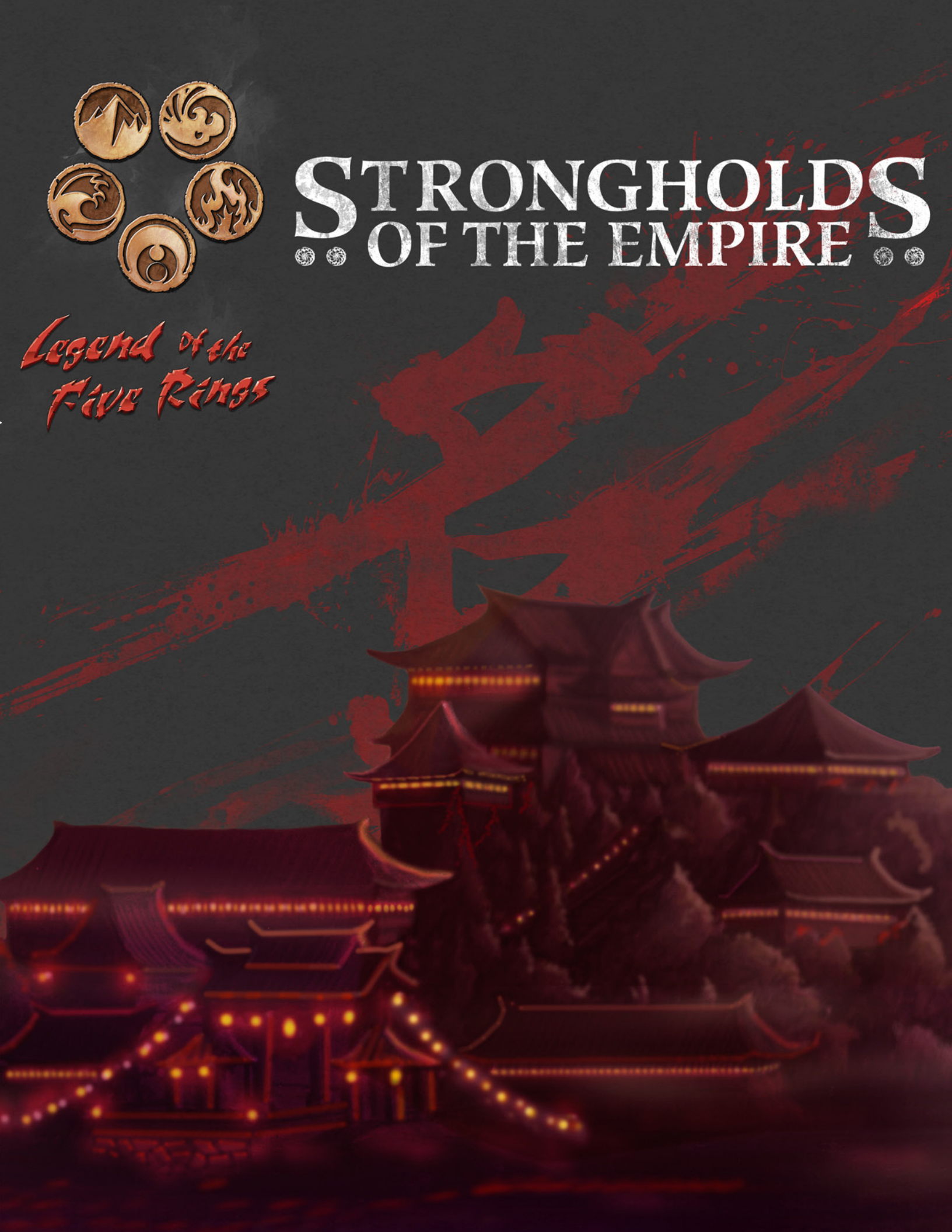
Strongholds of the Empire

Legend of the Five Rings





Strongholds of the Empire

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Dedication:

To all our fans who have asked when we are going to release a PDF sourcebook. And to all our authors, who have waited literally years for this to become a reality.

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Introduction

Welcome to Strongholds of the Empire, a sourcebook for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game! The purpose of this book is to provide more information on the various settlements around the Emerald Empire, both for GMs to use as settings for their campaigns, and for players to develop their characters' backgrounds more completely. Each of the strongholds detailed in this book contains a brief history, the major locations and individuals within that area, and new mechanics, some of them based in that area to help players build characters that are completely integrated with the stronghold in question. In keeping with our tradition of timeline neutrality for 4th Edition, we have attempted to present these strongholds free of major storyline influence. In some cases, obviously, that was not entirely possible, but we hope that every stronghold or city detailed in this book can be used, at least to some extent, in a game set in any era of Rokugan's history, whether it be past, present, or future!

The cities and strongholds described within this book include the following:

Broken Wave City – The largest coastal port controlled by the Mantis Clan.

Clear Water Village – A center of trade and intrigue for the Crab Clan.

Dark Edge Village – A Unicorn Clan holding well known for its dueling grounds.

Nikesake – The center of diplomatic relations between the Phoenix Clan and their allies.

Otosan Uchi – The Empire's original Imperial City, eventually lost to the Spider Clan.

Water Hammer City – A center of the Dragon Clan's smithing traditions.

Toshi Ranbo – Otosan Uchi's successor, hotly contested by the Crane and Lion clans.

Zakyo Toshi – A den of vice and iniquity, perfect for its lords among the Scorpion Clan.

In each chapter, the details of the unique stronghold or city are examined. There are certain components that are uniform in their presentation. In each chapter, you can expect to find:

History and Timeline

Although care has been taken to keep the cities as neutral as possible in terms of timeline and setting information, the information pertaining to the city's past as established in the existing storyline has been included should you choose to make use of it. If not, some of the ideas and information should still be of use to you in creating your own story for the city's background.

City Denizens

First in broad strokes and later by specific character, each chapter describes the sort of people who live within the city and includes a small number of its most important personages.

Location Guide

The most important and most interesting locations found within each city are described as well, giving ample opportunities for a character's history or future to involve them in a number of different ways.

New Mechanics

Each chapter also contains a small number of new mechanics, typically in the form of Advantages and Disadvantages that represent a character's ties to the city in question, and Alternate Paths that help represent some of the ideas and archetypes presented in each chapter.

Regional Advantages/Disadvantages

For the most part, the Advantages and Disadvantages introduced in this book relate to a character being born in or spending much of their life within a specific city or area. Although these traits are closely linked to the clan featured in each chapter, at least thematically, there's no reason that any other clan's members can't have that same Advantage or Disadvantage if they are from the same area. Likewise, if a GM has a city that is an integral part of the campaign and which is similar thematically to one of the cities detailed in this book, the name can be changed on any of the traits to make them more suited to the setting in question. Naturally, a GM should feel encouraged to make minor changes as necessary to ensure that using Advantages in this manner is an effective and enjoyable modification for all parties involved.

Random Encounters and Adventure Hooks

One of the main challenges that every GM faces is that of how to generate the little details that add flavor to an adventure and help draw their players into a setting. It isn't necessary for you to describe every little thing the characters see at every step, but a good GM wants the players to live in the moment as their characters, and every detail you present helps create that sense of immersion. Furthermore, you can also use that random passerby on the street or that little building down the block as a hook onto which you hang conflict and challenge, whether spontaneously generated or as part of your pre-set plan.

You can find ideas for these sorts of details in the random encounter tables and descriptions of Rokugan in the L5R 4th Edition sourcebook Enemies of the Empire, especially for wilderness and rural areas. And when it comes to creating a sense of a small farming village, it is probably sufficient to know that they are fairly dull places; most of the residents are agricultural workers who spend all day in the fields and eat, sleep, and maybe drink at night. Some of the residents are tradesmen or serve some other specialized function, but the rhythms of agricultural work dominate, day in and day out.

But the Empire's towns and cities are rich and complicated environments, and since this is a book devoted to cities, we offer here some additional options for filling out the time your characters spend in those environments.

Mundane Encounters

Every moment you spend in the open in an urbanized environment, you will notice someone going about the business of daily life. Here are some ideas for such mundane details:

Peasants or traders bringing in food from an outlying village.

Laborers transporting building materials.

A food peddler hawking rice balls or mochi (red bean paste buns) from a cart.

A shopkeeper or innkeeper splashing water outside his establishment to purify the ground (mornings).

Monks tending to a small shrine to one of the Fortunes.

A group of soldiers on patrol.

Mendicant monks asking for food.

Monks helping heimin with their work.

A Clan magistrate and his yoriki speaking with a suspect.

A crier proclaiming a sumai competition.

A magistrate and yoriki from another Clan, passing through.

A provincial Governor or other high-ranking clan samurai and his entourage, passing through town.

A clan diplomat and his yojimbo passing through town.

A Miya Herald proclaiming news on behalf of the Emperor.





The Marketplace

Commercial establishments are always a popular destination for player characters in an urban area. Often, these are located in open marketplaces, where various types of merchants set up cheek-by-jowl with each other. Rokugan is superficially no different from any other fantasy setting in this respect, but finer details can make it distinctive:

Weaponsmith / Armorsmith / Fletcher.

Rice merchant.

Fishmonger (fish will be preserved if the location is inland).

Food seller (simple prepared foods, such as rice balls, noodles, baked goods, steamed buns, cooked fowl or fish on skewers, etc.)

General goods merchant, selling the sort of items found in a traveler's pack.

Healer or apothecary selling services, as well as herbs and medicines (and perhaps poisons).

A stable with horses, oxen, or other beasts of burden.

A musician performing in a stall or booth.

A theatrical troupe performing in a large stall or booth.

Jewelry and luxury goods.

Curiosities, perhaps including minor nemuranai or goods of gaijin origin

Note that weapons and armor are more tightly controlled in Rokugan than in many fantasy settings, since only samurai are allowed to own most weapons and armor. Therefore, it should be difficult to find weaponsmiths and armorsmiths who are willing to make their goods available to the general public.

Inns and Sake Houses

Inns and sake houses are popular destinations for player characters, not only because they are the safest place to spend the night in an urban environment, but also because they are excellent places to glean local intelligence. Of course, it needn't be an easy or direct process for the PCs to get the information they want. A wise GM will require them to settle in and socialize for a time before cutting to the chase. Here are some ideas for what characters visiting a respectable inn or sake house will find:

Heimin having a drink at the end of the workday.

Gambling in the back room.

Off-duty soldiers having a drink.

A ronin looking for work

Two customers playing go or shogi.

A musician playing for the customers' entertainment.

Bandits having a drink.

A thief looking for customers who will be too drunk to resist a robbery attempt.

A traveling merchant with tales from elsewhere in the Empire.

A traveling merchant looking for caravan guards.

A traveling merchant with a curious item for sale, perhaps including nemuranai or goods of gaijin origin.

A prominent samurai and his entourage, causing a stir by his very presence.

Conflict

A conflict that draws the attention of the player characters is a perfect example of how an accidental encounter can provide a gateway to adventure, or at least a diverting sidelight to a larger story. Some conflicts are the stuff of everyday life and happen in the larger world regardless of what the player characters choose to do. A conflict can force the characters to take notice. Here are some ideas for conflict situations your characters might come across:

An unattended child crying.

A heimin man and woman arguing.

A drunk causing a public disturbance.

A samurai bullying a heimin.

A heimin bullying an eta.

A crime in progress.

An argument between samurai, involving a slight to the honor of one of the disputants.

A criminal being apprehended by local magistrates or soldiers.

A duel between samurai.

A maho-tsukai summons an oni.



Broken Wave City

Another wave boomed against the rocky shore, throwing a plume of spray over the two figures standing near the surf.

Yoritomo Ryoma laughed and spread his arms. "Almost as bracing as the deck of a kobune, eh Moshi-san?"

His companion smiled and wiped water from her face. "Indeed," Moshi Kameko replied, then glanced at the construction crew loitering nearby. "But I assume you requested a halt to work on the City's new break-wall for more than aesthetic reasons...?"

Ryoma pointed at the next wave rolling towards them. "When it strikes the rock, listen."

Kameko frowned as the wave slammed into the rock and burst upward like shattered crystal--

Her frown deepened. There...a hollow sound that echoed after the wave had sluiced back into the sea.

Ryoma gave her an expectant look. "Did you hear it?"

"Yes. There is empty space...one of the tunnels of the Ningyo, perhaps...just beneath us."

"Hai." He stamped his foot. "Kaigen's Island still holds secrets, eh?"

"Well, much of it does remain unexplored."

Ryoma nodded. "Hai. And we can hardly proceed to start Broken Wave City's new break-wall on land that may collapse under the first load of stone." He shed his sandals and kimono. "That is why I have asked you here, Moshi-san. I am a strong swimmer, but the water kami play here with particular vigor."

She nodded her understanding. "Perhaps we can soothe them for a while." She held out her hand, palm up and cupped. As the spray from the next wave descended, she closed her eyes and placed her other hand over the water she'd caught, moving it in a stroking gesture, as though petting a cat. The ocean subsided to a flat calm for perhaps half a bow-shot in all directions.

"The kami will be placated for only a short time," she said, her eyes still closed.

Ryoma grinned and leapt into the water.

Kameko willed the kami to remain calm, but they jostled and tugged, anxious to resume their wild play. She began to worry that Ryoma wouldn't return before she had to release them. But then a hand clamped onto the rock and Ryoma finally clambered back out of the surf. Kameko opened her eyes and the waves roared back to life.

She looked at Ryoma as he rubbed water from his hair. "So...did you find anything of interest, Yoritomo-san?"

He shrugged. "I have investigated many of these tunnels. Only a few have anything of note...bits of wrecked ships, things that may have once been cargo, deposited there by currents or, perhaps, the doings of the Ningyo, or even stranger creatures."

Kameko frowned impatiently. "And what of this one?"

"Another unfortunate example."

"Ah. Unfortunate."

Ryoma gave a slow nod...then his face lit with a grin. He opened his closed fist, revealing mud--and the glitter of golden coins, all of strange design.

"Unfortunate, indeed," he laughed. "There was too much of this for me to carry in one trip!"

History:

Broken Wave City holds the distinction of being one of the newest holdings in Rokugan; certainly, it is the newest large city. The land upon which it sits did not even exist before the year 1167. Kaigen's Island, as it came to be known, was raised from the sea at the climactic battle of the War of Fire and Thunder, fought between the Phoenix and Mantis Clans.

The Mantis launched what was intended to be a decisive attack on the Phoenix, resulting in an engagement that came to be called the Battle of Broken Waves. In the midst of the clash, a corrupted Mantis fleet known as the Dark Wave emerged from hiding, attacking Mantis and Phoenix alike. Putting aside their conflict to face this new threat, the Phoenix Elemental Master of Earth, Isawa Sachi, raised an island from the bottom of the sea while Yoritomo Kaigen, the Mantis's Master Sensei of Tempest Island, summoned an enormous ocean wave. Caught between the hammer of the wave and the anvil of the new island, the Dark Wave was annihilated. In the aftermath of the battle, the Phoenix surrendered rather than see more conflict and death result from what was clearly a sinister manipulation of the two Clans. As compensation, the Mantis claimed the new lands created by Sachi, as well as the sea-trade routes nearby.

Yoritomo Naizen, the new Mantis Clan Champion, immediately ordered the construction of a castle on the largest of the islands. The isle was named after Kaigen, who, along with Sachi, perished with the Dark Wave. The castle itself would be called Kyuden Kumiko, in honor of Naizen's predecessor Yoritomo Kumiko, who had fallen in mortal combat with the commander of the Dark Wave fleet. Kaigen's Island offered a number of prospective locations for the castle, but the best was high ground overlooking a deep natural harbour on the southwest shore, facing the Phoenix coastline.

The island immediately posed a succession of serious challenges. Since it was actually a portion of the ocean floor abruptly lifted above sea-level by magic, the marine life raised along with it quickly died off, leaving nothing but a barren expanse of volcanic rock and coral, layered with mud. No trees meant no timber for construction. The only building material immediately available was stone, but since even stone structures require some lumber in their make-up, the Mantis were forced to import timber, as well as rope, lamp oil, paper, and all the myriad other construction materials needed from the mainland.

But this was only the beginning of the problems for the island's new owners. Ocean storms thundered across the barren land, damaging and delaying the construction efforts. Rain and ocean spray saturated the ocean silt blanketing much of the island, making it slump in dangerous mudslides. And the island itself proved unstable, suffering from periodic earthquakes as the rock adjusted itself to its new and unnatural existence above water. One particularly violent tremor triggered a cascade of volcanic eruptions at the island's western end that continues to this day. Fortunately, this volcanic field, known as the Fire Fountains, is far enough from Kyuden Kumiko and the city growing in its shadow that it presents no immediate danger. An intriguing side-effect of this volcanic activity is that the island is actually growing, as lava spills into the sea and hardens into new rock. If the eruptions continue, scholars estimate Kaigen's Island will almost double in size in as little as twenty years.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty faced by the Mantis, however, was the general lack of even the most basic resources on the island. Cities in Rokugan face many problems, but few suffer difficulty finding sufficient wood for fuel, arable land for the cultivation of crops, or fresh water for the use of their residents. Unfortunately, none of these basic



things occur naturally on Kaigen's Island. With nothing available but bare rock, briny mud, and salt water, virtually everything else must be brought in by ship. For some commodities, this was feasible, but for fuel, soil, and water, the effort and expense involved meant shipping wasn't an option.

Faced with such a dilemma, another Clan might simply have surrendered to what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles and left the desolate island to the wind and waves. Not so the Mantis. Kaigen's Island had been too hard-won and its significance figured too prominently in Rokugan's politics for the proud Clan to abandon it. Cisterns were constructed around the island to catch fresh rain-water for drinking and bathing. Sea-weed, dried and bundled, provided a source of fuel, as well as a valuable nutritional supplement to the abundant fish caught in the surrounding waters. And when mundane means fell short of what was needed, the Mantis turned to their shugenja. The Moshi, masters of fire and water, called upon the kami to purify sea-water for drinking, and to provide fire, when needed, to supplement the fuel resources offered by marine plants and fish oils. Even the newly-joined Kitsune family, attuned to the earth, worked to pacify the worst of the island's tremors and mitigate the greatest threats from rock-falls and mud-slides.

Their basic needs addressed, the Mantis threw themselves into the task of developing Kaigen's Island. The great castle of Kyuden Kumiko was to be the centerpiece of a new settlement, a city named after the great battle that had seen the island born – the City of the Broken Wave. Only a few months after the seawater had sluiced off the newly risen island, the foundations of Kyuden Kumiko were set in the rock and the first of its mighty walls raised. At the same time, the first traces of the city appeared at the foot of the castle's gate. Stone quays were laid into the harbor, providing docks for the merchant ships bringing building materials and other goods from the mainland and the Islands of Silk and Spice; with these came warships, first as escorts and immediate protection of the new settlement, but ultimately, to stay. The Third Storm, one of the three great Mantis fleets, has now come to be based at Broken Wave City, giving the Clan a powerful military presence only a few miles from the Rokugani mainland.

Today, although Kyuden Kumiko itself is essentially complete, Broken Wave City remains very much a work in progress. Certainly, much the same could be said about any city; no inhabited settlement is ever really "finished." But in the case of Broken Wave City, this is especially true. Every structure is new, built since the island rose. Many are only partially complete. Even in the "older" sections of the city, there is much new construction. As a result, the city feels vibrant, like a living, growing thing, full of energy and possibilities. The harbor bustles constantly, with fishing boats and merchant kobune jockeying about among the majestic warships of the Third Storm. Much of the population is transient – crews of ships staying at dock only long enough to turn around cargo – so trouble is common enough to ensure the city magistrates are rarely short of work. Those who call Broken Wave City their permanent home tolerate these troublesome visitors because of their ultimate importance to the city's well-being. But those who have put down roots here know they are the true heart of Kaigen's Island. They are proud of what they have accomplished in their short time on the barren island, and look forward to a day when they are no longer dependent on imports for basic necessities.

Such a day may come sooner than many expected. Already, several small rice paddies have been coaxed into life near the city. Even more unexpectedly, grasses, flowers and even small shrubs have begun to sprout from what was once submarine mud, their seeds carried to the island by birds or seaward winds from the mainland. If a reliable source of fresh water can be secured, many feel Broken Wave City could be completely free of its overseas dependencies within a generation or two.

Many challenges remain, however, and the island has proven time and again that it cannot be taken for granted. While most of its surface – particularly close to the City – has been explored, some sections, especially along the northern shore, are covered with virtually impenetrable masses of thick, crumbling coral. Elsewhere on the island, many caves and strange, circular tunnels have been located. Named "The Tunnels of the Ningyo," these have proven extremely dangerous to explorers; deep pitfalls, collapsing roofs, toxic air and scalding jets of steam are only a few of the hazards within. More ominously, a few have contained evidence of Taint, perhaps remnants of the Dark Wave after it was smashed against the island by Yoritomo Kaigen's great wave.

Kaigen's Island keeps many secrets yet.

Timeline Neutrality

Of all the strongholds described in this book, Broken Wave City is by far the most timeline specific, in that it was created relatively recently in the canon storyline and has a rather specific set of events surrounding its creation. However, the event leading to the island's creation could easily have taken place at a different point in the Empire's history, perhaps taking place in a short confrontation between the Phoenix and Mantis clans centuries ago. Barring that, the city could exist on a naturally occurring island anywhere along Rokugan's coast (a particularly good choice if you wish to create friction between the Mantis and any clan with seaside holdings in your campaign). If even that does not suit your needs, however, the locations and NPCs from this chapter can easily be lifted from Broken Wave City and located anywhere in the Empire, although obviously a port setting would be best.



Timeline

The following timeline summarizes the major events affecting Broken Wave City:

1167, the Month of the Horse - The Battle of the Broken Wave occurs. In its aftermath, the island raised from the ocean by Isawa Sachi and used by Yoritomo Kaigen to destroy the Dark Wave fleet is claimed by the Mantis as a "spoil of war" and named Kaigen's Island (although the Phoenix sometimes refer to it as Sachi's Anvil instead). Construction immediately begins on port facilities in the sheltered harbor named the Bay of Thunder. These docks, intended to support the construction of a new castle to be called Kyuden Kumiko, will become the base for the Third Storm of the Mantis fleet.

1167, the Month of the Rooster - Construction of Kyuden Kumiko begins.

1168, the Month of the Dragon - Kaigen's Island is shaken by a major earthquake. Considerable damage is done to the new construction. The tremor also triggers ongoing volcanic eruptions at the island's western end, and a tsunami that strikes the Phoenix coast. The Mantis provide aid and assistance to several Phoenix villages struck by the tsunami, an act of charity that helps mend Mantis-Phoenix relations following the War of Fire and Thunder.

1168, throughout the year - The Great Keep of Kyuden Kumiko is completed, along with the most essential of the surrounding defensive works. Foundations are laid for the most important holy places in Broken Wave City, including the Temples to the Sun and to Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea. The city begins to grow along the shore of the Bay of Thunder, giving rise to what will eventually become the Commerce and Fishers Quarters.

1169, The Month of the Serpent - A terrible spring storm sweeps in from the eastern ocean, damaging much of the work underway in Broken Wave City. A wall collapses into the newly-completed court chamber at Kyuden Kumiko, killing or injuring many within, including the City Governor. In the confused aftermath, a young courtier, Yoritomo Ninsei, rallies the remaining city leadership and organizes recovery and reconstruction efforts. Impressed with the young man's abilities, Yoritomo Naizen names him as the interim Governor of Broken Wave City.

1170 and afterwards - Construction continues in Broken Wave City. The original docks are upgraded and expanded to accommodate the Third Storm of the Mantis fleet, now based there. Separate commercial and fishing docks are constructed, along with their associated city quarters. A new Holy Quarter is established, where Shrines to the Fortunes and other important figures of reverence, such as Yoritomo and Kaimetsu-Uo, are located. The Great Clans establish embassies in Broken Wave City, finally fully recognizing the Mantis claim to Kaigen's Island; the Minor Clan Alliance, led by the Tortoise, establishes an embassy soon after. Exploration and development efforts continue across Kaigen's Island, as well as among the smaller outlying islands in the surrounding waters. Many unusual features, such as the Coral Barrens and the enigmatic Tunnels of the Ningyo, are located and targeted for future investigation.

City Denizens

As the preceding History shows, Broken Wave City is a unique place in Rokugan. Aside from small villages and hamlets, which may appear and disappear with the vagaries of weather and crops, there are no settlements in Rokugan as new as this city.

Kaigen's Island is, in essence, little more than an expanse of barren rock, coral and mud. Everything that isn't one of these things – including fresh water – must be imported or created, at least until surface plants and trees take hold and crops can be grown. This is a process likely to take many years, even with the acceleration afforded by the considerable magical power of the Mantis. Until then, Broken Wave City is dependent on imports of even the most basic commodities. The Mantis are convinced the effort and expense is well worth it, as they have finally established a major holding and port very close to the Rokugani mainland. In Broken Wave City, the Mantis see a great opportunity to exercise direct influence on the Empire, gaining the stature and prestige which is their due as a Great Clan. Broken Wave City, like the Mantis Clan itself, is a new reality in Rokugan and one not to be taken lightly.

This background heavily influences those samurai who have lived in Broken Wave City. (Note that, unless a campaign is set at least fifteen to twenty years after the War of Fire and Thunder, there are no actual natives of the city, except for the children!) Because even basic necessities like fresh water and rice cannot be taken for granted, most Broken Wave inhabitants tend to be quite thrifty sorts. Moreover, because the city is set on an island, almost every Mantis samurai who lives there is either a sailor or, at the very least, is deeply familiar with sailing and with the general operation of the bustling port around which the city revolves. Because the city is still in many respects under construction, it is also not unusual for local inhabitants to have or at least be familiar with the sorts of skills that are constantly in demand – crafting, artistic talent, and the study of engineering are all widespread in Broken Wave City's population.

Finally, it should be remembered that the Mantis are seeking to make Kyuden Kumiko an important hub in their relations with the Empire. As shown in the "Important Personages" section later in this chapter, complex political relationships are par for the course in Broken Wave City. Clearly, relations with the Phoenix, from whom Kaigen's Island and the trade routes around it was claimed at the end of the War of Fire and Thunder, are problematic. But the Crane and Crab also both stand to suffer from the shift in Imperial politics represented by Broken Wave City, so experience with political maneuvering and intrigue, at least in part revolving around trade, characterizes all those who have spent significant time in this remarkable city.

The Old Quarter

The Old Quarter, including both Kyuden Kumiko and the buildings that exist within its shadow, is only "old" in a relative sense, since no part of the city can truly be called "old." What would eventually become the Old Quarter was the island's original settlement, housing construction crews and those supporting them while the castle of Kyuden Kumiko was under construction. The original docks were also located here, taking full advantage of the shelter afforded by the Bay of Thunder, as well as proximity to the site of the new castle. All of this means that the Old Quarter is now the most desirable real estate in Broken Wave City. The homes of the wealthiest and best-connected residents are located here, as are the embassies from the various other Clans. Buildings in the Quarter are generally large and well-appointed, and are separated by high walls and well-tended gardens; the latter particularly demonstrate the wealth of those who live here, since the plants and the soil must all be imported to the rocky island. At the foot of the road leading down from the castle's gate is the Great Pier, used only by those ships carrying important persons or delegations. The rest of the docking space at the head of the Bay of Thunder is used exclusively by the Third Storm of the Mantis fleet.

The City's Chief Magistrate, Tsuruchi Takamasa (see "Important Personages"), maintains his headquarters in the Old Quarter.



Kyuden Kumiko

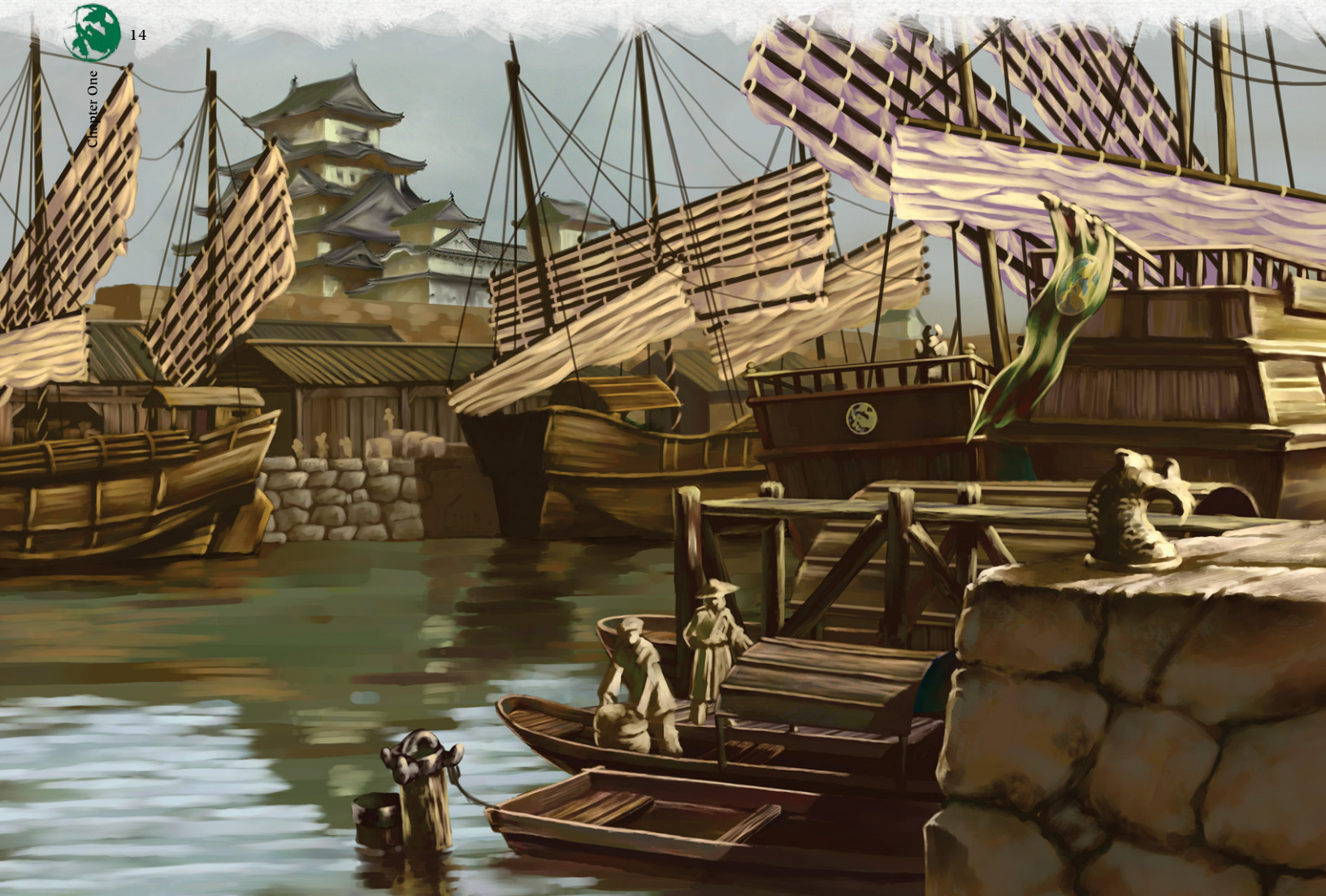
The great castle of Kyuden Kumiko looms over the Old Quarter and the Bay of Thunder, dominating Broken Wave City. It is named in memory of Yoritomo Kumiko, the Mantis Clan Champion who died fighting the Dark Wave fleet at the Battle of Broken Waves. Her successor, Yoritomo Naizen, proclaimed the construction of the castle as the first order of business for the Mantis on their newly-claimed island. It can be said, therefore, that Broken Wave City really came into existence to serve and support Kyuden Kumiko. This makes the relationship between the castle and the city different than many other places in Rokugan, where castles are often built as defensive and governance structures for existing towns and cities.

While not the largest of Rokugani castles, Kyuden Kumiko is certainly among the more impressive in terms of fortress engineering. Given the barren nature of Kaigen's Island, the Mantis were forced to rely mostly on the island's dark, volcanic stone for the castle's construction. As a result, the looming towers and walls of Kyuden Kumiko present a sombre, brooding face to the world, more reminiscent of the utilitarian works of the Crab than the usual flamboyance of the Mantis. Within, however, it is a very different place. The Mantis have spared no expense to furnish Kyuden Kumiko with the most ostentatious displays of wealth. Where wood is exposed, it is rare types like bloodwood, mahogany, and tropical walnut. Spectacular artwork – some of clearly gaijin origin – is interspersed among exotic plants, colorful chattering birds, and glittering displays of crystals, gems and ceramics. The combined effect is somewhat jangling and off-putting to the more refined tastes of most mainland Rokugani. This is no accident; because of its proximity to the mainland, Kyuden Kumiko is rapidly becoming the main interface between the Mantis and the rest of Rokugan not only for trade, but also for political and diplomatic relations. If the juxtaposition of the castle's dour exterior and its conspicuous displays of wealth within cause other clan delegations to be made uneasy, so much the better.

The interim Governor of the City, Yoritomo Ninsei (see "Important Personages"), lives in Kyuden Kumiko and oversees the Court here.

The Great Pier

The Great Pier is the largest single dock in Rokugan, designed to accommodate any vessel afloat. It is here that ships carrying important visitors or delegations to the City arrive. Ships of the Imperial families customarily dock at the Great Pier, as do those ships carrying embassies from the Great Clans. Should the Emperor ever deign to visit the City, it is here the divine feet will first touch land. A broad road leads from the base of the Great Pier to the gate of Kyuden Kumiko looming on the hills above.



Third Storm Haven

The Third Storm represents almost one-third of the Mantis fleet; alone, it commands almost as much maritime military power as the combined fleets of all the other Clans. The decision to base the Third Storm at Broken Wave City was a controversial one. The Storm numbers close to twelve thousand personnel, in nearly two hundred ships. Simply accommodating and supporting so many ships and people posed a massive logistical problem for the city. This has been partly solved by grouping the Storm into three smaller formations called Squalls. At any given time, one Squall is at sea, patrolling the coastal waters of Rokugan and the sea-lanes to the Islands of Silk and Spice. The two remaining Squalls are in port, one just returned from sea-duty and undergoing repairs, refit, and general reconstitution, the other preparing to go to sea and relieve the currently on-station Squall. In this way, the Third Storm is maintained in a constant state of readiness, without unduly taxing crews or ships, while also reducing the number of vessels in port and associated ship movements through the harbor. Even so, it is possible to "surge" the full fighting power of the Storm to sea within one day, should the need ever arise.

However, this leads to the other main point of contention about basing the Third Storm at Broken Wave City. Previously, the Mantis Fleet was a known but rather remote power, generally not of immediate concern to the other Great Clans. Now, though, a full third of that power is based only a few miles away from the Rokugani mainland coast. The sudden proximity of this powerful and strategically mobile force has provoked frowns of concern throughout the Empire – particularly from the Phoenix, Crane, and Crab Clans. The Mantis, for their part, do their best to not be too smug about this significant shift in the balance of Rokugani power.

The barracks and other administrative and logistical facilities for the Third Storm sprawl throughout what used to be the city's original warehouse district. This has the benefit of placing most of the available combat power in the city in close proximity to the Old Quarter and Kyuden Kumiko, should the need to fight ashore ever arise.

The Phoenix Embassy

All of the Great Clan Embassies, as well as those of the Minor Clan Alliance and the Imperial families, are located in the Old Quarter. All are as well-appointed and luxurious as one would expect for the Clans in question. The notable exception, however, is the Phoenix Clan. This normally reserved Clan has erected a large embassy of white marble, imported at great expense, that literally shines amid the otherwise somber volcanic stone comprising most of the city. Lavishly-appointed, it hovers on the very edge of being pretentious. This display is mainly the doing of the current Phoenix Ambassador, Shiba Sayoko (see "Important Personages"), who harbors deep resentment towards the Mantis over the outcome of the War of Fire and Thunder. For their part, the Mantis have carefully avoided making any comment, apparently preferring to let the Phoenix do as they will and simply pretending not to care.

House of the Golden Mist

Behind the high wall encircling this establishment, which is ostensibly a teahouse, Madame Izanami offers a commodity which is very scarce in the cramped confines of Broken Wave City – privacy. Those who so desire may divest themselves of their identity for a time, replacing distinctive clan garb with an unadorned kimono and mask of gray silk. Patrons can then engage in all sorts of behavior that would otherwise be considered unacceptable or even scandalous, without fear of losing on (face). The House of Golden Mist is not an inexpensive establishment, however; generally, only the wealthy and well-connected can obtain access to the particular discretion – and the goods and services that go with it – offered here.

The Holy Quarter

Although many of the buildings in this part of the city are, indeed, shrines and temples, not all are strictly holy structures. It is here that each of the Mantis families maintains their dojo and related facilities; accordingly, many of the buildings in the Holy Quarter are places of study, practice, and learning, rather than of prayer. This has proven to be quite beneficial, insofar as the priests and monks of the temples can be closely involved in the education of the samurai of the city, particularly the children. For example, the priests and priestesses of the kami attending the Shrine of Fukurokujin, the Fortune of Wisdom, also spend time teaching at the nearby dojo of the Moshi and Kitsune families.

Located in this quarter are temples to each of the Seven Fortunes, together with a single large shrine dedicated to several of the Minor Fortunes. There are also specific shrines dedicated to figures particularly revered by the Mantis, such as Kaimetsu-Uo and Yoritomo. Because of the peculiar nature of Kaigen's Island, the Holy Quarter also contains several separate and quite elaborate shrines devoted to several Minor Fortunes not normally given such an honor, but whose favor is sought on the City's behalf. These include Isora, Fortune of the Seashore, Kenro-ji-jin, Fortune of Soil, and Kyufoki, Fortune of Earthquakes. On the other hand, notably absent from this quarter is a temple to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth, or shrines to Suitengu, Osano-Wo, or to the Sun. These are located in other places on the island, locations deemed more appropriate to their particular natures.

Temple to Daikoku

The Temple to Daikoku, Fortune of Wealth, is located on a hillside overlooking the Commerce Quarter. It is said that any transaction conducted in direct view of the large statue of Daikoku at the temple's entrance will be blessed by the Fortune and none of the participants will lose on the deal. Of course, this does not stop many transactions in the quarter from being conducted well out of sight of any inquisitive eyes, including those of the Fortune – and if possible, those of magistrates and tax collectors.

Shrine to Suitengu

The Shrine to Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, sits on a point overlooking the entrance to the Bay of Thunder. It is often crowded with sailors seeking the blessing and protection of the Fortune before they put to sea. The shrine is also the site of a ritual unique to Broken Wave City. After seawater is purified into fresh drinking water by those Moshi shugenja assigned to the task throughout the city, the salt that remains behind is brought here. Once per week, this salt is poured back into the sea in an elaborate ceremony by the priests of Suitengu, thanking the Fortune for the water taken from his realm.

Temple of the Sun

This splendid Temple is placed to receive the first rays of the rising sun. However, its placid atmosphere belies a debate simmering among its congregants. Traditionalists believe it should be named after the original Sun, Amaterasu. Conversely, reformers insist that the correct name should be Temple of the Jade Sun, to reflect the ascension of the Jade Dragon. For now, however, "Temple of the Sun" remains the official name, as Moshi Kishiko, Mistress of the Temple, seeks to steer a neutral path among the passions of her flock.



The Commerce Quarter

Originally, all of the City's commercial activity was conducted through the docks in the city's Old Quarter. However, with the arrival of the Third Storm, all non-military shipping had to be directed to new facilities. Fortunately, the city's forward-thinking Harbormaster, Watanabe Al-Zayan (see "Important Personages"), had already foreseen that the wharfs of the Old Quarter would be insufficient to support the future growth of the city and had advocated construction of additional docks on the Bay of Thunder. As a result, the city only had to contend with a few months of disruption while the new docks in the Commerce Quarter were completed. Rapid expansion of this quarter of the city followed, to accommodate the new influx of shipping and the myriad goods and services needed to support it.

If the Old Quarter is the center of political power in Broken Wave City, and the Holy Quarter its focus of spiritual devotion, then the Commerce Quarter is its beating heart. Broken Wave City relies heavily on imports of most basic goods, so ships dock, unload their cargoes, and depart again as quickly as they can be turned around, with other ships continually waiting for space to anchor. The quarter bustles and thrums with organized chaos, as goods are unloaded, sorted, stored, and distributed throughout the city. Meanwhile the crews of docked ships wander among the shops, sake houses, noodle stands, and the inevitable establishments of lesser repute, seeking some diversion before putting back to sea. Most of the ships here are still Mantis, but increasingly, vessels of the Phoenix, Crane, and Crab jockey for berth space, while unaligned ships wait their turn to convert cargo to profit.

Commerce Docks

Warehouses line the shore, opening on the docks at their seaward ends and large freight-yards to landward. Constructed mainly of stone, these open-ended designs allow for efficient through-put of goods from ships to shore, and thence on into the city. Several of the warehouses are especially well-guarded, secured against intrusion so they can be used for the storage of valuable goods. The majority, however, handle less valuable bulk commodities, such as timber and rice, which require less careful oversight.

Belly of the Orochi

A play on the name of several prominent features on Kaigen's Island, the Belly is probably the most popular sake houses in Broken Wave City. Masa, owner of the Belly, is a blunt, straightforward heimin who offers a decent selection of sake and food at reasonable prices. A particularly popular attraction here is a bunraku puppet theatre offering a sardonic and often bawdy take on well-known stories of the Empire. A comical retelling of the story of the original Gozoku conspiracy is especially popular among the patrons.



The Fishers Quarter

A further testament to the insight and planning of Harbormaster Watanabe El-Zayan, the Fishers Quarter accommodates the myriad small craft that perform what may be the most vital maritime service for Broken Wave City – feeding its people. With essentially no arable land, and all rice and other staple foodstuffs needing to be imported, the city turned to the sea to feed its growing population. Fortunately, the shallow waters of the Phoenix coast were already rich fishing grounds; the emergence of Kaigen's Island from the sea seems to have only enhanced their productivity, creating warmer shoals teeming with sea life. Fishing boats endlessly cycle from the Fishers Quarter, out to sea and back, bringing ashore rich harvests of cod, mackerel, and tuna, more exotic species such as swordfish and shark, and even bales of red-brown seaweed, a "vegetable" coming to figure as a staple in much local cuisine. The docks here are not just berths for the fishing boats; they are also a raucous, almost continuous fish-market, where fishermen sell their catch right from their holds. It is little wonder that the seafood dishes of Broken Wave City are developing a reputation as some of the finest and freshest in Rokugan.

Sachi's Watch

In recognition of the sacrifice of Isawa Sachi, the shugenja who raised Kaigen's Island from the sea to assist in the defeat of the Dark Wave fleet, this imposing tower is named in his honor. It is the official residence of the Harbormaster. However, for practical reasons, the Harbormaster keeps an office in the Commerce Quarter and spends much of his time there, dealing with the myriad issues that arise from ships moving in, around, and out of the port.

Defensive Works

Even as the first surveys of the future foundations of Kyuden Kumiko were begun, it was clear to the Mantis engineers that complex defensive works, such as continuous city walls, would largely be a waste of effort. Kaigen's Island was its own fortification, with the sea its moat and the Mantis fleet its defensive bulwarks. As a result, only Kyuden Kumiko itself enjoys the protection of traditional walls. The remaining defensive works for the city consist of separate watch-towers and keeps, the main difference being that the latter are larger, stouter structures, more capable of independent defense. These are strategically located to provide observation both across the island and out to sea. As long as sufficient warning is available, the Mantis are confident that the might of the Third Storm is sufficient to answer any conceivable threat to the city.

Eta Village

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The Last Landing

This small dock is so-named because it is here the dead are brought by the City's eta, prior to their cremation in the Fire Fountains. This is, therefore, truly the "last landing" for those brought here. An eta family lives here, maintaining the dock and keeping the path to the Fire Fountains clear, or designating a new one when lava flows overrun the existing trail.

Other Notable Locations

The following locations are not situated within the city proper, but are located on the portions of the islands that have not yet been the target of development and construction.

The Fire Fountains

Triggered by a powerful earthquake not long after the emergence of Kaigen's Island, the Fire Fountains are one of the most spectacular, albeit dangerous, sights in the Empire. The term "Fountain" is more than just poetic; powerful eruptions of incandescent lava reach scores and sometimes hundreds of feet into the air. More lava pours from vents and fissures in the rock, forming flows that eventually spill into the sea and quench, steaming, into new rock. As a result, Kaigen's Island is slowing growing, adding hundreds of square feet of new land to itself every day.

While beautiful, the Fire Fountains are also potentially deadly. Only the eta of Broken Wave City regularly approach them closely, using them as a natural crematorium for the city's common dead. However, more than a few eta have been killed by the Fountains in the process, overcome by heat or fumes, or struck and killed by sudden bursts of rock and lava.

In game terms, to reflect the hazard posed by the Fountains, anyone approaching within 50' of an active vent must make a Stamina Trait Roll against TN 15 every



five minutes. Failure means they are overcome by the radiant heat and gases, suffering a +10 TN penalty to all actions. This penalty will last until the affected individual spends at least one hour more than 100' away from the nearest vent. Additionally, for every five minutes an individual spends within 50' of a vent, roll a die. On a 10, they are struck by erupted debris – stones and flecks of hot ash – and suffer 4k2 points of damage.

The Coral Barrens

The Greater and Lesser Coral Barrens are a series of what used to be submarine coral reefs. When they were lifted out of the sea, the coral and all associated marine life quickly died, leaving an almost impenetrable landscape of desiccated remains twisted into bizarre, unearthly shapes up to twenty feet tall.

Few serious attempts have been made to penetrate deeply into the coral, so the Barrens remain almost wholly unexplored. As inhospitable as the Coral Barrens are, however, they have provided Broken Wave City with one of its most valuable exports to date. Coral is highly prized by artisans, and figures prominently in many types of art, such as inlays and sculpture. Although exposure to the elements is causing the coral to fade and crumble, the Barrens will provide a supply of quality coral for many years yet.

In game terms, the Coral Barrens are considered Difficult terrain, and creatures larger than man-sized (such as horses) will find movement all but impossible. Also, any creature moving through the coral for a significant length of time will accumulate an array of painful cuts, totaling 2k1 points of damage for every hour spent exploring the Barrens (1k1 points if wearing heavy armor or similar protection).

The Orochi's Spine & The Temple to Osano-Wo

The central portion of Kaigen's Island rises into a steep ridge of volcanic rock called The Orochi's Spine. The peak of the Spine, the highest point on the island, soars almost six hundred feet above the water. Construction of a watchtower was begun here shortly after the Mantis claimed the island, but it quickly became clear that more easily-constructed and accessible watchtowers at lower elevations would provide sufficient surveillance of the surrounding waters. The partially constructed tower on the Spine was later taken over by the Order of Osano-Wo, and is now being incorporated into a new shrine to the tempestuous Fortune of Fire and Thunder. The location is ideal; not only does the peak provide an excellent view of the Fire Fountains, but during storms it is often struck by bolts of lightning and shaken by mighty peals of thunder. Construction, however, is slow, as the monks and those assisting them must contend with the same difficulties as the builders of the original watchtower.

The Tunnels of the Ningyo

The Tunnels of the Ningyo does not label a single feature. Rather, it is the collective name for numerous caves and tunnels located throughout the island. When they were first discovered, it was thought these oddly-circular openings in the rock must be artificial, created, perhaps, by the aquatic Ningyo or a similar race – hence their name. However, ship's masters sailing near the Fire Fountains have recently noticed similar structures apparently in the process of forming from lava flows, suggesting that the tunnels may be a natural interaction of the kami of earth, fire, and water. Whatever their origin, many of these tunnels exist on Kaigen's Island, both above and below water. Most are less than one hundred feet long, terminating at blank rock walls and containing little of interest. About one in ten, however, extends for many hundreds of feet. Their diameter ranges from as little as two feet to as much as ten feet. While they are generally straight and usually slope gradually toward the island's margins, they do occasionally bend or drop sharply. And while most are empty, they sometimes contain items either dropped overboard or lost in shipwrecks, such as sections of waterlogged planking, corroded weapons and armor, and even skeletal remains. Debate continues as to whether these items have been deliberately placed, or are simply the result of currents and wave action. More ominously, however, one Tunnel was found to contain a Tainted "living cannon," presumably leftover from the Dark Wave fleet after it was destroyed; another was the lair of a vicious, aquatic troll-like creature. In both cases, lives were lost before the foul creatures could be subdued.

Even without the threat of dangerous creatures, however, the Tunnels can be quite hazardous. Pitfalls, cave-ins, accumulations of toxic gases, and sudden jets of scalding steam are just some of the threats explorers face within these enigmatic passages.



Important Personages

The following individuals are among the most powerful permanent residents of Broken Wave City, although the constantly changing population often brings complicating factors and competitors onto the scene, if only for a short time.

Yoritomo Ninsei

Interim Governor of Broken Wave City

Yoritomo Ninsei is an excellent example of what happens when an ambitious man happens to find himself in the right place at the right time. Circumstance gave the young Yoritomo the interim Governorship of Broken Wave City. Now, he seeks nothing less than to be fully and permanently invested in the office – even if that means incurring the lasting resentment of others more senior.

The second-youngest of five brothers and sisters, Ninsei quickly recognized that the only way to distinguish himself from his siblings was to seize every opportunity for attention and accomplishment. The martial arts did not come naturally to him, but his quick wit and quicker tongue more than made up for his average achievement with the sword and bow. By the time of his gempukku, those who knew the family would comment that Ninsei might not be the eldest, but he certainly was the most prominent child. This – not to mention the open resentment of his older brothers and sisters – only encouraged the young man to even greater efforts.

However, resentment turned to action. The manipulations of his older siblings caused Ninsei to be assigned to a series of remote and uninspiring diplomatic posts across the Empire. Eventually, he came to serve as a junior functionary at the new court of Kyuden Kumiko. At the time, much of the castle and most of what would become Broken Wave City was little more than a grimy construction site. Ninsei bitterly resolved to endure, telling himself that, eventually, his opportunity would come.

And come it did, far sooner than he dared hope. One night, as a ferocious storm pounded the island, a recently-completed wall collapsed into the court chambers of Kyuden Kumiko. Most of those present were killed or badly injured, including the city's Governor who, ironically, had banished Ninsei from court for three days for arguing with a superior. In the chaos that followed, Ninsei immediately sensed opportunity. The young Yoritomo swung into action, conspicuously organizing rescue and recovery efforts. When the Governor died of his injuries, Ninsei, on his own recognizance, assumed temporary leadership of the city. Impressed by the young courtier's bold actions – and, perhaps, seeing a bit of his younger self in the brash, ambitious Ninsei – the Clan Champion, Yoritomo Naizen, named Ninsei interim Governor of the city, the post he holds today, although he is aware that he will have to surrender it to a more military individual at some point in the near future; he suspects the Third Storm's commander, Yoritomo Jera, may well become his replacement.

Many quietly question the Champion's wisdom. Older and more senior politicians are available, but so far, Naizen has seen fit to leave Ninsei in the post. Ninsei almost seems to relish the resentment of his elders, but is keenly aware that forces within the city would love nothing better than to see him fail. Accordingly, he is extremely wary, not to say paranoid, carefully measuring everyone who crosses his path as either a potential ally or adversary. He will let nothing and no one interfere with his ambition to be named permanent Governor of the city. Clearly, the young Yoritomo has greater ambitions still, but what they may be, even he has not yet said.

Yoritomo Ninsei, Interim Governor of Broken Wave City

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3
Perception: 4

Honor: 4.0 *Status: 4.8* *Glory: 3.0*

School/Rank: Yoritomo Courtier 4

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Commerce 5, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Games: Go 3, Games: Shogi 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: Law 2, Lore: Mantis Clan 3, Lore: Phoenix Clan 2, Lore: Underworld 2, Sailing 2, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 3

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Crafty

Disadvantages: Driven (become permanent Governor of Broken Wave City), Greedy

Tsuruchi Takamasa

Chief Magistrate of Broken Wave City

As Chief Magistrate of Broken Wave City, Tsuruchi Takamasa is charged with maintaining law and order on behalf of the Mantis Clan. It is ironic, then, that murky whispers float around the dour Tsuruchi, suggesting that his own past may have been anything but lawful and orderly.

Little is known of Takamasa's early years. Following his gempukku, however, his reputation quickly grew as a skilled bounty hunter – an efficient and determined enemy of those who would flout the Emperor's law. But it was after the Rain of Blood – a supernatural attack on Rokugan by the evil sorcerer Iuchiban – that Takamasa gained notoriety. The Rain Tainted and drove mad many of those it touched, leaving Rokugan awash in chaos and blood. The Jade and Emerald Magistrates, supplemented by forces from the clans – including the bounty hunters of the Tsuruchi – sought to root out those corrupted by Iuchiban's evil storm. Takamasa quickly proved himself as skilled at stalking the Tainted as he was at bringing outlaws to justice. One after another, Takamasa's relentless arrows found their lethal mark.



And then the dark whispers began.

Men such as Takamasa accumulate many enemies, so it may have been one of these who started the dark rumors that not all those slain by Takamasa were Tainted. Or it may have been more sinister forces, seeking to perpetuate the effects of the Blood Rain, who began to whisper the word 'murder.' Whatever their source, stories soon took hold that Takamasa was using the mantle of bounty hunter to indulge a dark appetite for indiscriminate killing. It was even hinted that Takamasa had been affected by the Blood Rain himself, and that the Taint was driving his ruthless passions.

Rumors are not testimony. No one ever stepped forward to confront or accuse Takamasa. Still, a residue of suspicion clings to the Tsuruchi to this day, eliciting wariness and even a little fear among those who cross his path. Years of exposure to sun and wind and rain, and more than a few scars, only heighten the ominous nature of this dour, taciturn man.

For his part, Takamasa seems to take no notice of this residue of suspicion. Certainly, it has not prevented him from gaining rank and status among his family and Clan, or from being named Chief Magistrate of Broken Wave City. In fact, there are those who suggest that Takamasa himself cultivates the stories, using them to bolster his reputation. Being suspected as a ruthless and cold-blooded killer has advantages when one must uphold justice to a city full of transient sailors and merchants. Takamasa, and the magistrates and yoriki who work for him, have little mercy for those who break the law. Justice in Broken Wave City tends to be swift and, when necessary, brutal. By no means does this prevent all crime, but those who perpetrate it do so with caution; one never knows when Takamasa himself may be lurking in the shadows, watching.

Tsuruchi Takamasa, Chief Magistrate of Broken Wave City

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 3
	Stamina: 4	Agility: 4		

Honor: 2.0	Status: 4.0	Glory: 3.0 (Infamy: 1.0)

School/Rank: Tsuruchi Archer 4

Skills: Athletics 4, Commerce 2, Defense 4, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation (Search) 5, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 3, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Law 3, Lore: Underworld 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 4

Advantages: Daredevil

Disadvantages: Infamous (Murderer)

Shiba Sayoko

Phoenix Ambassador to Broken Wave City

Shiba Sayoko's story is one of tragedy, bitterness, and revenge. Ironically, the circumstances that led to this have made her the powerful and influential presence she is in Broken Wave City. The Great Clans have all placed skilled ambassadors in this newest and closest of the Mantis courts, but none are as committed or driven as Shiba Sayoko.

Sayoko's tale did not start this way. For many years, she was the devoted and loving wife of a Shiba warrior named Mori. Shiba Mori had originally been assigned to the diminutive Sayoko as a yojimbo, and for the early years of her career as a Phoenix diplomat, their relationship was strictly professional. But over time, love blossomed between the two. Eventually, Sayoko was able to convince her daimyo that a marriage would be beneficial for the clan; Mori stepped down as her yojimbo and became her husband. Children followed, and the couple found that rarest of things among Rokugani nobility – true love.

But the War of Fire and Thunder changed everything. Sayoko urged Mori, a man she believed past a warrior's prime, to leave the war to younger men. Mori, however, could not resist the call of battle. Given command of a legion, he distinguished himself on the battlefield until a Tsuruchi arrow found a gap in his armor at the Battle of the Broken Wave. Sayoko was devastated by the loss of her beloved – all the more so given her Clan's surrender to the Mantis and their claiming of Kaigen's Island just off the Phoenix coast, events which only seemed to make Mori's death more needless and futile. She swore a bitter revenge on the Clan which had taken her husband's life and destroyed her loving home.

Using the considerable connections and favors of her political service, Sayoko procured the position of ambassador to the Mantis, taking up station in the new court of Kyuden Kumiko. At once, she set about taking every opportunity to attack and undermine the Mantis. Her most obvious act was to ensure that the Phoenix Embassy would be the most striking and recognizable structure in Broken Wave City, importing white marble, rich wood, and colorful tile at great expense. But Sayoko is no fool; years of political maneuvering have given her a keen sense of where, when, and how far to push, and when to simply wait and bide her time. She remembers her training with the Asako, and when patience is required, she can draw upon the calming influences of meditation and the tea ceremony to maintain her inner peace. In any case, promoting the interests of the Phoenix remains her primary concern – if the Mantis can be harmed in the process, so much the better.

An outwardly charming and gracious older woman, Sayoko readily grants audiences to those who seek her time. This allows her to carefully assess those she meets, astutely discerning who can help her cause and who should be avoided or even politically neutralized. She is utterly ruthless in this regard, and will not hesitate to bestow favor on those she believes can help her – or destroy those she thinks will simply be in her way.

Shiba Sayoko, Phoenix Ambassador to Broken Wave City

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4
Awareness: 4

Honor: 5.0 *Status: 3.0* *Glory: 2.6*

School/Rank: Asako Loremaster 4

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Courtier 5, Defense 1, Etiquette (Conversation, Courtesy) 4, Games: Shogi 2, Investigation 3, Knives 1, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History (Minor Clans) 2, Lore: Law 1, Lore: Mantis Clan 2, Lore: Phoenix Clan 3, Meditation 4, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 4

Advantages: Heart of Vengeance (Mantis Clan)

Disadvantages: Lost Love (husband killed in the War of Fire & Thunder), Small

Watanabe Al-Zayan

Harbormaster of Broken Wave City

In a clan of skilled mariners, few are as capable as Watanabe Al-Zayan. What makes the man even more remarkable is that, in spite of the considerable handicaps of birth to a vassal family and a gaijin name, he has gained the position of Harbormaster, an office that many see to be one of the most powerful positions in Broken Wave City.

It is unlikely that any who knew the clever but unassuming boy would believe that, one day, he would oversee one of the busiest ports in the Empire. His mother was Rokugani, but his father was a gaijin she met while visiting the Ivory Kingdoms. Fortunately, the Mantis are practical about such things, so the half-breed boy was allowed to be fostered into the Watanabe vassal family of the Yoritomo. With his exotic features there was no denying the boy's birthright, so he took the name of his father, Al-Zayan, both to recognize his origins and because he assumed it couldn't possibly make his social standing in Rokugan any worse. The young Al-Zayan's story might have then passed into obscurity, except for one thing – when it came to matters of ships and sailing, the young Watanabe had almost preternatural abilities. Within just a few years of his gempukku, Al-Zayan had already pioneered several innovations in ship design, widening the lead in maritime technology which the Mantis enjoyed over their competitors. Ships whose keels had been laid by Al-Zayan soon became the most sought-after, which brought the young man to the attention of the Mantis Champion, Yoritomo Kumiko. Kumiko knew a confrontation with the Tainted Dark Wave fleet was inevitable and sought every possible advantage. Al-Zayan's innovations, applied to warship design, so impressed Kumiko that she named the young Watanabe to her personal staff – a high honor, indeed, for one of such humble origins.

After Kumiko's death, the new Champion, Yoritomo Naizen, retained Al-Zayan among his retinue. However, with the growing need for talent in Broken Wave City, he sent the young bushi there, with a mandate to establish facilities to repair and eventually build ships. Al-Zayan immediately recognized that the nascent port was ill-designed for shipwright's work, and set about suggesting improvements to the new Governor, Yoritomo Ninsei. Immediately impressed with the man (meaning that he recognized Al-Zayan would help make him look good) Ninsei named him Harbormaster and gave him leave to design and manage the port facilities as he saw fit. Al-Zayan threw himself into the job with the same devotion he applies to every task, with the result that Broken Wave City, in spite of its high volume of shipping, is one of the most efficient ports in the Empire.

Watanabe Al-Zayan is an unassuming man, most recognizable by his exotic features and by a shipboard injury that left him lame. He is more interested in solving practical problems than becoming embroiled in what he views as the cynical and manipulative world of politics. That said, there are those in Broken Wave City who bear little love for the man. He holds a senior office, all but unprecedented for a vassal family half-breed with a gaijin name. More than a few – including the commander of the Third Storm, who bristles under the need to conform to Al-Zayan's orders for ship movements in the port – would love to see the Watanabe shipwright gone from the city.

Watanabe Al-Zayan, Harbormaster of Broken Wave City

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness: 3		Intelligence 4		

Honor: 3.0 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 2.0*

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 1, Commerce 4, Courtier 2, Craft: Shipwright 4, Defense 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 2, Games: Go 4, Kenjutsu 2, Knives (Kama) 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History (Sailing, Shipwright and Naval History) 2, Sailing (Naval History) 5, Sincerity 2

Advantages: Crafty

Disadvantages: Gaijin Name, Lame



New Mechanics

New Advantage: Broken Wave Citizen [Social] (3 points)

Broken Wave City is the beachhead of the Yoritomo family's influence upon the mainland, and as such is a center of commerce, education, and military organization. Those who dwell within the city have an incredible wealth of opportunity available to them due to the city's importance to the clan. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Commerce and Sailing Skill Rolls.

New Disadvantage: Broken Wave Stigma [Social] (2 points)

Your status as a citizen of Broken Wave City is a constant reminder of the past difficulty between your clan and the Phoenix. Despite their inclination toward pacifism, many have found the War of Fire and Thunder difficult to forgive. You suffer a penalty of -1k0 to all Social Skill Rolls made targeting members of the Phoenix Clan. You gain one less point than normal when purchasing the Sworn Enemy or Nemesis Disadvantages if the other party is a Phoenix Clan samurai.

New Advantage: Inheritance: Kobune [Material] (10 points)

One of your relatives was a successful captain for the Mantis, and his ship has passed to you now that you have come of age. You may not be the most prepared for such a task, but the option is available if you wish it. You possess a small kobune, one that can be successfully crewed with perhaps a half dozen men including yourself. You are capable of making a trip between the mainland and the Mantis islands in two weeks, assuming it is not storm season, and a single voyage should cover expenses and end with a profit for you. The exact size of the profit should be determined by the GM (possibly with the assistance of Commerce Skill rolls from you), but will typically range between 5 and 10 koku per voyage. If your campaign utilizes the optional rules from Emerald Empire, this Advantage also confers 2 Duty Points.





