irregular layout compared to a normal Rokugani castle. Four external towers connected by a low wall surround the central keep, and at night torches are lit outside the walls to watch for any possible attack.

The main keep houses the clan's ruling family and their closest vassals. It also holds the treasures of the clan: its best armors and weapons (including several awakened items) and a fortune in iron, jade, and coin. After the Boar are destroyed, rumors of these lost treasures often draw ronin and bandits to the area, although none ever return with any of the fabled wealth.

Below the castle is the main town in the Heichi territory, a large settlement dedicated to mining, forging, and trade. Every day scores of peasant laborers go underground to dig out the ores which are the clan's source of wealth. The town has only the barest level of self-sustenance, relying on a few rice paddies and the fish from some mountain streams; most supplies come from the trade caravans which visit regularly to acquire the clan's armors and metals. The settlement has an uneven landscape, with steeply sloping paths and crude staircases, and is quite dirty by Rokugani standards, covered with the dust and waste of the mines. The inhabitants maintain a number of small temples in the area, including a secret shrine in honor of the mountain spirit called the Shakoki Dogu (this is kept from the eyes of visitors who might misunderstand it).



The Lands of the Dragonfly Clan

As noted in Chapter 3 (the Dragon Clan), the Dragonfly Clan's seat of power, Kyuden Tonbo, is actually located within the Dragon province of Chinpi. However, the rest of the lands of the Dragonfly are a single province outside the Dragon borders, forming a buffer zone between that clan and the Lion. While the fields of the Dragonfly Province are rolling and gentle, they are not particular fertile, and the clan's peasants must struggle to produce enough food. The lands are nearly indefensible, and of course the clan's singular castle is actually located across the border in Dragon territory. This is something the Tonbo fully understand, and many times they have elected to stand aside and not disrupt an enemy army en route to attack the Dragon lands.

Kyuden Tonbo

The lone castle of the Dragonfly is more of a compound of buildings than a true castle, and the title of 'Kyuden' – meaning a castle that can host an Imperial Winter Court – has never been tested. The Tonbo daimyo dwells in the single high pagoda-topped tower here, and the primary Dragonfly dojo is nearby, but the largest proportion of this holding is given over to guest quarters. Those who wish to see the Dragon are required to stop here and ask for permission, and their waits can sometimes stretch into weeks or even months. The Dragonfly insist on providing suitable accommodations to their guests for as long as may be necessary.

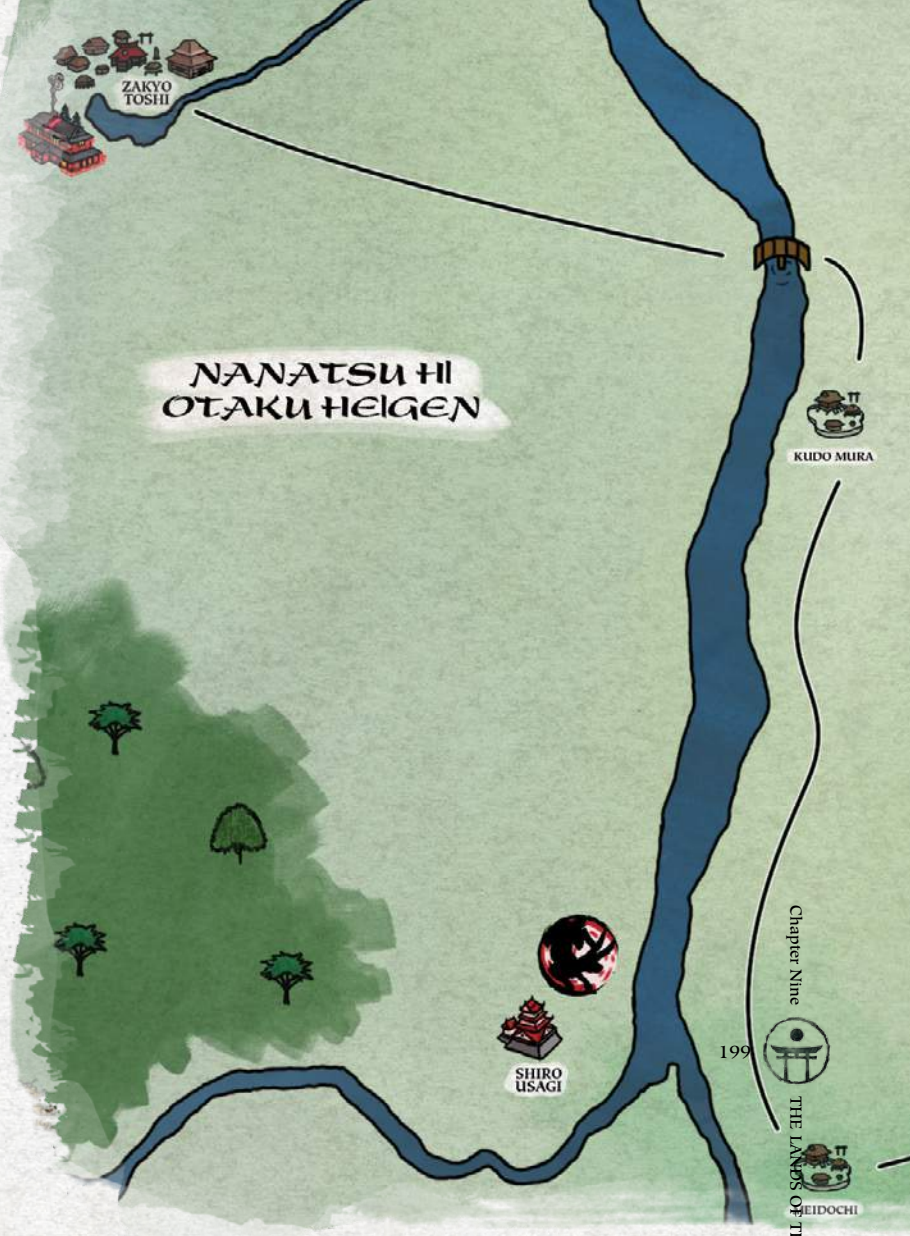
The Still Water Monastery

The lands of the Dragonfly are covered in numerous small temples and shrines, not surprising for a Minor Clan focused on spiritual and magical studies. The Still Water Monastery, dedicated to the Fortunes, stands out among these due to its martial nature; the monks here follow the path of the sohei (warrior-monks) and are actually a stronger military force than the Dragonfly Clan's own modest number of bushi. The sohei largely keep to themselves, but have occasionally involved themselves in peasant uprisings within the nearby Lion lands (siding with the peasants). While many of the other temples and shrines in the Tonbo lands have been destroyed over the years by invading forces of one sort or another, the Still Water Monastery has never fallen, a point of pride to the monks who call it home.

The Lands of the Hare Clan

Modest by Great Clan standards, the Hare lands are actually among the larger Minor Clan territories. They are primarily located along the River of Gold, mostly on the western bank but with some on the eastern bank. Less fertile than the lands of the Scorpion to the north, they are nonetheless blessed by Inari-no-Kami and produce a fair excess beyond what the Hare need. Their lands are also blessed by a generous number of hardwood trees for lumber, allowing the Hare to remain fully independent of both the (generally uncaring) Crab and the (often hostile) Scorpion Clan.





While most maps of the Empire show the clan having a single "Usagi Province," after the reign of Toturi I the clan also has a miniscule second province, the Ujina Province, controlled by the newly created second family of the Hare. Since all the noble families of the Great Clans claim at least one province of their own, the Ujina claim their own land, small as it is, and maps drawn by Hare scribes always indicate this second province (even if a strong-armed bushi might be able to fling a stone across the length of it).

Shiro Usagi

The Hare Clan's ancestral seat of power is located just west of the River of Gold and east of the Shinomen Forest. Built soon after the clan's founding in the eighth century, this castle is small but highly defensible, with nine-foot walls of solid stone. Later generations add three concentric moats, further enhancing the defenses, but the castle is still too small to withstand a major assault from a Great Clan. In the year 1123, a Scorpion general named Bayushi Tomaru captures the castle and razes the surrounding lands, leaving a charred ruin behind. For years afterward the ruins are rumored to be haunted by the ghost of Hare Clan Champion Usagi Oda.

After the restoration of the Hare Clan, the castle is rebuilt in a very pragmatic design and much stronger than before. The outer walls are made twice as thick and twelve feet high.

Kudo Mura

The village of Kudo is perhaps the single most important location in Hare lands. Located on the east bank of the River of Gold in an astoundingly fertile area, full of rice paddies and thriving farms, it provides almost the entire food supply for the clan, and is probably the single most productive holding in all the Minor Clan lands. After the Hare are disbanded and then reformed in the twelfth century, the village finds itself outside their official borders and effectively becomes unaligned, its crops shared between the Hare and the Sparrow (a source of tension between those two clans). Further changes of control follow later in the century, but after the ascension of Empress Iweko I the village and surrounding territory is finally restored to the Hare Clan.

Meidochi

The only notable Hare holding aside from Kudo and Shiro Usagi is a medium-sized village, home to over a thousand peasants, located in lightly-wooded lands along the River of Gold. The village straddles the meeting point of three roads, making it a minor commercial hub, and most of the Hare Clan's trade runs through it. The clan maintains a very small keep on a hill on the west side of the village.



The Lands of the Monkey

The land which becomes known as the Vale of the Monkey is located at the eastern edge of the Scorpion Clan's Soshi provinces, and is granted to the newly-formed Monkey Clan by Emperor Toturi I in the early twelfth century. It is a lovely place of rolling hills, many small forests, and rich soil irrigated by a slow-paced river. Prior to the ascension of the Monkey, this territory is the subject of a centuries-long tug-of-war between the Lion and Scorpion; unfortunately for both of these Great Clans, the lands are difficult to defend, with no particular natural barriers. As a result, the valley switches hands dozens of times over the course of Rokugan's history, both from direct military clashes and through courtly maneuvering (the Crane are particularly fond of using the fate of these lands to show political favor to one side or another).

With the establishment of the Monkey Clan, the eternal struggle over these lands comes to an end, for no Great Clan will dare to attack a Minor Clan led by the closest friend of the Emperor. The peasants here embrace their new lord (himself a former peasant) with passion and loyalty, and the newly-named Vale of the Monkey flourishes. Toku insists that all his villages be protected by at least one resident samurai, a traditional policy that the Great Clans ended centuries earlier in favor of centralized military control. Toku's policy makes it more difficult for Monkey samurai to marshal for war, but makes it far easier to defend the many villages against bandits and to be aware of any peasant concerns.

Toku Torid-e

The Vigilant Keep of the Monkey is located atop a hill at the northern end of the Vale of the Monkey. It is a small castle but well built and defensible. After enduring several devastating attacks in its early years, the castle adds extensive supply caches in its basements and escape tunnels in the event of another defeat.

As the seat of power for the clan, Toku Torid-e is home to a modest court, usually attended only by ambassadors from the Scorpion and the other Minor Clans. Other clans visit occasionally, and usually send warriors rather than courtiers – the Monkey are a martial clan and their lands contain little of interest to a courtier.

There are four major shrines inside Toku Torid-e, dedicated to Toku himself (who is proclaimed the Fortune of Virtue after his death) and to the three Emperors of the Toturi Dynasty. These three shrines have collected a number of minor relics associated with those three Emperors, and bringing more is a sure way to earn the favor of the Monkey.

The main dojo of the Monkey Clan is also present within the Keep, and most Toku bushi study within its walls at some point in their lives. Kenjutsu lessons happen within the dojo itself but other training often takes place outdoors.

Shinden Fuzake

Like the Hare, the Monkey Clan boasts a second full family – the Fuzake, proclaimed by Dowager Empress Toturi Kurako in the year 1169. The Champion of the Monkey Clan awards them control of a village near the Scorpion Clan border and arranges funds for them to build a temple there. The Fuzake dedicate their new temple to those Fortunes other than Toku... all of them. Shinden Fuzake pays homage to every deity from the Seven Great Fortunes to such obscure deities as Isora, Fortune of the Seashore (the nearest beach is hundreds of miles away). The temple has an erratic layout, with statues of Fortunes greater and lesser in various nooks and corners, and is frequently changed to accommodate the elevation of new Fortunes.

The Lands of the Oriole

The Tsi are a ronin family for centuries, all but unknown to the larger Empire despite being officially vassals of the Hantei. Known as weaponsmiths of legendary skill, for most of their history they live quietly in East Hub Village, slowly accumulating a few minor residences and holdings in other parts of the Empire, including Otosan Uchi itself. In the mid-twelfth century, a number of major events – the creation of the Celestial Swords, the ascension of one of the Tsi to become Fortune of Steel, and the destruction of Otosan Uchi – combine to result in the Tsi becoming the Oriole Clan.

Quite a few ronin swear fealty to the new Minor Clan, swelling its numbers, but the Oriole nonetheless lack anything that could be called a province. They have many small parcels of lands – a village here, a mine there, and so forth. Those considered to be vital, such as mines, are given a single samurai to oversee them; such warriors know they cannot single-handedly hold the lands under their charge, but are expected to send word when attacked so the clan can seek proper vengeance in the future. The Oriole might have little ability to strike on their own, but the ability to gift their magnificent weapons to those who earn their favor gives them a surprising number of allies.

Kyuden Tsi

The Oriole's only true castle is still incomplete at the end of the twelfth century. Originally designed by Clan Champion Tsi Zutaka in the year 1170, the castle's construction is badly delayed by the subsequent Destroyer War. When finally completed it will be the most splendid palace among all the Minor Clans, but in the year 1199 it is still a shining aspiration (and a perpetual drain on the clan's coffers). The half-built palace is located a short distance westward from the Imperial City of Toshi Ranbo. Its architecture is a marriage of Kakita and Isawa aesthetics, but expressed in the humble, understated manner of the Oriole. Planned features for the completed palace include a Hall of Blades and a great shrine to the Fortune of Steel.

The Lands of the Ox Clan

The Ox lands are unusual due to being located close by the ancient domain of the extinct Snake Clan. Rokugani as a whole shun the area, thinking it cursed, and while they are technically controlled by the Phoenix that clan avoids the region as well. Thus the lands were simply there for the taking when Shinjo Morito and his followers fled from the Unicorn. By claiming and securing lands which no other clan would touch, Morito won permission from the Emperor to create his own Minor Clan. None realized at the time that Morito was a Kolat and had chosen these lands to protect the hidden Kolat Temple nearby.

The territories of the Morito family are loosely divided into two regions. In the south, the Ox control the edge of the fertile Dragon Heart Plain, a gently rolling land which is also vast and open, difficult to defend. The Ox cavalry patrol the region aggressively to prevent incursions by bandits, and the clan's scattered villages have small waystations for warriors and mounts to rest. The Ox have also built a number of small keeps to serve as hubs for their patrols. During the winter the population here increases as many peasants from mountains come down to stay in the less inhospitable plains.

In the north, the Ox have a number of smaller villages which use the numerous mountain streams for fishing and brewing sake. A few villages also breed mountain ponies which the Ox use to patrol the mountains. Here again, the Morito maintain several keeps overlooking the most prominent passes to the rest of Rokugan. (During the time of the Kolat, some of these keeps also protect the road to the Hidden Temple.)

Shiro Morito

Shiro Morito is an impressive fortress located on the lower slopes of the Great Wall of the North Mountains. It is larger than any other Minor Clan's fortress – larger than some Great Clan fortifications, in fact – and is visible from miles away. It is built in a traditional and functional style, with no excess frills, and is large enough to house the entire clan if needed. The main keep has extensive reserves of food, weapons, and fresh water, allowing it to withstand an extensive siege. The main dojo of the Morito Bushi School is also located within its walls, although much of the training happens outside. The small town at the stronghold's feet boasts several armories and smithies providing gear for the Ox army.

Shiro Morito does boast a small court, usually attended by Phoenix and Dragon samurai (the clan's neighbors to east and west). Unicorn and Scorpion samurai sometimes attend as well, along with ambassadors from the Minor Clan Alliance. The Ox are generally considered fair hosts, and guests often come to appreciate the rugged beauty of their lands.

The Ox Stables

As a Minor Clan born from the Unicorn, the Ox are justly famed for their horses. Ox warhorses are a mixed breed of Unicorn warhorses (sometimes called Tall Horses) and Rokugani ponies; they are smaller and weaker than Unicorn horses, but are still strong enough to serve as actual warhorses, making them highly desirable to other clans. As a result, the Ox Stables – located in the village below Shiro Morito – are a significant resource for the clan in its relations with the rest of Rokugan.



Red Horn Village

Located in the southeastern corner of Ox lands, Red Horn Village is a center of trade and diplomacy. While the clan's most important visitors are hosted in Shiro Morito, lesser merchant patrons and diplomats go to Red Horn Village instead, a shorter trip.

The village takes its name from the high number of Phoenix guests there, and that clan maintains a permanent embassy and trade center there called the House of the Jade Dawn. Red Horn is also something of a festive destination for certain types of outsiders, boasting several gambling houses (albeit under careful watch from the Morito).

The Western Keep

This small castle is the base of operations for sentries who protect the western and southern borders of the Ox lands. It is also the seat of power for the clan's Kijuro vassal family. The keep is little more than a stable and barracks.

The Lands of the Sparrow

In Rokugan, the Imperial families have wealth that staggers the Great Clans, the poorest Great Clan stands head and shoulders above the wealthiest Minor Clan, and the poorest Minor Clan can look at the peasants and know it is superior... except for the Sparrow.

The lands of the Sparrow Clan are uniquely desolate and challenging, a single valley filled with rocks in the north and swamps in the south, with dry sandy soil that mocks the very notion of rice paddies. Somehow, the Sparrow have managed to dig a life out of this misery, enduring the sudden cold snaps that herald winter and the flash-heatwaves that announce the arrival of summer. Mud hovels, straw roofs, and a few rare stone buildings are all that can be found here, and samurai and peasant standing side-by-side as they tend to simple root vegetables, toiling day by day to scratch out a meager existence.

They would not have it any other way.

Situated between the Crane to the northeast and the Crab to the southwest, the Sparrow lands are a unique environment that tests samurai's honor and strength of character like no other, teaching them to endure the greatest hardships and to appreciate the Now – for the past is erased by harsh weather and the future may never come.

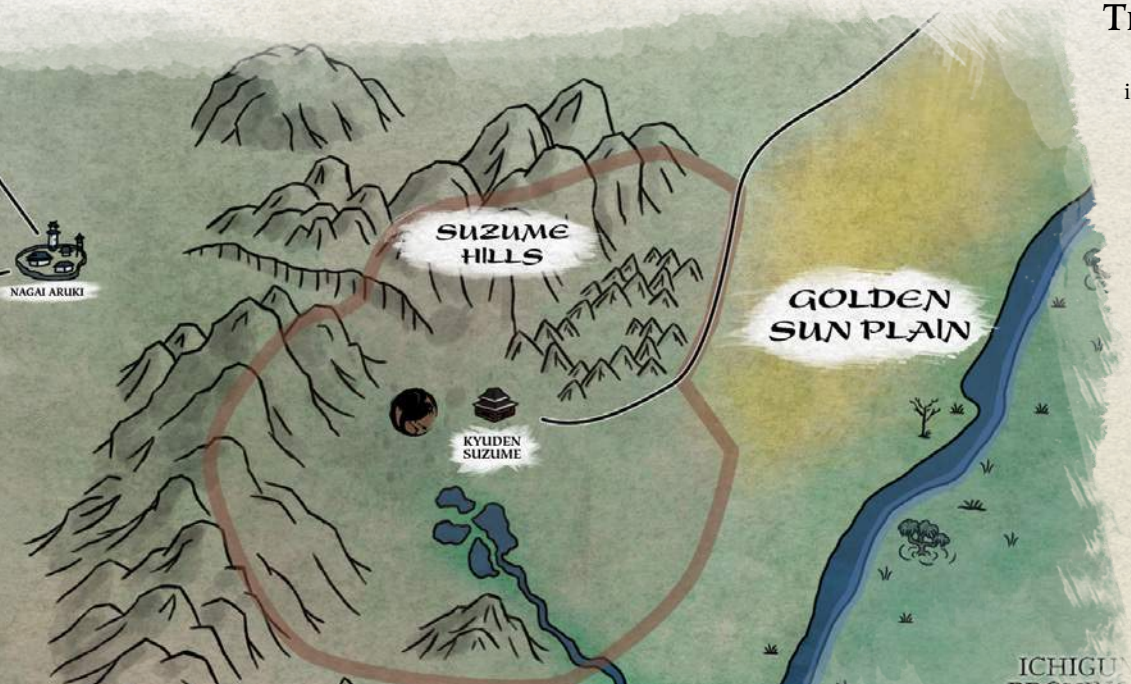
Kyuden Suzume

Despite its ambitious name, Kyuden Suzume is in fact little more than two one-story buildings with a shrine between them. Visitors sometimes confuse it for a storehouse, and its "Kyuden" title is allowed only due to the Emperor's respect for Sparrow ideals. The buildings lack any kind of decoration, and indeed trying to maintain decorations in the harsh environment of the Sparrow lands would be futile even if the clan had resources to devote to the effort.

The interior of the main building has a large courtroom that doubles as a dojo – the only dojo in Sparrow lands until the construction of a dedicated external one in the year 618. The second building contains the residence of the Sparrow Clan Champion and his immediate family, as well as a few honored advisors and servants. The inside of the castle also has the only Sparrow artwork, mostly shoji screens and statues.

The central shrine is dedicated to the clan's founder, with a smaller shrine for Lady Doji, the founder of the Great Clan that was the parent of the Sparrow. Another small shrine venerates the Sun (Lady Sun for most of history, Yakamo and the Jade Sun thereafter).

The most notable feature of the castle is invisible to outsiders: a maze of tunnels and subterranean rooms beneath the stronghold that stretches for miles in every direction. Here may be found the Suzume family library, the scrolls kept safe here from the myriad destructions that would find them above. Secret entrances to these warrens dot the landscape, hidden by foliage and brush. Many Sparrow spend days within these tunnels without ever seeing the sun, but they claim it gives them time for contemplation and serenity.



The Golden Sun Plains

Said to be favored by Lady Sun herself in ancient times, the Golden Sun Plains are quite possibly the single most beautiful and fertile region in all of Rokugan. Golden stalks of wild grains flutter with each breeze, trees dot the landscape, and gentle creeks teem with fish. Some of the wild animals here are so docile they will approach humans and eat directly from their hands. It is said that tossing a handful of seeds onto the soil of the Plains will cause each and every one to sprout without so much as watering them. The Sparrow are charged with protecting this bounty, but are not permitted to use it – the Emperor long ago proclaimed



the Golden Sun Plains off-limits from mortal settlement. The Plains are open to samurai to visit, so long as they obey the decree of the Emperor and disturb nothing. No food is to be gathered here, no water taken from the streams, no blade drawn, no blood spilled; the entire area is sacrosanct, holy to the Sun. Small fires such as campfires are permitted, but all the wood used must be gathered from fallen branches and dead leaves, not a single twig plucked from a still-living branch.

Only a handful of Sparrow possess the self-control and willpower to look upon this bounty while denying it to themselves. These samurai call their duty the Vigil, a sacred duty to the Son of Heaven. Sparrow samurai quietly follow any visitors at a discrete distance, keeping an eye out to ensure they take only memories, nothing else. Those who seem to tarry too long, or who are in danger of damning their souls by accidental blasphemy (such as drawing a katana to sharpen it), are approached by helpful guides who happily escort and assist them.

The Lands of the Tortoise Clan

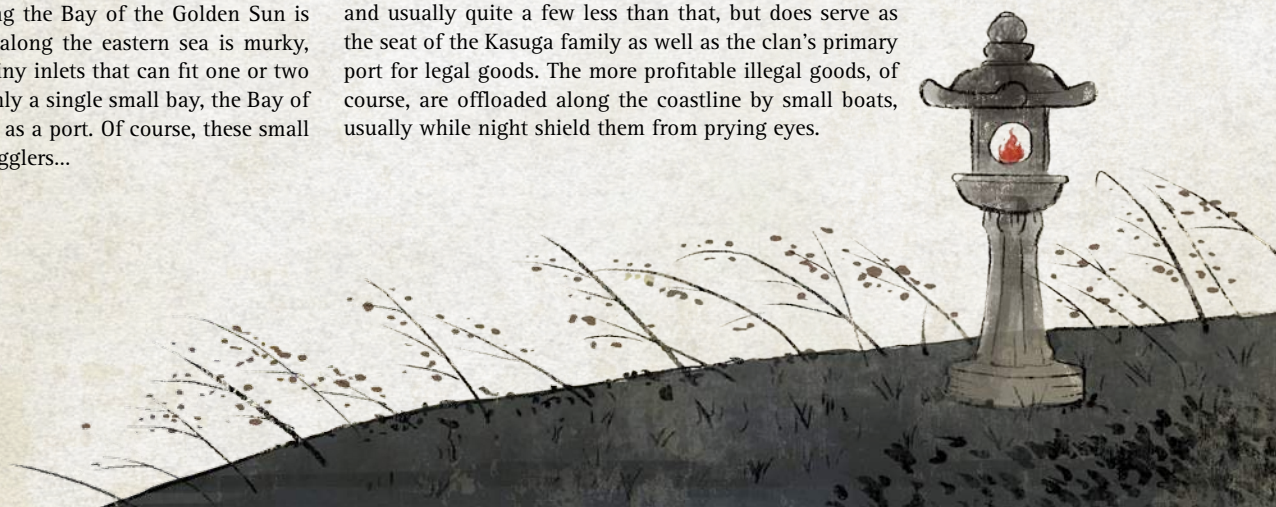
No minor clan, and indeed no Great Clan, has quite the diversity and wide-ranging territory as the Tortoise, an oft-overlooked Minor Clan that actually controls enough wealth to rival some of the Great Clans... but whose true duty to the Emperor prevents it from ever revealing that wealth.

The single province of the Tortoise is a small patch of territory on the northern shore of Wan sano Kin Taiyo (the Bay of the Golden Sun). Protection and control of the Bay is the Tortoise Clan's official duty, one it does not seem to take as seriously as other clans would like. Rumors claim the Tortoise accept bribes from smugglers, or act as smugglers themselves, but little is ever done about this due to the special status of the Tortoise as the favored clan of the Throne. Their lands, however, are compact and unremarkable, uglier than other Rokugani would like, with squat trees, common brambles, and a swampy shoreline. While the shoreline facing the Bay of the Golden Sun is lovely, the longer shore along the eastern sea is murky, filled with marshes and tiny inlets that can fit one or two shallow boats. There is only a single small bay, the Bay of Slow Tide, that can serve as a port. Of course, these small inlets are perfect for smugglers...

The Tortoise, as favored vassals of the Emperor, are often gifted land by the Throne with small parcels of land or isolated holdings in other parts of the Empire. Often, these "gifts" are lands which the Otomo judge to be lacking in any real worth but which still require some manner of oversight. The Tortoise obediently take control of them and dispatch lone samurai and handfuls of peasants to watch over them. In truth, there is a tiny village, a small shrine, or a rocky outcropping in almost every province in the Empire that a Tortoise calls home, these scattered plots being of no interest to anyone else. From these tiny enclaves the Tortoise dispatch their merchants, earn coin, and sometimes become involved in local smuggling rings or other organized crime activities.

Slow Tide Harbor

The largest town in the lone Tortoise province, Slow Tide Harbor is the one port they control fully. The bay, like most of the Tortoise coast, is swampy and dark, and in truth is more of a lagoon – large and protected, but quite shallow. The water here is dark, the shoreline choked with trees and roots, but it is the one place in the Tortoise lands that a ship can dock and load or unload its cargo. The village rarely numbers more than a hundred samurai, and usually quite a few less than that, but does serve as the seat of the Kasuga family as well as the clan's primary port for legal goods. The more profitable illegal goods, of course, are offloaded along the coastline by small boats, usually while night shield them from prying eyes.









Chapter Ten

The Shadowlands

The Shadowlands is the term used in Rokugan to describe the Tainted realm which lies to the south and southwest of the Empire's borders. It is a vast place, larger than the combined lands of any three Great Clans, and in many eras of Rokugan's history it is growing, absorbing formerly pure lands at its edge.

In the center of the Shadowlands is its source: the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, the place where the Ninth Kami fell to the earth and broke through into Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. Conditions there are chaotic and unpredictable, as Jigoku's influence constantly changes the world, and some accounts even claim the land is slowly rotating around the Pit like a draining sink. As one moves further away from the Pit, the influence of Jigoku lessens and the Shadowlands becomes more stable. Still, even in regions close to the Empire the Shadowlands is often in a state of flux, geographical features seeming to move at random, making it very difficult to map or understand the place.

There are some features which remain static, usually because they are held that way by the will of a powerful denizen of the Shadowlands. The Taint infects everything within the Shadowlands, and anyone (or anything) brought into the region is susceptible to its influence – here, the Taint permeates even the very air.

Before the fall of Fu Leng, this region was a tropical paradise of color and light. Afterward, it is a place of gray clouds and bleak moors, of jagged stones and twisted, unnatural plants. The colors are browns, yellows, grays, and blacks. Nothing in the Shadowlands is as it seems; a tree might lash out and devour someone, a field of dark grass might be the waving hair of buried zombies, a small pool of water might be a portal to Jigoku or the eye of an enormous oni. At times, the plants and animals in the Shadowlands are eerily reminiscent of those of the Empire, changed only in subtle ways. At other times they are hideously different – rice that wraps roots around the ankles of those trying to harvest it, cherry blossoms that burrow into the skin of those they fall on. The "natural" animals are always aggressive and malignant, with peculiar coloration and mutated forms. There are also unique plants and animals, transplants from Jigoku or one of the other spirit realms, things created as experiments by powerful maho-tsukai, or simply creatures that have mutated so much as to be unrecognizable.

The people of the Shadowlands are, in many cases, not truly "people" at all – at least as the Rokugani understand the term. Humans who dwell here are (with very few exceptions) irrevocably Tainted – a category known in Rokugan as "the Lost," mortals whose bodies and minds are twisted by the Taint into utter evil. Many of them simply go mad, succumbing to the basest and most violent instincts. After the Dark Lord Diagotsu appears in the early twelfth century, he organizes the Lost and is able to reduce the number of them who go completely insane; this gives rise for a time to a sort of "civilization" in the Shadowlands, a dark and malignant echo of the Empire from which the Lost once hailed.

The other creatures in the Shadowlands live in societies that fit their nature. Trolls, ogres, and goblins are the most common, but there are others that might be considered "people" by some extremely loose description – bog hags, pennagolan, and other such creatures.

And, of course, there are the oni, who slip constantly through the Festering Pit into the mortal realm, ever multiplying, ever hungry.

The Realm of the Lost

The places depicted here are all built in the twelfth century, when Daigotsu organizes the Lost and imposes a sort of "civilization" on them. After Daigotsu leaves the Shadowlands to infiltrate the Empire, renaming his followers as "the Spider Clan," these holdings are largely abandoned and soon crumble away, eroded by the chaotic and destructive nature of the Shadowlands.

The Wall of Bones

A dark reflection of the Great Carpenter Wall, the Wall of Bones is intended to protect the City of the Lost from any attack, whether by the Crab or by Shadowlands rivals. Built a few miles north of the city, and stretching for dozens of miles in either direction, the Wall is literally built from bones – the skeletons of Diagotsu's slain enemies and the spines and rib-cages of enormous oni he summons for this specific purpose. Lost Kaiu assist in the design, and it does show a perverse echo of the Kaiu Kabe in its appearance.

Despite the eventual departure of the Lost, the Wall of Bones stands unbroken until the army of the Destroyers invades the Shadowlands from the south. They overran the Wall and most of it is destroyed, leaving only a few remnants here and there.

The City of the Lost

Located deep in the Shadowlands near the junction of the Black Finger and Dark Moon Rivers, this is a city in every sense of the word. It houses samurai, peasants, and even eta who lived their lives in a grotesque semblance of how they would live in the Empire. Of course, the chief difference between the City of the Lost and any city inside the Empire is that all of its human inhabitants are Lost, their minds and souls irrevocably corrupted by the Taint. There are also more obvious visual differences, such as the unpleasant nature of the food they eat, and the presence of goblins and ogres roaming the streets. But for all that, in some ways it is very much a standard city. There are even magistrates, although their methods of enforcement would make the harshest Rokugani flinch in horror.

The Lost use the city as a headquarters and staging point for their expeditions out into the rest of the Shadowlands and to the Empire proper. For a time, Daigotsu even suggests to his followers that the city may someday be accepted as the capital of a "Great Clan" forged from the Lost, but eventually he abandons this idea in favor of infiltrating the Empire instead.



The Temple of the Ninth Kami

Rising like a monolithic black fang in the center of the City of the Lost is the Temple of the Ninth Kami, a direct symbol of the power of Fu Leng and his agent Daigotsu. The Temple served as both a place to worship the Ninth Kami and as personal headquarters for Daigotsu himself, and its main chamber is dominated by an enormous statue of Fu Leng crushing a crab beneath his foot.

The temple is mainly a rumor in Rokugan, and some tales mistakenly place it miles away from the City of the Lost. At one point the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban takes control of the temple and destroys all the symbols of Fu Leng, but it is later retaken by the Dark God's followers. Eventually, however, the temple is abandoned when Daigotsu leaves the city for good.

The Onikage Ranges

Near the City of the Lost is an open plain where hundreds of onikage – Tainted beasts which were once horses – roam and hunt whenever the Lost are not using them as mounts. The Lost sometimes release prisoners into the range so the onikage can hunt them for sport.

Near the range are special walled stables which are kept free of the Taint. Here, stolen horses from Rokuga, always of the finest stock, are bred to create new onikage. When new foals are born they are allowed to grow for a time, then taken outside and killed so their corpses can reanimate as onikage.

Shiro Chuda

This castle is built from obsidian that seems to have simply grown out of the ground into its current shape. Located on the outskirts of the City of the Lost, it is here that the reborn Chuda family performs its horrific experiments. Such rituals attract fouls spirits and gaki to the castle, and even the other Lost avoid the place.

Not far away from the castle is a barren field lined with metal troughs, simply called the Field of Blood. It is in this field that the Chuda harvest the blood they need to perform their vile rituals. They are experts in draining the blood from mortals while keeping them alive for as long as possible. Once the victims finally perish, they rise as undead who serve the Chuda.

Somewhat farther away from Shiro Chuda is a place called the Bloodworks. Here the Chuda experiment with creating Tainted nemuranai, with considerable success. In some ways the Bloodworks superficially resembles the Great Forge of the Crab, but it also houses cells and torture chambers – some of which are combined with forges, for the Chuda torture, maim, and kill to empower their creations.

The Teeth of the Serpent

In the western Shadowlands, territory claimed at various times by many different factions of the Realm of Evil, a lone Chuda discovers a vast outcropping of crystal that resembles the teeth of a serpent. The Chuda quickly move into the area and mask it with spells, making it difficult to approach for those who do not know how. The terrain around the Teeth is somewhat less chaotic than the rest of the Shadowlands, likely due to the purity of the crystal itself, making it easier for the Chuda to maintain their masquerade.

The Chuda family's motive in controlling this region is simple – they distrust the Shadow Dragon and its Goju minions, and wish to provide themselves with a stronghold that is somewhat secure against his power. Unfortunately, the Shadow Dragon's response to their actions is been extremely violent. It is not known if the Teeth of the Serpent survive to the end of the twelfth century.

Places in the Shadowlands

Because this realm is so erratic and changeable, it is difficult to define any territories within it; what is swamp one year might be desert the next. There are, however, certain specific locations that seem to remain more-or-less the same, even if their locations are occasionally... flexible.

Amaterasu's Furnace

Ironically, the Shadowlands is home to a volcano which rejects the dark realm's power. This active fissure in the earth is called Amaterasu's Furnace, and legend claims it formed as a result of Amaterasu mourning the death of Hida himself, perhaps even on the very place where he died. The fissure is untouched by the Taint, and all attempts to Taint it or to use its elemental fury for nefarious purposes have failed.

Somewhere deep within the fissure is a portal to Gaki-do, though none have been able to reach it through the heat and steam. None know whether the entrance was there before the fissure was formed or if it was opened as a result of its formation.

The Black Finger and Dark Moon Rivers

The Kuroi Yubi Kawa splits off from the River of the Last Stand at the Empire's border and flows into the Shadowlands, eventually ending at a stagnant lake (called the Forbidden Lake by the few Crab who know about it). The Crab refer to it as the River of No Return, believing that any who do not turn back from it will never return from the Shadowlands at all.

The Black Finger River becomes darker and more stagnant as it runs deeper into the Shadowlands, and is so Tainted that anyone who drinks it will be instantly Lost. Vile plants grow on its banks and hideous monsters lurk beneath the surface – anyone who falls in, whether human or oni, never comes out again.

Near the place where Daigotsu eventually builds the City of the Lost, the Black Finger River forks, creating the Dark Moon River. The land between these two rivers is some of the most Tainted in the Shadowlands, so it is no surprise that Daigotsu chooses it as the site of his stronghold. At some point he also constructs a bridge over the river, and some rumors claim this "bridge" is actually an oni named Oni no Hashi which is large enough to serve as a bridge.

Big Stink

This was once a Crab fortress, Haikyo sano Kappa, taken by the Shadowlands as it slowly crept through the lands of the Crab. The ruins are claimed by numerous tribes of goblins, and over time the number of goblins grows until the place literally becomes a city of the vile beasts. The goblins call the place Big Stink and consider it their "capital city" – a typical crude goblin mockery of human behavior. Kuni explorers learn about Big Stink, but choose to conceal it from the Hida so as to be able to study goblin behavior.

In the twelfth century, Big Stink attracts the attention of the bizarre entity called Omoni, the so-called "flesh sculptor." He uses it as the location for his flesh forge, remaking the majority of the goblin race into something stronger and more dangerous within a single generation. Unfortunately, Omoni's goblins, while more powerful, are also stupider than their ancestors, and most of them die out in Daigotsu's wars with the Empire. The remnant population of "true" goblins quickly breeds back up in numbers and they reclaim Big Stink for themselves.

Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake

Deep in the Shadowlands is a small and surprisingly peaceful lake. Dark perversions of cherry blossom trees grow alongside it, spawning blood-red blossoms which are poisonous to the touch. So many of these blossoms have fallen into the lake itself over the years that the water is tinged blood red and even more poisonous than the blossoms. Poison notwithstanding, Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake is a beautiful place, and Moto Tsume chooses it as his home when he and the rest of the Dark Moto join the service of the Shadowlands.

The Dark Moto build a village and a keep alongside the lake. They name the traditional Rokugani fortification Thundering Tide Keep, and use a vast field nearby to keep their onikage steeds. From here they ride forth to plague the Empire for hundreds of years.



A legend within the Empire claims that after the Dark Moto were defeated in the twelfth century, those of them who survived lost the blessing of Fu Leng. Facing mortality at last, they fled "home" to their keep and gathered all their collective knowledge of the Shadowlands, planning to send it to the Empire in the hope of redeeming themselves. However, they were slaughtered by a force of ogres and trolls before they could do this. The Rokugani who recount this tale say the keep should now be called the Keep of Final Regrets. As for whether this actually happened... who can say?

The Festering Pit of Fu Leng

The most notorious place in the Shadowlands, located somewhere at or near the center of the dark land, is the spot where Fu Leng fell to the earth. It is an open portal between Jigoku and Ningen-do, making it the most Tainted place in the world. The land around the Pit bubbles and seethes, and bizarre weather effects originate in the multicolored clouds overhead. The terrain shifts and moves almost at a whim, and creatures of Jigoku are spawned and eaten constantly, leaving only the strongest to spread out into the world.

Many Lost have sought out the Pit in order to touch Fu Leng's power or to travel through into Jigoku and meet him in person. Of course, most of these dark pilgrims are consumed by the Taint or by the oni, leaving only the mightiest to become Fu Leng's trusted servants.

Forbidden Lake

The Forbidden Lake lurks somewhere in the lands south of the Festering Pit, fed by the waters of the Black Finger River. The waters of the Lake are said to be so foul and tainted that it is impossible to see more than a foot through them, and nothing which enters these waters ever leaves them. The water is almost unnaturally placid, and only the most severe of storms seems to be able to create waves on its surface.

Legend says that before the fall of Fu Leng, the lake was known the Lake of Crystal and was one of the most beautiful and pure lakes in all the land. Once Fu Leng Tainted the area, the lake became as impure as it was once pure.

The Forgotten Tomb of Fu Leng

This place is a huge structure of alien design, located deep in the Shadowlands. For centuries it is believed this is the place where the Isawa consigned the corpse of Fu Leng once the Dark Kami was defeated by the Black Scrolls. Countless Shadowlands creatures have ventured into the structure, along with more than a few Hiruma scouts, but none have ever been seen again.

Rumors claim that after Kuni Yori fell to the Taint, he brought the skull of Hantei XXXIX (who had died while possessed by Fu Leng) and consigned it to the tomb, truly making it the Tomb of Fu Leng.

Allegedly, in the latter half of the twelfth century Daigotsu learns that the tomb is actually an edifice built by an ancient forgotten troll as a permanent portal to Gaki-do. Whether this is true or not is unknown, but there is no denying the Tomb is a supremely dangerous place even for the denizens of the Shadowlands.