New Alternate Path: Kitsune Artisan

For much of their history, the Kitsune people have been sequestered in their own small region of the Empire, struggling for survival and attempting to overcome the many deficits of resources that have plagued them since their creation as the Fox Clan a thousand years ago. Because of their struggle for survival, the Kitsune have rarely possessed the resources to devote any time or energy to the pursuit of the arts. Despite this, however, a unique tradition of artistry has arisen among their ranks, a testament to the notion that the soul of a samurai yearns for beauty, no matter his surroundings. Those who have spent time in the forest have learned to see the beauty of their surroundings, appreciating it for exactly what it is, and leave their mark upon it in delicate ways. The most unique aspect of the Kitsune artisan tradition, however, is that in its purest state, it is performed without damaging the materials from which it is created. Living sculptures are created from the trunks of trees that continue to grow and thrive following their creation. Others are crafted from boulders that remain in place, continuing to support whatever lay atop them with no loss of stability. With the increase in the family's profile as part of their incorporation into the Mantis Clan, they were called upon to create more permanent, traditional works of art for the benefit of their clan's court endeavors, but the spirit of their work remains the same. The removal of their creations has caused some degree of discomfort to many Kitsune artisans, but the strange nature of their craft is such that it has become an instant sensation in many courts, and the displays found in Broken Wave City are among the most popular in the current court season.

New Alternate Path: Kitsune Artisan

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Kitsune Shugenja 2
- **Requirements:** Any one Artisan or Craft Skill at 3

Technique: The Beauty of the World

A master of the Kitsune naturalist art style can craft incredible beauty out of any aspect of the world, be it wood, stone, or whatever can be found in nature. When working with natural materials, you may expend an Earth spell slot to gain a bonus of +1k0 on any Artisan or Craft Skill Roll. You may expend a number of spell slots in this manner equal to your School Rank, and this may be used in conjunction with Void Points.

New Alternate Path: Tsuruchi Swordsman [Bushi]

The origins of the Tsuruchi family are found in the Wasp Clan, the tiny Minor Clan that would later join the Mantis Clan and become the Tsuruchi. The family's founder, a ronin born of a union of Lion and Scorpion, despised the blade because to him it represented all that was wrong with the clans of his parents, the same clans that robbed him of everything he knew and loved in the world when he was little more than a child. Because of this, he eschewed it completely and expected his followers to do the same; the samurai who served the Wasp did not even carry a katana. Generations of war and decades of service to the Mantis, however, as well as the retirement of Tsuruchi himself to the ranks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, gave rise to a new generation of samurai who saw no reason to cast off study of the blade, and in fact embraced it to the fullest. With the natural athleticism of the Tsuruchi, swordsmanship comes easily once embraced, and the Tsuruchi swordsmen are rapidly developing a reputation as the finest in the entire Mantis Clan. Granted, this is not the greatest praise, given that most families within the clan embrace alternative weapons as their primary combat style, but other clans have begun to recognize the potential of Tsuruchi as opponents.

New Alternate Path: Tsuruchi Swordsman

- **Technique Rank:** 4
- **Replaces:** Tsuruchi Archer 4, Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter 4
- **Requirements:** Kenjutsu 3

Technique: Ascendancy of Steel

A master of the Tsuruchi style is a flurry of movement and unrelenting assault. You may make a melee attack as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action when wielding a sword.



Chapter Two

Clear Water Village

"I think your herald returns, Kaname-sama," Jaigo said.

"Good, we will wait for him here," Kaname replied, gratefully halting his mount. "I believe you have found every bump in this pitiful road, you ungrateful nag," he whispered to the horse. "A sore back, is that how you show your gratitude for being honored to bear your daimyo?"

Yasuki Kaname, daimyo of the Yasuki family, slid stiffly from the saddle. His yojimbo Jaigo remained mounted, eyes upon the rider approaching from the setting sun. Jaigo affected not to notice Kaname's weary expression or the stiffness in his gait, but the old bushi could not quite keep a smile from his face.

Kaname smiled ruefully himself. These past years had been strange, and so to be a saddle sore daimyo should not perhaps be considered unusual. He gazed at the Yasuki mon stirring in the evening breeze, the new Yasuki mon.

"We are Crab now. We must prove our worth to our new clan." It was a thought he repeated often to himself as he made his way to Kyuden Hida. As new daimyo of the Yasuki family, it was his duty to travel and make his obeisance to the head of his clan.

He had no idea what kind of reception to expect from Hida Tsakura. Doubtless it would be less comfortable and entertaining than the visits in his youth to the lands of the Crane. With the war only two years past he was not expecting an invitation to visit the Crane any time soon. The very thought made him laugh.

"Hai, it is Gensuro returning from Clear Water village," Jaigo said. "No doubt you wish to mount up and get to Clear Water as soon as possible Kaname-sama."

Kaname threw his old friend a wry look. Then, trying to appear nonchalant, he pulled his aching body back into the saddle.

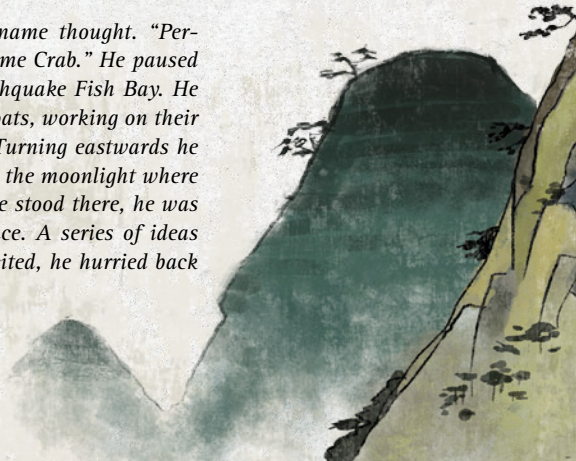
"Gensuro, what news from the village?" Jaigo asked as the herald drew to a halt.

Gensuro bowed from the saddle, addressing Kaname directly. "My lord, the village is being made ready for your arrival. The men are to be housed in the keep, and Kaiu Harata has requested you stay at his home tonight and dine with him."

"Then let us not keep our gracious hosts waiting," Kaname replied, nudging his horse once more into motion.

Later that evening, after a meal that proved more than adequate, Yasuki Kaname made his excuses to his host and went for a walk alone. He found himself walking along the walls the Kaiu had erected to defend the village should the Crane attack. The Crane had come, and the walls had defeated them.

"The Kaiu make good walls," Kaname thought. "Perhaps it will not be so difficult to become Crab." He paused to look out across the waters of Earthquake Fish Bay. He could see fishermen seated on their boats, working on their nets by candlelight after a long day. Turning eastwards he could see the River of Gold shining in the moonlight where it flowed into the bay. Suddenly, as he stood there, he was struck by the possibilities of this place. A series of ideas came to him, rapidly and clearly. Excited, he hurried back to rejoin his host.



"Harata-san, I would be honored if you would join me for a walk."

The burly Crab raised his eyebrows, but nodded. "Hai, Kaname-sama."

"Harata-san, I have walked upon your walls. They are well made."

Kaiu Harata bowed at the compliment.

"One thing confuses me though," Kaname continued

Harata raised an eyebrow, but asked politely, "What is that, Kaname-sama?"

"Why didn't you make them bigger?" Kaname laughed and spread his hands towards the bay.

Harata looked at the Yasuki daimyo, and then to the bay. "Forgive my ignorance, Kaname-sama, but I do not understand your question."

Kaname nodded. "Do not apologise, I am not sure I understand it fully myself, yet. Let me ask you a more important question, then." He led his host down to the shore, and the two of them stood there for a long while gazing at the waters.

"I want you to carefully consider this question, Harata-san," Kaname said finally, "and I wish an answer only when I return from Kyuden Hida." He pointed to the waters of the bay. "If you were asked, could you build walls upon the waves? Think on it. I will retire now. Goodnight, Harata-san."

Kaiu Harata stood on the shore for a long time after Kaname left, deep in thought on the new daimyo's strange question.

The following morning Kaname took his leave and continued his journey. Some weeks later, returning from his audience with the Crab daimyo, he stopped once more at Clear Water Village and dined with Kaiu Harata.

After their evening meal the two men walked along the shore again. Kaname handed Harata a scroll. The Kaiu recognised the chop at once – it was the seal Hida Tsakura, the Crab Clan Champion. Harata broke open the scroll and read the kanji within. They were few and to the point.

"I have spoken with Kaname. Listen to his ideas, build the walls bigger."

Harata read the scroll again, then turned to Kaname.

"I would hear your ideas, Kaname-sama," he said.

Kaname nodded, and explained to the Kaiu the inspiration which had come to him on his first visit. "I now require an answer to my question Harata-san. Can you build walls upon the waves?"

Harata's eyes glowed. If Kaname's ideas proved fruitful they would make the Crab even stronger.

"Hai, Kaname-sama. I can build your walls."

History

The Before the Crab-Crane war, Clear Water Village was simply another small fishing village on the shores of Earthquake Fish Bay. True, it was home to the Sunda Mizu Dojo, the founding of which was attributed by tradition to the first Hida, but the school was almost unheard of outside Crab lands, eclipsed by the more famous schools of the north such as the Kakita school of the Crane.

In 387 this changed. When the first Crab-Crane war broke out, Clear Water became a site of strategic importance to the Crab, vital to insure that supplies of men and material could quickly reach the front. A small Hida force rushed eastwards to occupy the village, and after a hurried inspection they called for Kaiu help in reinforcing it.

The Kaiu quickly organized defenses, at first simple earthworks and wooden palisades. As the war ground on, year after year, they built strong stone walls around the village, and a keep to house the troops stationed here.

In 398 a small Crane army attempted a strategic outflanking of Crab forces. Landing from ships, their plan was to take Clear Water Village and sever the Crab supply lines, stranding their armies in Crane lands. They succeeded in investing the walls and capturing the bridge over the River of Gold, but got no further. The small Hida force mounted a strong defense, aided by the sensei and students of the dojo. Hiruma reserves moved quickly to deal with the threat, and within a week the Crane force was routed. This proved to be the high water mark of the war for the Crane, and two years later the war came to an end.

After the war the members of Yasuki family were eager to prove their worth to their new clan. In 402 Yasuki Kaname, daimyo of the Yasuki family, set out to visit his new ruler, Crab Clan Champion Hida Tsakura, at Kyuden Hida. He stopped to rest for a night in Clear Water Village, and in a series of insights his keen mind appreciated the possibilities of the location.

With the blessing of Hida Tsakura the Yasuki and Kaiu families began work on developing the village into a much greater place, a base from which the Crab would draw strength and funds for their unending struggle with the Shadowlands.

By 409 the land walls were finished, encircling an area many times the size of the original village, and work was underway to enlarge the harbor and provide berths for dozens of ships. Kaiu Harata died in 412, a year before the great sea walls were completed. As per his wishes, his ashes were interred in the walls, that his spirit might guard them. He guards them still.

Timeline

57 – Sunda Mizu Mura is founded by the first generation of Crab warriors in service to Hida. The settlement is created as a fishing village to gather resources for the clan's military, but its relatively secure location and distance from the influence of the Shadowlands ensures that it quickly becomes a center of trade and commerce. Within a short time after the village's establishment, the Kami Hida finds favor with the local dojo, Sunda Mizu Dojo, and institutes the sacred tradition of carving all students' names into the stone walls of the establishment.

387 – The course of the first Yasuki War results in Clear Water Village becoming an essential link in the supply line for the Crab front line. Supplies from the village allow the Crab to maintain a strong presence in the Yasuki provinces.

398 – In a last ditch effort to end the war with a decisive victory, the Crane lay siege to Clear Water Village, hoping to sever the Crab supply lines, divide their forces, and force a truce. The attack is unsuccessful, however, and begins a downward spiral of Crane fortunes that ends the war within the next two years. The Yasuki family and their holdings join the Crab Clan.

409 – A series of defensive walls surrounding the land border of the city are completed, ensuring that it cannot be easily threatened by enemies attacking overland.

413 – An intricate and complex series of water-borne boundaries, the sea walls, are completed to protect the port from naval threats, either from another clan such as the Crane or Mantis, or from creatures from the Sea of Shadows.



City Denizens

It is a well-known fact in Rokugan that the wheels of the Imperial Bureaucracy sometimes turn exceedingly slowly. Nowhere is this more evident than in the offices of the Imperial Cartographers.

So, although Clear Water is now one of the largest ports in the south of Rokugan, on the maps of the Empire that emerge from the Cartographers' august office it is designated as a village. Therefore village it remains, until such time as bureaucracy catches up with reality.

Clear Water Village has a population of over 10,000 people, making it one of the larger cities in the Empire, albeit not quite in the league of Ryoko Owari or Toshi Ranbo. This can increase by almost a third when the Yasuki declare a Great Fair. The port handles almost all of the maritime trade of the Crab clan, both that traveling by sea and that which travels along the River of Gold to the Scorpion and Lion lands.

In addition, Clear Water is home to one of the largest fishing fleets on Earthquake Fish Bay. This fleet provides one of the main sources of food for the Crab forces that man the Carpenter Wall, preserved in the form of smoked fish and salted fish cakes. Should this source of food ever be interrupted the Crab would be hard pressed to feed the armies defending the Empire.

The Yasuki have spared no effort in developing the resources of the area. A variety of trade goods leave here every day, bound for the lands of the other clans. Trade products include ink, pearls and mother of pearl, steel cast as ingots (each bearing the Crab mon as a sign of its quality), and several species of snail which thrive in the warm waters of the bay. In addition to their value as food, these snails have colored carapaces which can be used to make dyes highly prized by kimono makers, and as a result they fetch a good price.

The Yasuki also trade a variety of high-quality crafted items, from sandalwood and ivory combs to wicker hats and footwear. Nothing which could have value in trade is overlooked. As an example of Yasuki ingenuity, take seaweed. It is eaten fresh or dried by the local populace, but the Yasuki also use it as the base of a poultice to treat wounds, and add it to several other ingredients to make a cream which they sell as a skin product to noblewomen of the courts, including the Imperial Court. Thanks to skillful Yasuki marketing techniques, the cream is always in high demand.



Rice and fish are never traded, however, for even given the abundance of Earthquake Fish Bay's warm waters, the Crab require enormous food reserves to man the Wall. The demand is multiplied further should they be forced to field an army in battle against another clan. Food is in fact the major Crab import, and tons of it, primarily rice and soybeans, flow through the port every day.

Clear Water is a major source of revenue and resources for the Crab. Such is its importance that the clan has stationed a full legion of troops here, with ashigaru auxiliaries, to protect the port and the nearby river crossing.

The port also enjoys the protection of the walls conceived by Kaiu Harata. Known as the Kaiu Wave Walls, these imposing fortifications surround the port to all sides on land, and extend into the waters of the bay providing protection for the harbor itself.

The walls are incredibly thick at the base, and wide enough at the top to allow three men to walk abreast. Bastions on every wall and tower mount Kaiu siege weaponry. In addition the walls are pierced by hidden tunnels, much like those of the Carpenter Wall itself, which

act as storehouses. Arms and food are kept stockpiled here, enough to arm an entire additional legion and feed them for many weeks. Again like the Carpenter Wall, the tunnels have several secret doors which lead outside the walls, and in the event of a siege, these can be used to dispatch scouts or to launch sorties against the enemy.

Although the existence of the tunnels is well-known to the current Crab governor, magistrate, and military commanders, a fire soon after they were completed destroyed some of the plans. Therefore the full extent of the tunnel network has never been firmly established, and it is possible there remain secret chambers in the walls that no one has entered since Kaiu Harata's death.

Despite the strength of the walls, for some time one flaw remained in Clear Water's defences. In 657 a pirate band known as the Sea Dragons attempted to destroy the Crab fleet by launching small fire ships into the harbor. Although the Kaiu destroyed many of them, the small size of the ships made them difficult targets and some got through, causing great damage. The Kaiu consulted with the other Crab families on a way to remove this final weakness in the defences. It was the Kuni who provided a solution.

Using their Earth magic, the Kuni grew a series of coral reefs on the approaches to the harbor entrance. The paths through these so-called Kuni Reefs remain a closely guarded secret. No ship can now safely approach the harbor without a Hiruma pilot onboard. Such pilots are rowed out to the waiting ships, accompanied by two bushi. The bushi have standing orders to kill the pilot at the first sign of any treachery from the ships, such is the Crab determination to keep the routes secret.

The administration of Clear Water Village depends on the political situation at the time. Should the Crab be at peace with the Crane, their nearest neighbors, the local governor is normally a member of the Yasuki family. Should the Crab be at war, or if the threat of war is high, a Hida governor is normally appointed. The Crab are careful to ensure that the governor is supported by Yasuki advisors in such cases. After all, Clear Water Village is too important economically to the Crab to allow even war to interfere with its commercial activities. In recent years the Crab have almost always been on a war footing with the Crane, and the Hida seldom have a good head for business, so this policy has served the Crab Clan well.



Location Guide

For administration, tax, and security reasons Clear Water Village is divided into a number of districts. Four of these districts are walled off, accessed through several gates, but travel between the districts is largely unrestricted. The exception to this is the Administrative district.

The Administrative District

The Administrative District is easily the most formidable of the four walled districts in Clear Water Village. The walls that surround this district are equal in strength to those protecting the entire port. A single gatehouse pierces the wall, flanked by two towers. A squad of bushi is always on guard here, and no one is admitted without the proper papers or authority.

For those who are not residents or officials of the Administrative District, admission requires papers showing one has been requested to appear before the Governor or another official. Visitors may also be admitted if they are in the company of local officials, or are persons of significant rank (Imperials, magistrates, etc). With the exception of Imperial magistrates or other persons of exceptional rank, all visitors are required to leave their weapons at the gatehouse.

This district is the seat of local government, housing not only the offices of the local administration but also the garrison barracks, the naval port, and the personal residences of the highest-ranking Crab samurai in the city. At the center of the district, both figuratively and literally, lies Clear Water Castle. The castle is built in the rinkaku style, with the keep at the center and two baileys ranged concentrically about it. The outer bailey houses the lowest ranking bushi, the inner bailey those who are next in seniority, and the keep itself houses the Governor, his family, and his personal retainers. The current Governor is Hida Matsuro, but he is often absent from Clear Water on official business. In his absence the day-to-day administration of Clear Water falls to his trusted karo, Hida Utaka.

Surrounding the keep is a wide dry moat, which is spanned by a single bridge. There are always guards on duty here, and at night braziers and torches insure the area is well lit. Beyond the moat are the offices of the city officials, the barracks of the garrison, and the homes of those prominent Crab families who call Clear Water home. Closer to the water are the naval administrative building and the barracks of the sailors.

In the midst of all this the Yasuki have managed to set aside a small area in which they have created a magnificent garden, filled with sakura trees, an artificial river, and even a carp pond. The Yasuki residents often come here to relax and renew themselves, although their Hida cousins do not visit it nearly as often.

Outside the gates of the district, the Crab authorities maintain a wooden post for displaying official notices and proclamations. It also lists details of wanted criminals. Interested parties can speak to the captain of the guard at the gatehouse, who is authorized to cut papers empowering samurai to act on the local magistrate's behalf in carrying out their mission. Noteworthy success may get the attention of Hida Matsuro himself, and those who win his favor may be invited along on one of his notorious "falconry" trips (see "Important Personages" later in this chapter).

The Harbor District

The second of the walled districts, the Harbor district is by far the busiest part of Clear Water Village. Workers labor in shifts around the clock, so the vital task of unloading food and other vital shipments continues at all hours. These goods are transferred to warehouses inside the Merchant's District, or shipped immediately west to the Wall.

Three gates pierce the harbor wall, the Rice Gate which leads to the warehouses of the Merchant's District, the Tea Gate which opens near the Hanamachi District, and the Workers Gate, which gives access to the homes of the heimin families based here.

The western end of the harbor has dry-dock and repair facilities. Here any ship damaged by treacherous weather conditions or the attacks of pirates can be repaired for a reasonable cost. To the east of the harbor, guarded by a fortified stone pier and tower and adjacent to the Administrative District, are the docks of the Hida navy stationed here. These docks are large, able to host up to a dozen kobune or Iron Turtle vessels and almost as many again of smaller ship types such as the seki bune.

The naval forces here are under the command of Hiruma Genjuro. He co-ordinates with the Yasuki merchants to protect important shipments, and also mounts regular patrols as far as the Tidal Land Bridge, guarding against any threats to merchant shipping, be they pirates or Shadowlands in origin.

Commoner sailors who come to Clear Water Village are normally confined to the Harbor District, and tea and sake houses have been provided for their entertainment, albeit none as fine as those inside the Hanamachi District. Ship captains, samurai visitors, and other notables can gain access to the rest of Clear Water by obtaining a pass from the guards at one of the gates. This allows them free access to all the open areas of the city, although they are expected to return to an inn in the Visitor's District by midnight. Those found outside its walls after this time



can face severe penalties unless they hold very high social rank. The Crab are ever conscious of security here.

The port can be a boisterous place. After journeys lasting weeks, sailors are often eager to slake their thirst for sake. The Hida patrol the harbor walls, while Yasuki bushi patrol the waterfront itself. They have a friendlier demeanor about them and are less likely to employ lethal force to restore peace.

The harbor is also home to several illegal activities. In the shadiest of teahouses one can make contact with smugglers, forgers, and thieves. The Yasuki occasionally crack down on these activities, but not too hard – after all, they are involved in many of them. The Yasuki are careful to restrict these kinds of activities to the harbor area itself. Should they find anyone undertaking unsanctioned activities outside the Harbor District they move swiftly and forcibly to bring them to an end.

The Kuni Tower

To the undiscerning eye, this tower appears like any other on the Wave Walls. If one looks closer, however, there is a perceptible difference. A small landing jetty within the naval harbor gives access to a set of stone steps climbing to a door some ten feet above the high water mark. Those who enter this door find a set of stairs which do not run up to the walls but rather descend downward, below the water level. This is the Kuni tower, a place of fear and death for those suspected of Taint or of practicing maho.

The Kuni Tower is a facility born of a convenient alliance between the Kuni and Yasuki families. Occasionally the Kuni Witchhunters come across a maho-tsukai who is difficult to accuse. Perhaps the person is someone of importance, a samurai magistrate, a shugenja from one of the other Great Clans, or anyone else against whom an accusation would not stand (and could create political complications for the Crab). In this case the Kuni turn to their Yasuki allies. If there is a Yasuki ship nearby its services are freely offered, and if not, the legendary Yasuki skill in smuggling is brought into play instead. The suspect is quietly removed and brought to Clear Water Village, where the Kuni take him into their sinister tower.

The Kaiu built most of this tower below the waves, creating a series of cells and chambers hidden by the water of Earthquake Fish Bay. Suspects are interred in these cells, and the Kuni use their formidable powers to extract a confession from them, along with details that will help locate and crush any allies they might have. Once the suspect has confessed, the Kuni seal the cell and open the special valves the Kaiu constructed in this tower, allowing the bay waters in. The waters can be admitted swiftly, filling the cells in minutes, or slowly, taking a number of hours or even days. For those who confess, the Kuni typically allow the water to enter at the slowest possible rate. It is a terrible death.

Very rarely, the Kuni find they have made a mistake. Those Kuni who make such errors all react differently. Some commit seppuku. Some enter the cells fully conscious and allow the waters to claim them. Some go to the Wall, determined to fight those whose corruption is certain. Others are pragmatic, as so many Crab can be, accepting that not everyone is perfect and vowing not to be mistaken again. Regardless, such unfortunate innocent victims do not survive their sojourn in the Kuni Tower. The Kuni work to protect the Empire, and they cannot allow a mistake now and then to stand in their way, nor can they allow such a prisoner to bring word of what has transpired. Should word get out that the Kuni are abducting people from elsewhere in the Empire it would cause a major outcry in the Imperial Court, if not war.

The Visitors District

This is the third of the walled districts in Clear Water Village. The Crab, wary of outsiders, built only one gateway into this district. This gate is in the south wall, opening into the Workers District. There are guards on duty at the gate at all times and it is locked at midnight, only opening again at dawn. The walls are tall and smooth, almost impossible to climb without equipment, and a patrol moves along the base of the wall at regular intervals. Those caught outside without a pass are in serious trouble – at the very least they will be brought to the gatehouse of the Administrative District and questioned by the city magistrate or one of his yoriki. If anyone is spotted doing anything suspicious, such as attempting to climb the walls, the patrolling bushi will simply attack first and ask questions later.

Within this district there are many inns, teahouses, and sake houses of acceptable quality. There is also a garden, designed like the private garden in the Administrative District but on a larger scale.

For much of the year, this district is less than two thirds occupied, but during the Great Fairs it is filled to overflowing, and those staying here may be forced to share rooms with strangers or pay much higher prices than normal.

Local superstition has it that this district is haunted. During quiet times people have claimed to hear strange noises near the walls. One traveler even told a story of following another man who seemed to be acting suspiciously. The man turned a corner ahead of him, but when the traveler got there, he found only the wall. The man had disappeared. Of course, since the traveler had spent the evening at a sake house, his tale was not taken very seriously.

The Workers District

This district is home to the many heimin workers and fishermen who reside in Clear Water Village. The sake houses here are of mediocre quality. Thousands of people dwell in this crowded district, inhabiting small apartments and simple one-room houses. There is almost nothing of interest here for samurai.

The Craftsman's District

This district is home to the skilled craftsmen of Clear Water. Here can be found net weavers, basket makers, carpenters, and stone workers. Here also are smiths, metal workers, and woodcarvers, all of them producing the finest goods for trade. Anyone wishing to purchase an item here will be directed to one of the many merchants in Clear Water, unless they are looking to commission an unusual or unique item. Those looking for repairs to arms or armor, however, have come to the correct place.

Due to the presence of many smithies, fire is a constant danger in this district, even more so than the rest of the city. Recognizing this, the Crab authorities have taken steps to minimize the risks. The buildings here are spaced further apart than normal, buckets of sand and water are hung from every post, and special Kaiu water wagons have been placed strategically throughout the district. Smiths must ensure that their forges have special covers in place, to minimize the risk of sparks being carried on the wind. Thus, the last major fire to break out in Clear Water Village was not here, but rather in the Merchant District.

In this district the master weapon smith Hida Bansaro makes his home. His skills are well known within the Crab, and some say he is among the finest weaponsmiths of his generation. He has gathered around himself a skilled group of fellow craftsmen, covering every aspect of sword-making, from the saya and tsuba





to the hilt wrappings. Each year Bansaro and his fellows craft the daisho awarded to the Champion of the Sunda Mizu dojo.

Player characters who win the admiration of Hida Matsuro may commission daisho from Bansaro. The swords are expensive, costing a magistrate's annual salary, but they are worth it.

The Merchant District

This district houses the warehouses, stores, and homes of the Yasuki merchants, along with others who have been granted a license to trade here. All of the goods dispatched for trade can also be bought here, usually at reasonable prices.

In the center of this district lies a great square. Here can be found a shrine to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth, revered by the Yasuki above all others. Here too is where the Great Fairs are held, when merchants from all over Rokugan come to trade for the finest products on offer. The Yasuki declare a Great Fair at least once a year, unless war or other troubles intervene.

Just off the square is the Yasuki auction house, a small building converted from a teahouse. Here the Yasuki hold their Jade Auctions, one of their more unusual customs. At these auctions, extremely rare artworks, valuable items, and ancient artifacts are put up for open bid, available to any parties. The medium of the bid, however, is not money but jade. Although the Crab lands have several jade mines, their constant need for jade to confront the forces of the Shadowlands means they are perpetually short of the precious divine substance. Even in better times, when jade was more plentiful, the Crab feared their stocks might run low, moving the Yasuki to hold the first Jade Auction. They have continued to hold them at irregular intervals over the years, calling one only when they believe they have suitably unique and valuable items. There have been whispers that they will hold one at the next Great Fair.

Although it is possible to buy or trade for all manner of items in this district, there is one product which is not so readily available, even from the mercantile Yasuki. Tea of Jade Petals is sold by only one merchant in Clear Water Village, Yasuki Fuchiko. She keeps careful records of all those purchasing it, as well as the quantities purchased. These records are regularly examined by the Kuni, making sure that it is only purchased by those authorized to drink the Tea of Jade Petals to control their acknowledged Taint.

The Hanamachi District

The fourth walled district in Clear Water Village is the Hanamachi District. The walls here are simple ones without any true defensive value, designed mainly to channel the traffic into the district for the ease of law enforcement. This is the city's entertainment district, where the okiya, the houses of the geisha, are to be found. Of course, the geisha houses form only a part of the Hanamachi district. Surrounding them are many other entertainment establishments, encouraged by the Yasuki. Theaters and playhouses, fine quality tea and sake houses, and many fine restaurants can be found here. Indeed, it is the Yasuki sponsorship of such activities, almost as much as their skill for trade, that marks them as something different from the other Crab families. A holdover perhaps from their days amongst the Crane, but certainly not something of which they are ashamed.

The Yasuki are frequent visitors here, but the district is open to all. Most Hida and Kuni rarely visit, for they have little time for the world of culture, the so-called karyūkai. When they do, they normally go no further than the sake houses. Guests from outside the Crab Clan, however, make a point of sampling this district's wares whenever they visit, thereby further enriching Crab coffers.

Many artists make this district their home, the most famous of which is the ronin painter Hanaka. His delicate ink paintings of the bay are sought after by many. Although he sells some of them to live, he is also known to trade them for collections of poetry, his own greatest love.

The wandering bard Ikoma Ranaka also visits this district regularly. When he is here the Hida flood the place, eager to hear his recitations of the stories of past Crab heroes.

Lately something else has drawn the Crab here as well. A new play is being presented, the Battle of Last Stand River, and the actress playing Kuni Osaku, Hakiro, has garnered much praise (and drawn more than a few samurai admirers) for her portrayal of this Crab legend.



Sunda Mizu Dojo

Tradition has it that this dojo, one of the oldest in Rokugan, was founded by Hida himself. The passage of centuries has made it impossible to say whether this is true, but it is known with certainty that Hida did teach here, and that he set down many of the dojo's strictures and rules that are still in practice today.

The most famous of these was the direction that every student and sensei was to carve their name into the grey stone walls of the dojo, and no name was ever to be defaced or removed. Over time, this rule led to the dojo being expanded again and again as space ran out on the walls. Eventually, the sensei literally ran out of room, and it seemed the dojo was in danger of being forced to break this time-honored tradition. By this time, however, the village itself had grown into a major settlement, sheltered within the Kaiu Wave Walls. The Governor at the time, Yasuki Kanaka, declared that all lands within the original village walls would henceforth be the property of the dojo. He relocated the villagers who lived there into new houses. This action allowed the dojo to keep growing.

Today the dojo consists of the original buildings and training grounds, an assortment of new buildings built by the Kaiu to blend seamlessly with the original constructions, and the original keep tower, by virtue of its hilltop location the highest building in Clear Water and now the home of the sensei who teach in the dojo.

The dojo also contains a strange throwback to the old village days. Near the oldest of the buildings stands a simple hut. New students often inquire about this structure... and the sensei tell them that this is the hut Hida slept in when he instructed at the dojo so many years ago. Whether this is true or not none can now say, but the sensei often spend the night there, meditating on the lessons of the Kami and how best to instruct each generation of students in the battle against the Shadowlands.

The cellars of the sensei's tower hold the instruction rooms of the Kuni. In these rooms their students receive instruction about Shadowlands creatures, their strengths and weaknesses. In a few strong cells the Kuni hold some samples of weaker Shadowlands creatures, used as part of the students' training to give them first hand experience of what it is like to fight against the evil of the horde.

The training here is tough, for the Crab must learn to do battle with monsters the rest of the Empire can only imagine in nightmares. In the second year of their instruction they are taken as a class to the Shadowlands and taught survival methods there. Finally, for their gempukku they are sent alone into the Shadowlands, with orders to return with the head of a Shadowlands creature. This is presented to the sensei and if they approve the student graduates. The heads are cleansed of Taint by the Kuni and put on display over the entrance and along the wall tops. Over the centuries a truly terrifying collection of heads has been assembled here, and normal citizens tend to shun the place.

In addition to the traditional Hida school, Sunda Mizu Dojo also teaches the techniques of the notorious Pragmatist school, a style of fighting which focuses on hand to hand combat. Lately, one of the sensei here has also begun trying to find a way to combine all the Crab bushi styles into a new unified fighting form. Whether this succeeds or proves to be merely wasted effort, however, remains to be seen.

Each year, Sunda Mizu Dojo holds a contest to appoint a champion. This is purely a contest of arms, unlike many competitions in other lands, for the Crab have no need for good Go players. They require warriors capable of battling the Shadowlands Horde. To date, all champions have been of the Crab, even though students from outside the clan are sometimes permitted to train here. Indeed, samurai of the other clans have gradually come to appreciate the advantage in having bushi trained to combat the Shadowlands, and many of the other families now send a few of their bushi to study here. These are most often from vassal branches of the great families, but recently the Crane have sent one of their best, Daidoji Yoshorou. So good in fact, that for the first time the dojo may have a champion from outside the Crab Clan.

The North River Wharf

While the River of Gold is wide and slow-moving for most of its length, a set of rapids to the north of Clear Water Village prevent it from being fully navigable. The Crab have gotten around this by building a small river port above the rapids. Over the years this has grown into a small satellite village, North River Wharf.

The village is a very basic settlement. Apart from the wharfs, it contains only a guard house, a teahouse, and the dwellings of the heimin. It is protected by a low stone wall and garrisoned by a small force of ashigaru. During times of danger, Hiruma scouts are deployed on both sides the river to give early warning of any threat.

North River Wharf allows the Crab to maintain a trade fleet on the River of Gold and gives them access to Scorpion and Lion lands. Although such trade is taxed heavily by the Scorpion, the Crab know it is worth the price. The river is also one of the main centers of Yasuki smuggling operations.

Important Personages

The following individuals are of particular importance in Clear Water Village and are, for the most part, known to the vast majority of people who live within the city.

Hida Matsuro

Governor of Clear Water Village

Hida Matsuro, Governor of Clear Water Village, is 44 years old and bored beyond belief. Although he understands the importance of the port to the strength of his clan, he wishes that another had been appointed to govern here. He longs to return to battle, where he belongs. When the occasion permits, he relieves his boredom by shark fishing in the bay, or pursuing his favourite pastime, falconry.

His tetsubo, Biter, is a testament to his skill at shark hunting. The craftsman Hida Bansaro has embedded Biter with the teeth of the sharks Matsuro has caught. Bansaro has also embedded several jade teeth, to make the weapon effective against Tainted foes. This makes Biter a ferocious weapon to look upon, and it deals tremendous damage when wielded by Matsuro.

Matsuro's falconry is less successful – mainly because it is a lie. His superiors in the Hida Clan have begun to note that many of his falconry trips seem to coincide with reported sightings of Shadowlands creatures on this side of the Wall. Matsuro pursues such creatures with implacable hatred; the Shadowlands took his wife from him many years ago, and he will never be able to kill enough of them to wipe away his fury.

Still, so long as Clear Water continues to run smoothly in his absence, the Hida are willing to tolerate his eccentricities. The Yasuki are less forgiving. Many things require the Governor's attention, many papers require signing, and not all can be handled by subordinates. Thus far they have been slow to complain, out of respect for Matsuro's deeds. But should a major deal fall through due to his absence, they will have no option but to ask for him to be replaced, preferably with one of their own.

Should Matsuro hear good things about Player Characters, he will likely invite them along on one of his "falconry" trips. If they do well they will earn his respect, a valuable commodity, although the price of failure could be high if they are facing oni or worse.

Hida Matsuro, Governor of Clear Water Village

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 3		Agility: 4	Strength: 4	

Honor: 2.9 *Status: 6.0* *Glory: 2.2*

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 4

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcons) 4, Athletics (Swimming) 2, Battle (Specific Enemy: Shadowlands) 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Commerce 1, Craft: Fishing (Shark Fishing) 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 2, Defense 5, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 6, Hunting 3, Intimidation 1, Jiujutsu 1, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Lore: Law 2, Medicine 2, Sailing 3, Stealth 3



Advantages: Gentry, Heart of Vengeance (Shadowlands), Social Position (Governor of Clear Water), Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Driven (Destroy Shadowlands Creatures), Lost Love

Hida Utaka

Captain of the City Guard

Hida Utaka is Matsuro's karo, and acts as his chief advisor, the captain of the guard, and his effective deputy when Matsuro is away on "falconry" or other personal business. He is a tough, stern, no-nonsense Crab warrior, not the man best suited to helping run a commercial city, a fact of which he is well aware. He often leans on the Governor's various Yasuki advisors to help make decisions.

Those who inquire about the bounties posted outside the gates of the Administrative District will most likely deal with Hida Utaka, and should they perform well, Utaka can offer them more opportunities. If they continue to impress him, he will eventually pass their names to his lord.

Beneath his stern demeanor, however, Utaka hides a secret. Like many samurai, his marriage was an arranged one. Although he and his wife have had two children, there is no love between them, only duty. Some months ago, he was persuaded by Yasuki Sumiko to go to see the new play "Battle of Last Stand River." He went, expecting to be bored out of his mind. Instead he became instantly smitten with the actress Hakiro, who portrays the heroic Kuni Osaku.

He has begun to court her, and the two meet as often but as discretely as they can. He has rented a house in the Visitors District, and disguises himself when he goes there to meet Hakiro. His wife suspects, but as long as he maintains his discretion she will say nothing – she too is Crab, and knows the meaning of duty. However, if others found out about Utaka's affair with a mere actress, it would lead to his disgrace, so he must tread carefully.

Hida Utaka, Captain of the City Guard

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4

Awareness: 4 Intelligence: 4

Honor: 4.6 *Status: 3.5* *Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier 3, Defense 4, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 2, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 3, Hunting 1, Intimidation 2, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 2

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Wary, Social Position (Karo)

Disadvantages: Bad Eyesight, True Love (Hakiro)

Yasuki Sumiko

Influential Merchant Patron

Yasuki Sumiko is not a bitter woman, but she feels strongly that each person is suited to a certain task in life. For the Hida, that task is undoubtedly fighting. For the Yasuki, it is making money.

Because of this, she feels that Clear Water Village, a trading port and place of commerce, should have a Yasuki governor. If the Crane come, surely the walls will hold them as they did before, and in the meantime the city



needs proper governance and administration. She does not dislike Hida Matsuro – in fact, she respects him greatly. Sumiko simply feels he is not the best man for the position, and is inadvertently damaging the Crab by not maximizing the revenue that could be earned from the merchant activities in Clear Water.

If one were to ask Sumiko who she would see in the position instead, she would of course choose herself. Not out of pride, she would insist, but for sheer ability.

These thoughts do not prevent Sumiko from performing her duties, however. She is a loyal Crab and does her best for the clan.

Her most recent project began two years ago, growing out of an inquiry on how pearls were formed. The Kuni told Sumiko they believed they were created when a piece of grit or other foreign object got inside an oyster shell. Sumiko immediately bought up several local oyster beds and hired local divers to be her farmers. She has been experimenting ever since with stimulating oyster to produce pearls. At first the results were discouraging, but now she is beginning to see returns from the project. Should Sumiko succeed in coming up with a practical way to culture pearls, she will greatly increase the wealth of the Crab. And with such success, Sumiko feels, the governorship of Clear Water should at last be hers.

Yasuki Sumiko, Influential Merchant Patron

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 4
	Willpower: 4		Perception: 3	

Honor: 4.6 *Status: 3.5* *Glory: 4.2*

School/Rank: Yasuki Courtier 3

Skills: Calligraphy 1, Craft: Fishing 1, Commerce (Appraisal) 5, Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Investigation 4, Intimidation 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 3, Lore: Crab Clan 2, Lore: Pearls 1, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Temptation (Bribery) 5

Advantages: Clear Water Native, Clear Thinker, Wealthy (8pts)

Disadvantages: Insensitive, Overconfident

Yasuki Funtaru

The Serpent in the Garden

Years ago, Yasuki Funtaru came to a realization and a decision. His realization was that the Shadowlands was destined to win the war against the Empire. His decision was to be on the winning side.

Now he uses his smuggling contacts to aid maho-tsukai and support the cause of the Shadowlands throughout the Empire. He carefully works only through intermediaries and covers his steps meticulously. After all, if he's going to be on the winning side, he wants to be around to enjoy the fruits of victory.

None suspect that his agents were responsible for setting the fire in the warehouse where Yasuki Fuchiko stored her supplies of Tea of Jade Petals two years ago. Nor that before the fires were set, these same agents stole large quantities of the tea, which he now smuggles to maho-tsukai throughout Rokugan.

Thanks to the warnings of the Kuni, he has become aware of the existence of Black Pearls (see "Items of Note" farther in this chapter). He has managed to recover seven of them with the aid of greedy and unscrupulous divers, all of whom have later perished tragically in apparent shark attacks. With the assistance of a corrupt craftsman named Kano Ichara, he is planning on using the Pearls to sow fear and discord in the Empire.

Yasuki Funtaru, the Serpent in the Garden

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
			Perception: 3	

Honor: 1.7 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 2.2*

(3.7 Perceived)

School/Rank: Yasuki Courtier 3

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcons) 1, Commerce (Appraisal) 3, Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 4, Intimidation 3, Knives 2, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Spellcraft 1, Temptation 3

Advantages: Allies (scattered maho-tsukai of various influence), Clear Water Native, Perceived Honor

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Shadowlands sympathizer), Disbeliever



Hiruma Hotaro

Ambitious Sensei

Hiruma Horato is one of the sensei at Sunda Mizu Dojo. He is a clear-eyed older man of great purpose and determination. Every student he trains here, every skill he learns from the other sensei, he puts to use defending the Empire. For some time now he has experimented with blending the various Crab styles, taking their essences and trying to combine techniques. With the permission of his lord he has trained in two separate dojo himself, trying to find a way to fuse the Hida and Hiruma techniques. While he has had some modest success, his style remains largely unrecognised at the dojo. The vast majority of his students are Hida, and they continue to train in the traditional Hida bushi school or the family's smaller Pragmatist school.

Recently Hiruma Hotaro has taken a Yasuki student, Yasuki Tomuri, under his wing. His goal is simple: if he can train a champion, one who can defeat all other students at the dojo, the other sensei will have to listen, and his new style will gain the respect it deserves. Whether this plan will bear fruit, only the future can say.

Hiruma Hotaro, Ambitious Sensei

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 3			Strength: 4	

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 4.2* *Glory: 4.9*

School/Rank: Hiruma Bushi 2 / Hida Bushi 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 5, Engineering (Traps) 3, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 7, Hunting 4, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Crab Clan 1, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Stealth 5

Advantages: Crab Hands, Higher Purpose, Leadership, Multiple Schools, Social Position (Sensei)

Disadvantages: Clear Water Stigma, Jealousy (other sensei at dojo), Obtuse

Hiruma Genjuro

Lord of Earthquake Fish Bay

Hiruma Genjuro, nicknamed "the Walrus" because of his long moustaches, is in charge of the Crab navy based at Clear Water Village. It is a responsibility he enjoys immensely. Not only does he love the sea and ships, he also understands their use in warfare. He knows that control of the waters of Earthquake Fish Bay can let the Crab negate any thrust westwards by Crane forces. Not only that, but proper control of the bay waters would allow the Crab to project their own forces to any point in the bay, while providing a secure base for operations against the Crane ports farther up Rokugan's coast.

Lately his eyes have looked to other horizons. As large as the Crab navy is, it is tiny compared to that of the Mantis. But if the Mantis could be brought onboard as allies, the most powerful navy Rokugan has ever seen would be at the Crab's disposal. No clan with a coastline could defy them, would dare defy them. The Hiruma and Mantis together could control the seas and coasts, the Hida could crush any that opposed them on land, and the Phoenix and Crane could not march to another clan's aid with a Crab navy at their backs. The Empire could be the Crab Clan's for the taking.

Genjuro is well aware that these thoughts are treacherous, and he has no intention of revealing them to anyone, at least not yet. But in secret, at night, he has begun to draw up plans for invasions by land and sea, and has hired artists to travel through the lands of the Crane and Phoenix and bring back paintings of their coastal defenses.

Should the day ever come when a Hida wishes to sit upon the throne, Genjuro will have the plans ready for him to do so.

Hiruma Genjuro, Lord of Earthquake Fish Bay

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 4
		Agility: 5		

Honor: 3.7 *Status: 2.5* *Glory: 4.7*

School/Rank: Hiruma Bushi 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 4, Defense 5, Games: Go 1, Heavy Weapons 4, Hunting 2, Intimidation 1, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Mantis Clan 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Sailing 2, Stealth 3

Advantages: Large, Tactician

Disadvantages: Contrary

Kuni Akiko

Victim of Conscience

Kuni Akiko is a young but accomplished witch-hunter. She has uncovered countless maho-tsukai plots throughout the Empire, and her family believes she is destined for great glory. Akiko, however, is not so sure. She is haunted by the fact that innocent people have occasionally had to be killed. Does not Shinsei say every life is precious? Is it truly in the best interests of the Empire that innocents must die? Fu Leng wishes to extinguish innocence, light, and truth. Are the Kuni in danger of becoming like that which they most hate?

These questions trouble her deeply. Now she faces a difficult choice. A young Phoenix shugenja was brought to the Kuni Tower some weeks ago, suspected of giving magical knowledge to a maho cult. The witch-hunters have now come reluctantly to the conclusion that they were mistaken, and preparations are underway to dispose of this unfortunate shugenja.

Kuni Akiko finds herself at war with her conscience and her duty. She has decided that if she can extract an oath of silence from the shugenja, so that he never reveals what has taken place, she will attempt to free him before he is killed. To do so Akiko requires allies from outside the Crab, and a plan. If she can find both she may be able to do what no one has done before, and achieve a breakout from the Kuni Tower.

Kuni Akiko, Victim of Conscience

Air: 2 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 3
Willpower: 4

Honor: 5.8 *Status: 1.5* *Glory: 2.5*

School/Rank: Kuni Shugenja 2

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Investigation 4, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Theology 2, Spellcraft 4, Sincerity 3, Staves 2

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Way of the Land (Hida and Yasuki Lands)

Disadvantages: Soft-Hearted

Bayushi Akana

Bayushi Akana appears to be an overweight buffoon. He is also a member of the Scorpion Clan, and so cannot be what he appears to be. Therefore, the man known as the Scorpion on the Shore must be a talented Scorpion operative, one who bears watching. Such, at least, is the opinion of almost every member of the Crab Clan in Clear Water Village. The fact that Akana somehow managed to obtain merchant's papers from the previous Yasuki Governor, enabling him to set up a business in the Merchant District, only reinforces this opinion.

Bayushi Akana is not a buffoon, nor is he fat, but he is having an immense amount of fun at the Crab Clan's expense. His added weight comes from clever wicker frames and padded clothes, and his buffoonery is simply a technique from the Scorpion acting schools. In reality Bayushi Akana is a skilled swordsman, one of the most dangerous duellists in Clear Water, and a shrewd observer of all around him.

The Crab maintain a close watch on Akana, waiting for him to make his move. This is exactly what the Scorpion wants. Bayushi Akana is a red flag being waved about by the Scorpion. He gets everyone's attention, while the real Scorpion agents move about unnoticed in the city.

Bayushi Akana

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 2 Void: 3
Willpower: 3 Perception: 3

Honor: 2.2 *Status: 1.3* *Glory: 1.9*

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 3

Skills: Acting (Profession) 5, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Commerce 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 3, Craft: Tailoring 3, Defense 1, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Iaijutsu 7, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Law 1, Lore: Underworld 2, Perform: Storytelling (Bragging) 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 3

Advantages: Blackmail (4 Points, former Yasuki magistrate), Clear Thinker, Quick

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (False identity), Overconfident



The Great One

Apex Predator of the Bay

The Great One, as he is called by the fishermen of Clear Water, is an incredibly large tiger shark that haunts the waters of Earthquake Fish Bay. Either he or a shark like him has been reported in the area for centuries, and the superstitious locals have come to regard him as a sort of minor Fortune. They believe that when the Great One appears, it heralds an event of great importance. The last confirmed sighting of the Great One was almost half a century ago.

The Great One has rarely been reported as attacking people. Usually it is only those who seek him out who must fear his wrath. Hida Matsuro has let it be known that should the Great One return to the bay, Matsuro will go out to meet him. If he does, the fishermen expect there to be a new Governor very soon.

At one point, the Kuni believed that the Great One's tremendous size was a result of the Shadowlands Taint, but an expedition mounted during his last appearance, led by a shugenja named Kuni Funura, proved this was not true.

The Great One, Apex Predator of the Bay

Air: 3	Earth: 6	Fire: 4	Water: 5
			Strength: 7

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Bite 6k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k3 — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 64: Dead*

Skills: Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: The Great One cannot survive out of water. While in water it may move at normal speed.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Huge*
- *Swallow: If three or more of the Great One's damage dice explode against an opponent, the Great One swallows that opponent whole. A swallowed character is helpless, unable to take Actions, and suffers an additional 3k3 damage each round until either it or the Great One dies. If the target is Large, four of the Great One's damage dice need to explode to swallow the target, while only two exploding dice are required to swallow a Small target.*



Items of Note

The following items are somewhat unique to the area of Clear Water Village, and are known by name immediately to any native.

The Black Pearls

Black Pearls, also known as the Black Pearls of Fu Leng, are formed from a small piece of Tainted material aggravating the inside of an oyster or clam. Whether the Tainted material is introduced accidentally, or is a deliberate act by the forces of Jigoku, none can say. The result is the creation of a Black Pearl, Tainted gems which have an ill effect on those who hold them. In addition to potentially Tainting those who hold them, the Pearls exert a sinister fascination that makes it very difficult for anyone to let them go. Characters who discover a Black Pearl must make a Willpower roll, TN 20, in order to surrender it.

Thankfully Black Pearls are rare, and the Kuni offer a large bounty for any recovered.

Kano Ichara's Puzzle Boxes

Kano Ichara is a craftsman of unique genius, but also completely corrupt at heart. He is a loyal follower of Yasuki Funtaru, and when Funtaru tasked him to find a means of using Black Pearls to sow discord in the Empire, he used all of his powers to do so. His solution was to craft a puzzle box, a special kind of puzzle box. Normal puzzle boxes are designed to offer a modest intellectual challenge, aligning various moving faces and hinges to open them and reveal what is kept inside – typically a small gift, or a scroll with a quote from the Tao of Shinsei.

Ichara's twisted genius has come up with a puzzle box that has no solution – and within that puzzle box resides a Black Pearl. The fact that the box has no solution is not readily apparent, however, since each box is constructed in such a clever way as to appear completely solvable. Whoever receives one will certainly believe so. Each time a particular combination of moves fail, the box's clever construction suggests that if one retraces steps and simply tries a different combination the puzzle will finally be solved.

All the while, the evil effects of the Black Pearl are working on the person trying to solve the box. Soon their behavior begins to change, subtly at first, as the desire to gain the hidden and enticing Pearl is amplified by the frustration they feel at being unable to solve the puzzle box. They become obsessed with opening the box, ignoring all but the most important matters and spending every hour available working at it. Should anyone attempt to take the box from them they will grow angry, perhaps

even react violently. Finally, when they can take no more, they will loose all control and break the box by force to gain their prize. By this time, they will most likely have been driven insane.

Funtaru has only been able to acquire seven Black Pearls, and Ichara has been able to make five boxes so far. He gave the first box to a fellow craftsman, and was able to observe the progression of the symptoms described above. Once the craftsman had possession of the Pearl, he killed his entire family under the belief they were trying to rob him of it. Pleased with this result, Ichara and Funtaru are now planning on sending the remaining four boxes to more important and influential targets, targets whose eventual madness could throw the Empire into chaos.

The Sea Dragon Daisho

This legendary pair of swords has been lost in Earthquake Fish Bay for over four hundred years. The swords were originally known as the Doji Dragon Daisho, and were crafted by Dragon smiths as part of the bridal gifts when Mirumoto Minaiko married Doji Gunjen. Legend has it that the Togashi Daimyo at the time had a hand in their making.

The swords were in the Doji family for only one generation. Then Doji Yasagawa was killed by the female pirate Chaiko, who later called herself the Sea Dragon, and the swords came into her possession. Ultimately doomed by her killing of a samurai, she nevertheless waged a brilliant campaign for a time, culminating in her successful destruction of a large part of the Crab fleet pursuing her by attacking Clear Water Village with fire-ships. After this incident the Crab and Crane joined their forces and hunted her relentlessly. The Crab laid a successful trap with modified merchant ships, and the Sea Dragon was sorely wounded and her ship badly damaged. Rather than surrender and be executed she dived overboard. When her crew was captured, they said that when they saw her last she was treading water and bleeding badly, and the sharks were closing in. The Doji family later hired divers to search for the swords, but they were never located.

Rumors have begun circulating this year, rumors that the objects up for bid at the Jade Auction will be the Sea Dragon Daisho. The Doji have written to Hida Matsuro, putting forward their claim for the swords. He has simultaneously denied they have a valid claim while refusing to confirm that the swords will be up for auction. If they are, though, he has suggested the Crane come with an ample supply of jade.



New Mechanics

New Advantage: Clear Water Native [Social] (3 points)

Your time spent in Clear Water Village has allowed you to build a beneficial and discreet network of contacts in the world of mercantile interests. It may be distasteful, but none can deny that it has proven quite useful. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Commerce Skill Rolls. The amount of koku you receive as part of your School's Outfit is increased by 50% (rounding up).

New Disadvantage: Clear Water Stigma [Social] (2 points)

Growing up in Clear Water Village has left you with an unpleasant stigma: many among your clan assume that you are involved in the mercantile interests and rampant obsession with money and material goods so common in that city. Even among the Crab, who normally care little about such things, this is seen as distasteful. Your Glory is considered one rank lower when dealing with other Crab, and you must choose to either lose all the koku that normally would be part of your School Outfit, or one weapon normally included in your Outfit. (Your lords assume you are wealthy, and offer you less in the way of an initial stipend.)

New Alternate Path: Hiruma Yojimbo [Bushi]

Since the first days of the Crab Clan, the athletic and attentive Hiruma have often served as yojimbo for the Crab Champion and his most important vassals. This is not because the Hida lack for physical or martial power, of course, but rather because the Hiruma excel at perceiving threats that other Crab might easily miss. They are also considerably faster than the average member of most other Crab families, and speed is an essential component of any successful yojimbo's repertoire of talents.

New Alternate Path: Hiruma Yojimbo

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Hiruma Bushi 3 or Hiruma Scout 3
- **Requirements:** Defense 3

Technique: The Crab's Shell

Those Hiruma tasked with protecting the lives of important Crab personages understand that the best and most effective means of defending them is to destroy their enemies as quickly as possible. After making a successful melee attack, you may immediately perform the Guard Action as a Free Action (if your charge is close enough for you to Guard). If you do so, you may add the amount by which your attack roll exceeded your opponent's Armor TN to the Armor TN of your charge until your next Turn.

New Alternate Path: Yasuki Enforcer [Bushi]

The Yasuki merchants specialize in all manner of questionable forms of commerce and negotiation, and some few among them are discovered to have an exquisite talent for intimidation. Rather than see such gifts go to waste, the Yasuki lords at Clear Water Village prefer to teach them the methods they need to make their threats a reality. After all, a threat that cannot be followed through on is just poor business.

New Alternate Path: Yasuki Enforcer

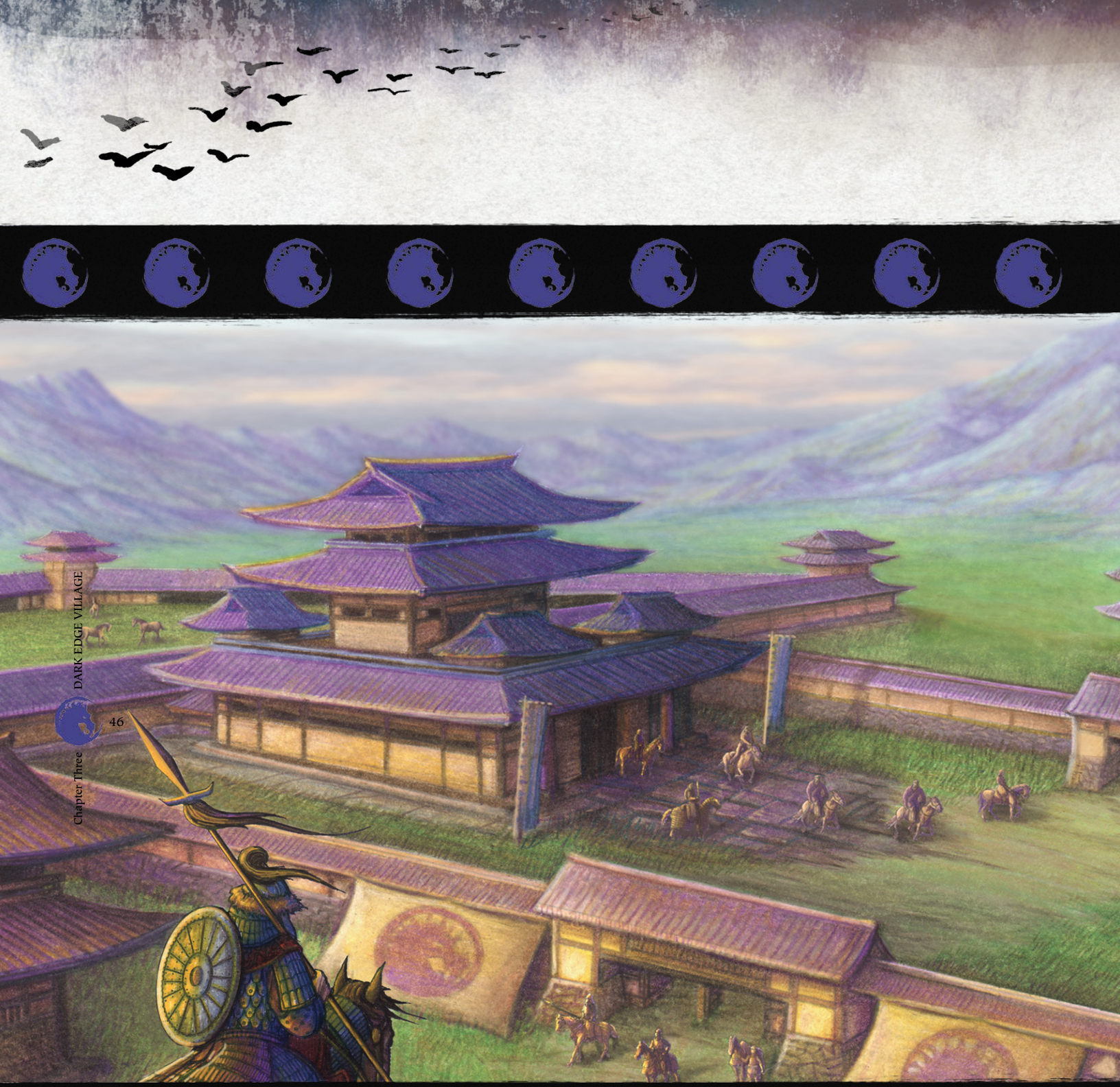
- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Yasuki Courtier 2 or Hida Pragmatist 2
- **Requirements:** Intimidation 3

Technique: Gentle Encouragement

The enforcers of the Yasuki family know how to threaten in such a way that thoroughly cows any potential opponent. You may make a Contested Roll against any individual, using your Willpower / Intimidation against their Willpower / Etiquette. If you are successful, you gain a bonus of +1k0 on all attack rolls made against that individual during the first Round of combat against them during your next skirmish. Each successful Raise made on this Contested Roll increases your bonus by an additional +1k0. If this Technique is activated during a skirmish, the initial Contested Roll is a Complex Action.







Chapter Three

Dark Edge Village

Sweeping with short, precise strokes, a weathered, middle-aged shugenja smoothed out the sand of the ancient dueling field. Utaku Natsumi watched the slow progression of the rite with a small degree of impatience, mixed with pity. Age, it seemed, had slowly enfeebled the shugenja until it left the older woman barely able to ply the rake. Besides, the field was so rarely used now that there was little to turn beneath the surface. No fragments of armor, no spatters of blood, no signs of the glorious duels from ages past. Only smooth tracks of white sand, turned for centuries by hand until it was fine and pristine.

How terrible, to have age whisk away even the ability to perform one's simplest duties, the Utaku thought. She suppressed a momentary shudder at the notion of old age stealing away her strength, her smooth skin, and her honor. Then she turned her attention away from the shugenja and to her opponent at the other edge of the dueling field.

Seated cross-legged at the edge of the circle, the Dragon seemed positively, infuriatingly serene. He was just as cryptic now as he had been when he gently chided Natsumi's haste to give pursuit to alleged bandits; when he had counseled against chasing down the thieves who had stolen two tureens of ginger and a jug of ornamenting lacquer, as if the Unicorn should simply allow theft under their very noses and in the heart of their lands; when he had implied that her desire to hunt down those who would shame her lord by committing open crimes in his lands was nothing more than childish impetuousness.

Childish to leap in defense of her lord's land and people? Childish to root out the wicked and punish them? No, she was no child any more, and the honor of a samurai-ko could not be so easily tarnished with careless words. Not without consequences. Natsumi thought that perhaps the display might even bring her some glory for her skill in defending her honor.

"Do you expect many will come to watch?" she idly asked of the shugenja. The aged priestess sighed and lifted up the rake, then replied, "A few. So many duels have been fought in this place that they do not draw as much attention. Nor is this a duel of station like those of old, when Emerald Champions were made here." Something in the shugenja's eyes seemed to show a glimmer of distaste for the young Unicorn. Then, the priestess shouldered her rake. "Remember, Utaku-san, the dark edge comes at the end of the duel. Honor shines brightly. Edges become dark from blood. You know as well as any what the Fortunes have to say about blood."

Without further comment, the shugenja turned, straightened, and walked surely and surprisingly swiftly across the sand to the old observing platform where once courtiers and even Emperors had watched the duels at this place. Natsumi couldn't help herself; she sneered slightly as the shugenja left. Old and useless, just like this village, she thought, as the Dragon quietly uncoiled at the far edge of the field.

History

Dark Edge village has an ancient history. According to Imperial records, it was the site where Emperor Hantei held the first tournament of the Emerald Champion in the dawn of the Empire, and it was made the formal location of all Emerald Tournaments in the Second Century, under the reign of Hantei Genji, the Shining Prince. Until the command of the Shining Prince, the village was little more than a small stop along a trade route in western Dragon territories, despite having once hosted the great duel between Kakita and Matsu. The prestige associated with regular Emerald Tournaments, though, quickly catapulted the village into a new (though transitory) standing.

Opinions differ as to why Hantei Genji formalized Dark Edge Village as the home of the Emerald Tournaments. Some claim that Genji, always renowned as an artist, chose the village because of the descriptions brought to him by an Imperial cartographer who carried pictures and poetic stories of the humble village's rustic charm, sandy fields, picturesque tree cover, and sere eastern hillsides. Courtiers inclined toward gossip claim the location was actually chosen by the famous Doji Hatsuo, with the influence of his advisor Soshi Saibankan, specifically because it was far enough away from any central authority that it would be considered neutral territory, and therefore an open field for competition in the Emerald Tournaments. Whatever the truth of the matter, the village was chosen, and gained enormous prestige from its importance as the center of the iaijutsu duels that became the standard for choosing Emerald Champions. Doji Hatsuo and Soshi Saibenkan, meanwhile, went on to develop the system of Emerald Magistrates to enforce Imperial law.