The Ogre Barracks

Before Fu Leng's fall the race of Ogres had a thriving culture. When Fu Leng began to create the Shadowlands, most of the ogres were corrupted. The remaining Free Ogres realized they could not fight the Taint and instead gathered what cultural artifacts they could, burying them beneath a hut in one of their villages, then covering them with a large stone. When corrupted ogres began attacking the village, the Free Ogres buried a second cache of less valuable items so the Tainted ones would only search until they found this false cache.

The Free Ogres fought to defend the village with all the strength they had, but eventually succumbed to the tide of Tainted beasts. Fu Leng piled the corpses of the Free Ogres in the center of the village and ordered that they be left there as proof of his victory. Through the centuries the pyramid of ogre bones has fossilized into stone. Whether the ancient remnants of Ogre culture are still hidden nearby is unknown.

The Plains Above Evil

The Plains Above Evil are technically not part of the Shadowlands, being a vast open land which lies to the north of the Shadowlands and to the west of Crab lands. While the Plains themselves have inexplicably resisted the Taint, they see many wandering monsters from the Shadowlands, as well as strangely savage natural beasts. A few attempts have been made to settle the Plains, but all have ended in disaster. None know why the Plains resist both the Taint and Rokugani civilization, but there are rumors of mysterious abandoned watchtowers dotting the landscape, each of alien design.



The Sea of Shadows

Off the coast of the Shadowlands is the Sea of Shadows, a Tainted sea that extends dozens of miles into the ocean. Enormous Tainted creatures dwell within the sea, and its currents and waves do not always behave in a natural way – a ship might find itself riding a current out of the Sea which abruptly turns and drags it in deeper.

The Crab and the Mantis know of a single sea lane through the Sea of Shadows which remains somehow free of Taint; a legend claims that Osano-Wo created it to give his favored sons a way to travel through the dark waters.

The Womb of Terror

Deep in the Shadowlands, in close proximity to the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, is a dormant volcano known as the Womb of Terror. The volcano itself is said to be a perfect balance between the Elements and the Shadowlands Taint. Scholars wonder whether this balance existed before the Fall of Fu Leng, and if the dormant volcano was a holy place before the creation of the Shadowlands. Whatever the truth may be, it is now a place where *kansen* gather, and those of the Lost who still cling to Rokugani magic travel here to perform their most powerful rituals.

In the late eleventh century, the Womb of Terror becomes a much more significant place when the Dark Oracles use it as the place to create their dreaded Elemental Terrors.

The Holdings of the Spider

The Spider Clan is created in the late twelfth century when the Dark Lord Daigotsu changes his tactics. Rather than trying to conquer the Empire from the outside, he would infiltrate it from within, creating a false "clan" and using it to gain entry to Rokugan's social structure. As a result, the Spider have no "lands" in the conventional sense, but they do have a number of individual holdings scattered around the Empire, hidden in remote valleys, high mountain passes, and in the dense woodlands of the Shinomen Mori.

In the aftermath of the Destroyer War, the Spider are granted official Great Clan status by Empress Iweko I – not out of any recognition of their claims, but because the alternative is continued war after the Destoyers have all but wrecked the Empire. However, the vast majority of the Spider are immediately sent to the Colonies, where they operate under the supervision of the Dragon Clan. So in practical terms the "clan" actually has even fewer possession within the Empire after its recognition than before.

Black Silk Castle

When the newly-organized "Spider Clan" moves out of the City of the Lost and into the Empire, it needs a new base of operations. Diagostsu orders the construction of a castle atop some ancient ruins in the midst of the Shinomen Mori. The castle is built of the darkest stone its builders can find: obsidian, granite, and basalt. The black color also carries over to the interior decorations, with black silk screens, dark wood panels, and even black-lacquered furniture.

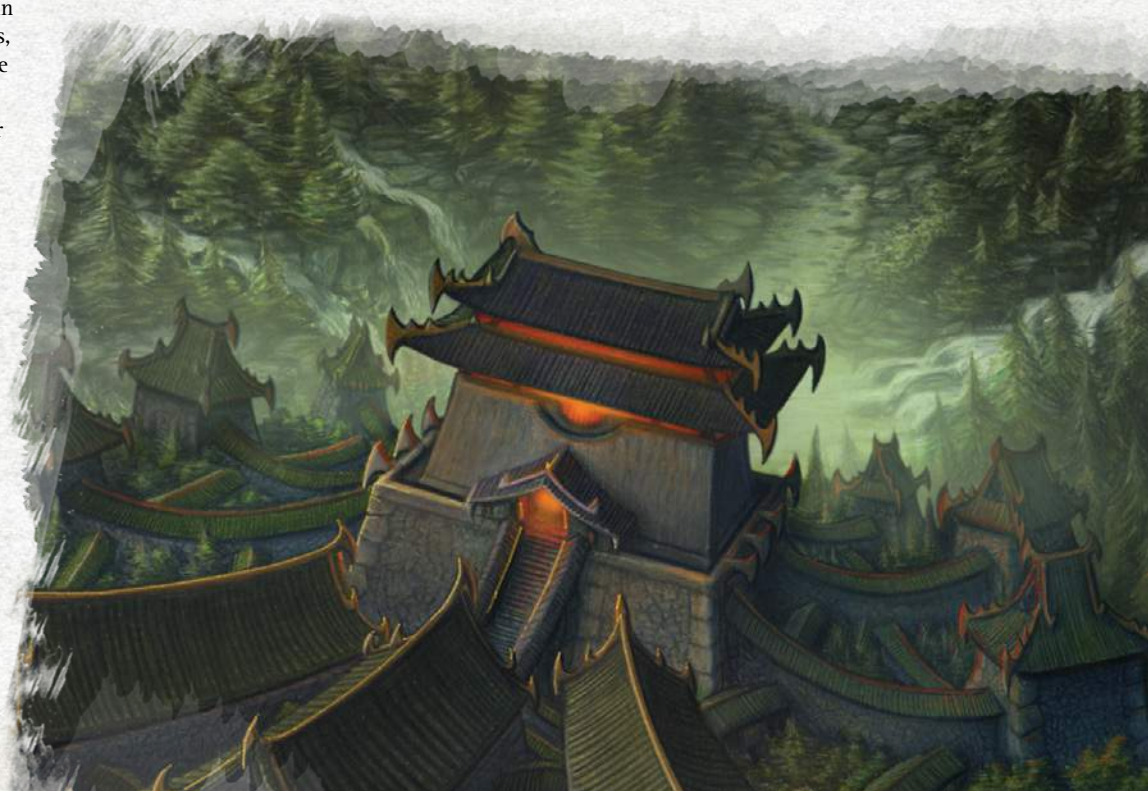
In the center of the structure is the huge court chamber where the Dark Lord hosts his strange perversion of a court from atop an obsidian throne. The castle also contains luxurious guest quarters for the few visitors the Spider receive.

After the ascension of Empress Iweko I, the castle is attacked by the Shogun's forces, and Daigotsu orders it burned (along with much of the forest around it) rather than let it be captured.

The Fanged Temple

In the northern Phoenix lands is what appears to be an abandoned temple. For much of the history of Rokugan it is indeed abandoned, but when the heretical Order of Venom turns its back on the rest of the Brotherhood, it takes possession of the ruin. However, the monks deliberately take very little action to repair the temple. They do, however, dispose of any wandering monks or explorers who visit it.

During the War of Dark Fire, the location of the temple allows the Order of Venom to launch counter-raids against the lands of the Yobanjin. The monks of the Order of Venom kill hundreds of the Dark Oracle's minions, although they pay a heavy price for doing so.








SEIGOTSU PASS
WATERFALL OF SHINSEI
SHINOMEN FOREST
10 MILES
HOWLING FIELDS
TANI HITOKAGE
NANATSU HI OTAKU HEIGEN
SHADOWLANDS MARSHES
HIRANO AKU JOKI
THE TWILIGHT MOUNTAINS

The Shinomen Forest

On paper, the Shinomen Mori is part of the Empire of Rokugan. At various times since the arrival of the Kami, this great forest has bordered on the territories of the Lion, the Unicorn, the Scorpion, the Hare, the Falcon, the Fox, and the Crab. None of these clans, however, have ever ruled over the Shinomen... and although no faithful subject of the Emperor would ever say so openly, it is doubtful whether the Son of Heaven can be said to rule it either. The forest is beyond any mortal's ability to control. Those who have tried have invariably failed.

There are maps of the interior of the Shinomen, but none of them are truly accurate or even complete. Some were made by travelers who did not know their positions as well as they thought. Others have been edited on Imperial authority, to protect or obscure sites better left untouched. A few seemed to be correct when they were drawn – but if the cartographers were to retrace their steps, they would find the forest much changed from what they saw mere days before.

The Shinomen Mori keeps its secrets.

The Natural Environment

Some say, only half in jest, that anything which can be found in nature can be found somewhere within the Shinomen Mori. Of course this is not strictly true; the Shinomen is a forest, and as such does not contain plants or animals from the desert or the ocean or the frozen heights of the mountains. But the region is powerfully connected to Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals, and as such it contains a diversity of life that is indeed worthy of remark.

Because it covers such a large territory and stretches so far from north to south, the Shinomen is far from homogenous. The northern part of the forest is generally darker, with tall oaks blocking much of the sunlight while maples crowd in the shadows beneath. In wet low-lying areas such as river valleys, these trees give way to cypress and hemlock. Rising elevations to the west, however, favor trees more commonly associated with mountainous

areas, such as fir and spruce. The southern regions of the Shinomen are often more open, with sparser trees and even scattered meadows; here the riverbanks are more likely to be crowded with willows, and elm predominates in many of the flatter areas. In the corrupted area called the Shadowlands Marsh, scrubby mangroves are one of the few non-Tainted plants to survive in quantity. Near the lake of Cherry Blossom Snow, cherry trees are ubiquitous; where the forest meets the Twilight Mountains, on the other hand, birch trees become common.

Any Rokugani who ventures into the Shinomen Mori is well-advised to pay close attention to the trees. Many scouts, for example, have noticed the surprising frequency of fruit trees such as plum and apricot in the southern part of the forest, which can save lives when the path has vanished and rations are running short. More often, however, a change in the trees can be a warning. Travelers have reported passing from ordinary oak forest to a stand of tall juniper, the line between them as clear as if it were cut with a sword. On another occasion, a deserter from an army spoke of finding three lone cherry trees amid a clump of spruce, growing in a precise triangle around a flat stone. When these strange alterations happen, it is frequently a signal of supernatural influence in the area. At other times, unfortunately, the signal comes after the strangeness: explorers have told tales of entering the forest in the south, only to find themselves surrounded by trees more suited to northern regions. When they emerged once more, they found themselves much farther north than they could possibly have traveled in the time elapsed.

The animal life of the forest shows equal variety... and equal peculiarity. The Shinomen Mori is home to many natural creatures, but it is not uncommon for a seemingly ordinary rabbit to suddenly reveal itself as an usagi shapeshifting spirit. Rokugani who have entered the forest have told stories of their encounters with kitsune (foxes), inu (dogs), bakeneko (cats), koumori (bats), saru (monkeys), tsuru (cranes), and more such spirit creatures. Nor is Chikushudo the only Spirit Realm that touches on the Shinomen Mori: travelers have encountered entities from Gaki-do, Toshigoku, Sakkaku, and even Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams. It is likely that spirit portals open and close in the forest with some regularity, perhaps following some heavenly cycle not yet charted. Moreover, many of the trees are home to kodama which will sometimes aid and sometimes cause trouble for travelers, depending on whether they are shown proper respect.

Indeed, the line between the natural and supernatural life in the forest is blurry at best. The Crab tell stories of a pack of wolves near the Twilight Mountains who showed cunning well beyond the capabilities of ordinary beasts. This tale has been told for centuries, long after any such pack should have died out or dispersed... but ask those who travel through the region and they will swear the wolves are still there. Here as elsewhere, the wise explorer remembers that anything around him is probably aware and watching, and behaves accordingly.

Geographical Features

Because the Shinomen is so enormous (and so poorly mapped), there are very few natural features that can be pinpointed with any certainty. Only a few regions and landmarks are so distinct as to be obvious to any traveler who encounters them.

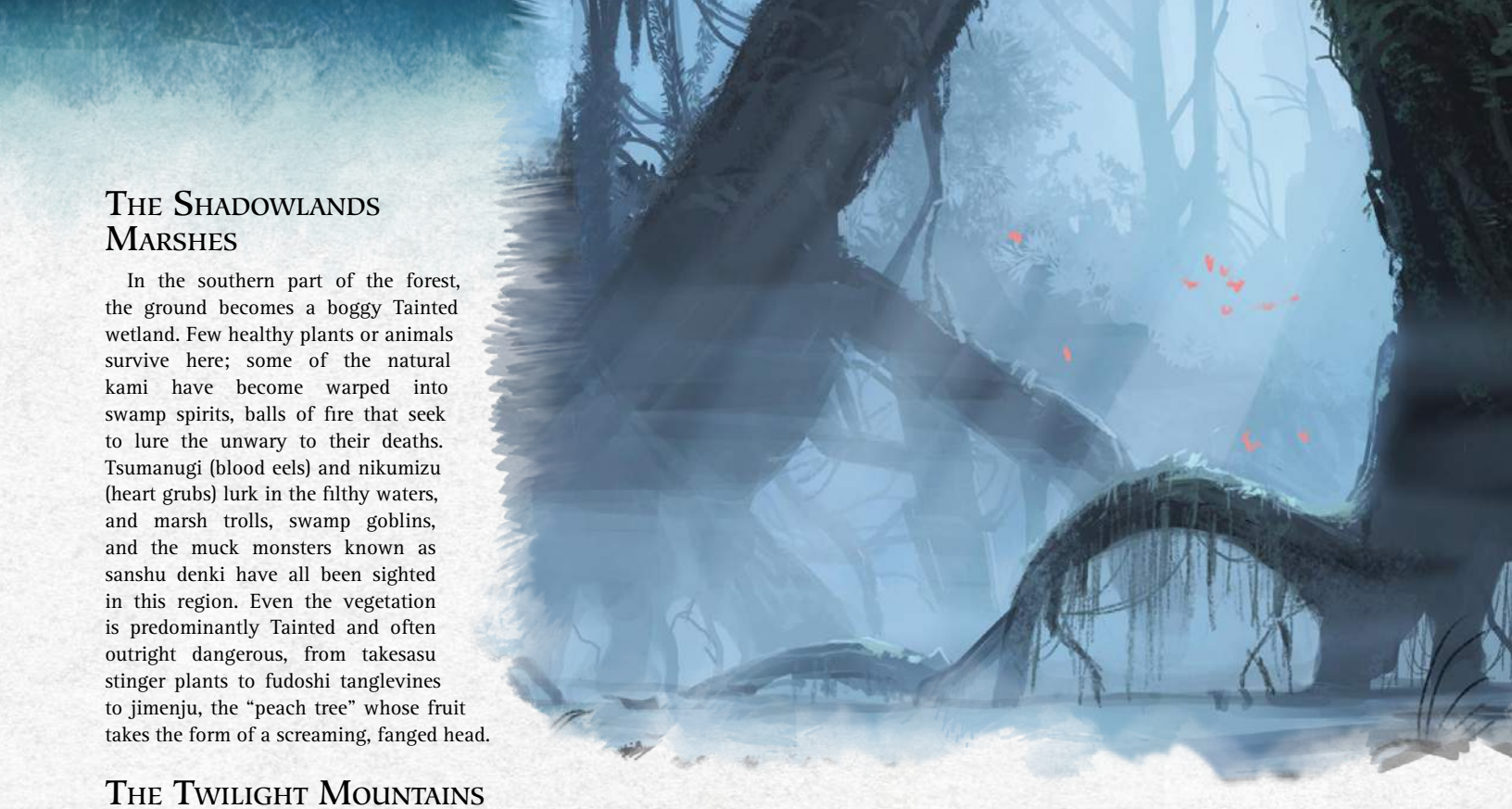
The River of the Sky

Unlike the River of Gold to the east, the River of the Sky flows from south to north, from the Naga city of Siksa nearly the entire length of the Shinomen. Anyone thinking to use it as a guide through the forest, however, will quickly be frustrated. The River of the Sky follows a winding path and frequently vanishes underground, resurfacing miles further on. In fact, the only way anyone can be certain it is the same river throughout is the remarkable purity of its waters, which bear the blessing of the Naga Vedics. Whether this blessing has anything to do with the river's unusual northward course, no one can say.



The Estuaries of the Snake

Although some believe this to be part of the River of the Sky's twisting course, the darker, muddy waters of the Estuaries of the Snake must arise from a different source. As landmarks go, the Estuaries serve primarily as a place to avoid; their labyrinthine depths, a trackless maze of brooks and creeks forever splitting and recombining, have doomed every traveler who has ever tried to map them. Legends claim one branch leads to a lost temple and another to a spring whose water bestows eternal youth – but the small chance these things exist does not seem worth the incredible danger of trying to find them.



The Shadowlands Marshes

In the southern part of the forest, the ground becomes a boggy Tainted wetland. Few healthy plants or animals survive here; some of the natural kami have become warped into swamp spirits, balls of fire that seek to lure the unwary to their deaths. Tsumanugi (blood eels) and nikumizu (heart grubs) lurk in the filthy waters, and marsh trolls, swamp goblins, and the muck monsters known as sanshu denki have all been sighted in this region. Even the vegetation is predominantly Tainted and often outright dangerous, from takesasu stinger plants to fudoshi tanglevines to jimenju, the "peach tree" whose fruit takes the form of a screaming, fanged head.

The Twilight Mountains

Properly speaking, the Twilight Mountains are not part of the Shinomen Mori at all. Their peaks rise high enough, however, to be of use to travelers, who can use them as a navigational aid when traveling in the southwestern part of the forest.

Naga Sites

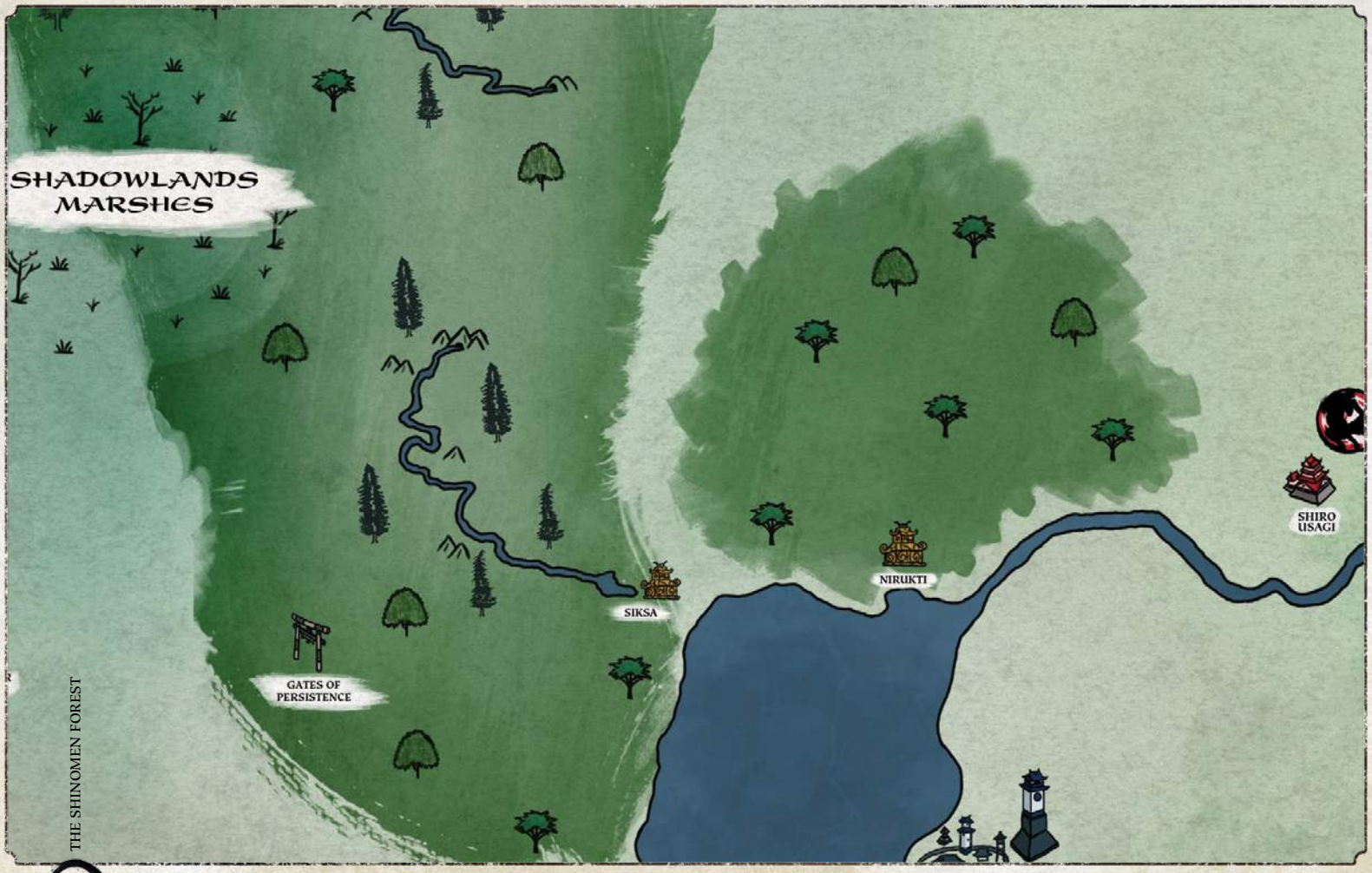
If anyone can claim to truly know the Shinomen Mori, it is the Naga – though even they awoke from their long sleep to a forest much different from the one they remembered. Vast as the Shinomen is now, in their day it was far larger, covering an area perhaps three times the size it occupies in the modern era. They even claim the human name of the forest is a corruption of a Naga word, shishomen, which means "homeland." Unlike the humans of Rokugan, who have built few permanent settlements within the Shinomen, the Naga once had several flourishing cities there. Even after the long absence imposed by the Great Sleep, remnants of these cities remain.

Each of the cities is named after one of the vedanga, the moral and aesthetic ideals of the Naga race. There are six vedanga cities in total, but Kalpa (rebirth) and Candas (freedom) lie outside the Shinomen Mori: the former in the mountains west of Shiro Ide, and the latter under the surface of the southern ocean. The remaining four are in the heartland of the Naga civilization, the Shinomen Mori. The five Naga bloodlines were each associated with one of the cities and their vedanga, with the exception of Kalpa; they carved the symbols of those ideals into their walls, as a daily reminder of the concepts they wished to uphold.

Nirukti (Joy)

This city, named for the vedanga of joy, was the home of the Greensnake bloodline during the glory days of the Naga civilization. It stands in the southern reaches of the Shinomen Mori, just north of the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow and not far from the Asp city of Siksa. During the time of the Naga, an elegant canal channeled a river through the winding streets of the city, irrigating the gardens and cooling the inhabitants when the summers grew hot. Many of the plazas and finer buildings were painted, though this has long since worn away. In the surrounding lands there are remains of "villages" that may have once housed as many as ten thousand Naga.

Time was initially kind to Nirukti: it stood almost wholly intact when Scorpion scouts discovered it in the early days of the Empire. The samurai who explored it misunderstood the carvings they saw there, believing them to be relics of a human tribe from before the fall of the Kami. They theorized the people who built the city had been so cruel and deceitful, they embraced the iconography and worship of the serpent, turning their backs on proper objects of reverence such as the Sun and Moon.



Of all the Naga cities, Nirukti has been the most thoroughly documented by Rokugani scholars. Many of their early theories proved to be embarrassingly wide of the mark: for example, Asako Bakuji believed the tall tower in the northwestern corner of the city might have been intended as a link to nearby trees, allowing the Naga to move along the branches as some forest-dwelling serpents do. In fact it was an observatory, used to chart the heavens and predict when to plant or harvest crops. Rituals to the Bright Eye and Pale Eye were conducted on the platform at the top, and the lower floors contained chambers for the vedics and astronomers. The adjoining building was a school for astronomers devoted to the Bright Eye.

Rokugani historians misunderstood another structure even more thoroughly. Depending on which text one reads, the large building in the northeast was either a place where criminals were condemned and tortured, or the site of terrible sacrifice to evil gods. In truth, this was the Naga library. Because the Greensnakes often have a more tenuous connection to the Akasha, they maintained a great storehouse of scrolls here, unlike any other found in the Naga civilization. The chains dangling from tall, twisted steel spikes once held shelves, not prisoners; the balcony overlooking the whole was a reading room, not the place from which a judge would pronounce vicious sentence. The scrolls themselves are long gone, of course – although rumor persists of a secret chamber whose contents might still be intact.

The palace, by contrast, was correctly identified by scholars, although some held to an alternate theory that it might have been a temple. (One which, presumably, was used for kinder purposes than sacrifice.) According to legend, the entire building was once plated in gold; in truth only the dome was ever decorated in that fashion, though the gold itself is long since gone. Entrance to the palace was by means of two curving ramps that stretched over the reflecting pool in front, terminating at an archway flanked by crystal obelisks (now fallen) and surmounted by a figure of intertwined snakes. This figure symbolized peace and harmony, as did the ramps, each of which was long enough to fit a Greensnake's entire length before his front passed through the entrance. Sadly, the left-hand ramp has partially collapsed.

Public announcements were delivered in a large pavilion, ringed by ten pillars. The beautiful mosaic dome has excellent acoustics – perhaps too good, as human visitors claimed to hear strange hissing sounds whenever they spoke. The pavilion is in superb condition, unlike most of the city; some attribute this to a blessed pearl buried beneath, which protects the structure against damage. Unfortunately, no such protection extends to the hatching hall just west of the pavilion, which has been reduced to the status of a refuse pit. The bathing pool in the southwest is much smaller than it once was, owing to a blockage in the water source, but would still be good for swimming – were it not for the unnerving sensation of scaly bodies brushing against the legs of humans who enter its waters.

Despite the city's ruinous state, many smaller structures can still be made out. These include innumerable small houses and a great marketplace. Obelisks used to be common throughout the city: four at the entrance to Nirukti, and four more at the start of the path that leads to the palace. Two of those on the road outside are still in place, one of them fallen; they bear inscriptions welcoming visitors and warning them of the consequences that will befall any who break the Qatol's law. Only the bases of two obelisks remain in front of the palace. Legend says that Togashi himself took one of the city's missing pillars and erected it somewhere in the mountains of the Dragon Clan, in memory of the lost Naga race.

Four obelisks also dominate the enormous plaza that stands directly in front of the palace. This open area once served as a hub of social interaction among the Greensnakes, and a tiled disk is set into the ground, bearing symbols of their commitment to peace and diplomacy. This is badly damaged now, the gems that once adorned it long since stolen. The obelisks stand between four arches, the southernmost of which has collapsed. This plaza, unlike the library, was a place of judgment: each obelisk contains a jade core, and the circle they created revealed evil within. The southwestern pillar has cracked in half, though, and much of its core has been chipped away by eager Rokugani hands.

The City of Joy met its downfall during the reign of the eleventh Hantei Emperor in the sixth century. Although most histories make no mention of this fact, the Shosuro-Ikoma library records show that he ordered the city's walls to be torn down, stone by stone. This completely destroyed the exterior fortification and seriously damaged a number of buildings within the city. More public is his edict, never revoked, that forbade any Rokugani to enter the ruin. Despite this, many fragments from the city found their way out into the Empire. Peasants in the region collected them for a time, believing "Naga stones" would bring good fortune. The finest ones, however, wound up in the hands of Asako scholars, who began to suspect the civilization which built Nirukti was far more advanced than even the tribe of Isawa. The builders clearly had their own system of writing, for example, and their engineering was highly sophisticated.

In modern times, Nirukti is almost completely abandoned. Scorpion scouts who dare to spend the night in the city vanish without a trace, and a poison marsh has formed in the region, making even daylight travel hazardous. Furthermore, the Great Temple on the eastern edge of the city, once home to Nirukti's Constrictor-born High Vedic, has become Tainted; the gold-and-silver statue of the Qatol which stands there is blackened and broken at the waist. After the Naga enter the Second Great Sleep, bushi from the Unicorn and Crab guard the approaches to Nirukti, entering the ruins only to clear out the occasional bandits who dare to violate the Emperor's edict.

Even the Naga themselves avoid the city when they are awake, for the Akasha warns them away. In truth, the destruction in the sixth century killed many Naga who were deep in the Great Sleep, and some of their spirits linger there, furious at their loss. One of those who died was a great war-leader called the Jerish, and his wrath made the ruins lethal to any who dared enter. However, late in the twelfth century the Naga claim the Jerish is reincarnated in a human body as the Crab clan samurai Hida Fubatsu. It is possible the return of the Jerish could signal great changes for the city in which he perished.

Siksa (Courage)

Not far from Nirukti lies Siksa, the home city of the Asp. It is the best-preserved of the Naga cities in the Shinomen Mori, and the one known to the greatest number of Rokugani in the modern day, being much more easily accessible than Vyakarana.

The Asp are the bloodline of warriors, and their home reflects that nature. The City of Courage looks more like a Rokugani structure than the other Naga cities, with a strong encircling wall and a street plan that allows for defense in depth should the outside fortifications be breached. However, since everything is built to accommodate the powerful Asp, the similarities end there. No Kaiu siege engineer, for example, would plate the walls of his castle in gold – but the Asp did, and the precious metal remains untouched today, despite the centuries the Naga spent in slumber. The Asp credit the good condition of their city to their military culture, which encouraged them to prepare well for the Great Sleep; the other bloodlines dispute this reasoning.

Siksa is built around the headwaters of the River of the Sky, also called the Holy River. Even today, its waters are pure, thanks to the blessings of the Lord Vedic of the Bright Eye. During the Bloodland War, the Shahismael, the Asp general who sought to subjugate all other Naga bloodlines, was captured by his first lieutenant the Shahadet on the banks of this river. In commemoration of this victory, every year the current Shahadet and the members of his personal legion descend to the spring and bathe in its waters, communing with the spirits of their warrior forebears. The spring also plays a vital role in the formation of the Asp Legion. Each new recruit is submerged in the waters by his comrades, who recite to him a litany of his faults, and offer guidance on how to better himself. Following this ritual, he remains there alone. Rumor says that during this time, the recruit has a vision of his own eventual death, giving him the opportunity to prepare for it and thereafter face danger without fear. If this is true, however, no member of the Asp Legion has ever confirmed it to an outsider.

In modern times Siksa is one of the most active Naga cities, due to its good preservation, its relatively accessible location, and its strong population of healthy Asp. Large portions of it are still uninhabited, of course, and when the Second Sleep occurs the Asp even give over a few buildings to their Unicorn allies.

Iyotisha (Astronomy)

The city of Iyotisha lies in a deep valley on the far western edge of the Shinomen Mori. It is the home of the enormous Constrictors, physically largest of the Naga bloodlines, and its architecture reflects that association: everything in Iyotisha is constructed on a titanic scale, dwarfing the few humans who have ventured there.

The size of the buildings is only one of the characteristics that make Iyotisha seem peculiar. Iyotisha is clearly a planned city, but planned according to a principle which baffles its visitors. For the answer, they must look upward. Iyotisha is the City of Astronomy: its streets are laid out according to the cycles of the heavens, with the great boulevards following the paths of the stars. To its Constrictor inhabitants, this feels perfectly natural and obvious, but even the astrologers of Rokugan find it strange, for the very stars themselves have shifted position since the days when Iyotisha was built.

Unlike Nirukti and Siksa, Iyotisha did not weather neglect well. When the Naga first awoke from the Great Sleep, the Constrictors were dismayed to find their city had fallen almost entirely into ruin, without human intervention hastening the process. A large number of trees have grown up inside the boundaries, their roots shattering foundations, and ivy tore down many walls, giving the impression that the forest was slowly consuming the city.

Because the Constrictors are commonly the Vedics of the Naga, Iyotisha is a deeply spiritual place. Naga who visit say they can feel the presence of the Akasha in the ruins, whispering lessons in the depths of their minds. The one building in the entire city that remains intact is the central temple of the Vedics. This is perhaps the largest single structure the Naga ever built: a huge circular hall with an oculus in the center of its vast dome, allowing the light of the Bright Eye and the Pale Eye to always reach inside.

Iyotisha was attacked in the year 1160 by the Tsuno, but their assault was rebuffed by the Asp, who awakened to defend the city. Since then, the Khan has tasked the Twenty-Eighth Junghar Legion to protect Iyotisha (from a respectful distance). The few Constrictors who remain awake still dwell in the temple, deep in communion with the Akasha. They seek to understand the decline of their race – and hope, if fortune smiles upon them, to reverse it. Rarely visited even by their fellow Naga, they do not take kindly to interruptions from human intruders.

Vyakarana (Magic)

The City of Magic lies at the very heart of the Shinomen Mori, in a valley surrounded on three sides by waterfalls. The mist from these falls hides Vyakarana from sight – an appropriate veil for the home of the mysterious Cobra bloodline.

Rokugani who come there seldom see more than a small fraction of the settlement. Even most Naga have never slid through its streets, believing the place to be haunted by the whispers of the Akasha. Vyakarana is not a city that has ever welcomed visitors, not even at the height of its prosperity; there are no bridges across the three rivers that flow away from the falls. At the same time, however, there is no wall to keep anyone out. Should Vyakarana ever come under attack, the jakla of the Cobra bloodline trust in their mastery of pearl magic to keep them safe.

Despite their great wisdom, the Cobra have yet to explain the fate that befell their city during the Great Sleep. Those who awoke found the buildings and streets draped in thick, mystical webs, whose origin is still unknown. Much of Vyakarana is intact beneath these webs, but the Naga hesitate to disturb them, fearing what consequence may result. Certain jakla have set themselves the task of unraveling mystery and web alike, but so far they have met with no success.

The Unicorn Clan bushi Moto Chen is one of the few Rokugani who can claim to know Vyakarana well. He settled there for a time with his wife, the woman known as Akasha, the human embodiment of the collective memories of the Naga race. But even Chen saw only a limited portion of the city; there are entire districts he was forbidden to enter. Although Vyakarana has served as a locus of contact between the Unicorn and the Naga, few samurai are comfortable there, feeling a sense of pervasive unease in the hushed, web-shrouded city.

The Cobra have good reasons to limit access to their home. Many of their number never awakened, and are physically vulnerable while they remain in the grip of the Great Sleep. Furthermore, the city itself contains a great secret, one the Cobra keep even from others of their race: the Well of the Cobra.

Unlike the other Naga, who give their spirits freely to the Akasha and are regularly reborn into different bloodlines from one life to the next, the Cobra strive to keep their souls within their own bloodline. When each Cobra youngster reaches its first molting, one of the city's jakla conducts a ritual in which the youth spills seven drops of blood into the Well. Eggs of the Cobra bloodline are immersed in the blood-tinged waters of the Well, drawing the spirits of past Cobra into the waiting body.

There are legends of this practice among the other Naga, accounting in part for the insularity of the Cobra (and, some say, the high frequency of Abominations among them). Very few outside Vyakarana know the truth of it, though, and if the Rokugani were to find out, they would almost certainly associate the practice with maho. The process is an imperfect one regardless, and Cobra souls have occasionally been reborn into other Naga bloodlines. Despite this, they continue to keep the Well hidden, and would undoubtedly kill any outsider who came too close.

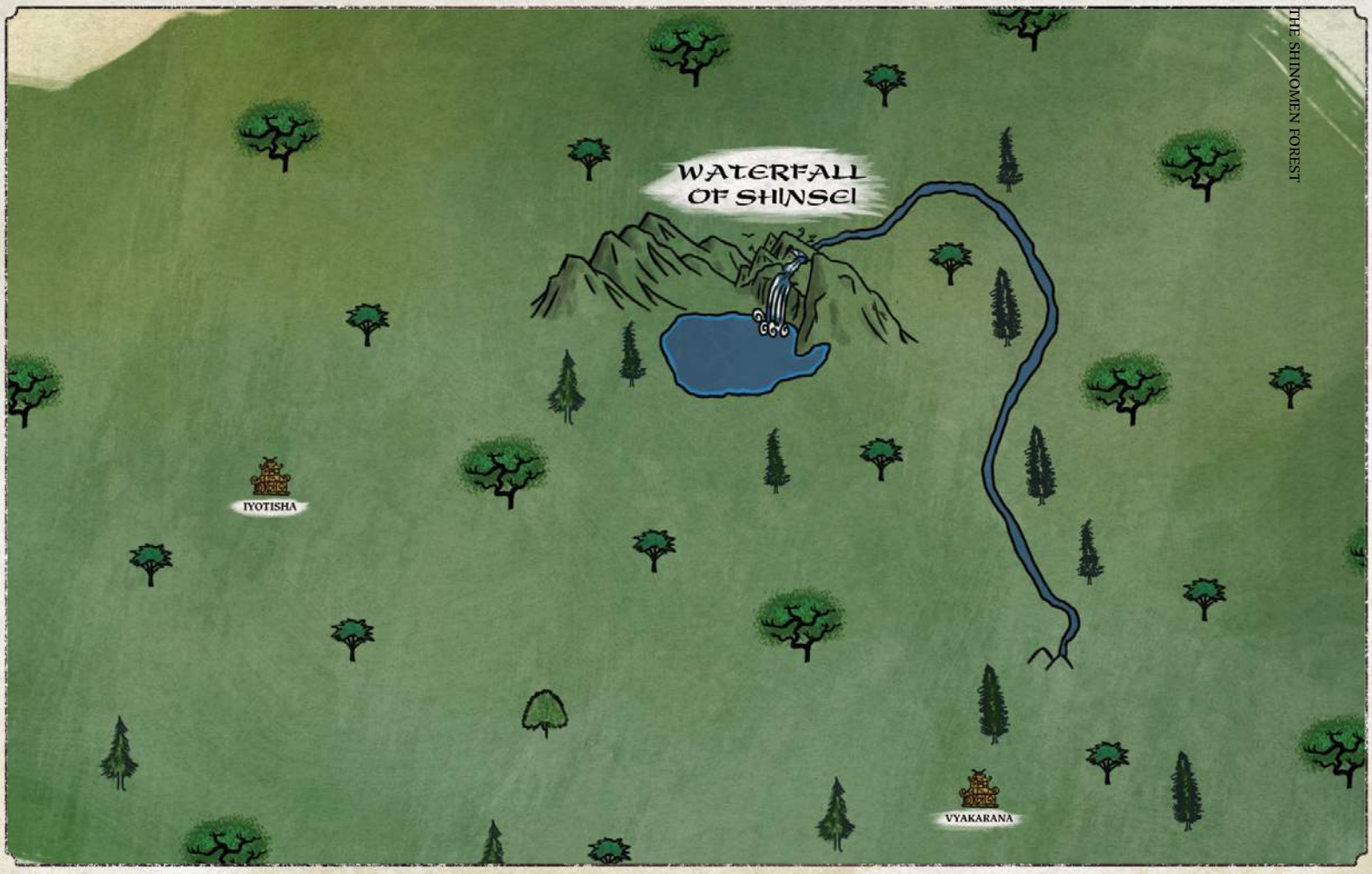
Four Bridges Glade

Most of the famous Naga sites within the Shinomen are cities, but the Four Bridges Glade is quite different. It directly overlooks the River of the Sky, in an area where the river flows from southeast to northwest through a steep-sided ravine. The glade itself stands atop a tall island promontory, isolated in the middle of the river. Were it not for the bridges, there would be no way to reach it at all.

Each of the four bridges is built from quartz of various colors, intricately carved so that their facets catch, reflect, and refract the light of the Sun and Moon. Prior to the awakening of the Naga, some legends credited Isawa or one of his children with the construction of the bridges, simply on the grounds that no one else could have made anything so fine. In truth, though, even they were not capable of such feats. The Naga say the bridges are the work of an ancient vedic of the Pale Eye, one who lived so long ago that even the Akasha does not contain the memory of his name. He built each bridge to signify the four Elements through which the Akasha, represented by the glade itself, may be found. The emptiness of the glade symbolizes the emptiness of the soul once it enters the Akasha. The end of the journey, the Naga say, is less important than the journey itself.

Humans attached a similar meaning to the site before they knew its origin. Because the diagonal course of the ravine allows each bridge to be aligned with the cardinal directions, they assumed an association with the Elements. Not long after the discovery of the glade, some unknown visitor placed white stones at the foot of each bridge, carved with the kanji for Earth, Water, Fire, and Air. The glade, of course, represents the Void. Pilgrimage to this site has become an important ritual for the monks of Reihado Shinsei; when they have reached great understanding of an Element, they cross the appropriate bridge and meditate for a full day in the glade above the river before crossing back the way they came. Completion of this rite signals to the world that the monk is a master of that particular discipline.

There is a legend that any monk who attains mastery of all four Elements never returns from his fourth pilgrimage. Some say such a monk achieves Enlightenment and vanishes from this world; others say the monk leaves by an invisible fifth bridge, to seek mastery of the Void itself.