For well on to seven hundred years, Dark Edge village prospered greatly. The presence of Emerald Magistrates and Champions at the village—not to mention the visits of the Emperor himself at the times of tournaments—led to tremendous change and growth. Stoneworkers came in, using quarried stone from the northern mountains to build strong structures to house the Imperial retinue during visits. Local administrators became influential and wealthy from the commerce brought during each tournament, although most of them stayed scrupulously incorruptible, as the Emerald Magistrates would have relentlessly rooted out any larceny or treachery performed under their very noses.



Once the initial burst of growth passed – tournament fields sanctified, the new temporary dwellings for visitors constructed, and the administration and local defenses improved – the village slowed its rate of growth, but the population boom still left even the common farmers very prosperous. At each new tournament, a new viewing stand would be constructed for the Emperor and guests; at the end of the tournament, these structures would be torn down and the useful materials sent by lengthy caravan to the Imperial capitol for rebuilding into shrines or monuments there. In this way, the village guaranteed that each tournament would have its own grandiose theme and unique style, coloring, and architecture, while the location of the tournaments remained consistent and traditional.

A period of instability occurred when the Gozoku conspiracy rose to power and then was overthrown in the fifth century. During the reign of the Gozoku, many of the Emerald Magistrates had been corrupted into little more than servants and killers for the conspiracy; those Magistrates who held to their honor often found themselves marginalized or sent to distant provinces. When Hantei Yugozohime assumed the throne and broke the Gozoku conspiracy, Matsu Mochiko gained the title of Emerald Champion. The former ronin worked quickly to re-establish the Emerald Magistrates as the Empress's arm of justice, and correctly surmised that the magistrates placed furthest from the centers of power were the ones least likely to be corrupted by the Gozoku. After winning the Emerald Championship, Mochiko called an immediate meeting of those high-ranking magistrates, already in the village to watch the outcome of the tournament, who she had determined to be of questionable character. Instead of demanding their seppuku – potentially fostering a revolt by dozens of highly-trained and experienced samurai – she had the doors of the building locked and burned it to the ground. The homes of every Gozoku agent in Dark Edge village were likewise burned completely. Mochiko famously stated to a shocked record-keeper, "This way, no tainted sword, no tainted koku, no tainted gift from the Gozoku shall remain to tempt any Emerald Magistrate." Then, she gave orders for the village to construct new quarters and for shugenja to purify the village so it could resume its proper function.

The return of the Unicorn clan in the early ninth century, and the subsequent transfer of Dark Edge Village to Unicorn control, led to significant shifts in the style and architecture of the village. More importantly, it led within a century to the end of the village's role as the site of the Emerald Tournaments.

Early after the Unicorn Clan arrived from the Burning Sands, the former nomads set about creating new homes for themselves in the lands returned to their trust by the Emperor. As the horse-lords settled into the rolling hills of the north, they took over the administration of the local peasant villages. Though the peasants looked askance at the fierce and barbaric customs of their new masters, all knew better than to object to the rule of samurai. Imperial recognition gave the Unicorn Clan legitimacy, and with that seal of approval they set about changing the face of the villages in their territory to better suit their preferences. Small farm villages became home to circles of yurts, horse-grazing land, and eventually to squat edifices of stone and mortar, built in the fashion of the low, shaded desert homes of the steppe nomads in the Burning Sands. Dark Edge Village went through the same series of changes as the Unicorn Clan assumed stewardship over it.

Though the Unicorn administrators chose to rebuild some of the homes and buildings in their own preferred style, the central function of the village remained initially unchanged. Doji Ryobu, the Emerald Champion during the Unicorn's return – and, in fact, the recipient of Doji's fan from the wayward riders – stridently opposed any attempts to move the Emerald Tournament from the site, in spite of the opposition the Unicorn Clan faced from many of the other Great Clans. As part of the support the Crane clan granted to the Unicorn, Ryobu requested that Hantei XXII continue to uphold the site as the traditional location for the Emerald Championship, regardless of the fact that the Unicorn hosts knew little of the formalities behind the tournament or the importance of the village in relation to it. Cynical speculation holds that the Crane saw the situation as a political gambit that could not fail; if the Unicorn continued to host the tournament well, the Crane would have a powerful political ally, while if the Unicorn failed to uphold the sanctity of the tournament, their shame and clumsiness could have been





parlayed into demands for reparations in exchange for the Crane Clan's subsequent loss of face. The Unicorn, no strangers to tests of mettle in duels, rose to the challenge and continued to host the Emerald Tournament at the Dark Edge village, simultaneously using the event as an opportunity to showcase their own culture, traditions, and way of life to the Emperor and the courts. This opportunity to impress some of the greatest minds and duelists of the Empire doubtless sped the Unicorn Clan's process of reintegration into Rokugani culture; Emerald Magistrates who had seen or participated in the tournament, after all, had a first-hand understanding of Unicorn ways, and were less likely to believe slanderous accusations about the then-controversial clan. The Unicorn clan appointed its own administrators to the village, rebuilt the tournament field to include a course for horsemanship, and proceeded to reap the accolades and glory that came with hosting the iaijutsu duels of the Emerald Championship.

It was not to last, however. The Unicorn Clan's control of the site created endless political controversy, especially after the Moto family fell to the Shadowlands during their misguided attack on that accursed realm. Moreover, not all Crane rulers were as determined to support the Unicorn as Ryobu had been. By the beginning of the tenth century, the Unicorn Clan's position had weakened enough that other Great Clans began campaigning actively to have the Emerald Tournaments relocated to their own lands, generating endless petitions to the Hantei Emperors. Finally, Hantei XXVIII settled the matter by proclaiming that the Emerald Tournament would be moved to the Plains of Thunder, under the supervision of the Brotherhood of Shinsei. This ended the political battle over the Tournament's location for good.

Dark Edge village, once a vibrant hub of activity for duelists and courtiers, was abandoned by the Emerald Magistrates and fell into a slow and quiet decline. In the two centuries since then, it has become something of a historical footnote. While scholars and shugenja do occasionally visit the place to remind themselves of its past significance, gone are the days of brilliant Imperial processions and duels between the greatest swordsmen in the Empire. Shugenja who visit claim they can feel the eyes of hundreds of years of ancestors watching the old dueling fields. They believe samurai who choose to settle their differences here can gain the favor of their clan's representatives from ages past. One lone shugenja still maintains the local shrine by the dueling field and oversees the caretaking of the field itself. The last viewing stand, built for the tournament in the year 996, remains standing, but its paint has long since faded and the many o-fuda prayer streamers placed upon its pillars have flown away in the wind. Out of respect for the duels that were fought here for centuries, the local lord continues to maintain the dueling field and the horse lanes, even though no Emerald contestants come any longer; still, samurai who pass through here consider it a great honor to duel on the same fields where so many of the Empire's protectors once fought. On some occasions, the Emperor or members of the court do still visit for ceremonial purposes, but those visits have become increasingly uncommon.

Dark Edge Village does remain situated on one of the main trade roads leading to the Dragon city of Yamasura, and connected to the temple of Daikoku in Unicorn territory. This affords some level of trade and moderate prosperity, as merchants pass regularly through the village on their way to the markets in Yamasura, then give offerings of thanks to Daikoku on their way back home. The War of the Rich Frog, though, impacted trade even in Yamasura, which in turn left traffic through Dark Edge Village at a low ebb.

Today, Dark Edge Village is a posting of little prestige for a Unicorn samurai, but the peasants at least no longer have to worry about roaming bands of drunken revelers picking fights after watching days of duels.

Timeline

23: The first, unnamed "Emerald Tournament" is held at Dark Edge Village. Kakita is the victor, defeating Matsu.

153: With the official proclamation of the post of Emerald Champion, Emperor Hantei Genji creates the tournament used to select each Champion. Dark Edge Village is chosen as the site for these tournaments, and gains great prestige and trade opportunities as a result.

251: In a break from tradition, the Emperor appoints Matsu Noshin as his new Emerald Champion when Doji Kuzume refuses an order to kill the monk Togashi Kaze and instead commits seppuku. Dark Edge Village goes on to host the next tournament to Noshin's successor, but the break of several years without a tournament causes significant hardship, as expected trade and festival business do not materialize.

435: Hantei Yugohozime breaks the power of the Gozoku conspiracy and becomes the first Empress. The ronin woman Matsu Mochiko takes up the mantle of Emerald Champion and began purging Emerald Magistrates that supported the Gozoku from the ranks. In the process, she burns down a large section of Dark Edge Village, including every home belonging to a suspected agent of the Gozoku conspiracy.

815: After nearly seven hundred years as an independent holding, the center of iaijitsu dueling for the Empire, Dark Edge Village comes under the sway of the returned Unicorn Clan. The Unicorn recognize its significance but bring their own tastes and style to the tournaments.

998: In order to end political warfare over who will host the Emerald Tournaments, Emperor Hantei XXVIII decrees that the Emerald Championships will henceforth be held in the Plains of Thunder instead of Dark Edge Village.

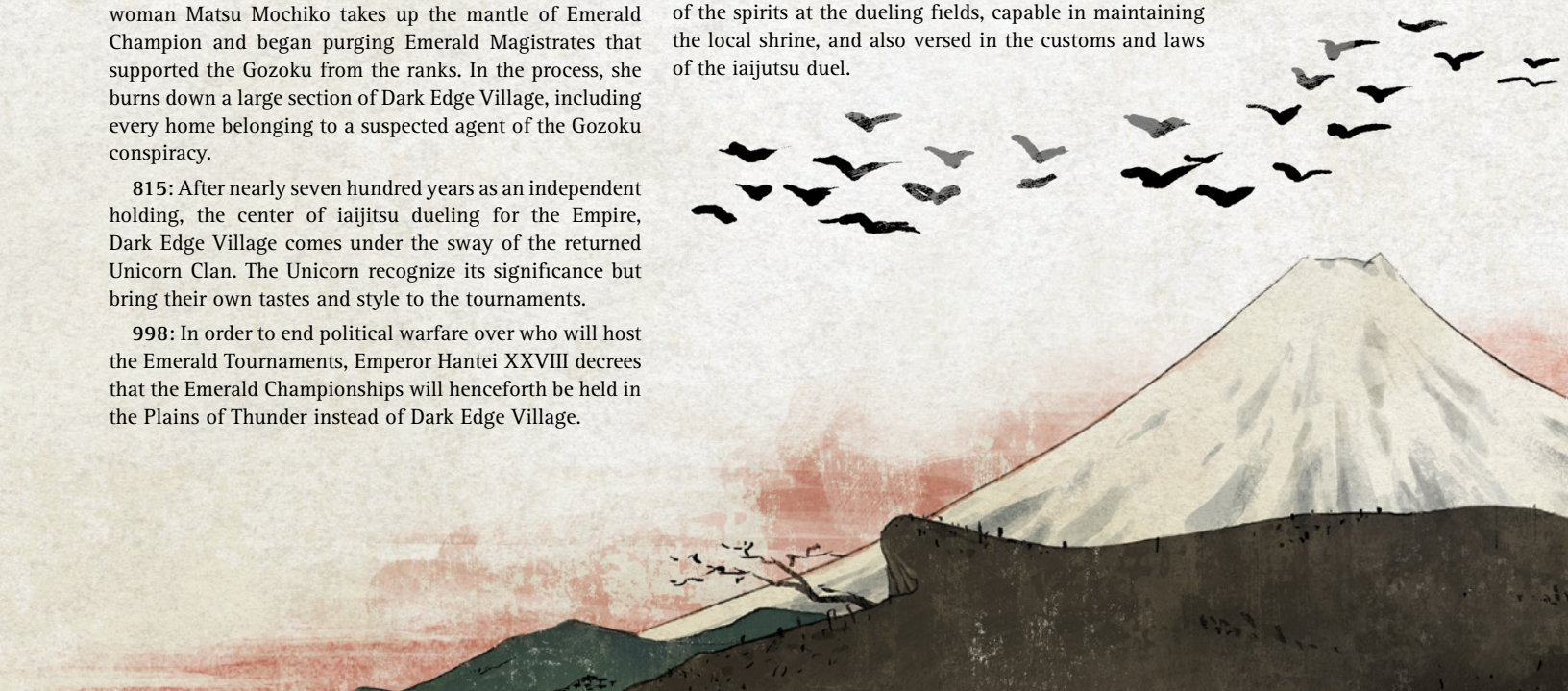
City Denizens

Few samurai hail from Dark Edge Village now. Once, it was a bustling town famous for producing skilled duelists. Today, samurai from the village are as likely to have been honor guards for the tourney fields as to have been historians or shugenja studying the pasts of the Emerald Champions and the many ancestors who dueled here.

The peasants of the village remain, as ever, a hard-working lot. In past centuries they were quite accustomed to dealing with demanding visitors of high station, and even today the farmers and craftsmen are quick to avoid trouble and equally quick to obey orders from any samurai. Any talk of secrets or conspiracies is met immediately with nervous glances to the northeast, where patches of empty land mark the ancient sites of those magistrates' dwellings burned in the fifth century.

Those samurai whose families reside in Dark Edge Village are mostly local officials or guardsmen. While the Unicorn Clan does not skimp on the training of its country-dwelling bushi, the village is far enough away from the main strength of the clan that samurai fostered here tend to develop close ties, or intense enmity, with the few others of their station in the place. This is no great city teeming with hundreds of samurai, so every individual samurai knows the other bushi and shugenja here quite well.

Shugenja from Dark Edge village are rare; usually no more than one child per generation is born in this village with the gift of the kami. A tradition is growing, however, that shugenja from the village commune with the ancestors who long ago fought and bled here for the honor of becoming the Empire's protectors. The resident shrine-keeper, Iuchi Masuyo, regularly accepts offerings for the ancestors, but in a few years she will need to retire. Her replacement will have to be a shugenja who is mindful of the spirits at the dueling fields, capable in maintaining the local shrine, and also versed in the customs and laws of the iaijutsu duel.



The Dueling Fields

The single most important part of Dark Edge Village, indeed the locale for which the village exists at all, is the dueling field. The large, well-kept circle of sand on the eastern side of the village has, for centuries, been the site of countless duels between samurai of all clans, even the occasional ronin. The other dueling sites – the short practice runs to the west of the field proper, the long stretch for horse-riding and obstacles, the archery field on the southeast side – all complement this most central locale. Anyone entering the village from the main road, which cuts across the north side of the village, will certainly see these competition fields. From a distance, they are defined primarily by large poles made for flying banners, and by the faded red viewing box on the east side. Up close, though, the disarray of the fields becomes much more evident. While the dueling sand is well-swept and the horse lanes are cared for, the archery field and all but one of the practice lanes have gone to weeds.

The dueling fields are generally quiet and very empty. Only Iuchi Masuyo, the shrine keeper and resident caretaker, spends any quantity of time here, aside from the occasional peasant groundskeeper pressed into cutting and carrying away brush. When a duel does occur, Moto Kenta arrives to officiate, and other minor samurai will sometimes assemble to watch. Most days, though, the field remains completely deserted. Nobody ever sits in the viewing box, either, since it is reserved for guests of high station.

The overall feel of the dueling fields is of a place haunted by its past. Like a scarred veteran bushi telling stories of past deeds, the village has seen its glory days pass long since. Now, it is worn out, well past its prime, although it still has a certain charm to those who appreciate its importance from an earlier time.

Because of the low income of the village and the general lack of consistent tournaments, the local caretaker has her hands full just keeping the main field well-tended. With the aid of a few of the children of resident farmers, Iuchi Masuyo manages to keep the sand pit raked, the surrounding weeds cut, and the bordering posts straight and secure. More than that, though, would take too much time and effort for an old woman. If Masuyo finally succumbs to old age and infirmity, it may be impossible for the locals to keep the dueling fields in good condition.

For many years now the village has hosted only local duels or small tournaments. Were the Emperor ever to arrive for another tourney, there would be a massive upheaval as the village prepared for the court's presence. New buildings would have to be constructed, old structures renovated, and huge amounts of work and money poured into making the place fully presentable once more—an undertaking that hasn't happened in nearly a century. Bureaucrats from outside the village would doubtless arrive to provide their "guidance," leading to further strife with the local populace. In some sense, everyone knows the dueling fields are the town's only claim to fame, yet also its greatest potential liability.

Area Residents

Iuchi Masuyo, the shrine-keeper, resides in a modest home on the south side of the fields, not far from the shrine itself. The shugenja is a bit too worn out in her late middle age to make long trips back and forth, so she remains close to the area where she does most of her work. She possesses a measure of some wisdom along with her advancing age, and is keenly aware of the problems that face Dark Edge Village, but since she is not an administrator she has little choice but to leave those matters to the samurai in charge. During the day, she can usually be found puttering about the shrine, raking the sand in the dueling field, or overseeing some of the youths from the local farms as they clear away debris and brush.

Moto Kenta, the local dueling arbiter, occasionally visits the dueling fields, mostly to voice his displeasure to the wind. When duelists occasionally come to use the fields, he presides personally, but otherwise he tends to remain in the administrative district, where he is a common thorn in the side of Ide Oyunbileg.

Main Dueling Field

The central field itself is circular, 25' across, and covered in white sand. Small wooden posts surround the perimeter, each painted red and bearing a tiny charm made by the resident shugenja. Duelists are expected to enter from the north and south (since fighting east-to-west might give a handicap depending upon the location of the sun). The field is carefully raked every day, but even so, tiny pieces of broken armor, weapons, and good-luck charms still sometimes turn up in the sand, or in the surrounding grasses.

Viewing Stands

The viewing stands are made of red lacquered wood that is showing the signs of advanced age; the stands would need a major renovation if the Emperor or another important functionary were ever to visit. Because the stands are east of the field and face west, most duels are traditionally held in the morning or early afternoon.

Shrine to the Duelists

While most Rokugani shrines revere a Fortune, an ancestor, or the teachings of Shinsei, the shrine on the south side of the Dark Edge dueling field pays homage to all who have come to settle their differences in honorable combat, and all who have participated in tournaments to extol the excellence of the Empire. The shrine itself is old but solid, with a torii arch just outside and a small raised hill for



the shrine proper. Iuchi Masuyo spends roughly half of each day here in prayer and communion, or just cleaning the shrine and keeping up the various ancestral tablets and statues.

Horsemanship Field

When the Unicorn Clan first took over the village, they installed a new horse-riding field. This place is larger than the main dueling field, placed slightly to the north, and also covered in the fine white sand found throughout the area, although it has hard-packed dirt beneath it. This field is oblong, with rutted tracks where centuries of horse-tourneys have run the outer perimeter. Next to the field are several large wooden obstacles: fences, tree stumps, and logs, all of which can be moved into position by peasant laborers to form obstacles for trick riding. Given the predilections of the Unicorn Clan, the horsemanship field still garners a fair amount of attention and care. Young bushi posted to a stint at the village often petition the administrator for the opportunity to use this field in training and in competitions with their peers, so it is not uncommon to see a pair or quartet of Unicorns riding hard around the field with obstacles in place.

Archery Field

The archery field occupies a somewhat cramped space to the south of the main tournament field. Contestants are expected to fire north to south, which prevents any "accidents" from arrows launching into the main tournament area or the viewing stand, and also prevents issues with sun glare. Archery has often been considered a second-rate pastime compared to iaijutsu dueling, and the Unicorn in any event prefer to practice their own archery from horseback, so the archery field today is overwhelmed with tall grass, and its targets are simple circles of wood with faded paint. From time to time, Unicorn horse archers will move an archery target to the horse trail and practice firing from horseback, so the targets are also riddled with holes.

Practice Lanes

In contrast to the main dueling field, the practice lanes are short, rectangular spots only a few feet long and a man's width. Each lane ends with a stand for a practice dummy. These lanes are traditionally used by samurai who wish to warm up or show off before a duel, but the general lack of regular duels at the village now means that only one of the lanes is kept in good condition. Most of the lanes are now spotted with weeds and grass, and the stands for dummies have not been maintained in years. Should a new tournament ever come to Dark Edge Village, of course, peasant laborers would quickly be conscripted to refurbish these spots.

Administrative Center

The heart of Dark Edge Village is here, where the local samurai reside. Though the condition of the dueling fields speaks to the village's past, the resident samurai live in buildings that are clearly much better kept than the oft-unused fields.

Visitors to Dark Edge Village will notice the administrative center first because of the two-story building where Ide Oyunbileg resides and conducts business. The streets here are all wide and marred by the signs of frequent horse traffic, and much of the south edge of the area is given over to horses. Visiting samurai who are not Unicorns will receive curious looks, but the village itself is hardly worth invading, so it is rare to see guards or to have one's movements about the village challenged – unless, of course, the Unicorn happen to be at war with one of the other Clans at the time.

The administrative heart of the village shows a restrained opulence. None of the resident samurai are of high enough station to demand a truly rich home or a defensible fortification, so the buildings here are mostly one-story structures. Some have stone walls and foundations, in the fashion of buildings from the Burning

Sands; others are built in the more conventional Rokugani style, with wooden exteriors and paper interiors.

Ide Oyunbileg, the local governor (if such an exalted term can be used for the ruler of this modest settlement), has several problems, not least of which is the fact that the income for her village barely matches the costs of maintaining the dueling fields. Were a major disaster to strike, such as an outbreak of plague or a large fire, the village would be woefully unprepared. Oyunbileg wishes to implement a fire brigade and improve the sewage disposal of the village, but she does not have the money or manpower to do so. Thus far, all of her attempts to find other means of raising revenue have been rebuffed; the Unicorn Clan will not allow her to raise tariffs on trade goods, since this would hurt trade with the neighboring Dragon Clan, and she cannot charge a fee for use of the dueling facilities, as this would be considered crass at the very least. The village supports itself with farming on its western side, but Oyunbileg is desperate to find some way to improve the fiscal state of Dark Edge.

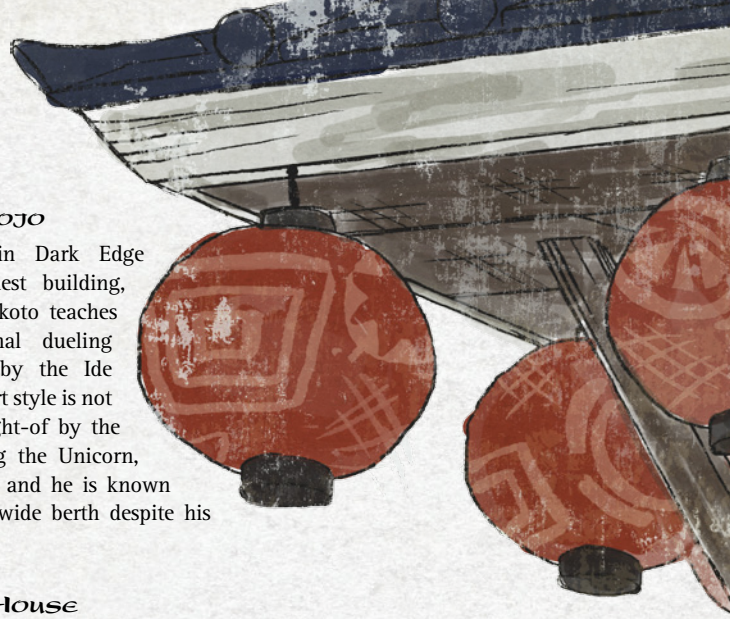
Area Residents

Administrator Ide Oyunbileg resides in the two-story peak-roofed structure at the heart of the town, currently the largest building in the village. She spends much of her time indoors, worrying over the state of the village, but she does take time to personally see any important visitors such as other samurai or rich merchant caravans passing through. She occasionally manages to get in some riding for pleasure, and will roam the village while on horseback, accompanied by two bushi (usually Shinjo Rokuro and one other guard).

Moto Kenta, the arbiter for duels that take place in the village, also resides in this quarter. He has a simple, no-nonsense home built in the foreign stone-and-plaster style. The arbiter spends much of his time riding with other local bushi and occasionally honing his swordsmanship, both on horseback and on foot, at the dueling fields. People who win his trust and acclaim may be invited to join him for an evening of drinking and conversation at his home, which while oddly built and very spartan is suitable for a bushi of his station.

Shinjo Rokuro, the most senior of the local bushi, also resides in the administrative area. He has a home near Kenta's, built in the same design, but he prefers to decorate his domicile with mementos of his many youthful travels across Rokugan. He is secretly infatuated with Ide Oyunbileg, but would never let his feelings interfere with his duty to her, especially since he already has a wife.





Ide Makoto, the sensei of Calm Heart Dojo, also resides here, in a house of more conventional Rokugani design.

Tonbo Yoshito, a Dragonfly emissary, lives in a guest room of the administrative center. Yoshito spends a good deal of his time at the shrine near the practice field, so he is rarely home, though he does remain alert to important travelers or business so that he can send messages back to Dragon lands about potential trade deals or troop movements.

Koi, a peasant, oversees the local inn. Samurai who are not invited to lodge with one of the local officials, or in the barracks with the few resident guards, will be directed to stay in his business, which overflows with customers on those occasions when a caravan or tournament comes to the village. Koi is a jolly balding man who is not afraid to tell racy jokes and even to occasionally share his good humor with samurai, but he is also a good enough judge of character to know when to be silent (especially around Utaku battle maidens).

Masao, the village blacksmith, occupies an uncertain space in local affairs. His trade is necessary to shoe horses and to repair weapons and armor damaged in duels, but he is a peasant and is not skilled enough to manufacture weapons; he only repairs damaged ones. As a result, the other peasants regard him with less respect than such a craftsman could normally expect.

Administrative Center

Ide Oyunbileg's home and official place of business are both in the center of the town, surrounded by a well-groomed garden of scrubby desert plants. The front door is a massive piece of hardwood, painted a deep violet color and etched with an appeal to Ebisu, Fortune of Honest Work. Oyunbileg meets with visitors and oversees administrative work downstairs in a large central room decorated in Unicorn fashion, strewn with seating cushions and hanging paintings; a raised platform on one end of the room allows the diminutive Unicorn woman to sit slightly elevated above guests, when appropriate. She resides upstairs, where cleverly-built windows help to create a breeze that mitigates some of the summer heat. Guests in the village will almost certainly be called to the building for an audience with Oyunbileg.

Tonbo Yoshito lives in a guest room upstairs.

Moto Kenta's Home

Kenta's house is simple, functional, and austere. It is built in a Burning Sands style of stone foundation with stone-and-plaster walls, and he makes no apologies to anyone for its appearance. The interior is sparsely decorated; hooks on the walls allow him to hang up his bow or spear near the front door, while he keeps an iron brazier in one corner for heat on winter nights. Kenta has nobody to impress, so he keeps his home undecorated.

Calm Heart Dojo

The only dojo in Dark Edge Village is this modest building, where sensei Ide Makoto teaches the subtle non-lethal dueling techniques favored by the Ide family. The Calm Heart style is not especially well thought-of by the more militant among the Unicorn, such as Moto Kenta, and he is known to give this place a wide berth despite his interest in dueling.

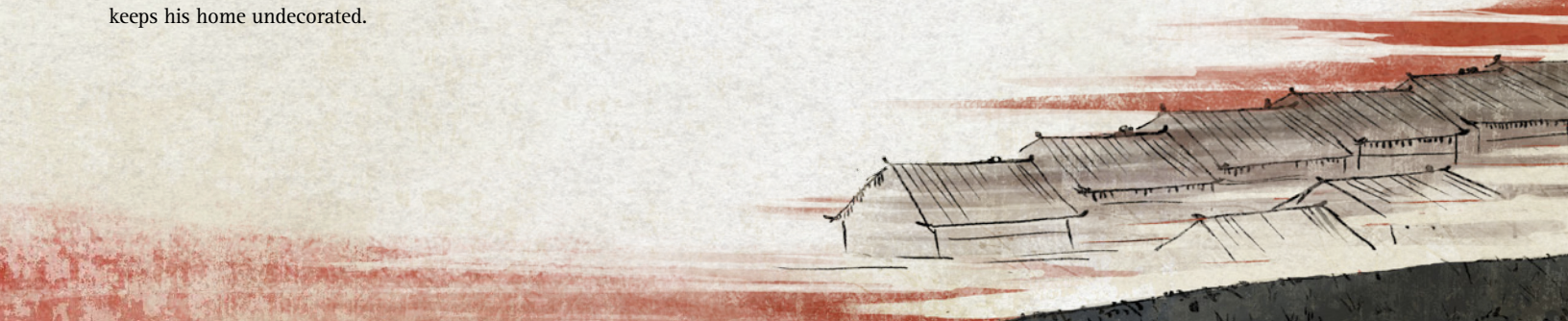
Koi's Lodging House

The local peasant Koi (Carp) runs an inn built on a simple floor plan. It is a square-shaped affair with a gate on the north side, gardens in the center, and rooms along the outside of the garden and abutting the outer wall. In terms of defensibility, it is nearly useless, but its comforts are reasonable. Koi's multitude of children takes care of various tasks such as running messages, cleaning rooms, and fetching bathwater. The rooms are quiet and discreet, though they lack the comforts and amenities one might expect in Crane or Scorpion lands. Visiting samurai who do not have the respect to garner a stay in the administrative building or the home of another samurai will have to stay here, but this is not such a bad thing; Koi is chatty, and makes sure that his guests are well cared for, all while trying to push various sorts of Unicorn foods on them and asking if they're visiting for a duel.

Blacksmith

The local blacksmith, Masao, runs a foundry on the west edge of town, near where the village breaks into farmhouses and fields. His foundry shows the particulars of his craft: the walls are hung with horseshoes and he keeps bars of iron in a barrel against one wall, but there are no weapons to be seen anywhere. He does have several sharpening stones.

Visitors looking for arms and armor may be surprised to find that Masao simply doesn't make such things, for he lacks the skill to make a katana worthy of a samurai. Instead, he concentrates on banging out dents in armor, sharpening spears and swords, and producing a never-ending stream of replacement horseshoes for the Unicorn. He could be found in the middle of any such task.



Important Personages

Ide Oyunbileg

Dark Edge Administrator

Ide Oyunbileg grew up in the courts. Both of her parents were minor courtiers, and though much of her day-to-day education and upbringing was under the care of tutors and instructors, her parents' positions meant that she naturally spent much of her time in the company of diplomats, artists, and envoys. One of her instructors, in the course of teaching religious parables and important historical stories, also had a tendency to slip in tales of many minor but honorable samurai from the early years of the Empire. As a result, Oyunbileg developed a passion for the precepts of Honor, and came to see the courtier's position as a means to uphold civility and honorable conduct without throwing the Empire into the chaos of warfare.



After her gempukku, Oyunbileg served as a minor functionary and attaché in the small Unicorn city of Duzaki Toshi. Several years in that position gave her a strong appreciation both for the day-to-day work of overseeing such a place, and she admired the passionate and honorable service that local samurai brought to their labors in this province. Her diligent work eventually led to elevation to a direct assistant role to a local lord, and finally to her own promotion to administrate Dark Edge Village, all in only seven years.

Administration of Dark Edge Village, however, has proven to be a very demanding task for Oyunbileg. Though the position carries a certain prestige, she has come to realize it is a post with little possibility for further advancement, save perhaps in the rare event of the Emperor or another high-ranking official visiting to oversee a special duel. Furthermore, funding is constantly an issue. While Oyunbileg finds working with finances tedious, not to mention somewhat beneath the proper station of a samurai, she has little choice. The costs required to maintain the dueling field and the shrine stretch the village to the limits of its income. Simply paying taxes every year becomes a veritable nightmare for Oyunbileg, as she must balance the demands of the Imperial tax rolls with the limited income of her village while simultaneously working to uphold the prestige of its past glories. She works diligently, often for long hours, to keep the village fiscally secure, but it remains a constant issue.

Visitors to Dark Edge Village will likely meet Oyunbileg if they stay for more than a day or two; she has a tendency to personally inspect the various fields and homesteads as part of the process of looking into the town's financial obligations. She is an affable administrator, but also quite adherent to honorable conduct, and a sometime student of iaijitsu dueling, a result of her research into the roots of the village. Troublemakers and ronin will find themselves politely encouraged to move on, or perhaps even challenged to settle matters on the field of honorable combat. (Due to her relatively modest skill in dueling, Oyunbileg is likely to choose a duelist to represent her in such a case, simply to avoid the awkwardness that would ensue should she lose.) Conversely, samurai who conduct themselves with a rigid adherence to Bushido and who show an appreciation for history will quickly find her a willing ally.

Ide Oyunbileg has the rich reddish-brown skin characteristic of those Unicorn with a strongly gaijin appearance. Though she is not classically beautiful, she does pay enough attention to her appearance to remain presentable. She keeps her dark hair pinned up and uses a touch of makeup to accentuate her brown eyes. Samurai

expecting an old, nearly-retired administrator will be surprised by her relative youth and apparently boundless energy, as well as her penchant for tales of honorable heroes.

Ide Oyunbileg, Dark Edge Administrator

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 2
Awareness: 4

Honor: 5.1 *Status: 4.0* *Glory: 2.2*

School/Rank: Ide Courtier 3

Skills: Athletics 1, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Commerce 1, Courtier 4, Etiquette (Courtesy) 5, Games: Shogi 2, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation (Notice) 2, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Ancestors 2, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: Law 3, Meditation 1, Sincerity (Honesty) 4

Advantages: Ebisu's Blessing, Irreproachable

Disadvantages: Gaijin Name, Idealistic, Small

Iuchi Masuyo

Shrine-Keeper

The keeper of the shrine at Dark Edge Village seems to be a middle-aged woman, but her mannerisms and her tendency to recall very old duels and tournaments hint that perhaps she may be quite ancient. In spite of her long years, Iuchi Masuyo is as spry as ever. When she moves slowly, it is not out of age, but out of serenity and, occasionally, a desire to test the patience of others.

Masuyo has served as the shrine-keeper for Dark Edge Village almost since her gempukku. Trained by the previous resident shugenja, a highly eccentric old Iuchi, she quickly absorbed much of the special history of the place, including a strong sense of reverence for the many ancestors whose spirits remain watching the grounds. Like many Unicorn shugenja, she practices certain forms of gaijin magic, and often decorates the local shrine with trinkets, prayer scrolls, knotted cords, and stranger items. Not only do these trinkets keep the shrine sacred, they also help to mollify the ancestors by serving as tangible reminders of peoples' past devotion. In Masuyo's case, this is doubly important as she occasionally finds herself haunted by unhappy ghosts from duelists who died on the field while defending a righteous cause. This, in turn, causes Masuyo to pay close attention to the destinations of various visitors to the village, in hopes of sometimes nudging a passing samurai into resolving the long-lost torment of the ghosts of duelists past.

Masuyo has the unenviable responsibility of not only keeping the shrine in pristine condition, but sanctifying the dueling fields. This means sending eta to rake the sand after blood is spilled in a duel, overseeing the duels to insure the proper forms are followed, speaking up if an unclean person tries to enter the tournament ring, and providing the guidance of the ancestors to the participants. She occasionally handles the business of cleaning and raking the dueling field herself, and due to her age and history of long service, most people do not look askance at this, although her willingness to perform such menial labor might raise eyebrows from a visitor.

Though given to occasional stereotypical utterances of wisdom from the Fortunes, Masuyo is also quite genuinely knowledgeable about ancestors and their proper propitiation. Her advice may not be useful to a bushi about to enter a duel, but will certainly provide some cryptic guidance to other shugenja.

Masuyo is also due to train a replacement, but due to the budgetary problems facing Dark Edge Village, the call for an appropriate shugenja to aid her at the shrine has thus far gone unfulfilled. A player character might fit the bill, though of course the shugenja in question would have to be a Unicorn or receive a special dispensation to train in Unicorn techniques.

Iuchi Masuyo, Shrine-Keeper

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 3 Void: 4
Intelligence: 4 Perception: 4

Honor: 5.5 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 1.6*

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 3

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Horsemanship 1, Lore: Ancestors 5, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History (Dueling History) 5, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 5, Meditation 4, Spellcraft 4

Advantages: Balance, Clear Thinker, Jurojin's Blessing

Disadvantages: Low Pain Threshold

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Earth's Touch, Extinguish, Jurojin's Balm, Nature's Touch, Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of Pan Ku, Rejuvenating Vapors, The Raging Forge, To Seek The Truth

Moto Kenta

Arbiter of Duels

Dark Edge Village's loud, outspoken, and hot-headed arbiter of dueling is an unlikely choice for the position. While most samurai would consider patience and silence to be cardinal virtues in a duel — even relishing the moment of contact between souls before a weapon is drawn — Moto Kenta does not humor such niceties. To delay a duel, in his mind, is to draw out the inevitable.

Kenta is in many ways an archetypal Moto. He is stocky and brown-skinned, wears a fur-lined coat and hat, and delights in horsemanship, strong drink, and upsetting the cultural niceties of the rest of Rokugan. His brash mannerisms, however, belie a very perceptive mind. Early in his training as a Moto, Kenta's sensei realized that the loud, obnoxious young samurai had a keen gift for scrutinizing his opponents. This was advantageous because Kenta also had a strong knack for making enemies. He developed a propensity for offending samurai of other clans, then challenging them to duels at the drop of a hat — a habit that helped him to develop his skills with iaijutsu and with the traditional katana, both a bit



unusual among the Moto. Kenta's sensei hoped the young Moto's keen eye and propensity for dueling would make him a suitable arbiter of such matters, and that exposure to many samurai of many clans in a wide variety of disputes would open the young man's eyes to the broader world and help to temper his attitude.

Unfortunately for Kenta, his dueling days came to an abrupt end when he found himself bested by a Crane duelist, who took the opportunity to slash the Unicorn's hands and force him to drop his sword. Every time Kenta picked up his weapon, the Crane would lash out and injure him again, then back off silently, mocking his helplessness. Eventually, Kenta was so badly wounded he could not retrieve his blade, at which point the Crane contemptuously sheathed his katana and left. Kenta still bears deep scars on the backs of his hands, and exhibits an outspoken distaste for the Crane Clan. "They hide their insolence and disrespect under a veneer of civility, but its stench is all the more repellent for their attempts to hide it," he opines when among friendly company.

Today, Kenta still makes enemies, but he has at least begun to learn from his mistakes; he now recognizes the value of understanding the technique of one's enemy. He is brusque with anyone who does not have official business, and always pushes for duels to be settled quickly. While his mannerisms can be offensive, samurai who come to understand him will discover he has a keen eye and can be counted on to be loyal and honorable when defending a friend. He simply has a tendency to rub people the wrong way.

Moto Kenta, Arbiter of Duels

Air: 2 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 3

Reflexes: 3 Agility: 4

Honor: 4.7 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 2.0*

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Defense 2, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana, Scimitar) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Spears 1

Advantages: Wary

Disadvantages: Brash, Contrary

Kata: Striking as Void

Ide Makoto

Calm Heart Dojo Sensei

Ide Makoto was born to a very typical Ide family, living quietly in Dark Edge Village, and from early childhood he developed a belief in Bushido that was pure, unhindered by the cynicism that afflicts many bushi as they experience the world. Very little about him has changed since his gempukku, and many villagers still see the young man from so many years ago within him. Makoto spent some time learning from the sensei of Calm Heart Dojo as a child, and while others in the town preferred to move on to the study of more conventional dueling forms, Makoto found a powerful appeal in the Calm Heart philosophy of making the duel an art rather than a deadly contest. It was a view that complimented his outlook on life in general, and he continued to study at the dojo long after he was required to, spending many comfortable hours discussing Bushido and the way of the samurai with his sensei.

Four years ago, his family decided it was time for Makoto to marry, and they chose for him a pretty young woman named Shiriko. She too had a deep-seated belief in the rightness that Bushido represented, and they proved an excellent match. Within six months of the wedding, Makoto found himself desperately in love with his wife. He knew how rare such an occurrence was, and thanked the Fortunes every day for Shiriko's presence in his life. Soon after, she gave birth to a son. Makoto thought he could not be happier, and once Shiriko was well enough to travel, he took his new family to visit her parents in the Village by the Sleeping River. Her family was delighted with their new grandson, but soon enough the visit ended, and Makoto's new family set out to return to Dark Edge Village.

It was then that bandits attacked Makoto's family. Although he had been trained to defend himself, his training did little good in a real fight against the ruthless tactics of the bandits. They killed Shiriko for the small pouch of money she carried, and nearly killed Makoto and his infant son as well. Makoto barely escaped with the child, and the loss of Shiriko devastated him. Alone now, he has struggled to raise his son, drowning his sorrows in the intensive study of the sword. His singular devotion caused the sensei of the Calm Heart Dojo to name Makoto his heir, and a year later, the old man passed away in his sleep.

Ide Makoto strives to present a calm and collected front to his students, discussing with them the virtues of Bushido much as he once did with his sensei, and most of the time he does a reasonable job. However, when he is alone, he finds himself brooding on the loss of his wife, and what their life together could have been if not for the foul bandits. Someday, he may act on his dark thoughts.

Ide Makoto Calm Heart Dojo Sensei

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4

Intelligence: 4

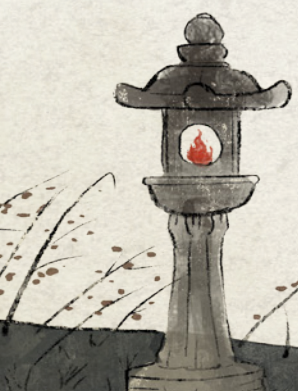
Honor: 5.5 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 4.6*

School/Rank: Shinjo Bushi 4, Calm Heart Duelist

Skills: Animal Handing (Horses) 3, Athletics 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 7, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Lore: Heraldry 1, Lore: Iaijutsu 1, Medicine 3, Meditation 1, Sincerity 2

Advantages: Dark Edge Native, Virtuous

Disadvantages: Dependent, Idealistic, Lost Love (Ide Shiriko)



Tonbo Yoshito

Dragonfly Emissary

Tonbo Yoshito is a man in search of a cause. This young Dragonfly only recently completed his gempukku, and only due to a phenomenal show of luck; Yoshito stammered his way through questioning by his elders, and struggled through the athletic challenges his peers easily conquered. When he was stumped by a question about the finer points of divination, he realized the answer lay, coincidentally, in the helpful phrase from the Tao that decorated the room where his test was held – right behind the questioner's head, in fact. When he was trying to achieve a place of respect on the field of simulated battle, an opponent charged at him – only to have his armor's back lacing snap, leaving him sprawling in the dirt with his armor scattered about him. Every time it seemed that failure would greet Yoshito, some other bizarre coincidence would occur, and he would find himself lauded for his performance. Only Yoshito knew it was luck, not skill or perseverance, that accomplished these feats. Yoshito and the kami – who chuckled quietly at him every time one of these incidents happened. The kami weren't responsible for these strange incidents of chance; the spirits told him simply that he was amusing and strange.

Yoshito had searched long and hard for guidance from his ancestors, the Fortunes, and the wisdom of Shinsei, finally coming to the conclusion that he simply didn't have the inner resolve necessary to serve as a samurai. When he successfully graduated from his gempukku, he was left striving to satisfy his lord in his tiny clan, but still believed his personal shortcomings meant that he would be a disaster in any position to which he was assigned. Neither Fortunes nor ancestors answered his prayers for guidance. If his luck ever ran out, he knew, he would be doomed – and might doom whatever cause to which he became attached.

Eager to please but also eager to be away from any place where his presence might raise suspicion or lead to later disaster, he hit upon the notion of suggesting he serve as an emissary to Dark Edge Village. After all, the village served as one of the prime settlements on the western edge of Dragon lands and the trade routes there. If the Dragonfly Clan were the humble keepers of the gateway to the Dragon, shouldn't one of them keep an eye out at the place where Dragon and Unicorn lands met?

Unbelievably, his query was taken seriously, and soon Yoshito was dispatched to Dark Edge Village with instructions to watch carefully, write back with information about interesting travelers, and see to political matters that might impact the Dragon and Dragonfly clans. Of course, his lack of any expertise in court matters hampers his duty somewhat, but at least he is far enough away that if his luck ever does run out, it can't hurt the rest of his clan.

Yoshito seems like a cheerful man, but he is always a bit unfocused and comes across as continually slightly embarrassed. In truth, he completely lacks self-confidence. He sometimes achieves good things, usually by the simple expedient of hard work, but he superstitiously believes that some great curse or working of the Heavens has placed him in a difficult position. His only real outlet is in rare evenings when he shares stories with Iuchi Masuyo; he respects the elder shugenja greatly, and inwardly fears that old age may soon take her away, leaving him the only shugenja in the village – at which point, he feels, it is only a matter of time until he is exposed as a fraud.

Tonbo Yoshito, Dragonfly Emissary

Air: 3 Earth: 2 Fire: 2 Water: 3 Void: 3

Willpower: 3 Intelligence: 3

Honor: 4.0 *Status: 1.1* *Glory: 1.0*

School/Rank: Tonbo Shugenja 1

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier 1, Divination 2, Etiquette 1, Meditation 1, Spellcraft 1, Storytelling 1

Advantages: Luck (9), Read Lips

Disadvantages: Momoku

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Bo of Water, Cloak of Night, Elemental Ward, Nature's Touch, Reflections of Pan-Ku, Sympathetic Energies



New Mechanics

New Advantage: Dark Edge Native [Social] (2 points)

As a native of Dark Edge Village, the administrative aspects of iaijutsu are almost second nature to you. You gain one additional rank of Lore: Iaijutsu. When arranging a duel or representing a duelist, your Status is treated as if it were one rank higher.

New Disadvantage: Dark Edge Reputation [Social] (2 points)

Unfortunately, being a native of a village such as Dark Edge Village, one that has a very well known reputation for a specific reason, can have a negative impact on one's personal life. Many inattentive individuals without any real knowledge of you or your training assume that, since you are from Dark Edge Village, you are a talented duelist, and will seek to duel you to prove their own level of skill. Roughly once per two game sessions, someone will attempt to challenge you to a duel, sometimes friendly and sometimes not, regardless of whether you have any talent in that area or not. When a campaign is taking place in an inappropriate setting, such as the Shadowlands for example, the drawbacks of this Disadvantage are temporarily suspended.

New Alternate Path: Calm Heart Duelist [Bushi]

The dueling grounds of Dark Edge Village are famous throughout the Empire, and as a result many young duelists travel to the village to train and in hopes of meeting both worthy opponents and sensei looking for new students. The village is home to the only notable traditional dueling dojo within the Unicorn lands, although it is quite modest compared to those of the Crane or Dragon and is easily overlooked by visitors to the town. Ironically, most who adhere to the tradition come from the peaceful Ide family. Their purpose in creating a dueling tradition stems from their need to resolve conflicts in which their kinsmen, the representatives of the Unicorn Clan in court, become embroiled. The necessity of being able to skillfully defend the honor of the Ide and the Unicorn as a whole, and to do so without needlessly taking life, has given rise to the dojo of the Calm Heart Duelists.



New Alternate Path: Calm Heart Duelist

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Any Unicorn Bushi School, Rank 3
- **Requirements:** Iaijutsu 3, Lore: Law 1

Technique: The Calm Heart Conquers

A soul of serenity can overcome even the most stalwart opponent. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of any Iaijutsu Skill Roll when you are not striking to kill your opponent, whether in a duel to first blood or a skirmish. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when you are wielding a katana or wakizashi.

New Alternate Path: Ide Caravan Master [Courtier]

The Ide family of the Unicorn are not only its representatives in court, but they also serve as its most effective and numerous merchant patrons. In particular, the Ide are well known for their merchant caravans, which travel across the Empire and sell the clan's unusual wares to all manner of interested customers. This is an incredibly profitable endeavor that brings in a great deal of revenue for the family and the clan as a whole. Those who are trained to oversee such activities occasionally suffer from some degree of stigma for their association with mercantile pursuits, but the rewards are significant enough that there is never a shortage of willing candidates.

New Alternate Path: Ide Caravan Master

- **Technique Rank:** 1
- **Replaces:** Ide Courtier 1 (This Path uses the same Benefit, Skills, Honor, and Outfit)
- **Requirements:** Commerce 2

Technique: The Gilded Road

A true master of the caravan path can forge lasting bonds with his customers, and has reaped the rewards of his travels. You gain a bonus of +1k1 on all Commerce Skill Rolls. You also gain this bonus on all Social Skill Rolls made with your customers. You gain one level of the Wealthy Advantage and one instance of the Way of the Land Advantage for free.





Chapter Four

Nikesake

The Imperial road ran straight as an arrow through the flowering mulberry groves, a small stream chuckling beside it. It seemed positively idyllic to Seppun Akira as he watched the peasants tend to the trees.

"Beautiful, is it not?" asked his companion, Shiba Katsura.

"Hai, it has the sort of peace I expect from the Phoenix lands," replied the young Imperial with a faint smile.

"These groves are why Nikesake would be important to the Phoenix even if it was not a city of diplomacy."

"Indeed?"

"Hai. From the bark of the mulberry comes paper, from their fruit wines and preserves, and many useful things are made from the wood. Even a few silk worms have been convinced to spin for us," the Phoenix replied, gesturing at the trees. "In fact, much of the paper used in the Phoenix lands comes from here."

"And the scholarly Phoenix use a considerable amount of paper," Akira nodded. "Is this mulberry paper used for the sacred scrolls of your clan's shugenja?"

"Rarely, Seppun-sama," answered Katsura. "Most of the materials for those holy items are gathered from the Isawa Woodlands and worked by apprentices."

Akira was pondering that thought when the main citadel of Nikesake Castle came into view, the sun catching on the orange and red tiles of the roof. His Shiba companion, clearly pleased by the sight, asked, "What do you think of our guardian castle?"

"Quite striking." The young Imperial reined in his horse to a slow walk, letting the city reveal itself in stages. The city's walls, like those of the castle, had been freshly whitewashed and almost glowed in the late afternoon sunlight. As he rode closer, the light shimmered off the moat and caught the water blossoms that floated there in a perfect moment. Akira smiled. Trust the Phoenix to create natural beauty out of military necessity.

"A well defended city," he remarked.

"It has to be. Nikesake has fought off the Lion more than a score of times in its history. Two of my ancestors died manning these walls against Matsu assaults."

"Brave and honorable samurai, Shiba-san," said Akira, touching his Seppun mon in benediction. The Phoenix bowed his head, accepting the praise on his ancestors' behalf.

The two did not speak further, each lost in his own thoughts, until they crossed the bridge over the moat. The hooves of the horses drummed on the wood, and guards bearing naginata, the mon of the Provincial Guard prominent on their armor, stepped forward to bar the travelers entry. "Halt and state your business."

"Seppun Akira, magistrate of that family, on Imperial business. This is my companion and guide, Shiba Katsura-san," the Imperial announced in a firm voice. He presented a scroll marked with the seal of his daimyo.

The guards bowed low and stepped back. "Forgive us, Seppun-sama. Do you need to see our commander?"

"Domo arigato, Phoenix-san, but there is no need. My mission takes me to the Blue Tiled Room."

"Good luck, Seppun-sama." Akira noted a look that passed between the guards and Katsura.

Once they were on their way, Akira turned to his companion. "And what should I know of the Blue Tiled Room, my friend?"

"They are philosophers and are prone to be . . . verbose," the Shiba answered with obvious diplomacy.

"I hope my courtly skills are up to the challenge." Akira glanced about himself as they rode through the city. As he would expect of the Phoenix, the city was orderly and clean, with an old-fashioned look. A multitude of small shrines were scattered among the buildings.

"This is Friendship Street," explained Katsura. "Here may be found the embassies of the Great Clans. If we followed it to the end," he gestured to the castle ahead, "we would arrive at Nikesake-jo itself. But the Blue Tiled Room, and the school it belongs to, is on the far side of the castle."

"I do not mind seeing more of the city, my friend," nodded Akira. He watched the people they passed on the streets, careful not to stare impolitely. "Our mission is important but not so pressing that a few minutes' delay will matter." The city's inhabitants seemed well fed and well dressed, in modern fashions that contrasted with the city's antique design. They wore a positive profusion of hats, he noted. Those who saw his mon bowed as he passed by, and Akira nodded in return.

Soon their path took them to the edge of the castle's grounds. Akira paused to look at Nikesake-jo, a magnificent and imposing structure. He was not surprised that it had defied even the Lion.

"This way, Seppun-sama," said Katsura. "This is the southern reach of the Street of Scrolls," the Phoenix gestured down its length, "where all of the knowledge of the Empire is gathered, somewhere." Akira could see he was right. Never had he seen such a profusion of shops selling scrolls, prints, and all manner of written materials. The narrow shops were interlaced with even more small shrines, and here and there scribes plied their trade. Everywhere there was knowledge bound in paper. Everywhere there was the written word for sale and people haggling over its price.

"It is remarkable," laughed Akira. "I have never seen so many scrolls for sale, not even in the Imperial capital. It is my hope to find time to look through some of them before we must return to the capital."

"The Street of Scrolls has what you are looking for." Katsura made a vague gesture. "It is finding it that can be a problem."

Akira nodded, a wry smile on his lips. "So I can perceive, Shiba-san."

"If you do not mind, Seppun-sama, I will take you slightly out of our way to show you one of the other sights of Nikesake."

"As long as it is not a great delay."

Soon enough they turned onto another street, this one also of shops, larger ones displaying wooden goods of all varieties. "This is Wooden Gate Street, though the gate is at the far end. Here the wood of the mulberry trees you saw is put to use. Woodblocks to make decorative prints and copies of popular works are made here, along with many other things. But it is the woodblock printing I find most fascinating, as with it, knowledge can be spread more quickly."

Akira nodded, thinking about how such could be used to make magistrates' lives easier. They reached the end of street, where there was a collection of massive carved wooden doors, each decorated with prayer strips spinning in the wind. A young man in Phoenix colors stood by one of the doorposts, declaiming on the nature of the elements to a small audience, while children dashed about.

"The gate that gives the street its name, carved with the city's history and," Katsura added with a nod toward the orator, "a popular place for the philosophers to proclaim their insights."

"These would be the philosophers trained at the Blue Tiled Room, ne?"

"Indeed, Seppun-sama."

The pair rode on in silence, the Shiba guiding the Imperial though the rest of the city. "I hope these philosophers are as skilled in translation as I have been told," Akira said finally. He reached back to touch a satchel. "These ancient gaijin documents almost certainly contain information that will be vital to the safety of Empire."

"They are the finest Phoenix scholars, and they will not fail the Empire, Seppun-sama. Do not fear."



History

Improbably for a Phoenix city, Nikesake was first established as a military camp. For much of the Empire's long history, the Lion and the Crane were locked in a struggle for control of Rokugan's heartland. Wars alternated with political and economic clashes, and the city of Toshi Ranbo, the eventual capital of the Empire, changed hands between the two clans almost more times than can be counted. During one of these conflicts the Phoenix, always seeking peace, moved an army to guard the southeastern edges of their lands, close to the threatened Crane territories. Lead by the noble Shiba Norinaga, the Sapphire Legion stood to arms to prevent the Lion from passing through their lands to attack the Crane, and placed their camp on what would eventually become Nikesake. The Lion Champion of the time was a stubborn man but not a wasteful one, with no wish to fight against two Great Clans at once, whether on the field or in the courts. He extended his lines north and east, forcing the Sapphire Legion into defensive positions, and waited for the Phoenix to tire of the confrontation and leave. He underestimated the Phoenix commitment to their allies and to a peaceful Empire.

The camp became a village, the village a town, and finally a small city arose. Its location has made it a frequent stop place for travelers passing though on their way to and from the lands of the Shiba and the rest of the Phoenix, giving rise to trade routes and diplomatic meetings. For many travelers, it is their first true taste of the Phoenix lands.

But Nikesake's founding is not as well remembered as the story of its most famous son, Isawa Asahina. Asahina was the Master of Air at the time, though he was also strongly attuned to fire, and was a young man of bright passions. When his brother was killed by the Lion in a border dispute, very near to Nikesake itself, Asahina sought vengeance. However, before he could make his formal petition for a blood feud, the Crane intervened and brokered a peace between the Lion and the Phoenix. Asahina's soul cried out for revenge, revenge denied by the Crane.

Putting his estate in order and leaving it in his cousin's care, the Master of Air rode fourth from Nikesake into the Crane lands. His passion drove the kami of fire and air into a frenzy and he cut a swath of destruction through the nearby Crane villages. No one could stand before him until a Crane samurai-ko – Doji Kiriko, daughter of the Crane Champion – rode alone to stop him. Sensing the pain that drove Asahina to near-madness, the Crane maiden stepped between him and the villagers, never drawing her sword. His Air magic tossed her aside, his Fire magic burned her, but she returned bloodied but unbowed, accepting to pain to protect the people of the Crane. Finally, in the village of Kimura, Asahina's wraith broke fully and struck down Kiriko. And as her broken body lay before him, her soul hovering between this life and the next, Asahina saw the terrible truth of what he had done.

This was the famed Victory With No Strike, as the samurai-ko's noble sacrifice broke through Asahina's rage. He renounced his status as an Elemental Master and his place in the Phoenix Clan to nurse Doji Kiriko back to health and make restitution to the Crane Clan for his actions. Asahina abandoned violence and gave himself over to the care of others. When Kiriko recovered, she took Asahina as her husband. The Crane Champion raised Asahina and his wife – his own daughter – to be the founders of a new Crane family, a family which would exemplify Asahina's new pacifistic beliefs and inspire others through their example.

That event helped draw the Crane and the Phoenix together into an alliance that has persisted, with few exceptions, through all the centuries since. To symbolize these ties, the Crane constructed the beautiful Phoenix Blessing Shrine to honor Asahina's birth family and the Phoenix, in turn, constructed the Crane's Gift Shrine to remember how Asahina brought the two clans together. It is said that as long as the shrines stand, the friendship between the Clans will endure through every obstacle.

Over the years, Nikesake has been threatened more than once, most often by the armies of the mighty Lion. While the Lion Clan is too honorable and devout to threaten the shrines in the area, that has not stopped them from trying to conquer the city, and they have come close more than once. However, for all of their military prowess, the city has never fallen to storm.

Nikesake did once fall to treachery. The Order of the Eighteen Stars, a minor branch order of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, had run afoul of the Crane Champion and a group of disgruntled sohei from the Order infiltrated the castle and took it by stealth. The city was soon surrounded by forces from both the Phoenix and the Crane, and terrible bloodshed seemed inevitable. However, in the midst of a rainy day, Isawa Eisai, Master of Void, appeared and walked into the city. The next morning, he walked out again, leading the disarmed sohei. Together they walked north, leaving to city behind. Nikesake was restored to Phoenix rule, and the rebellious sohei vanished from the historical record.

Over the centuries Nikesake has developed more significance to the Phoenix than merely as a trade center or a military fortress. The city's famous mulberry groves provide the raw materials for paper making, and much of the vast amount of paper used by the Phoenix Clan's scholars and shugenja is produced here. The availability of so much paper has also made Nikesake a major center for producing books, and the city boasts a vast population

of scribes and woodblock artists, producing new works almost every day. The Phoenix claim that one cannot find a more extensive selection of written works available anywhere outside of the capital itself.

In later centuries, Nikesake has become the Phoenix Clan's bridge to the growing metropolis of Toshi Ranbo. It is also the place where the Crane and Phoenix Clans meet, making it a place of culture and diplomacy. It is said that more marriage alliances between those two clans begin here than in any other place. Other clans have placed enclaves in Nikesake as well, and it has become the diplomatic gateway to the Phoenix lands, where all are welcome. It was also in relatively recent years that the Provincial Guard changed its name, as it was previously known as the Sapphire Legion. An Imperial unit of very similar name, the Sapphire Chrysanthemum Legion, rose more to prominence and the Phoenix, ever accommodating, chose to change the name of their organization in order to avoid confusion between the two; in the eyes of the Phoenix, any mistaking their organization for the Imperial one would be due to presumption on the part of their clan, and thus something that should be avoided at all costs.

Timeline

308 - The Sapphire Legion of the Phoenix is sent to aid the Crane, and founds their base camp in a small farming village. The camp soon becomes a permanent garrison and the village quickly grows to become Nikesake.

353 - Isawa Asahina rides forth from Nikesake seeking vengeance against the Crane.

397 - Following the death of Asahina, to honor his enlightenment the Crane build a set of shrines to the Phoenix outside of Nikesake, and the Phoenix respond in kind. It is said that as long as the shrines stand, the friendship and alliance between the two clans will be unbreakable.

c. 400 - Nikesake begins paper production and the organized cultivation of mulberry groves around the city.

411 - Sohei of the now disbanded Eighteen Stars Order seize Nikesake by stealth and demand that the Crane stop the suppression of their sect. A standoff between a joint Crane-Phoenix Army and the sohei is settled when the Master of Void walks into the city and speaks to the rebels. What he said is unknown, but the sohei agree to disband and leave the city. The Master of Void leads the sohei away to the north.

487 - The Blue Tiled Room, a school of philosophy for courtiers and scholars, formally begins teaching in Nikesake.

712 - Nikesake is besieged by Matsu Yoshitomo's army. The Lion shatter the city gates and prepare to storm the castle, but are driven off at the last moment by a combined Crane-Phoenix army. This is the closest Nikesake ever comes to falling to direct military action.

871 - Nikesake is used as a military base camp, as the Phoenix support the Crane Clan's defense against a Lion assault. In honor of their shared commitment, Nikesake is made the official diplomatic meeting point between the Crane and Phoenix.

884 - The Scorpion establish a small embassy in Nikesake to confirm their friendship with the Phoenix as well. The other great clans slowly follow suit, increasing Nikesake's diplomatic role.

922 - An unusually wet spring leads to flooding serious enough to inundate the mulberry groves and damage the city walls. The Master of Earth and Master of Water intervene, coordinating their efforts and repairing the damages done in two short weeks. This preempts a possible Lion march on the city while the defenses were weakened.

1133 - Agents of the Lying Darkness attempt to destroy the twin Shrines. A pair of unknown ronin armed with crystal weapons hold the shadow creatures off long enough for the alarm to be raised, and the dark entities are destroyed with fire and the kami's wrath. Damage to the shrines is minor. The fate of the brave ronin is unknown.

1150 - During the War of Spirits, Hantei XVI, the so-called Steel Chrysanthemum, threatens to burn the city and its shrines to the ground unless he is granted safe passage and supplies as he marches deeper into the Phoenix lands. Unwilling to risk the loss of the shrines, the governor accepts, and afterwards commits seppukku in apology to his clan.

1165 – The Bloodspeaker cult unleashes the Rain of Blood. Thankfully, the supernatural assault does not cause much disruption to Nikesake. Less than fifty people are directly affected, though more than two hundred are killed in the ensuing violence. The protection of the Twin Shrines is credited with saving the city from this terrible event.

1166 - During the War of Fire and Thunder, a Mantis raiding party gets as far inland as Nikesake, but is driven off from the area before it can cause significant damage. In response, the Phoenix increase patrols and rebuild long abandoned watchtowers along the eastern edges of Nikesake's province.

1166 - The Sapphire Legion is renamed the Provincial Guard to avoid giving offense to the Imperial families.

1167 - The Mantis build an embassy in Nikesake, staffed primarily by members of the Moshi family, to help in rebuilding relations after the War of Fire and Thunder and hopefully avoid future trouble and misunderstanding between the two clans. With the completion of this embassy, all of the Great Clans have official representation in Nikesake.