Shinseist Sites

Enlightenment can be found anywhere – even in the depths of the Shinomen Mori. Although the Way of the Little Teacher is associated with humans, and human beings have left very few marks in the trackless expanse of the great forest, there are a few sites in the forest (or that are believed to exist there) that have a strong association with Shinsei and the Brotherhood.

Fire Pool of Purity

Some dismiss this location as a mere tale, a futile dream that taunts desperate samurai. Over the centuries enough stories have been told about it, though, that many scholars believe the Fire Pool of Purity actually exists.

The Fire Pool is said to have its origin as a small pond where Shinsei once stopped for a drink of water. So great was the Little Teacher's spiritual merit that this trivial action imbued the pond with virtue. Since then its waters have shone with a radiant and unquenchable light.

Were this light its only special quality, the Fire Pool would be no more than a curiosity. According to the stories, however, these shining waters are capable of curing any ill: disease, poison, even the Shadowlands Taint itself. The Lion histories contain an account of a lord who was dying from the bite of a tsanuri, a lethal snake whose venom has no antidote. A group of scouts, determined to save their lord, went in search of the Fire Pool. Only one returned, a samurai named Ikoma Bakenin – but the water he brought restored his lord to such great health that the man was able to carry his own horse through the palace gates as proof of his recovery. (Not recorded in that account is a later rumor which says the lord did not need all of the water Bakenin brought. The remainder is supposedly still in the keeping of the Ikoma daimyo, held for a day of extraordinary need.)

Of course, such cures are not easily obtained. Most of those who go in search of the Fire Pool of Purity never return. Given the hazards of the Shinomen Mori, this is hardly surprising – but the stories say there is more to it than that. Some unknown entity guards the Fire Pool against those who would take its waters, and kills many of those who approach its shores. In some versions of the tale, this entity is a guardian placed there by Shinsei himself. In others, the pool is haunted by the ghosts of those who failed to attain their goal – which would suggest the site's defenses grow stronger with every samurai who falls to them. Even those who win through are not necessarily safe, if they have come seeking the ultimate cure: only the purest of heart can survive the experience of having the Shadowlands Taint burned from their bodies and souls.

Where is the Fire Pool of Purity? If Rokugani scholars knew that answer for certain, there would be instant war as the Great Clans vied to secure the location for themselves. All that is known with certainty is that the Pool lies somewhere along the River of the Sky. Given that the river spans almost the entire length of the Shinomen Mori, this is hardly enough to point the way.

The Waterfall of Shinsei

Unlike the Fire Pool of Purity, this landmark is relatively easy to find. It lies at the northern end of the River of the Sky, just before those silvery waters vanish underground for good. Here the river cascades over a series of boulders in a fall of nearly 100 feet, ending in a pristine lake – the final point at which the river's course can be traced.

The wandering Unicorn who first discovered the waterfall called it "the Road to the Sky," and it has become something of a pilgrimage site for Rokugani, samurai-ko in particular. The name "the Waterfall of Shinsei" comes from a story that claims this is the last place Shinsei paused before departing Rokugan forever. In honor of this, some samurai brave the dangers of the Shinomen Mori to purify themselves beneath the fall, re-dedicating themselves to the service of their lords and clans.



Lost Heaven Shrine

Contrary to the previous story, there is also a legend that Shinsei did not leave Rokugan, but rather perished in the Shinomen Mori. Although this is generally considered a children's tale, it is popular among the Crab – perhaps because their harsh duty makes death a more believable ending than a walk into the sunset.

In this legend, Shinsei traveled through the forest without pause until he collapsed of exhaustion and died. Rather than decaying, his body vanished, and in its place rose a small shrine. (Some versions hold that the shrine marks the dying place of Shinsei's firstborn son, rather



than the Little Teacher himself. Others merely attribute the site to some noble and nameless ronin.) The moral of the tale comes when a later traveler asks a monk in the forest how to find the Lost Heaven Shrine. The monk simply answers, "When the path ends, that is where you will find it."

Various samurai, mostly Hida and Hiruma, have attempted to confirm whether there is any truth to this tale. Despite the fact that no one has ever claimed to have found the shrine, everyone knows what it is supposed to look like: an upright white stone, taller than a man, with an empty bowl on the ground before it. There is a natural-seeming groove in the stone shaped like a katana; by that sign, they say, the traveler will know he has found the shrine at last.

The Crow's Tongue

Some travelers have encountered a beautiful wetland in the depths of the Shinomen, far different from the malignant swamp known as the Shadowlands Marsh. Here, they say, the wildlife exists in peaceful harmony, so even decay may be seen as a part of the natural order of the world.

Near the edge of this wetland there is an oval pond called the Crow's Tongue. The name derives from a legend that says Shinsei's crow dipped its beak into the waters of this pond on the day its master left Rokugan. The crow's tears fell into the water, giving the pond its salty flavor, but its blessing made the wetland a place of inviolate peace. Whatever hazards a traveler may encounter outside, here he may rest and be well.

A further elaboration of the story says the crow is still there, watching over the pond and the adjoining marsh. The waters there will remain salty and bitter until Shinsei returns.

Other Sites

Not everything in the Shinomen Mori owes its existence to Shinsei or the Naga (presuming, of course, that all of these locations do in fact exist). As with so much else in the great forest, it is difficult to separate fact from truth, even when a samurai swears he saw it with his own eyes.

The Leaves of the Tree Dojo

This is a grand name for a makeshift fortification used off and on as the base of operations for the infamous Forest Killers bandit gang. Located within the southern fringes of the Shinomen, the dojo relies upon the haunted reputation of the forest and its relative isolation to escape detection. The Forest Killers themselves are one of the most successful and long-lived bandit organizations to ever stalk the Empire. Founded in either the late eleventh or early twelfth century by a former Crab named Hiruma Miroto, the Forest Killers plague all the nearby lands and are declared to be destroyed several times, only to reemerge to plague the people of the Empire again and again.

Part of the reason for the survival of the Forest Killers is a secondary base of operations, a hidden cavern in the hills just south of the Shinomen Mori. The location of this cavern is only revealed to the oldest and most trustworthy members of the organization, and it serves as their last refuge in times of trouble, as well as a storehouse for looted items that cannot be sold immediately. It is from here that a cadre emerges to rebuild the Forest Killers each time they appear to be wiped out.

The Tree of Wisdom Beyond Time

Considered by most to be a mere fable meant to teach children proper respect for the earth, this tale purports to explain the single mahogany tree that stands just south of Nirukti, within a ring of maple and oak.

The story claims that one day a man walked into the Shinomen Mori and begged for "wisdom beyond time." Although the narrative gives the man no name or identifying features, he is assumed to be a shugenja, for when he begged the Air spirits to show him the meaning of everything, they told him to ask the Fire. The Fire, in turn, told him to ask the Water; and the Water, of course, told him to ask the Earth.

The Earth, being what it is, ignored him. But the man was persistent; every day for a month he prayed to the Earth, asking it to share its wisdom and secrets. This finally vexed the Earth beyond its own endurance – and, some say, it was insulted that the man had asked the Air, Fire, and Water first. Whatever the reason, the Earth turned the man into a mahogany tree.

"Now you will know wisdom beyond time," the Earth said to the tree. "Meditate upon your insincerity. Think upon your arrogance. The Earth is not yours to command. It was born before you, and it will exist long after you have turned to dust and become one with the stones beneath your feet."

Whether the man has learned his lesson yet, the story does not say.

Sighing Moon Murders

In the ninth century an imperial noblewoman named Miya Ebekko was traveling through the Shinomen Mori on her way to Crane lands with only two handmaidens for company. They never arrived at their destination. When scouts finally located their bodies, the corpses had been so defiled that the earth was bloody for paces in every direction, and it took the eta days to collect every scrap of flesh and bone.

To this day, no one is certain what killed the three travelers. Most believe a ronin named Gugaku murdered them out of greed, to steal the six golden koku they carried in their shawls. But this does not explain why he then went mad and hacked their bodies to pieces; the argument that he did so to cover his trail is hardly satisfying. Others say it was a beast that attacked them, perhaps a rabid wolf or even something Tainted. A few blame the Naga, theorizing that the women stumbled into some ancient trap meant to defend a treasure they did not even know was there.

The three women were given proper funeral rites, of course, back in the Imperial city of Otosan Uchi. Despite the best efforts of the Seppun shugenja overseeing the ceremony, though, the pyre their remains had been placed on would not burn – not until a sprig of wood from the Shinomen Mori was added to the pile. History says the Emperor himself wept when the three women passed to their rest at last.

Unfortunately, it is questionable whether they achieved any rest after all. The site of the murders is supposedly still haunted; nothing will grow there, and the very ground remains wet with blood, just as it was when the bodies were found. Those who travel past take care to do so in daylight, and avoid stepping on the stained earth.

Gates of Persistence

In the third century a Kaiu samurai named Sudaro lived with his only son, making a poor living as a stonecutter. How this came about is not certain; some histories say he was actually a peasant who pretended to the status of a samurai, while others say he fell into debt and his lord, determined to shame him for his attachment to wealth, refused to even grant him the dignity of being made ronin, exiling him instead to the life of a peasant craftsman. Regardless of the truth behind his origin, though, Sudaro's existence is recorded in the Imperial Histories.

A Bayushi daimyo (whose name is not recorded) came to Sudaro and demanded the stonecutter carve a great torii arch for him. The daimyo planned to mount the arch over the road into his lands, striking awe and fear in the hearts of all who approached. When he returned to claim the torii, however, he found a tiny flaw in the stone. Furious, the daimyo drew his katana and struck, shattering the torii into a hundred pieces. As penalty for Sudaro's failure, the Bayushi took Sudaro's six-year-old son.

This boy was the only source of joy in Sudaro's grim life, and no matter how great the Bayushi lord might be, Sudaro was determined to reclaim his son. The stonecutter followed the Scorpion party northward, and heard his son shout in fear as they entered the Shinomen Mori. That night, the cruel-hearted daimyo tied the child to a tree and dared the forest to take the boy.

When Sudaro caught up the following morning, every last Scorpion was dead, and the boy was nowhere to be seen. Overwhelmed by the loss of his son, Sudaro cried out... and heard the child reply from the woods. His son was alive and well, and said he had been rescued by "serpent men" – clearly some of the few Naga who remained awake during the Great Sleep. In gratitude for their aid, Sudaro vowed to carve for them a torii that would surpass the one he had made for the Bayushi lord. He spent the next four years dragging a monumental block of stone from the Crab mountains all the way to the spot where his son's life had been saved. Although various samurai offered horses or even their own strength to assist him, Sudaro insisted on completing the task alone. When he finally reached his destination, he and his son raised the block onto one edge and carved it into a flawless arch.

The torii still stands today, just inside the edge of the forest nearest to Kaiu lands, with the kanji for "Nothing, Tomorrow, Forever, Today" etched into its stone. Many years later the twenty-first Hantei Emperor, hearing the story of Sudaro's achievement, elevated him as a Mikokami, the lesser Fortune of Persistence. In modern times, Brotherhood monks make pilgrimages to the Gates of Persistence to pray, for according to their tales, sleeping beneath the torii grants dreams of both the Naga and of Sudaro's dedication.

Hibagon Village

The existence of hibagon themselves is disputed, let alone an entire village of them. Those who doubt say that observers have mistaken simple monkeys for something more. The creatures have been sighted in enough places, however, that it is difficult to write the ape-men off as a mere figment of overactive imaginations.

The so-called "hibagon village" is said to lie deep in the Shinomen Mori, as far from the borders as it can possibly get. Unlike the crude, temporary shelters of sticks and leaves that travelers have claimed to identify as hibagon work elsewhere, this place is supposed to be something closer to a proper village, with huts laid out around an enormous oak tree. This tree is the home of an ancient kodama spirit which the hibagon worship as a god. In darker versions of the tale, they sacrifice travelers to their god and eat the flesh, but those who believe hibagon are real dismiss this as utter nonsense, citing the cowardly nature and vegetarian diet of the creatures. (One might also question how such primitive animals could possibly overcome a trained samurai of the Empire – though a peasant, perhaps, might fall prey.)

There is another version of the story, however, which might hold a kernel of truth. In this variant, the hibagon are not animals at all; they are men. They are the descendants of a tribe that refused to accept the rule of the Kami at the dawn of the Empire, and fled into the Shinomen Mori seeking a place where they could continue their ancient ways. Over the centuries they have degenerated, becoming stupid, bestial creatures not even capable of chipping stone to make simple tools. This, the storytellers say, is a cautionary tale, showing what men and women would have become without the Celestial Order to guide them.

Eight Worlds Sorrow Path

Deep in the records of the Falcon Clan there is an account which tells of two villages just on the edge of the clan's territory, known as Kuguro-Mushari and Tsuyoi Kokoro Mura. For unknown reasons, this account also makes mention of the road that connects the two villages to one another, which bears the remarkable name of Eight Worlds Sorrow Path.

There are no other documents mentioning those villages or the path between them. No traveler has visited them in centuries; whenever an archivist unearths this reference to them, he invariably assumes the villages were relocated or died out ages ago. There is no record of relocation, though, and even if the inhabitants died, surely someone would have happened upon the ruins by now. One clerk, a man possessed of a fanciful imagination and too much free time, suggested the Eight Worlds Sorrow Path was designed to teach human beings to release their attachment to the world. Those who walked it enough times eventually reached Enlightenment, and one by one the villagers walked it until they all transcended mortal existence. When the last of them departed this world, the houses and the path itself vanished with them.

However, there is not a single shred of proof to support this clerk's idea.

The Vanishing Inn

Although there are occasional human settlements within the fringes of the Shinomen Mori, they are few and far between. Any traveler who happens upon an inn within the forest ought to be immediately suspicious... but if this story is to be believed, dozens of samurai have been caught up in the illusion of an inn, not realizing they have walked into a dreadful trap.

In the classic version of this tale, the samurai traveler arrives to find the common room of the inn filled with surly villagers (though there is no village for miles around). The keeper of the inn, by contrast, is a beautiful young woman, mourning her recently-dead parents (who supposedly built the establishment). She is honored to have such a noble guest, and brings him the best food she has to offer. Some storytellers say the samurai refuses this meal, but whether he accepts it or not, she sings a song for him, and her voice is astonishingly lovely and pure.

Inevitably the illusion fails. The samurai realizes the villagers are actually shikko-gaki; his beautiful hostess is a bog hag. The food he has so ravenously been eating is human flesh, taken from the bodies of previous travelers. He fights his way free and escapes the inn, but when he returns to the site the next day, intending to burn it to the ground, he finds no sign the building was ever there.

This tale mimics the characteristics of a kwaidan, a "strange story" told only for entertainment. The records of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, however, contain more than a few accounts of acolytes who renounced the world and shaved their heads after defiling themselves by eating human flesh. If the inn truly does exist, then travelers within the Shinomen Mori are advised to refrain from its hospitality.

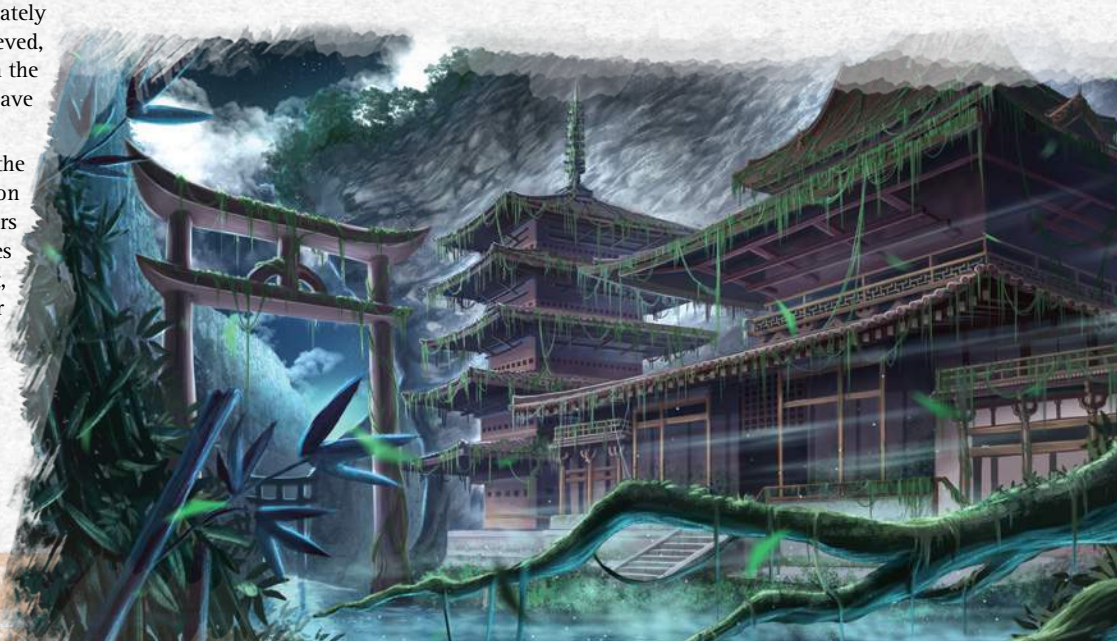
Secrets of the Forest

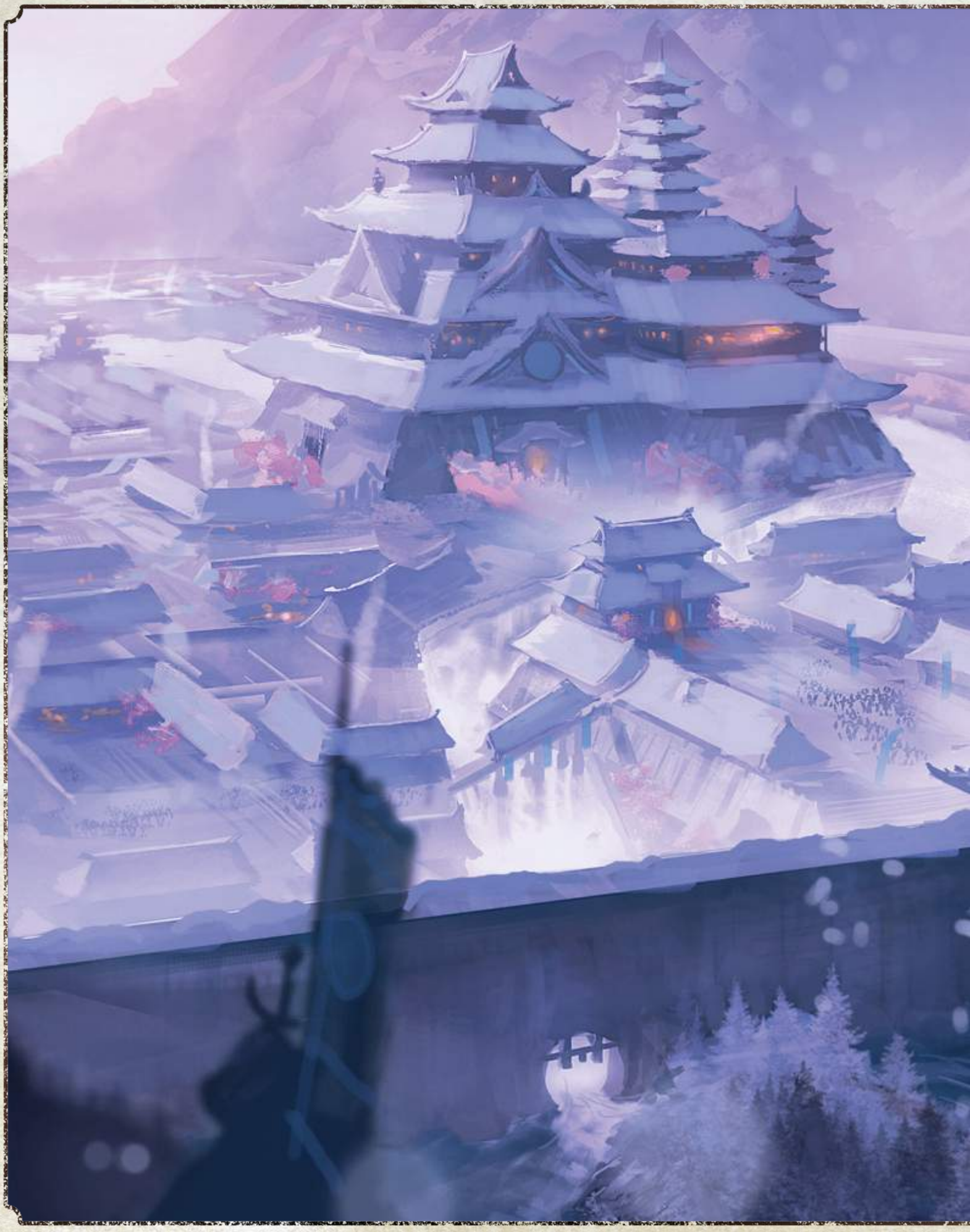
The stories and locations described in the previous sections are merely the most famous ones associated with the Shinomen Mori, the ones which have made their way into the Empire often enough that many Rokugani have heard of them. The forest is vast, larger than the territories of any of the individual Great Clans. Every samurai who has ventured beneath its branches has a tale of something unusual he found there, even if it was only a tree whose trunk seemed to have the shape of a face, watching him wherever he went.

Some of these tales are benign, such as the Daidoji scout who traveled along solid ground until he suddenly found himself walking on the branch of a tree, high above the earth. Others are more sinister, like the Shinjo who went berserk and murdered his Ikoma companion out of a conviction that he must stay and examine the site.

To learn the secrets of the Shinomen in full would take far more than the thousand years of Rokugan's history. Any who wish to expand their knowledge of the place are advised to tread cautiously, and always to remember:

The forest is stronger than they are.









Chapter Twelve

Other Lands
Imperials Monks and Unaligned

Although the bulk of the Empire's lands are controlled by the Great Clans, there are plenty of regions which fall outside the reach of those eight mighty factions. The three Imperial families – Otomo, Seppun, and Miya – each control lands and castles of their own, and the Brotherhood of Shinsei administers temples and shrines throughout the Empire. There are even some independent strongholds, ruled by ronin or even by peasants, although these tend to fall into the orbit of one or another of the Great Clans over the course of history.

Imperial Lands and Holdings

Although the three Imperial families are among the wealthiest and most politically powerful families in Rokugan, they control very few castles and very little in the way of land. Of course, their most important holding is the Imperial City itself – Otosan Uchi for the first eleven and a half centuries of the Empire's history, and Toshi Ranbo thereafter. These two mighty cities are discussed separately in Chapters 13 and 15.

Lands of the Otomo Family

The Otomo family holds no actual provinces and thus has no "family lands" in the normal sense of the term. No peasants till farmlands for the Otomo, and the family controls no territory larger than its own palace and associated village. This peculiar situation is maintained throughout the history of the Otomo family, from its founding in the first century all the way through the fall of the Hantei and then the Toturi dynasties. The family deliberately chooses this essentially landless status, for to the Otomo the possession of lands is an obstacle to their purpose as a family. Their duty is to maintain social order by pitting the clans against each other, ensuring no single clan holds enough power to threaten the Emperor. Lands are a distraction. Farmers are a distraction. Retainers and armies, generals, logistics, and all the duties of landholders are not only distractions, but are actually beneath their calling. Moreover, because the Otomo are kin to the Imperial House and vital to the maintenance of the Imperial Bureaucracy, they know they will be provided for out of the Imperial Treasury and need not trouble themselves to seek more lands to maintain their opulent public image. They do, however, make careful "investments" in skilled peasant retainers, mercantile

patronage, and artistic sponsorships, allowing them to generate a considerable amount of extra wealth without any need for lands at all. As a result, this small family boasts a lavish lifestyle comparable to the mightiest Great Clan families, a source of considerable jealousy to other samurai in the Empire.

Otomo holdings, whether a small estate in a distant city or their seat of power at Kyuden Otomo, are always lavish – displaying the family's unquestioned power and wealth – but also highly ordered and traditional. The necessary amenities are always present, and their holdings never lack for retainers, servants, or any other human assets, but nothing unusual or exotic is tolerated; even more than the Crane holdings, the estates of the Otomo are monuments to propriety. However, thanks to the strict order which the Otomo demand, they are also equally functional.

Kyuden Otomo

The Otomo family's only castle and by far their most impressive possession. Its location and nature through the Empire's history tell a great deal about the Otomo family's purposes and status. In many respects it has always been more important where it is located rather than how impressive it might be.

Until the mid-twelfth century, Kyuden Otomo is situated within the Forbidden City, the walled innermost portion of Otosan Uchi. It is the only structure there which is even close to the height of the Imperial Palace itself, but is carefully constructed to ensure the Otomo do not in any way overshadow that building – theirs is always clearly the lesser location. The building is positioned near one of the main gates into the Inner City, a location that reflects that all Rokugani, before they can reach the Imperial Palace and the Emperor's own court, must pass under the watchful eye of the servants of the Emperor. A palatial and magnificent estate, it holds offices for much of the Imperial Bureaucracy in its lower floors and attendant buildings, and is opulent enough to host several Winter Courts in years when it was deemed inappropriate for the Emperor to travel out of the capital.



After the fall of Otosan Uchi during the Four Winds era, Kyuden Otomo is rebuilt elsewhere with the assistance and blessings of the Crane Clan. Its new location is on the coast just north of the Crane lands (and thus technically within the boundaries of the Imperial territory around Otosan Uchi), but the Crane take responsibility for supplying and protecting it. Although the Crane never stint on their obligations, to the Otomo this new home dependent on a Great Clan is a sign of how far their stars have fallen since the end of the Hantei Dynasty. While this sentiment eventually faded in the later Iweko dynasty, when the Otomo are re-confirmed in their traditional duties, the fact that their main palace is located far away from the Imperial City remains a source of concern. It allows their family dojo to train its students away from the scrutiny of others, but the Otomo consider this a minor blessing at best and yearn for the days when they can rebuild a full palace in their rightful place at the Emperor's side.

Lands of the Seppun Family

Of the three Imperial families, the Seppun have the most extensive actual holdings, but even so these amount to only one sizable province. On the other hand, this province is one of the most lush and attractive plots of land in the Empire. Located within sight of Otosan Uchi's Hub Villages, the Seppun Province is a place of wide verdant fields, covered with rice paddies, and cut through by many small streams prized for their quality and variety of fish. Needless to say, the Seppun profit greatly from their maintenance and tending of these lands.

The number of samurai retainers actually administering and defending these lands is low, indeed considerably lower than the family could assign if it wished. The Seppun consider their sacred duty of defending the Emperor, whether in Otosan Uchi or later in Toshi Ranbo, far more important than defending their own lands, and they maintain the bulk of their soldiers within the Imperial capital at all times. This does mean their lands are not strongly garrisoned, especially in the twelfth century when the capital moves to the more distant Toshi Ranbo. There is always a lurking fear that the Seppun province may come under attack raiders, bandits, or other such threats, but the Seppun family's close friendship with both the Lion and the Crane means its leaders seldom worry too much about this possibility. Both clans have interests tied closely to the Imperial Throne, and so it is rare indeed that they are not willing to send a legion to aid in the defense of the Seppun Province.

Moreover, the Seppun lands are home to the sacred Grave of Seppun, one of the holiest sites in Rokugan. It would take brave bandits indeed to assail this region, considering the wrath of an entire Empire would fall on them.

The province is heavily domesticated and up until the fall of Otosan Uchi it is one of the most densely populated regions in Rokugan. Even after the fall, despite the decline in the Hub Villages to the south, there are still a formidable number of samurai living in this region. Wildlife is found only within certain sacred regions where no act of

violence is allowed; otherwise, the whole place is tilled and maintained for one or another purpose of the Seppun family. It is no surprise that they are both beautiful and extremely quiet; only when the city of Otosan Uchi itself is threatened is there any true violence within the Seppun Province.



Kyuden Seppun

One might expect the personal defenders of the Imperial line might have a powerful military installation for their home, but in reality Kyuden Seppun – often called the "Second Home of the Hantei" – is a nigh-indefensible palace. Although it is built at the high point of a hill, it lacks the high walls and fortified keep of a traditional castle. Instead, Kyuden Seppun is a sprawling estate of several conjoined smaller estates (or yashiki). These various estates, built over time by different Seppun daimyo, gradually fuse together into a truly magnificent and wondrous residence. Thus it is little wonder that Kyuden Seppun is a frequent choice for the Emperors of the Hantei line to host their Winter Court.

Despite its beauty, Kyuden Seppun is not a place of grandiose pomposity or excessive displays of wealth. Instead it is a serene, reverent, and quiet place, one where violence is almost unheard of and guests are treated to a far more enlightened experience than many first expect. The Seppun are a deeply religious family with equal roles as priests and soldiers, and have always treated their ancestral home as a place that calls first and foremost on their roots in the priesthood. Thus, while a military garrison is always present here, it is relatively small and kept largely out of sight from guests. Most of those guests, even the most stuffy or worldly, depart with a sense of inner peace and speak glowingly of their time here.

After the fall of Otosan Uchi, the halls of Kyuden Seppun become a more somber place, marked by the sense of failure and grief which haunts the family. Although the later Toturi Dynasty and Iweko Dynasty Emperors still visit Kyuden Seppun for Winter Court, they do so far less often than the Hantei, and the ominous nearby presence of Otosan Uchi's ruins makes the place far less appealing to outsiders. By the end of the twelfth century the halls of the palatial estate grow increasingly quiet.

The Four Temples

True to the religious roots of the Seppun family, Kyuden Seppun is surrounded by a quartet of temples called Daikandaiji, Yakushiji, Asukadera, and Kawaradera. These four temples are named in honor of four sayings by Shinsei and thus each reflects particular elements of the Shintaoist faith. Retirement to these temples is a popular choice not only among the Seppun but any individuals of high status and political pull. Consequently, these four temples have always had a certain appeal to political figures seeking advice and guidance from the Brotherhood, and the more politically-minded monks of the Brotherhood likewise tend to gravitate here.

The Grave of Seppun

Located within walking distance of Kyuden Seppun, this is one of the few locations in the Empire to be exempted from the rule of cremation imposed after the first appearance of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban, the sacrosanct Grave of Seppun has stood inviolate through all the centuries from her death to modern times. No enemy has ever despoiled the Grave, even during the worst of crises, and rumors abound that the site is watched over by the spirit of Seppun herself, a shade strong enough to dissuade any who might desecrate her remains.

The stately but small tomb is covered in frescoes depicting the stars as they were seen when the Kami fell to earth, along with various other religious iconography. A small path connects it to the Seppun estates, winding through groves of willow trees. Visitors are not common, but those who do come are deeply pious and respectful.

The Seppun Gardens

This term is used to describe not a "garden" in the conventional sense, but rather the entire region in the vicinity of Kyuden Seppun. No farming is conducted so close to the Seppun estates, but the lands are still tended well, creating the tone and appearance of a vast lightrly manicured park. Aside from their vast expanse and semi-natural beauty, the Seppun Gardens are known mainly for the statuary that can be found within them. One new statue is commissioned each time a Seppun daimyo is appointed, and thus over time they slowly multiply. Only very rarely is anyone foolish enough to cause harm to these statues, and pilgrims visit them to honor the servants of the Emperor and reflect upon their history.



The Hub Villages

The four Hub Villages are located around Otosan Uchi, and while they technically are not within the Seppun Province, for most of history they are protected by the Seppun in the same manner as the Imperial capital. These four large villages – in truth, they are closer to small cities – serve both as places for excess samurai to live and as sources of specialized heimin labor for the city's needs. Because Otosan Uchi itself cannot grow beyond its outer walls and thus often has insufficient housing for all those who visit it, many samurai acquire estates in one or another of the Hub Villages. Much of the Imperial bureaucracy lives there, and when the Emerald Champion's magistrates bring in taxes in the fall, they are counted in the Hub Villages. In effect, these towns are the "little capitals" of the Empire, where those who do not have access to the Emperor's Forbidden City can still meet to negotiate and trade. Thus, for most of history the Hub villages are well populated and heavily trafficked, known both for their many wealthy samurai and for their numerous heimin artisans, craftsmen, and shipwrights.

In the wake of Otosan Uchi's destruction in the mid-twelfth century, the Imperial City is rebuilt in Toshi Ranbo and much of the Hub Villages' population moves there as well – along with most of the Seppun bushi who protected the villages as well. However, the four small cities do not entirely die. Protected by a mixture of ronin, clan samurai, and local peasant soldiers, they endure and even manage occasional bursts of renewed prosperity.

The city of Otosan Uchi may be gone, but the Hub Villages retain their positions near the great Bay of the Golden Sun, and this grants them an ongoing strategic and mercantile value despite their reduced power and population.

Mura Kita Chushin

The North Hub Village is a major center of merchant commerce and is also known for its shipwrights, building ships of all kinds for any who might need them. After the founding of the Tortoise Clan in the fifth century, the village is always ruled by a headman appointed by the Tortoise, and the small clan runs a large open-air marketplace, the Iron Turtle Market Square, within the town. The clan also places its official Embassy in this village rather than in Otosan Uchi itself.

After the fall of Otosan Uchi and the departure of the Seppun, the Tortoise largely take over the village and turn its many abandoned buildings into shops and warehouses full of strange and exotic goods.

Mura Higashi Chushin

East Hub Village is notorious as a town heavily populated by ronin and mercenaries, usually looking for employment by the samurai visiting the Imperial city. East Hub is the smallest of the four towns, and most activity centers around a large teahouse called the House of the Green Koi – founded by an Imperial Herald – and a neighboring sake house called the Crimson Blossom.

Once the Tortoise Clan comes into existence, it maintains a nominal presence within the village and hires a ronin otokodate called the East Wind to protect its assets.

After the fall of Otosan Uchi, the East Wind tries to protect the town as best it can on its own, eventually gaining patronage from the Unicorn Clan for this purpose. Later in the twelfth century, the Mantis Clan is granted control of the town's port; they use it, among other things, to bring in the supplies for building their semi-secret holding called Houritsu Mura.

Mura Nishi Chushin

West Hub Village is home to the storehouses of the Imperial tax collectors, many of whom also live here. It is also known for a large sake brewery, the Western Hub Sake Works. Aside from this, the village's only notable historical significance is the presence of an estate belonging to the ronin Tsi family. Supposedly, in the second century the family's founder, Tsi Wenfu, is bestowed this estate by Emperor Hantei Genji himself. The Tsi family remains here quietly for centuries, making and selling beautiful weapons.

In the late twelfth century, the Tsi are finally granted Minor Clan status as the Oriole, and West Hub Village is passed to their control. At that time the first bushi dojo of the Oriole Clan is built here.

Mura Minami Chushin

South Hub Village is a center of art and culture, home to numerous heimin artisans and a fair number of samurai ones as well. Doji Nio, the son of Lady Doji and Kakita, makes the South Hub his home and thus it is, from the very beginning, a magnet for those of creative and artistic

temperament. After he dies, his will leaves his estate to "Rokugan's authors of beauty" and it becomes a communal home for storytellers, poets, painters, and every other sort of artist trying to make a name in Otosan Uchi. The estate is often referred to (somewhat facetiously) as Kyuden Nio.

Shortly before the fall of Otosan Uchi in the twelfth century, Kyuden Nio is attacked by the Onisu called Hakai and completely destroyed. Under normal circumstances it would have been rebuilt, but just a year later Otosan Uchi itself is destroyed.

Since then, South Hub Village recovers somewhat more than the other three Hub Villages. Its proximity to Kyuden Seppun means travelers and pilgrims still pass through on a semi-regular basis, and while the artisans never return in any great numbers, the town does boast a major silk-works.

The Castle of the Emerald Champion

The lands north and west of Otosan Uchi, beyond the Seppun Province, are assigned to the Emerald Champion, the first and most revered of the Jeweled Champions. The castle itself, known as the Palace of the Emerald Champion or Shiro Yogasha, sits on a high hill surrounded by a wide empty plain, the Plains of the Emerald Champion, allowing any advancing army to be spotted days in advance. However, no Rokugani army ever dares to threaten its borders, since all daimyo know this would simply be an invitation for all the other clans to attack them.

The castle is a luxurious and sprawling estate with only modest fortifications; the Imperial Chrysanthemum displayed at the front gate is considered protection enough. In the twelfth century, after Otosan Uchi is destroyed, Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi orders defensive walls constructed around the castle, and builds several lookout towers on the plains. However, the castle remains safe from attack.

After the new Imperial capital is established at Toshi Ranbo, the Emerald Champion no longer views this castle as a suitable headquarters. The estate is re-tasked as a base and dojo for Emerald Magistrates, and the Ruby Champion – the primary sensei of the Ruby Dojo that trains Imperial magistrates – builds a small estate adjoining the castle.

Lands of the Miya Family

In contrast to the religious significance of the Seppun and the wealth and influence of the Otomo, the Miya inhabit lands which are modest in size, poor in wealth, and relegated to a distant part of the Empire – almost as if the Emperor were embarrassed by the youngest and smallest Imperial family. However, nothing could be further from the truth. The Miya chose their lands for themselves, selecting the humble region as a reminder of their duty and their family motto: "There are no Miya heroes." That this forces them to travel long distances to fulfill their duties is an extra challenge they happily accept.

The lone province of the Miya is nestled against the foot of the Spine of the World Mountains, a place of rolling foothills that give way to wide open plains. Very



little of this land has been properly cultivated, and much of it is given over to natural beauty – trickling streams and waterfalls in the mountains, lightly-wooded forests in the hills, and swaying grasslands and wildflowers in the plains. A few farming villages are found scattered around the province, most of them located near Kyuden Miya itself; they are called Genmai Mura, or Brown-Rice Villages, a nod to the Miya's embrace of commonality. There are a few notable areas in the province, however, which reverse this general trend... most obviously the Miya family's castle itself.

Kyuden Miya

The Miya castle is actually quite humble despite belonging to an Imperial family, and in truth the title of "Kyuden" is as much a gesture of respect as an assessment of the family's ability to host the Emperor's Winter Court. The castle itself is only three stories tall, a broad-based and squat keep in a solid style more akin to the Crab than the tall grace of the Crane or the Otomo. A second small castle, reserved for the Emperor and his travelling companions if they should ever visit, stands to the northeast of the Miya's own keep, still within the same walled courtyard (and with the best view and the most protection). Unofficially known as 'Kyuden Hantei,' this second castle is opulent and elegant, draped in wealth and works of art... and stays empty for decades at a time, save for the handful of Miya caretakers charged with its upkeep. The number of times that Kyuden Miya has hosted the Winter Court may be counted on the fingers of only one hand... but on those occasions, the Son of Heaven wanted for nothing.

The walls of Kyuden Miya are of stone, thick enough to repel attacking legions, but have never been tested by anything greater than occasional banditry. They lack parapets or walkways for guards, giving them a peaceful appearance which the Miya consider vital to their duties of communication and diplomacy. Those who take a closer look will note the small holes that line the walls near the uppermost sections; these are peg holes, allowing the Miya to insert wooden platforms to create walkways if needed. This is but one of the many small unique developments provided by the Miya's vassal family, the Anou.



On either side of the castle are shrines: the Eastern Temple, dedicated to the Sun, and the Western Temple, dedicated to the Moon. Prayers for good fortune happen in the East, where it is said the Sun herself listens to the humble Miya's requests, while calls for mercy and apologies are given in the West, where the Moon will decide if punishment for misdeeds has been sufficient. These temples would probably be far more famous if the Miya were better located in the Empire, but they see no need for tourists to clutter their humble home.

Of final note is that Kyuden Miya, like many of the Empire's oldest castles, has one room set aside for six Great Clans at Winter Court (Crab, Crane, Dragon, Lion, Phoenix, and Scorpion) but has never added a place for the children of Shinjo after the return of the Unicorn Clan. When the first Unicorn emissaries came here, they said, "We brought our own castles!" and introduced Rokugan to the Yurt. It is a point of clan pride to recreate this every time the Unicorn visit, with the Miya apologizing once again for having not yet constructed new quarters and the Unicorn once again insisting on using their tents.

The Miya Library

While all samurai families in Rokugan keep libraries, the Miya have a special connection with theirs, the third-largest library in the Empire (behind the Isawa of the Phoenix and the Ikoma of the Lion). This library is nearly devoid of any writing by the Miya themselves, a further reinforcement of the family motto ("There are no Miya heroes") which is inscribed above the entryway. Instead, the Miya library is dedicated to everyone else, serving as a central repository for the heraldry and mon of every samurai in Rokugan, alive or dead. These archives are exhaustive, and Miya heralds travel to every clan annually to keep up their records and provide assistance for those samurai who have been granted the right to create their own personal mon. The Miya always strive to make sure any new mon does not match an earlier one so as to avoid any confusion in the official records. This is not always successful, however, and veteran Miya librarians can detail how the mon of a family in the fourth century is not the same as the one used in the seventh century by the same family – distinctions that escape even the most erudite historians from other parts of the Empire.

Service in the library is dreary, repetitive work, focused on meticulous filing and research, and the staff is largely composed of failed Heralds – those who did poorly at their gempukku, those who are unable to handle the rigors of travel, or those whose social skills lack the eloquence or humility required of a shisha. Those given more valuable senior positions, such as the annual trips to gather new mon, are the ones who can turn this drudgery into an honorable and enjoyable pursuit, becoming true librarians despite their early foibles. The best of these strive to become the Head Librarian, a position of little power but great respect. The Head Librarian is expected to have a near-encyclopedic knowledge of the library's contents and to know all the mon of all the clans, Great and Minor, living and extinct.