City Denizens

The Phoenix of Nikesake are heavily influenced by the Crane, as it is not only the site of the primary Crane embassy to the Phoenix but also the first city that most Crane caravans pass through on their way north. Combined with its closeness to Toshi Ranbo, this makes Nikesake a cultural hub for the Phoenix. All the rest of Rokugan filters through Nikesake on its way to the Phoenix Clan. If a new fashion or style is not adopted here, it will not be welcomed by the rest of the Phoenix either. 'Nikesake Fashion' is the arbiter of taste for Phoenix samurai and courts alike. For the most part, it tends toward a more subdued and traditionalist sense of style than many other clans prefer, although there are exceptions.

Nikesake Fashion incorporates what the Phoenix see as the best elements of Crane fashion blended with more traditional styles. A single item of religious significance is almost always included, often a charm hung from the obi, calling the attention of a Fortune whose blessing the wearer seeks. One aspect of Nikesake Fashion that is distinctive and unchanging is its love of hats, all manner of headgear, and ornate hairstyles. The residents of the city like to say that you can tell the true self of a samurai from his choice of hat, a view that the Crane and Scorpion find charming, if a bit naive.

In addition to fashion, the residents of Nikesake pride themselves on their learning and their mastery of philosophical debate. Education, even among the lower castes, is encouraged by the government of Nikesake, as part of the more general Phoenix view that educated heimin are both more likely to find enlightenment and can better support the goals of the clan. Books and scrolls are more commonly available here than in almost any other place in the Empire, and numerous scribes and woodblock artists work here. Nikesake is a major center of paper production, the raw material for the paper coming from the nearby mulberry groves, and the majority of all paper used in the Phoenix lands come from the Nikesake area. A small amount of silk is also produced in the mulberry groves, but the cooler weather of the Phoenix lands limits the amounts that can be harvested. Nikesake silk is often woven un-dyed and used for the under-layers of clothing, serving as a reminder of the need for purity and closeness to the land.

The people of Nikesake are also known for being good listeners. In the rest of the Phoenix lands it is commonly said that someone from Nikesake listens twice as much and learns three times as much. Courtiers from Nikesake are also known for being talented speakers, their philosophical training serving them in good stead in courtly games and debates.

Location Guide

Nikesake is notable for the consistency and traditional style of its architecture. To many, the city seems old-fashioned, but for the residents, it is familiar and welcoming. Though the city occasionally gets an influx of visitors, it is usually able to absorb them for short periods with little disruption. Seasonal inns are opened from the spring through autumn to cater to the travel season.

The entire city is guarded by outer walls and a shallow moat, albeit with several gates to facilitate travel and trade. The outer walls are whitewashed to improve their appearance, since many of the Phoenix prefer to ignore such martial matters, but are nevertheless well maintained and as strong as any city's defenses. Edible water plants and catfish abound in the moat, and can only be harvested by the governor's permission, usually for festivals or in preparation for a siege. Like the coloration of the walls themselves, these flora and fauna help make the defense seem less military and more decorative.

Asahina's Grace, the Crane Embassy

The oldest of the embassies in Nikesake, it was once a Shiba magistrate's station, and was granted to the Crane by the one-time yojimbo of Asahina himself, who later became a magistrate. Out of respect for its original owners, the building retains the simple external facade it possessed when it was first given to the Crane, but the inside exemplifies Crane opulence. Over the years, the Crane have acquired the adjacent buildings and combined

them into an extensive, if slightly confusing, collection of structures.

The Crane Embassy is often used by the local Governor as a place for informal diplomatic meetings and even for official parties, since it is much less austere than the court chamber of Nikesake Castle. The Crane themselves also regularly host lavish soirees, as well as more intimate discussions of philosophy and poetry. A posting here is highly sought after among the Crane, and most diplomats are fortunate if they can stay here more than a couple of years. Serving here requires a mastery of both politics and the arts of hosting and conversation. While such a high turnover rate would normally be a source of inefficiency, in this case the close relationship with the Phoenix Clan ensures this is not true, and the Crane embassy maintains a sense of continuity even when its occupants change.

Blue Tiled Room, the Library of Philosophy

The Blue Tiled Room began as the private library of Asako Itsuo, the second Governor of Nikesake. Fascinated by philosophy, he gathered works on schools of thought from across the Empire, seeking the views of every clan and every philosophical order. His son carried on the tradition, his nephew after him, and so on down through the generations of the city's rulers. Over the centuries the Blue Tiled Room has slowly expanded, gathering more and more information on philosophical studies from across Rokugan and even beyond. The sages of the library eventually opened a school for courtiers who shared their love of philosophy. The teachers and students of the Blue Tiled Room hold weekly discussions to which all are welcome, as long as they remember their place. So long as proper etiquette is followed, even the thoughts of a peasant can be heard here.

Since they work with gaijin texts frequently, the sages of the Blue Tiled Room are among the most knowledgeable translators of written gaijin languages in the Empire, though this fact is not widely known outside their circle. The Elemental Council and the Kitsuki Magistrates are both well aware of this resource, however, and make use the skills of the Blue Tiled Room's translators when needed. On rare occasions others have sought out their help as well.

Friendship Street, Embassy Row

Aside from the Crane, the other Great Clan embassies have ended up congregated along one of the main streets leading to Nikesake Castle. This has given it the name Friendship Street. It is a well-kept and civilized residential area, with houses of local Phoenix samurai interspersed with the embassies. In order leading away from the castle, the embassies on the street are the House of the Black Lacquered Doors (Scorpion), the Silver Dragon Embassy (Dragon), the Ki-Rin's Stair (Unicorn), the Kitsu Rebirth Library (Lion), the Red Crab Citadel (Crab) and the Home of the Sun (Mantis).

The Minor Clans maintain a suite of rooms for their diplomats in the home of their merchant factor on the far end of Friendship Street, in the somewhat unfortunately named Tanuki Drum House.

Kuri Street, the Street of Warehouses

This wide throughway with several squares is the main shopping street in Nikesake and, on market days, it becomes a huge open air market as well. The shops and markets of Nikesake sell a wide and varied selection of goods gathered from across the Empire, an exceptional selection for a city of only medium size, although the items often seem to arrive here immediately after they fall out of fashion in the Crane lands. Unsurprisingly, many of the merchants



here have ties to the Crane, either directly or indirectly. However, since goods from all over the Empire find their way here, most clans have at least a few merchants operating in the city.

Nikesake-jo, the Castle of Nikesake

Towering over the city is this fortification. It is quite ancient, dating to the early centuries of the Empire, but an observant engineer will note that it has incorporated all of the most recent improvements in defensive architecture. The location of Nikesake Castle, serving the Phoenix Clan's lifeline to the Crane, has made it a holding that has born the brunt of Lion aggression for eight centuries, and it is one of the most frequently defended strongholds in all the Phoenix lands. The interiors of the castle tend to be stark and unadorned, for it remains a war fortress first and a residence second. However, some attempt has been made to make the castle a pleasing sight: the walls are whitewashed regularly, and the roof tiles are glazed in orange and red and arranged in geometric patterns pleasing to the eye. Simple gardens decorate the grounds. A wide moat provides an additional line of defense for the castle, but the two red painted bridges over the moat are quite beautiful and considered one of the city's attractions.

Nikesake Castle acts as the barracks and training grounds for the Provincial Guard, the Phoenix unit permanently posted to the city. The governor's residence and court chambers are within the castle, but the Phoenix find the interior of the castle oppressive, and usually hold court outside or in town (often in the Crane embassy).

The castle's deep storehouses hold supplies sufficient to survive through a long siege, and the extensive granaries of the fortress are often used as a staging ground for moving rice in or out of the other Phoenix provinces. An Emerald Magistrate's office and residence is located in the castle, overlooking the granaries, but it too is rarely used – typically the resident Emerald Magistrate prefers more welcoming quarters in the city itself.

Street of Scrolls

If one seeks knowledge in Nikesake, the Street of Scrolls will be the destination. Small shops specializing in different niches of knowledge line both sides of the streets, each proprietor an expert in his or her specialized area. Maps, prints, scrolls of all variety, and even works with limited information on gaijin are available. Small shrines are scattered up and down the street as well, many dedicated to obscure Fortunes related to the specialty of the shop they are near.

Freelance scribes have their own areas scattered up and down the street, working for any who need their services. They copy scrolls, draw up legal documents, and write letters for those who cannot do it themselves. Since the quantity of paper here makes fire a significant hazard, buckets of sand with bamboo covers are kept on hand by every doorway, and many of the buildings are made of stone with thick tile roofs.

Wooden Gate Street

Here may be found the city's skilled artisans, who make fine things from the wood of the local mulberry trees, as well as other lumber brought in by trade caravans. This street is also the heart of production for the fine wood-block prints that Nikesake is famous for. The artisans of Nikesake produce decorative and illustrative prints which are shipped throughout the Empire. The artisans also do a small amount of cloth printing, but not very much, as most of the cloth must be imported. However, Crane and other cloth-makers often come to Nikesake to buy their wood-blocks and use them to print designs on their cloth.

The street gets its name from a decorated arch on the city gate at one end. It is carved with the history of Nikesake and decorated with prayers written on strips of paper that change with each seasonal festival. The arch is often used by the local children as a base in their games, and is also favored by local philosophers giving impromptu speeches.

Crane's Gift Shrine

This Phoenix-built complex is more traditional than its twin, the Phoenix Blessing Shrine (see below), but no less lovely. At the center of the compound are shrines to the Seven Fortunes, and radiating out from them are smaller shrines to the lesser Fortunes and Ancestors. A fine ancestral shrine to Asahina himself honors the man who tied the Crane and the Phoenix together. Nearby is a special shrine to the Fortune of Redemption, a former Crane, built by the Isawa shugenja who was her companion and friend for many years before she ascended to the Celestial Heavens. The gardens surrounding these shrines are simple yet beautiful, and use many plants from the Crane heartland.

Phoenix travelers heading to court or to the Crane lands will usually stop here for a blessing. Samurai on their way to war also stop here, seeking the Fortunes' protection for those they leave behind. It is also a popular pilgrimage for Crane lovers hoping to be blessed as were Asahina and Kiriko. Carved mulberry-wood netsuke showing the two founders of the Asahina family are popular gifts for visitors, especially these Crane visitors.

Blossoms of Four Seasons Inn

The most famous of the roadside inns around Nikesake, and one of the few open year round. The Blossoms of Four Seasons Inn is located on a small hill, tucked in among the mulberry groves, and accompanied by a well-tended garden and a bathhouse. The main building has been rebuilt and improved many times but always remains a charming and welcoming place.

This inn also figures prominently in several tragic romance stories and plays in Rokugan. Its gardens are said to be haunted by the spirits of a star-crossed pair of lovers, variously described as Crane, Lion, Phoenix, or even Scorpion depending on who tells the story. In spite of, or perhaps because of, these stories, it remains a popular place for travelers to stop and for lovers to covertly meet.

Graceful Phoenix Theater

This large theater complex boasts several stages, costume and prop shops, and a large warehouse for the storage of props and supplies when not needed. The Graceful Phoenix is used by several troupes of entertainers to refine their acts and try new plays before taking them to the more demanding audiences of the Imperial capital or the Crane or Scorpion lands. Noh, Kubuki, and puppet plays are all performed here, along with poetry readings, musical performances, and acrobatic displays. The stages and seating are designed to be rearranged as needed to accommodate any of these styles of performance.

The theater is used in rotation by various troupes and performers, and there is rarely a day that goes by without at least one performance, even during the off-season. It is among the most popular places to see and be seen in Nikesake.

Mulberry Paper Works

The largest single source of work in the Nikesake region, the prosaically named Mulberry Paper Works produces paper not only for Nikesake but for the entirety of the Phoenix lands. The majority of the raw materials come from the mulberry groves around Nikesake, but when demand increases additional sources must be tapped, both in Phoenix lands and in the neighboring Lion and Crane lands.

Work stops during the depths of winter, but for the rest of the year the paper works are constantly at labor, producing paper for the use of the Phoenix Clan. A small number of workshops here are restricted, used only by members of the families that have run the paper works for generations. These special workshops are used for making high-quality paper for use by high officials and important letters and documents.

Tours are available of the main parts of the paper works, since some shugenja and courtiers are interested in seeing where the paper that is so important to their lives comes from.

Phoenix Blessing Shrine

As one would expect from the Crane, this shrine is an artistic masterpiece build in the height of the ornate late 4th century style. Arranged around shrines to the Seven Fortunes are lesser shrines devoted to the Fortunes and Ancestors favored and venerated by the Phoenix Clan as a whole. An extensive garden helps to weave the outer collection of small shrines into a harmonious whole.

By tradition, all shugenja and monks heading into the Phoenix lands stop here for the Fortunes' blessings. Many meditate overnight, or even longer, seeking to align themselves with the spirits of the Phoenix. Visions are rarely granted but those that are often warn of impending danger.



Important Personages

Shiba Ekken

Reluctant Politician, Governor of Nikesake

The Governor of Nikesake is a serious man in his late twenties, dressing formally but as simply as his station allows. His black hair is worn in the traditional samurai style, and his eyes are a deep, thoughtful brown. As a warrior first, Ekken wears his daisho in any circumstances he can do so without causing offense. If the city is threatened, he will not hesitate to take up his naginata and join the defense.

Shiba Ekken was born in Nikesake, but while he was still a child his father's posting was changed to Shiro Shiba. Growing up, Ekken trained to serve as a bushi, expecting to spend his years among the Phoenix armies as a loyal samurai, as his family had done for generations. Such was his focus on that task that he quickly drew the attention of his superiors, who noticed his skill and dedication, particularly since he also showed a natural gift for leadership. He reached the rank of Gunso before his twenty-fifth summer. When a freak accident killed the previous Governor of Nikesake, Ekken – a distant cousin – was chosen to replace him.

Ekken's appointment caused much discussion among the Shiba, and the former governor's son, Shiba Kazuo, petitioned for the right to assume his father's post. The case was heavily debated in the courts before the word of the Clan Champion confirmed Ekken in his post, quashing all further discussion. Kazuo blames Ekken for the loss of the post that should have been his by right. Ekken, for his part, is distressed by this turn of events, since he never asked for such a position. However, as a loyal samurai he knows the matter is out of his control, and does his best to fulfill his duties.

Since his arrival at Nikesake, Ekken has thrown himself into his work, a difficult task since, while some of his skills as a military officer are transferable to his new post, many are not. The townsfolk were wary of him at first, but his hard work and sincerity have slowly won them over. More recently, his superiors have notified him that he needs to take a wife. Ekken is not looking forward to having to master yet another set of skills.

Ekken has found the Commander of the Provincial Guard, Shiba Seishisai, to be an able officer, willing to accept the guidance of civil authority. While Ekken is a warrior himself, he sees Seishisai as a warrior's warrior, and seeks to restrain him from provoking both his own clan and the Lion by his continual military preparations.

Ekken gets along much better with the philosophers of the Blue Tiled Room, who are universally supportive of his administration of the local government. In particular, Ekken is indebted to their sensei, Isawa Kuki, who has shown him some of the intricacies of courtly action. Although Kuki keeps himself available to advise his governor on obscure points of etiquette, the sensei is convinced his student is capable of acting on his own.

The Priestess Chinone also supports Ekken, and he deeply respects the nun's extensive personal knowledge of the town. He meets with her frequently to smooth out small problems before they become large ones. Ekken does worry that she is too attached to some of the common people here, and he fears that if any serious crisis or loss afflicts the city, it would break the old priestess' heart.

Shiba Ekken does have one unique problem as governor of Nikesake, he hates hats – he always has. But the Governor of Nikesake is expected to wear hats, magnificent hats, at all times. He finds this quite intolerable, and he endeavors to lose and otherwise avoid his headgear whenever possible. His servants, ever efficient and dedicated, keep bringing him new and better ones.

Shiba Ekken, Reluctant Politician

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 4		Intelligence: 4		

Honor: 6.7 *Status: 6.0* *Glory: 5.2 (6.2 in Nikesake)*

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 4

Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Battle 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 4, Games: Go 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Phoenix History 2, Meditation 3, Polearms (Naginata) 5, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 3

Advantages: Ebisu's Blessing, Leadership, Quick

Disadvantages: Idealistic, Sworn Enemy/Nemesis (Shiba Kazuo)

Shiba Seishisai

Commander of the Provincial Guard

Shiba Seishisai is a warrior first and foremost. Even his courtly clothing has a military air about it. He speaks quietly but with an authority born of experience. His graying hair is worn in the traditional samurai style, and a long scar runs along his left thumb. The hilts of his daisho are wrapped in aged shark skin and faded orange cording. When he is not in court, he wears simple warrior's clothes, sometimes with armor but not always. To those who do not know him (and miss the commander's menhari-gata in his obi) he could be mistaken for any other veteran Phoenix warrior. If Seishisai was not such a successful commander, he would have been assigned to some post far away from potential political entanglements. But as it is, his success on the battlefield kept winning him better positions and promotions to more prominent posts, ultimately leading to his appointment as commander of the Provincial Guard.

Shiba Seishisai has served in many Phoenix armies and against many foes, and is one of the very few Phoenix shireikan whose battle strategies and current posting are studied by the Lion. Seishisai in turn has studied the Lion

way of war and has come to the conclusion that the Phoenix border must be defended in depth should another war occur. He has done his best to master the defensive warfare the Phoenix favor, but he worries about the safety of his clan, and fears the passive Phoenix approach to the Empire's problems may prove the clan's undoing. As long as he is allowed to serve, therefore, he will ensure the soldiers under his command are ready to defend their clan, physically, mentally, and spiritually. He is a commander who drives his soldiers hard, but does not expect anything from them that he does not also demand of himself. The Provincial Guard, often more used to being a sort of pseudo-police force than a proper military unit, found the adjustment to Seishisai's command jarring, but they are adapting.

While the soldiers are his, the town belongs to the Governor, and Seishisai must work closely with him. He has been seeking to build a strategic reserve of trained ashigaru throughout the Shiba lands, but has not yet convinced Shiba Ekken to allow him to form a civic militia in Nikesake itself. He has been allowed to militarize the surrounding villages so that they can protect themselves against bandits and wild animals, as well as providing trained ashigaru in time of war.

Seishisai appreciates the Provincial Guard's tradition of recruiting ronin into its ranks and has been slowly expanding the number of ronin employed. While many of the ronin are just mercenaries, Seishisai has been diligently cultivating those who have the potential to become true and permanent vassal of the Shiba and the Phoenix. He is considering settling these former ronin among the border villages to provide military expertise and skilled leadership, but he has yet to win approval for this far reaching plan from Ekken.

The general's plans are often supported by the philosopher Isawa Kuki. This unsettles Seishisai – since Kuki seems to hold the usual Phoenix pacifism and distaste for militarism, his apparent endorsement of Seishisai's plans seems bizarre. The opposition from the nun Chinone, on the other hand, Seishisai finds entirely predictable. Although the general always treats the priestess with proper respect and deference, he must of necessity ignore most of her protestations. A kind word will not stop an invading army, however much she might wish it to be so.

Seishisai's wife, a former yojimbo, lives in Kyuden Isawa, where she is raising their children. He writes to her often, seeking advice, and to his children, exhorting them to work hard. Theirs was a typical arranged marriage, and while they get along well enough, neither would call it love. He misses his children more, but knows they are well cared for.



Shiba Seishisai, Commander of the Provincial Guard

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4
Willpower: 4

Honor: 5.4 *Status: 6.0* *Glory: 5.8*

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 6, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 5, Games: Go 7, Games: Shogi 5, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: Military History 4, Meditation 3, Polearms (Naginata) 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 2, Theology 1

Advantages: Irreproachable, Leadership, Way of the Land (Nikesake and environs)

Disadvantages: Driven (Defend the Phoenix Lands), Fascination (Military Strategy)

Isawa Kuki

Master of the Blue Tiled Room and School

Isawa Kuki came to Nikesake at a young age with his father, a shugenja assigned to aid in matters diplomatic. Kuki found the kami endlessly fascinating, but they never spoke to him directly as they did to his father, so he was forced to try to understand them through other means. At first he turned to the study of religion, which was Intriguing but failed to answer his questions. It was in a discussion with a Unicorn traveler who had been to the Burning Sands that he first came to appreciate philosophy, in the form of the Unicorn describing the Yodotai and their thinkers. The young Phoenix sought out similar thinkers in Rokugan, and soon the Blue Tiled Room welcomed him in.

Kuki soon proved himself a prodigy among the students of the Blue Tiled Room. He had a natural feel for philosophy and a talent for putting arguments in terms that were easy to grasp for all. He was sent to the courts of the Crane, the Dragon, and the Scorpion, and in all of them he was a welcomed guest due to his ability to entertain and debate with anyone, without ever giving offense.

Kuki's days as a traveler and ambassador of the Phoenix were ended by the death of the previous head of the Blue Tiled Room's School, Asako Banzan, from eating ill-prepared fugu. (Or perhaps deliberately prepared by a jealous wife, according to some rumors.) Kuki returned to join in the great debate to decide who would succeed Banzan. To no one's surprise but his own, he bested all comers and was appointed the head of the dojo at the age of thirty.

For the last two decades, Kuki has overseen the Blue Tiled Room as both an institution and as a school. He has drawn upon the web of contacts from his time in the courts to gather both promising students and rare documents from across the Empire. Although so far his tenure as sensei of the Blue Tiled Room has been quite successful, he is now looking for a successor – he would like to travel the Empire once more, before he is too old to enjoy it.

Kuki's wife, Isawa Ran, has no interest in philosophy herself, but she is a skilled gardener and spends much of her time in the gardens of the Twin Shrines. Their children are grown, and while none of them have chosen to follow his philosophical path, he is not disappointed. Kuki believes each person must seek their own way in the world.

Isawa Kuki and his school support the Governor of Nikesake in almost all things, for the success of the city and the school are closely intertwined, and members of the Blue Tiled Room form much of the civil bureaucracy of the city. He finds Commander Seishisai fascinating, a man with such clarity of purpose and drive to see that it is achieved even in the face of opposition from his own clan. Kuki often backs the general in discussion, applying his considerable rhetorical skills to support his positions, much to the discomfort of Seishisai, who believes there is some kind of subtle political game being played.

Kuki deeply respects the High Priestess Chinone for her kindness, her skill with people, and her friendship with the kami. He often wishes he could interest Chinone more in philosophy, for he is certain her insight into the kami, if she could overcome her devotion to the teachings of her order, would be fascinating. He has yet to make her see it in such a way, but he continues to try, patiently nudging her in his direction.

Kuki dresses well, thanks to his wife, but tends to be a little careless in his appearance, as he is focused on other things. His hair is worn long, the black shot through with silver, and tied back with silk cord. His voice is still strong despite his age, carrying well, his diction is excellent, and in conversation he flows between subjects with a subtle grace.

Isawa Kuki, Master of the Blue Tiled Room and School

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 3
Willpower: 3 Intelligence: 4 Perception: 3

Honor: 6.2 *Status: 3.9* *Glory: 6.1*

School/Rank: Asako Courtier 4 / Asako Philosopher

Skills: Athletics 2, Artisan: Ink Painting 3, Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 5, Courtier (Rhetoric) 4, Defense 3, Etiquette (Courtesy, Conversation) 7, Games: Go 3, Horsemanship 1, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Botany 3, Lore: Gaijin 5, Lore: History 5, Lore: Imperial Court 3, Lore: Law 4, Lore: Myth and Legend 3, Lore: Naga 3, Lore: Philosophy 8, Lore: Phoenix Clan 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Meditation 3, Sincerity 5, Perform: Oratory 5 , Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 5

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Forbidden Lore (Gaijin), Fukurokujin's Blessing, Languages (Thrane, Yodotai), Sage, Precise Memory, Voice

Disadvantages: Can't Lie, Contrary, Fascination (Philosophy)



Chinone

High Priestess & Guardian of the Twin Shrines

Few are more suited to tend the Twin Shrines than Chinone. A child of the Isawa, where she was a promising student of the kami, she married into the Asahina as a young woman, where she continued her mastery of the spiritual arts. Now, her husband is dead and her children have had their own children, and she has retired to the service of the Fortunes, joining the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Naturally, she was drawn to the Twin Shrines of Nikesake where, after many years of faithful service, she was finally chosen as the new High Priestess. The Brotherhood saw her as an ideal bridge between their own ranks and the two clans, Crane and Phoenix.

Obaasan (grandmother) Chinone, as she is often known in Nikesake, spends each day wandering the town, greeting all and sundry and finding out the latest news. She does whatever she can to smooth out problems between the peoples of the city, and works especially hard to sort out family conflicts, believing them to be the root cause of many other troubles. Hardly a day goes by where she is not asked to help sort out some sort of misunderstanding between neighbors or family members. Chinone does not work with law, but rather with people and traditions, and tries to solve problems before they become something the law must act upon. In many ways, Chinone sees the entire city as her extended family, and does her best to lead them to a peaceful and fulfilling existence.

Chinone works closely with the new governor, Shiba Ekken. She sees much of her sons in Ekken, and defers to him in all political matters. Ekken, in turn, gives her free reign to manage the religious and spiritual affairs of Nikesake. They meet at least once a week to discuss problems and concerns in the city, and she can usually convince him work together with her to solve small problems before they become large ones. By contrast, it should come as no surprise that Chinone and Shiba Seishisai, the pacifist priestess and the militant general, do not get along well. She views Seishisai as a warmonger who will embroil her home in needless conflict, while he sees himself as simply taking necessary steps to defend the Phoenix lands. Since they are both important people in the town, they remain formally polite to one another, but their mutual dislike is known by all.

Isawa Kuki, on the other hand, is something of an enigma to Chinone. He is clever, charming, and knowledgeable – and from her perspective, a consummate troublemaker. It is not that he is evil or cruel, but rather that Kuki delights in subtly challenging conventional wisdom through philosophical debate, a habit that drives Chinone to distraction. She cannot find it in herself to actually dislike the philosopher, and can see his obvious delight in both knowledge and wordplay, but she does her best to push back against his seemingly innocent undermining of Rokugani traditions. She finds his support of Seishisai's military policies baffling and frustrating as well.

Chinone has always been a small woman, more so now as her age advances. Despite the ravages of time it is apparent even now that she was once a great beauty, though she would modestly deny such a claim. Her long hair is white with age – unlike many nuns, she has not shaved her head. Her eyes are still a clear hazel and sparkle with kindness. She dresses simply but well, as befits her station, eschewing formal robes except for festivals and other special occasions.

Chinone, High Priestess and Guardian of the Twin Shrines

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 5
Awareness: 4			Perception: 4	
Honor: 8.1		*Status: 3.9*	*Glory: 4.2 (7.7 in Nikesake)*	

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 5

Skills: Artisan: Gardening 3, Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 5, Courtier 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 5, Investigation 2, Lore: Crane Clan 4, Lore: History 2, Lore: Philosophy 2, Lore: Great Romances 3, Lore: Phoenix Clan 3, Medicine (Disease Treatment) 6, Meditation 5, Perform: Oratory 5, Spellcraft 5, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology (Fortunes) 7

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Blessing of the Twin Shrines, Friendly Kami (Water), Luck (3)

Disadvantages: Bad Health, Lost Love, Small, Soft Hearted

New Mechanics

New Advantage: Inheritance: Asahina Blade [Material] (9 points)

The near-mythical priest smiths of the Phoenix Clan have a venerable tradition to honor the memory of Isawa Asahina, one of the clan's great heroes and a symbol of their clan's alliance with the Crane Clan. An Asahina Blade is a 3k2 wakizashi. When you use the Guard Action while wielding this weapon, the bonus to your charge's Armor TN is increased an additional amount equal to your Honor Rank.

New Advantage: Nikesake Citizen [Social] (3 points)

As a citizen of Nikesake, you have gained important contacts within the Crane Clan, and your prestige within court has increased as a result. You gain a bonus of +1k0 on any Social Skill Roll made interacting with a member of the Crane Clan. You also may purchase the Allies Advantage for one point less than normal when purchasing Allies within the Crane (the Ally still has a minimum point cost of 1).

New Disadvantage: Nikesake Stigma [Social] (4 points)

The emphasis placed upon peace and serenity that is so omnipresent within Nikesake has had a dramatic effect on your training. Even bushi are not immune to the effects of this atmosphere, as the bushi dojo within the city place a great emphasis on diplomacy and fighting defensively rather than offensive warfare. You suffer a penalty of -1k0 on all Weapon Skill Rolls that are not also School Skill Rolls.



New Alternate Path: Asako Philosopher [Courtier]

In addition to its purpose as a center of diplomacy, or perhaps because of it, Nikesake is a noted center of education within the Phoenix provinces as well. The so-called Blue Tiled Room within the city is highly specialized, having extensive tomes concerning philosophy gathered from all across the Empire and beyond. Many courtiers stationed within the city for long periods of time, particularly among the Asako, consider the pursuit of philosophy an entertaining pastime, and spend many hours within the library poring over the various tomes. Fluency in one school or another of philosophy is considered something of an achievement, and the courtiers who frequent the library enjoy having elaborate debates among themselves, frequently changing the school of thought from which they are debating in mid-argument or even multiple times during the course of a single debate. Scholarly courtiers of other clans, particularly the Crane, are welcome to join in these debates, but few ever find the pastime quite as entertaining as the Asako seem to. While the avid pursuit of philosophy is largely a diversion among the denizens of Nikesake, the lords of the Phoenix are familiar with their pursuits and have had occasion to call upon them when insight into certain other families and clans is required.

New Alternate Path: Asako Philosopher

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Asako Loremaster 2
- **Requirements:** Courtier (Rhetoric) 2, Etiquette 3

Technique: The Winds of Rhetoric

Those who study with the Nikesake sophists have learned to defuse almost any situation, as they have a superior understanding of how those with whom they enter debate think and seek solutions to various problems. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of all Contested Social Skill Rolls using Etiquette.

New Alternate Path: Provincial Guard [Bushi]

Once known as the Sapphire Legion, the Provincial Guard is a unit of distinction among the Phoenix Clan, well known for its defense of the sacred City of Treaties, Nikesake. The legion was founded hundreds of years ago, and named for the accord reached between the Phoenix and Crane clans, an accord further reinforced in later years by the marriage of Isawa Asahina to the daughter of the Crane Champion, resulting in the creation of the Asahina family. The legion's name is taken from the color of the gemstone in question, a tribute to the colors of their allies among the Crane. In recent generations, however, the creation of an elite unit called the Legion of the Sapphire Chrysanthemum within the hierarchy of the Imperial families, who were ignorant of the Phoenix unit's existence, has created something of a predicament for the Phoenix clan. They cannot continue to refer to their unit as the Sapphire Legion for fear of confusing them with the Imperial group of a similar name, and so the group has become known simply as the Provincial Guard, an admittedly somewhat bland name that manages to preserve both the unit's intent as well as its integrity. Members of the Provincial Guard are well known for their courtly tendencies, and are trained in matters of etiquette in addition to their normal duties as sentries and yojimbo. Perhaps Ironically, the Shiba who train within Nikesake have found that the two aspects of their training are actually quite similar, and mutually beneficial.

New Alternate Path: Provincial Guard

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Shiba Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Defense 2, Etiquette 2

Technique: Maintaining the Peace

A Shiba member of the Provincial Guard is skilled in protecting himself from all harm, regardless of its source. When in the Defense or Full Defense Stances and spending a Void Point to augment your Armor TN, you also add an amount to your Armor TN equal to your Etiquette Skill.







Otosan Uchi

Yotsu Motoko, gunso of the Sword of Yotsu garrison, picked her way in the darkness through a field of rotting planks and broken stone. Less than a generation earlier, this had been a prosperous commercial neighborhood in the Imperial City. Now it was a rubble-strewn wasteland, and fortunate to not be contaminated by the Taint — at least as far as anyone knew.

It was a night on which the Obsidian Moon had chosen to hide her face, and the remains of the buildings that rose up around her seemed blacker than the cloudy night sky. Charred and defiled, they seemed to take on the shapes of people screaming in agony, stretching pleading arms to the Heavens. Much as the entire city had done when Daigotsu and his horde came on that fateful night....

But there was no point in dwelling on that now. The darkness kept Motoko and her patrol safe, concealed from any enemies who might be stalking the ruins. Of course, that also meant she could not see the enemy, either. At least she could hear nothing but silence as she and her soldiers moved along. The absence of noise was palpable, proof they were finally learning to pad their armor to prevent it from clanking, and to strap their daisho tightly to their sides. That augured well for their survival.

Several hours ago, as dusk fell over the ruins, Motoko had been briefed by one of her senior officers in the Sword of Yotsu's base in what had once been the Yatoshin District. "Tonight, I want you to take your patrol to the Hayashi District eta village," he said. The Yotsu still insisted on using the old designations for parts of Otosan Uchi, even though the 'eta villages' were now gathering points for terrified refugees of all ranks. "One of the day patrols reported increased wild animal activity out there. The residents were told to keep torches burning at the perimeter all night, and it's probably just wolves. But you never know. So be careful."

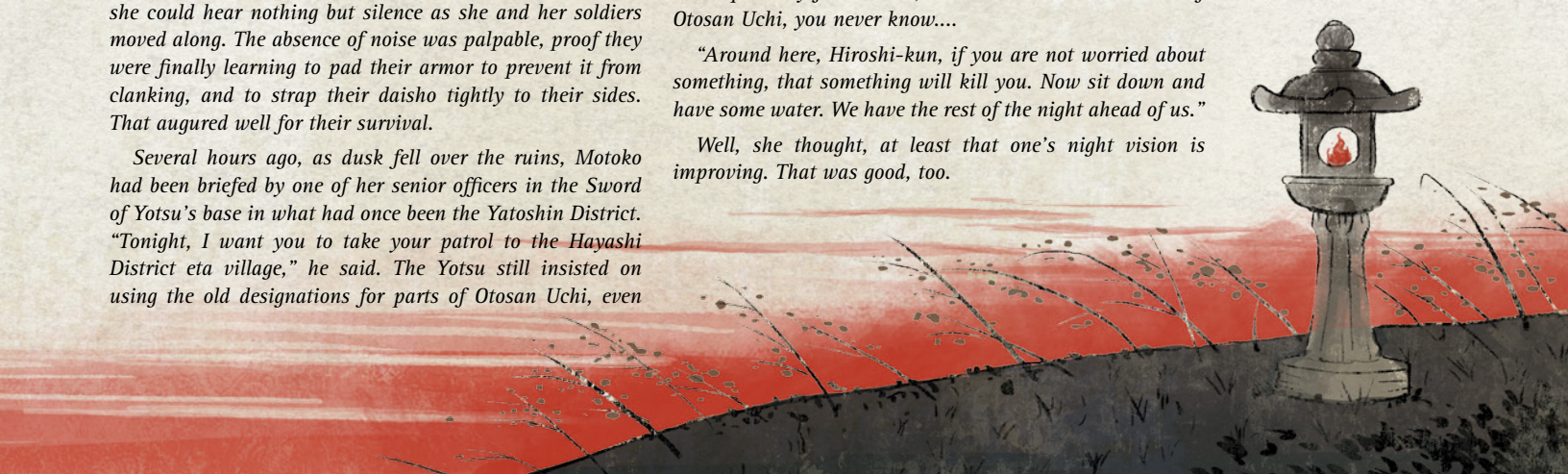
Had it really been several hours since they set out? Without the moon, it was hard to tell. If so, it was time to call another halt and rest. Motoko raised her arm, then realized the gesture was near invisible in the darkness, and hissed a command. It pleased her that she could not hear her soldiers fall out.

As she turned to look for a place to sit, she sensed the presence of her youngest soldier, a lad who had just joined her patrol a couple of weeks ago. He regarded her thoughtfully. "Are you worried about something, Motoko-san?"

It's probably just wolves, he said. But amid the ruins of Otosan Uchi, you never know....

"Around here, Hiroshi-kun, if you are not worried about something, that something will kill you. Now sit down and have some water. We have the rest of the night ahead of us."

Well, she thought, at least that one's night vision is improving. That was good, too.



History

For eleven centuries, Otosan Uchi was the Empire's leading city. Founded by Hantei himself, it was the seat of Imperial power, Rokugan's most important political center, and a vital center of high culture and economic activity. As the home of the Hantei Emperors and the first Toturi Emperor as well, it was also Rokugan's main repository for its history, its collective memory, its sense of self. So much of Rokugani history unfolded here, and so much of it was remembered and preserved here as well.

All of that came to a stunning end in the year 1159, when the sinister Daigotsu led his minions in a surprise attack on the Imperial City, part of a complex plan to free his master Fu Leng from the Realm of Death. The Dark Lord of the Shadowlands transported his army north by sea – a strategic feat thought to be beyond the Shadowlands' capabilities – and found Otosan Uchi lightly defended and unprepared.

Before forces loyal to the Empire could rally and eject them, the Shadowlands horde laid waste to the city, and the Imperial sanctum of the Forbidden City was utterly despoiled by Daigotsu's ritual to free Fu Leng, conducted in the Imperial Palace itself. Not even Fu Leng himself had achieved such complete ruination of the Imperial City in the climax of the Clan War. In the aftermath, the Empire had no choice but to abandon Otosan Uchi as defiled ground, unfit for human habitation. The Imperial capital was moved to Toshi Ranbo within a few years.

For almost all of its history, Otosan Uchi was considered to consist of two major sections. The heart of the city, which lay inside the legendary enchanted walls, was called the Ekohikei – the Inner City – and contained the Emperor's Forbidden City. Outside those walls, the Toshisoto – the Outer City – sprawled in a vast ring. It should not be surprising that the Ekohikei was the wealthier and more prestigious of the two, given its age, history, and proximity to the Imperial Palace. The buildings that housed the Imperial government were located there, along with the Great Clan embassies, and the Ekohikei's residents were largely Imperials and other prominent samurai who belonged to the true nobility, the upper crust of the samurai caste.

The Toshisoto housed a more diverse population, one that formed a cross-section of the Empire's population. From the eta who tended to the dead and the entertainers who served the populace, to laborers and tradesmen, to wealthy merchants, artisans, innkeepers, slumming nobles, vagabonds and gamblers, travelers and wanderers just passing through – these were the folk who populated the



Outer City. The Toshisoto was thus a lot like other Rokugani cities, except that it was larger and existed mostly to support the orderly majesty of the Ekohikei, supplying it with goods and necessities. The contrast between the two gave the Outer City a reputation for unruliness, but in truth it deserved this repute no more than any other major city in the Empire.

Formally, Otosan Uchi was divided into seventeen administrative districts, each with its own governor appointed by the Emperor. Each district was traditionally known by the name of the current governor, although this custom was sometimes ignored by residents who preferred to use older names with which they were more familiar. This could cause a good deal of confusion for travelers asking natives for directions, as well as for those who recorded the city's history. But such habits persisted from Otosan Uchi's early days all the way to the end of its life as the Imperial City.

Eleven of these districts lay in the Toshisoto. Those located in the south and west had the wealthiest residents and were considered relatively pleasant and safe. Conversely, the city's port was located on the northern side of the mouth of the River of the Sun, and was generally considered the filthiest and least safe part of Otosan Uchi. One of the most noteworthy districts, however, was the Yatoshin District (as it was known from the year 1111 onward). It lay between the port and the well-off southern suburbs, and its governorship was granted in perpetuity to the ronin Yotsu and his descendants. Yotsu had sacrificed his son to save the Imperial Heir, Hantei Sotorii, from Bloodspeakers, an act that won him his own family name.

Six districts made up the Ekohikei. One was the Forbidden City itself, which fell under the Emperor's personal authority, so there were only five district governors. However, rivalries between these district governors ran much stronger than in the Outer City; and their struggles over resources and prestige often became quite bitter. Rather than personally involve themselves in these quarrels between their personal representatives, the Hantei Emperors relied upon a group of diplomats, monks, shugenja and other supposedly disinterested personages to mediate between them.

During its time as the Imperial City, Otosan Uchi was the most heavily protected single location in the Empire. Even in peacetime, the city typically boasted about 30,000 soldiers in residence or in garrison in various districts. Although theoretically all of these troops were at the Emperor's disposal, in practice they reported to a hodgepodge of commanders: Seppun Guardsmen, Imperial Legionaries, and contingents from all of the Great Clans were present in varying strengths. All of the Clans had embassies and other interests that required military protection, and in Rokugan military strength has always tended to work hand-in-iron-glove with political action. On top of that, the Lion Clan always felt a special duty to guard the Imperial City, since their role as the Emperor's Right Hand has always been crucial to their self-image.

After Daigotsu's attack in 1159, the entire character of the city changed. Otosan Uchi became a crumbling, contaminated ruin, little different from the Forbidden City to the outer suburbs. Today, only the most desperate, the most courageous, and the darkest of heart spend much time here. Whole neighborhoods have been abandoned, overgrown by plants, and in many places vermin and wild animals hold sway. Intelligent beings have largely abandoned the city. Swathes of what was once the Empire's greatest city are now so contaminated with the Taint that they are uninhabitable except by those who are Tainted themselves.

The physical condition of the city can best be described as ghastly. Those sections that are overgrown and reverting to wilderness may count themselves fortunate. Where the Taint has taken hold, what was once living, whether plant or animal, has been warped into forms for which Heaven cannot responsible, as if cultivated by an Oni Lord, or even Fu Leng himself. The Shadowlands creatures Daigotsu brought here have mostly left, but not all of them – some remained behind and avoided the Lion army's counterattack. Now they torment the few remaining humans who dwell here.

The buildings that were not completely leveled, either by Daigotsu's rampaging followers or by the Lion after the city was evacuated, are now crumbling and decayed. Even those that are still inhabited have not been restored to anything near good condition. There are no materials or manpower with which to make repairs, and the pervasive atmosphere of despair and sorrow precludes the willpower with which to effect a restoration. What was once elegant wood is now charred or rotted, what was once grand marble or stone is now blackened rubble and dust. Many stone buildings have a softened, slumped appearance, as if the solid blocks were melted and fused. It is widely presumed that some dark magic of Daigotsu accomplished this effect.

The Empire of Rokugan endures, but its former capital is a wreck. And unless it can somehow be purified and made fit for habitation once again, it will remain an open wound in both the Empire's body and its soul — a wound that is not mortal, not yet, but is still a painful reminder of the power of the Empire's enemies and the fragility of everything it holds dear.

Timeline

Although Otosan Uchi was not the first city of the Empire as reckoned by its founding date (that distinction actually belongs to Gisei Toshi), it was Rokugan's foremost city for over a thousand years. As such, it was the scene of some of the most dramatic and important events in the Empire's history. Attaching firm dates to events in the Empire's earliest history is difficult, however, since reliable records did not begin to be kept for some time.

Otosan Uchi is Founded: Dawn of the Empire

The Imperial Palace is built on the hill where Hantei proclaimed the creation of the Empire of Rokugan. A great city quickly begins to grow up around it, catering to the new seat of Imperial power and high culture. To preserve its status and aura of majesty, the area immediately around the Palace is closed off to all but members of the Imperial Family and those who serve it directly, creating the Forbidden City.

Following the Day of Thunder and the defeat of Fu Leng, Otosan Uchi grows rapidly, and construction begins outside the city walls. From this point on, a distinction is made between the city outside the walls (Toshisoto) and the city inside the walls (Ekohikei).

442: Representatives from gaijin lands visit the Imperial City, but when they are ordered to leave, they resist violently. The armies of the Great Clans ultimately succeed in driving out the foreigners in a bloody struggle, the Battle of White Stag, and the remaining gaijin take ship for their native lands. Empress Hantei Yuguzohime is killed in fighting, and further contacts with the gaijin are forbidden by her successors. The strange weapons of the gaijin leave permanent marks on the mystical walls protecting the Ekohikei.

1111: The ronin Yotsu saves the Imperial heir, Hantei Sotorii, from a Bloodspeaker cult. In reward, he is given the right to a family name and the unprecedented honor of governing a district of the Outer City in perpetuity. It is known thereafter as the Yatoshin District. Previously, the Hantei Emperors had reserved all district governorships as political patronage, given and withdrawn on a whim.

1123: The Imperial City is the focus of Bayushi Shoju's attempt to seize the Imperial Throne. Shoju assassinates Hantei the 38th and Scorpion soldiers occupy the capital in a ruthless surprise attack. Armies from the other Great Clans converge on Otosan Uchi and lay siege to it. The coup fails, and Shoju is killed in a duel by Akodo Toturi. Hantei Sotorii takes the throne, become Hantei the 39th, the last Hantei Emperor.

1128: As the Clan War reaches its climax, Hida Kisada attacks Otosan Uchi from the sea in an attempt to seize the throne from the ailing and childless Hantei the 39th. The Emperor is revealed to be possessed by Fu Leng, and Kisada and the remnants of his army flee the city in disarray. The forces of the Empire, Crab included, rally to confront the possessed Hantei and attack the Imperial City. As fighting rages outside the Forbidden City, seven heroes, the reborn Thunders, enter the Imperial Palace and defeat Fu Leng with the help of the Twelfth Black Scroll. Without a leader to hold them together, the Shadowlands forces are quickly routed and the city is saved. Akodo Toturi is proclaimed Emperor Toturi I, and his ascension is affirmed by the Celestial Heavens.

1132: The returned Kami Shinjo marches on the Imperial City to overthrow Toturi I, who has been corrupted by the Lying Darkness. Lord Moon intervenes on behalf of the Emperor, but his avatar is slain by the monk Takao.

1159: Catastrophe visits the Imperial City when Daigotsu and his Shadowlands army, arriving unexpectedly from the sea, storm the lightly-defended capital. While his minions rampage throughout the city, the Dark Lord enters the Imperial Palace — the place where Fu Leng was killed on the Second Day of Thunder — and uses it as a gateway to the spirit realms, freeing the Ninth Kami's soul from imprisonment in Jigoku. Fu Leng briefly lays siege to the Celestial Heavens themselves before being defeated and driven back to Jigoku.

The Lion Clan army, assisted by forces loyal to Akodo Kaneka and Toturi Tsudao, evacuate civilians from the city and eventually force the Shadowlands horde to withdraw. They find the capital ruined and beyond salvation. Reluctantly, they raze what is left of it. Rokugan will need a new seat of Imperial power.

1165: The Bloodspeakers briefly open a gateway to Jigoku within the ruins of the former capital, unleashing oni and other Shadowlands horrors. Lion troops contain the outbreak and eventually seal the gateway once more.

1168: A disparate group of heroes led by Jade Champion Asahina Sekawa and aided by the Sword of Yotsu root out the Ninube, former servants of the Lying Darkness, who had carved out a stronghold in the ruins of the capital.





City Denizens

In an earlier time, giving characters roots in Otosan Uchi would have meant attaching great prestige to them. After all, what reason would a character have for hailing from the Empire's capital? He might have been a member of one of the Imperial Families, or related by blood to someone who served the Imperial Court. He might have been a member of a Great Clan embassy, meaning that he would either be a high-ranking member of that Clan, an immediate family member of such a personage, or a junior clan samurai considered promising or well-connected enough to be trusted with such an important assignment. At the very least, he might be an artisan favored by the Emperor or someone in the Imperial Court. Whatever the case, giving a character some sort of concrete association with Otosan Uchi at a time when it was still the Imperial City meant that character was a person of note, basking in the glow of having lived, at least for a time, in close proximity to the Son of Heaven. After all, even the commoners who lived in the capital reveled in a sense of superiority to peasants from the bored, tired provinces. It is only natural that samurai would do the same.

A character from the capital would tend to brag about walking by the Hito Water Gardens or one of the Great Clan Embassies every day on his way to this place or that. Or he might casually let it drop that he's seen the Emperor in person a number of times – something that very few Rokugani subjects outside the capital get to do even once in their lives. For him, though, such rare and wondrous occurrences are the stuff of every day life. Is it arrogance or simply stating facts to speak of such things?

In a campaign set after 1159, of course, having a personal attachment to Otosan Uchi means something very different. At best, the character (or his family) would have lost home and property when Daigotsu's horde rampaged through the city. He could easily have lost friends and loved ones as well. Displaced Imperials would retain their old offices and find suitable replacements for their holdings once the new capital was established at Toshi Ranbo, but the psychological impact of seeing the old Imperial City in flames, and of comprehending how much was lost in the calamity, would linger for the remainder of one's days. The Seppun family continues to mourn the fall of Otosan Uchi for decades after, and individuals characters would do so as well.

Characters who have some sort of personal connection to the ruins of Otosan Uchi are a much more motley bunch than before. The few Rokugani samurai who remain in Otosan Uchi will almost certainly be ronin. Anyone with a connection to the Imperial Families or one of the Great Clans had the means to leave before the city was officially abandoned. Such ronin are most likely members of the Sword of Yotsu, but they might also be old residents (or their descendants) who were unable to evacuate the city, or too stubborn or mad to do so. Some bold adventurers come to Otosan Uchi to prove their mettle amid the ruins, and it is occasionally a destination for young samurai on Musha Shugyo, although such choices are dubious given the Taint known to haunt the ruins. Others might come seeking lost artifacts, records, and other abandoned treasures. Sometimes a Great Clan will organize an expedition upon realizing that something of theirs might have been left behind at their former embassy or some other such site.

Other residents of the old capital are more sinister. The Spider Clan have taken up residence in the old tunnels beneath the city, and used them as a base of operations for the wave of assassinations they carried out in the year 1170. As yet, the Spider presence remains undiscovered, even by other permanent residents of the city, and their agents here usually go about the ruins in disguise.

Until recently, the sinister group known as the Ninube, shapeshifters who once served the Lying Darkness, also used Otosan Uchi as their headquarters, though for what exact purpose was not clear and may never be known. It is known that they commandeered the ruins of the Temple to Hantei for their main base, and insinuated themselves into several bandit gangs, the largest of which became known as the Sons of Shadow. Their presence was largely destroyed by Asahina Sekawa in 1169, and their leader, Ninube Chochu, was killed. It is not known for certain, however, whether the entire Ninube presence was eradicated. Some safe houses and scattered members may still exist among the ruins.



Location Guide

This section describes some notable locations in Otosan Uchi as it existed during the decade after Daitogsu's forces sacked the city and effectively ended its preeminent status in the Empire. For a description of the Imperial City as it was at the height of its glory, see the *Otosan Uchi* boxed set.

Eta Villages

As in most Rokugani settlements of any size, the eta of Otosan Uchi were forced to live together on the very outskirts of the city, as far away from respectable folk as practical. These were, by nature, unpleasant places, where funeral attendants, tanners, butchers, and others defined as untouchable by the Rokugani caste system congregated in cramped, impoverished conditions. Only through charity could they receive a decent supply of life's necessities, and that happened rarely at best.

It is ironic, then, that these former eta villages of the former Imperial City are now Otosan Uchi's principle centers of human habitation. They escaped Daigotsu's depredations relatively untouched. The Lord of the Shadowlands was interested in the heart of the Empire, not those whom the Empire disdained. The eta villages are therefore uncontaminated by the Taint and suffered little physical destruction. Those refugees from more prestigious neighborhoods who could not or would not evacuate before the Lion army razed the city have tended to gather here.

Tainted Ground

Some parts of Otosan Uchi in which Daigotsu and his minions were particularly active, or present in particularly dense concentrations, were so badly contaminated by the Shadowlands Taint that it seems practically impossible they could be purified and made fit again for human habitation. The presence of such areas was certainly one of the most important factors in Matsu Nimuro's decision to abandon and raze the city.

Treat these areas as if they were the Shadowlands for determining the effect of the Taint on those who spend time here.

These locations represent some, but not necessarily all, of the contaminated neighborhoods of Otosan Uchi. Some areas of the city were abandoned so quickly and so completely that no one has returned to them to discover whether or not they are Tainted. The ones noted on the map are merely those contaminated regions currently known to the locals.

Wild Animal Infestation

These areas have been completely abandoned by humans, allowing the wild to encroach on them. Even buildings that somehow escaped both the torch and the corrosive touch of the Taint have crumbled. There are no permanent human residents here, and a significant chance of encounters with wild animals native to Otosan Uchi's climate and surrounding topography. Likely encounters include badgers, snakes, feral dogs, and wolves.

Many of these areas are completely overgrown with trees and plants now that the human tendency to order the environment is absent. If so, characters with an appropriate Skill, such as Craft: Poison or Medicine (Herbalism), might be able to search for medicinal or poisonous plants here, at the GM's discretion.

Eastern Wall of the Ekohikei

One of the key factors in Otosan Uchi's defenses for much of its history was the powerful enchantments woven into the walls surrounding the Inner City. Each quarter of the inner wall received a different enchantment, and each magnified the power of the city's defenders.

In the case of the Eastern Wall, the Isawa imbued the wall with the power to command the loyalty of the spirits of warriors who fell in its defense, binding them into the wall to fight eternally in its defense. These spirits also absorbed and eventually regenerated all damage done to the wall itself. The only exception was the damage caused by gaijin powder weapons in the Battle of the White Stag, which mysteriously failed to heal.

Today, the gold kanji in which the names of the fallen were inscribed are tarnished almost to black. The spirits of the fallen are still bound to this ruin, but the persistent influence of the Taint (and, some say, grief at the city's terrible fate) has driven them mad, and they lash out indiscriminately at anyone within their reach. Anyone who passes by the Eastern Wall runs the risk that one or more fallen guardians, effectively ghosts, will come forth to attack.

Western Wall of the Ekihokei

Whereas the Isawa enchanted the Eastern Wall of the Inner City to command the spirits of the city's fallen defenders and keep them fighting, the Kuni took a much different approach to the Western Wall. Their magic bound the attacking enemy to the wall, neutralizing them by trapping them in the fabric of the stone. During the First War, more than a few oni fell to this fate.

However, neither the Kuni nor anyone else ever figured out how to exorcise the spirits of the evil beings trapped in that quarter of the wall. After some study and deliberation, the Isawa pronounced the Western Wall presented no immediate danger to the city, but residents of the district adjacent to it often claimed to hear the unearthly howls of the beasts within.

Adventure Hooks: Lost Among the Ruins

Because the old eta villages are now population centers for Otosan Uchi's internal refugees, they are a good source of adventure hooks. Among their current residents, there are bound to be helpless commoners or ronin who need a samurai's aid. They could be merchants who left behind a stash of koku or valuable merchandise when they fled their homes, and who are too afraid to retrieve it themselves. Or the lost items might be sentimental in nature, and their owners will have a story that tugs at the player characters' sympathies.

The hook could also involve lost people. Many families were separated in the panic caused by Daigotsu's rampage or the confusion of the subsequent evacuation. Relatives might still be looking for each other years after the event. Perhaps a family member or business associate begs the characters' assistance in seeking out such long-lost persons.

Daigotsu's army did not destroy the Western Wall and its enchantment, but the sudden presence of so much corruption did weaken it to the point where it allowed many of the trapped beings to escape. This only added to the power of the Dark Lord's force, of course. Some of these monsters were subsequently killed by the Lion and Imperial forces, while others escaped to elsewhere in the mortal realm or returned to Jigoku.

Not all of them were freed, however. Many remain trapped in the Western Wall to this day, although the magic binding them to the wall was severely weakened. Their Taint fairly oozes from the wall, contaminating the surrounding ground, and every now and then, one or more of these Shadowlands beasts will escape and add their presence to the terrors that haunt the entire city.

The area within 300' of the Western Wall is Tainted ground, and spending time on that ground has the same effect as spending time in the Shadowlands. Also, there is a significant chance of encountering Shadowlands creatures near the Western Wall, including goblins, Tainted ogres, or minor oni.

Imperial Museum of Antiquities

Despite the formality and apparent gravity of its name, the Imperial Museum of Antiquities was always something of an eccentricity in the Imperial City. The Hantei Emperors kept their own archive of historical records and their own collection of important artifacts, and for the most part



these were intended for the Imperial Court's official use and never displayed to the public.

The Museum of Antiquities was created by a curious Witch Hunter named Kuni Hazu, who gained the favor and patronage of Hantei XVIII. Hazu spent the remainder of his life traveling the Empire (and, some say, even the gaijin lands beyond), collecting odd and interesting objects and bringing them back to the capital for display. His successors continued his practice, and over time the museum acquired a hodgepodge of preserved creatures, unusual and possibly magical objects, bizarre mechanical contraptions, and relics of foreign cultures. It became a repository of the weirdly fascinating rather than the historically important. The only things that made it 'Imperial' at all were the scope of its founder's curiosity and the indulgence of the Hantei dynasty.

The museum was destroyed in Daigotsu's rampage, and it is generally assumed that its entire collection is now lost. While it is true that the vast majority of its curiosities were physically destroyed and no longer exist, there is always the chance that a stray item – perhaps even an item of considerable value or power – somehow escaped the catastrophe. Such items might be hidden in the rubble to this day, awaiting recovery.



Temple to the Kami

The Temple to the Kami was one of the true wonders of the Empire. Built by Isawa himself in homage to the elemental kami, the building was specially consecrated to these elemental spirits so that it belonged to them, and not to any human. Although it had human caretakers, the custodians treated the temple as if the kami themselves were the true residents, and the spirits' power manifested itself in intensely powerful ways within the temple walls. The kami of Void and the Four Elements all had their own rooms in the temple, and they affected visitors to the temple in their own distinctive ways. Those who visited the temple in hopes of gaining blessings from the kami learned that they have to praise and appease them, or else they would cause great harm, perhaps even death.

The Temple of the Kami was a source of tremendous natural power, and its very existence troubled Daigotsu as an impediment to the power of the kansen he relied on for his own magic. The temple's power could not be removed by simply killing humans. His army therefore put a special effort into destroying the temple, knowing that it would be a thorn in their side as long as it stood.

Their efforts bore mixed results at best. Isawa's ancient temple still stands – more or less. It is chipped and scarred, charred and disfigured, but it has not crumbled to its foundation, as have so many other buildings in the Inner City. The Shadowlands creatures could not drive the kami from a temple built out of reverence for them, but they did succeed in diminishing their presence, so that entering the rooms dedicated to the Elements no longer has the same effect that it once had.

Five rooms, one each devoted to Air, Earth, Fire, Water and Void, form the heart of the Temple to the Kami. Entering one of them brings a visitor into close and intense contact with the kami of that Element. The kami are still present in these rooms, but they do not have the power they once boasted, and they are indiscriminately hostile to those who intrude on them. Some say they have gone mad from years of proximity to the Taint.

Mechanically, anyone who enters one of the rooms dedicated to the kami must immediately make a Ring Roll, the Ring in question being the Element to which that room is dedicated, against a TN of 25. Those who fail have their Ring and associated Traits reduced by half (rounded down) for a period of 24 hours. If that person has at least 1 Rank of Shadowlands Taint, the penalty for failure is instead a number of Wounds equal to the total of all of his Rings.

However, despite the spirits' hostility, sufficiently powerful shugenja may still try to communicate with the kami who inhabit the temple. Those who pass the kami's initial test (by making the Ring Roll successfully) who are a shugenja of School Rank 4 or higher can try

Civil Wars in Other Eras

The evacuation of Otosan Uchi did not clear the stricken city of every person and item of significance. It was conducted in a hurry under dire circumstances, and chaos was an inevitable result.

The flip side of that fact is that not everything that is now considered lost was truly destroyed. Items may have been misplaced, overlooked, or left behind in the confusion. They may have been cached and hidden in the hope that they could be recovered later – if the person who hid such an item was killed, the only the knowledge of its fate would be lost. (The cache of jade is a good example of this.) .

The curiosities of the Imperial Museum of Antiquities are merely some examples of items that could await rediscovery in the ruins of Otosan Uchi, and by no means the most valuable. The Palace of the Hantei and the nearby Palaces of the Imperial Families were all flattened by the destructive power of Daigotsu's ritual that freed Fu Leng, but not everything within those revered buildings was necessarily obliterated. Items of historical significance, powerful nemuranai, and other such valuables now assumed to be lost may in fact have survived the destruction and lie hidden in the rubble. Similarly, the Great Clans kept things of genuine value and magical power in their embassies and guesthouses in the Forbidden City. Those, too, may have been left behind.

This likelihood has given many treasure-hunters reason to risk exploring the ruins of Otosan Uchi, and it could inspire player characters as well. Rumors of lost treasures could come from almost anywhere. The eta villages are an obvious choice. Speculation about such things floats around the Imperial Court and the courts of the Great Clans, and could be heard almost anywhere, giving the PCs incentives to go hunting on their own initiative in hopes of gaining glory — assuming that they survive, of course. GMs wishing a more structured adventure could instead have a daimyo or other prominent figure offer the PCs a formal commission to try to retrieve specific ancestral items or knowledge.

to communicate with the kami in the room, by casting Commune with at least 6 Raises for clarity. Those who try this and fail suffer a number of Wounds equal to the difference between their Spellcasting TN and their actual roll. Those who succeed, however, can win the kami's favor, and receive a bonus to their Ring (and the Traits associated with that Ring) equal to half (rounded up) of their current Rank in that Ring. This bonus lasts for a period of 24 hours.

Crane Clan Embassy

The estate housing the Imperial Embassy of the Crane Clan was once a paragon of elegance and aesthetic expression. It was known in particular for its expressive story-garden, decorated with ikebana designed to be viewed in a particular sequence that told a story, a different story each day.

Like the rest of Otosan Uchi, the estate is now a dysfunctional ruin, its walls blackened and crumbling, its breathtaking gardens reduced to ash and carried away on the wind – perhaps mercifully so, as oblivion would be preferable to mutation brought on by the Taint.

As of 1168, it is also the property of the Yotsu Family. In that year, the Crane bestowed lands upon the Yotsu as thanks for helping Asahina Sekawa defeat the Ninube. The Crane also gave them their old embassy, mostly as a symbolic gesture – and one that cost the Crane nothing, as they had no hope of reclaiming it anyway. Still, those in the Imperial Court felt that if anyone could make use of the ruined structure, the Yotsu could do it.

So far, the Yotsu have explored the old embassy grounds and have found some rooms that could be made habitable without too much work. They send regular patrols to the estate out of respect for the Crane and their gift, but they still prefer to operate out of their traditional home in the Yatoshin District of the Outer City (see below).

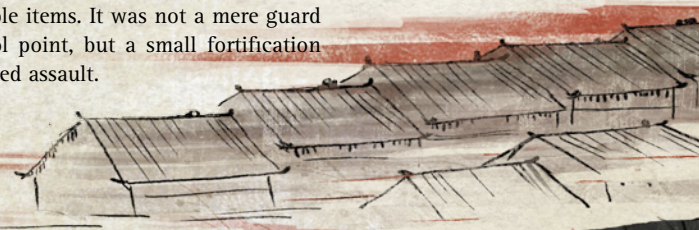
Imperial Water Gardens

Once one of the wonders of the Forbidden City, this vast park consisted of an artificial lake filled with water diverted from the River of the Sun and dotted with islands containing fountains, miniature gardens, and gazebos, connected by a maze of footbridges. By day, it was a spacious display of the wealth and majesty of the Hantei, and on spring and summer nights, when lanterns were lit on the islands, it became a beautiful wonderland and a favored place for the city residents to relax.

As such, it was a place that Daigotsu's forces singled out to destroy out of sheer spite. The islands are now desolate, and the water of the lake glows an eerie red both day and night. This is now Tainted ground, and spending time on the islands or in the water has the same effect as spending time in the Shadowlands. Furthermore, the Taint has mutated the plants of the islands into a dangerous blood-drinking Shadowlands plant known as fudoshi. Stepping onto an island will set off a skirmish with these predatory vines.