The Archive of the Emperor

As befits the Heralds of the Empire, every single proclamation of the Emperor is copied and stored in the Miya Library, no matter how minor or major. These proclamations are routinely copied by junior librarians to ensure that none are lost, with extra copies placed in the Imperial Capital's own records. This section of the Miya library is always open to visitors, with copies of every proclamation brought out for perusal by request. (The originals, of course, are stored much more carefully, with only the most senior samurai ever given access to them.) While many would think that mistakes and errors would creep in over the centuries, the Head Librarian personally verifies each copy when it is made, ensuring perfection in the transcription. In general, each proclamation is given a new transcription once a century to ensure readability.

The Archive of Winter Court

This is perhaps the least-visited wing of the Miya library. The Miya scribes at each year's Imperial Winter Court keep a list of each guest who was present, of the participants in each major contest, the winners of those contests, and any particular lore that springs from each. The archive of the winning poem from each year's Winding Water Banquet is kept here, as well as the winner of each Bowman's Wager and the names of those who drank from the Cup of Defeat (and those who refuse). The location of each Winter Court is also recorded here, and those treaties which are signed are preserved as well. These records tend to be brief, cold, and impersonal, with only the barest facts presented. More elaborate and detailed histories can, of course, be found in the Ikoma libraries, but the Miya family's famous neutrality ensures that legal terms from diplomatic endeavors are properly filed and archived for the future.

The Dead-Letter Archive

Perhaps the most unusual portion of the Miya library is the so-called dead-letter archive. Miya Heralds who are tasked with delivering messages hold this duty sacred, willingly giving up their lives rather than let their mail be tampered with. When a letter cannot be delivered, usually due to the death of the recipient, it is stored here, deep inside the Miya library; here it will remain, until the original recipient comes to claim it. This is not as unlikely as it sounds, due to Rokugan's history of ghosts and returned ancestors, but nonetheless the archives are rarely opened. In the wake of the War of Spirits, when so many of the deceased return through Oblivion's Gate, the Miya release nearly a tenth of their entire archive, in some cases with returned Miya spirits personally handing the messages over to their original recipients.

The Miya Stables

The Miya stables are the largest horse-breeding area outside of the Unicorn lands. Here the wide-open plains of the Miya are put to good use, letting their steeds run wild and free, yet carefully tended by Miya horse-breeders. After the return of the Unicorn, the Miya have cross-bred Unicorn riding horses with their own Rokugani ponies to create a unique breed of Miya ponies known for their swiftness and endurance. Most Miya use standard Rokugani ponies, but the Miya ponies are used to deliver emergency messages and to convey the Emperor's annual decrees far and wide.

The Miya ponies are exclusively property of the Miya and are never sold or given to any other Great Clan, ensuring they never become misused as weapons of war. Over the centuries, there have been some attempts to steal them, but such efforts inevitably bring the wrath of the Imperial Legions upon the transgressors.

The Anou Lands

Kaiu Anou was a fourth-century Crab whose engineering skills were highly-regarded. When the Hantei requested he build a temple in Otosan Uchi, he was happy to oblige and created a true masterpiece. The Emperor was so impressed that he gave him status as the founder of a vassal family for the Miya, to teach his skills to those who would be a part of the Emperor's Blessing each year. Anou could not turn aside from such an honor, but the Crab were upset over losing such a valuable samurai and have nursed a quiet grudge ever since. The Kaiu, in particular, get irritated whenever the Anou are called "the best builders in the Empire," pointing out that Anou was a Kaiu first and there is a huge difference between building farmhouses and building the Great Carpenter Wall.

The Anou lands serve as the "industrial region" of the Miya, home to what few logging villages they have, as well as their only stone quarries. There is a single marble quarry which produces a unique pink shade of marble, highly prized in the noble courts of the land; most of the quarries are focused on more simple stone used in construction for the Blessing each year. More important than these resources, however, are the five Disaster Villages that the Anou oversee, used to train Miya in assorted construction and rebuilding techniques.

Earthquake Village is the northernmost, nestled in the mountains. Here the Miya spend a year building a small village, then celebrate by destroying it with a landslide, mudslide, or rockslide, depending on the exact location. The next class is sent in to clean and repair it.

Wildfire Village is the westernmost, located in foothills that have been cleared of trees. The rocky lands around the village are kept barren to prevent fires from spreading. The Miya spend one year building a proper village of wood and paper, then celebrate by burning it down. The next class is sent in to rebuild it.

Flooded Village is the southernmost Disaster Village, nestled at the tip of the foothills and surrounded on two sides by a small river. The Miya flood the village yearly, requiring their students to repair the damage. During the first 'water' year of each decade, the river is instead allowed to crash into the village in a giant tsunami, destroying much of it. This takes fully two years to repair, training essential for service on the Rokugani coastline.

Tornado Village is the easternmost and most unusual, due to the shrine to Asahina Isawa found near it. The shrine holds a special relic, a simple fan which is actually a nemurani able to create a potent windstorm. This allows the Miya to start each year by blowing this village down, then using the rest of the year to rebuild it.

Plague Village is the central Disaster Village and the only one that is never destroyed. It is also the only Disaster Village that is populated, with both heimin from the Miya lands and actors contributed from other clans (mainly the Scorpion and Crane). The exact trouble of Plague Village changes from year to year, but is most commonly either a plague or a famine. Rarely, it is used to showcase a village overtaken by banditry or even one in open rebellion. The Miya tend to the "sick," learn how to feed the "hungry" and how to keep riots from breaking out, how to mediate every sort of desperate situation. This is also where the Miya learn to build and repair shrines and temples, since both disease and famine are seen as punishments from the Fortunes and piousness is the best cure.

Interestingly, Plague Village is where some Miya choose to learn the art of midwifing (ordinarily restricted to eta) in order to serve this most vital of unclean activities in an emergency. More than one village has seen the village midwife lost to plague, only to have a young Miya step in and save the life of both mother and newborn. Such samurai must be cleansed due to the unclean nature of blood, of course, but the humble Miya accept the duty all the same.

Lands of the Brotherhood of Shinsei

The lands that belong to the religious orders of Rokugan are not organized into provinces like the lands of the Great Clans. They are scattered all across the Empire, often nestled in the very heart of lands belonging to one or another of those clans. Thus, the monastic holdings located within clan territories and in the three major cities of Rokugan are discussed in their respective chapters; this section tackles those monastic holdings which fall outside any other factions' domain. These religious holding are generally sites of great spiritual or historical significance, despite their sometimes remote locations. Enlightenment is a destination reached by many paths, after all, and can be found in the most unlikely places.

The Brotherhood is at best loosely organized and the various orders within it vary from one another in almost every aspect; their holdings are similarly diverse in theme, albeit sharing certain physical similarities.

Dangai

This is a small monastery built in a barren section of land between the Crane and Scorpion borders. It is primarily a library, and the dry, silent, remote region suits this task well. Dangai is also known for the serenity of its rock gardens. Pilgrims seeking quiet contemplation often



visit here, which is a good thing – since the arid climate limits the amount of food production in the local area, the monks are forced to rely on visitors to bring in additional supplies.

The climate is very good for the storage of scrolls, and Dangai is considered to have some of the earliest known editions of the Tao of Shinsei. From time to time it becomes fashionable in the greater Empire to have a version of the Tao copied from those in Dangai, and at such times the monastery sees a sharp increase in visitors and gifts – to the amusement of the monks, who know the wisdom of the Tao is not in the writing but in the reading.

Monastery Among the Winds

Founded in the fifth century, this holding stands in a small valley near a minor pass through the Spine of the World Mountains, accessible to the lands of the Lion and Scorpion. The pass is not by any means the best way to cross the mountains, but it is sometimes used by pilgrims and messengers; much more rarely, merchants and soldiers use it, though it is too small to allow the movement of large armies. The monastery itself makes the best use it can of the surrounding area, with terraced farms on the slopes and garden plots within the monastery walls.

The Monastery Among the Winds is a place for Seppun miharu and members of the Imperial Legions to retire. They are expected to then spend their remaining years training Brotherhood sohei to help defend the Empire. The Seppun recognize the need for the Brotherhood to have its own guardian force and thus made it their task to provide a training ground for such a group. In violent eras such as the eight century and the twelfth century, the monastery also finds use as a hospital and site of convalescence for wounded samurai.

Monastery of the Five Rings

This is the first temple of the heretical Order of the Five Rings. During the Five Rings Heresy in the early sixth century, Lion Clan Champion Akodo Kento orders a monastery dedicated to these teachings be built in the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains. It is constructed with great speed, completed in only three years. A few years later, Master of the Void Isawa Amiku leads an army to conquer the monastery, but the Phoenix are defeated.

After the collapse of the Five Rings Heresy, the monastery is abandoned and falls into ruin. Many years later it is rebuilt as an outpost of the Four Temples Order. Interestingly, they retain the site's original name, both out of respect for the misguided and lost sect and as a cautionary reminder of a time when the Brotherhood almost tore itself apart.

Subsequently, the Brotherhood uses the inner libraries of the restored Monastery of the Five Rings to keep records of the heretical sects of the past, retaining such knowledge in order to know how to confront and defeat their false claims. This inner library is watched over mainly by former Ikoma, along with a few retired Inquisitors and ex-Witch Hunters.

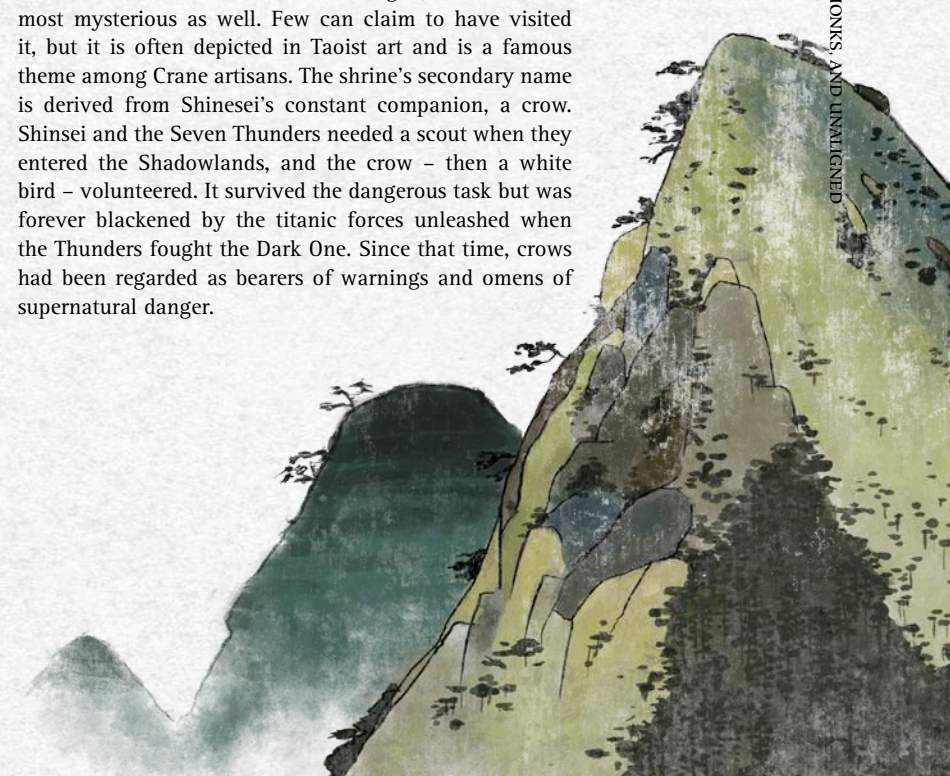


Quiet Stone Monastery

This place is built into a great stone outcropping at the edge of the Dragon Heart Plain, and some consider it a marker of the northern edge of Rokugani civilization. Legend claims it is constructed in the first century when Shinsei still taught, and the little teacher himself visited and offered his wisdom to those here. Whether this is true or not, the Brotherhood claims that in the mid-first century a young monk here named Tsumiko achieved Enlightenment; he is widely considered to be the first Enlightened Master after Shinsei himself. With such a legacy, it is no surprise that Quiet Stone Monastery becomes one of the greatest monasteries in the Empire and the school from which the philosophy of the Void emerged.

Reihado Shinsei

The Shrine of Shinsei, also called the Crow Shrine, is the most famous of all shrines in Rokugan, and one of the most mysterious as well. Few can claim to have visited it, but it is often depicted in Taoist art and is a famous theme among Crane artisans. The shrine's secondary name is derived from Shinesei's constant companion, a crow. Shinsei and the Seven Thunders needed a scout when they entered the Shadowlands, and the crow – then a white bird – volunteered. It survived the dangerous task but was forever blackened by the titanic forces unleashed when the Thunders fought the Dark One. Since that time, crows had been regarded as bearers of warnings and omens of supernatural danger.



The Crow is tended by a handful of monks, some of whom are rumored to actually be the shapeshifting Kenku, admirers of Shinsei's ways. It is said that only those of pure heart can find the shrine, and as if that were not challenge enough, the exact location is uncertain and seems to change from one era to another. Indeed, retired samurai who seek Enlightenment will sometimes undertake a quest to seek out the Shrine of Shinsei, traveling all over the Empire (and even beyond) in hope of finding the sacred site. Some accounts have placed the shrine within the borders of the Shinomen Forest, while others have located it on a rocky stretch of the Crane coast known for sudden squalls and thick fogs appearing without warning. Where the Shrine of Shinsei truly lies may be a mystery that cannot be solved.

Shrine of the Seven Thunders

Located in a cave in the Mountain of the Seven Thunders, this is actually seven shrines dedicated to those seven brave souls who faced down the Dark Kami (and in the twelfth century, is expanded to also revere their reincarnations who do the same). Images of the Thunders are carved into the very stone of the mountain, in styles appropriate to their clan of origin. It is a place that celebrates the infinite potential of the mortal man and the triumph of Shinsei's wisdom over the madness of Jigoku. Hidden within the monastery, available only to the most honored guests, is the Library of the Thunders, a collection of writings about the heroes and their lives. The library contains firsthand accounts from those who knew the Thunders personally, as well as general historical records about the Days of Thunder.

The monks who tend this place are devoted to contemplation and meditation, spending most of their time on those activities except when maintaining the shrines. Each monk chooses one shrine to tend exclusively. It is a harsh but spiritually rewarding duty, and not all supplicants are accepted; candidates must prove their dedication before being allowed to join the order.

While the facilities for visitors are minimal, this is nonetheless often the site of pilgrimages for those seeking guidance or inspiration. At the bottom of the path up the mountain is a tent city of trinket sellers, places for pilgrims to stay the night, and similar amenities; it waxes and wanes with the seasons.

Shinden Osano-Wo

The great Temple of Osano-Wo, the largest facility dedicated to the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, is located west of Ryoko Owari in the middle of the Plains of Thunder. The temple is founded at the end of the third century, two hundred years to the day after Hida Osano-Wo's death, and it has survived ever since despite occasional attack by Shadowlands forces foolish enough to confront the Brothers of Thunder on their holy home ground. While the Order of Osano-Wo is originally an independent organization, over the centuries it is gradually welcomed into the fold as part of the larger Brotherhood. The monks of this order are widely known as the most militant and worldly of the Brotherhood sects, blending martial and spiritual training in a harsh but effective whole. There are few places in the Empire where one can learn more about the practical fighting arts.

The temple itself is constructed from limestone gathered from the surrounding plain, and looks as much like a fort as a temple. The roof is pierced with Kiau-made lightning rods that flare in the frequent thunderstorms that wash over the area. In the front of the temple is a huge maze, also made of limestone, filled with hazards such as geysers and fields of sharp stones – this is a training ground for the monks, and visitors are kept out. However, the monks do welcome visitors and relish news from all places. The temple has large guest quarters and a special room is always kept ready for the Emerald Champion, who is viewed as blessed by Osano-Wo.

This association of the Emerald Champion with Osano-Wo is probably the reason why the Test of the Emerald Champion is relocated from Dark Edge Village to here in the tenth century. The monks accept this new role for the temple with alacrity, constructing a tournament ground outside the temple. The abbot of the temple serves as the main judge of the tournament, ensuring there is no risk of partiality.

Unaligned and Ronin Lands

In Rokugan, all of the land belongs to the Emperor and his samurai maintain it for the greater good of the Empire. However, there are some places that seem to slip outside this neatly regimented design. Sometimes these places are governed by Imperial agents, on other occasions they are protected by a clan, but there are also instances of completely "independent" towns and even cities which pay taxes directly to the Emperor (or in some cases do not pay taxes at all). And, of course, there are groups such as bandits who actively seek to stand outside the proper order of things.

The City of the Rich Frog

The settlement known as Toshi sano Kanemochi Kaeru is an independent ronin city for most of its history. Legend claims it is founded by a mischievous spirit-frog from Chikushudo, but other historical sources claim it is built by the Lion Clan during the centuries that they rule the lands of the departed Ki-Rin Clan.

The city lies just north of the Drowned Merchant River, in lands close to the territory of the Lion and Dragon (and later the Unicorn) but usually not claimed by any of them. During the centuries in which the Ki-Rin Clan is gone from the Empire, the Lion sometimes exert control over



the city, but for most of its history it is independent, ruled by a secretive ronin family calling themselves Kaeru. An Imperial Magistrate is assigned to uphold law and collect taxes, and the Kaeru create their own militia, an otokodate called the Machi-Kanshisha, to serve as yoriki for the magistrate. The city earns a well-founded reputation for being open to any business possibility, including smuggled goods, dishonorable services, gaijin artifacts, and even drugs such as opium, all with the knowledge and tacit approval of the Kaeru family.

After the return of the Unicorn Clan, the city finds itself caught between two hostile clans, and the Unicorn begin exerting stronger influence over the place, wishing both to control the territory and to shut down the illicit commerce there. During the twelfth century the Unicorn seize the city outright, ruling it for several decades, and the Kaeru family find both their numbers and their influence declining to the point where they can no longer effectively administer the city. A renewed war between Lion and Unicorn finally ends with the Lion taking full control of the city, and the surviving Kaeru swear fealty to the Ikoma as a vassal family.

Daidoji Yukan-se

The Valiant Daidoji Tower is a small keep located just north of the Crane province of Kishou. It is held by ronin whose ancestors were once Crane Clan samurai. Originally, the tower is an outlying Scorpion holding; at some point in the Empire's history, it is captured by the Crane, but some undefined sin or vice among the samurai here results in their being exiled from the clan. Ever since, the ronin hold the tower, hunt bandits in the surrounding lands, and hope against hope for the day when they can rejoin the Crane Clan – so far, to no avail.

The Forgotten City

While "city" may be too grand a name for it, the sobriquet "forgotten" is well earned, as any born in this place are cursed to forget its location should they ever leave. Located in an isolated valley in the Great Wall of the North Mountains, just within the Empire's borders, the city is as close to Yobanjin villages as it is to Rokugani ones. The community is founded by the powerful but insane ronin shugenja called Karatsu sometime during the early twelfth century. Its populace is initially comprised of those who follow Karatsu willingly, as well as peasants kidnapped from both the Empire and the Yobanjin lands, and a few people who were already scraping out a living in the hidden places in the mountains. Counting the outlying farms, they number about three thousand altogether.

Karatsu seeks out those with the talent to speak to the kami and teaches them himself, but bans maho as too dangerous to practice. His students' abilities make them the "nobility" of their little realm, modeled vaguely after the Phoenix Clan (of which Karatsu was once a member). Hidden observation points monitor the two passes in and out of the valley, and anyone who stumbles upon it by accident is spotted and quickly disposed of.

Karatsu dies during the Destroyer War in a mad attempt to kill his son, Kuronada. Afterward, the ronin unit called the Legion of Two Thousand is tasked with finding his city, but amid the confusion at the end of the Destroyer War, this mission is forgotten. The subsequent status of the city is unknown.

Koeru Mura

This is a small fortified village located between the Crane and Scorpion lands, granted Imperial authority to govern itself. A governor is chosen from the leading families of the village and rules the town and surrounding lands with the help of a handful of ronin guards. Occasionally, a small detachment of samurai from the younger Minor Clans will assist in protecting the area as well. The most prominent local shrine is dedicated to Inari, the Fortune of Rice, and this is no surprise since the village is surrounded by fertile rice paddies and grain fields. The excess of each year's harvest is sold to the highest bidders among the Minor Clans.

In the mid-twelfth century, the Koeru Mura Dojo is established here as the training center for the army of the Minor Clan Alliance. Thereafter a mixed force of Minor Clan samurai is permanently stationed here, assuming responsibility for protecting the village and taking a strong voice in appointing its governor. The village is expanded by the addition of troop barracks and training grounds. (For a brief period prior to the Destroyer War, the village is under Mantis Clan protection, but after that conflict ends Imperial authorities issue a new charter returning the village to its previous status as a protectorate of the Minor Clan Alliance.)



Lost Traveler Castle

The northern base of operations for the famous ronin otokodate called the Legion of Two Thousand is located in the lands between the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. Its name comes from the fact that its location is so out of the way only a lost traveler would ever happen upon it. While small, this castle uses Kiau techniques in its construction and is surrounded by fast-flowing streams which make it deceptively difficult to attack. The dojo of the Legion of the Wolf, the so-called "Wolf's Lair," is reestablished at Lost Traveler Castle once that ronin band combines with the Legion. This places the former Wolf Legionaries close to the Dragon and Phoenix Clans, with whom they maintain strong ties.

Lost Traveler Castle serves as a forward staging ground for ronin guarding the northern borders and keeping watch over the ruins of Shiro Chuda on the Dragon Heart Plain. While primarily used by the Legion of Two Thousand, the Imperial Legions also stockpile supplies here in case they need them to operate against the Yobanjin. Imperial Magistrates are also known to use the castle as a base when their duties carry them to this part of the Empire.

Mura no Kin

The "Village of Gold" is a rich title for a poor place. Mura no Kin perches on the northern end of the Wall Above the Ocean Mountains. The land is unstable and prone to earthquakes, which is why the Kaiu close the gold mines they once supervised here, declaring them too dangerous for the rewards. Stories say the mines still have rich veins of gold, and soon after they are abandoned by the clans, ronin and criminals move in to the area, taking control of the village. Lone diggers and criminal crews alike try their hand at digging for gold, trying to reopen the old Kaiu shafts, but the work is dirty and dangerous, as are the people who live here.

In the early twelfth century, the unscrupulous Lion ambassador to the Sparrow, Kitsu Yunaki, discovers Mura no Kin and takes control of the mines, using enslaved zokujin and peasants to work them. His operation is eventually discovered by a magistrate and shut down, but the village is only vacant for a short time afterward before the desperate and the criminal return to the place.

Nanashi Mura

"Nameless Village" is located along but just outside the southern border of Dragon lands, roughly halfway between the City of the Rich Frog and Kyuden Tonbo. The village is founded in the late eleventh century by a ronin named Fuyari after he and his band are turned from evil deeds by a chance encounter with a mysterious hooded figure. Togashi Yokuni, Champion of the Dragon Clan, gives Fuyari permission to found a village solely for ronin, ruled by them under the distant protection of the Dragon – so long as they never build military defenses.

After its humble beginning the town grows considerably, although the land it is located on is not well suited to farming. The locals raise what food they can, but most of their needs have to be met with imports (indeed this is one of the reasons Togashi offers this location for the village, insuring ultimate control by restricting the food supply).

Nanashi Mura is known as a place to hire ronin, and often hosts bidders for their services from around the Empire. However, no clan (other than the Dragon) maintains a permanent presence here. The settlement is dominated by a shrine to Ebisu, the Fortune of Honest Work, a constant reminder that ronin are here to work. The town is divided into three loosely defined districts: Broken Wing, founded by Crane and Phoenix ronin, retains a veneer of civility; Bushi Row, catering to Lion and Crab ronin, has a pervasive martial air; and finally Highway's End, the most disreputable section, where those who do not fit in the other two areas end up. The Nanashi Dojo is the central meeting point of the village, and soon becomes one of the most respected ronin dojo in the Empire. It teaches the techniques developed by the Eyes of Nanashi, the village's guardians, as well as other ronin techniques.

After the destruction of Otosan Uchi in the mid-twelfth century, the ronin unit called the Legion of the Wolf establishes a presence here, both to aid in policing the village and as a recruitment point. The so-called Wolves' Den later relocates to Lost Traveler Castle when the Legion of the Wolf merges with the Legion of Two Thousand.

Dragon's Guard City

According to legend, Ryu Bannin Toshi is founded by the family of a small girl who gave a Celestial Dragon a rice ball. In thanks, the dragon promised her family would know peace for a thousand years. The girl's descendants become some of the most successful fisherman in Rokugan, and their independent city became both prosperous and prominent. A nearby town called Kiken na Roka Toshi (Treacherous Pass City), located at the southern entrance to the Treacherous Pass, is eventually absorbed into Ryu

Bannin Toshi as a single urban center, thriving on trade and fishing under the watchful eye of the Seppun family and later the Tortoise Clan. Indeed, so much did the city grow that by the twelfth century the Great Clans begin to covet it.

When Emperor Toturi III dies, plunging the Empire into a time of fear and uncertainty, the city's leaders begin to worry that their independent holding will become too tempting a target. Through allies in the Tortoise Clan, the leaders of Dragon's Guard City approach the Mantis Clan for assistance, seeking protection in exchange for preferential trading arrangements. The Mantis eagerly accept the offer, believing it will give them their first significant mainland port holding. However, by the end of the twelfth century, the direct Mantis influence in Dragon's Guard City wanes and that of other clans – notably the Phoenix, Crane, and Crab – increases due to its becoming a major port for the arrival and departure of convoys to the Imperial Colonies.

Palace of the Breaking Dawn

Shiro Akatsuki is located just to the south of the Phoenix border in the Mountains of Regret. Originally an obscure Imperial holding used by minor functionaries, it is abandoned during the chaos of the Clan War. Later in the twelfth century, it is rebuilt as another base for the ronin Legion of Two Thousand. The previously roaming ronin dojo called the Dojo of a Thousand Leaves is permanently established here as well. Early in the Destroyer War the castle comes under attack from the ronin shugenja Karatsu, and his magic inflicts significant damage; it is not until several years after the end of the Destroyer War before the defenses are fully rebuilt.

By the end of the twelfth century, retired ronin and ashigaru who served in the Legion of Two Thousand are settling in the area around the shiro, leading to a slowly expanding independent village.

The Village of Broken Dreams

This small village is built by the ronin band called the Unbroken. It is located where the Twilight Mountains meet the Plains Above Evil, a region just beyond the Crab border. The Kaiu know of its existence but allow it to stand and even secretly support it in difficult times – they appreciate the Unbroken's practical approach to the problem of the Taint and feel it would be detrimental to the Empire for their technique to die out.

In the aftermath of the Destroyer War, the emergence of the so-called "New Taint" means the numbers and role of the Unbroken steadily wane, the village shrinking away until the last of the old Unbroken die at the end of the twelfth century. The ultimate status of their technique is unknown.

Zakyo Toshi

"Pleasure City" is founded as a trade city in the latter half of the seventh century, using its place on the Small Trade River, a tributary of the River of Gold, to act as a staging ground for goods moving to or from the Scorpion lands. Its position near the borders of the Scorpion, Fox, and Hare clans allows Zakyo Toshi to serve as a hub for illicit trade as well. For most of its existence it is ruled by a merchant council who are responsible for seeing that taxes find their way to the Emperor's coffers – usually through a friendly Otomo intermediary who ensures the city keeps its nominal independence. In the early ninth century the city briefly serves as a garrison for the Imperial Legions and is ruled by an Emerald Magistrate, but the status quo is restored within a couple of generations.

In the early twelfth century, the Mantis press claims to Zakyo Toshi as part of their supposed authority over "unaligned lands," but their grip is never strong, and in the later part of that century the Emerald Champion Shosuro Jimen grants control to the Scorpion. The Scorpion later abandon the city after it is burned during the Destroyer War, and after the end of the war it is placed instead under nominal Imperial control, with a restored merchant council reporting to the Imperial Treasurer.

Certain aspects of Zakyo Toshi remain constant no matter who is officially ruling the city. It is a place of trade, smuggling, and vice. All manner of illegal goods and services can be found here if one can pay the right price. The city is justly infamous for the criminal gangs who operate here, variously ignored, suppressed, or co-opted by the rulers. Among the most successful and long lived are the gangs known as the Bawdy Carp (who use tattoos with a fish or water motif as identifying marks, and are focused on prostitution and gambling) and their rivals the Silent Canary (who deal more with smuggling and moneylending). Another notable gang is the Brotherhood of Autumn, whose members pose as monks to facilitate their trade in opium and other illegal substances.









Otosan Uchi, the Imperial City

Otosan Uchi, the Imperial City

The city of Otosan Uchi, whose name literally means "Father's Home" (a reference to the first Hantei Emperor, who was effectively the father of the Empire), is also known more casually as *Buzama ni Hirugaru Kyojin* (the "Sprawling Giant"). The capital of the Empire for 1100 years, Otosan Uchi is home to every aspect of Rokugani culture, almost a microcosm of the Empire itself. In contrast to the other two cities presented in this book, Otosan Uchi's history is for the most part stable and unchanging, a physical symbol of the Empire's continuity under the Hantei Dynasty. That finally changes in the twelfth century, when the city is rocked to its foundations, psychologically and physically, by the Scorpion Clan Coup and the subsequent Clan War. Those conflicts result in the termination of the Hantei Dynasty and its replacement by the short-lived Toturi Dynasty, and less than two generations later the city is destroyed in the assault led by the Dark Lord Daigotsu.

Physically and organizationally, Otosan Uchi is divided into three major sections: the Toshisoto, or Outer Districts; the Ekohikei, or Inner Districts; and the Forbidden City, which contains the Imperial Palace and associated locales. The original city, built around the Emperor's Palace in the first century, was designed in a group effort by all the Great Clans, but was not intended to go beyond the inner zone that became the Ekohikei. However, time and the natural expansion of the population spread the city outward beyond the Ekohikei's *Miwaku Kabe* (the so-called Enchanted Walls) and gave rise to the Toshisoto. There is a clear separation of caste and rank between the different sections of the city, as those with the most status generally live and work closest to the Imperial Palace. Further, while heimin and hinin are necessary throughout the city, they are only allowed with the Forbidden City itself for specific duties as required. Samurai who wish to visit the Forbidden City must gain special permission, and lower-ranking samurai need permission just to enter the Ekohikei.

The Ekohikei is surrounded by a massive wall (imbued with powerful Elemental magic) and in its early history this wall represented the outer edge of the city's territory. However, once the Toshisoto was born, construction of new walls and new districts began. The city expanded outward and a further massive construction project dug out the land from the River of the Sun all the way into Golden Sun Bay, allowing ships to come upstream directly into the Toshisoto. In its original form, the Imperial City


Hinjaku
River of the Sun
Shudo Bastion
Bitter Hearts
Chiken Temple
Magistrate's Memorial
Dark Cloud Monastery
Kinjiren Tombs
Hojize
Temple of Eternal Breath
Miwaku Kabe
Hiito
Juramashi
Yasuki Trading Grounds
Forbidden City
Karada
Temple to the Seven Fortunes
Hayasu
Kanjo
Seppun Hill
Chisei
Shining Square
Temple of Doh
Temple to Akodo
Ochiyo
Temple of Bayushi
Temple to Shinjo
Road of the Mesa High
Hidari
Hida's Temple
Temple to Shinjo
Temple of the Sun Goddess
Garden of Juramashi's Honor


Toyotomi
Kyuden Kokai
Shrine to Lord Moon
Makoto Wall
Hana Garden
Meiyoko
Trader's Row
Takeo Library
Ryoshi Saido
Kinenji's Tower
Higashikawa
Shrine to Ebisu
Daikoku Arch
Flooded Merchant Bazaar
Bay of the Golden Sun
The Imperial Capital
Otosan Uchi
In the year 1123 of the Isawa Calendar



was a flawless oval, its perfect shape easily seen from nearby hills. But as the new districts formed and the city's expansion took on a life of its own, the shape became irregular and haphazard. The new outer walls were never actually actually completed, and indeed many sections of those walls crumbled over time. Architecture in the Imperial City is somewhat stunted by the limiting factor of the Imperial Palace itself. The Emperor's castle is considered the epitome of architectural perfection, a symbol of purity and religious devotion, and no other structure in the city is allowed to rival it in height or splendor. However, because the Palace was created in the first century long before modern advances in architecture, the rest of the city must labor under strict design limitations.

The Governors

Both in the Ekohikei and the outer Toshisoto region, Otosan Uchi is divided up into various districts, and samurai are chosen (somewhat arbitrarily) by the Emperor or a senior member of his court to rule over these districts in much the same way as a Governor rules over a city or province. The Governors report to the Sentaku Tribunal (see below), a component of the Imperial Bureaucracy. However, since the Tribunal does not approve of seeing any sort of problems within the Emperor's city, many issues are suppressed, hidden, or otherwise swept under the rug. The Governors usually try to deal with their own problems quietly, but when this backfires the inevitable result is loss of position and quite possibly seppuku. Moreover, there are also hatamoto of the Emerald Champion who can overrule any governor with the voice of the Champion if it should be necessary.

The military defense of each district is left up to its Governor, though in truth there is little need for defense when the Lion Clan and the Imperial Legions watch over the city. Moreover, some leaders do not wish to spend the koku necessary to maintain even a token force for internal security (or simply do not have the funds to do so). Others maintain personal guards recruited from their own clan. Each governor does have the right to take command of any of their citizens' personal guards, potentially giving them the ability to call on sizable "free" forces in an emergency.

Traditionally, each district in the Toshisoto changes its name when a new Governor takes power in order to acclimate the citizens to their new leader; however, many citizens refuse to learn the new names, instead calling their district by the name they remember from their youth (or the name of the Governor they liked the most). In the Ekohikei, the district names are permanent, regardless of who serves as Governor.

The Sentaku Tribual

The Sentaku Tribunal serves a number of functions for the Imperial Bureaucracy, but its most important is controlling access to the Ekohikei and the Forbidden City. Prior to its creation, samurai would flock to the city seeking an audience with the Son of Heaven, crowding the place as they waited for days or weeks for their opportunity. This not only made the city chaotic but also consumed far too much of the Emperor's time in endless audiences. Eventually, it became clear that intermediaries would be necessary to control access to the city and, especially, the Emperor. Thus the Sentaku Tribunal was born.

The Tribunal draws its members from all four districts of the Ekohikei to ensure diversity of opinion and politics (the Otomo prefer it this way to avoid the formation of cabals). Sentaku means "choice," and the men and women who are honored with an appointment to the Tribunal are the ones who choose whether any petition or request is worthy of the Emperor's time. They also handle a great many administrative matters that are important for the city but below the Emperor's attention, and are considered to speak with the Emperor's voice in these matters. Any statements or decrees they make are considered law in Rokugan, and can only be overruled by the Emerald Champion or the Emperor himself. However, the Tribunal also has its own covert methods for maintaining control in the Ekohikei; certain members of a more flexible morality recruit devious criminals to hold positions of power within the Imperial city – ensuring these people will repay the favor when called upon. Those in the know refer to these members of the Sentaku as the "Sentaku Syndicate," although the existence of this group is officially denied by everyone.

Law Enforcement

Otosan Uchi is the birthplace of all Imperial law, so it is no surprise that the structures and enforcement of that law are strongly represented here. Each year, during the month of the Dragon after the Emperor returns from Winter Court, a meeting is convened of the Hashira Horitsu, or "Pillars of Law." The Emerald Champion, Imperial Magistrates, ranking courtiers and nobles, and a select few others are invited to discuss matters of law. It is here where legal policy is made, reshaped, or disregarded as no longer necessary. The Emperor technically oversees the entire affair, but typically appoints the Emerald Champion or a ranking member of the Imperial Court (or in the first or second century, a prominent Imperial Judge) to adjudicate. The event is supposed to take only three days, but dissembling over minutiae can sometimes cause it to drag on for weeks.

Magistrates in Otosan Uchi are divided between wandering and district magistrates. Assignment to a district is more prestigious, since it provides greater stability (and for those of flexible morality, greater opportunities for bribes and graft). Wandering magistrates technically have more legal authority, since they can enforce the law in any district, but lack any power base and thus rarely ascend to higher rank. Under each magistrate are yoriki, samurai deputies who do most of the grunt work of policing the city. Within the Ekohikei, yoriki are the lowest-ranking law enforcement, but in the larger Toshisoto region there are also many doshin (armed peasants) who assist the yoriki, especially when dealing with the peasant population. Of special note are the prisons of such a large city, of which there are two: one for samurai called Kyuden Kokai in the Prison and Moon district and one for all others in the Eta's Island district. These prisons are not assigned Imperial guards, but instead policed by hajisherazu, or samurai who have been shamed in their public lives. Instead of becoming a ronin, or retiring as a monk, some samurai willingly give up their freedom to serve in this thankless task. Their primary duty is management of daily life and they provide a habitable environment with room for contemplation.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Imperial City is the single most visited religious location for pilgrims in Rokugan. It was here that the Kami first touched upon Ningen-Do. Here, Hantei became the first Emperor and proclaimed the Imperial City to be created. Every aspect of faith is to be found in Otosan Uchi from Shinseism to the devotion of fortunes both lesser and great, ancestor worship and appeasement of the little kami of the world. Pilgrims of all castes come to the shrines and temples of Otosan Uchi and offer thanks as well as gifts. So many visitors come each year that an entire industry has sprung up around the need for gifts. Small shops and craftsmen make their living from this practice. Two locations in a city full of shrines stand out: the Spiritual district and the Forbidden City itself. The Spiritual district houses the largest temples, the Temple to the Sun, and the Temples of the Kami while the Forbidden City is the spiritual center of the world.

The Otosan Uchi Box Set

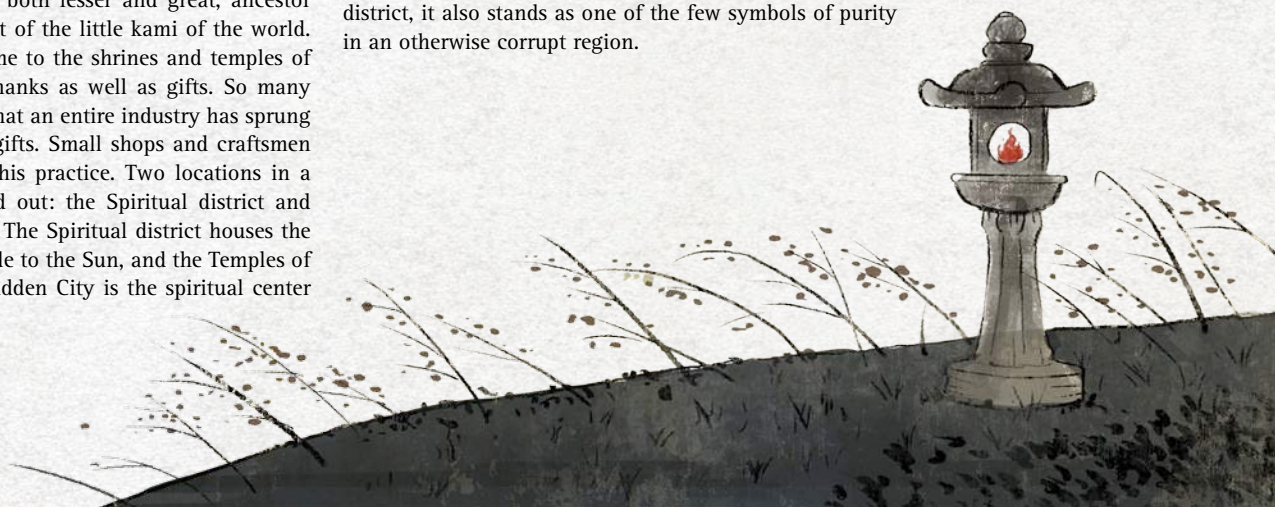
Otosan Uchi was originally detailed for the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG* in a boxed set published almost fifteen years ago. Although that set (available as a PDF from DriveThruRPG or in used game stores) was far more detailed than this chapter, it was also set at a specific point in Rokugan's history – just before the Scorpion Clan Coup. For the benefit of those readers who may have access to it, we have listed the Governor's name after each district in the Toshisoto.

The Toshisoto Districts

The practice of renaming each Toshisoto district after its new Governor can make it quite difficult for a non-resident of the city to track what is where. However, the Sentaku Tribunal uses its own naming conventions distinct from the Governor-based names in order to ensure proper record-keeping and taxation. These names, based on unique qualities of each district, are known only to those who are part of the Tribunal or the Imperial Bureaucracy and are seldom mentioned in polite company.

The Brutal Flame (Tsai) District

Zankoku Hon'O, or the Brutal Flame, is one of the towers around the Imperial City whose firelit tops guide visitors to the capitol in darkness and serve as lighthouses for ships in the Bay of the Golden Sun. This district's tower is one of two at the tips of the Antlers of the White Stag (which form the mouth of the bay) and has the distinguished history of having never gone dark. It takes its name from the Battle of the White Stag, when a fire tensai of the Isawa stood atop it and called down the fire kami upon the gaijin invaders. By far the most prominent beacon in this district, it also stands as one of the few symbols of purity in an otherwise corrupt region.



The Brutal Flame district lies sandwiched between the beautiful Emperor's Road district and the mercantile South Dock, and is home to criminals and smugglers of all types. This region has little appeal to samurai, especially those with honor or station, but many wealthy merchants reside here. Under certain governors, the few respectable holdings here are emphasized and can even draw tourism, but such times are the exception to the rule. Governors here are selected either for their ability to "manage" the criminal element or their ability to stamp it out. Unfortunately for its residents, the former is usually the case, and most governors have come from the Scorpion, the Yasuki family, or the Tortoise. "Cleansing" governors rarely last more than a year or two before they depart – dead, shamed, or simply resigning in disgust. Also, because of the prevalence of Scorpion governors over the years, several unique holdings here have a decidedly Scorpion flavor.

The home of the district governor possesses one of the finest views of the Bay of the Golden Sun. The residence is used by some governors as a bargaining chip, offering to share the spacious rooms, libraries, and gardens with other samurai in return for future considerations.

Bayushi's Mask is a legendary geisha house with some of the finest courtesans in the city. The building is decorated with beautiful images of the surrounding lands, including a magnificent full-wall painting of the Golden Sun Bay. It is located near the inner edge of the eastern Miwaku Kabe (called "Glory") and sometimes draws the ire of pious ascetics who worship there.

Leaves of Shosuro is a tea house famous for its *matcha* brews – and also covertly notorious for the hidden opium den in a back room.

The Tear, sometimes called **Shosuro's Tear**, is a renowned playhouse, boasting polished floors and a huge central auditorium with a variety of historical paintings on its walls. Control of the playhouse changes according to which acting troupes are most popular at any given time, but most often it is run by the Scorpion.



Life's Waterfall is a sake house favored by citizens across the city because of its beautiful interior: the inner structure has dozens of fountains which mimic the cliff side waterfalls of Golden Sun Bay.

Light as the Wind, an Asahina holding, is a large shop specializing in kites and painted dolls. It does modest business for most of year but is one of the city's most popular shops during the Kite and Doll Festival.

Two traditionally Dragon-held holdings may be found in this district, in counterpoint to the more common Scorpion influence. **Bayushi's Bane**, owned by an ancient Agasha family, is dedicated to treating "strange ailments" (i.e. poison), and the **Dragon's Mists** is a hospital maintained by the Kitsuki and Agasha/Tamori. The Dragon here take a vow never to interfere with the natural process of life, but aid in all "manmade" troubles. Resident gather each morning outside the hospital to watch as the structure is bathed in a golden glow as the sun rises.

Several abandoned houses line the waterway region, serving as useful hideouts for the district's less savory residents – especially on days of heavy fog rising from the bay.

The last item of note within this district is hidden in the back alleys: a small shrine to Hofukushu, the lesser Fortune of vengeance, attracts the victims of the city's myriad criminals. Worshippers leave rice, sake, koku, and personal items related to the crimes perpetrated against them or their loved ones. In more than one era of the Imperial City's history, vigilantes take it upon themselves to enact the Fortune's will.

The Emperor's Road (Hidari) District

The district referred to by the Sentaku as "the Emperor's Road" is a region of prosperity and elegance, a display of beauty for the Imperial family to review. From the Imperial Palace, an arriving or departing Emperor walks upon the Road of the Most High, a massive wooden roadway designed specifically for the Son of Heaven Emperor to travel through his domain. The Road of the Most High cuts through the Ekohikei, but when it reaches the Outer City, it is here, in this district alone, that the Emperor rests his gaze. This district follows along the Road of the Most high on both sides all the way to the southern gate, and presents the Imperial Presence with the best of everything the city has to offer. Nothing which might offend the eyes of Heaven may remain within sight of the Road of the Most High.

The Emperor's Road District changes hands perhaps more than any other district in the city, precisely because of the high profile of its Governor. If his job is done well, the Emperor's blessing may fall upon him, followed by glory and higher rank. However, the opposite is true as well – failure leads to removal from office (and the certainty of never again holding high rank).

Unsurprisingly, leadership of the district rarely allows unsightly structures to remain in place; any building with structural damage or even simply a poor reputation is razed to the ground rather than risk Imperial ire.

From the huge jade torii arches which stand above the gate of the Ekohikei to the simpler but larger gate which exits the Toshisoto, the Emperor's Road District is filled with some of the most famous shops, inns, tea houses, and other aestheticly pleasing holdings in the city. Kakita and Kaiu smiths often live here, crafting the vaunted sacred weapons and armor of their namesakes. The Crane have a disproportionate number of holdings within the Emperor's Road District; one street corner might boast an origami shop which uses tiny paper animals and people in complex parodies of famous Rokugani plays, while a few blocks away a Crane-run geisha house called Doji's Children draws in members of the kuge. Each of the fine arts boasts at least one holding near the Road of the Most High at any given time, though of course as fashion and the whims of the Emperor change, so too do the buildings themselves.

A few of the famed holdings in the Emperor's Road district have arisen from more unusual circumstances. The **Emerald Coin** is a long-standing business thrust into fame because a passing Emperor favored a simple statue outside its structure. The **Light from Above** is a dining house with a central room open to the sky; this allows patrons a perfect view of the starry night as they partake of dinner. The **Inn of the Last Rite**, not far down the street, is so named because its patrons drink late into the night and are led into private rooms so as not to disgrace themselves. (Of course, many do not realize that the back rooms also lead to illicit gambling and opium dens in the basement.) Finally, *Soshiuchi*, the House of Loss, is a huge mansion which stands just within sight of the Road of the Most High. Long ago a proud Crane lord hired dozens of craftsmen to build a home for his bride, promising he would return to her after a coming battle. Inevitably, he perished in the conflict, leaving her to wander the house in sorrow never to leave again. To this day the house is reputed to be haunted by the regretful spirits of husband and wife, standing as testament to a different sort of beauty.

The Juramashi District

Juramashi has the honor of being the single largest district in the city. It also carries the more dubious distinction of being a region of utter chaos and confusion, a district known for its dizzying variety in architecture, customs, and people. Juramashi stretches from the River of the Sun to the southern Miwaku Kabe, and spans outward to the southern edge of the Imperial City. It is so large it is divided into two "blocks," Upper and Lower Juramashi, each of which could rival another district in size. The blocks are like two separate worlds, but no Governor would ever dream of splitting them and giving up power – if one could rule long enough to consider doing anything of the sort.

Juramashi is the only district in Otosan Uchi which the Sentaku refers to by its original name. The first Governor, Juramashi, held power for more than a decade. Every single Governer since has left office, in one way or another, in less than six months' time. Thus, to the people of the district, no matter who rules here it will always be Juramashi. To the bureaucracy which actually performs the day-to-day governance, a single transient Governor does not matter; gokenin, karo, and other such middle-managers truly run this largest district, a fact which annoys the kuge to no end.

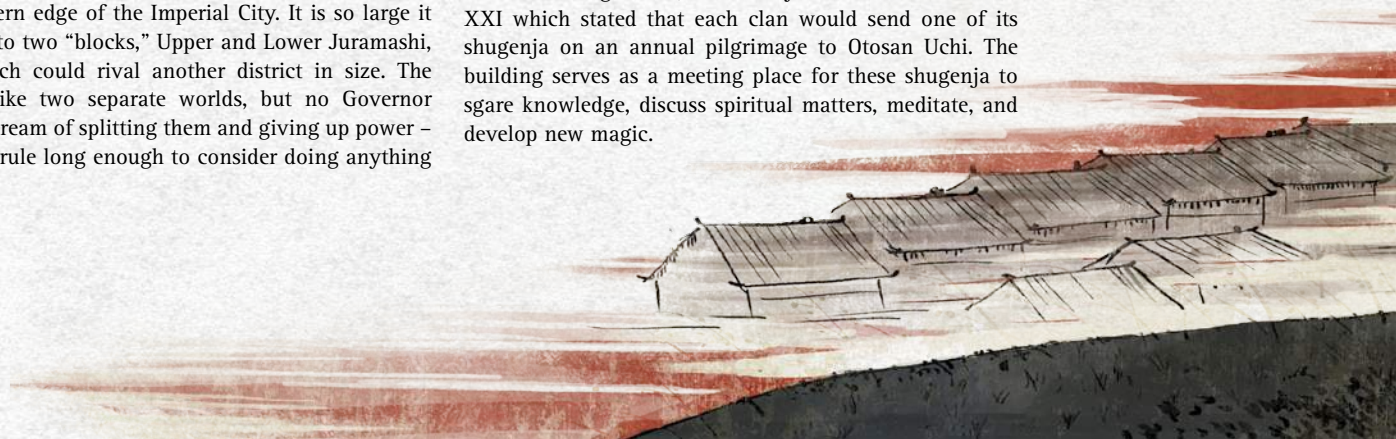
The district suffers from extremely poor planning and a mixed bag of attempted solutions to this problem. Streets veer off in random directions, rarely running parallel to one another. Building locations and designs follow no clear pattern, rhyme, or reason. Even locals born in Juramashi can have difficulty navigating outside their own sections of the district. Numerous solutions have been tried to combat this chaos: city "scouts," maps, massive engineering projects, and other stranger maneuvers have all been attempted... to no avail. The citizens of Juramashi actually enjoy this chaotic aspect of their district, believing it adds both character and fame. An old adage says that in Otosan Uchi, every facet of Rokugani life can be found. Those in Juramashi claim some tiny part of it all resides in Juramashi's twisted streets and narrow alleys.

Upper Juramashi contains residential neighborhoods populated mainly by samurai, as well as the more wealthy merchants. Lower Juramashi houses lesser merchants, heimin, and even some eta villages, all thrown together haphazardly. At the outlying edges of the district, peasants work the Izaru farms in a constant struggle to feed Juramashi's huge population. Juramashi is also home to a number of unique features and holdings, some quite specific to its domain, others serving as tourist attractions.

Hidden behind more appealing structures, the **Craftsman's Quarter** supplies the constant construction projects of Juramashi. In Lower Juramashi, a family of **lamplighters** oversees huge warehouses full of candles and other supplies for the over three hundred lamps in the district. Because of the practical limitation of the family's size, there are many nights when Upper Juramashi must fend for itself and light its own way.

The **Gardens of the White Monk** once served as a private residence for a Kakita gardener, but now its wondrous lilies, vibrant sunflowers, and illuminating white roses are maintained under the watchful eye of the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

The **Blessings of the Eternal Kami** is a mansion-turned-meeting house, created by a decree from Hantei XXI which stated that each clan would send one of its shugenja on an annual pilgrimage to Otosan Uchi. The building serves as a meeting place for these shugenja to sgare knowledge, discuss spiritual matters, meditate, and develop new magic.



Kuroka Library is the single largest library in the city, though like Juramashi itself, within its walls chaos reigns. Some say the information of the entire world is housed somewhere within Kuroka... if you can find it.

Two structures honor the original Governor of the district, though oddly no one can agree on his original clan. The **Juramashi District Meeting Hall** was commissioned by Juramashi himself and completed after his death. Home to scrolls, stories, and artwork, the contents of the meeting hall follow a theme of uplifting the soul. Not far away are the **Gardens of Juramashi's Honor**, which comprise the largest garden complex in the Imperial City, a favorite spot for citizens of Otosan Uchi to contemplate nature or engage in silent meditation. A squad of over thirty Kakita-trained gardeners and scores of heimin assistants keep the gardens an ordered oasis amid the chaos of the district.

Other unique holdings in Upper Juramashi include **Natsu-Togumara Shrine**, dedicated to the Fortune of Travel and Experience; **Bright Wind Geisha House**, drawing samurai of the highest ranks (the okaa-san boasts that she is visited by at least one major family daimyo or Clan Champion each year); **Glory's Forgotten Rest Inn**, a gigantic structure where visitors to the Spiritual District nearby come to rest; and **Maratu's Origata** for those who seek to engage in the fine art of gift-wrapping, or *origata*.

In Lower Juramashi, **Jurojin's Chance** serves as the only legal gambling den in the district, standing just outside the city's outer walls. Dice and games of chance are popular, but the location is more famous for its races which use dogs and horses. There are even monthly bets on how long the current governor will last – and who will replace him.

The Spiritual (Ochiyo) District

Otosan Uchi attracts religious pilgrims from all across the Empire because of its history, its political significance, and its spiritual connections. While the Forbidden City is the obvious choice for most tourists, few outside the upper crust of society are ever allowed inside the secure domain of the Son of Heaven – indeed, only a minority of visitors are permitted to pass through the Miwaku Kabe into the Ekohikei. For the rest, there is the Spiritual District.

Surrounded on all sides by other domains, the Spiritual District relies on a strong relationship with its neighbors in the Gilded Hill and Juramashi. Far and away the most popular destination for visitors to the Toshisoto, the Spiritual District is the site of major temples to the founding Kami, the great Temple of Lady Sun, and dozens of smaller shrines. Monks, shugenja of all orders, and samurai of religious or philosophical mindset come here to pray, to seek the wisdom of their ancestors, or simply to bask in the joy of the Spiritual District's connection to the higher realms. This region is known for its peaceful streets, its lack of shops, and its quiet residents. There are no shouting merchants here hawking wares, no ruffians stalking the streets. The district is well-maintained and is constantly patrolled by Imperial and Lion soldiers who eagerly remove anyone causing trouble. In fact, the sole source of disruption in the Spiritual District is not really a disruption at all: every hour is marked by the huge tolling bells of the great temples, bells which also ring at every great moment in the Empire's history, such as the birth of an Imperial heir or the passing of the Emperor.

At the heart of this district are the temples and shrines which pilgrims come to visit. Dozens of shrines to heroes and Fortunes, both greater and lesser, dot the roadways here. Above them all stand the Temples of the Six Great Kami and the Temple of the Sun Goddess.

The **Temples of the Six Great Kami** are arrayed in an orderly fashion along the road called Seppun's Path. **Hida's Temple** is sturdy, built of stone and thick wood, more a dojo than monastery. Designed as commentary on the stoic founder of the Crab, its inner walls are painted with scenes of Hida's conquests and victories over the Shadowlands. Each of his sons has alcoves and statues of their own. Atarasi is shown venturing into Fu Leng's domain alongside Shinsei and the Thunders, while Osano-Wo stands tall, full of thunder and lightning. Next door is the **Temple to Shinjo**, a structure which has suffered over the centuries as earthquakes weakened its foundations. Each of the seven times it has been rebuilt, the monks here have altered the layout and design in honor of the Lady of Travel. The **Temple of Bayushi** is a shadow between its neighbors, a site few non-Scorpion are allowed to enter alone. Within its labyrinthine chambers the monks maneuver the walls and passages, shifting the shoji screens in a fashion similar to the interior Kyuden Bayushi. Dozens of hidden alcoves and unknown chambers wait within. Nearby, the **Temple to Shiba** is a peaceful oasis surrounded on all sides by placid water and well-kept sands. Its walls are covered in free-flowing ivy and its arching corridors draw visitors inward to a central shrine. Elaborate kanji decorate the walls, floor tiles, and ceiling with symbols of the Seven Great Fortunes and the mysteries of the Elements. This temple also boasts a library of prophecies and has an original copy of both the Tao and of Uikku's prophetic wisdom. The **Temple of Doji** stands as a simple, pure reminder than not all constructs of the Crane need be elaborate. The temple is covered always in a blanket of white flowers on its outside, harvested from the gardens within. Finally, the **Temple to Akodo** is a vivid echo of the great Hall of Ancestors in Lion lands. In fact, the same architect was used to construct both buildings and its inner halls, frescoes, and statues stand as a twin to the Hall of Ancestors.

Oddly, no Temple to Togashi stands within the walls of the Spiritual District, an 'oversight' which the Dragon Clan never sought to rectify. Otosan Uchi is destroyed before Yoritomo ascends to the Heavens as the Kami of the Mantis Clan.

The largest building in the Spiritual district and the largest temple in the city is the **Temple of the Sun Goddess**. Its grandeur rivals that of any temple in the Emerald Empire, though its construction and design is simple. Monks work constantly to clean the pure woodwork so it glows with a radiant light at all hours of the day. Even in the dead of night no shadow falls close to the Temple and it stands as a guiding light.

The road called **Seppun's Path** twists and coils between all these locations, leading from the outer wall to the painted stones of the southern Miwaku Kabe. Though Seppun herself was long dead before the Toshisoto and the Spiritual District were built, Seppun was the chief religious advisor of the Hantei and the road was named in her honor. It is intended to serve as a sort of pilgrimage in itself, winding through hidden gardens, around trees and hedges, and through secluded meditation sites. It serves as a favorite meeting spot for young lovers and skulking courtiers alike.

Despite the draw of its religious structures, the Spiritual District does possess some other noteworthy holdings. A watchtower, one in the long link of Otosan Uchi's defense, has been converted over the years into a judge's court, yoriki station, and even a fighting arena. Nearby is the **District Armory**, full of enough weapons to supply a small army and a defensive location in its own right. A stable is maintained here as well, tasked specifically with the duty of caring for injured steeds. Once recovered from their injuries, these horses are offered to the Emerald Champion and his Imperial Legions. A library of sorts stands next door: the **Asako Records**, an old building, small and unassuming, which possesses thousands of scrolls dedicated to unraveling the complex lineage of the Rokugani elite.

Over the years a series of minor entertainments have been allowed to develop within the Spiritual District. Though the governors never allow anyone to sell mundane goods, even the pure spirits of this place may require entertainment. **Shinsei's Precious Memory Tea House** is the most famous, and legend says the Little Teacher himself stopped here on his way to gather the Thunders. He visited the peasant huts in this area and spoke to the heimin for hours; when he departed, he asked them not to build any sort of shrine to his visit, so instead the peasants constructed this tea house to commemorate his visit. Everyone in the Spiritual District considers it a solemn duty to serve as a volunteer here for at least one season in their lifetime, so the house has no regular employees.

Simple Pleasures serves far more worldly desires. This single-story geisha house is barely large enough to have sleeping chambers for its residents. Instead of inviting samurai in, the okaa-san of the house sends her geisha out on call.

Kin-iro no Sento, or the Golden Spire, is somewhat obscured by tall trees and the mighty temples of the Kami. It is the largest public house in the city, with over forty-six expensive rooms, each lined with fine silk shoji and with balcony views of the district. It is for the elite who visit or dwell in the district but do not have a private residence of their own. Nearby stands its rival, **Eishuri's Compassion**, a high quality tea-house and inn which stands forever in the shadow of the Golden Spire. **Merciful Spring Inn** and **Heaven's Gift Inn** are both boarding houses for the less wealthy; the former serves ji-samurai and retainers, while the latter serves heimin craftsmen, artisans, merchants, and other such "upper crust" of that caste. Heaven's Gift is known by its dragon motif, which is found in every square inch of the house.

The Gilded Hill (Hayasu) District

Named for both its affluent nature and for the steep hill which dominates its landscape, the Gilded Hill is located just south of the River of the Sun and west of the Forbidden City. It is primarily a residential neighborhood for elite samurai, famous artisans, and wealthy merchants. The hill itself is the site of many elaborate private homes, while the district as a whole is known for its huge open spaces set aside for festivals. In the Imperial City, such space comes at a premium and is an obvious sign of wealth. The region is patrolled frequently and there are dozens of farms located just outside the crumbling outer walls to ensure it is never short of food. With the exception of a few servants' dwellings, all the structures here present the appearance of wealth.

However, this district is not quite so splendid as it outwardly appears. Fortunes rise and fall, for samurai and heimin alike, and some of the homes here only give the appearance of wealth while inside they are empty, echoing with lost riches. Indeed, the "gilded" Sentaku name is a subtle recognition of this reality.

At the top of the hill is the huge estate of the district governor, containing more than twenty extra bedrooms, offices, and meeting halls, and surrounded by dozens of outlying buildings as well as a huge Shintao rock garden. The most prominent private residences are all located on or around the hill at varying levels. Near the base of the hill and scattered throughout the remainder of the district are the barracks of the samurai who patrol the district at the governor's behest. Each barracks is dedicated to a single clan and assigned a specific region of the district to oversee.

The Gilded Hill district is home to several different neighborhoods, each boasting a variety of shops and entertainments catering to the residents. **Cherry Blossom Row** is located at the base of the hill and runs parallel to the river. This strip is so-named because of the cherry trees which line the waterway, cultivated by the neighborhood's resident artisans from the Kakita Academy. Elsewhere in the district, likewise along the edge of the River of the Sun, lies the **Chirping Crickets Neighborhood**. Merchants take residence here and sell wares from modest and well-decorated shops attached to their homes. The name comes both from the general sound of commerce and, specifically, from a shop which sells tiny gilded cages with lucky crickets. Along the outer wall, the **Fortune's Favored** neighborhood houses the wealthiest merchants in the city. Each of them has one or more shops in the *Sukichiba*, a strip of markets located in the gaps of the crumbling outer wall. Clustered in between the Chirping Crickets and Fortune's Favored is the **Wild Rice** neighborhood. Heavily populated, it is home to the least expensive houses in this district, though they are still among the most sought-after real estate in the city. Finally, just behind the great hill is a residential area populated by samurai called the **Sheltered Swords**. It is secluded, hidden between hill and walls, and home mainly to samurai of the Crane, Dragon, and Scorpion Clans.

There are three other important locations in the Gilded Hill. The **Shining Square** is a grand merchant plaza which doubles as a setting for festivals and other such group activities. Governors take advantage of this natural gathering place to post notices for citizens and keep an eye on local attitudes. To the south of the district are huge cultivated rice paddies, located close to the nearby Spiritual District. These paddies do extremely well and are believed to be blessed by the great spirits of the Imperial City; taxes from their harvest help keep the Gilded Hill District in good financial shape. Lastly, well outside the outer wall is an eta village. The eta here live better than most of their kind elsewhere (even in Ryoko Owari), indeed better than many peasants. Because these eta have access to one of the wealthiest regions of the Imperial City, spy networks and covert organizations often infiltrate this village and use it as a base of operations.

The Rich Crescent (Hojize) District

This district is commonly referred to by the Sentaku as the Rich Crescent because of the unusual shape it takes as it cuts off its subsidiary, the Eta's Island. The two districts were originally one, but in the second century a Lion governor declared he could not abide ruling over "such an ignominious rabble" and split the district in two. Thus shorn of its subsidiary, the Rich Crescent now surrounds the Eta's Island, cutting it off from the Miwaku Kabe. The Crescent is perhaps the wealthiest district of the Toshisoto, even more so than the Gilded Hill, receiving tax funding and subsidies from dozens of merchant patrons and an annual stipend from the Imperial families themselves. It contains the primary inland road to the Imperial City. Governors of the Rich Crescent are responsible for creating the first impression of nearly every overland traveler into the Father's Home, and the district is maintained accordingly.

The Rich Crescent controls more than half the river traffic into Otosan Uchi, and its wharves are overseen by friendly but cunning portmasters. Lush private estates take up much of the district, set back well away from the crumbling outer wall – though in fact the outer wall here is in a better state than almost anywhere else, at least those portions close to the main gates. Merchant shops here are well-stocked, magistrates and doshin patrol the streets with regularity, and violations of the law are punished quickly and harshly. The streets of the Rich Crescent are lined with manicured gardens and trees, while cultivated waterways and ponds dot the landscape. The overall effect stuns and awes each new visitor to Otosan Uchi.

Like Juramashi, the Rich Crescent is a large place, home to a variety of neighborhoods and holdings within its borders. The riverside neighborhoods on their western side are dominated by the ports and warehouses where goods are stored, while their eastern sides are devoted entirely to the sale of said goods. Hidden behind the merchants and craftsmen by the river are the denizens of the **Kankei** neighborhood – a thin avenue is lined with fine-quality geisha houses and sake houses, strategically located along the Way of the Elements to greet lucky travelers. **Riverside Merchant Plaza** stands in full view of the Governor's residence, and is comprised of a series of open-air markets and warehouses which sell bulk raw materials, grain, and few luxury items, primarily to heimin. The Governor's residence itself is a splendid building with no walls to block the full view of the rest of the city.

Along the road into Otosan Uchi there are official **Clan Guide Houses** where each visiting samurai is brought upon first arrival. A guide escorts the samurai along the Way of the Elements to a house equipped with the finest bathing facilities, pre-stocked clothing, wondrous food, and a staff dedicated to their every need. Halfway between these houses and the Governor's residence are the district courts, although these are rarely used since the governors here prefer to deal with violators of the law in private.

One of the main attractions of the district is the **Magistrate's Memorial**, the place where Soshi Takasho and Akodo Minobe uncovered the plots of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban. The Memorial is also an active magistrate's station, home to the Emerald Magistrate responsible for the district; that post is usually filled by a Lion, a Scorpion, or a member of the Isawa or Kuni families.

A few unique holdings are scattered throughout the district. Among these is the **Morning Star Tea House**, founded by a Kakita Artisan remembered now only as "the Morning Star." Assigned the task of mapping the city during the reign of Hantei XXVIII, the Kakita samurai-ko quickly realized the task would be impossible due to the ever-changing landscape. In the end, she mapped what she could, finished the rest "from my own musings," and gave the final product to the Emperor. The Hantei accepted the map and thanked the Morning Star by bestowing this fine establishment on her. A copy of her original map hangs within the house in a place of honor.

Not all of the Rich Crescent district is designed for artistic value. The *Kinjiren* **Tombs** house the graves disturbed during Iuchiban's crimes, and while they are no longer used to inter bodies the empty chambers remain, all but forgotten. Nearby, at the site of the Battle of Stolen Graves, may be found the *Chiken* **(Bloodsword) Temple** dedicated to Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder. Unfortunately, the place seems haunted, echoing with the distant sounds of a smith working at his forge. The **Dark Cloud Monastery** nearby takes care of the temple, and its monks constant chanting and drumming can be heard for blocks in all directions.



Finally, the district is home to the **Temple of Eternal Breath,** a strange little shrine with a mysterious past. It is said that whoever prays here and expresses true faith shall never die.

The Eta's Island (Hinjaku)

In the city's earliest history the Eta's Island was part of the Rich Crescent District, but after the second century it is governed separately in order to remove the city's "dirty" inhabitants as much as possible from the public eye. The Eta's Island is the least-respected location in all of Otosan Uchi, and in fact most of it lies outside the city's crumbling outer wall. The few samurai who live here are typically disgraced outcasts or ronin – though in times of great strife, when refugees pour into the Father's Home, this district fills up with unfortunate outsiders.

Eta homes comprise a large portion of this district, and the untouchables here are in charge of cleaning not only the Rich Crescent but all the surrounding districts as well. The **High Lowlies** neighborhood in particular is close to the Rich Crescent; the eta who live in the High Lowlies are the most skillful of their caste, typically serving the magistrates of the city as torturers or as personal assistants in investigation of dead bodies. The **Wide Hat** neighborhood serves as a sort of bridge between the Rich Crescent and Eta's Island; it is home to the lowest of merchants, those who specialize in swindling new visitors to the city by selling them cheap religious trinkets to offer at shrines. It is whispered by those in the know that "special" (i.e. forged) documents and papers can be purchased here as well.

For all its low repute, the Eta's Island does possess a few unique holdings of its own. The *Takusanno Sakanaya* fishery is a processing plant for cleaning and scaling the fish sold to vendors across the city. It specializes in Pink Hamachi sushi, and the smell of the fishery keeps samurai from its doorstep. *Shizukomen*, or Silent Release, is the crematorium which serves as the center of all business in the Eta's Island District. As the Governor says, "everyone dies," and the crematorium is always busy. Eta morticians prepare the bodies of the dead in a huge stone building, well away from the sight of any mourners. **Buichi's Bunraku Dolls** is famed as a supplier of puppeteer dolls made from wood harvested outside of Otosan Uchi. **Durite Zoo,** founded by a former governor named Kuni Durite, houses animals from all over the Empire, but focuses on reptiles and birds of the Islands of Spice and Silk; however, the lack of tax revenue to maintain it causes it to quickly become run-down when his tenure ends.

Finally, two structures stand close to one another and to the Rich Crescent district. **Shudo Benten** is an all-female monastery dedicated to the Fortune of Romantic Love. Women here are trained in the fine arts commonly associated with geisha, and lovers of all castes will endure a visit to the Eta's Island in order to pray here for success. **Bitter Hearts** is a kabuki theater funded by the office of the Rich Crescent governor. Plays within its walls focus on the darkest emotions of the samurai, base desires and sins, topics which more respectable theaters would never depict. It is a measure of man's flawed nature that this theater has thrived for generations despite its location.

The Prison/Moon (Toyotomi) District

The district known to the Sentaku as both the Prison District and the Moon District is never called by those names outside the private halls of the Imperial Bureaucracy. Samurai, heimin, and hinin all consider this district to be cursed by both the presence of Otosan Uchi's one and only prison and by the presence of the sinister Temple of the Moon. In most eras of the city's history, the district is one of the least respectable domains, a dark and dirty place visited by few if any travelers.

The **Shrine to Lord Moon** is detested by residents citywide. High walls surround it to reduce the impact of its existence on the surrounding lands. Within those walls, only dry and dull plantlife grows, and everything is gray and bland. A small crew of monks and peasants maintain the shrine and live within the walls, never leaving; they receive food from outside and collect written prayers, all focused on forgiveness of wrath upon one's enemies.

The second-most reviled structure in the city is **Kyuden Kokai**, the Palace of Remorse. It was created when the city was first built and was placed well outside the Miwaku Kabe – at the time, the city planners did not even consider the possibility of the Toshisoto's existence, and it was many centuries before the city's expansion encompassed the prison. This place is maintained by its two hundred





inhabitants, under the direction of the handful of samurai guards assigned here – all of whom consider an assignment to Kyuden Kokai to be a source of shame.

The residence of the district Governor stands next to the district magistrate's residence, both near the prison. The Governor's domain is a palatial estate with an elaborate garden, and is perhaps the only impressive structure in the district. The magistrate station is quite large, the chief magistrate commanding twenty-five subordinate yoriki and more than a hundred doshin. Some question the need for such a sizeable policing force, but one need merely recall a single prison riot to quash those words.

A few "geisha houses" (in only the loosest sense of the term) and related establishments are found in this district, places such as the **Jumping Frog** which rely on copious amounts of cheap, potent sake to do their selling for them. **All Words are One** is a bookstore where pillow books are sold in the front while in the back a customer can forge or decode messages with the help of the Scorpion-sponsored shopkeep. The **House of Many Wonderful Things** is run by a Yasuki-sponsored merchant and sells strange items from all over the Emerald Empire... and some from the gaijin lands.

Of course, there are upstanding holdings in the district as well. The **Lucky Orchid Blossom** is a respectable geisha house, offering the best sake and entertainment. The **Lion's Rage** is a sake house founded by a boisterous Lion samurai, and attracts samurai from its parent clan as well as from the Mantis and the Crab. The **Pampered Flower** is a bath house where guests are offered sweet *mochi* cakes, given deep-tissue massages, and rubbed with herbs to grant their skin a healthy glow. (It is whispered that the house offers a costly service which will leave the skin tender but visibly reduces age by years.) The **Crying Peacock**, the only theater in the district, is a richly decorated structure filled with paintings and sculptures of Noh and Kabuki artists. **Everyone Dyes** is reputed to be the best dye shop in Otosan Uchi, while **Life's Love** is a small rock garden where lovers court one another with poetry and music; rumor has it that Shinsei once blessed the site, proclaiming "those who fall in love here shall remain that way forever." A shop called **Dawn Before Darkness** sells expensive lamps and can be seen for blocks around because of its radiant glow. **Fortune's Wisdom** is a house of Go, home to Imperial-sponsored Go tournaments and the *Naka Dainkei* (Inner Circle) of elite Go masters; only those who can beat a reigning Go Master three times are admitted to their ranks. *Yobigoeke*, or Ring Out, is a huge sumai dojo which houses major tournaments each year and is home to one of the many Imperial sumo stables. **Suma's Hot Spring** is a wooden structure built around a hot but muddy spring; it serves cakes and sake to its guests, and geisha "wring out" a guest's impurities afterwards. **Yum-Yum Mochi** serves the best mochi in the district, while the **Smiling Wok** is the longest-lived restaurant in the region – not from its quality, but because its prices are so low that even the poorest ronin can afford to dine here. It is said visitors never experience the same taste twice, but this is not a compliment, since the varied flavors include bitter, sickly sweet, sharp, and bland.

A mysterious library stands near the center of the district, a tiny structure impossibly filled with scrolls, hangings, and written word of all kinds. Those who enter get the distinct impression the building could not possibly house all it does without magic, and only the truly brave are willing to traverse the maze of paper to the center of the library where the "true knowledge" is held.

Tenari's Ruin (Meiyoko) District

Much like with the Prison/Moon District, the Sentaku Tribunal keeps its name for this region hidden from the local populace. The name "Tenari's Ruin" refers to the catastrophe of a long-dead governor. A brash young shugenja named Yogo Tenari governed the district and was not content with the simple estate of his predecessors. He searched the area until he discovered an enchanting grove on the southwestern edge of the town. Ignoring the advice of his engineers, he had a huge palatial estate built there, sinking untold thousands of koku into its design and construction. One year later to the day, an earthquake ravaged the district, killing Tenari, his family, and his staff. The ruins remain to this day as testament to the folly of pride. Heimin and samurai alike claim they can sometimes hear the ghost of Tenari lamenting his foolish fate.

The Tenari's Ruin district covers the northeast corner of the Toshisoto, a sizeable region broken up into quarters. Each quarter is overseen by gokenin, who face a constant struggle against the criminals who take refuge here between the North Dock and the less-savory Prison District.

The modern home of the district governor stands atop high cliffs, overlooking both the beauty of Golden Sun Bay and the entire district. At the base of the governor's hill is **Hana Garden**, where iris flowers highlight Shintao rock gardens, all of constructed in memory of the Battle of the Bloody Retreat. Each stone of the garden bears the name of a fallen Scorpion who died in that campaign against the Bloodspeakers.

Between the governor's estate and Kyuden Kokai stands the **Makoto (Courtesy) Wall**, ensuring the samurai of this district need not see that shameful structure. Four guard towers and a magistrate station keep watch over the prison, and the magistrate's station also serves as the center for gokenin activity in the district; all judgements and punishments are rendered here. Close by at the **Great Civic Center**, the bureaucracy of the law takes place in a long wooden structure. The Emerald Magistrate of the district invites citizens to come here and air grievances, although most of the time nothing is done in response. Another major government structure is **Kinenhi's Tower** at the outer wall. Yogo Kinenhi commanded this guard station for years, eventually realizing the Emperor had forgotten him, but he did not waver in his duty in over 38 years. Now, the sound of Kinenhi's slapping sandals walking the wall is as familiar as the wind.

Haven, a rundown and shoddy quarter, serves as a domain of gambling dens and unsavory characters. Here visitors to the city can indulge in opium, sake, games of chance, and cheap geisha with little interference from magistrates. Oyabun (criminal bosses) run the neighborhood and make a killing in the sale of illegal goods. In most eras, the Governor imposes some control on this by taxing the criminal enterprises and working with their leaders to maintain order. Far from the lighted roads, the **Ivy Palace** geisha house is preeminent among its brethren here, and sometimes even sees a visit from the Governor. **Mariko Theatre** is known far and wide for its remarkable stage plays, though no one remembers who or for what the building was named. The **White Stream Oolong** is a sake house which serves a famous plum brandy, touted as the 'best beverage in the city.' Between the exquisite brandy and the talented staff, the White Stream attracts wealthy of all types.

A fountain named for Akodo Yuji marks an invisible boundary between the neighborhoods held by the underworld elements and the more reputable domains of the district. **Takeo Library** is a backup for the Ikoma family, housing partial records of all the important events in the Emerald Empire's history. The **Iris Petal** is a tea house owned by the governor's estate which provides the finest *gyokuro*¸ or green tea, in the city. Nearby is *Gisei Ningen*, Mortal Sacrifice, an ambiguous statue worshipped by those who have lost a loved one who died with honor. The **Maze of Wisdom** is a hedge maze gifted long ago to a district governor by the Togashi monk. The ise zumi told the Governor: "You may seek your wisdom within the silence of the hedge. A true Togashi may find the heart, but only after he finds himself." Oddly, the maze requires neither pruning nor care.

A stone Shintao temple is the tallest structure in the district. The Keeper of the temple rings the bell tower each hour in echo of the Spiritual District. Additionally, the Keeper is blessed with secret knowledge of an old tunnel to the Temple of Eternal Redemption within the Ekohikei.

Finally, a statue of the ronin Kinryoku rises prominently in the district. Long ago, Kinryoku protected a governor from assassination, throwing himself upon the killer's blade. As he breathed his last an oval of blood spilled over a large stone, which now rests on a marble base next to his statue. Each year, on the anniversary of his death (the 14th day of the Serpent) a festival takes place in Tenari's Ruin; on this day no work is allowed and everyone offers blessings for the life of the Governor.

The North Dock (Higshikawa) District

The North Dock District follows the northern bank of the River of the Sun as it becomes the Golden Sun Bay. Though small, North Dock plays a vital role in the economy of Otosan Uchi, and boasts more pleasure houses per block than any other district. Additionally, though it does not do as much business as South Dock, this district is one of only two which deal with imports and shipping into the city. The roads of North Dock are often wet because of the heavy fogs and rains coming off the bay; in an effort to counter the drudgery and filth of muddy streets, the wealthier merchants have had the centers of all the major roads paved with gravel. Also due to the fog, every residence and holding hangs large wood lanterns to guide travelers. North Docks also tends to flood in the spring, so most houses along the waterway are built on stilts. It is not uncommon to see small boats resting on the bare earth, tethered to posts; when asked their purpose, the citizens laugh and tell the questioner, "wait for the first spring rain, you'll never have to ask again."

Governors of North Dock take advantage of the necessity of travel and commerce through their district to funnel wealth into its few unique holdings. The district stables and Imperial barracks use a large portion of such wealth, maintaining an entire *kaisha* (company) of the Imperial Guard and dozens of horses. Usually a Lion *chui* is given the responsibility of overseeing these forces, a tradition which dates back centuries. The district Governor's own home uses another large slice of the taxes; the building is a mansion filled with all the amenities a samurai could desire. Unfortunately for the dockworkers and merchants of the city, it stands directly in the way of business, blocking warehouses from the docks; throughout North Dock's history this has been a point of contention for the residents. Some Governors have considered moving, but most see it as their due to live exactly where they wish and view the nuisance as a suitable reminder of who is in charge.

The most profitable docks of North Dock are the **Morning Star Wharves**, whose three piers can maintain up to thirty large kobune. The warehouses here are typically full of Phoenix and Mantis goods, food, raw materials, and goods from the Crab and Sparrow... as well as small amounts of Tortoise foreign goods. Nearby is **Bochi Seido**, the Graveyard of Shrines, an exotic mixture of shrines dedicated to old Fortunes, forgotten spirits and ancestors, the kami, and even Shinsei. Most are not clearly identified, but two in particular are quite well-maintained: one is dedicated to Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea, while the other venerates Isora, the Patron of the Shore, and his wife. Both fishermen and sailors brave the strange Bochi Seido to offer their choicest catches and wealth for the favor of these Fortunes.

North Dock is also home to a few strange structures and holdings known to few outside the city walls. The **Endless Journey** is an old Agasha holding with a maze of shoji screens in front of a garden depicting tales of ancient times, the Fortunes, and heroes of old. Each time it rains, the Dragon here remove the shoji and replace them anew. Visitors must navigate huge hedges, twists and turns filled with wisteria, all to reach the 'wisdom within. **Time's Gift** is a shop which offers trinkets made of silver, gold, and jade, while **Sweet Solace** sells candied breads and meat-filled pies. **Hameo's House of Fish** sees the highest yield of any fishery in the city, while **New Direction** offers travelers leaving the city for Mantis lands and the Crane coast fine (and expensive) maps – though some of them have a reputation for putting one in the way of coastal pirates.

However, as with all districts, not all regions can be prosperous. **Trader's Row**, though significant in size, is filled with lower-caste merchants. Here, nearly any item or good in the city can be found... once, at least, though seldom a second time. Each day the traders gather and set up their stalls with few signs, no organization, and no landmarks. The Row borders both the Sea Mist neighborhood and the Settling Spring neighborhood, home to wealthy sailors and merchants respectively.



The South Dock (Kosuga) District

South Dock District has significant influence over the myriad mercantile interests in Otosan Uchi. Merchants, traders, and moneylenders all come together each year to influence the value of the koku in the city (and therefore the Empire). More than two-fifths of the city's trade passes through the ports of Otosan Uchi, and nearly three-quarters of that comes through South Dock. It is the starting point of the commercial roadways in the Empire, the place where the flow of koku begins. In most eras of the Empire's history, South Dock is a single district, but during the time of Emperor Hantei XXXVIII a ronin saves the Emperor's child and is given the family name of Yotsu. In these times, a sub-district called the Yatoshin exists here, primarily made up of the huge warehouse neighborhood within the district. During these times there are two governors here, though the leader of the Yatoshin technically reports to the South Dock lord.