Southern Guard Post

This tower was considered the most secure position along the Southern Wall of the Ekohikei. It could only be entered along the top of the wall, and navigated by a spiral staircase wide enough to accommodate mounted troops. Landings at each floor gave access to barracks rooms, armories, and at the bottom levels, vaults designed for storing koku and valuable items. It was not a mere guard post, or a traffic control point, but a small fortification meant to resist a sustained assault.



Bandits!

Bandits now form a substantial part of the human population of Otosan Uchi. They do not prey on the other human residents so much as they take advantage of the isolation of the former capital, setting up their home base among the ruins and journeying out of the city to prey on nearby trade and travel routes. Personal belongings and stolen goods alike can be hidden in plain sight here without much worry that they will be stolen while the bandits are away.

There is little cooperation between bandit groups in Otosan Uchi. In fact, they are so spread out that no single group knows of the existence of all the others. However, bandits groups break up and reconstitute themselves with some regularity, and a veteran bandit will have had many different sets of comrades in his career.

The notorious bandit group called the Sons of Shadow once allied themselves with the Ninube, but have largely disappeared since Asahina Sekawa routed the Ninube from the city.



This imperviousness to the outside world convinced the Sword of Yotsu to use it as a staging point for their patrols into the Inner City, despite the fact that it requires taking a somewhat roundabout route from the Yatoshin District. They climb the Southern Wall to reach the gate, and store weapons and armor in chambers on the lower floors. A hole they knocked into the wall of the ground floor allows them egress into the Inner City.

Depending on the time of day and whether or not a patrol has set out, visitors will find anywhere from 2-12 Yotsu bushi here at any given time. If there are more than four present, one will be of Insight Rank 3, and at least one other will be of Insight Rank 2, with the remainder being of Insight Rank 1.

District Barracks (Bandit Lair)

Formerly, each district of the Outer City had its own barracks complex to house the soldiers charged with keeping order in that district. These were fairly conspicuous buildings, since there was no reason to conceal their function. As such, they make an unusual choice for a bandit lair. But Otosan Uchi is now so deserted that no matter where a bandit gang chooses to set up, it is unlikely to be noticed by very many people, and even those who do notice it will not be able to do much about it. A former barracks therefore makes as good a hideout as any, especially since it was originally designed to house those who live by the sword. Further, some of them still have caches of weapons and armor, or even abandoned pay chests, inside.

Each of these locations currently houses a bandit gang, ranging in size from small groups of 20 or 30 individuals up to large bands of 100 or more. At any given time, there is a good chance that part of the band is away, whether on a raid or just foraging for basic supplies. Of those who are present, a sizable proportion, often as many as half, will either be drunk, asleep, or otherwise unprepared for a confrontation.

Cache of Jade

During what would turn out to be the final days of Otosan Uchi, a Yasuki trader living in the city was charged with moving a valuable shipment of jade mined in the Great Wall of the North Mountains to the Crab lands. However, he judged the southbound caravan on which he had reserved space was guarded too lightly for him to trust it with such a valuable cargo. Accordingly, he stored the jade until he could find a more satisfactory means of transportation. Instead of the typical practice of securing it in a heavy stone jar in the vault of his trading house, however, he entrusted it to a place where no one would think to look for it – the humble house of one of his shop assistants, located in a nondescript neighborhood in the Outer City.

Before this treasure could resume its southward journey, Daigotsu's army swept in from the sea. The trader and his shop staff were all killed, and knowledge of this cache of jade passed from living memory.

Anyone who stumbles upon the remains of what was once a modest and utterly nondescript house will have an opportunity to find crates containing a huge amount of jade, roughly equal to 500 "fingers" of the sacred stone. The crates are hidden in what was once a storage closet, concealed by shards of wood and debris. The wood has begun to rot away and the pile of damaged personal and household items that once hid the jade are slowly turning to dust and drifting away on the breeze.

Dojo Seo

Among the Empire's defenders, only the Sword of Yotsu remain in Otosan Uchi in any significant number. While the city's status and condition have changed dramatically, the Yotsu cling stubbornly to their original purpose for being here – to protect the people of the capital. Though the old administrative organization of the Yatoshin District no longer means anything, the Yotsu still consider this area to be their home among the ruins, and they use the dojo founded by Yotsu Yatoshin's daughter Seo as their base of operations.

There is not enough living space inside the dojo to accommodate the entire Sword of Yotsu force, so senior members share the old District Governor's residence, and

a nearby warehouse has been converted into a barracks for the junior bushi. Before the fall of Otosan Uchi, Sword of Yotsu members lived in private residences throughout the district and reported for duty in small groups at scattered muster points. Afterwards, however, the city was a much less secure place, and Yotsu Seo recognized the wisdom of concentrating her forces into a central location.

Yotsu Seo no longer lives here, however; after succeeding her sister Urieko as the leader of the family, she moved to Toshi Ranbo out of respect for the family's improving relationship with the Seppun. The Sword of Yotsu forces inside the city have so far declined to select a leader to replace her, however. Instead, they make important strategic decisions by consensus of the senior officers.

The fact that the Sword of Yotsu remain here at all is a tribute to the determination of Yotsu Seo, who held herself and her followers to their sworn duty after the fall of the city. Since then, they have usually been able to muster between 300-500 bushi, depending on their success in recruiting new members. Scarcely a third of them, perhaps even less, will be present at or around Dojo Seo at any given time, even in the dead of night. They run patrols throughout the ruins of the capital at all hours, covering as much ground as they can. They know that trouble — whether it takes the form of bandits preying on the remaining residents, folk innocently wandering into hazardous areas, attacks by wild animals, or even the Shadowlands creatures who remain — can pop up at any time. They also know that no one else will help the unfortunates who still live among the ruins.

Adventure Hooks: The Sword of Yotsu Amid the Ruins

The Sword of Yotsu doggedly protect as much of the ruins of Otosan Uchi with their patrols as they can. But they are more than just another possible random encounter for player characters; they are a possible source of aid when the party lands in trouble, as well as an excellent source of knowledge about what is going on in the city.

The Yotsu can also serve as hooks to initiate an adventure set in the ruins of Otosan Uchi. If Yotsu samurai help out the party, they may ask for a favor in return, such as accompanying them on patrol when they are under strength, or checking out reports of trouble in another part of the city because they are stretched too thin to handle it themselves.

It is also conceivable that a Sword of Yotsu patrol will stumble upon the party and mistake them for bandits or other malefactors, forcing the characters to talk their way out of a confrontation, or risk a fight with some of the few genuine "good guys" left in the city.

Spider Clan Stronghold

Ironically, when Daigotsu's army swept through Otosan Uchi, they accomplished something that the Empire could not accomplish in centuries — they drove out the Kolat. The subversive conspiracy had long since established itself in the seat of Imperial power, and maintained a headquarters in a place where no one would think to disturb them: below ground. Beneath the grand palaces and wealthy merchant establishments of the capital, there was an extensive system of tunnels, both natural and manmade, some of them quite ancient. Those who wanted to escape detection could do so as long as they were willing to put up with the discomforts of living underground, and the Kolat were only one of several groups who dwelt in these passageways. For centuries, it was a perfect regional center for the Kolat, allowing them to operate literally under the noses of Imperial authority without being noticed. But once the Empire left Otosan Uchi, there was no reason for the Kolat to be there, either. Even if Daigotsu had cared to keep them around, they would not have stayed.

The Spider Clan have now taken over what the Kolat no longer desire. This location was once the Kolat's headquarters in the city, and featured meeting space and even comfortable living accommodations for senior operatives. The Spider have moved right in, using it as did their predecessors. A special room is set aside at all times for Daigotsu's personal use.

The Spider Clan's permanent presence in Otosan Uchi numbers around a hundred samurai and an equal number of heimin henchmen. At any given time, 20 to 50 Spider samurai may be found here and in the immediate vicinity. They are well-armed and alert, always watching for any



possibility of discovery. The number of Spider in the city can swell dramatically if something unusually important is going on, such as when Daigotsu issued the orders for his assassination campaign.

The Vault

Formerly used by the Kolat to store valuable items, this secure storage vault currently serves a similar purpose for the Spider Clan. They keep here all items of value they have found in Otosan Uchi, as well as important records about the true identities of their operatives in central Rokugan and what they have learned about the other inhabitants of the ruins.

Escape Tunnels

The tunnels of Otosan Uchi open out onto the River of the Sun at several points, as well as allowing movement to and from the surface at many other locations. These places mark the mouths of tunnels constructed by various parties for various reasons during Otosan Uchi's heyday. They are now key infiltration/exfiltration points for the Spider Clan.

Ninube Family Stronghold (Former Temple to Hantei)

The Temple to Hantei was actually a modestly-sized house to which the Hantei Emperors would retreat when they wanted to get away from the Imperial Palace. It sat at the end of a paved path called the Emperor's Walk, which was lined with statues of the current Emperor's predecessors.

After the fall of Otosan Uchi, the Temple of Hantei was a charred, stained wreck, much like the entire Forbidden City. Each of the 38 statues of the Hantei Emperors (there was never one erected in the likeness of Hantei the 39th) lay on its back, conspicuously toppled over. It was here that the Ninube set up their headquarters. It was not their only stronghold in the ruins of the city, but it was their primary one, and the one where their leader Ninube Chochu was most often found. The exact reason they chose the Temple to Hantei is not known, but it seems clear that they appreciated the symbolic value of installing themselves at the exact center of the former Imperial City and imposing their presence on a symbol of the Hantei's wealth and privilege.

The former Temple to Hantei is not terribly large, and it never accommodated more than a couple dozen Ninube ninja at any given time. However, many more were stationed in the surrounding neighborhood, serving as lookouts and spies.



Important Personages

Shosuro Meiyoko

Governor of the Meiyoko District

During the waning days of the reign of Hantei the 38th, Shosuro Meiyoko was the Governor of the district of Otosan Uchi's Outer City that lay just north of the city's port. She was by no means typical of the capital's District Governors, neither at that time nor at any time during the city's history. But her brief career does illustrate some of the political challenges that a Governor could face on top of the basic administrative challenges of overseeing part of the Imperial City.

Meiyoko was only sixteen years old when she became District Governor; she had just completed her gempukku after studying in the Bayushi Courtier School when her immediate predecessor — her father — died and left her the position. She was callow, but strong-willed; even as a youth, she defied her clan by taking a purely conventional view of Bushido, and made a point of not wearing a mask in public.

Nor was she foolish by any means. Aware of her political vulnerability amid the treacherous currents of politics in the Imperial City, she courted friendships with other District Governors, particularly Shosuro Mukai, another young and untested Scorpion who had recently assumed responsibility for the Higshikawa District. She also cultivated a friendship with Shiba Toyotomi of the Toyotomi District, a relationship that became personal as well as diplomatic over time. She placed her trust in advisors provided by her Clan — although that, as it turned out, would prove her undoing.

Her primary advisor was Yogo Mamoru, a former soldier who coveted the district Governorship and was secretly jealous of the much younger Meiyoko's authority. His personal ties to the district were older and stronger than hers, particularly his connections to its criminal enterprises. Shortly after the coronation of Hantei the 39th, he had Meiyoko assassinated and assumed the governorship himself, with the approval of the Empress Kachiko. He spent his entire term repaying his criminal associates for their help, acting as their puppet.

Shosuro Meiyoko, Governor of the Meiyoko District

Air: 3 Earth: 2 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 3

Awareness: 4 Intelligence: 3 Perception: 3

Honor: 2.8 *Status: 5.0* *Glory: 3.6*

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 2

Skills: Acting 2, Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Forgery 2, Investigation 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: Law 3, Perform: Dance 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Tea Ceremony 4, Temptation (Seduction) 2

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Irreproachable, Voice

Yotsu Motoko

Sword of Yotsu Gunso

Tough and cunning as well as idealistic, Yotsu Motoko exemplifies what has become of the Sword of Yotsu in Otosan Uchi since the destruction of the city. Once, they carried themselves through the streets of the old capital with a strange aura of nobility — strange, that is, for ronin. They were widely respected as heroes, warriors who had devoted themselves to the protection of others, yet remained humble as true servants of the Emperor.

Now, however, the ground that they patrol has become a blasted, deserted wasteland, and the challenges they face have changed drastically. They must carry themselves as outriders in enemy territory, who could face danger around any corner. These days, they resemble Hiruma Scouts as much as the valiant warriors who once kept the Yatoshin District safe.

Yotsu Motoko came to Otosan Uchi with her father, a ronin looking for employment, just before Daigotsu's army arrived from the sea. She saw her father ripped in half by bakemono, and her youth and inexperience rendered here nearly useless in trying to fight off the invaders. Instead of fleeing the city, however, she vowed to stay — partly out of grief and rage over her father's death, but also because she had nowhere else to go. Naturally, she gravitated to the Sword of Yotsu, who soon took her in.

Motoko is now a mid-ranking officer in the Yotsu garrison. After years of taking part in patrols throughout what is left of Otosan Uchi, she now leads them herself, and her long experience serves her and those under her command well, allowing them to accomplish their sworn mission and keep themselves safe at the same time. She has a knack for knowing whom she can trust. Player characters who encounter her will find her a useful ally, so long as they are honest with her and mean no harm to the people who live here.

Yotsu Motoko, Sword of Yotsu Gunso

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3

Reflexes: 3

Honor: 6.5 *Status: 0.0 (ronin)* *Glory: 2.8*

School/Rank: None (ronin)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 3, Jiujitsu 1, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Lore: Law 3, Lore: Otosan Uchi 3, Medicine 1, Stealth 2

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Quick, Way of the Land (Otosan Uchi)

Disadvantages: Ascetic



New Mechanics

New Advantage: Ruined City Shadow [Physical] (3 points)

Being stationed in the Ruined City is a dangerous assignment, even for the most sinister samurai among the Spider Clan. If the environment were not dangerous enough, the area is rife with potential enemies, and remaining undetected is the first priority for both Yotsu patrols and Spider operations within the city. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to the total of all Stealth (Ambush) Skill Rolls made in urban environments.

New Advantage: Stolen Identity [Social] (6 points, 5 points for Spider characters)

The city of Otosan Uchi was once the largest and grandest in Rokugan, and remained so for more than one thousand years. Even in its ruined state, there are secrets buried within that can reach across the face of an Empire. Among the ruins, you have discovered the trappings of another life, and can masquerade among the Great Clans in an established identity, complete with all the proper equipment. You may choose any one family and School from another Great Clan, as well as an alias. When using the Acting Skill to deceive others as to your identity, and using this alternate identity, you gain two Free Raises on any Acting Skill Roll. You gain the Outfit (but not the koku) of the selected School as well. Needless to say, getting caught in your false identity will lead to dire consequences.

New Disadvantage: Ruined City Survivor [Material] (4 points)

A duty posting within the Ruined City is a difficult one at best. The city is dangerous and short of resources, save what can be taken from the ruins, refurbished, and turned into an asset. Still, many stationed within the city must make the best of sub-standard equipment as a result of availability. You receive no koku as part of your starting Outfit, and two items from your Outfit are missing as well (you choose which ones are missing).

New Alternate Path: Daigotsu Scout [Bushi]

In addition to serving as the lords of the Spider Clan, the Daigotsu are also the rank and file of its legions. Of the many samurai who have joined the clan since its inception, those with a talent for speaking to the kami join the Chuda, those whom the Shadow Dragon has chosen as his own become members of the Goju, and a small handful take up the path of the monk as members of the Order of the Spider. All the rest join the Daigotsu, and among those legions, the cruel and sinister sensei of the Spider dojo select those with the greatest affinity for stealth, athleticism, and sheer physical prowess to serve as the small but distinguished group known as the Daigotsu scouts. These individuals are trained extensively in the art of remaining unseen regardless of circumstances, and are allowed to travel through the Empire with impunity, observing and remembering everything they have seen to report back to their master Daigotsu. In addition to their physical talents, the scouts are chosen for mental acuity; they dare not keep records of their observations, as capture could reveal too much about the family or clan. Likewise their loyalty to the Spider is of paramount importance. In the event that one of them is captured, the Daigotsu sensei must be confident that the





scout will not betray the family's secrets even under pain of torture or death. Together, these traits result in an elite cadre of scouts who are intelligent, talented, and completely ruthless. Those few who know of their existence regard them as extremely competent and dangerous enemies.

New Alternate Path: Daigotsu Scout

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Daigotsu Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Stealth 3

Technique: The Cloak of Shadows

Although not as talented as the inhuman minions of the Shadow Dragon or the Lying Darkness, the Daigotsu scouts are still highly skilled in moving about without being detected. Stealth is now considered a School Skill for you, and you gain one additional Emphasis in the skill above any you may already possess, and in excess of the maximum normal number of Emphases you may posses. Your Move Actions are not reduced when using Stealth, and when using Stealth you may also ignore any terrain penalties that would normally reduce your Move Actions.

New Alternate Path: Dark Path Sohei [Monk]

The Order of the Spider is an enigmatic and sinister order, with its origins in the diseased and diabolical mind of the fallen monk Roshungi. Under his teachings, enlightenment could only be discovered by completely unlocking an individual's greatest physical and mental power. The path to doing that, Roshungi reasoned, was completely up to the individual to discover. In his order, those who wished to embrace their full potential and thus unlock enlightenment and the secrets of the universe were encouraged to embrace whatever means were necessary to achieve power. To some, this meant embracing the Shadowlands Taint. To others, it simply meant becoming physically and mentally disciplined and powerful on a level virtually unprecedented among the Brotherhood. Roshungi's greatest pupil and eventual successor, the monk Michio, embodied this philosophy to its utmost, but there are others among the order who believe that they have been successful in finding the first steps down the road to enlightenment. Some of these individuals call themselves the Dark Path sohei, or warrior monks. These individuals combine all the power and ruthlessness of their order with the strange, almost supernatural powers normally seen only among the Brotherhood. Together, the two are an exceptionally dangerous combination that ensures the Dark Path sohei are a deadly threat to any they choose to label as enemies.

New Alternate Path: Dark Path Sohei

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Order of the Spider 2
- **Requirements:** Theology 3

Technique: Walk upon the Dark Path

Even the most devout member of the Brotherhood of Shinsei would attest that there is no one true path to enlightenment, and certain members of the Order of the Spider seem to bear out that theory. You gain two Kiho, for which you must meet all normal prerequisites. These Kiho do not count against the normal number of Kiho you may learn as determined by your School Rank.



Chapter Six

Water Hammer City

"Grandmother, why did you request this assignment in the Dragon Lands?" the young Scorpion said, her voice quiet under her catlike mask.

"Why is that so important, Mara-chan? Yours is to serve, and you just happen to serve your grandmother," the older woman said, stopping the horses before the small group entered the mountains.

The young girl huffed, obviously frustrated, but resigned to her assignment.

"How much truth is there in legend, granddaughter? How many secrets can be concealed in a well-told legend?" The old woman kicked her horse back onto the trail, climbing farther into the mountains.

"I don't know, Honored Grandmother. I would suspect a legend told through the generations could conceal quite a bit, but Dragon Hammer City is a new city. It was only finished recently and was founded when you were my age." The young girl sounding unsure of what she was saying.

"Ahh, Mara-chan, so you have paid attention on this trip!"

"Thank you, Obaa-sama," Mara said, not quite sure to take the compliment as it appeared.

"Yes, the city is only 40 years old," the old woman continued. "Still, legends already cluster around it. It is secluded deep into the lands of the Dragon. Only those specially invited are welcome in this city, only those whom the Champion of the Dragon wishes can step foot in it. Some say the monks who live there are some of the best blacksmiths in the Empire, though of course the Crane and Crab would argue that." The old woman's gaze fell upon a silk-wrapped bundle sitting on her lap. "I have known of this place since I was your age, but not until I was ready did I petition our Champion for the right to journey here, to see if my craft holds up to theirs, to see if my skill will allow me to use their great forge."

"Great Forge? Like the Kaiu Forge?" Mara said, her delicate mask hiding the curiosity in her eyes.

"Yes, so they say. The tale is that a wandering monk found something, something not of this realm. A great disk, they say, colored of the sea. Some say it is always cool and wet to the touch." The old Scorpion's eyes seemed to be looking at another place, and her voice had gone slightly sing-song. "The monk built a shrine to the Water Dragon on the place where he found it, and soon honored the Fortune of the Sea too. It was a gift of all water kami, they say, perhaps even a gift of the Water Dragon itself. The city grew out from this shrine. By all accounts, those who are nearest to the skill of the monk reside closest to the center, and those who need practice live farther out. An interesting arrangement, ne? Some of the best blacksmiths of the Tsi, the Unicorn, the Mantis, and our own Scorpion can be found here... and of course those of the Dragon themselves." She tucked away the silk bundle and shook herself slightly, refocusing on the trail.

"I am sure you will be admitted, Honored Grandmother," Mara said as they neared a narrow canyon.

"Perhaps. All seek the favor of the monk, for he allows only ten persons to use the forge, whether they succeed or not. Most fail," the old woman sighed. "But perhaps I shall not."

History

Though Water Hammer City has existed for nearly forty years, only a few samurai of the Great Clans are actually fully aware of the story behind its existence. The construction of the city was authorized by the Dragon Champion himself, but to the rest of the Empire, the city's founding is little more than a legend.

It is said that a wandering monk named Haru received a vision compelling him to journey far from his home, deep into the mountains, where he would find a gift from the Heavens themselves. He found the gift at the foot of a beautiful waterfall, in a clear pool that emptied into a small mountain stream. A beautiful sea-colored disc lay on the bank of the small lake.

The monk was overwhelmed by the power he felt within the stone disc, and meditated upon its purpose for many days until he received a second vision. This vision showed the monk crafting great weapons and armor alongside others such as himself, with the disc used as a sparkling anvil. His heart filled with divine purpose, the monk set about crafting a crude forge from whatever materials he could find.

Before long, Mirumoto samurai visited the forge at the behest of their Champion, and offered Haru their assistance. These samurai were but the first of many Dragon to be sent to the rapidly growing settlement, and soon peasants and merchants began to arrive as well. The monk had perfected the art of using the otherworldly anvil, and hopeful students began to travel to his forge in search of training. The first students to finish their training built forges of their own around the original, the second set of students built forges just beyond those, and so on. The monk was overjoyed, and soon he and his followers built a large shrine at the city's center to honor the Heavens for bestowing upon them such a wondrous gift. Thus was Water Hammer City born.

Over time, the city grew outward from the monk's shrine, which was itself expanded and rebuilt until it became a beautiful, blue-hued stone building that bridged the river itself. Artisans carved images of Suitengu and the Water Dragon upon its surfaces, a practice which soon spread to the other buildings of the city. The number of forges located within the city's center grew until they rivaled the number of homes. During these early years, caravans from the Scorpion, Mantis, and Unicorn Clans began to arrive, bringing an important early burst of prosperity to the emerging town. Later tales would report that some of these caravan leaders claimed to have arrived at the behest of divine visions, bestowed upon them or even on their daimyo.

Haru soon realized that he could not allow just anyone to use his forge. The sacred disk would not answer to the work of just any smith, even one of great skill. He would have to impose careful limits on the number of smiths allowed to work on its sacred surface. Haru decided he would use the forge himself but twice per year, and would dole out the remaining time to ten of his most promising students. These students would receive but one chance to use the anvil each year; for many of them, this meant they would receive but one chance each lifetime.

As the population of the city grew, it became apparent that it would need a governor, but the Kitsuki and the Mirumoto were a bit perplexed as to exactly who should appoint one. Half of the city rested upon Mirumoto soil, while the other half stood within the Kitsuki provinces. After some early disagreements, eventually the daimyo of the two families agreed to jointly appoint a single person as governor of the city. This tradition has served the clan well through the ensuing years.

Today, Water Hammer City has grown to a population of around three thousand, modest for a city, but impressive for one founded so recently. The town still centers around the shrine and its startling array of forges, while more elegant estates can be found near the waterfall on either side of the river. Most impressive among these is the governor's estate, which is draped in beautiful green and gold banners whenever the weather allows it. Small estates belonging to Scorpion, Mantis, and Unicorn representatives can be found along the edges of the lake formed by the waterfall, each separated by smaller holdings that remain in Dragon hands.

Visitors from other Clans are welcome within Water Hammer City, so long as they are granted approval by the Dragon Champion and the local Governor. A partial exception to these restrictions is allowed for members of the Scorpion, Mantis, and Unicorn Clans, to whom the former Clan Champion Togashi Hoshi allowed free access to the city in thanks for their early assistance to its growth. This tradition has been upheld by every Champion since.

The current governor, Kitsuki Kadiri, is a rarity among her family in that she was blessed with the ability to speak to the kami. Ironically, however, Kadiri had no special connection to the peaceful water kami which are most sacred to the city – it is the kami of fire that favored her the most. Since her appointment she has earned a reputation as a temperamental woman, and commoners often exaggerate her reputation to the point of suggesting she is prone to incinerating opponents first and ordering the eta to sweep up the ash afterward.

Kadiri's court is small but efficient, and is frequently attended by delegates of the various clans allowed access to the city. These individuals serve more as trade emissaries to the city than anything else, and matters of commerce fall by the wayside only when it comes time to name new apprentices to the current Master Smith. Though the selection is based entirely upon the whim of the Master, the courtiers within the city do not miss a chance to promote the skill of their clan's craftsmen, and the resulting competition and boasting often bleeds into other activities as well. Naturally, the Governor makes sure such competitions do not become improper, and the magistrates under her authority do not tolerate samurai who step out of line. So far the other clans have respected

this and kept any shady dealings they might have well hidden – none of them are willing to risk being expelled from the city by inflaming Kitsuki Kadiri's temper.

Choosing the Apprentices

Once per year during the New Year's Festival, prospective apprentices are allowed to display their greatest creation for Haru, the Master Smith, to inspect. After a long ceremony, one that becomes more complex with each passing year, Haru selects the nine most impressive smiths as his new apprentices. Those who fail to be selected, but who still display great skill in their craft, are allowed to remain in the city to continue their work, and the best of them generally work in the forges closest to the central temple.

After the new apprentices have been chosen, their first duty is to assist Haru in carrying the wondrous blue stone disc out of the temple and into the river running beneath the city. This mysterious act of veneration causes the water kami to purify the river and lake of the ash and soot which have seeped into them over the course of the year, allowing the city to start the new year with fresh water as well as fresh students. Once the disc has been returned to the temple, the celebration of the new year truly begins.

Timeline

1141 - A wandering monk, Haru, discovers a sea blue disc on the banks of a small lake deep in Dragon Lands. The disc is obviously not of this realm. Haru, believing himself guided by the Heavens themselves, constructs a shrine to this gift.

1143 - The Champion of the Dragon sends Mirumoto samurai to assist the monk with what he might need to expand his shrine. Upon arriving at the shrine, they discover nearly half a dozen monks already in attendance, and a unique forge and anvil within. The monks' skill at metalworking is quite impressive.

1144 - Caravans of the Scorpion, Mantis, and Unicorn begin to find their way to the emerging settlement, bringing supplies, workers, and even a few architects to help the city grow.

1154 - The settlement is officially named Water Hammer City in honor of Haru's discovery and his amazing skill with his forge and anvil. In this same year, one of his first students presents Haru with a blade of such quality he is granted permission to attempt to use the sacred anvil. He fails. Haru quickly learns that not all blacksmiths will be able to use the unorthodox anvil.

1158 - News of the Death of Emperor Toturi I reaches Water Hammer City. Haru sequesters himself for several months, creating a beautiful daisho with the mon of the wolf carved into the blades. These blades are stored in the temple, awaiting someone worthy to carry them.

1160 - Haru, now quite aged, falls ill. He refuses any treatment by shugenja, and soon disappears with several of his fellow monks. The disk also goes missing, inspiring great consternation among the city's residents.

1161 - Haru returns to the temple, accompanied by many more monks then he left with, and the disk reappears within the forge. The old monk's health appears powerfully restored, especially for a man of his age, and he begins his work again. He creates a suit of armor and emblazons the chest piece with an anvil in honor of Emperor Toturi III, Toturi Naseru, "the Anvil."

1165 - Bloodspeakers covertly assault the city, making nearly a dozen attempt to infiltrate the temple and claim the disk. In their last assault, the Governor and several bushi are slain, but the monks of the temple turn back the assault and kill the vile cultists to the last man.

1166 - Kitsuki Kadiri, a renowned fire shugenja and a reputed expert on hunting and destroying maho-tsukai, is appointed Governor of the city. She names Togashi Minoru to be her chief Magistrate.

1168 - Mirumoto Arimi founds Mountains Wrath Dojo. Magistrate Togashi Minoru names Kitsuki Asuko as his chief yoriki. The two are quite different but seem to work well together.



Denizens of Water Hammer City

The residents of Water Hammer City have, for the most part, enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous existence almost since the first brick was laid in the city's central temple. War has never come to this place, even during recent upheavals like the Spirit Wars, the Winter of Red Snow, and most recently the terrible War of Dark Fire. Furthermore, the city is nearly self-sustaining. The farmlands on its outskirts, the freshwater fish from the lake and river, and the forest a day's travel to the east provide enough food, wood, and other basic necessities for the inhabitants to survive on a modest lifestyle, although trade is needed to attain anything beyond that. Furthermore, the city has never known a drought. All of this means that Water Hammer City's permanent inhabitants, both heimin and samurai, tend to be unusually optimistic and expect things to turn out well. Some visitors have been known to use the word "spoiled" in describing them.

Water Hammer City is a young city, and its native samurai still somewhat struggling for a distinctive sense of identity. The city's culture, such as it is, is divided by the river. The north bank, home of the Mountain's Wrath Dojo, was heavily influenced by the Scorpion and Unicorn samurai sent to aid in the city's development. Samurai from the north side of the city tend to be more pragmatic and efficient. Also, between the influence of the dojo and the non-Dragon samurai who inhabit the district, those Dragon who are born and raised on the north side of the river tend to be more martially inclined than those elsewhere in the city. The influence from the Mountain's Wrath Dojo has caught the attention of the local Magistrate, who keeps a watchful eye to see if the dojo may become a source of disturbance.

This part of the city also tends to offer more in the way of high culture – for example, the Scorpion inhabitants have established several theaters and geisha houses, and the Unicorn maintain a riding school which many local Dragon samurai attend.

On the southern side of the river, there are a great many smaller shrines and temples taking up land around the central temple, the so-called Temple of Water's Strength. There is little outside influence to be found on the southern bank, save for the Brotherhood of Shinsei, the Tattooed orders of the Dragon themselves, a small commercial district run mainly by Mantis. There are a few minor shugenja dojo, but for the most part there are only residences, temples, shrines, and forges. This



part of the city is believed to exhibit a more serene and contemplative air. Samurai who are born and raised here tend to be more contemplative and religious in nature, and also more inquisitive, than their more practical northern counterparts – or so the local like to claim. Outsiders who visit Water Hammer City seldom can perceive such allegedly subtle differences.

Despite these differences between the city's two halves, samurai from Water Hammer City are generally known to be friendly and personable, especially by Dragon standards. The northern residents, despite their reputation for potential violence, are in fact normally quite friendly, unless crossed. The southern residents view each experience as a chance to learn – much like the Togashi themselves. The two halves form a unique society, only to be found in the lands of the Dragon.

Location Guide

Water Strength Temple

This large temple, grown from the shrine which Haru created forty years ago, dominates the center of Water Hammer City. The temple serves not only as a working forge and the religious center of the city, but also as a bridge over the river which flows through the settlement. The temple's beautiful blue stone walls are masterfully carved with images of the Fortune of the Sea and the Great Water Dragon, the two divinities venerated here. The temple's two entrances, one on each side of the river, are guarded by huge, awe-inspiring statues of the Water Dragon, gifts from the Elemental Masters of the Phoenix.

Within the temple is a large open chamber that bridges the river. Passage through from one side of the river to the other is permitted, but tends to be frowned upon by the resident monks, who see it as mildly disrespectful. This central chamber, the largest room of the temple, is filled with shrines small and large, venerating various Fortunes, and the walls are lined with small alcoves for visitors to engage in private meditation and prayer. The floor is designed with a number of small but well-placed holes, allowing visitors to see the river flowing past below. Supposedly, this was done at the behest of the temple founder, Haru, so that no matter where he was in the temple he would always be close to the water.

The rest of the temple includes a great meditation room, the monks' quarters, and of course the forge itself. The temple currently houses a dozen monks, but has room for nearly double that number. Their living area includes a number of private shrines, a dojo for training and physical fitness, and a small interior garden with plants transplanted from the Mantis Isles. The monks here usually belong to the Order of the Ten Thousand Temples.

The most sacred part of the building is, of course, the forge where the sea-blue disc resides. Here the monk Haru, the man who first discovered the fabled disc four decades ago, does his teaching and his craftwork. The disc itself resides in the center of the forge chamber, atop a large metal cylinder, presenting an unusual shape which even the most skilled smiths can find off-putting. (In mechanical terms, any Craft Skill rolls made while using this special anvil suffer a +10 TN penalty, due to the unconventional shape.) The forge itself is kept glowing red hot nearly all the time, since Haru and his apprentices may feel the call of inspiration at any time. Tools of the craft, reputedly some of the best maintained blacksmithing tools in all of the Empire, are kept in neat arrays along the walls, ready to hand.

In the back of the temple are storerooms, housing a small library and vast quantities of metal bars shipped from all over the Empire. These are neatly stacked and labeled according to which clan and province supplied them, allowing the smiths to choose whatever they might need. Here is also stored those of Haru's works which are complete but which he, for whatever reason, is not yet ready to bestow upon the world. Masterfully crafted armor, daisho sets, and numerous other weapons may be found here, sacred objects waiting to be gifted by Haru to those deserving of the Heavens' favor.

Unknown to most of the monks who reside at the temple, the storage room also contains the entrance to a hidden basement and escape tunnel. This feature was added by a Scorpion architect during the temple's construction, and while Haru was aware of it, he did not consider it something worthy of further attention. The tunnel leads to the Governor's estate, the only real fortress in the city, and is designed to be collapsed in case of emergency.

Governor's Estate

The Governors Estate was the second large structure to be built in the city, after the temple itself, and is the closest thing to a castle in Water Hammer City. Its architects were from the Kitsuki and Tamori families, and it shows influences from both. Its location, on the northern shore of the river overlooking the large lake, offers a splendid view of the waterfall and the mountains, as well as the rest of the city. The estate's outer walls are constructed from sea-green stone, making it look more like something from the Mantis Isles rather than the mountains of the Dragon Clan.

Although at first glance the estate appears to be built only for beauty, closer inspection reveals that it actually has fairly good defenses. Water Hammer City has never seen war in its very limited history, but strives to be at least somewhat prepared should war come. The estate's two-floor main building is solidly constructed, almost a small castle, with outer walls of the aforementioned sea-green stone. There is a large gate to the east, always open to the city during the day but closed and barred at night, and two smaller gates to the west, facing the waterfall and its lake. A large stable appears to be actually built into the western wall near the smaller gates.





The Governor's court chambers take up the largest portion of the ground floor. This large room faces the waterfall and the gate here is usually kept open during the warmer months, allowing the breathtaking view to entrance, and perhaps distract, those courtiers attend. The second floor contains guest rooms, sufficient to house six guests with their entourage and servants, and the residential chambers of the Governor. The Governor's rooms include a small but impressive library, and her private chambers face toward the city, allowing her a fine view of her responsibilities.

Only Haru and the Governor are aware of the tunnel system leading from Water's Strength Temple to the estate. The tunnels connect to the estate via a hidden basement, the sort of place which might be expected to conceal some deep and sinister secret. In fact, however, this is not the case. Rather, the basement houses a special library. By the order of the Dragon Clan Champion, each piece created on the temple's special anvil is carefully documented, along with the deeds and accomplishments of those who bear such gifts. The basement houses these records, meticulously organized and catalogued. Only those granted special permission by Haru, the Governor, or the Clan Champion may gain access to these scrolls.

Dragon Holdings

The Dragon comprise the majority of Water Hammer City's samurai population, of course, and their major estates and holdings are scattered throughout the city. The city has always welcomed other clans to be part of it, but the Dragon definitely maintain dominance.

The most prominent of the Dragon holdings are two estates belonging to Tamori noble families, located adjacent to the Governor's own residence. These are fine-quality samurai residences, one-level buildings with room enough for both the family and a generous number of guests. Built in the Dragon style, they are comfortable without being overly lavish. However, much like the Governor's own residence, these buildings are of stronger construction than they may outwardly appear, and maintain stores of food and water in fortified basements.

The northern half of the city boasts the sort of businesses and facilities that any city of decent size can offer – inns, tea-houses, and similar amenities. There is also an artisan district that boasts tailors, painters, and sculptors, among others. The most renowned of these artisans is a woman named Kitsuki Taiji. Since an early age, Taiji has seen parallels between the Kitsuki teachings and the basic principles of the artisan. Attention to detail, the ability to think quickly, and a dedication to perfection are all central aspects of the Kitsuki Method, and Taiji applies these principles to her artwork. She first gained public praise for a mempo made for a Hida general's son, an item whose aesthetic beauty was outdone only by its practical value. The son of the general, now a respected officer in his own right, sends thanks to Taiji every year on the anniversary of her gift, and claims the mempo has saved his life on more than one occasion.

On the northern outskirts of the city lies a public arena maintained by the Mirumoto Bushi Dojo, intended to provide space for displaying various martial arts. However, with the passage of time is has also become a proving ground for the smiths of Water Hammer City. Oftentimes, young smiths will challenge each other here to a contest of artistry. Typically, the two opponents are given 45 days to forge the finest possible blade. The completed items are presented to a predetermined tribunal of judges, and weighed on their mechanical and aesthetic merits. Then the actual test begins. Starting with softer materials like tatami mats and wooden blocks, the smiths test their weapons, gradually escalating to tougher and tougher challenges. When one sword breaks, or fails to cleanly cut an object, the opponent is declared the winner. If both swords fail, the contest is resolved by the judges' scores. So popular is this new tradition that a standing tribunal is now maintained for judging the contests, and many young smiths regard these competitions as a rite of passage.



Scorpion Estate

The Scorpion Clan maintains a large ambassadorial residence in Water Hammer City, built right in the shadow of the mountains, near the waterfall. The Clan of Secrets spared no expense at creating a stunning estate, surrounded by an outer wall of beautiful white and black stones. Sometimes, the white stones show a bluish tint under the sun's midday gaze, presumably a subtle way for the Scorpion to honor their Dragon hosts. Within the walls are several buildings, including a small barracks that can comfortably house a squadron of troops. The main residence is a beautiful house in the classical Rokugani style, designed for comfort and aesthetics rather than defense.

The Scorpion ambassador to the city is Bayushi Gozen, a man well-known to the Dragon as honest and honorable. (Perhaps that is why the Scorpion sent him here, since he seems quite ill-suited to the more sinister and ruthless methods typically employed by the Clan of Secrets.) He is unmarried and, never one to overuse resources, maintains only a modest staff of a few samurai assistants and a dozen or so servants. Gozen attends the court of Kitsuki Kadiri whenever required, and offers suggestions when asked, but otherwise is a rather passive and retiring individual. This arouses a certain degree of suspicion from other city residents, especially the Unicorn and Mantis contingents, who view the Scorpion presence here as dangerous and troubling. Some are waiting for the Clan of Secrets to stab the Governor in the back, but in truth Gozen is under orders to ensure the safety and prosperity of the city, as part of the general Scorpion policy of carefully maintaining alliance with the Dragon Clan.

Gozen regards the current Governor, Kitsuki Kadiri, as something of an unknown quantity. She seems to handle affairs in the city with a wisdom beyond her years, but the ferocity of her temper is reputed to be enough to frighten a Hida, a disturbing thought. For now, he holds back and waits to see what the future will show about her.

Currently, Gozen is hosting the visit of an elderly Soshi shugenja, Soshi Jigiko, known throughout the Scorpion lands are both a powerful Air Shugenja and an expert weaponsmith. Jigiko is here to meet with the monk Haru, hoping for the chance to work at least once on the legendary anvil before she dies.

Mantis Quarter

When the small shrine created by Haru began to grow into a city, the Mantis Clan stepped forward, opening its coffers to assist with the construction. Haru had once been a Mantis himself, and his former clan spared no expense in bringing a piece of his old home to the distant mountains. Of course, no matter how many koku they spent the Mantis could not actually bring the ocean to Dragon lands, so instead they brought buildings, plants, and themselves to Water Hammer City.

The Mantis were granted lands near the waterfall along with the Scorpion and Unicorn. They constructed an array of lavish buildings that would appear more at home in the more tropical climates of the Isles of Silk and Spice. Mantis architects spent years adjusting the design and theme of their native buildings to the harsher and colder climate of the mountains, especially the winters, whose biting cold was quite different from what they were accustomed to.

At present, the Mantis maintain two sizable residences here, surrounded by an enormous garden. Tropical plants and trees can be seen here, and seem to flourish despite the harsh and unsuitable climate – rumors credits their shugenja with responsibility, although the Mantis avoid offering public explanations.

Although there is no official Mantis ambassador to Water Hammer City, it is generally agreed that Yoritomo Jasu fills that role quite well. This elderly man was a close friend of Haru decades ago, when the monk was still a samurai in the colors of the Mantis Clan. After years of correspondence they were finally reunited when Jasu was assigned to Water Hammer City. Although he is now well past the normal age of retirement, Jasu continues to serve his clan, maintaining their commercial interests within the city. His retinue has grown, and he now boasts a formidable array of heimin merchants who deal in everything from blacksmithing supplies to gifts to the Fortunes. Jasu's earnings have built an estate that is the pinnacle of Mantis culture and art – a place some visitors, unfamiliar with the flamboyant Mantis sense of style, describe as "gaudy." Jasu only smiles at such reactions. After all, their response means they will remember him, and being remembered is crucial in the world of commerce.

Unicorn Quarter

The Unicorn interest in Water Hammer City, like that of the Mantis and the Scorpion, dates back to the founding of the city, and some reports claim the Unicorn arrived at the same time as the other two clans. The Unicorn themselves, however, claim they arrived slightly later, when a wandering samurai named Utaku Ujiken came to the city and toured the newly built Water's Strength Temple. Amazed at Haru's creations, he sent word back to his clan, and the Khan quickly recognized the importance and potential of this new settlement. He immediately sent aid as the Mantis had done, but at first it appeared there was little need for Unicorn assistance. The Mantis had already stabilized the local markets, and the Scorpion were assisting the first governor in establishing his court. But the Unicorn could offer one thing the other two clans could not: transportation. The city's inland location put the Mantis out of their element, with no major rivers to carry goods to and from the rest of the Empire. The Unicorn offered to establish caravans and trade routes from Water Hammer City to the rest of Rokugan, and thus made themselves the third clan welcomed within the newborn city.

Today, the Unicorn maintain a large single estate within the city, but their true strength lies on the outskirts of town near the Mountains Wrath Dojo. There they have a major trade facility, with several large warehouses, stables, barracks, and living quarters. Goods are stored here before moving in or out of the city.

Aside from the Dragon themselves, the Unicorn maintain the largest number of troops in the city, especially during the peak trading seasons in spring and early fall. During those times the number of Unicorn bushi in Water Hammer City can swell to over two hundred, but during the winter, when snow closes the mountain roads and trade grinds to a halt, only a tiny fraction of that number can be found in the city.

Recently, the Unicorn were given permission to establish a shrine to the Lords of Death within the Water's Strength Temple, and two of the Priests of Death have been allowed to take up residence alongside the monks living in the Temple.

Merchant District

The main hub for the trade routes established by the Mantis and Unicorn is the so-called merchant or commercial district, which is largely maintained by the Mantis Clan. Founded early in the city's history, it is situated a short walk from the temple itself, and is flanked on either side by the many forges that have sprung up in the last forty years.

In the early years, the marketplace focused mainly on providing basic needs like clothing, firewood, and food to the samurai and artisans of Water Hammer City. Soon, though, the need for actual crafting supplies became a substantial source of trade (and of income for the Mantis). Ink, paper, silk, leather, steel ingots, raw iron, even the sharkskin for wrapping katana hilts, all are available for purchase within this district.

Most of the merchants sponsored by the Mantis Clan, and the samurai patrons who do the sponsoring, reside in this district, and the clan keeps a few magistrates here to keep an unofficial eye on their doings. Although the city is governed by the Dragon, the Mantis find it prudent to police themselves and avoid involving the Dragon authorities whenever possible. This is especially useful on those occasions when issues of smuggling or tax evasion rear their ugly heads. Better the Mantis quietly clean up their own scandals than allow Togashi Minoru or his yoriki Kitsuki Asuko to catch wind of things and cause much bigger problems.

Despite this effort to maintain appearances, there is in fact a silent war going on within this district. During the first major influx of Mantis into Water Hammer City, two samurai arrived: Yoritomo Waruma and Yoritomo Keito. They were already rivals on the Isles of Silk and Spice, and both had worked diligently to get the other sent to Water Hammer, to what they both believed at the time would be a meaningless backwater. Both of them succeeded – and thus both came to the city. This left them no choice but to fight out their rivalry within Water Hammer City, each seeking to take control of the trade within the city, and each trying to drive the other to bankruptcy and defeat. They set up shops on opposite sides of the marketplace, and began vending their wares to the young city.

Waruma was the first to see the need for crafting supplies. He quickly began ordering the finest metal he could procure from Crab lands, and the most precious artisan supplies the Crane had for sale. Keito, not to be outdone by the man who'd tried to ruin his life, also began stocking metals and crafting goods. While Waruma was securing his contracts, though, Keito noticed the growing numbers of shrines within the city, and the first influx of pilgrims to Water's Strength Temple. He knew the visitors would want to bring offerings and gifts to the kami, as well as bring home souvenirs of their journey, and quickly made himself the man to supply such artifacts.

Waruma soon followed Keito's lead as well. Today, over three decades later, the two men sponsor multiple shops serving all manner of needs, lining the marketplace and the main streets in the commercial district. Thankfully, their bitter struggle has not erupted into violence. They are in agreement on one thing: theirs is a war of gold, not steel. Spilling blood will never prove their superiority as masters of commerce and wealth. Rather, each of them holds out for the day when the other closes his shops, discharges his merchants, and returns in disgrace to the Isles of Silk and Spice.



Artisan District

The heart and soul of Water Hammer City is the vast artisan district. The central core of the city is, in fact, nothing but blacksmithing shops, all of them fully equipped and ready to take on new smiths, apprentices, or customers. Due to the yearly competition at the New Years Festival, the central buildings are not specifically assigned to anyone, and only a few individuals have actually managed to stay in the same location near the temple from one year to the next. The monks of the Water's Strength Temple see these buildings, and indeed all the artisan buildings in the city, as smaller parts of a greater whole, with the temple as its heart. Thus, each smithy is cared for and tended as it were part of the temple itself. Those occupying these buildings quickly learn the reverence that is to be observed when anything is forged in this city.

The artisan district produces weapons and armor, of course, but also many other items of beauty and value. This diversity of creation was born from an incident early in the city's history. A young woman of the Dragon Clan, Tamori Yukiko, moved to the city with her family, and soon wandered into Water's Strength Temple. She spoke at length to Haru, and wondered whether there might be some other way to honor the Heavens than to make weapons and armor. Haru told her there surely was, but his own gifts lay in the making of the instruments of war, and it would have to fall on others to make items of peace. Yukiko became one of Haru's first apprentices, and he taught her all he knew of the art and beauty of smithing. After she finished her training, Yukiko opened up a shop which, at the time, was a rarity within the city: her forge produced nothing that could take another's life. She created great works of armor, and splendid pieces of both art and practical use, but never did she forge a blade.

Yukiko soon gained a following, especially after she was finally allowed the chance to create something on Haru's anvil. Although her first attempt had failed, her second effort, several years later, produced a work of art so stunning that the Tamori Family Daimyo presented it as a gift to the Dragon Champion. Her reputation grew, and soon a small community of peaceful artisans sprouted around her forge. Indeed, not all of them are even metalsmiths – an origami shop is within walking distance, for example. All of the artisans in this area are regular visitors to Yukiko's forge. Yukiko herself is aging, and has begun to take apprentices to pass on her knowledge. Currently she has six young samurai, three of them not yet at their gempukku, working at her forge and learning her wisdom.

Important Personages

Kitsuki Kadiri

Governor of Water Hammer City

From a very young age, Kitsuki Kadiri's ability to speak with the kami was profound. Her parents had great hopes for her, but when her schooling began at the Tamori Shugenja School, her initial performance was at best unremarkable. Indeed, there were a few instances where her failure in lessons were so complete that she was almost expelled, and her parents discussed the possibility of sending her to train in their own family school instead. Frustrated by her inability to master her own power, Kadiri's mind turned to darker subjects. She became entranced by tales of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban and other powerful maho-tsukai. Her descent into darkness was finally halted when she learned of the corruption of a fellow student, Tamori Arai. Like Kadiri, Arai was considered a failure, and she attacked their sensei using maho spells. Enraged at the dishonor committed by her fellow student – and, perhaps, feeling a sudden shame at her own flirtation with evil – Kadiri lost total control of herself. Within moments, only ashes remained of young Arai.

That incident taught Kadiri two lessons.

Her failure wasn't due to her own ineptitude; she was a Fire shugenja being taught Earth magic. The second and possibly most important lesson Kadiri learned was that maho was the last refuge of the weak, a refuge she had come very close to taking herself.

Kadiri's parents quickly called in political favors to enroll her in the Isawa Fire Shugenja School. The shame of coming so close to using the power of maho, coupled with a hatred of the weakness that lead to maho use, drove Kadiri to success, and after her gempukku she joined the Phoenix Inquisitors, spending several years hunting maho-tsukai. She soon gained a reputation as both merciless and efficient in her duties.

Her assignment as governor of Water Hammer City came as a shock. She had no knowledge of government, no understanding of bureaucratic procedures, and no desire to put her endless hunt on hold for something so alien to her experience. The Tamori daimyo explained to her why the Dragon Clan's most prestigious maho hunter was being appointed to a political post: there were suspicions that a maho cult had infiltrated Water Hammer City, perhaps in hope of corrupting the gift of the Heavens. Some in the Tamori believed the city's famed anvil could potentially be made into a new Anvil of Despair. Under the circumstances, Kadiri was the only possible choice to rule the city.

Kitsuki Kadiri governs Water Hammer City as best as she is able, assisted by those of her clan with more familiarity with the art of governance. And when there is enough proof, Kadiri puts her gifts with the Fire kami to proper use. She knows she will only be Governor until the Dragon Clan can find and destroy the cult cell she was sent to root out. She looks forward to that day with a vicious joy. Not only will it free her from the prison her reputation had brought her, but she will also be able to exact vengeance on the cult that forced her into her current situation.



Kitsuki Kadiri, Governor of Water Hammer City

Air: 3 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4

Awareness: 4 Intelligence: 5 Perception: 4

Honor: 3.0 *Status: 5.0* *Glory: 4.6*

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 4

Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Courtier 3, Intimidation (Control) 3, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu (Wakizashi) 3, Lore: Maho 5, Lore: Theology 3, Medicine 2, Meditation 3, Polearms (Naginata) 4, Spellcraft (Maho) 4

Advantages: Different School, Friendly Kami (Fire), Paragon (Duty)

Disadvantages: Brash, Driven (Destroy Maho Cults), Small

Spells: Kadiri has access to all basic spells from Air, Earth and Fire. She dislikes the use of Water spells. Her favorite fire spells are Breath of the Fire Dragon, Tail of the Fire Dragon, and Envious Flames.

Togashi Minoru

Chief Magistrate

Togashi Minoru has always felt a very personal connection to the Celestial Order, a connection that was confirmed when, in spite of an ominous personal feeling, he decided to visit a local temple. As he approached the gate, a bolt of lightning from a cloudy sky struck the temple, igniting a fire that quickly burned it to the ground. The incident taught Minoru what he had always suspected: the universe was guiding him personally. He took a handful of scorched rocks from the rubble as a reminder. Soon, Minoru began consulting the stones whenever he was stymied as to what the Celestial Order wanted of him.

Minoru was appointed as a clan magistrate by the order of his daimyo, perhaps out of some secret understanding of his true nature. He soon began to earn a reputation for being both fair and personable, as well as dedicated to justice. Among the common folk of the Dragon lands, legends soon arose about him, tales of an eccentric monk who was an unlikely champion of justice. Bandits and corrupt samurai feared his very name, and none escaped his justice, or so the tales went. Not all the stories were true, to be sure, but they had basis in fact.

It was shortly before Kitsuki Kadiri's first New Year's festival as Governor that she named Togashi Minoru as her chief magistrate. It was a political move to calm the more vocal opponents to her own appointment. It also turned out to be a shrewd one. Minoru proved to be a valuable asset in keeping both the festival and the city's tempestuous Governor under control, earning him the respect and admiration of city's population.

In the years since, Minoru has kept the city clean from major corruption and developed a strong rapport with the townspeople. He is a friendly man with fatherly eyes, a strong sense of justice, and a tendency to say whatever he thinks. He is a bit unsure about his new yoriki, however. Members of other Clans are frequently surprised, however, to learn that Minoru and Asuko actually form an effective team, despite their very different approaches to their duties. To the Dragon, however, it makes perfect sense; like the elements, the two samurai exist as separate parts to a greater whole.

Minoru possesses a number of eccentricities. The most unnerving and frustrating of these is his belief that the universe is guiding him through life, independent of what his Kitsuku yoriki would call "rational thought." This behavior – more than slightly annoying to others - has repeatedly frustrated the young Asuko, watching in horror as Minoru blithely ignored all the evidence in a case in order to come to his own conclusions. For his part, Minoru believes that the universe is testing him with the young Kitsuki, a belief that has only increased his urge to ignore the yoriki's trust in "evidence." Kitsuki Asuko's adherence to 'logic' and 'evidence' flies in the face of the truth of the universe. The world tells Minoru what he needs to do.

Togashi Minoru, Chief Magistrate

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4

Honor: 4.3 *Status: 4.0* *Glory: 2.6*

School/Rank: Togashi Tattooed Monk 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 2, Craft: Tattooing 3, Defense 4, Divination 4, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: History 3, Meditation 4

Advantages: Hero of the People, Inner Gift (Lesser Prophecy), Sage

Disadvantages: Fascination (Divination), Obtuse, Rumormonger

Tattoos: Balance, Hawk, Phoenix, Storm

Kitsuki Asuko

Kitsuki Asuko was raised in a very traditional house – traditional for the Kitsuki, anyway. Her father taught her with riddles and logic games to sharpen her mind. That sharpness in turn earned the praise of her teachers, and she was considered from a young age to have great promise as a magistrate. Fresh from her gempukku, Asuko was assigned to Water Hammer City as a yoriki to the resident chief magistrate, Togashi Minoru.

Sadly, the principles of the Kitsuki method – logic and rational deduction – seem to be anathema to Minoru. To the contrary, he seems to reject thought altogether. It is maddening for Asuko. While she searches crime scenes for evidence, Minoru looks for 'signs from the Heavens.' The first time they investigated a murder together, Asuko looked at the wound style and blood splatter patterns to try to determine the method of death. Minoru was more interested in the fact that there was a butterfly display. Inexplicably, they came to the same conclusion about the killer. Asuko believes this first case taught her all she needs to know about being a magistrate in Water Hammer City: endure Togashi Minoru until she is reassigned.

She holds fast to her beliefs, and often gets into bitter disagreements with Minoru over the difference in their methods, although samurai etiquette and her respect for his post does not allow her to express her feelings openly. Still, she is young and has a promising career. Her time in Water Hammer Village is just a bump in the road... she hopes.

Kitsuki Asuko, Yoriki

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
			Perception: 3	

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 3.0* *Glory: 2.4*

School/Rank: Kitsuki Investigator 2

Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Investigation (Interrogation) 3, Kenjutsu (Wakizashi) 2, Lore: Bushido 2, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 2, Meditation 3, Sincerity 2

Advantages: Balance, Clear Thinker, Great Potential (Investigation)

Disadvantages: Antisocial, Fascination (Lore), Soft Hearted

Haru

Master Smith

Yoritomo Batsu was a good Mantis samurai and an exceptional sailor, a man who loved the sea. But the Mantis Clan was not to be his destiny. While returning home after an assignment in the lands of the Tsuruchi, his kobune was swallowed by a typhoon. Lost in the vast storm, certain he would soon meet his ancestors, Batsu was granted a vision by the Fortune of the Sea, Suitengu. His ship did not sink, and he eventually made his way back to the Isles of Silk and Spice. Some weeks later, he found himself standing before his daimyo at Kyuden Gotei, explaining his vision and what he must do. He walked from the court of the Lord of the Mantis, no longer Yoritomo Batsu, just Batsu the wandering samurai.

He traveled the Empire north into the mountains, stopping at many shrines and temples to pray and seek guidance. It was almost as if he was guided to the north, for no samurai stopped him, indeed no one even spoke to him unless he spoke to them first. When he was tending a small shrine near the border of the Lion lands, a monk approached him thanking him for his help and offering food. No one else had spoken to him, and he sensed an immediate touch of destiny on his life. He shaved his head and joined the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and took a new name, Haru.

After many years of searching, Haru finally found what Suitengu and the Water Dragon had inspired him to search for: the mysterious blue-green disk. A city soon

grew around the gift he was entrusted to protect. Students came to learn from him and to seek his permission to use his sacred anvil. He had found his destiny.

When Haru first built the city's original forge, he realized a grim truth of the work he would do: his most memorable creations would be armor and weapons that won glory on the battlefield. At first, this seemed to be a problem. Would it be proper to honor the gift he had been granted by the Celestial Heavens by creating instruments of death? During a discussion with visiting Mirumoto samurai, however, a solution came to him. As the samurai explained, war was their calling within the Celestial Order. Defense of Clan and Empire was their reason for existence. What better way to honor the Celestial Order than honor its dictates? Haru agreed, but he knew there were more ways to honor the Heavens than by making weapons of war, and when others in the city began to create works of art and beauty, he was pleased.

Now an old man, Haru remains dedicated to the simple tasks of his smithy. He enjoys spending time at his anvil, with the monks who came to tend the shrine, and with the local commoners, especially during harvest times and festivals. He has also recently become an adoptive father. A few years ago, twin infants were left at the temple, and Haru has undertaken to raise them. He sees hope and passion in the hearts of these two young boys. In the future, he hopes perhaps to make a pilgrimage to the Isles of Silk and Spice, and show them the sea and his first home.

Haru, Master Smith

Air: 4 Earth: 4 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 5

Strength: 4

Honor: 5.8 *Status: -* *Glory: 5.6*

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 2 / Temple of the Thousand Fortunes Monk 2

Skills: Athletics 4, Commerce 2, Craft: Armorsmithing 6, Craft: Blacksmithing 6, Craft: Weaponsmithing 6, Defense 3, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Knives (Kama) 3, Lore: Fortunes 3, Lore: History 4, Lore: Mantis Clan 2, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 4, Sailing 3

Advantages: Enlightened, Great Potential (Craft), Sacred Weapon (Storm Kama)

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Dependents (Orphans)

Kiho: Buoyed by the Kami, Chi Protection, Freezing the Lifeblood, Ride the Water Dragon

Mirumoto Arimi

Sensei

Mirumoto Arimi had always felt pride in being a Dragon, but he never felt at home within their ranks. He passed his gempukku without incident, and was assigned to a simple guard posting at Shiro Mirumoto. And it was there that he met a visiting Yasuki diplomat, a quiet woman who



explained to him the hidden virtue of Determination, part of the deeper truths of a philosophy she called Shourido. It struck a chord with the young Dragon, and he immediately petitioned his lord to undergo a warrior's pilgrimage. His musha shugyo lead him to the Kaiu Wall.

The ronin Arimi became a welcome sight to Yasuki caravan leaders and others in need of protection. His ruthlessness and cunning won many battles, as well as attracting the attention of several Crab sensei. He studied privately with them for a few months before his lessons evolved into an entirely new and uniquely Dragon style, a new form of Mirumoto's wisdom: "Some men say I am a coward, but a samurai's duty is to protect his lord. Are they so simple-minded that they cannot see two swords serve their lord better than one?" If Mirumoto believed he should use both hands and both blades to serve his Empire, should the Dragon not use the weapons of stone and forest where they dwelled?

When Arimi returned to his homeland and rejoined his clan, he spoke at great length with both his former sensei and his daimyo. His new methods involved knowing the land better than anyone else, using knowledge of terrain to turn the mountains themselves into a weapon. Three days after his meeting with his sensei and lord, a messenger came to him bearing a scroll with the Mirumoto Family Daimyo's chop. The letter granted him a parcel of land in Water Hammer City, with permission to found a dojo there and teach his new methods to others. Thus was born the Mountain's Wrath Dojo. And while Water Hammer City boasts a number of dojo throughout its streets, there is only one, Arimi's dojo, that teaches a curriculum unique to the city.

The mountain, Arimi teaches, contains weapons other than steel. He shows he students the ways of the blade and the words of the Tao, but he also teaches them how to make rocks and snow slide down the side of a mountain, how to divert water to flood battlefields, and how to lure opponents into favorable terrain with a show of feigned weakness. Though some samurai are outraged to learn of his techniques, others see the wisdom in Arimi's lessons, and his dojo has no shortage of eager students.

Mirumoto Arimi, Sensei

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness: 4			Strength: 4	

Honor: 2.8 *Status: 4.0* *Glory: 3.9* *(Infamy: 1.0)*

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 3 / Mirumoto Sentinel 1

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 3, Hunting (Survival, Tracking, Traps) 4, Iaijutsu 5, Intimidation 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Crab Clan 2, Lore: Shugenja 2, Lore: Scorpion Clan 2, Lore: Theology 2, Stealth 2

Advantages: Dark Paragon (Determination), Way of the Land (all Dragon Provinces, Bayushi Provinces)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Student of Shourido) Idealistic, Infamous

New Mechanics

New Advantage: Inheritance: Water Hammer Armor [Material] (Special)

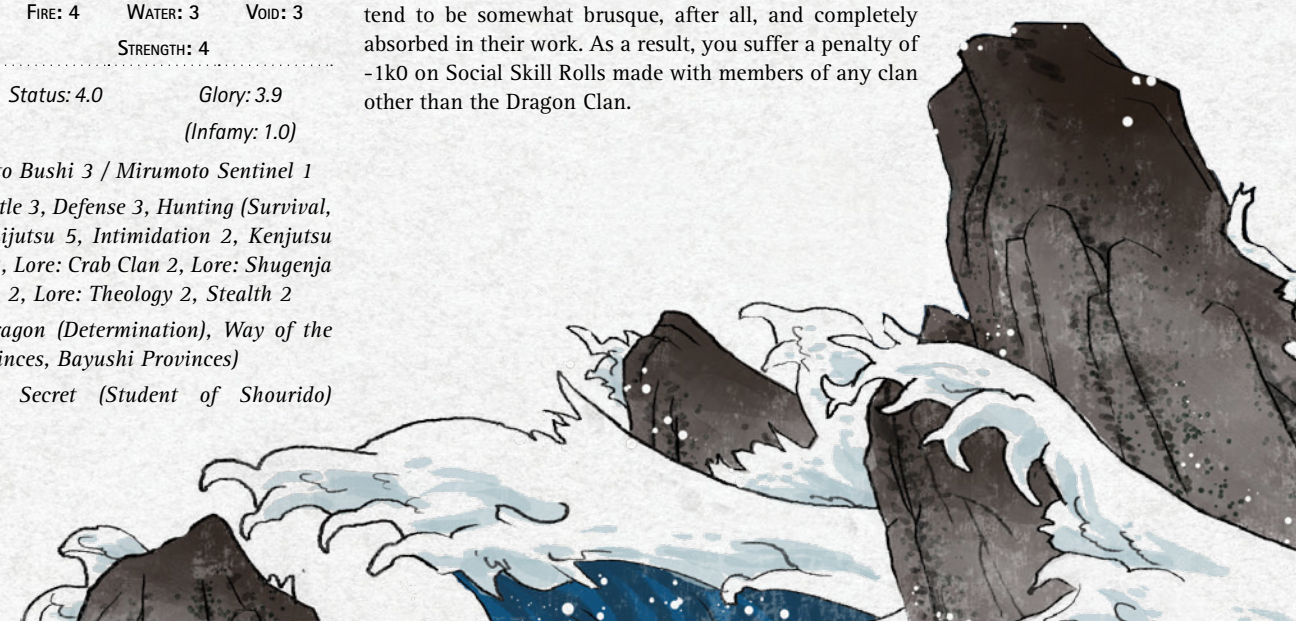
You have been bequeathed a suit of armor that was forged upon the great scale of the Water Dragon in the heart of Suigeki Toshi. Only a handful of such suits exist, and few indeed are honored to wear them. Your armor has its Reduction value increased by 2. The point cost of this Advantage is dependant upon the type of armor granted. Ashigaru armor is worth 4 points, light armor 7 points, heavy armor 12 points, and riding armor 15 points.