South Dock (and specifically Yatoshin) borders the great Golden Bay and most ship-bound travelers in the city enter Otosan Uchi through its piers – the wharves of North Dock are simply too ill-equipped to handle the same level of traffic. Regrettably for the Governor(s) of the region, few high-ranking samurai wish to live here, and most of the residents are commoners or ronin. However, a huge volume of wealth flows through the hands of the merchants here.

The South Dock floods just as easily as North Dock and takes similar precautions, with houses on the shore built up on stilts and random dry-docked ships seen all through the area. The streets of South Dock are much better maintained than in North Dock, due to the much larger numbers of wealthy merchants, and the district is dotted with houses of both entertainment and rest. Some shops stay open quite late, and warehouses are always preparing for the following day's load, so it is sometimes said that the South Docks never sleep. At night, for a few zeni a resident or visitor can hire one of dozens of peasants to lead them through the streets by the light of lamps carried atop tall poles.

Dozens of private homes dot the South Dock region, and while most of these are for commoners, the merchant residences can be quite fancy. None are quite as luxurious, however, as the home of the **Keeper of the Emperor's Koku Seal.** This seal is used to strike authentic koku during mintage, and usually is held by a member of the Miya family. The Keeper's estate is protected by some of the finest Imperial Legionnaires and Seppun wards. Nearby, the *Kodomo Shori,* or Children of Triumph, can be seen at the eastern Enchanted Wall. Samurai of all ranks come here and even live here for months, praying at the base of the Miwaku Kabe to draw the favorable attention of the fallen warriors who are the wall's Guardians. Shrines, community houses, and even tents are found here in chaotic profusion.

The home of the district governor is in the northern portion of the South Dock (as is the home of the Yotsu when they exist). The estate is quite fine, larger than any other in the district, though moderate when compared to those in other districts. The few clan samurai who live within South Dock reside near the Governor in the **Wizened Poet** neighborhood. To the south, near the middle of the district, lies the **Shrine to Ebisu**, Fortune of Honest Work, and serves as the true spiritual center of the South Dock. It is in turn surrounded by the **Fabled Tree** neighborhood, which consists of merchant homes, shops, warehouses, and the district guard headquarters.

Not far from the Miwaku Kabe, the **Glory's Shadow** neighborhood houses merchants, their homes ranging from lavish to ruined wrecks, along with the businesses of those same merchants. Citizens all across Otosan Uchi come here to partake of the strong sake and expensive courtesans of the **White Pelican**, the **Flowering Vine**, and the **Warm Street** geisha houses. Ronin live within the aptly named **Lordless Master** neighborhood, which is considered the Yatoshin in later years.

Of utmost prominence in South Dock is the **Daikoku Arch**, a tremendous extravagance unchanged over the centuries. In the earliest days of the Empire, when the Hantei charged his servants to determine the value of a koku, heimin piled sacks of rice high in a square and argued with their samurai masters for days on how much would be "one koku." When they finally came to agreement, this torii arch was built over the stacks; ever since, the arch has defined the measurement of a single koku.

In the days of the Yatoshin, the Yotsu maintain **Dojo Seou**, a small building run by Yotsu Seou to train ronin joining her family. The warehouses of South Dock also fall within the Yatoshin, and are located on the site of a famous battle, the *Hijugo*, or Day of Fifteen. In the sixth century, fifteen ronin battled to defend their Phoenix master from a Crab assault, barricading themselves inside one of these warehouses. They fought off thirty Kuni shugenja at the cost of their own lives; to this day ronin, Phoenix, and even Crab celebrate their victory. Today, the warehouses contain the wealth of an Empire. They are surrounded by the **Flooded Merchant Bazaar**, where any legal product in the city can be found.

Of final note, at the mouth of the great river where it meets the Bay of the Golden Sun stands **Fearsome Farmer Village**, a name gained because of a long-forgotten peasant uprising.

The Ekohikei

This section describes the four districts that make up the Inner City of Otosan Uchi – their people, establishments, and unique customs. Because the Ekohikei is so important and access is carefully restricted to the Empire's elite, each of these districts is managed by its own Governor despite being far smaller than those in the Toshisoto. A posting as a Governor in the Ekohikei is an honor few ever attain.

The Miwaku Kabe (Enchanted Walls)

The outer walls of Otosan Uchi were never altogether completed and are poorly maintained, with many sections crumbling or pierced by gaps. The walls of the Inner City are another matter entirely. During the First War, Hantei assigned four of the Great Clans – the Phoenix, Crane, Crab, and Ki-Rin – the duty of building walls to hold the city against the forces of Fu Leng. The entire circle of walls was completed in less than six years, and the efforts of shugenja from those clans imbued them with powerful guardian spirits and magical powers. Later, once the Empire was at peace, the Kakita re-worked the exteriors of the walls so their beauty would match their strength.

The Eastern Wall

The wall which is pierced by the main gate into the Ekohikei is nicknamed 'Homare' (Glory) by the Isawa, and with good reason – it draws its strength and fortitude from the gloriousness of those who have stood to defend it. Brilliant golden kanji are built into the wall's surface, naming every soul who has fallen defending it, and their spirits reside within the sacred stones, ready to take up arms in defense of the city again before moving on to rejoin the Celestial Wheel. The wall's magical nature allows the Earth kami to repair any damage done to it by magic or steel. However, there is one exception to this: the gaijin cannonballs from the Battle of White Stag left scars which remain visible through all the centuries thereafter.



The Southern Wall

The southern wall was consecrated by a shugenja named Isawa Naigama and his pupils, all of whom gave their lives in the process. During the subsequent Shadowlands assault on the city (known as the Battle of the Four Winds), the wall came to life, the Earth spirits forming limbs and striking out at the oni which attacked it. The oni all disappeared, and speculation remains as to whether they were destroyed or consumed by the wall itself. Naigama's notes have long since vanished into the depths of history, so the mystery may never be resolved. However, any foe who might assume the modern wall is mundane will surely meet an unfortunate outcome.

The Western Wall

Nobody goes to the western wall, at least no one sane. The wall binds within itself many of the Shadowlands creatures from the Battle of the Four Winds, and while the Empire was victorious that day the wall remains an eerie echo of the battle. The faint wails of these creatures, often called the Karada Voices, can be heard throughout the nearby districts, and is one reason why the nearby merchant trading grounds are usually so loud and busy – the merchants are doing their best to drown out the Voices. Over the years, many shugenja have tried to research the western wall to determine if it still poses a threat to the Emperor, and a few have tried to expunge the Tainted entities trapped within. Some researchers have gone mad from these attempts, and while the wall is generally considered to be safe, many still whisper of monsters under the city or feel hot, foul breath on the backs of their necks when they venture too close to it late at night.

The Northern Wall

The northern wall is destroyed during the Battle of Four Winds and rebuilt afterward. In modern times it is considered to stand equally with the others despite the original structure's 'failure' in that early conflict. While the other walls are solid, with very little structure or architecture inside, the northern wall is hollow, filled with mazes, traps, and ambush zones. Anyone who captured the wall's ramparts would then have to fight through the maze-like tunnels and passages that connect the wall's various sections with each other and with the ground.



The Kanjo District

The southern district of the Inner City, the Kanjo District is the most populous of the four districts in the Ekohikei, since it is the main destination for those to or from the Forbidden City. With hundreds, sometimes thousands, of visitors from all across the Empire coming and going each day, Kanjo is the busiest part of the Ekohikei.

The seat of Kanjo government is a series of plain, almost spartan buildings facing the River of the Sun. These mostly serve as housing for administrative bureaucrats, though several serve as the Governor's residence and one building is reserved for meetings of the Sentaku Tribunal.

The Kanjo District takes special interest in the Festival of Triumph, a celebration in honor of the successful defense of Otosan Uchi against Fu Leng. The district also is the only one that explicitly observes an event called the Futatsu Shihai (or 'Two-Lord'), a combination festival celebrating Shiba and Bayushi, the twin Kami who founded the Phoenix and Scorpion Clans.

The Southern Gate is surmounted by a massive fifteen-foot-tall torii arch crafted entirely out of jade and crystal. It is believed that the arch will glow in the presence of the Shadowlands Taint. Whether this is true or not, the gate serves as the main artery for samurai to enter and leave the Ekohikei; all travelers must have permission from the Sentaku and must pass intense scrutiny from the gate guards (mostly Lion). Any suspicion of false pretenses or deception is met with swift arrest and harsh punishments. The gate rests directly between the Kanjo District and the Chisei District, ensuring the nearby embassies of the Crane, Dragon, Lion, Phoenix, and Scorpion all have easy access to the gate.

The Lion, Phoenix, and Scorpion all maintain embassies within the Kanjo District. The Lion Embassy is the southernmost of their embassies within the Ekohikei (they are the only clan with two embassies) is designed to serve as a display of honor and pride in the clan's martial prowess. The Phoenix Embassy is a modest building surrounded on all sides by a moat-like lake and beautiful gardens; it is one of the few places in the whole Empire outside of Kyuden Isawa where original materials from the Isawa Libraries are kept, under careful guard from veteran Shiba bushi. The Scorpion Embassy is the smallest of all the embassies in the Ekohikei, and is interestingly the most un-Scorpion building in the city and perhaps the Empire – it has no outer defenses, no moving walls or secret passageways, and all the rooms save the interior meeting room have windows to the outside. This is the one place in Rokugan where the Scorpion recognize that secrecy and obfuscation can only damage their reputation, and they have designed the building accordingly.

Other notable locations within the Kanjo District include the Temple of Eternal Redemption, a temple managed by the Scorpion Clan's Yogo family that is officially dedicated to aiding the hardworking and downtrodden lower caste of Rokugan (but is also secretly a front for Scorpion activities within the Ekohikei). Sorrow's Fall is a waterfall in the River of the Sun where a young Ikoma samurai-ko flung herself to death protecting dark secrets of the Hantei

line. Only a handful of Scorpion and Ikoma know the truth behind the name of the waterfall. Finally, the Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom is a pleasant inn open to all which specializes in various brews of tea from across the Empire.

The Chisei District

While the Kanjo District is the place where most visitors to the Inner City arrive and leave, the Chisei District is where they enjoy the highest life of the samurai. It is a place of beauty, art, and perfection, and only the bare necessary minimum of those from lower stations are allowed into the district at all. It is the location of the Road of the Most High, the special road on which the Emperor walks when he leaves the Forbidden City. The Chisei district is opulent, almost decadent; the Crane embassy is located here, so it should be no surprise that art, beauty, and perfection are valued so highly here.

Because of this heavy Crane presence, all festivals in Chisei are conducted with strict attention to proper custom, decorum, and etiquette. The largest, most important, and most expensive festival here is the Festival of Kakita, a massive celebration of the Crane co-founder that traditionally coincides with the Emperor's departure for Winter Court (not a coincidence, to be sure). There are fireworks, displays of prowess, and contests of skill – even the occasional duel to first blood. In fact, the celebration lasts for nearly an entire month.

Due to the Crane influence, samurai from that clan are the traditional rulers of Chisei District. The Crane Embassy is the embodiment of all the ideals the Crane hold dearly, and over the years it has been expanded and renovated many times to ensure it is up to date with the latest trends, styles, and artistic developments. It also has one of the largest Story Gardens in all of Rokugan. By contrast, the seat of Chisei's district government is more austere, built to exacting traditional standards and constantly maintained to look as though it was just constructed.

Aside from the Crane embassy, two other major embassies are found within the Chisei District – those of the Minor Clans and the Phoenix. The Minor Clan Embassy's presence in the district is considered a great honor, but it is very much overshadowed by the Crane, and since all of the Minor Clans must share the same few buildings they often find themselves badly cramped during times of high political activity. The Phoenix Embassy, by contrast, is a serene place that sees little activity.

The fortification that houses the guards for this district is referred to simply as the Southern Guard Post, but it is unique in that all access to it is from the top of the walls that surround the Chisei District, making it highly defensible and difficult to infiltrate even for the most cunning of spies.

Aside from the embassies, the single most important landmark in the Chisei District is Seppun Hill, the place where Seppun first met the eight Kami at the dawn of the Empire and where Hantei won the tournament of the Kami to become Emperor. It is a sacred site and is the only piece of land in the entire city with no construction of any kind. After Seppun Hill, the next most important landmark is the Road of the Most High, the road used by the Emperor when he enters and leaves the Forbidden City. Duels of honor and even crimes have halted in the presence of the Emperor, and it is said that on more than one occasion he has passed judgement, ruled in favor of an offended party, or declared a marriage between two samurai on the spot as he was passing by.

There are a number of holdings within the Chisei District which reflect the aesthetic influence of the Crane Clan. One of the more notable of these is the tea house called the Field of Sharp Returns. The building itself is not all that impressive and the interior is cramped, but the tea served here is unique and of truly legendary quality. It is brewed from a plant grown only in the garden that surrounds the building, and thus no such tea may be found anywhere else in the Empire.

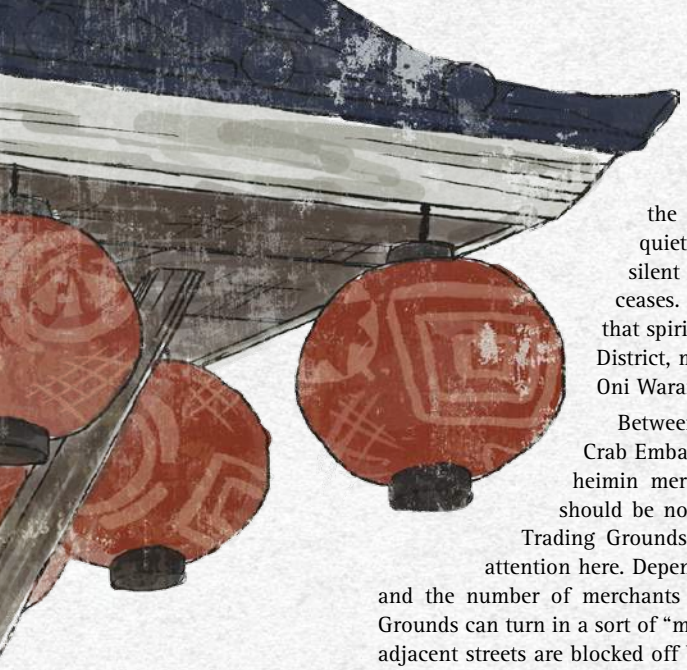
Finally, this district is home to the Temple to the Seven Fortunes, which contains small well-kept shrines to each of the Great Fortunes as well as a much larger central temple where daily prayer services are conducted. The bells here are rung each hour in time with those of the Temple District in the Toshisoto.

Karada District

Each of the four districts of the Inner City boast unique features that draw samurai to visit them. The Karada district, however, is the least populated of the four, and its most significant feature is a sinister one – the massive earthquake crevice known as the Oni Warai (the Oni's Smile). It is not a coincidence that the Crab embassy is located within this district. Though the Oni Warai does not pose any immediate or constant threat, few have returned alive from exploring its depths, and those who do are often blind or mad. Despite this, the Karada District is home to most of the lower caste residents of the Inner City – merchants, servants, laborers, and the like; the number of samurai residents, on the other hand, is much lower than in the other three districts.

The seat of Karada's district government is probably the most run-down set of buildings in the Inner City, though obviously much better maintained than (say) peasant huts. The Governors here are usually Crab and tend to be somewhat reclusive and anti-social, so their residence does not see nearly as much traffic as the other district Governors' homes.

The Crab Embassy is the only major clan holding within the entire district, and has the kind of spartan and utilitarian design the Crab are known for. However, it is probably the most well-decorated Crab embassy in all of Rokugan, since even they must be prepared to entertain important visitors when so close to the Emperor's palace. Since the Crab are the only clan with a significant presence in the Karada District, it is not surprising that the festivals and other public events here tend to exhibit a mixture of loud, boisterous celebration and solemn, lamenting honoring of the dead. Traditionally important Crab events such as Shouting Day are long, loud, drunken affairs, whereas



the Bon Festival is a very quiet event, the district falling silent as almost all activity ceases. There is a strong belief that spirits do not visit the Karada District, most likely because of the Oni Warai.

Between the presence of the Crab Embassy and the residences of heimin merchants in the district, it should be no surprise that the Yasuki Trading Grounds are the center of much attention here. Depending on the time of year and the number of merchants in the city, the Trading Grounds can turn in a sort of "merchant maze" as various adjacent streets are blocked off by the innumerable stalls (which also lends itself to less honorable dealings when no magistrates are looking).

The only notable religious holding in Karada District is Shinden Yaruki Jukko, a unique temple to the monastic tradition known as the Order of Courage's Reflection. The order blends Shintao and Bushido, and thus appeals to individuals from many walks of life. A particularly unusual practice of the order is the use of mirrors as a means of meditative self-reflection.

Finally, the district does house one notable Imperial holding, the Imperial Museum of Antiquities. This building is home to many historical oddities and relics, including a mysterious creature 'petrified' by the Museum's original founder, Kuni Hazu.

Hito District

The Hito District is a place where those within the Imperial City can feel safe – with constant patrols by the Lion and the Unicorn, as well as the tight provided by the nearby Imperial Guards in the Forbidden City, it is one of the most crime-free regions in all of Otosan Uchi. The River of the Sun passes through this district, making it physically smaller than the other three Ekohikei districts, and much of the remaining space is taken up by the residences of samurai with sufficient rank to live here.

Because of the presence of the river, the festivals and ceremonies within the Hito District tend to be focused on it. Both the Bon Festival and the Festival of the River of Stars are especially popular within the Hito District, and during those events the district sees its greatest number of visitors from both the Outer City and the Empire as a whole.

The seat of the Hito District government is the smallest among the four districts, a modest cluster of buildings filled with the bureaucrats who administer the district. The Governor here is most commonly a Lion, and that clan sees no need for larger or more ostentatious facilities. Unfortunately, this sometimes leads to frustration when the modest staff becomes overwhelmed, letting minor problems fester until they grow into larger issues.

The second of the two Lion Embassies is located within the Hito District. It is essentially a large and well-constructed barracks, and the soldiers who patrol the district are based and trained there. It also stands midway between the Crab and Unicorn embassies, acting as a sort of buffer. The Unicorn Embassy, also located here, is managed by the Ide family, and uses mostly Rokugani architecture with only a few modest hints of gaijin influence. Oddly enough, a separate embassy for the Minor Clan of the Fox is also located here; because the Fox are descended from those of the Ki-Rin who remained in the Empire, they were permitted to maintain their own embassy here, and when the Unicorn finally returned they built a new embassy rather than impinge on the Fox Clan. The Fox Embassy serves as the base of operations for the Mondai Ketsu, a secretive last-resort organization that exacts justice and answers to the Emperor himself. When the magistrates fail and there is no other recourse, the Mondai Ketsu are called in.

The Road of Fast Hopes is one of two routes coming out of the Forbidden City, leaving that place from the small gateway known as the Necessary Gate. It is used mainly by heimin servants and eta whose duties require them to come and go from the Imperial Palace, although low-ranking samurai use it as well. It crosses the River of the Sun from the Hito District to the neighboring Kanjo District at the Bridge of the Third Cut. The bridge's name is derived from the fact that the most dishonored and despairing samurai of the Ekohikei sometimes end their lives by jumping off the bridge.

The Imperial Training Grounds, just outside the Forbidden City, are where the Ekohikei's troops train alongside such elite units as the Empress' Guard and the Seppun miharu.

The Temple to the Kami is a unique holding with individual buildings dedicated to all five Elements. It has many strange and mystical qualities, with each shrine presenting challenges and puzzles that amaze and confuse visitors.

Finally, the Hito Water Gardens are a major attraction for samurai visitors who are able to gain access to the Inner City. They are a huge maze-like water garden located close to the River of the Sun, and have grown considerably over the centuries.

The Forbidden City

Located at the center of the Ekohikei, the Emperor's personal lands are the site of the magnificent ten-story Imperial Palace, the scarcely less-impressive Otomo Palace, and smaller palaces used by the Seppun and Miya families. The grounds around these palaces contains beautiful gardens and a set of Guest Homes for housing important visitors to the Imperial presence – one for each of the Great Clans. The whole of the facility is surrounded by an irregular wall, low but well-defended, cutting it off from the rest of Otosan Uchi. Only two gates pierce this wall – the main gate where the Road of the Most High passes through, and the much smaller Necessary Gate that leads to the Road of Fast Hopes.

The Forbidden City is also home to the Shrine of the First Hantei. This shrine was erected in the first century by Hantei Genji to commemorate his father's death from his wounds in the First War, and has ignored the passage of time completely, requiring no maintenance or reconstruction. A long bridge leads to the shrine, supported on the shoulders of statues of all the Emperors; as Emperors die and ascend into Tengoku, the bridge is redesigned to accommodate their statues. The shrine itself, however, is quite small and simple – in fact, the main chamber is barely large enough for a single man to stand within.

A complex called the Emperor's Labyrinth lies just below the Forbidden City, accessed through hidden tunnels in the ground level of the various Imperial Palaces. Ancient Scorpion wards, placed when the city was first built, ensure anyone without the Hantei blood will get hopelessly lost if they try to pass through this area. From the Imperial Labyrinth, an escape route follows the tunnels to the shore of the Bay of the Sun.

A small underground lake exists directly beneath the Juramashi District, and at its center is an island surrounded on all but one side by sharp coral and jagged rocks. In early days, this island served as a fledgling 'trading post' for various criminal enterprises. In later centuries, especially in eras when a single organization or mastermind controls the majority of criminal activity, a small estate is built on this island. Unbeknownst to most who operate here, there is also a small bed of Naga eggs hidden within the coral, perhaps the source of legends of albino snake creatures.

The Undercity

Otosan Uchi is built in a location frequently plagued by earthquakes, and the whims of the Fortunes often bring typhoons to batter the shoreline. This has created a dynamic and shifting network of natural tunnels and cave systems beneath the entirety of the Imperial City. Over the centuries, these erratic natural formations are supplemented by manmade structures: siege storage, escape tunnels, and secret bases for criminal enterprises. At various times the Kolat, the Tortoise Clan, and the Scorpion Clan have all maintained a significant presence in these tunnels. In addition, some of the major holdings and barracks in the city maintain siege supplies in the tunnels below their locations.





Chapter Fourteen

Ryoko Owari
The City of Lies

The city known as both the City of Stories and the City of Lies is one of the most influential and important cities in the Empire for over six hundred years of Rokugani history. It is a city of incredible wealth and ostentation, where mercantile interests are discussed more openly than almost anywhere else, and merchants from every clan make their homes. Situated on the River of Gold, astride the main trade routes between the northern and southern lands of Rokugan, it is the central pivot of all trade within the western half of Rokugan. Buzzing and bustling with commerce and activity, it is a place of endless rumors and famous legends, and every story here contains both an element of truth and a copious helping of lies. Fortunes are made and lost here, careers of both samurai and heimin begun and broken. Few who enter Ryoko Owari leave the city unchanged.

The city's repute is a study in contrasts – it is known as a sinister and dangerous place, a cesspit of vice and corruption, yet at the same time its size and wealth means it is viewed as a gem of the Emperor's crown. It is proof of the ultimate prosperity of the Empire, a place where every clan maintains an embassy and assigns gifted courtiers and skilled merchant patrons. Yet it is also a place where the allure of wealth and the scourge of opium conspire to destroy the honor and indeed the very lives of countless samurai, bringing shame on their families. And yet... despite its nefarious reputation as the center of the Empire's opium trade, despite the fact that every authority within it seems to be corrupt, its streets are clean, its people generally well-behaved, and its business and entertainment establishments are perfectly maintained. Indeed, the city's Empire-famous Licensed Quarter on Teardrop Island is home to some of the finest geisha houses in Rokugan.

The city is an enigma, one which even the Scorpion can barely understand and which has defeated all outside attempts to reform it. Virtually every criminal smuggling organization in Rokugan has its fingers in Ryoko Owari, and while some of the best and most honorable samurai of each clan may be found here in the Noble Quarter, so too may be found the worst and most unethical samurai imaginable. Smuggling is rampant and there are few magistrates who are not somehow complicit in illegal activities. Those few law-enforcers who manage to maintain their honor are frequently re-assigned elsewhere – or else found tragically dead. Indeed, for a city free of overt violence and unrest, Ryoko Owari seems to have an extraordinary number of mysterious accidental deaths, and it is rare indeed for a magistrate here to stay alive, serve justice, and not fall to the corruption that is practically the city's lifeblood.


Leatherworker's Quarter
The Festering Pit
Kawa no Kin
River of Gold
Towers of the Eyes
Licensed Quarter
House of the Morning Star
House of Foreign Stories
Island Garden
Teardrop Island
Dragon Bridge
Noble Quarter
City Hall
Gate of Condescension
Shosuro Palace
Magistrate Residence
Scorpion Garden
Ide Residence
Pleiad Gate
Temple of Bayushi
New Temple of Shosuro
Gate of Oni's Teeth
Mountain Goblin's Rest Road
Ryoko Owari Toshi
City of Stories, City of Lies
The City of Green Walls
City of Journey's End


W
S
N
E
Fisherman's Quarter
The Crab Caves
Wretched Gate
Bridge of Drunken Lovers
Downhill
The Loops
The North Rim
Bay of Drowned Honor
Jotamon's Dojo
Grand Wharf
Juniper Teahouse
Iron Wharf
Northeast Wharf
The Wharves
Moment's Edge Bridge
Two Gates
Fields of Gold
Daikoku's Garden
Unicorn Gate
Merchant's Quarter
Temple of Sadahako
Old Temple of Shosuro
Gate of Increasing Fortune
The Small Holes
Temple of Daikoku
Road Once Hidden

The History of Ryoko Owari

Ryoko Owari Toshi, the City of the Journey's End, is not originally a prominent location within the Empire. Founded by daimyo Shosuro Kaneie in the fifth century, it is originally a fortification straddling the River of Gold and supported by a small nearby village called Journey's End. Kaneie's purpose is to protect against circuitous Crab expansions into what would eventually become the Unicorn and northern Scorpion lands. The settlement's location on the River of Gold makes it a trade link between the northern and southern Empire, the linchpin of mercantile routes connecting the Crab, southern Crane, Scorpion, and Minor Clan lands. (After the return of the Unicorn Clan a few centuries later, this trade grows even more.) As a result, the settlement slowly expands into a larger town and eventually a city. Kaneie and his successors build walls around it covered in greenish limestone, earning Ryoko Owari the early nickname of the City of Green Walls.

A major boost to Ryoko Owari's fortunes comes with its sixth governor, Shosuro Kurodo, who makes a number of key decisions. In order to encourage the growth of the settlement, he declares a five-year tax abeyance for sake brewers and potters, theorizing correctly that once established the potters and brewers will remain when the tax exemption ends, and their presence in turn will attract merchants and craftsmen of all sorts. Kuroda also establishes the Firemen Gangs, quasi-independent groups of heimin tasked with fighting fires within their neighborhoods. This becomes a model imitated by many other Rokugani cities (Rokugani construction techniques mean that fire is always a threat); however, within a century Ryoko Owari's firemen evolve into organized protection rackets, criminal gangs who only fight fires as a sideline to their coercive activities.

Kurodo is also responsible for a most unusual decision that in some ways is the most significant of all for Ryoko Owari's growth and prosperity. Noticing that the city's eta are dumping much of its garbage and excrement into the River of Gold, fouling its waters, he repeals all taxes on selling dung to the farmers outside the city walls. This both encourages the expansion and success of farming (important for the city's burgeoning population) and makes the city's eta class the wealthiest and most conscientious of any such group in the Empire. The resulting prosperity earns Ryoko Owari its humorous nickname as "the City that Dung Built." (In later years, other clans will bestow their own nicknames on Ryoko Owari, such as the City of Stories and the City of Lies. The Crab, with their typical crude style, prefer to call it the "Rotting Scorpion Cesspool.")



When the Unicorn return to the Empire, they bring with them a new crop known as opium. The Scorpion gain the license to produce opium for medicinal use, and Ryoko Owari becomes the center of opium production and refinement for the entire Empire. Of course, this also makes the City of Lies into the center for the illicit trade in opium, further intensifying the city's notorious vice and corruption. It is this new cash crop which allows Ryoko Owari to ultimately grow beyond its contemporaries into one of the largest settlements in the Empire, exceeded in size and population only by the Imperial Capital. (During the Four Winds era, in the aftermath of Otosan Uchi's destruction by the Dark Lord Daigotsu, it is briefly the largest city of all, until the new capital grows up in Toshi Ranbo.)

Invasions and Occupations

While Ryoko Owari is generally considered a Scorpion holding, it has in fact changed hands on numerous occasions. The city is nigh-impossible to defend against a military campaign, being a sprawling metropolis whose long walls cannot withstand a determined assault. The surrounding terrain does nothing for defense, being a wide and flat plain without even the mild advantage of higher ground found in the other Scorpion holdings. It straddles one of the largest rivers in the Empire, one wide enough for large naval vessels to move through and invade the city from within. The sprawling tangle of its streets makes military coordination between the various districts all but impossible. As a result, in situations where the city is threatened by military force, the common practice of Scorpion Governors has been to offer immediate surrender while carefully hiding any illicit activities.

This practice begins when the Crab invaded and captured the city in the early seventh century. Governor Shosuro Sanekata withdraws, proclaiming "the Crab have taken the city, now let them try to govern it." Within a half-year the Crab army's discipline is so eroded by the vices of the city that they are forced to retreat, returning the city to Scorpion control – their only legacy being the construction of two mighty watchtowers on the riverbank south of the city walls. In subsequent years the city celebrates Liberation Day, the day the Crab left the city, as an annual local holiday.

During the reign of Hantei XX, the city is briefly captured by the Lion – they hold it for only a single week, but largely destroy the famous green walls. Afterward, the Scorpion build new city walls, eight feet thick and fifteen feet high, from black granite quarried in the Spine of the World Mountains.

In the twelfth century, the city endures its longest periods of non-Scorpion governance. The disbanding of the Scorpion Clan after the failed Coup results in the city being occupied by Imperial Legions, then sacked by the Crab when they launch their campaign to seize the Throne. The Unicorn administer the city during the later Scorpion exile to the Burning Sands, then return again to rule the city during the Four Winds era, when they manage to control it for over half a decade. Their efforts to impose orderly government and to reform the opium trade (restricting it to solely the legal trade in "medicinal" opium) prove altogether futile, however, and the city returns once more – inevitably – to Scorpion control. Only the Scorpion, it seems, can manage Ryoko Owari's tangle of wealth, corruption, illegality, and complex mercantile interests.

Factions and Interests

Officially, Ryoko Owari is ruled by a Governor in the same manner as any other Rokugani city. However, in the City of Lies nothing is ever so simple. The Governor (traditionally from the Shosuro family) must balance the city's many competing factions and interests in order to maintain prosperity and social stability. The problem becomes far more acute when the opium trade arrives, since the immense wealth it generates is a constant source of instability. The Governor must also manage the activities of the city's resident Emerald Magistrate, whose own agenda is often at cross-purposes with everyone else's needs. (From the Governor's standpoint, the ideal Emerald Magistrate is a corrupt one, since corruption is the city's normal operating method and is thus easy to manage.)

The Thunder Guard

The Governor's personal troubleshooters, the Thunder Guard are the elite of the city's military forces. They are officially houses by the Thunder Gate in the southwestern corner of the Merchant's Quarter, but may be found in every district of the city at various times. Established soon after the city's rise in prominence under Governor Shosuro Kuroda, the Thunder Guard reflect the need for a specialized military force whose sole duty is to maintain order within the city. Membership is not hereditary, but rather based on a mixture of merit and political favor. Among the local population, they are often regarded as little more than extremely well-trained thugs, and there is no denying that most of them – especially the officers – are on the take in various ways, accepting payoffs from the opium cartels, the firemen gangs, and various lesser scum.

Due to this endemic corruption, the Thunder Guard has a tendency to serve as agents of other factions within the city rather than as a faction on its own. Indeed, the rise and fall of merchant patrons within Ryoko Owari can often be measured by their ability to bribe and influence the Thunder Guard to cause trouble for their rivals. For the most part, the Guard seems to be comfortable with this role, and it is rare for the officers to seek their own power. The Guard does maintain the peace within the city, which is their ultimate purpose in existence, and so long as there is no overt violence, rioting, or other such disruptive events the Governor is perfectly happy to ignore the corruption issue. Ultimately, most Guards are cynical and world-weary, with a tendency to look down on the other factions within the city.

The Opium Trade and the Unicorn

To say that opium is the life's blood of modern Ryoko Owari is, if anything, something of an understatement. Although the city's early growth and wealth were built on trade (and Kuroda's infamous dung), its true and enduring prosperity is the direct result of the opium market.

Opium is not originally native to Rokugan, having been brought back by the Unicorn Clan from their long travels in gaijin lands. During the tenth century, all non-medicinal uses of the drug were declared illegal by the Emperor; nevertheless, pain-killers are sometimes required for proper treatment in time of war, so a legal trade in medicinal opium has been maintained ever since, with Ryoko Owari officially licensed to produce opium for this purpose. However, the scale of this legal trade is quite small, and certainly connect justify the vast fields of poppies growing outside the city and the equally vast storage warehouses the city maintains.

In truth, the illegal opium trade dwarfs the medicinal one by several orders of magnitude. This, of course, is because of the shameful addiction that all many samurai experience with this drug, particularly later in life. Lingering war injuries, bad memories, and simple weakness of spirit can all prey on a samurai, and while sake, tea, or meditation can help with such things, opium satisfies far more easily – and then addicts its users. Thus, despite its illegality, the drug is immensely popular and the smuggled illicit opium trade is immense. A huge amount of this trade, perhaps as much as 90%, passes through Ryoko Owari at some point.

In order to control both the market and the profits of that market, the Scorpion organize three separate opium cartels, run by the Bayushi, Shosuro, and Soshi families respectively. The cartels divide up the Empire's opium trade into geographical zones, and usually operate through Ryoko Owari with the consent and knowledge of the Governor – indeed, it is fairly common for the Governor to also be the head of the Shosuro cartel. Turf wars are strongly frowned upon as being bad for business and for internal clan relations, but they do occasionally take place – most famously in the case of the so-called "Opium War" in the year 1122, in which all three cartels turn on each other.

The Unicorn have a strong interest in the opium trade; due to their own experience with the use of opium, they know all too well the dangers of its abuse and feel a certain responsibility for the negative effects which the drug has inflicted on the Empire. They also resent the Scorpion control of a substance which they originally brought to the Empire. As a result, they have made several attempts to take the opium trade away from the Scorpion Clan, and this is probably the major reason for the clan's repeated attempts to gain control of Ryoko Owari in the twelfth century. Moreover, the less-honorable merchant patrons among the Unicorn have also tried to take control of the illegal trade for themselves (indeed it was one such individual who provoked the infamous Opium War). Regardless of whether their activities are honorable or corrupt, the Unicorn are a destabilizing element in both the opium trade and the more general affairs of Ryoko Owari, constantly trying to disrupt the power structures already in place.

The Kajinin (Firemen Gangs)

Due to the size of Ryoko Owari and its close-packed streets, fire poses an especially strong threat even compared to other urban centers. Normally, a city of this magnitude would pay official employees a substantial annual stipend to guard against fires and extinguish them when they occur, but Governor Kuroda decided that in times of tax shortfalls this could nearly bankrupt the city; his solution was to pay a much more modest stipend to freelance entrepreneurial persons among the heimin, tasking them to serve as firemen within their own neighborhoods. Although this approach has since been copied by a few other cities, the results are decidedly mixed.

With the exception of the original Temple Road firemen gang, the firemen of Ryoko Owari are little more than heimin protection rackets. They prey on their fellow commoners, of course, but they do not hesitate to also extort samurai – albeit with greater care in how they present their threats and promises. The reality is the same everywhere, though: the gangs extort the local populace by offering protection against fires – and if their targets do not pay, not only do the firemen not protect their buildings, but in fact they often set fire to them in person.

Over the centuries, the firemen gangs have expanded their interests beyond mere protection rackets into other criminal interests – opium dens, low-value prostitution, watered-down sake, gambling, and even general thievery and thuggery. They are generally enemies to the city's magistrates and the Thunder Guard, using a mixture of bribery and threats to make these authority figures stay out of their affairs. The gangs are generally smart enough to recognize they cannot operate with absolute impunity, however, and they avoid letting things escalate too much. Occasionally, an enterprising magistrate will undertake to "clean up the city," or the Thunder Guard will grow irritated with the gangs' arrogance – this usually results in large numbers of gang members being rounded up and a few executions, but the status quo is generally restored quickly.

Rival gangs rise and fall, their names usually derived from the territories over which they preside, contending with each other for greater slices of the pie. Although consolidations are occasionally successful in forming larger groups, new rivals always crop up and it is impossible for one fireman gang to rule over them all. In general, the gangs in the less well-policed areas of the city (particularly the Fisherman's Quarter) are the most brutal and criminal, while those in better districts behave more cautiously. In all cases, their work as firemen is still necessary, and thus the local peasants do their best to tolerate them as a necessary evil. Only the Temple Road gang, which has existed ever since Noburo's reign and follows an almost monastic dedication to its duties,

gains any real respect from those it protects, and most of the other gangs recognize that it is best not to anger the Temple Road group.

The Leatherworkers

As noted previously, one of the consequences of Shosuro Noburo's reign was the rise of the city's eta district to a sort of prosperity which most hinin never experience. For the most part, later rulers have left the sixth governor's deal with the eta untouched, but that changed during the reign of the city's tenth Governor, Shosuro Atsusuke. When Atsusuke learned that Emperor Hantei XVII would be visiting the city, he worried that the large numbers of eta in the city would offend the Son of Heaven. Accordingly, he broke Noburo's promise and began taxing the collection of dung at a heavy rate, hoping to thereby make Ryoko Owari less attractive to the eta and drive down their numbers.

At first, the eta and farmers offered only timid complaints which the Governor easily suppressed with force. However, the eta then took a subtler and more potent approach – they simply stopped collecting refuse, no matter how many of them the Governor had executed. Soon, the city was suffused with the stench of dung, the price of food was rising as farm productivity dropped, and civil disorder loomed.

The so-called Garbage Rebellion finally ended when Governor Atsusuke quietly repealed the taxes and the eta returned to work. Since that time, the eta in Ryoko Owari have been referred to as Leatherworkers, regardless of their specific duties – a mark of subtle respect seen nowhere else.

The Districts of Ryoko Owari

Each of the districts in Ryoko Owari, known colloquially as the Quarters, are the size of large towns or smaller cities found elsewhere in the Empire. Only a few major settlements elsewhere, such as Sunda Mizu Mura and Kyuden Gotei, approach Ryoko Owari's size, and only the Imperial Capital exceeds it. Physically, the city straddles the River of Gold, with three bridges linking the two sides – the most famous of these is the Moment's Edge Bridge, the site of the famous lethal duel between Crab duelist Hida Raiden and Dragon swordsmith Togashi Nyoko.



The Fisherman's Quarter

The Fisherman's Quarter is a heimin-dominated portion of the city, forming the main population center on the western side of the Bay of Drowned Honor. Large in area and densely populated, this district teems with life and activity at all times of the day, and the light of the sun is often partially obscured by the smoke of limitless charcoal cooking fires. Samurai are rarely found within this area, preferring to send heimin servants to see to it that fresh fish are brought for their needs. The whole quarter is extremely cramped by samurai standards, with buildings packed close together but seldom exceeding two stories in height (since they are made from basic and flimsy materials). Innumerable heimin sailors, fishermen, trade workers, and day laborers crowd the narrows roads, with many of the smaller walkways having barely enough room for two to walk abreast and countless tiny alleyways where only a single person can pass. With all these heimin (and the occasional ronin) shoving past each other, any samurai is bound to feel extremely uncomfortable anywhere but in the main thoroughfares. As if all that were not enough, the whole district is permeated with the smells of fish guts, charcoal smoke, and cheap sake.

The Fisherman's Quarter is loosely divided into three regions in the lexicon of the local inhabitants: the Crab Caves, the Loops and the North Rim. The latter region is arguably the best maintained in the district, with the deepest of the docks found on the sandy western side of the bay, and generally has the best (or perhaps the least-bad) reputation of the entirety of the Fisherman's Quarter. The fish and other cargoes here (typically lumber and rice, along with other foodstuffs) are generally carried across the Moment's Edge Bridge to the rest of the city for storage.



The Loops run between the Caves and Rim, and comprise the shorter and less prosperous docks; the reek of fresh and decaying fish is particularly strong in this area, as it is less of a trade-stop like the North Rim and the shallower waters are suitable only for fishing vessels.

The Crab Caves gained their name for being the locations of the many dens of ill-repute that ruined the Crab occupying army's discipline in the seventh century; prior to the establishment of the Licensed Quarter on Teardrop Island, theis southern portion of the Fisherman's Quarter served as the city's unofficial neighborhood for dens of ill repute and other vice-oriented businesses. Since the establishment of the Licensed Quarter, the Crab Caves have become known as the place for the most seedy and disgusting of vice operations, those unwilling to accept Teardrop Island's standards. This is the dumping ground for human refuse who cannot find work or patronage for their vice-peddling elsewhere in the city, and is perhaps the most disreputable place in Ryoko Owari.

The Juniper Teahouse

Perhaps the only location within the entirety of the Fisherman's Quarter worth noting, this place is the only well-maintained three-story buildings the district. Its name is a bit of a deceit, since anyone visiting there is never actually served tea. The Juniper is a base of operations for the Moment's Edge firemen gang, and is a den of ill-repute offering any seedy and cheap vice that ronin and peasants can afford. The place represents some of the worst aspects of the city, and the openness with which it operates is a signifier of Ryoko Owari's nature. Members of the Thunder Guard who visit the Juniper are offered a free cup of sake the moment they come through the door, which helps show how such a business can operate so freely here.

The Leatherworker's Quarter

The large, sprawling eta district of Ryoko Owari is located outside the city walls south of the Fisherman's Quarter, reached by the Wretched Gate from that district and by the Dragon Bridge from the Noble Quarter on the eastern riverbank. Any city on the scale of Ryoko Owari needs many eta, but even by such standards this district is quite large, one of the largest in the city and indeed in the Empire. (This is at least partly due to a shortage of arable land near the city's western side, allowing the eta to spread into territory which might otherwise have been given over to farms.) An outsider might assume that this district, divided into "neighborhoods" with such colorful titles as the Little Shadowlands, the Dragon's Shadow, and the Festering Pit, is one of the most unpleasant locations in Ryoko Owari. However, this would be at best only partially accurate.

The region is indeed unpleasant by samurai standards, since it is saturated in the spiritual uncleanness of the eta. Moreover, their duties inevitably mean that the district has a moderate but pervasive odor of rot and waste. The southern portion of the district deals in the collection and disposal of human waste and trash, while the crematorium



and leatherworking shops are found towards the north, nearer to the city proper. Still, the prevailing winds prevent the odors from being too strong, and aside from the inherent awfulness of the district's purpose, there is little else to make it a truly unpleasant place. In fact, by eta standards this district is surprisingly neat, clean, tidy, and prosperous. The extra space compared to other cities means all the one-story homes are of decent size, made of serviceable timber, well maintained, and clean. Indeed, the city's leatherworkers have long made a habit of staying fastidiously clean when not at their tasks, relying on both the flowing water of the river and internal wells to bathe regularly. Many homes have flower gardens and the streets are swept every day. Many of the eta families have dwelt here since the days of Shosuro Noburo, and their lovingly maintained houses are passed down from one generation to the next.

Of course, while the eta of Ryoko Owari live better than almost any others in the Empire, they are careful not to flaunt their status or offend their betters. They are almost universally silent and deeply respectful around samurai, so when one of the warrior caste visits the district it acquires a hushed air. Still, the eta do take a certain quiet pride in their humble homes and in their skills (their leather workmanship is known throughout the Empire for its quality). So long as they keep their heads down and their hands busy with their work, they are tolerated and largely left alone, just as they prefer.

The Licensed Quarter

Also known more simply as Teardrop Island, the Licensed Quarter is geographically the smallest of all the city's districts, being confined to a single island in the middle of the River of Gold. This makes it unique compared to all other Rokugani cities, since it means the licensed district is physically separate from the rest of the city. In fact, some scholars believe the term "floating world" (for the world of the geisha) may have originated with Teardrop Island.

Originally, all of Ryoko Owari's licensed entertainments are located in the Fishermen's Quarter. However, as the city grows the demand outstrips that district's space, while successive Shosuro governors become increasingly concerned over their inability to properly regulate and control the city's geisha houses, resulting in an embarrassment to the Scorpion Clan's name. Teardrop Island was the eventual response. Located outside of the bay used for the city's mercantile traffic, and with only a few convenient points to actually land ships, the island offers a perfect place to ensure both the integrity of the Licensed Quarter and the safety of guests, all under the governor's complete control.

Teardrop Island exists for only one purpose: entertainment. The finest geisha houses in all of the Scorpion lands are found here – perhaps the finest anywhere, although plenty of rivals would dispute that. Most establishments here are centuries old, operating with the patronage of ancient Shosuro and Bayushi families who zealously guard their privilege and the wealth and prestige that it brings. Competition runs heavy and hard between these establishments, but is always kept within civilized bounds – none will risk the ire of the governor or the possibility of being expelled from the island. The first rule of visiting Teardrop Island is that weapons are not allowed by any who are not the authorized protectors of the island (which is to say, the Thunder Guard). This is a social expectation but effectively serves as a rule of law, since only those of very high station indeed can defy such expectations. Much like other such places, Teardrop Island allows guests to save face by leaving their weapons to be "polished" until they are ready to depart the island – this task is handled by a business located on the island's only dock, where visitors drop off their weapons upon arrival and pick them up at departure. For the most nominal of fees, their treasured blades are treated with respect, cleaned and carefully tended. Even the Scorpion themselves respect this practice too much to plot a way past it.

Geisha houses, sake houses, regulated gambling dens, opium parlors operating under the pretense of some other form of entertainment – all these and a variety of other esoteric establishments can be found within the low ornamental walls that surround Teardrop Island. Even the most decrepit of locations here would be considered respectable establishments almost anywhere else. A position as an entertainer within these walls is considered an honor and privilege, and those who works here are rightfully proud of their skills.

The Thunder Guard makes a strict effort to ensure Teardrop Island remains as peaceful and pleasant as possible. This is not a place of cheap sake and drunken revelers shouting at the top of their lungs before getting into dishonorable brawls; guests are expected to behave themselves, and house bouncers, well-trained doshin, and soldiers of the Thunder Guard cooperate to ensure no unruly behavior lasts long. Those who defile the Floating World with violence are summarily ejected as efficiently as possible, without exception. As a result, Teardrop Island is the safest and most peaceful district in the city, far more so than even the Noble and Temple Quarters.

The House of Foreign Stories

An unusual location in the otherwise strictly traditional Licensed Quarter, this geisha house is controlled by the Unicorn Clan as part of their effort to increase their influence in Ryoko Owari. It deliberately seeks to draw on the appeal of the exotic by recruiting geisha who are either foreign-born or who have noticeable gaijin blood. Indeed, the house's greatest time of prominence comes in the early twelfth century when its okaa-san is herself a gaijin woman named Magda.

The whole style and design of the House of Foreign Stories caters to the appeal of the exotic – not just in the identity of its geisha, but also in their clothing and even in the food and drink served in the establishment. Of course, plenty of samurai reject the place as inappropriate and borderline blasphemous (taking their business to the other houses, especially the House of the Morning Star) but just as many are drawn in by the allure of the exotic and forbidden.

House of the Morning Star

The House of the Morning Star caters to precisely what the highest and most prestigious samurai expect of a geisha house. It is, without question, the finest establishment in Ryoko Owari and one of the finest in the Empire. As old as Teardrop Island itself, the House of the Morning Star is carefully upheld by the Governor's favor to ensure it is both the finest and most proper of geisha houses in the city. Nothing is unusual or out of place, for this place caters to what is expected, and excels in this above all others.

The Towers of the Eyes

Located south of Teardrop Island, the Towers of the Eyes are the sole legacy of the Crab Clan's brief occupation of the city in the seventh century. The Crab build these two towers (one on each bank of the river) to watch for any possible invasion fleet coming up or down the River of Gold. During times of war, a chain or cord can be strung between them to close the river to traffic. Rumors claim there are also tunnels connecting the towers beneath the river, although this has never been confirmed.

The Merchant's Quarter

Easily the physically largest of the city's districts, the Merchant's Quarter is also the most heavily popular but not nearly so packed and overcrowded as the Fisherman's Quarter. It is just as lively as that region of the city but with a very different tone to its activities. The smells that waft here are far more pleasant, though the scent of human sweat and labor always runs as an undercurrent with the perfumes of the nobility. The sounds of musicians ring in the ears of passers-by and merchants openly hawk their wares, promising life, health, wealth, well-being, or the Fortunes' favor to whoever comes within earshot of them. This part of the city is constantly alive and buzzing with activity at all hours of the day, though it dies off quickly in the evening. It is populated by tradesmen and merchants, heimin and samurai alike, and exhibits a perpetual state of semi-organized chaos.

The Merchant's Quarter is dominated by its wharves. While the residential and mercantile areas are split into neighborhoods called Two-Gates, Downhill, and the Fields of Gold, it is the three great wharves that dominate the affairs of the district. The Iron, Grand, and Northeast Wharves handle all the heavy shipping into the city, and are considerably larger than their sisters in the Fisherman's Quarter across the river. They can handle any vessel capable of navigating the River of Gold, and every day sees shipments brought in, taxes levied, and business conducted with an efficiency that would make the sternest Yasuki taskmasters proud. Heimin here jump to their tasks with zeal, knowing there is always someone waiting to take their place if they do not meet the standards of their demanding patrons. Failure could easily reduce them to working in the Fisherman's Quarter, a fate some heimin might consider worse than death or imprisonment.

Mercantile matters are discussed in this part of the city with far more gusto than in many other places in the Empire. Coin flows like water as business is transacted with rapid-fire speed. Even samurai here sometimes find it easier to simply conduct their business themselves, rather than endure the delays and inefficiency of working through heimin intermediaries... just another example of how samurai find life in this city disturbing and unsettling compared to other cities of the Empire.

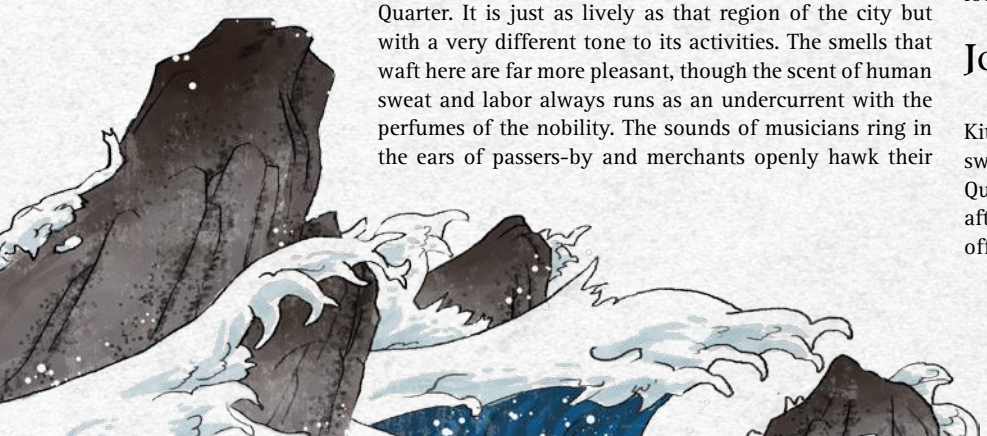
It would be easy to lose sight of the more notable locations within the Merchant Quarter simply because they all seem to change with each passing generation. Very few shops are held for multiple generations, for fortunes change constantly in Ryoko Owari.

Daikoku's Garden

One of the few places in the Merchants' Quarter that is noteworthy, this place is located in the eastern Fields of Gold neighborhood, leading up toward the Temple Quarter. It is a large bisected garden, a combination of an austere and pristine rock garden and a vibrant and colorful flower garden filled with poppies. It has remained in this location for centuries and is a popular destination for visitors. The rock garden is tended by monks of Daikoku from the Temple Quarter, while the poppy garden is tended by locals assigned by the current Governor.

Jotomon's Shinrai Dojo

During the twelfth century, a Dragon samurai-ko named Kitsuki Jotomon developed her own unique school of swordsmanship in a modest dojo within the Merchant's Quarter. The school remained open for only a short period after her death, but while it lasted it was unique in that it offered training to heimin, ronin, and clan samurai alike.



This caused considerable stir among the samurai caste, but she ignored their concerns and continued with her eccentric practices to the end of her life. With her passing, the dojo was closed and her ashes were sent back to the Dragon lands, where some of her students continued her traditions in a more favorable cultural climate.

The Noble Quarter

Here, the best and the brightest of Ryoko Owari live, socialize, and govern. Hear, in the Old and New portions of the district, all of the movers and shakers of the city hold sway. Nearly every samurai of station in Ryoko Owari lives within this district, aside from a handful in the Temple and Merchant Quarters. The hundreds of residences here are all expressions of the finest samurai sensibilities, and the only commoners to be found are household servants. Embassies for all the Great Clans are also located here, along with the city's seat of government.

The City Hall

Located just within the Noble Quarter through the Gate of Condescension, the City Hall is an austere building by the standards of Ryoko Owari. Most matters of day-to-day politics take place here rather than in the Governor's residence at the Shosuro Palace; throughout the city's history, it has been the practice of the Scorpion Governors to keep their business and personal lives separated as much as possible. All matters of taxation, governance, resolution of grievances and disputes, and similar things are dealt with first and foremost within the City Hall, usually by a functionary granted leave by the Governor to speak on his behalf, although the Governor will visit directly in the most important cases (or in ones which attract his curiosity).

The Magistrates' Offices

Adjacent to the City Hall is a smaller complex where the city's resident magistrates (both clan and Imperial) mete out justice. Needless to say, this can be a difficult and thankless task in a city of this size and nature. Built to withstand a military siege, it is an imposing and sterile structure, with attached prison chambers and one of the most well-stocked torture chambers in the Empire.

The Shosuro Palace

In contrast to the City Hall and the magistrates' offices, the Shosuro Palace that serves as the Governor's personal domain is beautiful, opulent... and confusing. Located on the highest hill in the whole of the city, it overlooks all of Ryoko Owari and is second in size only to the Temple of Daikoku. Ornate and beautiful, it is well apportioned but at the same time decidedly confusing to visitors, for its passages are twisting, its design irrational. Countless secret passages dot the structure, but their existence is not truly a secret as it might be in other Scorpion castles; indeed, visitors often stumble across them by accident. Guests are assured by the Shosuro that the myriad secret chambers and passageways are more an in-joke, a jab at the family's reputation for sinister secrecy. In truth, much of the palace's bizarre design is a side-effect of the mundane reality that it has been built, expanded, rebuilt, and re-expanded so many times over the course of the city's history.

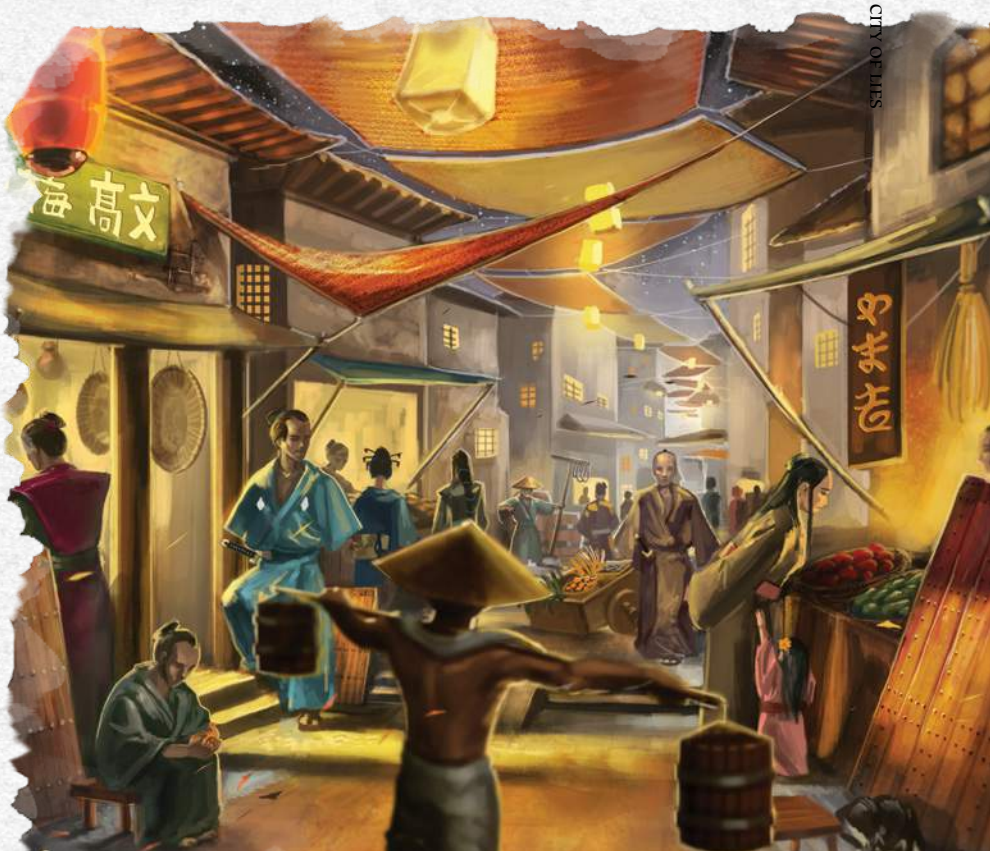
The Shosuro Palace is a frequent host for regional winter courts, but of course has never been the site of the Imperial Winter Court. While opulent in the extreme, the palace is far short of the size, grandeur, and above all the sterling reputation required to serve as host for the Emperor. Even such odd destinations as Shiro Moto have been chosen by Emperors in preference to this place.

The Unicorn Embassy

Among the various clan embassies in the Noble Quarter, none is quite so odd as Unicorn one, built by the Ide in the tenth century. Their residence is intentionally made to be particularly exotic and outlandish, with a bulbous top similar to the palaces found across the Burning Sands by their clan's forebears. The unique structure often draws both local gawkers and visiting sight-seers, and the Unicorn exploit this curiosity to build their networks of allies and contacts.

The Temple Quarter

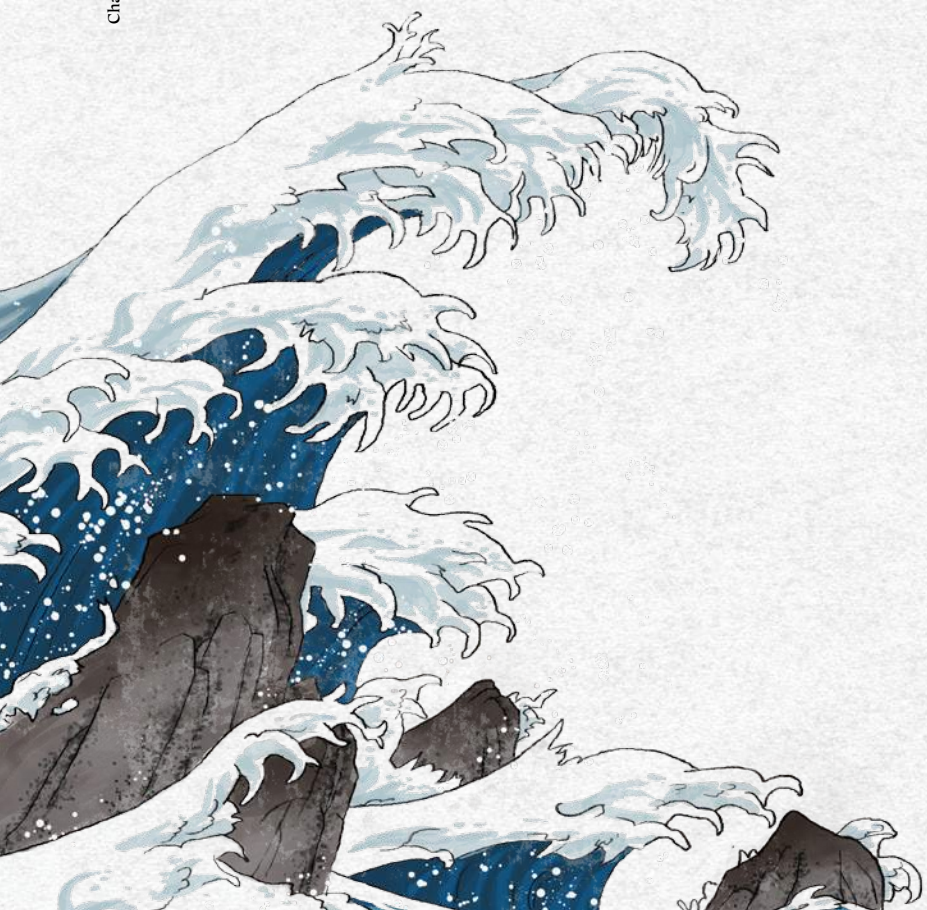
Dominated by the vast and ornate Temple to Daikoku, the tallest and most impressive structure in all of Ryoko Owari, the Temple Quarter is located on the eastern side of the city, connected to the Noble and Merchant Quarters. There are temples here to the Sun and to every one of the Seven Great Fortunes, along with lesser shrines to almost



every other notable fortune known to Rokugan. The district also has lavish temples to Bayushi and Shosuro, the two greatest ancestors of the Scorpion Clan. Moreover, whenever a lesser fortune is named by an Emperor, the priests in this district take great pains to find space here for a suitable shrine. Indeed, their devotion to ensuring that all of the fortunes are properly venerated rivals that of the Asako and Isawa, though this is never said within the hearing of a Phoenix Clan samurai.

This obsession with ensuring that all of the fortunes be venerated is perhaps best expressed in the shrine dedicated to Sadahako. A nearly forgotten minor Fortune, in life she was a geisha of Empire-wide renown and skill, and was purportedly proclaimed a Fortune by Hantei VII on his deathbed. There was considerable debate over the truth of her ascension, and some among the Asako continue to question it even in modern times. Nonetheless, a shrine to her is located in Ryoko Owari, just north of the Temple of Daikoku.

It is generally considered an unspoken rule of Ryoko Owari that the less savory habits of the city are kept out of the Temple Quarter. Obviously, this does not make the district into a safe haven for those seeking to avoid trouble with the Thunder Guard, but nonetheless all parties within the city take great pains to try and protect the integrity of this region. This may explain the relative non-presence of kajinin firemen gangs; there is a Temple Road gang in the northern part of the Quarter, but this group is known for its lack of participation in extortion and other illegal practices, and is almost monastically devoted to the integrity of its job. Aside from that, most locations within the Quarter are protected in time of fire or other crisis by the monks of Daikoku, who are said to be able to cleanse fires with the power of the Elements themselves.



The Temple of Daikoku

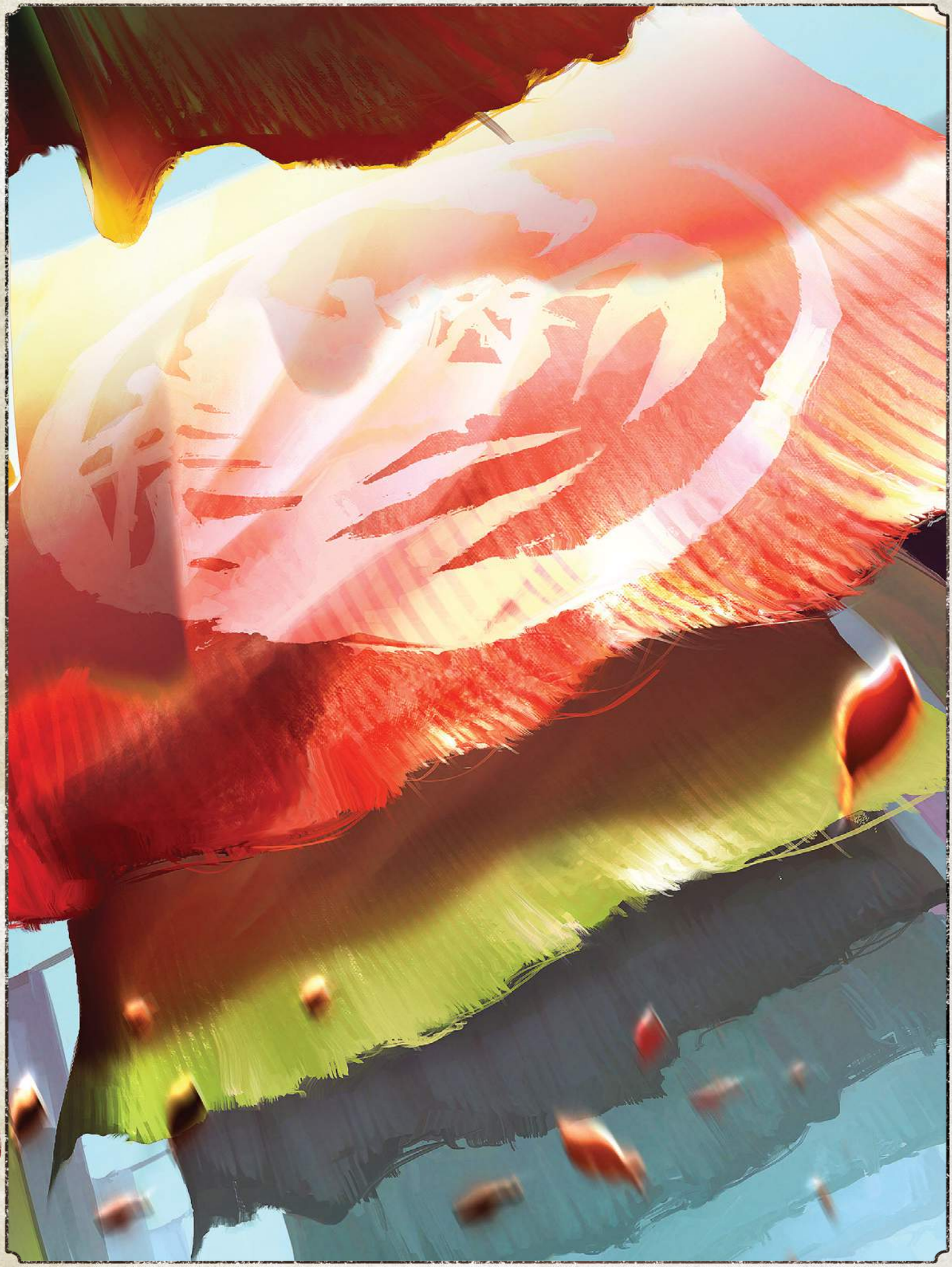
This is without question the single most impressive structure in the entire Quarter, and perhaps even the whole of the city. It is widely believed that Daikoku has bestowed his personal blessing on the city, and the Temple fashioned to show gratitude to him and seek his continued favor is one of the largest such temples in Rokugan, its great pagoda rising a staggering ten stories above the street. The great statue to Daikoku within the temple is fashioned from a single giant piece of stone, shaded pink, and is considered one of the Empire's wonders. Visitors to the city, even those who are not known for particular religious fervor, always make a point to visit the temple at least once; if nothing else, its lavish accouterments can be stunning to even the most jaded eye.

The temple is the home to the Order of Daikoku, a sub-sect within the Order of the Thousand Fortunes that focuses solely upon the Fortune of Wealth. The monks are considered somewhat bizarre by the standards of other Fortunist orders, especially since they are so focused on worldly affairs. Many of the businesses in the city make regular contributions to the Temple solely to gain the patronage of the monks (or to ensure they do not somehow earn their displeasure). There are innumerable stories of the monks' strange behavior and odd powers; one of the most famous involves the monks bankrupting a gambling house on Teardrop Island as a show of their fortune's disfavor. Whether this is true or not, all of the gambling houses of the Licensed Quarter make it a point to pay proper tribute to the temple.

The Temple of the Sun

Originally built by the fifth Governor of Ryoko Owari to honor the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, this temple continues into modern times, renaming itself to follow Yakamo and the Jade Sun in turn. Much shorter than the Temple of Daikoku, it nevertheless is famed in its own right for its construction – the temple is made entirely of pure white limestone, and reflects the Sun's light with dazzling purity during the day.

The most notable feature of the temple is the tall pillar in its outer courtyard which is surmounted by a globe of dazzling gold. According to legend, this giant golden ball was a gift from the Dragon of Fire itself, and contains some of that being's pure Elemental essence. Supposedly, anyone who tries to steal the ball is instantly consumed in divine fires.





Chapter Fifteen

The Imperial City Toshi Ranbo

The History of Toshi Ranbo

The story of Toshi Ranbo is one of strife, bloodshed, and violence. The castle and associated town is originally established by the Lion Clan in the fifth century as a base of operations against the Crane. Ownership of Toshi Ranbo see-saws back and forth between the two Great Clans for the next seven hundred years, and as a result it has the dubious distinction of being one of the most contested sites in all of Rokugan; outside of the Crab lands, there is no single place in the Empire that has seen as much conflict. Not until the twelfth century does the battle for ownership of Toshi Ranbo finally subside when it is made the new Imperial Capital at the end of the Four Winds era. Since then it has seen far less spilling of blood, instead becoming the epicenter of Rokugani politics. Of course, there are those who would claim this is no less lethal than open warfare, and that the city's full name – *Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho*, or Violence-Behind-Courtliness City – remains applicable at the end of the twelfth century.

By the early fifth century, the Crane and Lion Clans have been warring off and on for almost four hundred years, the result of the enmity that first developed between Matsu and Kakita at the dawn of the Empire. Border clashes between the two clans are common, with particularly fertile and productive areas such as the Kintani Valley being the focus of intense fighting. Eventually, it comes to be believed that ownership of the Kintani Valley, located at the conjunction of the Crane, Lion, and Phoenix lands, will give that clan tremendous leverage in the struggle for control of northern Rokugan. With this realization, Lion Clan generals notice a dangerous and potentially fatal flaw in their defenses against the Crane, who have the most success in commanding the valley. Should the Crane use the valley as a staging point for a major offensive, there will be little to stop a massive right-flanking maneuver against the Lion. And if the Crane succeed in breaking through the Lion defenses in this way, they will have free rein to march across the plains of the central Lion territories.


Shutsuens
Jchidou
Bakemono Mischief
Gilded Lotus
Maiden's Caress
Temple of the Seven Fortunes
Imperial Pala
Temple to the Seven Thunders
Temple to the Dark Fortunes
Shrine of the Three Dynasties
Temple to Te'tik'kir
High Temple of Toshi Ranbo
Faded Chrysanthemum Inn
Shrine of Fallen Hero
Chu
Drowned Merchant River
Guranai's Noodles
Quiet Waves Against the Sand
Jreitou no Seishiro
Tsudao Subdistrict
House of the Pale Moon
House of the Orange Blossom
Bending Reed Dojo
Juutaku Subdistrict
Kurai


N
Toshi Ranbo
wo Shien Shite Reigisaho
at the beginning of the 13th Century
Okura Subdistrict
Senzai
Senzai-za
Statue of Toturi Tsudao
Kumitate
Shiro Kiritsu
Senzai Noh Theatre
The Docks
Port Authority
Dueling Tako
Little Merchant's District
House of the River's Spray
Benten Subdistrict
Golden Palace
Shijou

To the Akodo leaders studying the problem, the answer was straightforward — a fortified location established close to the Kintani Valley. Not only does this block any Crane movements westward against the Lion, it also provides an excellent forward base from which to launch offensive operations against the Crane. The location chosen is a relatively flat and well-drained area adjacent to the *Oboreshinu Boekisho Kawa* (Drowned Merchant River), the main waterway in northern Rokugan. Construction begins in the year 437, with the creation of a fortified keep and a series of outbuildings. While the Imperial histories record the name of the newly-constructed fortification as Toshi Ranbo, this is actually unlikely – the name *Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho* (Violence-Behind-Courtliness City) is almost certainly a much later name for the place, applied after it became a focal point for Rokugani politics in the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries. The Ikoma histories make reference to *Kita no Yosa* (Northern Fortress), which may be the original name; nonetheless, modern records use the name Toshi Ranbo for this holding regardless of time period.

The following sections summarize the history of Toshi Ranbo after its founding:

Years 437 to 595

For the first century and a half of its history, Toshi Ranbo actually sees little in the way of overt military action. In part this is because the nearby Kintani Valley is still in the process of being developed as a major location for farming and trade, so the focus of conflict between the two clans is generally further south. Thus, after its initial construction as a fortified keep with a few supporting structures, little improvement is considered necessary by the Lion. This situation changes in the late sixth century, however, when the Kintani Valley becomes a major source of food and revenue for the Crane. That clan grows more concerned about protecting this valuable resource, while the Lion seek to threaten it. This, coupled with the lingering Lion concern about the security of their northern border, prompts both clans to begin a period of military build-up in the region.

Years 596 to 601

Striking preemptively, the Crane launch their first assault on Toshi Ranbo; they capture the holding, but are only able to hold it for eight days before a Lion counterattack retakes it. While this is a relatively minor action in itself, the temporary loss of Toshi Ranbo is a blow to Lion



pride that also underscores critical weaknesses in the holding's defenses. The Lion immediately begin fortifying Toshi Ranbo, constructing a series of defensive outer works, reinforcing the original keep, and incorporating the Drowned Merchant River itself into the defenses. The next Crane assault, in the year 600, fails, with the Crane suffering heavy losses. However, a subsequent Lion offensive in the year 601, directed at the Kintani Valley, is likewise driven back the Crane.

Years 602 to 1100

For five centuries, the region sees a pattern of successive attacks and counterattacks by both the Crane and Lion. Toshi Ranbo itself changes hands repeatedly. When it is under Crane control, the embattled holding becomes a base of operations to strike into the Lion Clan's northern provinces, just as the Akodo originally feared. Inevitably the Lion amass their forces, drive the Crane back, retake Toshi Ranbo and then launch their own attacks into Crane territory. The Crane in turn push the Lion back, capture Toshi Ranbo, and the cycle repeats itself. In some cases this sequence of offensive and counteroffensive occurs very quickly, over a year or two; in others it incorporates a whole series of campaigns spanning years or even decades. The exact casualty toll is unknown, but certainly includes thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of samurai and peasant levies.

Remarkably, despite being engulfed in decade after decade of conflict and strife, Toshi Ranbo grows as settlement. The surrounding lands, an ancient floodplain of the Drowned Merchant River, are fertile and easily-worked, while the river itself is navigable westward to the trade center at Toshi sano Kanemochi Kaeru (the City of the Rich Frog). Toshi Ranbo grows from a simple fortified holding to a small town, albeit one still focused heavily on military defense.

One notable side-effect of the near-constant fighting in and around Toshi Ranbo is the construction of numerous secret tunnels, passageways, and safe-rooms. The local populace uses these to escape the fighting while it is occurring (and to hide from the conquering forces if their allegiance is to the losing side). Stories are told of entire families secreting themselves away in these hidden passages, waiting for the town to change hands once more and then emerging to resume their lives as though nothing happened in the meantime.

Years 1118 to 1122: The Rise of the Tsume

In the year 1118 the political and military situation in the Toshi Ranbo area is upended when the daimyo of the Tsume family, vassals to the Doji, launch a sudden vicious attack out of his holdings in the Kintani Valley. By this time the Lion and the Phoenix have both established their own presence in the valley thanks to peace treaties brokered in the preceding centuries. Tsume Retsu, a ruthless and ambitious man, assaults Shiro Kyotei, a small castle held by the Akodo vassal family called the Damasu. The Damasu are overrun and virtually destroyed, and having claimed their castle for his own, Retsu continues his offensive north and west, seizing Toshi Ranbo itself. The Crane Champion reluctantly supports his Tsume vassal, unable to deny his success. Relations between the Crane and Lion Clans worsen dramatically.

In the year 1120, Lion Clan Champion Akodo Arasou leads an attack to reclaim Toshi Ranbo. Arasou, campaigning alongside his betrothed Matsu Tsuko, finds a strong force of Daidoji defending the castle; after a brutal close-quarters battle, Arasou is killed and the Lion are driven back in defeat. Subsequently, Tsume Retsu hands command of Toshi Ranbo over to another Crane general and retires to Kyuden Kotei, which he establishes as the new seat of Tsume power and governance. He is assassinated there in the year 1122.

In the meantime, the Lion finally succeed in recapturing Toshi Ranbo, only to lose it again to the clever political machinations of a Crane general named Doji Chuto.

Years 1123 to 1155

In the year 1123, the strained Lion-Crane relations are set back even further when a Scorpion agent named Bayushi Sozui disrupts peace negotiations in Toshi Ranbo, provoking the two clans into open battle just outside the town. Thanks to a treacherous Lion Clan soden senzo named Kitsu Goden, Sozui is able to release the power of Toshigoku into the area, dramatically escalating the ferocity of the battle, which comes to be known as the Battle of the Forgotten Tide. A group of magistrates is able to expose Sozui's meddling and convince both sides to stand down, but peace is short-lived, and the relentless pattern of attack and counterattack begins once more.

In the year 1126, weary of the seemingly endless bloodshed, a group of ronin form an otokodate (brotherhood) called the Tessen, devoted to protecting the inhabitants of Toshi Ranbo from the worst excesses of the warring clans. The Tessen is so named because the Crane have enacted a law dictating that no one in Toshi Ranbo save Crane samurai is allowed to draw a katana there. The otokodate choose the tessen (war fan) as their main weapon, and become quite adept at using it in defense of the citizens of Toshi Ranbo.

Years 1156 to 1159

In the year 1156 the Lion Clan Champion, Matsu Nimuro, attacks and captures Shiro no Yojin, a castle on the Lion-Crane border which had fallen to the latter clan during the Battle of the Forgotten Tide. The Crane slander Nimuro in court, claiming he won the day only due to treachery; in return, Nimuro proclaims he will seize Toshi Ranbo as well, describing exactly how he will do so. A month later, he attacks and captures Toshi Ranbo exactly as he said he would, earning the nickname of the Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo.



Three years later, the Crane manage to once more retake Toshi Ranbo, attacking while the Lion are distracted by war with the inhuman creatures called Tsuno. This threatens to once more ignite all-out war between the Lion and Crane, but this time the Imperial heir Hantei Naseru intercedes as a mediator. The Lion are furious when he awards Toshi Ranbo to the Crane, but the following year the Crane Champion, Doji Kurohito, cedes control to the Lion as part of his efforts to break the curse of the sword called Chukandomo. This finally earns him and the Crane the respect of the Lion.

Improved Crane-Lion relations are instrumental in prompting the Imperial Court to accept their joint offer to relocate the Imperial Capital from Otosan Uchi (destroyed by Daigotsu in the year 1159) to Toshi Ranbo. Toshi Ranbo immediately begins a period of rapid expansion as its new life gets underway.

Years 1160 to 1166: The New Imperial City

Toshi Ranbo grows explosively as samurai and heimin alike move to the new Imperial capital. However, in the year 1165 the city is rocked by a series of explosions and fires which destroy almost a quarter of the new construction. This once again heightens tensions between the Lion and the Crane, each of whom blames the other for failing to protect the city, but further conflict is forestalled by the burgeoning threat from the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban.

A year later, a joint investigation by both clans reveals that the so-called Fires of Toshi Ranbo were part of a plot to attack the Imperial Court. Both clans accept responsibility for failing to properly secure the city.

Years 1167 to 1169: The Race for the Throne

Following the death of Emperor Toturi III in the Shadowlands, the Empire is left leaderless. Moto Chagatai, Champion of the Unicorn Clan, resolves to claim the Throne and assume control of the Empire. The so-called Winter of Red Snow follows, as Chagatai campaigns through the Lion lands during winter and finally attacks Toshi Ranbo itself. The city suffers tremendous damage, particularly when the Emperor's brother Isawa Sezaru dies in a catastrophic explosion of Elemental magic. The fighting is finally brought to a sudden end when the Phoenix Clan arrives, accompanied by the Elemental Dragon of Fire itself, and imposes a truce.

Year 1170 to 1198: The New Dynasty

Kitsuki Iweko is proclaimed Empress by the Celestial Heavens at Seppun Hill and travels to Toshi Ranbo to assume the Throne. Although her ascension brings on Empire-wide celebrations, her reign proves to be a troubled one. Within a year, the Empire is attacked by the forces of the gaijin goddess Kali-ma. The northern tribes called the Yobanjin are part of the assault on Rokugan, having been subjugated by the Dark Oracle of Fire. After ravaging the lands of the Dragon, the Phoenix, and the Unicorn, the so-called Army of Dark Fire strikes directly for Toshi Ranbo, intending to kill the new Empress. It is finally defeated close to the city after its commander is lured into a trap and killed.

In the year 1172, as the Empire shudders under the main assault of Kali-Ma's Destroyers, a group of Rhumaalist assassins infiltrate the Imperial Court in Toshi Ranbo and try to kill Empress Iweko. However, they are thwarted, and the following year Kali-ma is at last defeated. In the aftermath of the final battle, the Dark Lord Daigotsu becomes ruler of Jigoku, and Iweko I is forced to recognize his Spider Clan as a Great Clan of Rokugan. Daigotsu also names several new Dark Fortunes, and in 1174 a new temple is constructed in Toshi Ranbo to their veneration.

In the wake of the Destroyer War, Toshi Ranbo experiences one of the longest periods of peace in its existence. For much of this time the Empire's attention is focused on the exploration and settlement of the Imperial Colonies, established in the former Ivory Kingdoms.

Year 1199: The Imperial Heir

Realizing that her reign is coming to an end, Empress Iweko I directs that Winter Court be held in Toshi Ranbo itself rather than being hosted by a Great Clan. At the outset of Winter Court, she retires into seclusion to consider the matter of her successor, leaving a regent to oversee the Court. However, the Court and the city itself are attacked by a powerful incarnation of Kommei no Oni, the Oni of Confusion. The implications of this are grave, as the Oni succeeds in by-passing the wards erected around the Imperial Palace to prevent just such an incursion.