New Advantage: Water Hammer Citizen [Social] (3 points)

Your time spent within Water Hammer City has given you an affinity for crafting, even if you have not devoted your life to the pursuit of such things. You gain one rank in a Craft Skill of your choice (this may not take you over the maximum beginning rank of 4). When determining the time required to craft any particular item, the cost of the item is considered one coin type smaller for you (for example, an item that has a cost measured in koku would determine its crafting time as if it were measured in bu, and an item with a cost measured in bu would determine the time as if it were measured in zeni).

New Disadvantage: Water Hammer Stigma [Social] (2 points)

Being raised within a city devoted to the pursuit of perfection above all else has left you a little desensitized to the social niceties that are so important elsewhere in the Empire. Artisans and smiths from Water Hammer City tend to be somewhat brusque, after all, and completely absorbed in their work. As a result, you suffer a penalty of -1k0 on Social Skill Rolls made with members of any clan other than the Dragon Clan.





New Alternate Path: Mirumoto Sentinel [Bushi]

In any mountainous region, such as the region in which Water Hammer City is located, the security of the Dragon Clan's vassals can be difficult to secure. In order to address this issue, the Mirumoto have trained a cadre of elite warriors known as the Sentinels to oversee such locations. The Sentinels are deployed in surprisingly small numbers to secure large sections of sparsely populated land in the Dragon mountains, and are remarkably effective at their duties. Before being assigned, Sentinels are extensively trained in the geography of their provinces, until they are familiar with every square mile of it, almost literally down to every tree and boulder. In addition to their prodigious level of skill in using the terrain to their own advantage, Sentinels are well known for hindering the movement of their enemies in any number of ways, exploiting the local terrain to the greatest advantage possible and reducing an opponent's mobility considerably; leading them into bogs, unsure footing, and pitfalls are particular favorites among these hardy warriors. Many Dragon Clan magistrates look upon the Sentinels as something like embarrassing cousins, but no one can deny their effectiveness as a unit.

New Alternate Path: Mirumoto Sentinel

- **Replaces:** Mirumoto Bushi 4 or Taoist Swordsman 3
- **Requirements:** Way of the Land Advantage

Technique: Master the Land

A Mirumoto Sentinel is intimately familiar with the land he is tasked with patrolling, and can use its every resource to his advantage. When you are in a province for which you possess the Way of the Land Advantage, you may select any three Bugei Skills you possess. While in the selected province, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to Skill Rolls using those Skills. You may select different Skills for each province for which you possess the Way of the Land Advantage. Additionally, you may make a Contested Void Roll against one opponent at the beginning of a skirmish, before Initiative is rolled. That opponent's Water Ring is considered one rank lower for the purpose of determining Move Action distances for the remainder of the skirmish.

New Alternate Path: Water Hammer Smith

The men and women who make Water Hammer City their home are almost without exception obsessed with the idea of crafting. Some believe that the prevalent obsession is a result of being in close proximity to the sacred forge, while others think it is merely an oddity that has developed within the city as a result of its nature and function; other cities focused on the arts and production of specific resources tend to have similarly narrow views about the world, after all. Even the peasants of Water Hammer City are fascinated by crafting, and virtually every home contains any number of sculptures, paintings, or other creations happily worked on by the denizens of the estate during their free time. Among all these individuals, however, none are more skilled, more respected, and more famous than the Water Hammer Smiths. These individuals come from all walks of life, as anyone can gain an apprenticeship if their level of skill or even their potential is sufficient enough. Each individual smith chooses his own apprentices, meaning that traditions vary wildly from one to another. The vast majority of them are Dragon, however, and although apprenticeships are often offered to students from other clans, it is rare for any of said students to gain the title of master smith.

New Alternate Path: Water Hammer Smith

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Any Dragon School at Rank 2
- **Requirements:** Any one Craft Skill at 3 or higher

Technique: Child of the Water

You have studied the secrets of the Water Dragon found in Water Hammer City, and the path of the smith has been made open to you. You may spend a Void Point to add double your Water Ring to the total of all Craft Skills you make for the rest of the day. If you are a shugenja, you may instead pay this cost by spending a Water spell slot. You may only benefit from a single use of this Technique at a time (i.e. you cannot spent two Void Points at different times during the day and gain two bonuses equal to three times your Void Point).









Michi seated himself quietly on top of the bench outside of the workstation and looked up at the halls far away. They glimmered with the sort of light that almost felt unreal, fantastical, like something out of a story. It was another world, that place far up in the center of the city, one that he and those working each day never saw.

Glancing back, he could see young Mura coming up from inside the tanner's shop and nodded to himself, chuckling slightly. They did not need to be quite so on guard as usual right now. Samurai would not be coming around, so they would not need to be ready to bow swiftly lest they incur the wrath of their betters.

"So, then, Mura, how are you adjusting?" he said, smirking at the younger man and pulling out his pipe. As he lit up, he motioned towards the city that lay before the two eta, then seated himself on a large rock. "What do you think of the heart and home of the chosen of Heaven, eh?"

"I don't know what to think sometimes," Mura answered, a bewildered tone in his voice as he sat down on another rock nearby. "My lord ordered that I and others come to this place, that we move here and serve. I... did not expect it to be like this. It's all... so very different from the kind of place they tell you."

"Oh? What do the country bumpkins tell you folks down south about this place?" Michi chortled, offering a bit of the tobacco to his compatriot. Mura accepted happily. It was cheap, and it was crude, but the smell of it was still a comfort after a hot day's work.

"They used to say the heavens come here, that this place is sacred and holy," the younger man said, tapping his pipe and lighting it. "And there's many shrines everywhere, all over the place, to more Fortunes than I knew existed... but..."

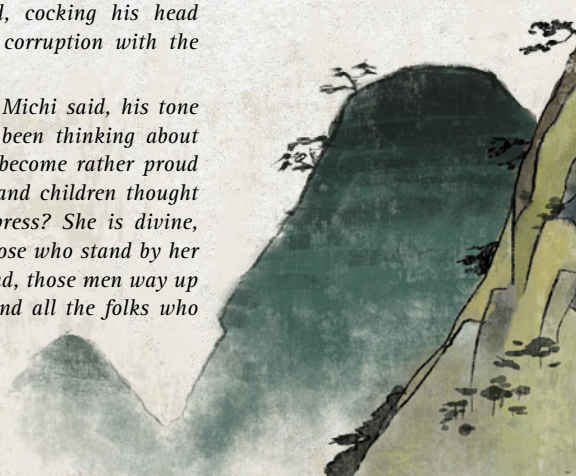
"But there's still that greedy skinflint down the street who's been using fake weights on the dumb samurai every day of his life to pad his pockets and the pockets of that magistrate he pays off?" Michi chimed in. He gestured down towards the edges of the wall, where some of the merchants would haggle and bring in fresh produce to the local eta. The merchant's activities were a well-known fact among the leatherworkers, but they did nothing about it, for the simple reason that they could do nothing.

"Yes, there are things like that... but this place, it is supposed to be..."

"Oh it is, boy." The elder eta spat phlegm, sucked on his pipe meditatively for a moment, and continued. "This place is the seat of heaven all right, and it's the holiest of holies. There's a temple on every street corner, if you look hard enough, but this place's more than that."

"I don't understand," Mura said, cocking his head curiously. "How can there be such corruption with the Divine Empress so very close?"

"They are men. We are all men," Michi said, his tone one of almost satisfaction. He had been thinking about this for so many years that he had become rather proud of his conclusions, even if his wife and children thought he was an officious fool. "The Empress? She is divine, chosen by the Sun and the Moon. Those who stand by her are their chosen as well, but in the end, those men way up there who serve her are still men, and all the folks who



serve them are still men. They're our betters, of course, and you'd best hit the ground if you see so much as a hint of a topknot. But they're still people, and all people are flawed, all people make mistakes. There's good men, and there's bad men," he went on, taking a nice long puff, "and in a place where Heaven watches so close, I don't think they can be anything more than what they really are. These folks here in this city, they've come to a place where the light of the Heavens themselves shines and reveals what they really are."

"What do you mean?" Mura replied, looking confused. He usually looked that way, of course.

"This is a place where the holiest of holies is seen. The greatest and most noble come here, the souls that stand above anything two little worms like you and me could ever achieve," Michi said, pointing again toward the far-away palace. "But wherever there's light, there's always darkness. And with the light of the Empress herself washing down on us, the shadows are that much longer, that much more room for hiding in the cracks and the fissures."

Mura looked almost horrified at Michi's words. "Are you trying to say this is how it's supposed to be?"

"Yep, or more like that's the way it has to be. My grandfather used to live in Otosan Uchi, long ago when it was the capital. He served the Otomo all his life, though you'd never see them even notice an old wretch like him." Michi laughed aloud, showing a mouth with less than half its teeth. "But he told me a tale or two about that city. It was the same. The brighter the lights that shone, the darker the dark around them. This is a place that makes it all come out, what you are, the good and the bad. I think it's because of the light of Heaven shining there in the palace."

"So the evil will be caught then?"

"Oh, now and again, we hear about that even down here. But the light always has something to fight, and when one shadow goes away, a new one'll crop up. I've heard plenty of stories of horrid things that died only to have worse come after." Michi shook his head. "Kid, you just get used to it. And there's one truly grand thing about a city that shines this bright."

"What's that?"

"Mura, where the Empress shines, there's no darkness that can be anything else but darkness. Men know their enemies in this place, not like in some others." Michi gave the youngster a wry grin before he rose and knocked out his pipe. "And now I'm off to bed. Long day tomorrow, boy, best you get some rest as well."

Mura remained for a time, thinking about what the older man had said. He looked up to the distant palace with the same awe he had felt the first day that his lord had brought him to this place. It was still as beautiful as ever, the slate roof glowing in the sunset. The rooftops of shrines and temples could be seen all around it, the glories of this most glorious of all cities. He shook his head. "Maybe," he murmured to his departed elder. "But sometimes, the worst enemies look like they shine with light. Fortunes grant the Empress to know the difference."



History



The city of Toshi Ranbo may have the most contested past in the history of the Empire, and has seen more battles than anyplace in Rokugan outside of the Crab lands. For hundreds of years, Toshi Ranbo was traded back and forth between the Lion and Crane Clans. Despite its troubled past, however, the city has risen to become the Imperial capital, one of the most famous locations in all of Rokugan.

Toshi Ranbo began its life as a minor Lion holding. The Damasu family, vassals of the Akodo, controlled the area for centuries, until an ambitious and opportunistic Crane samurai by the name of Doji Retsu gathered an army and seized control of the area. He first captured the stronghold of Kyuden Kyotei, the ancestral home of the Damasu, and butchered the family almost to the man. After this victory, one which appeared barbarous even to some of his fellow Crane, Retsu turned and attacked Toshi Ranbo itself, swiftly conquering it. The Crane Champion of the time, Doji Satsume, did not approve of Retsu's methods, but his success left Satsume with little choice but to endorse his conquests. Enmity had existed between the Lion and Crane Clans since the time of Matsu and Kakita, but Retsu's acts inflamed things still further. Indeed, even if relations between the clans had been good, his attack would doubtless have incited a violent response from the Lion Clan.

Lion Champion Akodo Arasou and his betrothed, the Matsu daimyo Matsu Tsuko, led the response to the Crane offenses. They brought a combined Matsu and Akodo army to retake the city from the Crane. Their troops cut through the Crane defenders like a hurricane, but victory would not be theirs. When Arasou noticed a unit of Crane samurai retreating into the castle itself, he bellowed a war-cry and charged forward after what he saw as cowardly Crane. In reality, however, the retreating Daidoji were the bait for a well-planned ambush, and Arasou died alone within Toshi Ranbo. This tragedy raised his younger brother, the scholarly Akodo Toturi, into the office of Lion Clan Champion. Toturi was a close friend of the young Crane lord Doji Hoturi, so his ascension brought a temporary end to the fighting over Toshi Ranbo. Matsu Tsuko, however, remained bitterly loyal to her dead love Arasou, and prepared endlessly for the day when she could resume the effort to retake the city.

Following the disbanding of the Akodo family by Hantei 39th, Matsu Tsuko became the Lion Clan Champion, and hostilities soon resumed between Lion and Crane forces. Toshi Ranbo became a major focus of military strategy, changing hands between the two clans throughout the remainder of the Clan War era.

This constant transition of ownership gave rise to a ronin band known as "The Tessen," an otokodate with the purpose and goal of protecting the heimen of Toshi Ranbo during the constant strife and danger of the military campaigns around the city. The group, composed mostly of former Crane and Lion samurai, gained its name from the actions of a local Crane governor, who decreed that only Crane samurai could draw a katana within the city. The group used war fans to avoid the governor's wrath, and the weapon soon came to be its symbol. With time, the Tessen came to hold a great deal of sway amongst the local population, and sometimes led the people in civic protests when one side or the other became too overbearing.

This state of affairs continued into the reign of Lion Clan Champion Matsu Nimuro. At the time of his ascension to office, the Crane once again held control of Toshi Ranbo, and Nimuro soon launched an offensive to retake the region for his clan. After he captured the nearby city of Shiro no Yojin, Crane courtiers accused him of using dishonorable means to win his victories. Rather than respond directly to these accusations, Nimuro simply told the Crane the time and objectives of his next offensive, aimed at Toshi Ranbo itself, in effect daring the Crane to stop the Lion armies. However, Nimuro used secret Crane supply lines to maneuver his army around Crane resistance and mass at the city before the Crane could fully muster their defenses. The final attack won the day for the Lion and delivered the city back into their hands.

Lion control of Toshi Ranbo lasted until the emergence of the Tsuno threat, several years later, forced them to withdraw the majority of their forces back to their central clan territories. The Crane quickly took advantage of this moment of military weakness, sending a sizable army to retake the city.

The next change in Toshi Ranbo's ownership was linked to significant events within the Crane Clan itself. The Clan Champion in the Four Winds era, Doji Kurohito, carried one of the swords forged by the renowned Crane weapon smith Doji Yasurugi, the legendary blade Chukandomo, which had washed up on the shore outside Kyuden Doji on the day of his birth. At the time, this event was taken as a sign that the future champion should bear the recovered weapon, which had originally been created to try to heal the rift between the Lion and Crane clans. However, the sword had been lost at sea, and during its long dormancy the spirits within the blade had seethed at their thwarted destiny, giving rise to a vicious curse. Chukandomo was indeed a mighty katana, but if its

wielder did not live up to the blade's high standards, the angry spirits within the sword would emerge to destroy the bearer, dragging his soul back inside the sword with them. Kurohito seemed doomed, but with the aid of his cousin, Doji Yasuyo, he was able to create a plan to end the curse. To trigger the sword's wrath, Kurohito formally returned control of Toshi Ranbo to the Lion clan. When Chukandomo's spirits emerged, a group of Kitsu soden-senzo summoned forth the spirits within Yasuyo's blessed sword, Naishi, to defeat them and end the curse. They were successful, and with the curse lifted, Doji Kurohito fulfilled Chukandomo's original purpose and gifted it to the Lion Clan. City and sword alike remained in Lion hands thereafter, offering hope that the thousand year grudge between Lion and Crane might finally be at an end.

Toshi Ranbo's place in history had not ended, however. Far from it. After the fall of Otusan Uchi, each of the so-called Four Winds – Toturi Tsudao, Toturi Sezaru, Hantei Naseru, and Kaneka – chose a new city to be their capitol. When Naseru finally became Emperor, reclaiming his father's name as Toturi III, he did not wish to use any of the previous choices, thereby showing no favoritism. Doji Kurohito suggested Toshi Ranbo be the new capital, and Matsu Nimuro, remembering Kurohito's honorable actions with Chukandomo, agreed, offering his city to the Emperor.

No sooner was the decision made to move the Imperial throne to Toshi Ranbo than the Imperial families began to pour resources and manpower into the city. A glorious new palace was constructed in record time, and the formerly tiny city grew like a living organism, heimen and samurai alike flocking to the city to take part in the work of building the capital. Over the course of the next several years, the city walls were torn down and rebuilt repeatedly as Toshi Ranbo expanded manyfold. It was already well on the way to matching the size and prestige of the former capital, Otusan Uchi, when the dreaded blood sorcerer Iuchiban escaped from his prison and unleashed the Rain of Blood upon the citizens of Rokugan.

During the Rain of Blood, a supernatural storm showered tainted blood from the sky, and those caught in the open often succumbed to the stain of Jigoku. Nowhere was this more disastrous than amongst the teeming masses of Toshi Ranbo. The rain fell on the myriad construction crews working feverishly to expand the city, and more than a few of them quietly developed the first stages of Shadowlands taint. Samurai culture can be oppressive to those not born into the ruling caste, and many peasants began to listen to the dark voices whispering in their minds, voices that spoke of rebellion and the glories of violence. At Iuchiban's command, the newly tainted population of Rokugan began to rise up against their masters. Samurai betrayed their lords, and peasants murdered their rulers. In Toshi Ranbo, this manifested in a series of massive fires that caused great damage to the city. Before the fires could be stopped, nearly one quarter of the city had burnt to the ground. Although reconstruction efforts began again almost immediately, the loss of life and property from the fires was staggering.

Toshi Ranbo was destined to face near-destruction again just a few years later, when the throne sat empty following Toturi III's death during his quest for enlightenment. When the Unicorn Khan, Moto Chagatai, launched his ambitious winter strike toward the capital, he was met at the gates of the city by a Lion army under Akodo Shigetoshi. A massive battle took place at the outer walls, a battle that spilled inside the city after the Mantis revealed their support for Chagatai and helped breach the walls. The west, northwest, and northern districts of the city became battlefields. Even worse damage followed, as Isawa Sezaru went mad and rained destruction down on those who would fight over his family's heritage. Although Sezaru's wife, Isawa Angai, brought an end to his rampage, the blast of magical energy that ended his life also destroyed a large portion of the city below, clearing several blocks' worth of buildings and setting fire to many more. Ultimately, only the intervention of the Phoenix Clan and the elemental Fire Dragon saved the city from complete destruction.

In the aftermath of the Winter of Red Snow, the Great Clans and Imperial families once again poured resources into the damaged capitol, trying to rebuild what had been lost in the battle. Under the brief occupation of the Phoenix, Toshi Ranbo experienced a period of relative peace and rebuilding, especially with the contentious troops of the Mantis and Lion expelled. However, the Phoenix could not long keep the Lion out of the city they had once claimed as their own, especially with the political might of the Crane now backing their former Lion enemies. Within a year, the Lion were once again one of the most dominant factions in the city. None of this stopped the frantic pace of growth and reconstruction, however.

Today, even with rumors of foreign invaders in the north, the city of Toshi Ranbo continues to grow, serving as the political and commercial hub for the Empire, setting the example of greatness that can be achieved in the Empire of Rokugan. The city has a new ruler, the Heavenly Empress Iweko, chosen by the Voices of the Sun and Moon on Seppun Hill. Toshi Ranbo holds its breath in anticipation of the changes she might bring to the capital of the Empire. Some fear her power, but those fortunate enough to have caught a glimpse of her believe fully in her divine sanction.



Timeline

Toshi Ranbo has always served as a military supply post in the frequent wars between the Lion and the Crane. Much of its early history is lost to everyone except the Ikoma, largely because prior to its becoming a major point of contention between the Lion and Crane, its history was of no interest to anyone save the Lion themselves. Their libraries hold both the early history of the city and the records of the now extinct Damasu vassal family. The family's destruction occurred nearly a century ago, and few remember their purpose or any of their names. The Ikoma, however, still remember, and when the time is right there can be no doubt they will remind the Lion and the entire Empire of the Crane's insult to them.

437: Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Reigisaho (Violence Beneath Courtliness City) is created by the Akodo as the northernmost holding along the shared Lion-Crane border. It is intended as a headquarters to coordinate the Akodo military efforts against the Crane, and to prevent the Crane from potentially circling around the northern Lion border. It is constructed near several relatively minor Crane holdings, such as the Kintani Valley, and as such does not come under military attack for some time after its construction.

598: The first major Crane assault on Toshi Ranbo takes place. Although the assault eventually fails, the Crane hold the city for a period of eight days, the first occupation in the city's history. As a result of the failed assault, the Lion begin fortifying the city heavily to ensure it can better withstand further attacks in the future.

1118: A relatively unknown and ambitious vassal of the Doji family, Tsume Retsu, launches a surprise attack from his tiny family's holdings. The short and brutal campaign completely eradicates an Akodo vassal family, the Damasu, and ends with Retsu's capture of Toshi Ranbo. The Crane Champion, Doji Satsume, endorses Retsu's actions despite the horror many Crane feel over the brutality of his actions. This leads to a period of uninterrupted possession of the city by the Crane, and dramatically worsens relationships between the Crane and Lion.

1120: The Lion Champion Akodo Arasou leads a campaign to retake Toshi Ranbo from the Crane. Despite Arasou's inspired leadership and the ferocity of his intended bride, Matsu Tsuko, the Lion are unable to take the city, and Arasou is killed in the fighting.

1124: After years of intermittent skirmishing over control of the city, the Lion and Crane clans are manipulated by the actions of Bayushi Sozui and the traitorous Kitsu Goden, and open war breaks out between them. In short order, two battles are fought, the Battle on the Plains of Gaiju Shindai and the Battle of the Forgotten Tide. Goden's treachery extends to opening a doorway between the realms to allow vengeful spirits from the Realm of Slaughter to possess the bodies of both Lion and Crane warriors, dramatically escalating the fighting. A group of magistrates discovers Goden's treachery and exposes him, providing the opportunity for both clans to withdraw somewhat and lessen the conflict. The reprieve is brief, however; within a matter of months, the clans are at war in the region again.

1126: Disillusioned by the constant fighting between the clans and their general disregard for the innocent citizens of the city, a group of ronin begin operating within the confines of the city in an attempt to protect its citizens from crime and from the excesses of the two warring clans. The group takes its name, "The Tessen," from the weapons they choose to employ, due primarily to the edict in place by the Crane that no one save a Crane may draw a katana within the city's confines.

1156: Matsu Nimuro is accused of treachery in his attack on the Crane city of Shiro no Yojin. He tells the Crane he will attack Toshi Ranbo in one month, and provides extensive details of exactly how he will do so. One of his vassals had discovered secret Daidoji supply lines that Nimuro uses to cut off Crane garrisons and attack the city itself. The Lion are victorious and take control of the city despite the Champion's forewarning, as the Crane are completely unable to halt his assault. Nimuro becomes known as the Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo as a result of this campaign.

1159: Distracted by attacks by the monstrous Tsuno elsewhere in their provinces, the Lion are unprepared for a sudden attack by Crane forces led by Daidoji Gudeta, who manages to retake the city in a swift assault. It appears that the conflict at the Lion-Crane border will explode into warfare again, but Imperial heir Hantei Naseru offers to mediate the dispute, an offer which both clans accept. The Lion are stunned and furious when Naseru rules in favor of the Crane.

1160: The Crane Champion Doji Kurohito cedes control of the city to the Lion Clan, as part of the plan to defeat the curse on his sword, Chukandomo. With the assistance of Lion shugenja on hand to witness the battle, Kurohito and his cousin Yasuyo succeed in defeating the curse. Kurohito promises that no Crane will lift a sword to retake the city of Toshi Ranbo for at least one year, and grants Chukandomo, now cleansed, to Matsu Nimuro. His actions earn Kurohito great respect from the families of the Lion Clan.

1160: Lion Champion Matsu Nimuro and Crane Champion Doji Kurohito appear before the recently reconvened Imperial Court and offer Toshi Ranbo as the site of the new Imperial capital, hoping to replace the ruined Otosan Uchi. The promise of protection by the combined forces of the Lion and Crane, together with the spirit of cooperation between the normally opposed clans, is sufficient to convince the court's attendees that the city is a suitable replacement, and the title of Imperial City is formally transferred to Toshi Ranbo.

1165: On an otherwise quiet morning, explosions and fire rip through the Imperial City without warning, resulting in nearly a quarter of the city being destroyed. The damage is largely limited to new construction, keeping casualties relatively low, but the loss of life enrages the Lion and Crane clans, who consider themselves the city's defenders.

1168-69: The Winter of Red Snow ends with the Khan Moto Chagatai's assault on the city. Bitter fighting and the catastrophic death of Isawa Sezaru cause immense damage before the Phoenix arrive with the Elemental Fire Dragon and force the fighting to cease.

Summer 1169: The Lion and Mantis are expelled from the Imperial capital by the Phoenix for openly brawling in the streets. Ambassador Akodo Setai accepts the Phoenix's judgment without argument, as he views the expulsion of the Mantis to be worth the cost.

Fall 1169: The Lion return in strength to Toshi Ranbo, led by Matsu daimyo Matsu Kenji, and accompanied by numerous artisans and scribes, all of whom are also trained warriors. The Phoenix give way to their entrance, and Lion troops soon are standing watches alongside Phoenix guards.

Winter 1170: The Divine Empress Iweko arrives at Toshi Ranbo after being proclaimed on Seppun Hill. This ushers in a new era in the history of the city and the Empire as a whole. How this will impact the city remain to be seen, however, since she leaves for Winter Court at Kyuden Bayushi shortly after her appointment.

City Denizens

No matter how a native of Toshi Ranbo might claim that living in such a city involves the same sort of lifestyle as anywhere else in the Empire, the reality is quite different. It is very easy for people from the capitol not to realize just how much they are changed, even by a short period of time living within the city walls of the Empire's greatest metropolis. A samurai who lives within such close proximity to the Imperial Court will be changed, whether he knows it or not.

One of the most obvious and expected changes of having dwelt in such a place is political familiarity. Note that this does not mean acumen. There are many political dupes and fools within the city walls who have lived in Toshi Ranbo their whole lives. However, even the peasants of the city cannot help but overhear the constant buzz of Great Clan and Minor Clan politics that seems to permeate every dealing in the Imperial capital. The geisha of the many houses within the city could tell long stories of the plots and the plans of the mighty, were they so inclined. Even the eta are all at least familiar with which clans dislike each other, who has alliances, and other basic political positions and struggles.

As for the samurai, even those disgusted by politics and who seek at all turns to avoid such topics will ultimately find they cannot escape them in this city. If they have lived here for more than a year, it is a given that they will be familiar with the 'issues of the day,' because such topics are on the lips of more courtiers than the stars in the sky. This has oftentimes caused denizens of the city to have an almost dizzying familiarity with topics that clansmen from more distant and remote cities find strange, esoteric, and surprising.

One of the other hallmarks of the people of Toshi Ranbo is that they are almost always busy. The city refuses to sleep, its business being conducted at all hours, changing only its tone and tenor with the setting of the sun. The merchants might close their shops in the evenings, but politicking, negotiating, and spying take their place of prominence beneath the Moon's watchful gaze. There are no holidays in Toshi Ranbo, no days of rest, no respite from the near constant political games of the Great Clans. All of the players, and there is no citizen within the walls of Toshi Ranbo who is not a player whether they grasp this or not, must always be aware of their every action and maintain their face constantly. They are genuinely frenetic souls, constantly preparing their next moves and watching for the counter-moves of others, even in locales where the quiet and almost sleepy lifestyle of the temple or the garden does not seem to offer such levels of activity.

This level of activity in the courts and city tends to leave many samurai stressed and harried, though none would dare ever lose face by showing it. Natives of Toshi Ranbo are oftentimes among the most polite and sincere when meeting new people, but are at the same time the least trusting of anyone in the Empire, save perhaps the natives of the infamous "City of Lies," Ryoko Owari. One false misstep so close to the throne of Heaven could spell doom not only for oneself, but for one's family, one's friends and one's lord. Trust is not something simply handed out by people here, and small comforts and respites are hard to find. Privately, some of these lonely and untrusting individuals have turned to less than honorable means to control their stresses, such as opium or sake. While those who do give in to such temptations generally maintain their decorum in public, every year there are small incidents involving those unable to control their vices properly, those who fall from grace for their inability to cope.

Toshi Ranbo is a political warzone for the clans. No matter what efforts the current chosen of Heaven might take to keep the peace within the capitol city and limit the amount of needless machinations, such attempts are ultimately fruitless. The courtiers will continue their games without abatement, and take every opportunity to further their clan's goals and power. Clan rivalries are invariably hotter in this city than in any place but the militarized borders of those who are at war, and the potential for both legal and illegal duels is extremely high in the city. With access to their lords being reasonably easy through means of Imperial Couriers, not to mention the high ranking delegates already in the city, duels can be sanctioned and concluded with almost alarming swiftness at times. Where they might be a rare and poignant punctuation of a samurai's life in smaller communities, they are an almost daily or weekly reality during times of high strife in Toshi Ranbo. Still, even here most duels are to first blood and nothing more.

Lastly, perhaps the one thing that is most easily forgotten about those who dwell in the city of Toshi Ranbo is that most of them are deeply devout individuals. While the average samurai might visit their local temple or ancestral shrine on a regular basis and pray for guidance, here in this city there is always a strongly religious undertone to life, due no doubt at least in part to the direct intervention of the Sun and Moon in establishing the current Imperial line. The Empress is, once again, a religious entity and one who holds great spiritual authority just by being who she is. The presence of not only the Empress but also the Voices of the Sun and Moon within the city walls lends credence to the feeling that the Heavens watch this city, and people feel this weight of vision upon them, causing them to frequent the temples and shrines of the area a touch more often than the average samurai, if perhaps sometimes out of healthy concern rather than full-fledged reverence.

Though one would never admit it, residents of the Imperial City are hard to miss, even when they travel elsewhere in Rokugan. Something about them stands out, for their day to day lives are filled with things other samurai cannot take for granted. Theirs is a charmed and unusual life, filled with interesting times.

Timeline Neutrality!

L5R 4th Edition's prevailing philosophy of timeline neutrality can be difficult to respect at times, and the city of Toshi Ranbo is a prime example of why it can be quite difficult. For most of its history, as you've just read, Toshi Ranbo was merely one focal point in the constant fighting between the Crane and Lion. Its elevation to Imperial City of Rokugan was surprising to most and has led to a radical change in the city's size, disposition, and importance. How can it be presented in both ways, both as a hotbed of inter-clan conflict and the center of Rokugan's diplomatic and cultural efforts? The answer to this question, as to so many others, is Sidebars! Throughout this chapter, you will find numerous sidebars that offer advice on how to use the information contained in this chapter to represent Toshi Ranbo in its pre-Imperial state.



Location Guide

Chuushin District

Located in what remains of the original city of Toshi Ranbo, the Chuushin district holds the true halls of Rokugani political power. This district includes not only the Imperial Palace itself, but also all of the major bureaucracies that enable the Empire to function. The home of first the Toturi dynasty and later the Heavenly Dynasty of Iweko, this district already shows the beginnings of the religious significance that the Forbidden City of Otusan Uchi held during the glory days of the Hantei dynasty. Surely there are few places in the Empire today that have seen the blessings of Tengoku as frequently as Toshi Ranbo.

The core district is surrounded by the original walls of the town, which make it almost its own city within the new urban sprawl. These walls were breached numerous times throughout their history, as first the Crane and then the Lion besieged the city, and although they were rebuilt each time, today they serve more to provide the palace with a bit of separation from the masses of the Empire than to prevent any sort of attack.

The Imperial palace sits across a broad open area from the original castle. It is surrounded by its own wall and is self-contained in all respects. In accordance with the lessons learned during the fall of Otusan Uchi, the castle has been heavily warded to prevent spirits and other supernatural menaces from being able to enter this sacred dwelling. However, these wards only exist within the palace itself, as the late Imperial Chancellor Bayushi Kaukatsu learned to his chagrin. During the Khan's attack, a portal to Gaki-do opened on one of the balconies that overlook the city, though this has since been sealed by the actions of the Scorpion hero Bayushi Kwanchai.

Just to the south of the Palace is a large open area known as the Kumitate, or field of assembly. This field was used during the Toturi dynasty to issue proclamations and allow the people of Rokugan to catch a glimpse of their Emperor. One of the palace's many balconies overlooks the field, and the Toturi Emperors would appear there on high holidays. (It remains to be seen if Empress Iweko will continue this custom.) Two structures break the open expanse of the field. The first is a statue of Toturi Tsudao. This exquisite piece of statuary is carved from a block of the purest pearl-white alabaster and bears a golden katana. This was a gift to the memory of Toturi II from her brother Naseru, Toturi III. It is said that as the Sun rises over the palace's walls in the morning, the tip of Tsudao's katana receives the light first. The other structure here is known as the Shrine of Fallen Heroes. This shrine was originally the ancestral shrine of Akodo Arasou when Toshi Ranbo was merely a small fortress city. Toturi III saw an opportunity to gain some support from the Lion Clan by preserving his uncle's shrine, but felt that using so much space for a single man's memory would be wasteful, so he rededicated the shrine to the fallen heroes of the Empire. Akodo Arasou's name tops the list, but is immediately followed by the names of those lost during the Dark Lord's attack on Otosan Uchi. This shrine is thus a source of special pride for the Lion, but also a place for all of the other Clans to remember their fallen sons and daughters. Names may only be placed on the rolls in the shrine with the blessing of the Emperor, so a great deal of political favor is often brought to bear when samurai lose their lives for Rokugan.

Most of the rest of the Chuushin district is taken up by the original castle of Toshi Ranbo. This fortification has since been renamed and remodeled as Shiro Kiritsu, the Castle of Law. This keep houses suites of rooms for the use of both the Emerald and Jade Champions, serving as the operational headquarters for these offices as well as the Champions' residences when they are within the city. Indeed, the clerks within these offices are often more informed as to the status of the Empire's magistrates than those residing at the official holdings of the Champions themselves. Truly Toshi Ranbo lies in the center of the Empire's legal network.

Perhaps the most important political court in the city, aside from the Emperor's court itself, is also located within Shiro Kiritsu. The district's governor has immense political power, far more than the governor of most large Clan provinces, for in a very real sense the governor controls access to the Emperor himself. Anyone wishing to address the Imperial Court must first pass through the rest of the Chuushin district. This restriction of access is only the first part of the governor's power, however. One of the quirks of building a city like Toshi Ranbo from the center out is that all the major roads run through the central district. Therefore travel between the outer districts is achieved most easily by going through the central district, since the other choice is to circle around the outside of the city. Individuals who find themselves in opposition to the governor's agenda often find that their travel papers contain errors that can take hours to sort out. The district governor during the end of Toturi III's reign, a Scorpion by the name of Bayushi Tsimaru, was notorious for using this tactic against his political enemies. The list of favors accrued during his stewardship made him a major political player in almost every Clan's halls of power. Thus, by controlling access to the Emperor and limiting movement within the city itself, the Chuushin governor wields political power that is potentially limited only by his imagination.

The Chuusin district fared better than many others during the War of Red Snow. Much of the damage was localized to the gatehouses on the western side of the river. Other than that, the district only needed perfunctory cleaning to erase the passage of the many combatants. The entire palace was ritually cleansed to remove the kharmic stains left by the deaths of the Empress and most of her guard. Phoenix records from the time also list construction crews being admitted to the palace, but their purpose there has remained a secret so far.

Ichidou District

The Seppun family felt the loss of Otusan Uchi far more keenly than any family in the Empire. As the designated guardians of the Imperial lines, they felt personally responsible for the loss of their ancient domain, a pain almost more than any samurai could bear. Only faith in their duty and the fact that an Emperor lived to sit upon the throne allowed them to continue forward.

When Toshi Ranbo was named as the new capital, the pious Seppun found with the new city a new calling. They would insure the religious sites of Rokugan, lost along with Otusan Uchi, would be reborn in the new capital. Each senior member of the Seppun family took it upon himself or herself to sponsor a shrine. Because of this, today one can hardly manage to lose sight of the shrines and temples which are found throughout the city. In no place is this more true than in the Ichidou district, commonly called simply the temple district. Located to the northwest of the palace, this region almost seems to be more of a large park than a district in a major metropolitan city. Indeed, most of the businesses found here are small tea houses or inns that cater to the samurai and monks who visit the many shrines. In warm weather the outer walls of these establishments are often retracted to make the district appear to be a series of pavilions amidst the well-trimmed bushes and raked white sand pathways in the temple gardens. Superstition states that the spirits walk in these pathways, and small children are often brought to this district to try to catch a glimpse of the playful kami, hoping they may show the gifts of a shugenja. Indeed, more than one future shugenja discovered spiritual abilities while walking the paths of this district.

The most famous shrine here (though not the largest or most prominent) is the one dedicated to the Little Teacher, Shinsei. Located in the heart of a particularly thick copse of trees, the shrine's pagoda roof barely breaks through the leaf cover. In fact, from the upper balconies of the Imperial palace a viewer can only see the extreme top of the roof and the carved onyx crow that rests there. Visitors on the ground, on the other hand, might notice the otherworldly silence that surrounds the entire area, and the powerful sense of being closely watched. The trees in the region are usually heavily laden with crows, who watch individuals as they approach the shrine. Typically the crows remain unnaturally silent, but sometimes a visitor will mysteriously elicit a cacophonous chorus of noise. Even in the depths of winter when almost all other birds have migrated away, several crows remain to continue their watch on their master's shrine.

The shrine itself is a place of quiet and harmonious surety, reminiscent of the man for whom it is named. Visitors who spend any time in quiet meditation here cannot help but find themselves assured of the rightness and harmony within the Empire. It is said that in the early days of the Iweko dynasty, many samurai of note spent time here trying to come to grips with the edicts of the Heavens.

In contrast to Shinsei's shrine, one of the most controversial locations in the Ichidou district is the shrine to Te'tik'kir. The Lion Clan constructed this shrine in 1169 to venerate the nezumi rememberer who gave his life to

Chuushin & Ichidou Districts

Before Toshi Ranbo became the Imperial City, all the city's districts were considerably smaller and less well developed. Chuushin was one of the most heavily fortified districts, a fact that doubtless played a role in its selection to house the new Imperial Palace. Because of their militaristic preferences, the Lion typically used this district to govern the city during those periods when they were in control.

The Ichidou district could hardly be called a district at all in previous eras. A more accurate description might be to refer to it as a motley collection of shrines, most of which were ancestral in nature. Whenever one of the clans fighting over the city would seize the area, they would remove all adornments from the shrines of their enemy's ancestors and replace their own barren shrines with all manner of lavish decorations and supplications. Outright destruction of an ancestral shrine, even one of an enemy, is an act virtually unthinkable to any honorable samurai.



transform one of the vicious Tsuno into Nintai, the last true Kitsu. This remarkable achievement was revealed to the Lion during the Winter Court of 1168-69 at Kyuden Otomo, and the Kitsu daimyo of the time, Kitsu Katsuko, was so moved by the achievement of the nezumi shaman that she personally entered into negotiations with the Lion Clan's enemies from the Unicorn Clan so that members of her family could travel to the Shinoman forest to meet this distant cousin.

The shrine of Te'tik'kir is most often visited by Lion deathseekers. If the sacrifice of a ratling can redeem one of the vile Tsuno, surely there is hope of redemption for a dishonored samurai warrior. The noble Lion Clan ambassador Akodo Setai, once a deathseeker himself, has also been known to visit the shrine. More recently, following the death of Nintai in the Shinoman forest at the hands of evil minions of Jigoku known as the Spider Clan, the shrine has been guarded around the clock by Lion bushi. Certainly they are waiting for the opportunity to extract some retribution on those who would defile this shrine and the murderers of the one they considered an ancestor made flesh.

One of the more notorious locations in the Ichidou district is the Faded Chrysanthemum Inn. The innkeeper, a former ronin by the name of Taro, is a gregarious man who caters his facility to other ronin and heimen pilgrims to the district. Indeed, few self-respecting clan samurai would ever let it be known they had spent any amount of time here. For his preferred clients, however, Taro offers a welcoming smile and a sympathetic ear. He knows the life of a ronin can be full of troubles and will gladly listen to the woes of any who need to speak. Of course, the name of his inn is somewhat questionable, given the association of chrysanthemums with the Imperial house. When asked about the name of his establishment, Taro proudly states that it is not in any way an insult to past Emperors. As a blossom fades away, he says, it scatters its seeds throughout the area surrounding it, spreading beauty far and wide. Taro's confident manner usually convinces anyone who might wish to push the issue further, but when some refuse to take his explanation at face value, he invites them to discuss the topic further with his patron from the Otomo family.

Taro truly does have the backing of an Otomo nobleman, one he shares a very dangerous secret with. He and this Otomo are both agents of the elusive Spider Clan, and the inn is a gathering place for the samurai who serve the Spider's dark interests. The inn serves as headquarters for Spider efforts to smuggle individuals into the city. It has hidden rooms for guests who do not wish to be seen, as well as a hidden shrine to the 9th Kami, Fu Leng, in the cellar. Strangely, this dark establishment somehow fits into the scheme of the district, offering its own religious venerations – though surely the shrine in this inn is a very dark reflection of the rest of the Ichidou district.

The Ichidou district's governor is less of a political power-broker and more of a social planner. His court is most concerned with allocating resources to properly observe the numerous religious festivals and rites, large and small, that fill up the Rokugani calendar. He is also involved in ensuring that the local Brotherhood monks provide proper care and attention to the hundreds of shrines in the district and to a lesser extent the entire city. While he is not very powerful politically, the governor has an extensive information network. As the city's monks travel throughout Toshi Ranbo to maintain the city's shrines, they see and overhear many things. These snippets of conversation and stories of the events the monks have witnessed filter back to the governor, who can then use this information to his benefit. Some governors have used these reports to great advantage, particularly those who have come from the ranks of the Seppun family. With their ties to members of the Emperor's hidden guard, these governors have been highly effective at assisting in the protection of the Imperial lines. Other governors, such as those drawn from the Phoenix or Dragon Clans, have been little more than the pawns of the more politically savvy power players within the capitol.



This court is not convened at any specific location within the district, but instead rotates between the various temples to the major Fortunes, at seemingly random intervals. However, locating this court is not difficult: one has only to ask one of the city's monks where and when one may petition the governor.

Unfortunately, the Ichidou district suffered significant damage during the Winter of Red Snow. The major temples were spared from desecration by an sort of mutual consent

of both armies, thankfully, and only the southernmost buildings were damaged by the wave of destruction unleashed by the death of Toturi Sezaru. However, the gardens and inns of the district were severely damaged by the rampaging armies. Nor did the arrival of the Phoenix forces bring immediate relief. As the units of the Elemental Guard called upon the elements to speed their arrival, they disturbed the quiet balance that the kami of the district had achieved. This caused almost as much damage to the gardens as the actual combatants themselves.

Soon after swords were put aside, the Seppun moved to restore this region to its previous splendor. Indeed, many of the gardens were replanted and growing before even homes were rebuilt. Without anyone on the Steel Throne, the Seppun had little else to do but turn their full attentions to the problem and show their mystical might to all of Rokugan. This, they felt, sent a message to the other Clans about what a single family could accomplish when they focused their efforts on a noble goal. Even the Phoenix were impressed at the speed in which the Seppun were able to restore the beauty and harmony of the region.

Senzai District

Most of the samurai who establish residences within the capital live in this district. The area is dominated by large sprawling estates, interspersed with clusters of smaller houses. Clan loyalties are expressed in very subtle neighborhood divisions within the district, and within these subdivisions, Clans attempt to maintain similar architecture and decoration, befitting their loyalties and affiliations. Crane neighborhoods, for example, often sport small but well-maintained gardens next to highly decorated traditional houses. They may have small attached rooms decorated to promote religious harmony and facilitate meditation or tea ceremonies. Lion neighborhoods, by contrast, are often far more austere and emphasize function over form. Any Lion residence of any importance will have a dojo, for no Lion will forsake his martial training. Typically, such dojo will be large enough to accommodate a moderately sized practice floor, an area for displaying the trophies taken throughout the history of the family, and a small ancestral shrine. Likewise, Lion houses tend to have small but well-manicured lawns instead of the artistic topiaries of the Crane.

Families who have served the in the capital longest usually have their residences closest to the walls of the Chuusin district. Because of this, the Lion and Crane neighborhoods tend to dominate those areas overshadowed by the original walls of Toshi Ranbo.

Proper decoration of an individual's house serves an important function. Every year Imperial officials tour the district and take stock of the various residences around the area. Based upon this tour, the bureaucrats choose an individual to recommend to the Emperor to be the district governor. Thus, this fortunate individual sets the precedent





by which all the other dwellings within the city are judged. During his tenure the governor he (or she) is expected to also oversee the cultural aspects of samurai life. The governor may sponsor new artists, host poetry readings, and in one case even sponsor a sake tasting. The governor's household becomes the place to be seen by those who wish to make a good impression or build their reputation. Because of the fame and prestige this position grants, competition is fierce, and as no one knows when the bureaucrats might stop by on their judging rounds, residences are always being cleaned, upgraded, and improved as the owners keep watch on each other and check to see whether someone has topped (or subverted) their current display.

While most of the homes in this region are inhabited by Clan samurai, a small group of wealthy and renowned ronin also maintain residences in the Senzai district. The Street of the Wolf, as many clan samurai call this neighborhood, is one of the most modest in the district. The ronin decorate their homes just enough to make sure they neither shame their Clan samurai neighbors, nor outstrip them. The one exception to this rule is a man who defies all normal conventions for this region. In fact, he is not a ronin at all, but rather an extremely enterprising merchant. Itachi maintains a house so heavily decorated as to be gaudy. He purchased his home from a ronin family who had the opportunity to marry their only daughter into a Minor Clan. They did not have the means to provide a proper dowry, so Itachi offered them a generous sum of koku for their house. The ronin agreed and Itachi was able to move into the Senzai district. Though he was already a successful trader who had greatly prospered from the growth of Toshi Ranbo, here he discovered a new means to earn money. With permission from the Emperor (and with plenty of promises of favors to other individuals), the wily merchant created Rokugan's first delivery service. There are almost no businesses within the Senzai district, ensuring that samurai do not have to be reminded of the unpleasantness of commerce while in their own homes. However, this means they must travel or send servants to the various districts of the city to procure even simple goods. Itachi arranged for lesser merchants and their children to serve as agents for the more prosperous merchants in the Shijou district. Goods are ordered and delivered to the samurai for a small fee, one beneath the notice of the typical samurai. This "service charge" is split between the delivery agents and Itachi.

The ronin of the Street of the Wolf are given a significant discount and therefore are more than willing to protect Itachi from anyone who would mean him harm. This is a useful arrangement, since he is willing to have his runners smuggle almost anything into the district. He is known among the more dishonorable samurai of the district as a useful tool who can accomplish almost anything and never talks about his actions. It may only be coincidence that while this district received a great deal of damage during the Winter of Red Snow, the Street of the Wolf was nearly untouched.

This district suffered extensive damage during the Winter of Red Snow. One of the Unicorn objectives in the invasion was to quickly pacify this district and hold the Lion Clan families within under protective custody. However, the arrival of the army of the Akodo had freed many of the city's samurai to defend their own homes. Where the Unicorn thought they would have a relatively easy time accomplishing their objectives, they instead found a determined and dangerous, if somewhat disorganized, street-by-street defense. This spread destruction and chaos throughout the region. If that weren't enough, Toturi Sezaru's death took place almost directly over the western part of the district. Many of the homes in that area are still being rebuilt, since a great deal of landscaping had to be done in order for the area to even be inhabitable once again.

Opportunistic samurai, of course, have used the destruction as an excuse to rebuild their homes in new and splendid forms. There has also been a great deal of political maneuvering to obtain the services of the city's construction crews, as political rivals within the district fight to insure that their enemies are not allowed to rebuild first. The competitive and sometimes petty nature of the samurai caste is evident here like few other places in the Empire, as individuals and Clans alike race to have their holdings repaired in time for this year's judging.

Shutsuensha District

A samurai's life is often one of tragedy and death. Every day is a war waiting to be fought, regardless if it takes place within a court or on a field of battle. A samurai is always ready to die for his lord or for the Empire at large. In such a fatalistic society, a samurai who did not have the entertainers of Rokugan to take his mind off his duties would surely go mad. The "Floating World" of sake and geisha houses provides samurai with distraction from their daily tasks. Geisha, in particular, serve not only as entertainers but also as secret confidants and counselors to weary and tormented samurai. Since they are officially "not people" within the Celestial Order, these women (and a few men) are able to take the worries off their samurai customer's shoulders without the samurai worrying they will use the information against them. Indeed, because of this ability, the city's northwest entertainment district, known as the Shutsuensha district, is one of the most important to the samurai of Toshi Ranbo.

The district is a buzzing hive of entertainment establishments. Samurai can easily lose themselves in the various delights and distractions offered by the businesses and performers. Polite and persistent hawkers invite lone samurai to partake of each house's particular brand of enjoyment. Tucked in behind these gaudy businesses, of course, are the non-descript tenements for the geisha and performers who work there.

One might be tempted to believe that this district would be rife with crime and villainy, but that would be an incorrect assumption. Even the various fireman gangs in the district keep relative peace between themselves, in contrast to cities like Ryoko Owari. Those who would cause problems here soon realize that the entertainers and geisha of the district are treated much like favored pets by the samurai of the city. Any disruption of their normal activities is met by an extremely brutal reaction from the city's magistrates in order to keep the city's bushi, especially those of the Lion clan, from initiating a pogrom against any they believe to be responsible. Such an action would no doubt end in a loss of life that would stagger the imagination.

While the district has a governor, he is little more than a glorified bureaucrat who maintains the security of the region and ensures the various establishments pay their proper taxes. This appointment is typically a political reward for those who have provided some useful service to the Imperial families. The job does come with a requirement to spend large spans of time being entertained by geisha, musicians, and others. Indeed, this appointment is one of the more sought-after rewards in the entire Empire. It is normally held by an aging courtier, or the former general of one of the Imperial legions who has been gravely wounded or is near retirement.

An official court is convened periodically at one of the district's magistrate stations, but this is largely a formality to settle any disagreement between the region's business owners and okaa-sans (madams) before tensions can rise too high. Maintaining public harmony is always an important task in this district.

Senzai & Shutsuensha Districts

Prior to the appointment of Toshi Ranbo as the Imperial City, few samurai made their permanent home within the city. The constant changing of hands made doing so both foolish and impractical. The district was quite small at the time, with no more than a few dozen minor estates, all rather blandly appointed in anticipation of the enemy inevitably overtaking it. The governor's estate is perhaps the only exception during this period, as it is both quite sizeable and appointed rather well, if somewhat erratically and in a fashion consistent with both the prevailing Lion and Crane styles of the era.

The Shutsuensha district more or less does not exist during the previous eras. Those responsible for entertaining the samurai caste found the city unsuitable for their interests. Those who did find such an idea appealing rapidly found that profit was impossible because of the constant war, property damage, and the changing of overlords. Even the most enterprising geisha house or sake house found that the Crane were not particularly forgiving of those who had served the Lion, and vice versa.

The true power in the Shutsuensha district emanates from the okaa-san themselves, mistresses of some of the wealthiest businesses in the city. None of these women carry more authority than Okami Kayou, the proprietor of the Gilded Lotus geisha house. It is said her establishment has entertained many of the Clan Champions and their entourages over the years, along with innumerable other prominent customers. It is whispered that the house even hosted Toturi III himself, though the Seppun who would know the truth of this are not willing to discuss the reality of such trivial rumors.

Kayou herself was once a legendary geisha, known for her talent at music and singing. When the previous okaa-san died unexpectedly, Kayou used the fame she had gained over the years to convince the Crane patron who actually owns the house to allow her to take control. This is a decision that the Crane Clan remains happy about to this day, not only due to the success of the Gilded Lotus but also its influence with the rest of the district. Indeed, if Okami Kayou makes a suggestion to the other okaa-san, they regard her opinion with a nearly religious zeal. Her geisha are widely known to be some of the most talented and well-trained in all the Empire, and her house can boast more of more clients of note than any two other houses.

The Gilded Lotus is one of the most recognizable structures in the city. It is a large building near the central district wall, painted in strong but understated tones of

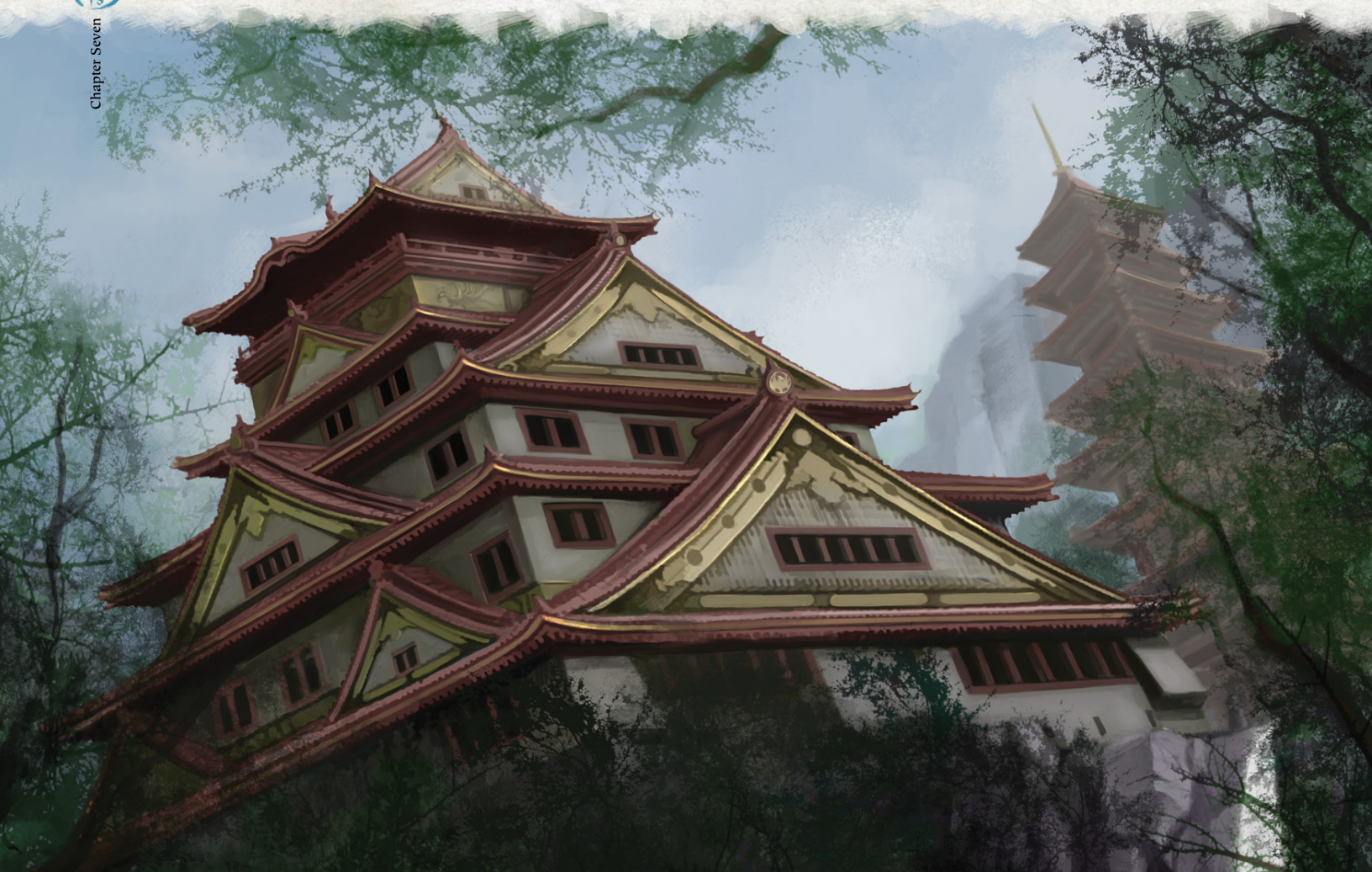
green and red. Its roof tiles are covered with a thin sheet of hammered copper. During the winter months, this is allowed to dull and tarnish, since the city as a whole slows when the Emperor leaves for Winter Court. Kayou always seems to know when to expect his return, however, and hires a gang of young men to polish the copper back its metallic sheen. The coming of spring and the Emperor's return is always met by sunlight glinting off the polished tiles of the Gilded Lotus, bathing the area in a warm glow that tells the city its master has returned.

In opposition (both commercial and moral) to the Gilded Lotus stands the Scorpion Clan holding known as the Maiden's Caress. It is a dark and largely undecorated building in the center of the district. Its clientele is made up of disreputable individuals who would rather not be recognized by any who would be about in the district. To insure this notoriety, each of the girls has been forced to spend a small amount of time in the seedier houses of Ryoko Owari, where they learn what happens to geisha who talk too much. The okaa-san, a slim and severe woman known as Aikuchi, was herself raised in Ryoko Owari, and trained by the Shosuro family to eliminate any problems that might arise in her establishment. Aikuchi doesn't spend much time around her counterparts, but when she does, most keep clear of her path. Magistrates are never called to her house, as there never seems to be any type of problem there. Since perception is all-important in Rokugani society, no one ever thinks to look there when someone disappears in the district. After all, why search a house where nothing ever happens?

Kurai District

The Kurai District is a widely sprawling locality, its expanse comprising a vast swath of land in the southwest of the city. While homes for the Kuge are set up towards the northeast, in the more quiet residential zones of the Senzai district, the vast numbers of Buke who live in Toshi Ranbo must be housed somewhere. Military guards are housed in barracks, of course, but normal samurai must have their own homes, and the Kurai district is where they reside. In addition, a large subsection of the Kurai district has been set aside as a residential area for heimin, properly separated from the homes of samurai and nearer to the outer walls in the south.

This particular district is one of the busiest regions in the city, with the possible exception of the Shijou District's bustling port authority. Samurai and peasant alike move through teeming and active streets, busy with the work of the Empire. It is a hive of life, bursting at the seams and constantly growing. No matter how the magistrates who attempt to control the city may try to contain its growth, it is almost impossible to truly contain the district's relentless expansion. Of course, Toshi Ranbo was not originally built to handle a population the size of Otosan Uchi, and the process of transforming it into a match for the magnitude and splendor of the former Imperial City has become the ongoing project and life's work of a full generation of samurai. There is always more work to be done, and consequently, there are always new samurai and new heimin coming to Toshi Ranbo.



Within this teeming region are a variety of noteworthy sights:

The Kurai District Court

As sprawling and confused as the region that it oversees, the District Court of the Kurai is considered one of the busiest and most important in the entire Empire. Inevitably, not all matters important to the city can be presented in the Imperial Court, due to the limited amount of time available to court officials and to the Divine Emperors themselves. Therefore, the majority of city issues are dealt with in this vast complex, by the District Governor and attendant staff.

Appropriately, this court building is quite large, with countless audience chambers where minor functionaries oversee the acceptance of each matter, petty or important, local or national in concern. Despite the vast amount of work, petitions and reports are typically filed with efficiency and swiftness, and those requiring the governor's attention will be granted audience as the busy schedules involved permit. That being said, the court is built and arranged in a style similar to a yashiki, and is thus almost a maze that can cause those unfamiliar with it to become easily lost, both in the paperwork and in the series of halls and chambers. It is said that a sign of one's preparedness for Imperial Court duty is simply being able to navigate these halls quickly.

Ireitou no Seishiro

Named after Doji Seishiro, one of many famous warriors to fall in the defense of the city, the "Memorial Tower" is one of the only permanent emplacements on the ever-expanding outer wall of the city. The low ridge it overlooks in the west makes it impossible for the city to easily grow in that direction, and thus this tower has become a permanent scouting emplacement, keeping watch for any future dangers which might threaten the Imperial City. The tower itself is an edifice of the finest Kaiu construction, built solidly enough to offer hope of many centuries of service. It has only two entrances, one to the inside of the city and one leading out through a small, largely invisible gate. This latter entrance is used by scouting parties and contains a pair of internal check points, security arrangements almost reminiscent of the Kaiu Wall. Indeed, the plans of the wall have been left with the officers in charge of the city's defense in the particular hope that they might be useful in constructing more permanent emplacements, should the city be able to stop growing and solidify its outer wall into a long-term state.

Dojo of the Bending Reed

Easily the largest dojo in the entirety of Toshi Ranbo, the Bending Reed dwarfs even those dojo set up for the city garrisons. It is found along the boundary with the heimin residences in the Juutaku subdistrict (see below). The complex, split into two dojo, is a large facility meant primarily for the training of the peasant doshin and hohei who serve the magistrates of the city, but also trains the many samurai yoriki who assist the magistrates. Because of the extensive needs of the city's law enforcement, during the city's most recent reconstruction it was felt that both heimin doshin and samurai yoriki should be made at least somewhat familiar with each other's training and capabilities. This is considered unorthodox, to say the least, and there are some of the more traditional Clans who look down on the Bending Reed academy. However, the dojo holds the blessing of the first Empress Iweko, and this alone has been enough to silence most, if not quite all, wagging tongues.

Within these halls, yoriki and doshin alike are trained in the arts of investigation, the study of the law, and in methods of fighting that focus on subduing an opponent. The majority of training is unarmed, focusing upon a variation of the Crane Clan's ancient Mizu-Do techniques, meant to pin or disable opponents without harm. Some weapons training is available here, but the dojo's focus upon law enforcement relegates this to the appropriate styles of fighting, such as mancatchers and jitte. After all, katana training is the place of a samurai, and not something peasant doshin should be exposed to. Samurai and peasantry from a variety of backgrounds come here from all over the city to train. Their clan loyalties are put briefly aside in the name of the greater peace of the seat of Heaven.

Quiet Waves Against the Sand

The Phoenix Embassy, along with those of the Crane and Lion, stands out among the embassies of the Imperial City. Even after that Clan's occupation of the city came to an end, it has maintained a considerable presence within the walls. Thusly, the Phoenix embassy is actually large enough to rival even the yashiki of the traditional city defenders.