The City of Toshi Ranbo

For ease of governance, Toshi Ranbo – like other large Rokugani cities – is divided into a series of districts. Each district is nominally self-governed, overseen by a Governor and his court. However, these District Governors are answerable to the City Governor of Toshi Ranbo, who oversees the city as a whole. The City Governor, in turn, is responsible to the Imperial Court – particularly the Commander of the Imperial Palace Guard (for matters related to security) and the Imperial Chancellor (for matters involving the efficient operation of the Imperial Court).

Toshi Ranbo is divided into the following districts:

- **Chuushin District** – The heart of Toshi Ranbo. The Imperial Palace is located here, as are the holdings of the Imperial families and many buildings and offices related to the Imperial bureaucracy. The Chuushin District encompasses much of the original town and defensive works that comprised Toshi Ranbo in past centuries.
- **Ichidou District** – Also known as the Holy District, this District is home to the major shrines and temples of the city.
- **Kurai District** – This is the largest of the districts, home to most of the Great Clan embassies and diplomatic residencies and to most of the buke who live in the city. The Juutaku sub-district, which includes many of the heimin residences in the city, is part of the Kurai District. The Benten sub-district, where the Mantis Clan Embassy is located, is also part of the Kurai District, as is the Tsudao sub-district.
- **Senzai District** – This is Toshi Ranbo's center of art and culture, home to most of the city's theatres and other places of performance. The Okura sub-district is part of the Senzai District.
- **Shutsuensha District** – The licensed quarter of the Imperial City hosts many of the most prominent inns and geisha houses, and is closely tied to the Senzai and Kurai Districts, both socially and commercially.
- **Shijou District** – The main commercial district of the city. The major markets are located here, as are the docks and warehouses along the Drowned Merchant River.

Toshi Ranbo Through Time

For much of its history, Toshi Ranbo is a relatively small and sparsely populated holding, important only because of its strategic location and military value to the Lion and Crane rather than because of any inherent value of its own. It is simply a small fortified town, and prior to the year 1100 it is not even that much – just a village surrounding a keep and related defensive works. Only when Toshi Ranbo is designated as the Imperial Capital after the fall of Otosan Uchi does it grow into a large city, important in its own right.

The rest of this chapter primarily discusses Toshi Ranbo as the Imperial Capital, a huge and growing city. However, each of the sections describing the city and its various districts includes a sidebar discussing what, if anything, from that section is applicable to Toshi Ranbo's earlier history. Game Masters running L5R campaigns set in earlier times can use these sidebars to maintain a canonical setting (assuming they wish to do so).

Chuushin District

The Chuushin District of Toshi Ranbo is the political epicenter of Rokugan. The district is roughly defined by the original outer defensive works and walls of Toshi Ranbo, whose design dates back to the founding of the holding in the early fifth century. Of course, the walls and defensive works are not actually the original ones, having been extensively modified and reconstructed over centuries of warfare between the Lion and the Crane. In modern times, these defenses have been further reworked, in part to make them more efficient and in part to make them more aesthetically pleasing. They now enclose the Imperial Palace of Rokugan, an elaborate twelfth century edifice built after the Imperial Capital was moved here, as well as the original keep – now renamed Shiro Kiritsu, the Castle of Law. Between the two imposing structures sprawls the Kumitate, or Place of Assembly, a broad plaza where citizens of the Empire gather during important festivals or holidays to hear the Emperor speak from a high balcony on the Palace.





The Imperial Palace is not only the official residence of the Emperor and his immediate family, but also contains the Imperial Court. It is here that the most important decisions regarding the Empire are made, usually in the form of petitions presented to, considered by, and then either approved or rejected by the Emperor. The Palace also contains numerous gardens replete with ponds, fountains, and streams, a maze of courtyards, and a variety of outbuildings. One small courtyard tucked among the towering wings and walls of the Palace is particularly notable – the place called Judgment's Retreat, where matters of honor such as duels and seppuku are resolved. Only the most serious such matters, invariably derived from conflicts among the senior delegates to the Imperial Court itself, are resolved here.

The Palace also provides offices and living quarters for the senior members of the Imperial Court. The Voice of the Emperor, the Imperial Chancellor, and the Imperial Advisor all reside and work in the Palace, as do the most senior members of the kuge, including the family daimyo and senior members of the Otomo and Seppun families.

Of course, the Palace is more than just a place of governance; it is also a fortification, devoted to protecting the divine monarch and his court. Large contingents of guards, including the Seppun Miharu and the shugenja of the Hidden Guard, are based inside the Palace. The whole structure is heavily warded against both magical and mundane intrusion, although these wards are not always reliable (as demonstrated by the appearance of gaki during the Winter of Red Snow in 1170 and the attack of the Kommei no Oni during the Winter Court of 1199).

Located south of the Palace, across the Kumitate, is Shiro Kiritsu (the Castle of Law). It is smaller and far less grand than the Palace; this is by design, so as to not compete with or detract from the splendor of the home of the Emperor. It is here that the Emerald and Jade Champions reside when they are in Toshi Ranbo, and their senior aides and staff also operate from here. There is of course much to-and-fro between the Palace and Shiro Kiritsu, as proclamations and decrees are made from the former, then implemented and administered from the latter.

One other aspect of Shiro Kiritsu is noteworthy. It is here that the District Governor, responsible for overseeing the Chuushin District, resides and maintains his own court. The Governor of Chuushin District is potentially extremely powerful, being able to exercise a degree of control over who can obtain access to the Imperial Court and the Emperor or Empress by controlling movement through the district. This was particularly true during the reign of Toturi III, when the Scorpion Bayushi Tsimaru was Governor of Chuushin and accrued extensive political favors in this way.

The open expanse called the Kumitate (the Place of Assembly), which lies between the Palace and the Castle of Law, is interrupted by two more structures. The first is a statue of Toturi Tsudao, daughter of Emperor Toturi I. The statue was placed here by her brother, Hantei Naseru, after he became Emperor Toturi III – thus recognizing his sister as Toturi II. The other structure is the Shrine of Fallen Heroes. This was originally the ancestral shrine of Akodo Arasou, the Lion Champion who died in the year 1120 trying to retake Toshi Ranbo from the Crane; Emperor Toturi III decreed it would become a shrine to all who have fallen in heroic service to the Empire. Arasou's name remains at the top of the list of those commemorated here, followed by the many samurai who died in the fall of Otosan Uchi.

Ichidou District

The Ichidou District, located north and west of the Chuushin District, saw its beginnings in a series of shrines constructed near Toshi Ranbo during its turbulent history of battle between the Crane and the Lion. As early as the fifth century, ancestral shrines, small temples to the Fortunes, and memorials to those who had fallen in battle in and around Toshi Ranbo were erected both inside and outside the defensive walls. It is worth noting that even when the holding changed hands, the shrines and memorials of the vanquished side would be maintained; no honorable samurai would dare desecrate such sanctified structures, even if they belonged to an enemy. As a result, when Toshi Ranbo began to grow in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, there were already numerous venerable holy structures and sites there which were incorporated into the newly-formed Ichidou District.

Following the establishment of the Imperial Capital in Toshi Ranbo, the Ichidou District experienced massive growth. Led by the Seppun family, who felt the loss of the holy sites in Otosan Uchi with a particular keenness, the Ichidou District rapidly expanded as elaborate new temples and shrines were constructed throughout. The district is noted for its serenity and the feeling of spiritual closeness experienced by those who visit it. It is widely believed the Elemental kami are particularly active in this District, and more than a few young Rokugani have discovered they are destined to become shugenja simply by walking through the Ichidou District and feeling the Elemental spirits stir at their presence.

The largest temple in the district is the Temple of the Seven Fortunes, a massive compound that includes individual temples to each of the Great Fortunes. Perhaps the most holy place in the modern Empire, the Temple is also the site of the final battle against the Kommei no Oni that attacks the Palace and city in 1199. The death of the oni in the square before the Temple does not appear to result in any lasting corruption in this holy place, and the square is planted with trees commemorating those who fell in the battle with the oni – the Grove of Darkness Denied.

Somewhat less grandiose, but still imposing, is the Temple to the Seven Thunders, where those who fought Fu Leng on both the First and Second Days of Thunder are venerated.

The High Temple of Toshi Ranbo, dedicated to the reverence of Shinsei, is less imposing than either of the others, but is perhaps more famous for it. Enclosed in a thick grove of trees, the High Temple is watched over year-round by crows who roost in the thick branches. Visitors here invariably find a deep sense of peace and harmony, perhaps reflecting some of the spirit of the Little Teacher himself.

The Ichidou District boasts many other smaller shrines and temples, including some which are rather unusual. The first of these is the Temple to Te'tik'kir, the Nezumi Nameseeker who restored the Kitsu named Nintai from his vile existence as one of the monstrous Tsuno. The Lion Clan was instrumental in seeing the Temple to Te'tik'kir constructed, since that clan considers the Kitsu to be among its most revered ancestors. Lion samurai, particularly those known as Deathseekers, often visit this Temple, and Lion guards stand watch over it.

The Shrine of the Three Dynasties is established by the Seppun shortly after the ascension of Iweko I as Emperor. The shrine's intent is threefold: to ensure none will forget the Hantei, who ruled Rokugan for over ten centuries; to show that despite its secular origins in the Clan Wars, the Toturi Dynasty was acknowledged by the Heavens; and to emphasize the divine connection between the new Iweko Dynasty and those same Heavens.

The most unusual addition to the Ichidou District is the Temple to the Dark Fortunes, dedicated to Daigotsu as Lord of Jigoku and the four other Dark Fortunes which he elevates. The grim and somber temple contains a shrine for each of them. Most Rokugani consider the very existence of the Temple to the Dark Fortunes to border on the blasphemous; its only visitors are the members of the Spider Clan, Daigotsu's devoted followers.

There are, however, more secular locations in the District. The Faded Chrysanthemum Inn is the most notable of these. Prior to the recognition of the Spider as a Great Clan, it is secretly operated by agents of that clan and serves as headquarters for Spider efforts to smuggle individuals into the Imperial City. It also has a hidden shrine to Fu Leng. With the recognition of the Spider and the construction of the Temple to the Dark Fortunes, this subterfuge became unnecessary and the Faded Chrysanthemum Inn simply becomes a common house for the convenience of those visiting the Ichidou District.

The Governor of the Ichidou District wields less political power than many of his counterparts in other districts of the city, but is no less prominent for it. He is responsible for the organization of the many religious festivals that occur throughout the year, and benefits from a formidable

Kita no Yosa

As noted previously, the original holding that became Toshi Ranbo may have been called Kita no Yosa, or Northern Fortress, when it was first constructed by the Lion in the fifth century. In any era prior to the twelfth century, the Game Master should portray Toshi Ranbo as little more than a single castle – the castle eventually becomes Shiro Kiritsu – plus outer walls and a small town enclosed within them. There would be some additional construction outside the walls, mainly farms and related buildings. Whether the GM chooses to call this place Toshi Ranbo or Kita no Yosa is up to him; more importantly, it will be a dour and functional military holding, housing troops from either the Crane or the Lion, depending on which clan is in control at the time.

In the early twelfth century Toshi Ranbo begins to grow, due to both its strategic location and the simple fact that Rokugan's population is growing as well. Accordingly, for stories taking place between 1100 and 1160, Toshi Ranbo will consist of the entire Chuushin District (except for the Imperial Palace, of course) and components of some of the surrounding districts, as described in the following sections.



The Ichidou District Through History

Prior to the twelfth century the Ichidou District does not exist as a place. However, Game Masters can portray a series of small shrines and temples devoted to ancestor worship, reverence to the kami and the Fortunes, and remembrance of fallen heroes, all surrounding Toshi Ranbo. Some of these would likely become "lost", forgotten over time, overgrown by vegetation and falling into disuse and disrepair. The fact that most would be located outside the defensive walls is not unusual, since even in wartime most Rokugani will go to great lengths to avoid interfering with or damaging such holy sites. Finding and restoring "lost" sites would be a good reason to award Honor and Glory to characters, or perhaps even small mechanical benefits reflecting the favor of such forgotten ancestors; conversely, harming such sites could not only result in Honor and Glory losses but could rouse the old spirits to anger, producing dire effects such as curses.

information network in the form of the monks and other holy persons who work in the many shrines and temples throughout Toshi Ranbo. While there is a Governor's Palace in the district, it is quite small, hardly worthy of the term "palace"; the Governor's court is generally held in the Temple of the Seven Fortunes, and is as much a holy ceremony as it is a place to discuss and resolve matters of secular business affecting the district.



Kurai District

Most of modern Toshi Ranbo is comprised of the vast residential Kurai District, which makes up most of the southwestern portion of the city. It is here that the bulk of the ordinary samurai of the Great Clans – the buke caste – make their homes. Those kuge not senior or important enough to live in the Chuushin District also live here. Finally, most of the city's heimin – those commoners needed for life in a city, such as artisans, craftsmen, merchants and the like – live in a separately-walled area known as the Juutaku sub-district.

Like much of the city, the Kurai District is quite recent. Prior to the late eleventh century nothing resembling this District exists at all. As Toshi Ranbo begins to grow at the outset of the twelfth century, houses are constructed outside the walls; like the city itself, these regularly change hands between Crane and Lion occupants. It soon becomes clear that these houses are not only vulnerable in times of war but also represent a security threat, since some of them crowd close to the existing walls. In the year 1210, the city wall is expanded for the first time to encompass these dwellings. A pattern soon develops – as the need for residential space outgrows the land available inside the wall, new dwellings are built outside and within a few years the wall is reconfigured to incorporate them. As a result, the southern and western walls of Toshi Ranbo are in a constant state of flux, moving progressively outward to accommodate new construction in what eventually becomes known as the Kurai District. Of course, this only accelerates after Toshi Ranbo became the Imperial Capital, as literally thousands of new residents displaced from Otosan Uchi move here.

As would be expected from a residential district for samurai, most of the dwellings in the Kurai District range from well-appointed to outright opulent. The oldest and largest homes, not surprisingly, belong to Crane and Lion samurai, and some of these are actually hundreds of years old, constituting true ancestral seats for their respective families. The densely populated Kurai District is commonly teeming with pedestrians, samurai and heimin alike going about their business. There are many small businesses located in the district, either standing alone or as part of local markets, serving the needs of the large and growing population.

Tsi Uchi, the "House of the Tsi," is the residence of the Oriole Clan Champion in Toshi Ranbo. A medium-sized estate, it is granted to Tsi Zutaka by the Emperor in the year 1168 and becomes the new Oriole Clan's primary headquarters. Tsi Uchi is not a military fortress at all, merely a large residential estate comprising a few humble structures, gardens, and a shrine, all surrounded by a low stone wall. It typically houses fifty or so Oriole samurai,

including the immediate family of the Clan Champion. Heralds from the Oriole's lands and delegations from the other clans are a common sight here.

The Bending Reed Dojo is the largest dojo in Toshi Ranbo. While technically a dojo teaching new magistrates in the ways of law enforcement, the Bending Reed Dojo also functions in the more traditional role of giving samurai a place to practice their martial arts together. There are ample sparring circles available, sufficient to ensure that few samurai will be unable to find a place to do battle.

Ireitou no Seishiro, the Memorial Tower, is named after Doji Seishiro, a hero who fell during Moto Chagatai's attack on Toshi Ranbo at the end of the Winter of Red Snow. It is an imposing structure designed and built by Kaiu engineers; rumor claims Seishiro's soul keeps watch here for threats to the city. Because of the rugged terrain immediately to the west of the tower, no further expansion of the city is possible in that direction; accordingly, Ireitou no Seishiro is one of the few permanent defensive works in the city.

The House of the Pale Moon is not the largest or most luxurious of the numerous public houses in Toshi Ranbo, but it is one of the best known. Located in the heart of the oldest section of the buke residential area, it is an unobtrusive structure, standing back from the Street of Lamplighters behind a low stone wall and a small grove of pine trees. The main floor is mostly taken up by two common rooms, one intended mainly for the service of food, the other (somewhat more boisterous) devoted to the service and consumption of sake and other alcoholic beverages. The two floors above are functionally a geisha house, but also have private rooms for discreet meetings.

The House of the Orange Blossom is a small public house owned by the Crane since its establishment in the early twelfth century. Among those in the know, it is widely acknowledged as a hidden treat of Toshi Ranbo, specializing by serving one of the finest gyoza (dumpling) plates in the city, if not Rokugan-wide. However, it has another claim to fame – it is one of the few buildings which has remained untouched throughout the various conflicts between the Crane and the Lion, through the Fires of Toshi Ranbo, and even through the Winter of Red Snow. It has passed from one generation to the next of its Crane patrons, the recipes for its exquisite dumplings kept a carefully-guarded secret.

Guranai's Noodles is typical of the many noodle shops in the city, all of which serve essentially the same purpose – places where busy samurai can obtain food quickly. Guranai's Noodles itself is most notable because it was heavily damaged during the attack on the city by the Kommei no Oni at the end of the 1199 Winter Court. It was also one of the first establishments rebuilt after the attack, a small but significant gesture intended to show that even in the most basic ways, Toshi Ranbo would not allow darkness to prevail.

The Kurai District is important in another way than merely as a residential area – it is also where the Great Clans maintain their official Embassies in Toshi Ranbo. Each Embassy is a hub of political activity relating to that clan; delegates to the Imperial Court are based in their respective Embassies, maintaining offices and in some cases living quarters there. Surprisingly, one of the most remarkable Embassy complexes in the city does not belong to the Crane or Lion, but to the Phoenix Clan. Called Quiet Waves Against the Sand, the Phoenix Embassy is a sprawling series of interconnected offices, audience chambers, and residences which surround one of the largest and most imposing rock gardens in all of Rokugan.

The Mantis Clan Embassy stands somewhat apart from the rest, being located in the Benten sub-district of the Kurai District.

There is actually little distinction between the Benten sub-district and the rest of the Kurai District; the same holds true for the Tsudao sub-district. Each of these was created for largely ceremonial purposes. The former recognizes the Fortune of Romantic Love, who is believed to watch over and bless a portion of the city that has supposedly seen more than its share of dramatic (and often tragic) love stories. The latter refers to Toturi Tsudao, whose brother Toturi III named a portion of the Kurai District after her as another way of memorializing her life.

The Kurai District Through History

Realistically, prior to the late eleventh century the Kurai District does not exist at all. Residences are located in what is now the Chuushin District, mostly occupying the broad expanse of what becomes the Kumitate and the Imperial Palace. Those samurai who live here are almost all either Lion or Crane (depending on who holds Toshi Ranbo) and are mostly part of a military garrison. Likewise, the commoners are those craftsman and artisans who support military operations, such as armorers, smiths, coopers, animal-handlers, and so forth.

After the late eleventh century, a significant social transformation occurs as Toshi Ranbo starts becoming more "cosmopolitan," its character shifting from a military holding to a more general hub of commerce in northern Rokugan. Samurai from other clans begin to settle here, a more diverse population of heimin moves in with them, and the expansion of the town beyond the walls gets underway.

After Toshi Ranbo becomes the Imperial Capital, the Kurai District grows explosively as thousands of samurai and heimin, many of them refugees from ruined Otosan Uchi, move here. In a story set in or immediately after the year 1160, the Kurai District will in some ways resemble a "frontier town," growing faster than can be easily managed and thus becoming a hotbed of all sorts of crime and corruption. By about the year 1170, however, the district is more settled and law-abiding, its most rapid growth behind it.



Of all the District Courts in Toshi Ranbo, that of Kurai District is the largest, the busiest, and (after the Chuushin District Court) probably the most influential. Petitions and problems that are important to the city and its surroundings but are deemed insufficiently significant for the Imperial Court are brought here to be considered. The Kurai District Governor wields considerable influence in the city, deciding where and to what extent new construction will be allowed, how resources are allocated in the city, how law and justice will be administered, and so on. The city's chief magistrate reports directly to the Kurai District Governor and all municipal taxes flow through his court. It is little wonder that the Kurai District Governor is considered the most powerful political figure in the city (outside of those lofty personages who live and work in the Chuushin District) and his favor is vigorously sought.

Senzai District

The Senzai District is the aesthetic and cultural heart of Toshi Ranbo. It is here that various forms of artistic diversion are found, including theatres for the stylized performances of kabuki and noh plays, the comedic renderings of kyogen, and even presentations of bunraku puppet shows. There are also venues for recitals of song, poetry, instrumental music, and dance – every sort of artistry which samurai perform and admire. While the most prominent and elaborate presentations occur in the major theatres, it is not unusual to see performers plying their craft in public houses, inns, noodle shops, or even on the streets of the district. However, there are two locations of particular note where the most prestigious events occur.

The traditional square stage of the Senzai Noh Theatre, open on three sides to the audience, has seen thousands of performances by some of the most accomplished playwrights and actors in the Empire. To be invited to stage a performance at the Senzai Noh Theatre is to reach the height of accomplishment in noh, leading to fame throughout the Empire if the event is successful... or a swift and ignominious fall from grace if it is not.

The Senzai-za is the foremost kabuki theatre in Toshi Ranbo and, therefore, in Rokugan. It is much larger than the Senzai Noh Theatre – in fact it is the largest theatre in the Empire, exceeding even the famous theatres in Crane and Scorpion lands – but is also somewhat less formal than its rival. Senzai-za is available for a wider range of performances than just kabuki plays, including more experimental works, song, dance, poetry, and instrumental music recitals.

Supporting these and many smaller entertainment venues are a wide range of related enterprises. The district is full of shops belonging to the artisans and craftsman who construct and maintain musical instruments and bunraku puppets, who make costumes and mix make-up, or who specialize in the construction of sets and props. The Senzai District is also where the most important tailors, seamstresses, and others involved in matters of fashion may be found. There are, of course, also a great many sake houses, inns, geisha houses, noodle shops, sushi stands, and other such mundane houses of commerce.

There are also many samurai of the buke who make their homes in this district; while administratively there is a clear boundary between the adjoining Senzai and Kurai districts, the real-world boundary is actually somewhat

blurred. However, where the Kurai District is busiest during the day, the Senzai District thrives in the evenings, especially during the warm nights of summer.

The Senzai District Court is one of the smallest in Toshi Ranbo, and to anyone not directly involved in the performing arts it is probably one of the least important. To most bushi, the Court and its business appear mostly frivolous. The Court and the Governor (who is normally selected from among those samurai who are best known as patrons of the arts) are focused mainly on matters of entertainment and culture. To playwrights, actors, and other such folk, the Senzai District Court deals with affairs that are absolutely vital. Scheduling and allocating theatre and stage space can make or break years of work invested into developing plays and performances, so the favor of the Governor is aggressively courted by those seeking artistic fame, as well as by those who are already famous and wish to remain so.

The Okura sub-district, like the Benten and Tsudao sub-districts of the Kurai District, is created more for reasons of politics than any particular administrative need. In the case of the Okura sub-district, the name was chosen by a Lion samurai, Akodo Ieshige, in recognition of his efforts in saving this part of the city during the Fires of Toshi Ranbo in 1165. In fact, Ieshige has some interest in the arts and involves himself in the artistic affairs of the sub-district he named, but defers all important decisions to the District Governor. It is likely that after his death the Okura sub-district will survive in name only, its administration returning to the Senzai District Court.

Shutsuensha District

The Shutsuensha District in the northwestern part of Toshi Ranbo is closely tied to both the Kurai and the Senzai districts. While the former is the focus of the political life for many in the Imperial Capital, and the latter their place for aesthetic entertainment, the Shutsuensha District – the Licensed Quarter – is where they do much of their socializing. The so-called ukiyo or "Floating World" of the geisha is concentrated here, with only small numbers of geisha houses scattered through the other two districts. Shutseunsha provides a vital service to Toshi Ranbo's samurai – allowing them to occasionally relax their iron self-control and freely express emotions that otherwise have no outlet.

Geisha are technically part of the hinin caste, the lowest position in the Celestial Order; however, unlike the "unclean" eta who perform polluting but necessary services to the city (dealing with dead bodies, carting away garbage and night-soil), geisha are afforded a unique place in the social order. Samurai can spend private time with geisha (and their male counterparts, the taikomachi) without any worries about maintaining their On. In the presence of a geisha, a samurai can freely laugh, or cry, or complain; since the geisha is a "non-person" there is no shame in losing one's face in her presence. As a result, geisha are in great demand in a major city like Toshi Ranbo, and dozens of houses – and in some cases, networks of houses under a common "brand" – thrive here.

The Senzai District Through History

The Senzai District is the newest district in Toshi Ranbo and did not exist at all prior to the city becoming the Imperial Capital. Although Toshi Ranbo begins to grow in the late eleventh century, arts and culture are only a trivial aspect of its military-dominated society, restricted to a handful of individual venues or conducted privately in the residences of samurai.

The Gilded Lotus, long the property of a powerful Crane family, now enjoys a considerable degree of autonomy under its okaa-san (madam). In the late twelfth century the okaa-san is Kayou, a former geisha herself and an example of how even a hinin can rise to a position of great power and prominence. The Gilded Lotus is frequented by the most important samurai in Toshi Ranbo; whispers claim that even Emperor Toturi III sometimes visited the house, albeit very discreetly. The roof of the Gilded Lotus, made of copper, is traditionally allowed to tarnish in the winter when the Emperor is gone from the city to attend Winter Court with one of the Great Clans. In the spring, anticipating the Emperor's return, the roof is polished by gangs of young men and boys hired for the purpose, greeting the Emperor when he arrives back in Toshi Ranbo with a warm gleam of coppery light.

The Maiden's Caress geisha house, a property of the Scorpion Clan, stands in opposition to the Gilded Lotus both morally and commercially. Dark and somewhat dour in its visual appearance, the Maiden's Caress deliberately appeals to those samurai of somewhat less-than-honorable character. The geisha who serve customers here have all spent time in seedier and more disreputable establishments, here in Toshi Ranbo or further afield (some even hail from the infamous Zakyo Toshi, the Pleasure City). The okaa-san is trained by the Shosuro of the Scorpion, and may even be a Shosuro agent using the title of okaa-san as cover for nefarious activities in the Imperial Capital. Whatever the truth, what is known is that those who cause trouble for the Maiden's Caress have a tendency to simply disappear.

Bakemono Mischief is a small sake house which predates Toshi Ranbo attaining the status of Imperial Capital. For many years the house displayed a painted sign showing the Kami Hida sleeping atop of the Kaiu Wall while goblins leapt over it, laughing. When Toshi Ranbo was a Crane or Lion holding, this irreverence was generally ignored, but once the other clans arrived in significant numbers – especially the Crab, of course – the sign did not last long. The house remains, however, and specializes in a powerful shochu whose consumption is described by many as more of an ordeal than an indulgence. Bakemono Mischief is popular among the heimin, as well as those samurai looking for an opportunity to go slumming while remaining in the Licensed Quarter.



The Shutsuensha District Through History

It is certain that geisha were present in Toshi Ranbo from its earliest days; no permanent place occupied by samurai can really do without the important emotional outlet they provide. However, the first true geisha house did not appear in Toshi Ranbo until sometime in the eleventh century; prior to that, geisha were employees of other business such as sake houses. It is only after Toshi Ranbo grows into a city in the twelfth century that it can boast of its own incarnation of the ukiyo, or "Floating World."

Similarly, eta certainly exist in and around Toshi Ranbo from its inception. For most of its history, eta live entirely outside the walls and are scattered each time a war occurs, returning and resettling once hostilities have subsided.



As Bakemono Mischief indicates, the district's options are not restricted to geisha houses, and in fact a variety of other establishments are found in Shutsuensh. These include small theatres and places of performance, but such places are nothing like those of the Senzai District. Rather, these are for the entertainment of the masses, the heimin and even the hinin. No self-respecting samurai would be caught attending a performance in one of these places, nor would he be likely to frequent the drink-houses or noodle shops here, which also cater mostly to commoners.

The Shutsuensha District Court is a fitful institution at best, since the district is largely run by a cartel of the most influential okaa-san. The actual court meets irregularly and commonly agrees with whatever petitions are brought before it by the various okaa-san or their agents. Only when the Kurai District Court itself takes notice of the Shutsuensha District, in the broader context of the administration of the entire city, does business in the District Court here adopt a more formal and objective tone. Of course, once such matters have been addressed and the attention of the Kurai District shifts elsewhere, the Shutsuensha District Court quickly reverts back to its generally inefficient and largely ineffective self.

The Eta

The portion of the Shutsuensha District closest to the outer city wall has no particular name of its own, and is not officially recognized as a sub-district; in fact, very few samurai will even acknowledge it exists. This is where the eta of Toshi Ranbo live. Within these narrow, winding streets and alleys, the eta have their own lives and social hierarchies, their own tiny political struggles that vaguely mirror those of their betters in the other parts of the city. Of course, for all their untouchable nature, these eta perform vital services which the city in many ways depends on. The eta keep Toshi Ranbo clean, gathering garbage, sweeping the streets, removing night-soil and carting it into the surrounding fields, removing the dead from the city for cremation, and conducting myriad other small, unpleasant, necessary services.

The eta join with heimin (the latter hailing from the Juutaku sub-district of the Kurai District) to form the so-called "fireman gangs" who patrol the streets, watching for and extinguishing fires before they can spread. Unlike in other cities such as Ryoko Owari or Zakyo Toshi, these firemen gangs have not degenerated into criminal enterprises – this is mainly in Toshi Ranbo. This is mainly because the two clans most prominent in the Imperial Capital's history, the Crane and the Lion, have always vigorously (sometimes brutally) quashed any such impulses among the firemen gangs.

Shijou District

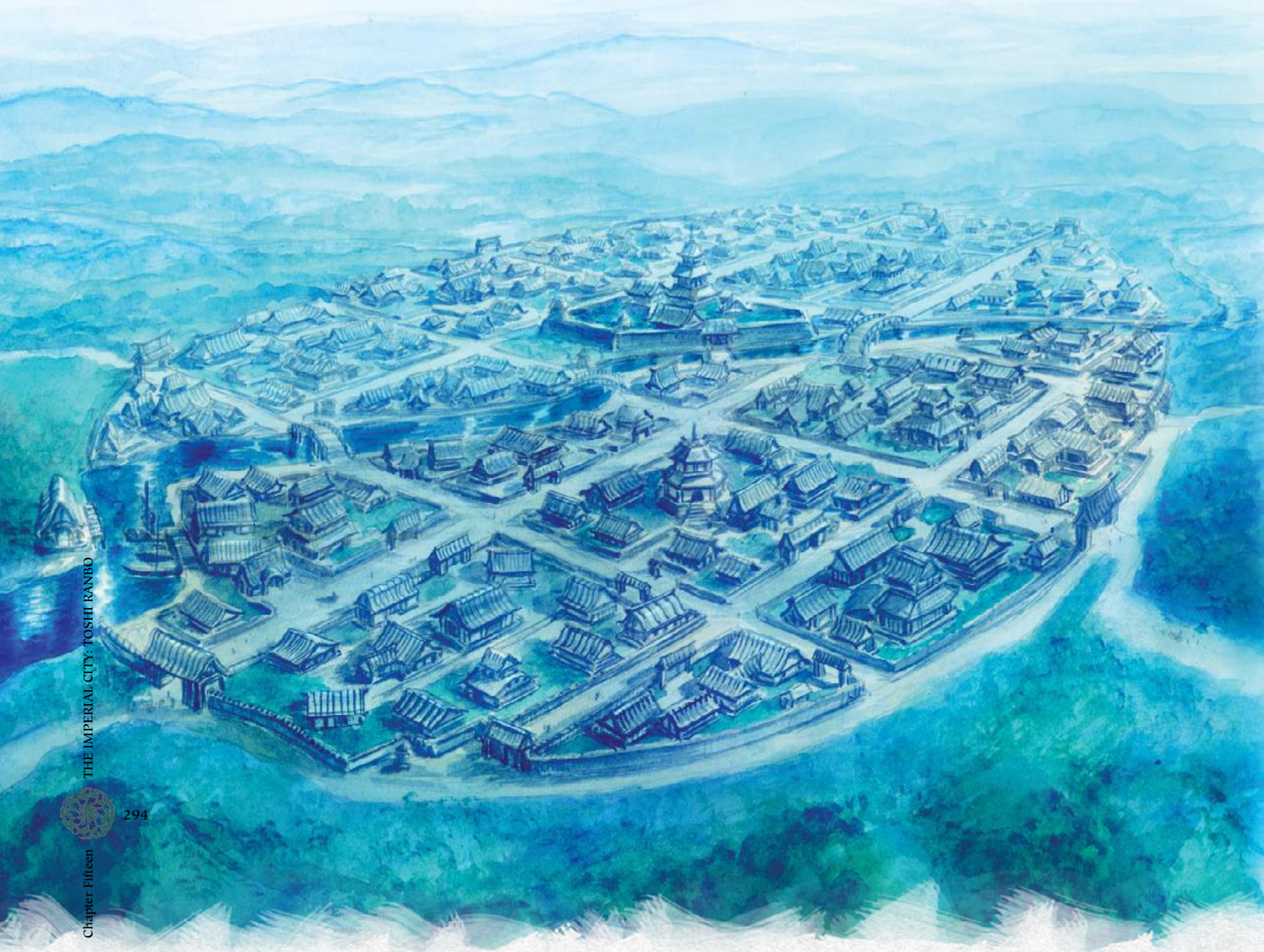
The Shijou District is the heart of Toshi Ranbo's trade, both regional and Empire-wide. Located along the Drowned Merchant River, it is a sprawl of docks, warehouses, markets, trading grounds, and all the myriad supporting infrastructure required by such activities. It is also a hive of cheap sake houses, seedy brothels, and the many sorts of generally disreputable businesses that spring up around places where sailors, dock-workers, and similar rough sorts gather. This is not to say the district is disorderly or lawless; the city magistrates are conspicuous here, maintaining a degree of order that is impressive even for the most notorious part of the Imperial Capital. Nor does this mean that samurai avoid the Shijou District. Many samurai, particularly from the Mantis Clan (as well as from particular families of the other Great Clans, such as the Yasuki, the Daidoji, and the Ide) are quite active in matters of trade and commerce. A great deal of inter-clan negotiation and deal-making happens in the Shijou District, some of it generating significant portions of their yearly total trade.

The hallmark of this district is change; the ebb and flow of fortunes as individual traders and trading cartels rise and fall mean the Shijou District is in a constant state of flux. A cartel enjoying a successful year may construct a new warehouse and shipping complex in the spring, only to suffer dramatic reversals over the summer and be bought out by rivals in the fall, who proceed to change or even demolish that new construction and replace it with something else. As a result, only those who live and work in the district full-time are likely to know their way around it, at least in detail. The most permanent structures are those that are prominent and important, such as the Imperial Treasury, or those so unimportant as to be beneath the interest of most samurai, such as the aforementioned squalid sake houses and brothels.

There is one other important aspect of the Shijou District. As mentioned, law and order is maintained here to a reasonable degree, but this does not mean there are not a multitude of less-than-legal activities. In fact, there is a thriving criminal underworld centered on the Shijou District, linked to illicit enterprises throughout Rokugan. However, it is an orderly sort of misconduct, an excellent example of truly organized crime. The various cartels involved in smuggling, drug-running, and the like have no interest in petty street crime; to the contrary, the enforcers of these cartels often work at preventing or solving murders, assaults, burglaries and other sorts of messily overt offenses. Sometimes they even do so in cooperation with the city magistrates, but just as often they maintain order on their own. A vicious thug intent on robbing people on the street is as likely to end up a mysterious corpse floating in the Drowned Merchant River as he is to be arrested and tried by the authorities.

The Golden Palace, despite its name, is one of the least impressive buildings in the Shijou District. It is one of the largest, but its four stories and tiled pagoda roof are much more about function than decoration. This is the Imperial Treasury – essentially a massive vault for the storage of Imperial wealth collected through taxes. Only one small wing is open to the public; it is here that taxes are brought and tax disputes filed. The exact layout of the rest of the interior is known by few; it is believed the secure rooms for storing coinage occupy the lower floors and also extend below ground, while the upper floors are mainly offices for the Imperial Treasurer and his staff, along with libraries for the maintenance of tax rolls and ledgers. However, the thick windowless walls, the omnipresent guards, and a myriad of magical wards against intrusion and fire mean only those with legitimate business inside the Golden Palace have any true knowledge of its layout.





The Docks of Toshi Ranbo are among the busiest places in Rokugan during the spring, summer, and early fall. An almost constant racket engulfs the wharfs and the warehouses serving them as boats and barges are docked, unloaded, reloaded, and launched; more din arises from the traders who prowl the riverside, seeking to be first to spot new cargoes, shouting purchase offers at the boat-masters and merchants seeking to sell them. (Not all business is done on-the-spot this way, of course; many cargoes are pre-sold, and are simply unloaded and dispatched to their destinations.) The whole place reeks – of river water fouled by effluent from the surrounding city, of damp wood and pitch, of fish and sweat and a hundred different sorts of cargo. Those arriving in Toshi Ranbo by river typically seek to get away from the Docks as fast as they can... which can actually be a tortuously slow affair when commerce is at a peak and the Docks are a swirling, shouting mass of packed humanity.

The House of the River's Spray at one time was the Mantis Clan's primary ambassadorial site in Toshi Ranbo. After the Race for the Throne, when the Mantis were temporarily expelled from the city, they established a new Clan Embassy in the Kurai District in order to be closer to (and more obviously part of) the flow of politics in Toshi Ranbo. The House of the River's Spray now functions mainly as a hub for Mantis trading and commercial activities in Toshi Ranbo. By traditional Rokugani standards, it is ostentatious in its ornamentation; the exterior is brightly painted in primary colors, with numerous decorations in ceramic, tile, and metals such as copper and bronze, while the interior is resplendent with works of art and sculpture, exotic plants, and even caged birds and animals. The result is somewhat jarring and off-putting for many Rokugani – which is the point, of course. Since the Mantis conduct their most important and sensitive negotiations here, anything that causes their commercial opponents discomfort simply provides more opportunities for the Mantis to work out favorable deals.

The Little Merchant's District is located in a long, broad depression near the river. It is a maze of tents, stalls, and shacks, a constantly-shifting grand bazaar operated by merchants who either cannot afford to build permanent structures or simply do not want to. The low elevation means the ground here is always damp, prone to flooding when the river is high, so it remains unsuitable for permanent construction. As a result, the Little Merchant's District has thrived, providing a place where nearly anything can be had... for a price, of course, and often not a fair one. Most of the merchants and clientele here are heimin, simply because most samurai would not be caught openly haggling and bargaining over goods. And although it is boisterous and loud, the Little Merchant's District is generally free of crime, a well-organized sort of chaos that polices itself. After all, if it were to become a problem, the city authorities might decide this patch of damp ground would be better left empty and unused.

The Dueling Tako is for several years a burnt-out ruin next to the Port Authority before it is repaired and remodeled into a dining and sake house by an enterprising Tsuruchi samurai-ko who married into the Dragon Clan. A colorful sign on the exterior depicts the "dueling tako," an octopus wielding a katana above its head. The house has two stories, the first floor being the dining and sake house itself – a large open room with massive wooden posts and beams, some of which still show charring from the fire that previously gutted the place. In the center of the room is the challenge table, where samurai engage in competitive feats of strength, cunning, and drink. The second floor is mainly private rooms where more discreet meetings can be held. The food at the Dueling Tako is actually only of average quality, but the sake is of very good quality and the place is thriving. One notable quirk is that the proprietor has never been seen eating rice, which some say is due to an incident at her wedding.

The Shijou District Court, also known as the Port Authority, is a sprawling structure originally built by the Daidoji Trading Council. At times it actually site empty, maintained but otherwise abandoned, while on other occasions it is a hive of activity as merchants from Toshi Ranbo and all across the Empire put forward requests and petitions for consideration by the District Governor. The busiest time for the Court is in the spring, when the thaw opens the roads and mountain passes, the rivers are freed of ice, and the winter storms at sea subside. This is the beginning of the yearly trade-wars, and much of the early conflict is focused here. So important is this place to the Rokugani economy that the Imperial Treasury uses its spring trading benchmarks to fix the value of a koku for the upcoming year. Accordingly, while most of those doing business here are heimin acting as brokers and agents for the samurai of the Great Clans, more than a few samurai also immerse themselves directly in the workings of the Port Authority. This is particularly true for samurai of the mercantile families such as the Daidoji and Yasuki, and some clans – notably the Scorpion and Mantis – also use this court as a training ground for their courtiers. The rapidly-shifting allegiances, intense negotiations, and frequent reversals and betrayals are excellent learning experiences for young courtiers, and those who fail here can be quietly removed and sent to obscure places without ever embarrassing their clans in the true political courts of the Empire.

The Shijou District Through History

From the time of Toshi Ranbo's founding, the Drowned Merchant River is vital to the holding. Both the Crane and Lion use the river as a means of bringing materials and troops here; moreover, its location provides a means of controlling access to the river near the strategic Kintani Valley. Accordingly, any story set between the fifth and eleventh centuries will see the town boasting at least a few docks, some warehousing facilities, and even some defensive works protecting access to the Drowned Merchant River. As the eleventh century progresses and Toshi Ranbo grows, the river became increasingly important as a travel and communications link, and up through the mid-twelfth century the docks gradually become more expansive, the warehouses larger and more numerous. Mercantile facilities and traders dealing in an increasingly broad range of goods likewise become more common.



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- Shinsei

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