It is a quiet place, subdued among all of the locations within the Kurai District. Even guests with urgent business for the Phoenix find themselves quieted slightly by the tranquility that seems to permeate the modest and traditional structures of this place. There are no retaining walls here – instead, the complex is surrounded by a set of spartan residences conjoined into an outer perimeter. The central audience chambers are at the far side from the entrance, and have a perfect view of the most sizable and impressive rock garden in all of Toshi Ranbo. In some ways, it almost feels as if one has walked into a temple or monastery when coming here, rather than a Great Clan's embassy.

Juutaku Subdistrict

No matter how much control the governor of the Kurai District may exert, reality continues to press more upon the capitol with each passing year. Four key governors are not nearly enough to manage the entirety of the city, its population swiftly growing and perhaps already surpassing the size of its predecessor, Otosan Uchi. The Juutaku "Subdistrict" is a prime example of this problem.

Situated to the south of the majority of the Kurai District, Juutaku is composed almost entirely of heimin residential space, along with a smattering of market districts at the boundary between the heimin and samurai housing. Small retaining walls have cropped up at points, helping city planners remember to keep the samurai and heimin housing separated from each other. For the most part the rest of the city ignores this district as much as possible, but there are a few locations of real note amidst the buildings of the subdistrict.

The Juutaku District Court

This is not a true district court but rather a satellite of the Kurai district court. However, the sheer size of the Juutaku subdistrict means that its court is nevertheless a rival of many vassal family courts in size. Built in a fashion reminiscent of a large magistrate's station, the court chambers are dominated by one principle three-story structure that towers over the houses of the area. It is situated along the largest roads in the center of the subdistrict, almost serving like the center of a wheel with the roads as its spokes.

A series of small audience chambers pepper the lower floor's outer ring, each occupied by functionaries who handle questions brought before the District Court. These almost invariably are local in nature, making the use of these chambers relatively infrequent in comparison to the greater courts. The large audience chamber on the third floor is used as the primary one by the current governor, on those rare occasions when he visits the subdistrict court. Few of the needs of the peasantry require the governor's personal attention, after all. Typically, the only individuals who ascend to this floor are those merchants with samurai patrons of sufficient status to earn them the governor's attention. .

A posting to the Juutaku subdistrict court is generally considered something of a sign of disfavor in Toshi Ranbo. Though anyone who rises to this position is certainly a person of status, they have been relegated outside of the four chief District Courts, and thusly out of the deeper courtly life of the Empire in many respects. However, as the heimin population continues to grow, the importance of Juutaku slowly increases, and in time an assignment here may prove to be more prestigious – or at least of higher value to those who earn it.

The Eta Residences

Technically, this portion of town is not even within the city walls or under the authority of the city proper. However, the eta have to live somewhere, and to the south of Toshi Ranbo lies the urban sprawl where they dwell. Nominally, the purveying of their needs and maintenance falls to the Juutaku Sub-district's government. Some samurai have taken this task more seriously than others.

Nevertheless, this region is almost shockingly clean by Rokugani standards. The eta of Toshi Ranbo are deeply reverent people, albeit not particularly educated. They serve in the very sight of Heaven, and know this well. Some eta resent their place in the Celestial Order, but those of Toshi Ranbo know and accept that their role is to dwell in the lowest of ranks, never to rise above this. They see themselves as Heaven's servants, and consider it a matter of pride that their homes be clean, easily moved when the city grows further, and their neighborhoods be free of crime and vice. If the samurai of Toshi Ranbo would but glance down upon their numerous neighbors to the south, they might be surprised to see the industry and care with which these humble servants live.

Shijou District

There are those in the Empire who firmly believe that this thriving and active district is the heart and soul from which the blood pumps into the greater Empire. Perhaps this is simply the pride of the market district's residents, or perhaps there is a certain amount of truth to the sentiment. The Shijou District is home to many prominent marketplaces and contains the city's port authority, located along the branch of the Drowned Merchant River that passes through central Toshi Ranbo. Thus, the district is key to many of the most important trade negotiations that occur each year in the Empire.

The Shijou district was rebuilt almost completely after the destruction of the Winter of Red Snow and Isawa Sezaru's death, and is thus the newest of all of the regions in the greater city. Its buildings and inhabitants, with a few major exceptions, are in an almost constant state of flux as mercantile fortunes rise and fall. The great and mighty may come forth in one year, building new warehouses and docks, only to see these structures change hands the next year as their owners face hard times, sometimes even disappearing and being replaced with new construction. While the district roads are not significantly altered over time, there is nevertheless a sense of incongruity in Shijou district, and it is oftentimes difficult to keep pace with the changes. Only long-term locals truly know the district well.

The Shirou District Court

Depending upon the time of year, the Shijou district court is either a silent place or a hive of activity. The current structure, a traditional design with ample chambers for meetings, was built by the Daidoji Trading Council with Crane finances during the reconstruction of the city. However, for all its grandeur, it often seems almost unnecessary, especially during the summer and winter months. At those times the court can be almost deceptively silent, like a forgotten palace, ostentatious without feeling gaudy.

Anyone who visits this place in the summer or winter might think it is an unimportant and overrated court of little real importance. This perception, however, is truly deceptive, and if one were to speak with those who frequent it during its more active seasons, they would disabuse any such notions. During the fall and the spring, the court is inundated with frenetic activity, constant

barrages of requests and petitions as merchants literally pour into Toshi Ranbo from every corner of the Empire.

Political courts, places of culture and diplomacy, thrive in the winter, when the great and mighty must remain within their palaces because of the snows. Courts of merchants, however, be they samurai or heimin, thrive most prominently in the spring, when the caravans begin their journeys and the kobune sail. The blooming of the sakura hail their opening, and the wars of commerce begin at once. Each spring, every clan's status is reassessed. Their market's shares and the value of their products are appraised with scrutinizing and oftentimes venomous eyes. In this court, the most important of all merchant courts, the value of a koku is measured and decided, each clan's worth being fitted to scales and given a hard value.

To traditional samurai, such a place feels both foreign and disgusting. Merchant patrons haggle and barter in a fashion that almost seems heimin-like, but each of them would remind those who might despise their activities of the importance of their duty. They are servants of their lords, and it is through their efforts that troops are fed, that the goods their lands produce are treated with the value they are worth, that their lords' interests are protected and the throne's taxes paid. It is through their efforts that Toshi Ranbo is well-supplied and well-fed, a fitting place to house the Emperor. It is not a necessary evil that they do, but rather a duty, however strange. And every spring new courtiers seeking to impress their worth to their betters must learn these lessons or find themselves relegated to lesser courts to languish. A courtier who cannot learn such lessons will never survive the demanding environment of the Imperial Court itself.

The Docks

Though the District Court may be frenetic and busy during the spring, it is always a place of order. Not so the docks of Toshi Ranbo. Here, merchants call out their wares above an endless tumult, and dockhands work alongside samurai in a tightly packed and dangerous environment. It is uncomfortable for those who are unfamiliar with it, so filled and bustling with life every single day once the merchant season has begun. Trade agreements occur within the halls of the courts, but here business is transacted on a daily basis.

The occasional palms are greased here, and product is sometimes sold on the spot. Tax assessment is conducted swiftly, by servants of the district governor under the supervision of the local magistrates. There is so much going on at any moment that to try and pay attention to all of what is happening can easily leave the observer dizzied and confused. Instead, the wiser focus upon their own work, calling out to those with whom they need to speak and avoiding spending too much time on other's business.

There are few places in the Empire busier than these docks – perhaps only the great port at Kyuden Gotei on the Mantis Isles can be said to exceed it in activity and energy. All trade through the capitol and coming up the Drowned Merchant River must pass through this port of call, meaning that almost half of the Lion, the Dragon, the Unicorn and even the Crane and Phoenix's trade will pass through these walls at some point. Officials who serve here are trained to be in constant motion, never tiring in their exhausting and frequently monotonous work.

It should be no surprise that the smell of fish is strong in this place, along with the lingering odor of workers' sweat. Few courtiers who are not themselves specifically assigned to this place linger here for long. Those disembarking to visit Toshi Ranbo are quick to show their chops to local authorities and enter the city proper, often holding small balls of spice to ease the smells, or waving them away with fans. This is a place that is dominated by merchants and especially the treading feat of heimin workers standing beside their patrons.

The House of River's Spray

Rising up along the water's edge on the north side of the district, the House of the River's Spray is one of the principle ambassadorial sites of the Mantis Clan. It stands almost as tall as the grand court building further south, and occupies a prominent position in the sight of anyone entering the city by the river. Even when it is unoccupied by Mantis samurai, as was the case when the Mantis were expelled from the city by the Phoenix, it is staffed and maintained by servants in preparation for the future return of their masters.

The building is a testimony to the wealth and tastes of the Mantis, and also to their slow progress in entering the more formal world of Rokugani politics. It is a grand structure, filled with trophies and gifts of the highest value from the other Clans. Extraordinary works of art decorate its walls, shoji screens crafted by artisans of surpassing



Kurai & Shijou Districts

The Kurai district has changed the least since the city's ascension, having previously been the largest and most heavily used portion of the city. It has expanded, of course, but other than that it has changed little. In previous eras it was the home of various barracks, dojo, and fortifications. It also was the center of any court proceedings that took place, although these were limited almost exclusively to military matters during Lion occupations and only marginally more diverse during Crane occupations. Likewise the only significant change for the Juutaka sub-district is that it is now larger and much more heavily populated.

Previously, the Shijou district consisted primarily of just the port holdings on the river, which were used to transport equipment and supplies to the city during its various occupations. Despite its essential nature, this area was ironically one of the better preserved in the city, as neither side wished to damage it since it was so essential to their own operations once the city was theirs.



quality. Numerous decorations are set in each room, vases of delicate porcelain, sculptures of rare stone and precious metals. It is enough to raise the eyebrows and hackles of more than a few samurai, but in truth it pales before the almost shocking displays of Kyuden Gotei itself. And while the artwork in the embassy is copious, it is arranged with traditional tastes in mind. There are never too many articles in any one room or audience chamber. Each chamber is arranged by those trained in arts such as ikebana, with a mind to maintaining the harmony of the building. This mixture of great wealth and traditional display often leaves guests somewhat confused, and truthfully, it is this confusion that is the desire of the Mantis Clan. For generations, the Minor Clans who would eventually form its ranks were looked down upon and underestimated by the samurai of the Great Clans. The Mantis deliberately seek to maintain some of the illusions of their former status when dealing with the other Great Clans, causing those who visit to be not only confused, but prone to resuming old habits of underestimating the Mantis Clan. This advantage, however small, has sometimes afforded opportunities to take advantage of the unwary in negotiations, opportunities no wise or cunning Mantis would ignore.

When the Mantis Clan representatives are present in the city, they conduct most of their more sensitive negotiations within these halls. When the colors of the clan fly over this building, their opponents in the mercantile districts watch them warily, knowing that there is one more great player active in the game of the market.

The Little Merchant's District

Not everyone has the clout or financial capitol to build and maintain a permanent warehouse in Toshi Ranbo. Such outlays are expensive and in some cases, not cost effective. While large scale shipments and arrangements are resolved in greater deals within the court's walls, simple merchants must sell their individual wares somewhere else. To house a bazaar within the very walls of Heaven's seat would almost be unseemly, and so to the northeast of the city walls a strange sort of place has grown over the years since Toshi Ranbo became the capitol.

In a long, low depression that is poorly suited for permanent structures lies a community of constantly changing tents and stalls. The "Little Merchant's District" is in effect a grand bazaar where those merchants who cannot or will not house themselves permanently within the walls of the city can ply their trade. It is a busy place during any season, though not so much as places like the courts and docks.

Almost anything may be found in these stalls for a price, albeit it may not always be a fair price. Yoriki quietly patrol and keep the peace while the salesmen ply their trade. Unsurprisingly, the majority of those who are present here are heimin rather than samurai. While in the Shijou district samurai may often be found performing their mercantile duties openly on behalf of their lord, they still avoid the sort of haggling and bargaining that routinely occurs here. Thusly, only on the rarest of occasions will a man or woman of status be found manning these booths.

While one might fear that such an impermanent and commerce-centered place might be innately seedy and unsafe, in fact this is not the case. The merchants of this bazaar know that if unsavory practices were to become common here, the magistrates would have to take a firm hand and quite possibly this place might disappear entirely. Thus, they make a considerable effort to police their own, and thieving and illegal trade are kept in check largely without need for action by the city magistrates.

The Golden Palace

The Imperial Treasury – otherwise known as the "Golden Palace" – is in fact anything but golden. While its walls contain one of the largest quantities of material wealth in the Empire, the building itself is extremely staid and almost mundane in appearance. It is probably the least ostentatious building in all of the Shijou District, aside from the considerable size needed to perform its functions.

The structure stands a solid four stories in height, with a tiled pagoda roof to shed rain and snow. There are no large audience chambers within its walls, no court or gardens. Instead, only the small offices and meeting rooms of bureaucratic functionaries are present, and of course the sealed vaults in which the wealth of an Empire is stored. This is the place where one brings simple petitions regarding taxes, or where one brings the actual taxes themselves, and nothing more. It is a place of business, not a court, and so avoids any ostentations that might make a person mistake its purpose.

While the lower floors are vaults and offices, some of them extending below ground, the upper stories are libraries. The scrolls here contain detailed ledgers and tax records, dating back easily several hundred years. The further back one goes, however, the fewer records have been stored. Since the appointment of Yoritomo Utaemaro as the Imperial Treasurer by Empress Iweko I, an extensive effort has been made to keep more detailed records, both for the present and the past.

Important Personages

Bayushi Tsimaru

Imperial Governor

Bayushi Tsimaru is a man whose star is definitely on the rise. He began his adult life as a simple yojimbo. When he found that his charge, a courtier of little note, had been compromised and was not working towards the best interests of the Scorpion Clan, he exercised his discretion and immediately ended a potential threat, then arranged the scene to make it appear as if the courtier had committed seppuku. With the treacherous courtier out of the way, Tsimaru took over the negotiations on his own terms. The discussions, with the Ide family of the Unicorn, went better than expected and instead of facing hard questions or reprimands upon his return, he found himself assigned as yojimbo to the Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Sunetra.

Tsimaru's new role as a yojimbo to the Clan Champion was far more challenging than his previous assignment. Sunetra was like a shadow, and keeping track of her movements was frustrating sometimes infuriating for the young yojimbo. He quickly learned to anticipate any possible escape from the immediate area and Sunetra's probable choice. he could keep track of her of the time.

Tsimaru's performance seems to have met with Sunetra's approval, for when she departed and passed the rule of the Scorpion Clan to Bayushi Paneki, she recommended Tsimaru for more challenging duties. The new Champion offered Tsimaru a new and very different challenge. The city of Ryoko Owari had recently returned to Scorpion control after a period of occupation by the Unicorn. The Scorpion Clan had deliberately stirred up the population to oppose the Unicorn Clan's occupation, and now a firm hand was needed to regain control. Tsimaru would be given that role. His skills in negotiation and his ruthless methods had not been forgotten, and now he would be called upon to use them to their utmost.

In Ryoko Owari, Tsimaru quickly gained control of the situation. In less than a year he had a stranglehold on the rowdy elements of the city and had revolutionized the distribution system for the city's opium crops. He even went so far as to cut the supply of the vital medicine to the Crab Clan when they were found to be causing a disturbance in the city. The city was quickly restored to the premiere holding in the Scorpion lands, and more koku were put away in clan and Imperial coffers than ever before.

After the death of Toturi III, the Imperial families recognized the need for strong governors within the capitol. Making note of Tsimaru's performance in Ryoko Owari, Otomo Hoketehime convinced the other families to ask Tsimaru to govern the city's vital Chuusin district. Hoketuhime believed this would provide a strong governor while earning the Otomo valuable debt from the Scorpion, but in truth, the decision has proven to be as dangerous as inviting a viper into one's bed. The Scorpion now have one of their most loyal agents in control of perhaps the most important province in the entire Empire. By placing restrictions on travel in and through his district, Tsimaru is able to leverage immense influence on the city as a whole.

Tsimaru has been presented to the new heavenly Empress, who seems to at least tacitly approve of his methods. In turn, the silent Empress seems to have instilled a sense of loyalty in Tsimaru that he has only felt once before, when he stood at the side of Bayushi Sunetra.



Bayushi Tsimaru, Imperial Governor

Air: 5 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4

Honor: 2.2 *Status: 6.5* *Glory: 3.5*

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 5

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Commerce 4, Courtier (Manipulation) 7, Defense 5, Etiquette 7, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Law 5, Sincerity 7

Advantages: Blackmail (various), Clear Thinker, Touch of the Spirit Realms (Meido)

Disadvantages: Infamous

Ikoma Munoto

Captain of the City Wall Guard

Munoto is a traditional, unimpressive man to look at, and yet a man whose deeds have spoken far more than his simple and unassuming frame might indicate. He was been given a great many things in his life. He holds a vaunted and powerful position, one of vast prestige and authority. He is a decorated soldier of the Lion armies, lauded by his fellows for his successes in various wars and conflicts over the years, even if those skirmishes he has won are not so well known as others. And yet, for Munoto, all of these things have become a curse.

This current post, Chui under the command of the Defender of Toshi Ranbo and head of the guards watching over the City Walls, would seem on the surface to be an appointment of exceptional honor and prestige. While it certainly is exactly that, it is also a position that has caused near constant stress and consternation for Munoto, pushing his health to breaking. A city such as this, the very heart and soul of Imperial religious and political life, the seat of the Emperors themselves, the very seat guarded by the honor of the Right Hand of the Empire, is a place of wonder and of glory – but it is also one of the Empire's hearts of political graft and corruption.

However much Munoto would wish to say otherwise, he has a romanticized and overly rigid picture of what honor means. Looking at the frequently dishonorable behavior of courtiers throughout the Imperial Courts, at the illegal activities that occur regularly in a city of such vast size, he has been mortified and horrified. Munoto is already known for his bold words in times of crisis, even when wiser and more sensible souls would have clamped their lips shut to bide a better time, and he has taken a stand. He makes every effort to struggle with the corruptive influences in the capital, carrying out his orders with the most rigid and absolute methods and interpretation. Most notable, he controls the gates of the city as tightly as his authority permits, even when doing so causes considerable disruption to trade and travel within Toshi Ranbo.

This policy has made Munoto no end of enemies among those in the capital who are less scrupulous in their ethics. Few would oppose him directly, especially since he has not actually stopped smuggling traffic into the city but merely inconvenienced a portion of it. However, he increasingly finds himself directly in conflict with other law enforcers within the capital, especially those he believes have been corrupted by local city interests.

A part of Ikoma Munoto finds his work greatly fulfilling. He sees himself as a righteous crusader standing guard upon the walls of the city. He knows every inch of them and the surrounding city, and drills his men every day for the potential of a direct land-based assault. He stands for righteousness and justice throughout his days and feels this in his very bones. However, at the same time he can feel the toll it is taking on him, mentally and physically, and he secretly prays that a new assignment, one less stressful, will be given to him at some point, before his own honor fails him, as it seems to fail so many men in the most honor-bound city in the empire.

Ikoma Munoto, Captain of the City Wall Guard

Air: 3 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 4 Void: 5

Intelligence: 5

Honor: 8.6 *Status: 5.0* *Glory: 5.3*

School/Rank: Ikoma Tactician 3

Skills: Battle (Mass Combat) 5, Defense 3, Engineering 4, Etiquette 3, Games: Go 4, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Notice) 4, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 2, Lore: Law 1, Lore: War 3, War Fan 4

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Tactician

Disadvantages: Contrary, Idealistic

Seppun Madoka

Taisa of the Hidden Guard

A captain and under-commander of the small, elite priesthood of the Seppun known as the Hidden Guard, Seppun Madoka is a woman who knows her duties better than almost any other. In truth, these duties are so firmly ingrained within her mind that they have left her almost unable to deal with anything but the work she has been called to do. History has taught her many lessons, lessons she remembers at every moment of every day. There are always enemies to the throne, and they will employ every dishonorable tactic necessary to defeat her and harm the Divine One.

Madoka has never heard her ancestors' words. She knows in her heart that this is because of her own line's failings, her direct ancestor having failed to defend the Hantei line and their children during the final days of their dynasty. This, she believes, has earned her bloodline the hatred of the Seppun shiryo.

She has promised herself that she will be different.

Madoka has trained her comprehension of both the priestly functions of the shugenja in general, and the duties of the Hidden Guard in particular, until she has reached a mastery that few shugenja ever truly attain. She is equally capable at the defense of the bodily safety, the

spiritual purity, the honor, and even the very souls of her charges, and expects nothing less than perfection from her subordinates, earning her a reputation among the Guard as a harsh taskmistress. Despite this, none who serve under Madoka disrespect her either in private or in public. Her mastery of Taryu-Jiai dueling and of the work of a Seppun priest is without peer, and she has freely taught the Seppun under her command all that her sensei permit her to do, in order that none of her subordinates are ever left unprepared. She is harsh, and even cruel at times, but they are all better samurai for having served under her, and they know it.

This drive that burns within her keeps her on the straight path of her duty always, but has ruined almost every other element of her life. She married for duty and gave birth to triplets, but handed off all duties of parenting to her handmaidens, spending almost no time with her sons or daughter. She has not seen her husband for more than an hour at a time in almost seven months, a thing she considers quite normal despite the fact that they all live under the same roof in the same house. She is too busy for socializing, too convinced that enemies wait for a single moment of weakness. This severity is seen even in her almost matronly appearance, the rigidity of her priestly dress, and the cold and unyielding countenance she possesses in all interactions.

Still, despite her wretched relationships with others, salvaged only by a rigid compliance with Rokugani social norms, her work is near immaculate. The very real enemies of the Empire are more than thoroughly aware of her existence, of her unwavering loyalty to the throne and her resolve to never offer a moment's weakness. Their normal response has been to seek points where she is not posted to duty, or to plot her ultimate downfall. So long as men and women like her serve in the Guard, however, even should she fall another would rise to take her place, likely one of the very individuals she has trained.

Seppun Madoka, Taisa of the Hidden Guard

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 5 Void: 4
Willpower: 5 Intelligence: 3

Honor: 10.0 *Status: 5.5* *Glory: 3.0*

School/Rank: Seppun Shugenja 4

Skills: Battle 4, Calligraphy (High Rokugani, Cipher) 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Hunting (Tracking) 3, Investigation (Notice, Search) 5, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Theology 4, Meditation 1, Spellcraft 5

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Redeem her Family's Honor), Irreproachable 4, Wary

Disadvantages: Doubt (Meditation), Cursed by the Realm (Yomi)

Asahina Oniji

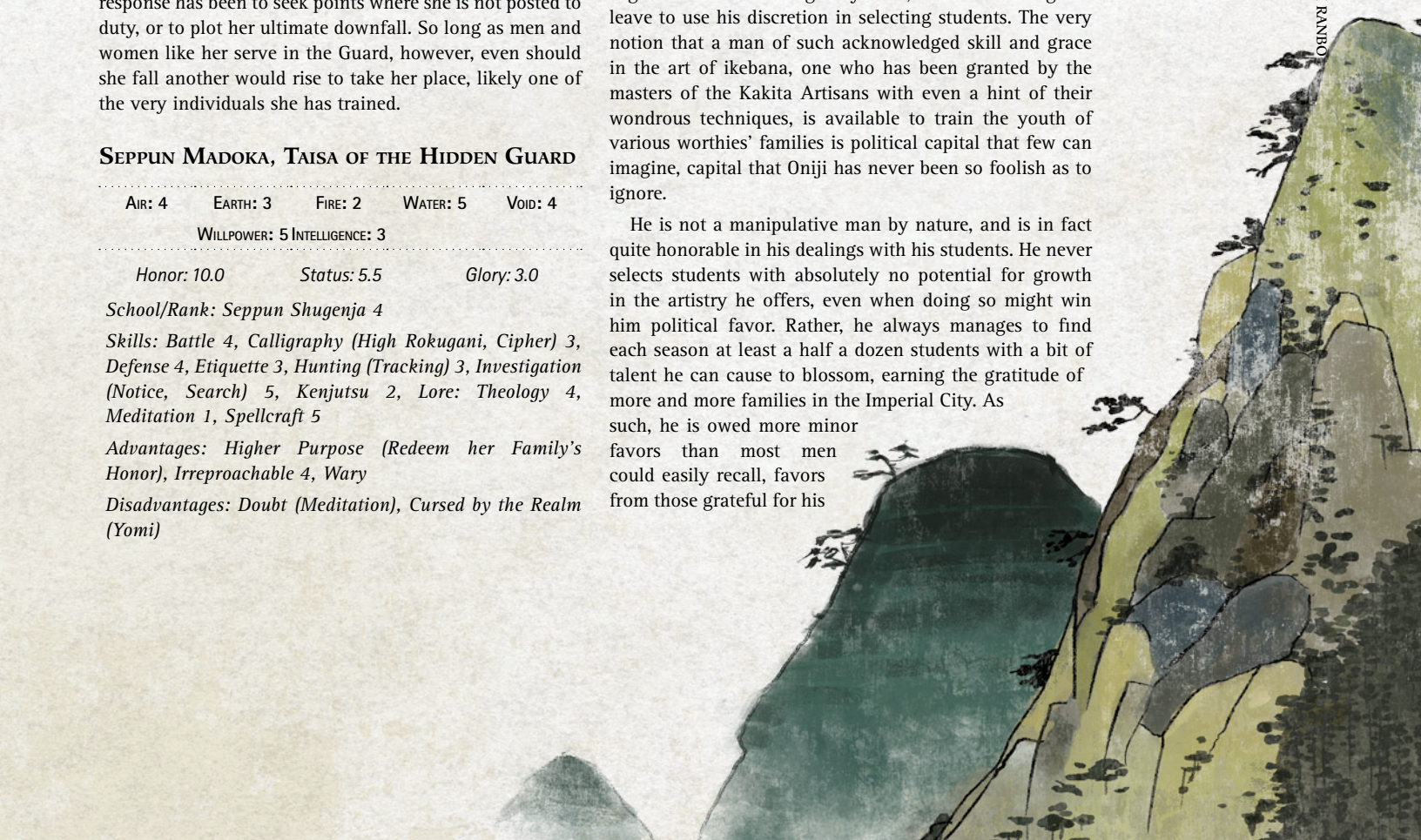
Notable Sensei

Asahina Oniji is typical of many of the higher-ranking and more powerful courtiers that riddle the Imperial court. He is an experienced man nearing his thirtieth birthday, having spent numerous years perfecting the art of the fan and the subtle languages of the court. However, he definitely stands apart from the throng of courtiers who cycle through the court chambers of Toshi Ranbo. There always have been and always will be these individuals who, while they are seemingly no different than any other of the hundreds of functionaries plying for the Emperor's time, have just enough of something exceptional to make them stand out, allowing them to gain some modicum of additional favor and remembrance. Oniji is one of these.

It is not his beauty, a handsome face much like that of other courtiers, that sets him apart, nor his almost unnaturally well-honed charms. While Oniji is certainly skilled in conversation and gifted with a pleasant face and luxurious hair dyed in the traditions of the Crane, he is not one who turns the eyes of samurai as do other, more adept seducers. Only his wife truly falls victim to his charms, a thing that has helped in ensuring a truly harmonious home life. It is not even his bountiful talents for ikebena, honed and mastered to a degree that draws eyes frequently. Rather, it is his knack for teaching that has made him a valuable asset to the Crane Clan within the courts.

Oniji is a minor sensei of the arts of ikebena. While not formally trained as a sensei of the Kakita Artisans, he has a gift for the educating of youths, and has been given leave to use his discretion in selecting students. The very notion that a man of such acknowledged skill and grace in the art of ikebana, one who has been granted by the masters of the Kakita Artisans with even a hint of their wondrous techniques, is available to train the youth of various worthies' families is political capital that few can imagine, capital that Oniji has never been so foolish as to ignore.

He is not a manipulative man by nature, and is in fact quite honorable in his dealings with his students. He never selects students with absolutely no potential for growth in the artistry he offers, even when doing so might win him political favor. Rather, he always manages to find each season at least a half a dozen students with a bit of talent he can cause to blossom, earning the gratitude of more and more families in the Imperial City. As such, he is owed more minor favors than most men could easily recall, favors from those grateful for his



having given their young boy or girl a touch of culture and artistic sophistication to go along with their martial or priestly training.

All of this celebrity and success has sometimes gone to Oniji's head, and he suffers from a highly inflated ego regarding his work, as well as a touch of a loose tongue. However, in a place such as Toshi Ranbo, such maladies and afflictions, while troublesome, are so very common as to often be ignored by the populace. If they must bear with a Hida traipsing around the canopy, hands itching for a weapon and looking like he wishes to be on the Wall once more, they can bear with a middle-aged man who talks a touch too much, especially when he is such a cultured and refined sensei.

Asahina Oniji, Notable Sensei

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 4 Water: 2 Void: 3
Awareness: 5 Willpower: 3 Perception: 4

Honor: 6.8 *Status: 4.0* *Glory: 6.1*

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 3

Skills: Artisan: Ikebena (Autumn, Spring, Winter flowers) 7, Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 2, Divination (Kawaru) 2, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Games: Go 4, Instruction (Ikebena) 5, Investigation 2, Lore: Theology 2, Meditation 3, Perform: Poetry 4, Tea Ceremony 3

Advantages: Blissful Betrothal, Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Jealousy (Ikebena), Rumormonger

Sotaro

Emissary of the Four Temples

Status has never been a thing that Sotaro has sought or concerned himself about. Even in his former life among the Doji, serving in the courts, he was content to work in quiet contemplation and handle the affairs of a minor bureaucrat without complaint. The grand heights of politics were a place for greater men than him, and he accepted his minor role in life without complaint.

An unfortunate accident while on horseback, however, altered the course of his life forever. The injury from his fall never healed properly, leaving him crippled and lame in his left leg, forced to limp along with the aid of a cane. While his work entailed little more than paperwork and the handling of an occasional matter of minor import in courtly proceedings, his superiors saw fit to put him into retirement early, a choice that left Sotaro with even less likelihood of advancement.

It was with surprise that he soon found himself in positions of authority among the brothers of the Four Temples – although, in truth, even the abbots of the temple were not those who held formal social positions in the sense that samurai did. His humble attitude of service seemed to warm his fellow monks to him. Sotaro, without realizing it, found himself more and more in the forefront of religious politics, and was soon serving as an aide to the chief abbot of the Four Temples, advisor of the brotherhood of Shinsei in the Ichidou District Court.

Sotaro, now at the age of forty, is still surprised by this turn of events. When he was politely nudged aside into retirement, he expected to remain quietly forgotten as he always had been. This was his role in life, so he had always believed, and yet he now found himself thrust into the forefront of negotiations regarding the festival season and the study of Shintao in the Empire. He has adapted as smoothly as ever, his calm and quiet demeanor suited perfectly to the work he is presently involved in. Very little breaks through his almost unnerving calm, allowing him to serve the Empire ably even in times of great crisis.

Despite having seen many years pass him by, the aging monk still feels young at heart. In many ways, it almost feels as if he has been given a second birth through the new work that has been placed before him. He hopes never to become so focused upon the worldly that he loses sight of the precious study of the Tao that has invigorated him since retirement. Those who encounter him may find him to be one of the most accessible and helpful individuals within the Ichidou Court. Although he remains a quiet and sometimes difficult to notice man, if one befriends him he can be a great asset in garnering the aid of the Brotherhood.

Sotaro, Emissary of the Four Temples

Air: 5 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4
Willpower: 4 Intelligence: 4

Honor: 10.0 *Status: 3.0* *Glory: 1.0*

School/Rank: Four Temples Monk 4

Skills: Artisan: Gardening 4, Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Horsemanship 1, Jiujutsu 2, Lore: Crane Clan 4, Lore: History 4, Lore: Theology (Shintao) 4, Meditation 5, Tea Ceremony 4

Advantages: Balance, Bland, Friend of the Elements (Air)

Disadvantages: Lame, Permanent Wound

Kiho: Banish All Shadows, Flee the Darkness, The Great Silence, Harmony of the Mind, Steal the Air Dragon, Touch the Void Dragon

Toritaka Kadiri

Compromised Magistrate

Kadiri has been within the most blessed city for too many years of her life. She has fought against crime and corruption for longer than she can remember, striking down criminals with her blade, ordering the execution of numerous individuals who thought to flaunt the Laws of Heaven, both here and abroad. But after so many years, she has grown nearly dead inside, devoid of any heart or spirit. Kadiri has lost, and she knows it.

Crime and corruption are inevitabilities in a city of this size. It is true that such enterprises are not nearly as prominent among the halls of Toshi Ranbo as they

are in other regions of the Empire, but the reality of a magistrate's duties in such a stressful part of the world has born down upon her for too long, too hard, and she has partially broken. She has become one of the most cynical individuals one is likely to ever meet, having seen many good men die meaningless deaths that on the surface honored their lords, but accomplished nothing to stop the original problem. She has lost almost all of her friends, most of her enemies, and seen them both replaced by a constant swath of newcomers who barely understand the realities of her work. She despises them all equally, and focuses upon her work with a dull and dogged determination, refusing to yield completely. She has lost all faith, but if she ever completely abandons her duty, she will have to admit her final defeat even to herself.

Kadiri's cynicism is written all along her care-worn features. Her seamed, hawk-like face glares beadily at anyone she meets, and though she always follows proper decorum, she has the well-known and notorious bluntness of her clan's warriors. She is obviously and clearly distrustful of everyone she meets, and follows protocol with the rigidity of a person going through rote motions, plunging herself into the precise execution of the details of her work.

Perhaps the worst part of this is that she is well aware of her failure. She has caved in one or two times to corrupting influences, fearing that however few there really are in the city, there are worse elements that might replace them. As a result, hints and allegations, albeit nothing substantive, have begun to filter amongst the samurai of the city, and there are many magistrates who do not trust her entirely.

One is most likely to encounter Kadiri when involved in legal investigations. Her doshin and yoriki are always under tight and rigid control. They only investigate what is before their faces, and decide cases exactly as she dictates to them, which allows her to help manage crime in the area at what she deems to be acceptable levels, and avoid conflicts with some elements in the city that are more trouble than they are worth. Otherwise, she is an overworked woman surrounded by mountains of paperwork and busy from dawn until well past dusk, when she returns home exhausted and sleeps for the next day's equally pointless struggles.

Toritaka Kadiri, Compromised Magistrate

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
			Perception: 4	

Honor: 2.4 *Status: 4.5* *Glory: 3.0*

School/Rank: Toritaka Bushi 3

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcon) 1, Defense 4, Divination 3, Etiquette 3, Hunting (Tracking) 5, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Law 4, Lore: Spirit Realms 2, Lore: Underworld 3, Meditation 2, Spears 3

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Corrupt)



Kakita Hogai

Go Master

Hogai is an old man at fifty-five. He has seen winters untold in the course of a search that has consumed much of his mortal existence, a search that can only be truly understood by another student of the Kakita. He is in search of perfection. Hogai was cursed early in his life with a constitution that was easily recognizable as incapable of proper service in the ranks of the Crane Clan's armies. He was incredibly frail and likely to die even in training, but his family insisted upon his initial education as a bushi. Graced for his skills and his bloodline with a Kakita Blade, Byakuren, he has carried it for as long as he could, and yet in his life it has never struck another living being even once.

Instilled within his heart, however, was the desire for perfection. Hogai knew that he could not draw his blade in battle, and that his clan would never see him as anything better than perhaps a military advisor off of the field, but he refused to be anything less than perfect in his own eyes. Seeking a path to latch onto, he came upon the game of Go.

Hogai poured his very soul into the study of the game, his actions those of a man obsessed. He could not be a warrior. He was no general. His grasp of the courts was acceptable but no more than was expected of an average member of the Crane Clan. He was not beautiful, and even his marriage produced no heirs before his wife's death. Yet, still, he would leave some masterful imprint upon the Empire, and in Go he felt that he had a chance. He has sought to perfect his play of the game almost every day of his life.

Hogai's kinsmen, who feared he would be left to obscurity, saw his growth in Go and in the study of instruction as a hopeful sign and assigned him to the capitol, where he has remained ever since as a minor ambassador of the clan, competing in every Go tournament and playing against many grandmasters of the game.

Yet, even after forty-five years of searching for perfection and ultimate mastery, Hogai has yet to achieve what he has set out to accomplish. Full perfection is denied to a heart that knows no balance, a teaching known for ages among the Kakita. So long as he cannot let go of his driven heart, he may remain forever within the capitol, seeking a thing that can never truly be achieved until one has forsaken oneself first.

Kakita Hogai, Go Master

Air: 3 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4

Awareness: 5 Intelligence: 5 Perception: 5

Honor: 8.1 *Status: 2.0* *Glory: 6.3*

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 3
Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette 3 (Conversation), Games: Go 9, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: History 4, Lore: War 6, Meditation 4
Advantages: Great Potential (Games: Go), Sacred Weapon: Kakita Blade, Tactician
Disadvantages: Bad Health, Driven (Become Grand Master of Go), Low Pain Threshold

New Mechanics

New Advantage: Imperial City Citizen [Social] (2 points)

Being stationed in the Imperial City is a tremendous honor for anyone, even among the Crane, and indicates both your level of skill and the degree of faith that your clan places in you. Your Glory is considered one rank higher when interacting with members of any Courtier School.

New Advantage: Imperial City Veteran [Social] (2 points)

Being stationed in the Imperial City is a tremendous honor for anyone, even among the stoic Lion Clan, and indicates both your level of skill and the degree of faith that your clan places within you. Your Glory is considered one rank higher when interacting with members of any Bushi School.

New Disadvantage: Imperial City Stigma [Social] (Special)

The unfortunate aspect of being stationed within the Imperial City is that it places one in situations where it is a very simple matter to earn the enmity of others, even if only for short periods of time. This Disadvantage functions exactly as the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage, save that it provides 1 additional point and that the identity of your enemy changes periodically. The identity of your current enemy is always determined by the GM, and one enemy may last as short as a month or as long as a year before someone else takes their place.

New Disadvantage: Trials of the Imperial City [Social] (Varies)

A duty posting in the Imperial City, while it can lead to glory and honor, can also result in a great deal of difficulty from the tense political climate, a climate to which many Lion find they are ill-suited. This Disadvantage functions exactly as the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage, save that it provides 1 additional point and that the identity of your enemy changes periodically. The identity of your current enemy is always determined by the GM, and one enemy may last as short as a month or as long as a year before someone else takes their place.

New Alternate Path: Crane Elite Spearman [Bushi]

The Crane Clan has always had a strong tradition of yarijutsu among its ranks, particularly the Daidoji. Given that the Crane military forces are typically fewer in number than their traditional enemies, any advantage that can be exploited on the battlefield is ruthlessly put to good use. While there are other groups within the clan who excel in this field, such as the Tsume vassal family, it is the Daidoji who supply the clan with its most numerous and proficient spearmen.

New Alternate Path: Crane Elite Spearman

- Technique Rank: 2
- **Replaces:** Daidoji Iron Warrior 2 or Daidoji Scout 2
- **Requirements:** Spears 3

Technique: Talons of the Daidoji

The ferocity of the Crane spearmen is well known upon the battlefield, as is their ability to pin and immobilize those who would threaten the clan. When using a spear to attack an opponent, if you strike an opponent who has not yet acted this round, he must make two Raises to successfully attack you for the remainder of this Round.

New Alternate Path: Ikoma Warden [Bushi]

Although it was not until the Unicorn Clan returned to the Empire that the armies of the Great Clans truly embraced the value of cavalry forces, the Lion had maintained a small cavalry force for centuries before that, dating back almost to the time of the Empire's founding. While the Akodo and the Matsu have always prepared for war, the Ikoma have often been relegated to ensuring the security and lawfulness of the Lion provinces. For this reason, the Ikoma Wardens were created. The wardens exist to patrol the perimeter and interior of the Lion provinces, traditionally moving along well-traveled and carefully controlled routes throughout the land. They hold magistrate status within the clan, although if they attempt to use this authority outside the rather limited parameters of their normal activities they can be called upon to explain themselves by virtually anyone. The wardens are easily the most capable horsemen in the Lion Clan, and are frequently called upon to supply cavalry forces not only for the Ikoma army, but the Akodo and Matsu forces as well. For this reason, those families often send individuals to train with their Ikoma cousins, and the number of wardens serving the clan at any one time is much larger than one would expect from a group intended for patrol and law enforcement.

New Alternate Path: Ikoma Warden

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Akodo Bushi 2 or Ikoma Lions Shadow 2
- **Requirements:** Horsemanship 3

Technique: To Race the Wind

A true warden understands that mounted warfare is as natural as fighting among the glorious Lion infantry. When Mounted, you gain a bonus of +1k0 to all Bugei Skill Rolls. Additionally, when spending a Void Point to augment a Horsemanship or Investigation Skill Roll, you gain a bonus of +2k2 instead of +1k1.

New Alternate Path: Lioness Legion [Bushi]

Founded centuries ago by a legendary Matsu sensei, the Lioness Legion has since its inception been feared by the clan's enemies for the sheer speed with which it can assault any enemy fortification, no matter how distant. Indeed, it is said by those who have had the grave misfortune of facing the Lioness Legion in battle that they combine the speed of cavalry with the unbridled ferocity of the Matsu, a combination that would give nightmares to any rational enemy commander. The Lioness Legion is typically composed of very young warriors, women in the prime of their physical condition, who are chosen for their natural athleticism and trained ruthlessly to exploit that advantage, as well as to combine it with advanced martial training. Although males are not permitted to join the unit, the techniques used in their training have been granted to lesser sensei among the family and a male equivalent unit, the Lion's Mane, have begun to take the field of battle in certain engagements.

New Alternate Path: Lioness Legion

- Technique Rank: 2
- **Replaces:** Matsu Berserker 2, Akodo Bushi 2, or Matsu Beastmaster 2
- **Requirements:** Athletics 3

Technique: Charge of the Pride

The Lioness Legion is feared for many reasons, but the greatest among them is their fleetness on the field of battle. When in the Full Attack Stance, any movement you make during the course of the Round gains an additional 5 feet (this benefit is only gained once per Round). Additionally, as a Complex Move Action, you may move your Water Ring x25 feet.

New Alternate Path: Doji Warrior-Poet [Bushi]

The Kakita are generally regarded as the Crane Clan's finest artists with a blade, and for exceptionally good reason. The Doji, on the other hand, are generally regarded as courtiers, with both families having a strong tradition of artisans within them as well. However, despite the general stereotype, the truth is that the Kakita produce a significant number of courtiers as well, and the Doji are just as likely to have a scion of the blade among their ranks as any other Crane family. One need look no farther than the Thunders of the Crane Clan, Doji Yasurugi, a brilliant orator, swordsman, and blacksmith, or his later reincarnation Doji Hoturi, one of the finest duelists in the history of the Empire, to see the full potential of the Doji line manifested. Unlike many other families in the Empire, the Doji consider pursuit of the blade and the arts of equal value, and the Doji are more likely to produce individuals gifted in both domains than perhaps even the other Crane families.

New Alternate Path: Doji Warrior-Poet

- Technique Rank: 2
- **Replaces:** Kakita Bushi 2
- **Requirements:** Iaijutsu 2, Perform: Poetry 2

Technique: Fan & Sword

A warrior-poet understands that focus is the one and only key to not only victory, but enlightenment as well. When you spend a Void Point to augment an Iaijutsu Skill Roll or a Perform: Poetry Skill Roll, you gain a bonus of +2k1 instead of +1k1. Additionally, whenever you are victorious in a duel or a poetry contest, you gain one additional point of Glory. If you were championing someone else, that person also gains one additional point of Glory. This is in addition to any normal amount being rewarded.





The door to the inn slid open, allowing the noise from the street outside to intrude on the patrons. A dusty samurai stepped through the door and slid it closed behind him. After placing his swords in the weapon rack at the door he signaled the innkeeper for a bottle of sake and scanned the room for a table.

The inn was not as well cared for as some in the city, nor was it as run down as others. The walls had seen better days, but they were still whole and sturdy. The paper on the windows was new. The furniture in the main room was an eclectic mix of old and new, a testament to some wild revelry in the past. Overall the inn gave the impression that it was both old and reliable. As far as Tamotsu remembered, it had always been here, a haven from the worst of the city's temptations, although one could find those same temptations if one only asked. This was Zakyo Toshi, after all.

"Oi! Tamotsu-sama." Another plain dressed samurai shouted across the common room to get Tamotsu's attention, as if the raised hand was not obvious enough.

"Good day, Atsushi-sama. I see your trip up north did you wonders."

"Yes, it is always such hard work guarding merchants' fat purses." Both ronin shared a laugh as a servant delivered their sake.

"So, what news while I was away?" Atsushi asked, pouring sake for both of them from the single bottle. That drew a frown from Tamotsu. Somehow he knew he was going to be stuck with the bill even though Atsushi had just come back from a job.

"You have not heard?"

"Heard what?" Atsushi shook his head. "As I said, I have been up north with a caravan of merchants, and only returned this day." He sipped. "Ahhhh, that's good."

"Well, this news should be worth the price of the sake."

Atsushi frowned at Tamotsu's subtle implication. He reached to place several coins on the table, but Tamotsu waved him off.

"No need friend, I meant no offense."

"Then what news?"

"It seems the Scorpion have decided to annex Zakyo Toshi."

"Oho! This is news indeed. But what does it mean to us?"

Tamotsu smiled. "That is what everyone is wondering. Me, I believe it means the more things change the more they stay the same. The Scorpion are fond of such vices as are found here, and here the rules aren't as stifling as they are in Ryoko Owari."

"So you don't think much will change?"

"I doubt it. After all," Tamotsu leaned back and gestured expansively, "centuries of greed and vice have marked this

town. It caters to a certain class of men. I doubt even the Scorpion can do much to change its nature."

Atsushi glanced around worriedly at his friend's remark, checking to see if anyone was listening. "Don't say such things too loudly, Tamotsu-san. Where the Scorpion are concerned, often the walls have ears."

Tamotsu looked his friend over carefully in light of his statement. "Hm. Are you saying you are a spy for them?"

Atsushi laughed. "You've known me for eight years and you would say such things? My word, my health, my purse, and my friends, these are the things that are important to me."

"Agreed, Atsushi, and my apologies." Tamotsu smiled and signaled for another bottle of sake to smooth over the other ronin's ruffled feelings. "You would make a terrible spy."

History

Zokyo Toshi, the City of Pleasures, the city of White Walls. Whatever is your desire, whatever your pleasure, you can find it here, if you know where to look. For the right price, of course.

The city was originally founded by several merchants traveling the trade routes that ran from the northern reaches of Rokugan to its southern coasts. The merchants hoped to create a hub of commerce in the area, a place that would let them rest, trade, do some business, and restock their wares before continuing on their way. From the beginning, Zakyo Toshi was a place where anything could be had for a price. After all, it was a city run by merchants, not samurai, and one that lay outside of any Clan's specific territory. It soon became known colloquially as Pleasure City, since any item of luxury or leisure could easily be found within.

Although the new trade hub grew quickly in popularity, within a generation its prosperity was in danger. The use of the River of Gold to transport goods reduced its value to commerce. Even worse, the initial success of Zakyo Toshi had attracted all manner of bandits to the area, and they preyed upon the caravans as they traveled the land routes running north and south. This further encouraged the merchants to reduce their risk by moving their goods on waterway. Between the bandits and the river, the city almost dried up and blew away in the wind... but a couple members of the Merchant Council hit upon a scheme to revitalize the city.

The Merchant Council was another unique feature of the early city. As one of the early founders put it, "When a bunch of rich commoners get together to found a city, there's bound to be a lot of gunso and not enough hohei." The merchants realized that none of them would submit to the others, so they decided rule by joint council would be the best way to keep the peace. Of course, once they settled that issue, they had to decide how they would pick those who would be on such a council. Being merchants, they decided profit would be their method. Whoever made the most profit in a year would be on the council for the next year. Given the eternal question of merchants' honesty, this proved a rather fractious method of choosing leaders, but in the end they all agreed that the Emerald Magistrate who collected their annual taxes would look over all their books and decide who had made the largest profit. This would also keep them more-or-less honest in their dealings, at least as honest as merchants could get. By all accounts, the expression on the face of their first Emerald Magistrate "judge" was quite memorable.

Seeking the assistance of an Emerald Magistrate also had other benefits. The city had been built on unaligned lands, a no-mans-land between the Scorpion, the Fox, and the Sparrow Clans, but not owing allegiance to any of them. This could easily have led to conflict with any or all of those Clans, so having an Emerald Magistrate collecting taxes from the city gave it a whiff of Imperial sanction. It also protected the city from any attempts those Clans might make to heap extra taxes on them, or even get taxed multiple times by different Clans.

When the young city's troubles arrived, the Merchant Council was already in place. They decided to capitalize on Zakyo Toshi's title of "Pleasure City" and re-invent the settlement to look similar to Ryoko Owari Toshi. Even down to the walls, though they decide that white looked better then the dark tones used in the City of Stories. Of course, renovating the city was not cheap, and with the trade declining, there wasn't that much profit to put into the project. The merchants bit down and took out loans from anyone who would lend them money, no matter they might be.

As one of the Council members later ruefully remarked, "The idea worked and it didn't work all at the same time."

The city was revitalized. New trade came in, not as much as the Merchant Council hoped, not necessarily the kind of trade they had hoped for, but enough to get the city back on its feet. The bandits who had been raiding the caravans, it turned out, needed a place to sell the goods and spend the money they had stolen. They came to Zakyo Toshi looking for good fences to buy their loot and a good time to have with their profits. And if they were not the customers the Merchant Council had hoped for, they did bring in the wealth the city desperately needed.



The city thus survived and, in its own questionable manner, thrived. As the bandits became customers instead of raiders, trade picked up again, and Zakyo Toshi's strategic position in southern Rokugan made it a stopping-place for many travelers. There are tales that the ronin Reichin came through here on his way north to battle the Bloodspeaker, and that Moto Tsume stopped here to relax on his way to his fated battle with the Shadowlands. There are even claims that Naga visited the city during the time of the Clan Wars, although there are no residents living today who can claim to have seen one of that fabled race.

The city has also acquired a detachment of the Imperial Guard, assigned to support the local Emerald Magistrate and to protect the settlement from threats coming from the Shinomen Forest or elsewhere. They try their best to maintain order and keep everyone in the city honest, but this is usually a losing battle. However, it has discouraged the Clans from trying to take the city by force.

More recently, the city has been facing a series of shake-ups. A few decades ago the Mantis Clan tried to lay claim to these lands, citing a mandate from Emperor Toturi the First to collect taxes and rule any unaligned lands. This was by no means popular with the Merchant Council, especially when Mantis boats came up the river and their samurai began settling in the city, far from their beloved ocean. Although the Mantis eventually gave up their claim, they remain influential in the city.

More recently, the city has been visited by a peculiar ronin brotherhood who all wear the same mon, a spider design. These ronin have stepped into the gaps left in the city's law enforcement by the limited number of Imperial Guard. Although they keep a low profile overall, they have earned considerable goodwill from the city's law-abiding residents for their efforts.

The city's most recent change, and most recent challenge, is the arrival of the Scorpion Clan, who have persuaded the Imperial authorities to grant them rule over Zakyo Toshi. What this means for the city's Imperial detachment, for the Mantis dwelling here, or for the Spider roaming the city's night-darkened streets remains to be seen, but most of Zakyo Toshi's long-term residents do not expect any change. As they are fond of saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Timeline

670 - Zakyo Toshi is founded by merchants traveling the southern land trade routes, who wish to create a stopover point near the Shinomen Mori. A small tributary of the River of Gold makes a perfect place to rest and replenish goods as well as continue trade over land or by water. The river is renamed Small Trade River.

687 - Overland trade routes through Zakyo Toshi begin to decline as more traders use the quicker method of shipping on the River of Gold.

701 - Due to the still-declining trade, the merchants of Zakyo Toshi decide to re-invent their city's image. Modeling themselves off of Ryoko Owari Toshi (or more accurately, off the reputation of the latter city), the merchants believe they can create a haven for samurai to relax and enjoy themselves. And since, unlike Ryoko Owari, Zakyo Toshi does not belong to the Scorpion Clan, the merchants hope the city will seem less threatening and be able to attract more samurai. The merchants raise capital from several questionable sources.

750 – The ronin Reichin passes through Zakyo Toshi on his way to meet the Emerald Champion at what will soon be called Seven Day Battle Plain. Reichin stops in the city

briefly and recruits several ronin before he heads out to fight Iuchiban.

815 - Multiple sighting of Shadowlands creatures occur around Zakyo Toshi. The merchants request aid from the Emperor. A detachment of Imperial Guard is assigned to garrison the town, at the expense of the Merchant Council. In order to cover this expense the merchants again seek questionable sources of funding. The Shadowlands creatures never make a full scale assault on the city, thankfully, being apparently more interested in the nearby Shinomen Mori.

824 – Daimyo Moto Tsume leads a large force of Moto troops south, swearing to crush the Shadowlands menace once and for all. On his way he stops and re-provisions at Zakyo Toshi.

925 - Shinjo Fujimaka and Ikoma Gohesu pass through and resupply at Zakyo Toshi as they begin their journey to map out the Shinomen Mori.

1090 - War between the Hare and the Fox erupts. This event threatens the safety of Zakyo Toshi, as the conflict spills into the surrounding unaligned lands. Despite claiming neutrality in the conflict, the city's merchants sell supplies to both sides. The protection of the Imperial Guard maintains the city's status as neutral ground, and eventually both sides in the conflict to send their bushi to Zakyo Toshi for rest and relaxation.

1124-1125 - Rumors and sightings of strange snake-like men in and around the Shinomen Mori circulate through Zakyo Toshi. In 1125 a small delegation of the creatures briefly visit the city, but do not stay for long.

1131 - The Mantis claim the right to tax and regent unaligned lands, citing their Clan Charter from Emperor Toturi the First. Zakyo Toshi is included by the Mantis in their definition of "unaligned lands" and the city sees an influx of Mantis samurai and merchants.

1135 – Sightings of Naga drop sharply, a phenomenon accompanied by an influx of Unicorn to the city. Some of the Unicorn stay long-term.

1165 – The fearsome Blood Rain strikes Zakyo Toshi along with the rest of the Empire. The city experiences massive upheavals, riots, and general mayhem. Imperial troops sent out to deal with the mobs are caught in the rain and often join in on the disturbances.

1168 - Ronin bearing the Spider mon begin to appear in the city. They act as a policing force wherever the Imperial Guard are absent, and try to ingratiate themselves with the merchants and people of Zakyo Toshi.

1170 - The Scorpion Clan announces its annexation of Zakyo Toshi. A small garrison force is sent to the city to replace the Imperial Guard garrison, and a Scorpion Governor, Yogo Maiku, is appointed to rule the city in place of the Merchant Council.

City Denizens

All Rokugani cities are populated largely by commoners, but Zakyo Toshi holds the distinction of also being founded and, for most of its history, governed by commoners. Those samurai who reside in the city long-term tend to be heavily influenced by their surroundings, and are quite accustomed to rubbing shoulders with peasants and merchants. To outsiders, the samurai of Zakyo Toshi – most of them ronin – seem almost blasphemous in their behavior. Furthermore, the city's most powerful factions are not samurai at all, but criminal gangs.

There are a number of such gangs operating within Zakyo Toshi, ranging from small packs to four major organizations with formidable resources. The first of these is known simply as the Firemen. While the term Firemen in Rokugan usually refers to a group of citizens organized to fight fires (an important duty in fire-prone Rokugani cities), in Zakyo Toshi this group is a thinly disguised criminal gang, concerned with the collection of protection money from merchants, geisha houses, and gambling dens. They get their name from the flame-like tattoos that cover their right arms, as well as the fact that they are known to burn down the buildings of people who do not pay protection money. However, when they do burn down buildings, they are very careful not to let the fire spread to those who have actually paid for their protection – an uncontrolled fire would bring down the wrath of the merchants and possibly draw the attention of the Imperial Guard, and now the Scorpion. The oyabun (bossman) of this group is an elderly gentleman named Kagi, known for his taste for fine-quality sake.

The Bawdy Carp, another of the four largest gangs in Zakyo Toshi, are recognizable by their water-motif tattoos, which always have a white koi and a black koi entwined together somewhere in the design. They own a number of geisha houses and less reputable establishments, the latter catering to those entertainments that geisha do not provide. In addition to these shady business practices, they also involve themselves in extortion for money and political gain. They tend to confine their activities to within the Pleasure and Gambling districts of Zakyo Toshi, where their strength is greatest. The oyabun of the Bawdy Carp is a man named Noriko.

The Silent Canary, the third of the four largest gangs in Zakyo Toshi, get their name from both their reluctance to talk when captured and the silence with which they move while on a smuggling job. Their identifying tattoo, naturally, is a yellow canary. Additionally, if the canary is shown in a cage, it means the gang member has been incarcerated at least once. The Silent Canary's main business is moneylending and smuggling in contraband items, such as gaijin gear (but not opium – that market is controlled by the Brotherhood of Autumn). They have a number of methods for smuggling things into the city, including a natural cave system that passes beneath the

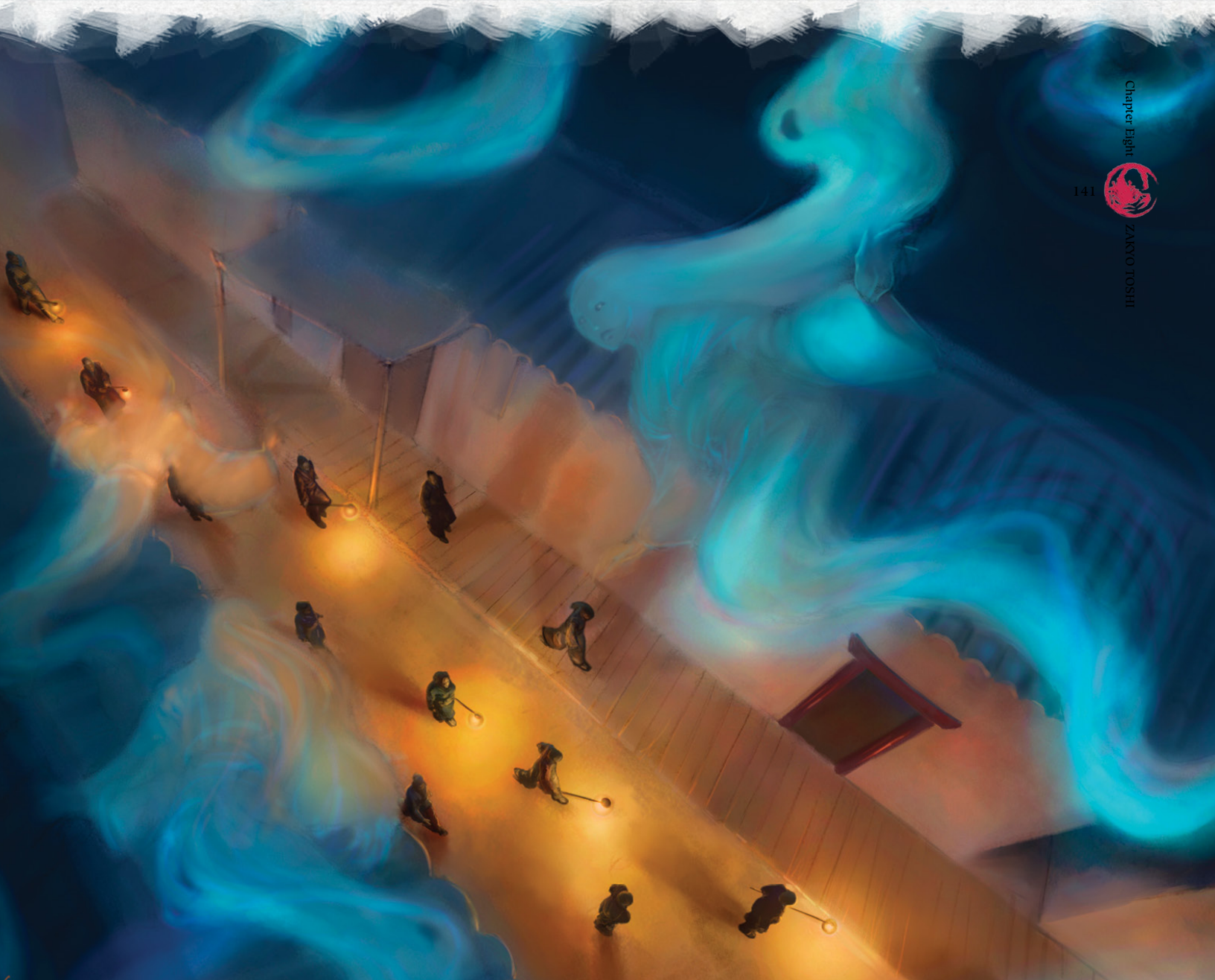
walls of the city. As moneylenders, they prefer to lend their money to the city's merchants, since that offers the highest profit margins, but they are not above making loans to samurai or even ronin. After all, it never hurts to have a good swordsman in their debt. The oyabun of the Silent Canary is Daisuke.

The last of the four large gangs is known as the Brotherhood of Autumn. At first glance they appear to be monks, what with their shaved heads and brown robes, and this look has earned them the ire of the few representatives of the Brotherhood of Shinsei in the city. Their distinguishing tattoo is either a tree shedding its leaves, or a leaf turning from green to an autumnal color. The Brotherhood of Autumn is concerned with the opium trade in Zakyo Toshi, and they control the infamous so-called Ugokasu Ichiba, the "Moving Market" (see the Location Guide for details). While they supply most of the opium dens in Zakyo Toshi, they do not actually operate any of them – their concern is only supply, not distribution. Their oyabun is named Qiuye.

Location Guide

Zakyo Toshi is a chaotic city, one often lacking in the sort of clear neighborhoods and district lines that characterize more conventional Rokugani cities. Businesses of questionable nature can be found in many different districts and there are few controls on movement within the city walls.

The southern half of Zakyo Toshi has no bridges across the Small Trade River. While this would be an inconvenience in most cities, here, enterprising individuals have turned it into an opportunity. These individuals, known as the Ferrymen, use small boats to transport customers from one side of the river to the other, charging a small fee. (The Ferrymen are cautious about how much they charge



samurai, especially those from outside the city, since they could easily take offense and cut the ferryman down.) Their raucous cries of "ferry for passage, one bu" are notorious in the city, and some claim that the riverbanks here are almost as loud as the dock district when trade barges are unloading. Of course, the Ferrymen's small skiffs have to share the river with those same trade barges, making things very dangerous for the small boats if a barge captain is not paying attention to the waterway. Still, the inconvenience of having to take the time to walk to the bridges often outweighs the danger, so the ferrymen stay in business.

Unlike the city it tried to imitate, Ryoko Owari Toshi, Zakyo Toshi does not have an island for its Floating World. The geisha district is located right in midst of the city, and most samurai walk right into the geisha houses carrying their weapons. Each house treats this differently – some hire a sword polisher to meet their samurai guests at the door, some have a weapons closet much like those found in many inns in Rokugan. No true geisha house will allow a samurai to remain armed with anything larger then a tanto once he enters, but of course, not all the houses in Zakyo Toshi are "true" geisha houses, and deadly brawls are not unknown. All houses, regardless of their nature, have hired help to restrain and subdue troublemakers. Inside Zakyo Toshi's geisha houses, the matron and the bouncers are the law – not even the Imperial Guard likes to have to settle disputes in these establishments.

It may be noted that even the most formal of Zakyo Toshi's geisha houses do not follow the general Rokugani custom of requiring an introduction from their customers. This custom began early in the city's history, on the reasoning that if this was to truly become a city of pleasure, a city where samurai could relax, it would be easier to allow the samurai to gain entrance without the need for such elaborate rituals. After all, visitors to Zakyo Toshi would be coming from all parts of Rokugan and would not necessarily know anyone in the city who would vouch for them. This policy both worked and failed. It worked in attracting samurai from around the Empire, but failed to attract the caliber of samurai the city's rulers had hoped for.



The Slippery Eel

One of the most famous geisha houses in Zakyo Toshi, renowned for its food and its excellent back massages. There are some nasty rumors that it has ties to the Bawdy Carp gang, which are true, as many of the bouncers here work for that gang. As such, samurai visiting this place can easily get more entertainment then a mere night of song and dance, if they are seeking something less savory. However, it may cost them more then they bargained for.

Due to the Bawdy Carp gang acting as the house's enforcers, trouble here is usually dealt with fairly quickly. The gang members carry easily concealed clubs or tonfa to subdue their more rowdy guests. Those guests who do suffer the attentions of the bouncers are often beaten unconscious, stripped naked, and left in the street with their swords. Repeat offenders tend to disappear.

The Carp use this house as a source of information and blackmail, but they use what they get very sparingly – they do not wish to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Shinsei's Cup

Shinsei's Cup is an unusual geisha house that has opened only recently. It offers the usual selection of entertainments, but all visitors to the house are required to wear a mask. If the visitor does not have a mask, the house will provide one for them as long as they promise to return it (they require a samurai's chop in order to lend out a mask). The house claims it is easier for a samurai to take his face off if he is not worried about showing it at all, and the mask also saves the samurai from any possible embarrassment due to seeing someone that he knows.

In fact, the Scorpion have opened this house, beginning the process of putting themselves in control of the city. They have offered to buy the contract of any geisha in the city who can prove her worth to them. This method secures the loyalty of the geisha, especially since the Scorpion can also guarantee a safe work environment. Many prominent geisha have already relocated to Shinsei's Cup, bringing their clientele with them.

The game of the masks is a new touch for Zakyo Toshi, one that has worked quite well for the Scorpion at their own settlement of Toshi Aitate. They hope that samurai wearing such masks will feel more relaxed and will talk more freely. Since the masks the samurai guests wear can be matched with their chops, the Scorpion know exactly who is saying what.



The House of Song

Owned by an older woman named Chiasa, the House of Song is known (as its name suggests) for its unparalleled singers. It is said that no finer pleasure can be found in Zakyo Toshi than to spend the evening at the House of Song. It is also said that the owner has a way of ferreting out a samurai's secret desires and catering to them.

However, Chiasa permits absolutely no overt bawdiness in her establishment, nor does she tolerate brawling or crudity. And while some houses in this city will not hesitate to admit anyone, even someone clearly afflicted with the Shadowlands Taint, Chiasa is far more selective. Those who violate her rules are politely asked to leave and are banned from the house for one week. If the perpetrator has the gall to commit a second offense, or returns before the banishment ends, they soon find themselves falling afoul of the law. Chiasa has an excellent memory for faces, and one of her favorite customers is the local Emerald Magistrate. Even the city's most powerful gangs have learned to give this house a wide berth. It remains to be seen how the city's new Scorpion overlords will approach her.

The Blue Lotus

Another unusual geisha house, located in the southern districts of Zakyo Toshi. Many samurai who have visited it claim, "One has not truly partaken of the delights of Zakyo Toshi until one has visited the Blue Lotus."

What makes the Blue Lotus so unusual is that only half the clientele are in the house at any one time. The house owns and employs a number of small skiffs, and its customers are able to punt up and down the river with their geisha companions, in complete and delightful privacy. Often they light candles and set them afloat on the river, a style which others Rokugani might consider unpleasantly close to the customs of the Bon Festival, but here is simply a way of giving the night a special ambience.

Oddly, the Blue Lotus is independently owned and is not controlled by any Clan or gang.

The Jade Cup

A small gambling house whose main claim to fame is the green porcelain cups they use in their dice game. It is also one of the rowdier houses in Zakyo Toshi, and fights from drunken patrons often spill out into the streets. This establishment has only opened within the last couple years, and seems to attract the baser elements of Zakyo Toshi. Rumor has it that more then just gambling goes on inside its walls. It is, in fact, controlled by the Spider Clan.

The Naga's Gaze

The Naga's Gaze was originally opened by one of the Unicorn who came to patrol the Shinomen Mori. He and his brethren needed something to do to ease their boredom between their shifts on duty, and a gambling house suited their tastes perfectly. The business has been passed down from father to son for several generations.

The Naga's Gaze is known not only for its dice games, but also for strange gambling games using thin placards of wood with pictures on them, a concept the Unicorn brought back from the Burning Sands.

Shinsei's Wind

Owned and operated by a merchant known as Iwao, the Shinsei's Wind is notorious for the signboard outside. The sign depicts the revered monk Shinsei with a gust of wind coming from his backside.

That being said, Shinsei's Wind is one of the cleaner and more honest establishments in the city. It does have its rough nights, and the occasional fight erupts, but Iwao's bouncers clear out such troublesome customers swiftly. Iwao tries to keep the worst sorts out of his establishment altogether, and keeps a sharp eye out for anyone showing symptoms of the Shadowlands Taint, finding excuses to turn away such dubious patrons.

Iwao does have something of a soft spot for those who are down on their luck, however, and often puts them up for the night in one of the spare rooms on the second floor. He is even known to lend them money if they truly need it. Those who try to take advantage of his generosity are sorry, though, for he seems to have a knack for telling which people really are down on their luck and which are just trying to sell him a sob story.



The Scorpion Shrine

This is one of the projects of the city's new Scorpion Governor, Yogo Maiku. The shrine is being constructed in the northern residential districts, and is intended to venerate several Scorpion ancestors, most notably Bayushi himself, Bayushi Tangen, and Bayushi Shoju. The latter choice is causing some stir amongst the populace, as most Rokugani, even in Zakyo Toshi, are not sure if Shoju should be treated with such reverence. But who is going to argue that question with a Scorpion? Yogo Maiku has promised that shugenja of the clan will attend and maintain the shrine once it is complete.

The real reason the shrine is being constructed is that Maiku knows of the smugglers' caverns beneath the city. The shrine conceals a small tunnel down to these caverns. Maiku intends to use the tunnels for Scorpion Clan business such as stockpiling supplies, hiding contraband goods, and moving troops quietly should the need arise.

The Chicken Dinner

The *Hiyoko Seisan*, or Chicken Dinner, is a popular gambling den of many ronin. It is named for the house's tradition of giving any ronin a chicken dinner on their first win of the evening. This makes it a popular place to go when money gets tight. The house does not extend credit to ronin, however, and no exceptions are made for unfortunate circumstances.

The Garrison

Since the annexation of Zakyo Toshi, the Imperial garrison has been greatly reduced in force. Originally assigned to keep watch over the potentially troubled border between the Scorpion, the Fox, and the Sparrow Clans, the Imperial Guard soon found itself being drawn into policing the city as much as watching the frontier. It is thus with some relief that the troops are now leaving this corrupting place in favor of the Scorpion.

The small Imperial force that remains now shares the barrack with the Scorpion Clan guards that have arrived to take over protecting and policing the city. This has caused a certain amount of tension between the two sets of troops, but so far no overt hostilities have occurred.

A new barracks is currently under construction next to the old barracks. Once it is complete, the two groups of troops will be separated. Even to the untrained eye, the new barracks seem to be heavily fortified.

Ugokasu Ichiba

The *Ugokasu Ichiba* or "Moving Market" is a loose conglomeration of smugglers and illicit opium dealers. The market is so named because it never stays in one place in the city for more then a day at a time. The Brotherhood of Autumn provides security for the market and scouts locations for it to take up residence, most often in an alley or side street. The stalls of the market are simple affairs of wood and cheap silk, easily assembled and taken down, or just as easily left behind in haste.

The market does a brisk business in many different illicit substances, including opium, other drugs, and a few poisons. It is actually fairly easy to find, as the booths tend to be quite colorful, and anyone asking around town can locate it fairly easily.

In the past, the Imperial Guard tended to leave the Moving Market alone, mainly because every time they tried to squash it, it reappeared within a week. No matter how many arrests they made, no matter how many stalls they burned, it always came back, so eventually they gave up and let it be. For their part, the merchants of the market have also been cautious about how freely they sell their more questionable products. After all, if someone were to use what they bought at the market to do harm to an influential person, the merchants would likely be hunted down and hung like common thieves.

It remains to be seen whether the Scorpion will allow the Moving Market to operate with the same degree of freedom it has enjoyed in the past.

Pearl Gate

Pearl Gate, also known as Exile's Gate, is the westernmost gate of the city, and the gate nearest the Shinomen Mori. When the Naga first visited the city in 1125, they entered through this gate. It was renamed the Pearl Gate in their honor.

Lately it has taken on a different name, Exile's Gate. Ronin who cause too much trouble in Zakyo Toshi are marched out of the city through this gate, with the obvious implications of being told to go get themselves lost in the Shinomen. It is also the gate through which the city's eta enter and leave every day for work.

The Pearl Gate is kept closed at night.

The Plum Blossom Gate

The northernmost gate in the city is known as *Sumomo Sakari*, the Plum Blossom Gate. This is the main entrance to the residential section of Zakyo Toshi. It was named for the sacred fruit that sustained Shinsei during his fasting, in the hope that this would bring good luck and prosperity to the city. This gate also closes at nightfall.

Snowfall Gate

The northeastern gate is known as the Kosetsu or Snowfall Gate. It gained this name from the habit of many residents coming to this gate to watch the first snowfall of the year, especially if they have no garden in their home to do so. This gate, due to its location near the pleasure and gambling districts, remains open at all hours unless the city is under attack.

Honeymoon Gate

The city's southeastern gate, known as the Shinkon-ryoko or Honeymoon Gate, leads directly to the gambling and pleasure district of Zakyo Toshi. This is the gate most travelers enter when they come to the city to relax. Originally named in the hope of attracting newlyweds to the city, this gate's name has become something of a joke in modern times. Much like the Snowfall Gate, this one always remains open unless the city is threatened by war.

Opportunity Gate

The southernmost gate is known as the Kikai or Opportunity Gate. It leads to the merchant district of Zakyo Toshi, and is the main route by which trade caravans enter and leave the city. The gate itself is of thick mahogany wood with the symbol of a koku carved into each door. This gate also remains open at all times, since caravans respect no hour for arrival or departure.

The Docks

Small Trade River flows from Shinomen Mori, through Zakyo Toshi, and down into the River of Gold. The river is, as its name implies, fairly small, with only enough breadth and depth to let two trading barges pass – and then only if their captains know what they are doing.

The eastern bank of the river is home to the docks district. These docks are a very loud and raucous business center during the day, as barges come in almost hourly and goods are offloaded into warehouses or merchant carts. Some merchants have even opened stalls along the docks, hocking fresh fruit and vegetables straight off the barges.

The Counting House & Council Chambers

Located near the Governor's mansion is a large round building that looks more like something found in Unicorn lands than a typical Rokugani building. Two stories tall, built entirely from wood from the nearby Shinomen Mori, its plain exterior belies the riches within its walls.

The inside is full of luxuriant amenities such as fine silk pillows, rugs from the far-off city of Medinaat el-Salaam, and polished woodwork from the Ivory Kingdoms. The main room holds six seats, five for the council members, and one for the Emerald Magistrate when he attends the meetings.

Originally the Counting House was the seat of power in Zakyo Toshi, but this began to change when the Mantis annexed the city in 1131. They installed the first Governor of the city in order to watching over the place and collect its taxes, and built a mansion for him to reside. More recently, the arrival of the Scorpion and their own Governor has further eroded the power of the Merchant Council.

The Council still meets once a month to discuss business, mostly reports on what goods are selling at what prices around the Empire, as well as to discuss personal news and concerns, such as bandit raids on their caravans. They have not given up all hope of retaining self-government yet, but it is slowly waning now that another Great Clan has laid claim to their land.

Shrine to Ebisu

Located just inside the Opportunity Gate is a large shrine to Eibisu, the Fortune of Honest Work. The irony of worshipping such a Fortune in a city dedicated to vice and self-indulgence is obvious, of course. While the shrine is not large by Rokugani standards, it is very opulent and well-kept, perhaps a gesture by merchants who do not wish their dubious city to incur Eibisu's wrath.

The Brotherhood of Shinsei tends to this shrine, keeping it clean despite its constant stream of visitors, and making sure the incense sticks and prayer strips are in good supply. Every caravan that passes through Opportunity Gate makes a stop at the shrine to send prayers to Eibisu that their journey be safe and that they have good fortune. Since caravans are leaving the city all of the time, the shrine never closes its doors.

Shrine to Daikoku

Slightly smaller then the Shrine to Eibisu and located right next to the Counting House is the shrine to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth. This shrine is even more extravagant in its opulence, with the statue of Daikoku being cast of solid gold. With such wealthy patrons as the Merchant Council, it is expected to be so.

The Council never meets without first coming to the shrine and praying for Daikoku's wisdom to shin on their endeavors. However, it is not unusual to see grubby ronin praying at the lavish shrine as well, right alongside elegantly attired merchants, for Daikoku favors gamblers as well as merchants.

Those who seek the Fortune's blessing find the shrine's doors open at all hours of the day and night. The Brotherhood of Shinsei keeps at least one monk on late night vigil, both to greet guests to the shrine and to watch for thieves.

The shrine is also unusual for offering a number of unoccupied rooms where peasants or samurai can stay and rest. This tradition started when the monks noticed that many a late-night reveler came to the shrine to celebrate their good fortune, only to fall asleep while giving thanks to Daikoku. Rather then turn these worshippers out on the streets, the monks give them a place to sleep it off until morning.

The North Bridge

An apt, if unimaginative, name for the wide and sturdy bridge that crosses the Small Trade River in the heart of the residential district. This bridge was designed to accommodate not only foot traffic, but caravan wagons as well. Like the Shobai bridge nearby, it could easily be used to move troops in a time of war.

The Trade Bridge

The other large bridge inside Zakyo Toshi, designed (like the North Bridge) to accommodate caravans rather than merely simple foot traffic. Trade Bridge is located in the northern part of the trade district and allows goods brought upstream on barges and unloaded on the east bank of the Small Trade River to be easily carted across to the other side of town.

Ambition Bridge

South of town and past the eta district is Ambition Bridge, so named because of the daring architecture involved in its creation. Ambition Bridge is a stone and wood fortification built tall enough to allow barges to pass underneath unhindered, but sturdy and wide enough to accommodate caravans leaving the city. Indeed, so sturdy is its construction that many claim it feels as if they are traveling on solid ground.

One Tree Brewery

Located just inside the Plum Gate in the residential district is the One Tree Brewery. It produces sake from the city's rice paddies for many of the inns in Zakyo Toshi, and also creates a very limited run of pear wine every year.

The brewery was founded by a merchant's widow who had lost everything but a single pear tree. She decided to try her hand at brewing, and soon her friends were marveling at the unique taste of her pear wine. A sweet but strong alcohol, albeit not as strong as shochu, nor as dry as traditional sake, the brewery's pear wine is quite a sensation in Zakyo Toshi, and its limited quantities command a high price.

The Fat Rat

The Fat Rat is a merchant's shop and deals mainly in general goods such as clothing, silks, footware, and the like. It used to be known as the Laughing Cat, but recently it had a severe run of bad luck – stolen goods, gang shakedowns, and late deliveries. In the hope of changing their fortune, the owners renamed their business the Fat Rat, in honor of the servants of Daikoku and the Scorpion Clan's annexation of Zakyo Toshi. (The Scorpion consider rats to be a symbol of good luck.)

In actuality, some of the misfortunes were planned sabotage, an attempt by the Governor to break the power of the Merchant Council. Yogo Maiku's advisor, Bayushi Chou, suggested that one way to deal with the Merchant Council would be to gain control of one of the Council seats. Since hearing that recommendation, Maiku has surreptitiously wrought misfortune on the owner of the Laughing Cat, with the intention of arranging the purchase of his business once he becomes sufficiently desperate.

After that, it is just a matter of showing profit to gain a seat on the Council.

The Dusty Caravan

When the Unicorn Clan came south to help guard the Shinomen Mori, more then just their bushi came with them. Enterprising merchants traveled south as well, hoping to make a name for themselves by opening a store in Zakyo Toshi selling unusual and exotic merchandise.

The current owner of the Dusty Caravan is a merchant named Saburo. He uses his lord's connections to a trader in the Burning Sands to acquire foreign spices, luxury goods, and curiosities. The store deals mostly in spices and a few bits of non-contraband gaijin gear, and has managed to do quite well, though not quite as well as originally hoped. Saburo is thinking of expanding into more illicit goods, and while the Scorpion annexation of Zakyo Toshi means a Great Clan is now in control, he believes it is unlikely they will strictly enforce the laws, thereby decreasing his risk and increasing his profit.

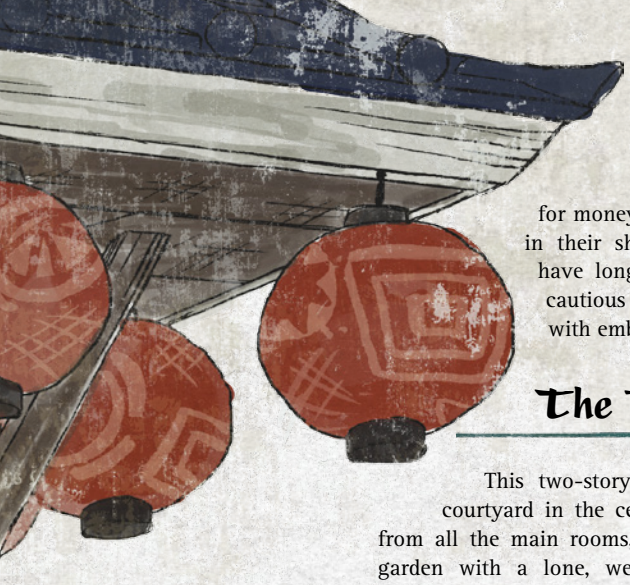
The Listing Ship

The Mantis Clan, known for their economic and mercantile expertise, have admired Zakyo Toshi from the time they first laid claim to it in 1131, seeing it as a potential trade hub to help move their goods into the heart of Rokugan. It was only natural then for them to open a business while the city was under their mandate. Located by the docks, the Listing Ship is a large shop offering every manner of (legal) gear that anyone could ask for. If they do not have it, they know where to acquire it, and are happy to do so for a suitable price.

Shogi's Pawn

This store has been around since the Eighth century, handed down through the generations from father to child. It buys and sells anything that can be brought through the door, and is willing to buy things from customers and then not sell them for up to one month, thus letting the customer potentially buy back what he sold. This is a very unusual business for Rokugan, and perhaps only in a city like Zakyo Toshi could it survive and indeed thrive. Shogi's Pawn is perfect for down-on-their-luck samurai, desperate





for money and with their swords rusting in their sheaths. Of course, the owners have long since learned to be suitably cautious and subservient when dealing with embarrassed samurai customers.

The Fuzzy Peach Inn

This two-story inn is famous for its open courtyard in the center of the building, accessed from all the main rooms, where can be found a small garden with a lone, well-manicured peach tree. The proprietor hires fine singers and entertainers to play and perform in the garden when the first blooms of the peach tree open, making it a kind of local holiday. All of the inn's guest rooms have windows opening to the central courtyard as well, offering a view of the peach tree from both the first and second floors.

The Starry Night Inn

Located just inside the Plum Gate in the residential district is the One Tree Brewery. It produces sake from the city's rice paddies for many of the inns in Zakyo Toshi, and also creates a very limited run of pear wine every year.

The brewery was founded by a merchant's widow who had lost everything but a single pear tree. She decided to try her hand at brewing, and soon her friends were marveling at the unique taste of her pear wine. A sweet but strong alcohol, albeit not as strong as shochu, nor as dry as traditional sake, the brewery's pear wine is quite a sensation in Zakyo Toshi, and its limited quantities command a high price.

The Celestial Rest

Located by the Pearl Gate, the Celestial Rest inn caters to those who are truly down on their luck. While it is a clean building, it is not especially well maintained. The inn does not charge rent, but instead depends on donations from its visitors to sustain it. Not surprisingly, those visitors are usually not well-financed if they are staying at the Celestial Rest.

The inn is not truly a business, but is run by monks from the Order of Thunder. It offers clean futons and edible, sustaining food, but nothing more. The monks, who come here from the Temple of Osano-Wo on the Plains of Thunder, work at the inn for a few months at a time before returning to the temple, spiritually strengthened by the experience.

Important Personages

Yogo Maiku

Governor of Zakyo Toshi

Yogo Maiku has only recently arrived in Zakyo Toshi to take up his post as the Scorpion Clan's Governor of the city. To the local residents, he seems to be a rather idealistic Scorpion courtier who has the interests of his new city at heart. Outwardly, he is an open-faced younger man, and wears very little in the way of a mask. Indeed, many people mistake him for a Crane, with his white hair – worn in a loose ponytail, a popular style with the Crane – and elegant manners. In fact, his hair turned white at a young age, reputedly from an encounter with a ghost, and he refuses to dye it back to black.

Since his appointment, Yogo Maiku has spent much of his time reassuring the populace of Zakyo Toshi that, while they have a new governor, nothing has really changed. He understands the town is quite profitable, and if he should try to clamp down and impose traditional Rokugani law and morality there would be no end of trouble, both from the merchants and from the samurai who come here to let off steam.

To further put the Merchant Council at ease he has instituted several civic projects in the city, showing his good will to the people. He has also not raised taxes -- instead, the bulk of the money supplied by the merchants to pay for the Imperial garrison is now being used to fund his new projects, while the garrison has been reduced and replaced by Scorpion troops. The largest of these projects is the construction of a new temple to Scorpion Clan ancestors in the northern districts.

Maiku is not quite as naive as he seems, however, and is actually using misdirection to screen his true intentions. While the people of Zakyo Toshi look at the temple he is building and the other civic projects he has initiated, he is actually busily working on his true task for the Scorpion Clan: find where the flow of smuggled goods is coming into the city and take control of it, find the source of the emeralds which occasionally enter the market here, and find the hidden base of this group calling themselves the "Spider Clan" that his superiors believe is operating in Zakyo Toshi.

Maiku understands he has been given a position of power and influence, and he will do everything in his ability to keep it. This means he has to consolidate a power base in Zakyo Toshi and can brook no threats to his influence. He intends to subvert or crush the gangs which have taken such deep roots in the city. At the moment, he is willing to let the Merchant Council stand, since it poses no real threat to him. However, he is uncomfortable with their power and influence, and on the advice of Bayushi Choi he has begun a long-term plan to infiltrate them and undermine their power.

Yogo Maiku, Governor of Zakyo Toshi

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 4

Willpower: 4 Intelligence: 4 Perception: 3

Honor: 2.4 *Status: 5.0* *Glory: 3.3*

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 3

Skills: Artisan: Painting 2, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Courtier (Manipulation, Rhetoric) 5, Craft: Poison 2, Etiquette (Conversation, Courtesy) 6, Games: Sadane 3, Horsemanship 2, Investigation 5, Lore: Underworld 2, Medicine (Herbalism) 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Tea Ceremony 4, Temptation 3

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Voice

Tamotsu (Bayushi Chou)

the Spymaster

Bayushi Chou trained with the Shosuro long ago, when he was a young man. Even he is not sure what his original face looks like. He is extremely adept at long-term covert missions, and has spent many years wandering Rokugan developing false personas and gleaning useful information for his masters in the Scorpion Clan.

One such persona is Tamotsu, a ronin who frequents Zakyo Toshi every chance he gets to enjoy the high life found there. As Tamotsu, a ronin who always remembers his place, he appears to be a thirtyish wave man wearing dusty brown clothing and carrying a very well-used daisho set. Pretty much any job is acceptable to Tamotsu, be it serving as a yojimbo, a caravan guard, a guide, or even a little extra muscle for the city gangs. As long as he gets paid, he does not care. Tamotsu is, however, quite chatty, happily sharing his opinions and news of his travels through the Empire with friends and co-workers alike. His affable demeanor and quick wit have diffused many a tense situation, earning him the trust of those he works with.

Bayushi Chou is capable of discarding the persona of Tamotsu at will, quickly changing into any one of his other identities at a moment's notice. To that end, he keeps several caches of gear and clothing stashed throughout the city.

In order to communicate his findings with Governor Yogo Maiku, Chou uses several redundant dead drops, placing identical copies of each message in several different locations. Yogo Maiku disregards any missive he gets that does not come in multiple copies. Chou has put several other safeguards into effect to ensure his messages are not compromised, such as acidic poisonous paper – the acid ensures that the paper dissolves within a certain time once it is exposed to air, and only Maiku has the antidote for the poison.



Tamotsu (Bayushi Chou), the Spymaster

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 4

Honor: 2.5 *Status: 1.0 (0 as Tamotsu)* *Glory: 0.2 (1 as Tamotsu)*

School/Rank: Shosuro Infiltrator 4

Skills: Acting (Ronin, Dragon) 7, Athletics 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 3, Courtier (Gossip) 5, Craft: Alchemy (Acids) 3, Craft: Poisons 3, Craft: Tattooing 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 3, Knives 5, Lore: Underworld 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth (Shadowing, Sneaking) 5

Advantages: Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Rumormonger

Hayate

Gang Oyabun

Hayate is the crafty and cunning chief of the four major gangs in Zakyo Toshi, although none of the individual gangs know he is in charge of all of them. He started out selling his services as a spy to each of the four major gangs, dealing dirt on each gang to the others. In each gang he was known by a different name and face. He never got any tattoos to show gang affiliation, claiming that such things would hinder his ability to find out information. Slowly he rose in rank within each gang, and wherever he was put in charge, trouble with the other gangs seemed to wane.

Through trickery, guile, and an occasional resort to poison, he managed to become the head of the Firemen, the Bawdy Carp, the Silent Canary, and the Brotherhood of Autumn. He claimed to each of them that he was

approached by a messenger from one of the other gangs and that the other gangs had offered an alliance. Thus, as leader of each of the four gangs, he welded them into a single powerful criminal organization. Each gang still operates independently, reporting to one of his personas.

He has never tried to gain a seat on the Merchant Council, since to do so he would have to actually create a real business and show some sort of legitimate profit, all of which would bring far too much scrutiny. Instead Hayate is happy with controlling the underworld of Zakyo Toshi, carefully not letting his grasp exceed his reach. He well knows that should he want something from the Merchant Council, he has but to ask. If they were so foolish as to deny his request, he would make life both unbearable and unprofitable for them, and they know it.

Recent years, however, have revealed new threats to his power. A new gang-like group, the Spider Clan, have come to his city and posed at helping to clean it up, disrupting many of his gangs' activities. Now the Scorpion are here, threatening to do the same on a larger scale. He has no love for either group.

Hayate, Gang Oyabun

Air: 4 Earth: 3 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 3

Honor: 3.5 *Status: 0.0* *Infamy: 3.0*

School/Rank: None

Skills: Acting (Underworld) 5, Commerce 3, Courtier 3, Craft: Poison 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Forgery 2, Games: Fortunes & Winds 5, Intimidation (Bullying, Control) 7, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 5, Knives 3, Lore: Underworld 3, Sincerity 3, Staves 3, Stealth 5, Temptation (Bribery) 5

Advantages: Allies (2/4; Firemen, the Bawdy Carp, the Silent Canary, the Brotherhood of Autumn), Bland, Dark Paragon: Control, Read Lips, Silent

Disadvantages: Infamous, Social Disadvantage (Heimen)



Chisai and Iwao, the Pekkles

A pair of Pekkles has taken up residence in Zakyo Toshi, posing as a married couple who are both honest business owners. Chiasa, the beautiful matron, owns the geisha house called The House of Song, where it is known she can be persuaded to entertain guests with her marvelous singing voice. Iwao owns the gambling den known as Shinsei's Wind, and is known to help out the occasional luckless ronin.

Since these creatures are Pekkles, trickster spirits from Sakkaku, they love to cause confusion. They have channeled their abilities into their work, setting things up to unleash a vast eruption of chaos when they eventually leave the city. A geisha house where no one holds the girls' contracts, a gambling den without an employer, will cause calamity for their employees and bewilderment for their customers. The two Pekkle can hardly wait for the denouement of their joke.

Of course, in the meantime they are not above stirring the pot. Their anti-gang stance and steadfast refusal to serve anyone with Shadowlands Taint have already stirred up a lot of trouble

Both Pekkles often use their powers to deal with troublemakers in their respective businesses. Of late, however, they have become a little distracted, sensing more people with Shadowlands Taint within the city then usual. This is cause for some concern with them, as well they remember what has happened to their kin, the Pekkle no Oni, who were corrupted by the Taint. While they do not really care for humans, they would still hate to see "their" humans, as they privately call their employees, corrupted by Jigoku. The largest source of Taint they have sensed is the Jade Cup, and they have begun to maneuver against it. Their human status as merchants does not offer them much power, but they are slowly spreading rumors and gossip against the Jade Cup, hoping to inflame public opinion against it.

Chisai and Iwao, the Pekkles

Air: 6 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 1 Void: 3

Willpower: 8 Intelligence: 3 Perception: 3

Honor: 0.0 *Status: -1 (Chiasa)* *Glory: 1.0*
0 (Iwao)

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 4

Skills: Acting 6, Commerce 5, Courtier (Manipulation, Gossip) 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Games: Fortunes & Winds 5 (Iwao only), Games: Oichu-Kabu 3 (Iwao only), Investigation (Notice) 5, Knives 3, Lore: Spirit Realms (Sakkaku) 5, Perform: Biwa 3 (Chiasa only), Perform: Song 7 (Chiasa only), Sincerity (Deceit) 7, Sleight of Hand 5, Temptation (Seduction) 5

Advantages: Benten's Blessing (Chisai only), Luck (6 points, Iwao only), Touch of the Spirit Realms: Sakkaku, Voice (Chisai only)

Pekkle

Chisai and Iwao are Pekkle, trickster spirits originally from Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. They delight in masquerading as humans and causing trouble, even if their pranks take years or even decades to bear fruit. Pekkle posses a number of special qualities:

Shapeshift: Pekkle may change appearance at will as a Complex Action, shifting their age (any from infant to young adult), appearance, and gender as well.

Spirit: A creature with the Spirit quality is from one of the spirit realms outside of Ningen-do, and as such is somewhat resistant to weapons and effects native to the realm of mortals. Spirit creatures in Ningen-do take half damage from any weapon or other physical attack which does not contain jade, crystal, or obsidian, as well as from any spell or magical effect which does not have the Jade or Crystal quality.

Taint Immunity: Pekkle are completely immune to the Shadowlands Taint.

Taint Sense: A Pekkle can sense the presence of Tainted beings within 1 mile of its present location. If there is some kind of protection to hide the Taint from detection, the Pekkle can make a Contested Awareness roll to detect the Taint.

Nyoko

the Eta

The *de facto* leader of the Eta in Zakyo Toshi, Nyoko, is an elderly woman. She may even have been beautiful once, but the life of an eta and the many years working in Zakyo Toshi have not been kind to her. She is tanned and weathered, and wears her gray hair trimmed short so it does not get in her way as she works. Her intelligence and no-nonsense demeanor has earned her a position of leadership among the eta, although she is not their official headman. She tends to see her position as more of a hassle than an honor, since it interferes with her regular work whenever others insist on bringing their troubles to her.

Currently she is faced with a dilemma. Her people are forced to live outside the city walls, both by long-standing Rokugani tradition and, more practically, because the stench from the crematorium and leatherworks tends to upset the sensibilities of those who have come to Zakyo Toshi for a good time. Scrounging for shelter, the eta have discovered a cave system beneath part of the city, much of which is already in use by smugglers. More importantly, they have found a trove of emeralds in those caves. Nyoko knows that her people must be very careful about how they spend these gems, as too much wealth will quickly bring them unwelcome attention from the higher castes.

For now she has begun to trade them quietly to the Silent Canaries, in exchange for small improvements for her people, such as proper lumber to build sturdier shelters, rather then rotted wood found in the forests.

Nyoko, the Eta

Air: 1 Earth: 2 Fire: 1 Water: 2 Void: 2

Awareness: 3 Intelligence: 2

Honor: 0.1 *Status: 0.0* *Glory: 0.0*

School/Rank: None

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Commerce 1, Craft: Leatherworking 5, Craft: Mining 1, Craft: Mortuary (Cremation) 2, Etiquette 1, Intimidation (Control) 4, Investigation (Search) 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 2

Advantages: Allies (Silent Canary), Ebisu's Blessing, Wealthy (5 Points)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Mining Gems), Social Disadvantage (Eta), Weakness (Agility, Reflexes)

The Merchant Council

The Merchant Council is the old decision-making body of Zakyo Toshi. Originally it was comprised of the five merchants who joined forces to found the city. Over time the original families died out, but the need for leadership continued. To fulfill that need, the merchants developed a system whereby membership on the Council is decided on the basis of annual profits. This is a system quite unlike anything elsewhere in Rokugan, and more than a little shocking to those of proper sensibilities.

The Merchant Council decides what caravans to finance and which provinces to trade with for the year, as well as what civic improvements need to be done and who will pay for them. With that kind of control, it is very infrequent for Council seats to actually change hands, since they effectively get to decide what will be profitable for the next year. However, bad seasons do happen, and caravans do get raided (sometimes at the behest of a rival merchant).



New Advantage: Zakyo Toshi Citizen [Social] (3 points)

Being raised in a city that wholly embraces commerce, gambling, and other such pursuits has allowed you many opportunities to improve your financial lot in life. You gain an additional rank in one Games Skill of your choice. The starting koku of your School's Outfit is increased by 50%.

New Disadvantage: Zakyo Toshi Stigma [Social] (3 points)

The stench of gambling reached you while you were still a child, and you have not yet purified yourself of its embrace. You suffer an almost overwhelming compulsion to engage in games of chance. Any pastime with an element of randomness can be turned into an opportunity to gamble. When gambling or games on which the outcome could be wagered are taking place, you must succeed at a Willpower Roll (TN 20) or be compelled to forsake whatever else is going on to participate. You may make an additional Willpower Roll every ten minutes you are involved with the game in an attempt to break free.

New Alternate Path: Scorpion Weaponmaster [Bushi]

The Scorpion are not generally known as a clan of great warriors, at least not in the same manner as their rivals among the Lion and the Crab. They are much more commonly perceived as villains, thieves, and assassins, accusations that are vehemently contested and yet not without a kernel of truth. Still, there are many within the Scorpion Clan who excel at martial pursuits, and the Scorpion army is rightfully feared on the battlefield. A small handful of Scorpion, however, possess the perfect combination of natural talent and extensive training to elevate combat beyond the simple act of war; in the hands of a Scorpion master, a weapon is but a brush and combat is his art. Perhaps ironically, the greatest weaponmasters among the Scorpion are typically found within the ranks of the Bitter Lies legion, which has led some within the clan to speculate that the prodigious physical talents these samurai possess are in fact some manner of compensation for their damaged psychological state.

New Alternate Path: Scorpion Weaponmaster

- Technique Rank: 4
- **Replaces:** Bayushi Bushi 4
- **Requirements:** Any three Weapon Skills at 2

Technique: I Am A Weapon

A true weaponmaster understands the common thread between all weapons, and draws upon it. When wielding any melee weapon, a number of times per skirmish equal to your school rank, you may as a Free Action use any other melee Weapon Skill you possess for attack rolls using your current weapon. For example, you could spend a Void Point to use Kenjutsu when wielding a tetsubo if you had no ranks in Heavy Weapons. You gain no benefits from any Mastery Abilities or Emphases when utilizing this Technique. The effect lasts a number of Rounds equal to your School Rank, and while this Technique is in effect you may make melee attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.

New Alternate Path: Shadow Blades [Ninja]

Among the military ranks of the Scorpion, there is one unit that is known to the clan's leadership but which appears in no formal documentation anywhere in the clan's annals. These men are trained by sensei of both the Bayushi and Shosuro families, and are among the most proficient killers in the entire Empire. When they take the field, there are no survivors to tell tales of their abilities. Even their allies never lay eyes upon them. The location of their secret dojo is unknown to all save those who dwell within it, and those of family daimyo status or higher among the Scorpion. A persistent rumor among the attendants of those who know of the Shadow Blades' existence places the dojo within Zakyo Toshi, but no one knows if this is simply conjecture or if there is a kernel of truth to the matter.

New Alternate Path: Shadow Blades

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Bayushi Bushi 3 or Shosuro Infiltrator 3
- **Requirements:** Ninjutsu 3

Technique: Never Beyond My Reach

The flawless blend of warrior and assassin works unlocks a samurai's true potential as a killer of men. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when wielding a katana or any weapon with the Ninja keyword. When wielding a weapon with the Ninja keyword, you may also add +1k1 to your attack and damage rolls with that weapon.





Appendix
Three Unaligned Settlements

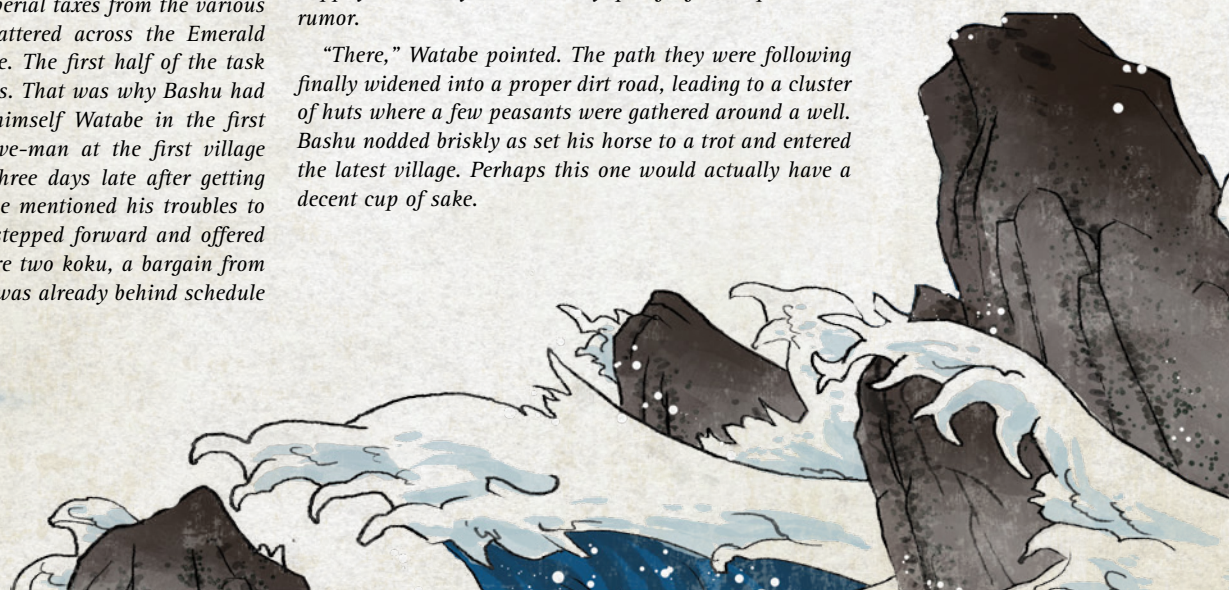
Otomo Bashu looked at his guide in frustration. "Surely we are close by now? We've been traveling for days. Are you quite sure you know where you're going?"

The young man in dirty brown kimono and hakama never even looked up as he answered tersely, "I know."

Bashu shook his head and turned back to the "road" they followed – little more than a place on the ground with less grass than other places – and sighed heavily. He had been ordered to collect the Imperial taxes from the various minor towns and villages scattered across the Emerald Empire like so much spilt rice. The first half of the task was simply finding the villages. That was why Bashu had hired the ronin who called himself Watabe in the first place. He had found the wave-man at the first village he visited. Bashu had been three days late after getting lost in the wilds, and when he mentioned his troubles to the headman, the ronin had stepped forward and offered his services as a guide. A mere two koku, a bargain from Bashu's perspective, since he was already behind schedule after just a single village.

Bashu suspected Watabe was secretly laughing at him, and in all honesty the Otomo could hardly blame him. Bashu was a courtier from the city, not a bushi, and not a particularly good courtier at that. His lack of skills was what had landed him this duty in the first place, and he thought it was entirely possible his superiors hoped he would stay permanently lost out here. He had heard bandit raids were plentiful away from the Imperial roads... though happily he had yet to see any proof of that particular rumor.

"There," Watabe pointed. The path they were following finally widened into a proper dirt road, leading to a cluster of huts where a few peasants were gathered around a well. Bashu nodded briskly as set his horse to a trot and entered the latest village. Perhaps this one would actually have a decent cup of sake.



The Village of Seitou Tason

A nameless, narrow dirt road is the only entrance to Seitou Tason. To the right of this road is a grove of trees, while the left slopes downward to a lazy stream. The road itself is only wide enough for two men or one horse to proceed at a time. A simple wooden bridge crosses a stream into the village itself.

The center of the village is a large open area that can't quite be called a town square, although that is clearly what is aspires to be. The villagers of Seitou Tason gather here during festivals, special meetings, and emergencies. The village well is located in one corner of the square, and in peaceful times is a popular place for local peasant women to gather and gossip while collecting water for their homes. To the right of the square is a crude, poorly built bell-tower. The bell itself is cracked, worn, and dirty. It has clearly been in use for many years – perhaps ever since the village was first established. It is nothing more than an oversized ladder with a narrow platform at the top, topped by a small bell which can be used to announce the end of the work-day, gather everyone for important meetings, celebrate holidays, or warn of bandits.

The assorted peasant huts that surround the town's central area are each unique in shape and design, the result of many generations of careful repairs in the face of weather and wear.

Due to Seitou Tason's remote location and its insignificance to the samurai population of Rokugan, the village residents rarely see samurai of any kind. Consequently, they have a hard time telling the difference between samurai with legitimate business and the bandits that rove the area. Villagers will typically greet visiting samurai with extreme deference and fear.

Location Guide and Denizens

The Mill and Granary

The mill is a large and very old wooden building on the edge of town. It has a heavy waterwheel that turns slowly in the sluggish current of the stream. The slow but steady thump-thump of the mill's giant mortar-and-pestle is a constant background noise to the entire village. The granary, just next door, is an equally large wooden building with a heavy thatched roof. This is where the peasants keep their supplies of rice, barley, millet, and buckwheat.

These buildings are the domain of Hippu, the "old man of the mill." He sleeps on a tattered futon in one corner of the mill's main room. Hippu is easily the oldest person in the village, a bitter shell of a man who spends all his time in his precious mill, puttering around trying to keep it in repair. His teeth and hair are all gone but his vision still works, and he does not hesitate to share his opinions with others – even samurai. Hippu is much too old to fear death, and he has a rather dim view of the samurai caste. He feels the samurai of Rokugan have forgotten their duty to the heimin in their endless wars against each other, wars in which the peasants are the true casualties. "If a samurai dies in battle, everyone says he fulfilled his role in the Celestial Order. People sing his praises and laud his courage. If a peasant dies because the samurai did not protect him, no one notices, no one sings. Only his wife and children lament his passing."

The Tea House

This nameless one-room business offers tea and shochu, as well as simple meals (soup, rice porridge, etc). During the evenings, many of the peasants will gather here to gossip about village affairs. The tea house is owned and operated by an old woman named Moriko who lives in a room attached to the back of the building.

Moriko is a kindly old woman, and the only one in town who even vaguely remembers Hippu when he had hair and teeth. She is known to give treats to the children of the village when their parents aren't looking, urging them to silence with a wink and a smile. She has a wicked sense of humor, and uses her old age to get away with mischief that wouldn't normally be tolerated from an adult.

The Herbalist Hut

The hut of Chiziru is often surrounded by a flowery or medicinal odor. It is probably the best-kept hut in the village, with new walls and a recently patched thatch roof, since every villager recognizes the importance of Chiziru and what she does. Inside, the odor increases in potency, for the main room is filled with pots of herbs, folk remedies, and medicines for all manner of ailments.

Chiziru the herbalist is the village's other elder citizen, a wizened crone whose age is somewhere past fifty. The locals refer to her as "obaa-sama" (honored grandmother) and provide her with food, clothing, and other needs in return for her irreplaceable services. She is a sharp-tongued woman who does not hesitate to scold those she thinks deserve it, but unlike Hippu she is very polite and deferential toward samurai. Chiziru uses traditional herbal remedies and folk treatments passed down through her family for generations. She is semi-literate, and has some very limited skills with the spirits – nothing resembling a true shugenja's talents, but enough to cast a few minor blessings from memorized chants. Her family's lineage includes a ronin several generations ago who claimed to be a former Kitsu shugenja.

Chiziru is assisted around the shop by her apprentice, Aoiko, a peasant girl who is just blossoming into full womanhood. Most of the young men of the village have a habit of lingering around the hut and offering to do odd jobs for Aoiko in their spare time. She is quick of mind and



easily picks up everything Chiziru teaches her, including what little reading and writing the old woman knows. She has also begun picking up her teacher's sharp tongue, and usually wins any verbal sparring with the village men.

Silk Works

Just outside the village is a modest silk farm, producing just enough cloth to provide for the locals. Until this year, the silk works was run by a married couple, Yusuke and Kaname, along with their parents and children. However, Yusuke was killed during a recent bandit raid while trying to protect his wife. Now, those Yusuke left behind are struggling to keep the place running by themselves. Kaname finds it very difficult to raise their three children, take care of their surviving parents, and run the silk works all by herself. The entire family lives in a one-room hut behind the main building.

Carpenter/Blacksmith's Shop

The most prominent shop in the village is a large open-sided structure with a sizable hut attached. The ground near the shop is littered with spare scraps of wood and metal. The inside isn't in much better condition, choked with pieces of furniture and tools in various states of repair. The craftsman Eizou and his assistant "Ox" can usually be found here, except when they are out making repairs elsewhere in the village.

Eizou is a large, muscular, and rather unattractive man in his early thirties. He is aggressive and sarcastic to his fellow villagers, but knows to hold his tongue in the presence of samurai. He is also man who loves to flirt with the young women of the village, especially the pretty ones. Sadly, his efforts in this field have so far come to naught, despite his putative good status as the local craftsman; nevertheless, he continues to hold out hope that someday one of those women will return his favor. Despite his outward rudeness, Eizou is actually a gentle and lonely soul, and abhors violence of any kind. He sees samurai as the sources of most violence in the world, and so will serve any samurai who come to visit the village quickly and efficiently in order to hopefully get rid of them as quickly as possible.

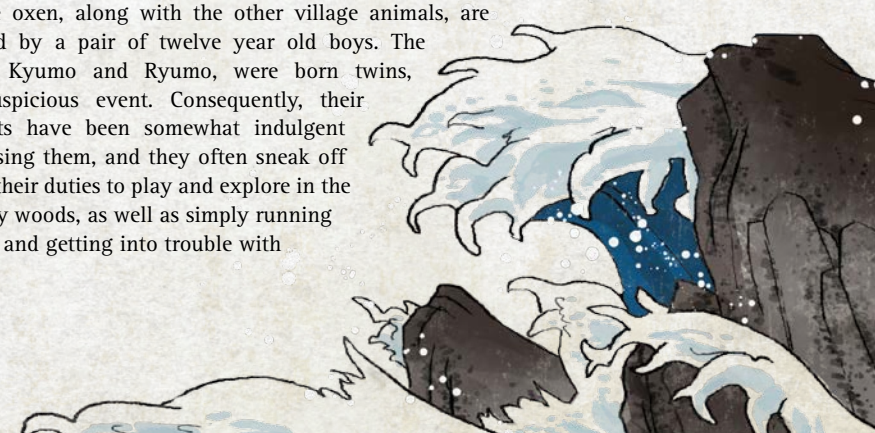
"Ox" is both Eizou's assistant and his foster-son – his real parents died in a bandit raid when he was a small boy. Although his real name is Oushi, most everyone in the village calls him by his nickname, given to him because of his huge build. Ox is over six feet tall and his shoulders seem as broad as two normal men. Ox has amazing stamina and never seems to tire at his work. In addition to helping Eizou, he also cuts firewood from the nearby forest, and helps with construction and other heavy labor in the village as necessary. Although his speech is as plodding as the animal whose name he bears, Ox is not actually stupid, and those who try to take advantage of him usually come to regret it.

Almost everyone in the village likes Ox and treats him as family, and he is highly protective of them, especially the village children, who he thinks of as younger brothers and sisters. Although he has been taught to be a peaceful man by his foster-father, Ox's ire can be roused if anything or anyone threatens the people of the village.

Oxen Pen

The pen is made of heavy wooden fencing and is attached to a roofed-over three-walled barn that provides shelter from the wind. There are anywhere from five to eight oxen in the pen at any given time, depending on whether Seitou Tason has been visited recently by bandits. The oxen are communal property, used for spring plowing and planting, hauling lumber, and other heavy labor as necessary. The peasants of Seitou Tason never slaughter the oxen for food, since they are far too valuable as labor. In fact, the oxen are easily considered the most valuable thing in the village by its residents, so any loss is a heavy blow.

The oxen, along with the other village animals, are tended by a pair of twelve year old boys. The boys, Kyumo and Ryumo, were born twins, as auspicious event. Consequently, their parents have been somewhat indulgent in raising them, and they often sneak off from their duties to play and explore in the nearby woods, as well as simply running about and getting into trouble with



Important Personage

Danyu

the Headman

Danyu is a lean, withered man in his forties, with sunken cheeks and thinning hair. He lives in a large double-sized hut with his aged wife Shizume. In his lifetime he has had two daughters but no sons. Both daughters have married into other households in the village.

Danyu inherited his position by a remarkable display of self restraint - the most notable event in the recent history of Seitou Tason, and still spoken of when the villagers gather at the tea house after a hard day's work. Nearly twenty years ago, the headman of the village was killed by a stampede of oxen, leaving no heir to take his place. A succession "war" began between the able young men of the village to gain the headman's office. This came to a head when the top contestants got into an all-out brawl. Danyu was one of the candidates for the position of headman, but he refused to fight. Instead he simply took any blows directed at him, somehow remaining standing despite immense punishment. Finally, only Danyu and the strongest fighter were left standing. It was then that Danyu's opponent had a moment of enlightenment, realizing that a physically strong leader was not nearly as important as a morally strong leader. He bowed to Danyu, who has been the headman ever since.

Danyu is a good man who loves the people of his village. Although he is as cowardly as any peasant, if it comes down to a choice between his life or the village, he will die willingly.

Danyu, the Headman

Air: 1	Earth: 2	Fire: 1	Water: 1	Void: 1
Reflexes: 2	Stamina: 2	Agility: 2	Strength: 2	

Honor: 2.3 *Status: 0.3* *Glory: 0.1*

School/Rank: None

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft: Farming 4, Hunting 1, Knives 2, Staves 2

Advantages: Balance

Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (Heimin)



The Town of Porisuko

Porisuko began life as nothing more than a camp for an otokodate (ronin band) who called themselves simply the Guards. It was intended to only be a camp-site where the ronin would wait for winter to dissipate. The group had just finished a lucrative job escorting Yasuki merchants home from the Dragon lands, and were well provisioned to hold out for the winter. When the snows began to melt, however, they discovered they had settled in a completely uninhabited portion of Rokugan – one with fertile land, still close enough to the roads that the group could find more work as they needed it. They decided to make the camp their base of operations, allowing smaller groups to leave and find work while the rest could train, repair their gear, and grow some food to supplement their wages. Soon, the Guards' excursions were bringing back more recruits, as word spread of their safe refuge. Additional ronin, uprooted peasants, and camp followers all settled in the camp, and it slowly began to grow. In time, it became a true village, but still ruled by the Guards.

Some years later, the Guards were led by an extremely pious man named Isamu. He felt a village as large as his – for it had indeed grown large – should have a shrine for his people to pray and purify their souls. Isamu meditated on the matter for several days, taking neither food nor water. When he finally emerged from his home he was gaunt and sickly, but his eyes shone with a new religious fervor. Isamu claimed to have seen a vision from the original founder of the Guards, a ronin named Porisu, who

told him there was only one Fortune the group should revere above all others – Mikoto, the Minor Fortune of Ronin, one of the most obscure of the mikokami. Isamu claimed it was thanks to the blessings of Mikoto and him alone that the Guards had survived as long and as well as they did. The villagers were somewhat skeptical of this vision, but the choice of Fortune made sense, and soon construction began on the new temple. Once it was built, the temple required an official blessing, and the village sent a request to the Brotherhood of Shinsei for assistance. The Brotherhood assigned a few monks to the new shrine, and kept in full contact with the village as it continued to grow. The monks called their new home Porisuko in honor of the original founder of the Guards, and in time the residents came to accept the name as well.

It was also the Brotherhood's activities which brought Porisuko to Imperial notice. A tax collector was passing through the area and stopped at a regional monastery, where he overheard the monks speaking of Porisuko. This puzzled him greatly, since he had never heard of this place and prided himself on knowing every town he was responsible for. The tax collector poured over his maps and records, but could find no trace of this mysterious town. The next morning he questioned the abbot about this non-existent town, who obligingly told him of the remote ronin settlement's location and history. The tax collector did not have time to investigate the matter further himself, but filed a report with his superiors, hoping the matter would be dealt with by someone.

A few years ago, the report was finally unearthed by an Imperial magistrate, Kitsuki Katashi. Both curious and appalled that a settlement had gone so long without discovery or proper Imperial supervision, he assembled a group of samurai and went in search of Porisuko. He discovered a prosperous, fully-functioning town, still led by the ronin otokodate which founded it. Katashi studied the town carefully and realized the Guards might prove intransigent at the thought of paying taxes and otherwise giving up their independence. Accordingly, three days later he summoned the leaders of the Guards and informed them that as citizens of the Empire, they owed the Emperor a great deal of koku in back taxes. In light of their apparent ignorance of the law, however, he was willing to petition the Emperor to forgive their debt, so long as they allowed an Imperial tax collector to be stationed permanently in their town. Katashi pointed out that other benefits would accrue from paying their taxes, such as Imperial protection should the town come under attack, and a better road connecting them to the rest of the Empire. Having thus tempted them, Katashi offered the alternative – he could return with an Imperial Legion and burn the town to the ground.

The town of Porisuko grudgingly agreed the first option was considerably better than the second. Katashi assigned a tax collector to the town, and one has been posted there ever since.



Location Guide and City Denizens

The Tax Collector's Residence

The Imperial tax collector for Porisuko, Shiba Kenji, resides in a house which, while modest by the standards of the larger Empire, is easily the most ornate in Porisuko. It tends to the simple lines that Phoenix favor in their architecture, and boasts a small garden in the front. A wall surrounds the entire estate, lending privacy to those inside. During the day, the gate is watched by a single yojimbo, Shiba Jiro. He greets the few samurai who come to visit with a distinct lack of enthusiasm, an attitude which no doubt landed him this remote posting in the first place.

The interior waiting rooms are simply furnished, with only a few pieces of Crane art to break the monotony. Visitors often assume based on these rooms that Shiba Kenji is the ascetic type, a view he does nothing to disabuse. It would be quite another matter if those same visitors were to see the interiors of Kenji's personal suite, which is filled with furniture and art from the lands of the Phoenix, reminders of his lost past. One corner houses a shrine dedicated to Kenji's late wife, Shiba Kuriko, which includes a carefully rolled piece of white paper wrapped around the hilt of a sheathed wakizashi.

Temple to Mikoto, Minor Fortune of Ronin

The Temple to Mikoto is as plain looking as the ronin who pray there. Simple wooden pillars support a single-story pagoda. Grasses grow tall and weeds are plentiful on the overgrown path to the shrine. A single elderly monk, Hayate, does his best to care for the shrine, but he lacks the energy to maintain the surrounding grounds.

Hayate is a kindly old monk, and has been tending the shrine for many years, but the observant may notice the swordsman's calluses on his hands. He does not care

for gossip and knows little of what happens in the town, although he is an endless font of tales about brave ronin who were inspired or protected by Mikoto. He will avoid speaking of his own past, however, gently reminding inquisitive samurai that a monk leaves his old life behind when he shaves his head.

The Geta

The sign outside this establishment shows a picture of a pair of geta (wooden sandals) casually tossed to one side while the feet the geta presumably belong to rest comfortably beside them. The wooden exterior of the two-story building is attached to a stable, letting visitors know this is the town's inn. Inside, the common room is filled with cheap, solidly-built tables. In the evenings ronin and peasants gather here to catch up on the day's news.

The Geta is owned and operated by a young couple, Haruko and Shinu, with help from their parents and children. Haruko can usually be found in the kitchens with her mother, fixing the meals requested by the patrons. Shinu is usually outside, chopping wood and tending to the other manual labor the inn requires. Shinu's father tends to the stables and the horses within. The old man will proudly tell any samurai who might ask how he was taught to care for horses by a groomsman for an Utaku Battle Maiden, so their horses will be well cared-for.

The couple's son and daughter, Kaito and Akane, acts as servants, bussing tables and delivering meals and drinks. Akane, the elder, is nearly fifteen, while Kaito is almost fourteen, and both have grown up rather comely. However, while Akane is a charming and well spoken girl, Kaito is brooding and morose. His feelings are made worse by the undue attention Akane has been getting from Ryou, the manager of the House of Midnight Blossoms. Kaito has always been overprotective of his older sister, and especially disapproves of a man like Ryou.

The entire family lives in a nearby hut, larger than most, but still relatively small for the number of people residing there.

Eta Village

A small community of eta has grown up on the southern outskirts of Porisuko, outcasts from the population despite their necessity. Foul odors of refuse, burned meat, and worse things continually permeate the air here, although the huts are just as well-kept as the rest of the town. Within even the eta community there is a social hierarchy, lead by Taiki, the chief leatherworker. Lesser figures include Yori, the chief mortician, and Gorou, who heads up the refuse-gatherers. Despite its ill repute, the eta community is a surprisingly lively place, and children run and play freely in the streets, although they are quick to hide if they spot a samurai approaching.



House of the Midnight Blossoms

The Midnight Blossoms is a somewhat unusual establishment, run by an equally odd man named Ryou. The house has been in existence almost as long as the town itself. It began as a group of camp-followers staying in the same place to make things convenient for their men. Later, it became something of a boarding house for new female arrivals who had yet to find a place in the growing village. Those who found homes or positions moved out as housing became available, but there were always some who remained. At some point – no one is really sure when – a drunken ronin made an off-color joke about flowers blooming only at night. The name stuck, and the women became known as the Blossoms. When he sobered up, the ronin decided the girls needed some culture in their lives, and brought in a retired geisha madam to share her knowledge. The Blossoms loved the idea of being more respected for what they were, and studied diligently with their new obaa-sama. The women hired the clever ronin to help them with the business side of things, and so the House of the Midnight Blossoms was born.

Due to its strange heritage, the House is considerably less formal and restrictive than a standard Rokugani geisha house. Although all the classical arts and entertainments are available here, the women have more control over their lives than in other such establishments, and no one owns their contracts.

Currently, the house employs a ronin named Ryou to deal with troublesome or violent customers. Ryou is a short man in his early thirties with oily hair and a quick smile. Recently, Ryou has noticed Akane, the daughter of the innkeeper, is growing into a beautiful young woman, and he is trying to persuade her to go to work at the House of Midnight Blossoms. He's sure the prospect of a comfortable and prosperous life will be too much of an opportunity for her to pass up.

Ryou once visited Zakyo Toshi and ever since has had dreams of turning Porisuko into a similar type of town. Unfortunately, he lacks both the business sense necessary to make such dreams come true and the personality necessary to achieve such a goal. Ryou is a complete materialist – he simply cannot understand how anyone would value anything more than money and physical comfort. He has learned that this irritates Clan samurai, and when such are about, he has a knack for disappearing. He is extremely difficult to track down when he does not wish to be found – even the Blossoms don't always know where to find him.

Important Personages

Shiba Kenji

Imperial Tax Collector

Shiba Kenji was born the third son in his family, and was never a terribly exceptional bushi. His only talent was a knack for numbers, but fortunately, his Asako Loremaster uncle noticed Kenji's talent and recommended him as a tax collector. Kenji accepted the position readily enough, for he knew he would never win glory on the battlefield, and as the third son he could expect little inheritance from his family. Even better, the appointment was enough for him to petition to marry his neighbor's daughter, Shiba Kuriko. Ever since childhood Kenji had been hopelessly in love with her, and to his great good fortune she had returned his feelings. Not many samurai are able to marry for love, but Shiba Kenji managed it. His future seemed secure, and his superior, Kitsuki Katashi, was an honorable and dedicated man. And then it started.

At first, the problems were small: missing ink brushes, the wrong color ink, or documents from the right day but the wrong year. Kenji assumed someone else in the tax collector's office was having a joke on his behalf, and ignored the incidents, hoping the perpetrator would get bored and find a new target. It was not to be. Month by month, the problems grew, both in magnitude and in malice. He would spend sleepless nights carefully recopying papers that had somehow been misplaced or spoiled by spilled ink. While he was away eating his midday meal, the columns of numbers he had so carefully been tracking would be thoroughly mixed up, or worse, missing entirely. Kenji would find himself tripping over his own feet at the most inopportune moments, or struck by pebbles flung from nowhere. Whispers began to circulate through the office that Kenji was cursed, and his superiors assigned him less important work.

One morning, Kitsuki Katashi stormed into Kenji's office, rage written across his face, and threw a wakizashi at the young Phoenix's feet. "Gut yourself," the Kitsuki demanded in a strangled voice. Kenji was baffled, and requested an explanation with as much deference as he could muster. In reply, Katashi showed Kenji his latest report, the margins of which were covered in obscene doodles. Kenji tried to explain that he had no idea where these grotesque drawings had come from, but Katashi would hear none of it. Finally, succumbing to anger of his own,



Kenji demanded Katashi show him proof of this being his work. "You Kitsuki speak of evidence, so show me some!" Caught off-guard by the eruption of his usually quiet underling, Katashi took a closer look, and grudgingly concluded that the horrid drawings could not possibly have been done by Kenji – they were far too crude in both style and technique, and probably drawn by someone left-handed. Disgusted, Katashi withdrew his demand for seppuku, but still insisted Kenji leave his office. There was a new position open at Porisuko, and that remote post would suit this troublesome young Phoenix quite well. Kenji would still have his position and status as a samurai, but he and his mysterious curse would be out of the way of civilized men. Almost as an afterthought, Katashi ordered Kenji to take the wakizashi with him, as a reminder of his near-disgrace.

Kenji and his young wife, resigned to their fate, set out for Porisuko. It was then that the unthinkable happened. As they approached their new home, a grinning mujina spirit popped out of nowhere, spooking Kuriko's pony. The beast threw her off and then trampled her to death in panic, while the mujina simply laughed in malignant delight. Kenji saw that tucked behind its ear was a brush, dried with the same ink used in the drawings that nearly killed him. Its work done, the creature vanished with a final cackle, leaving Kenji alone with his dead wife.

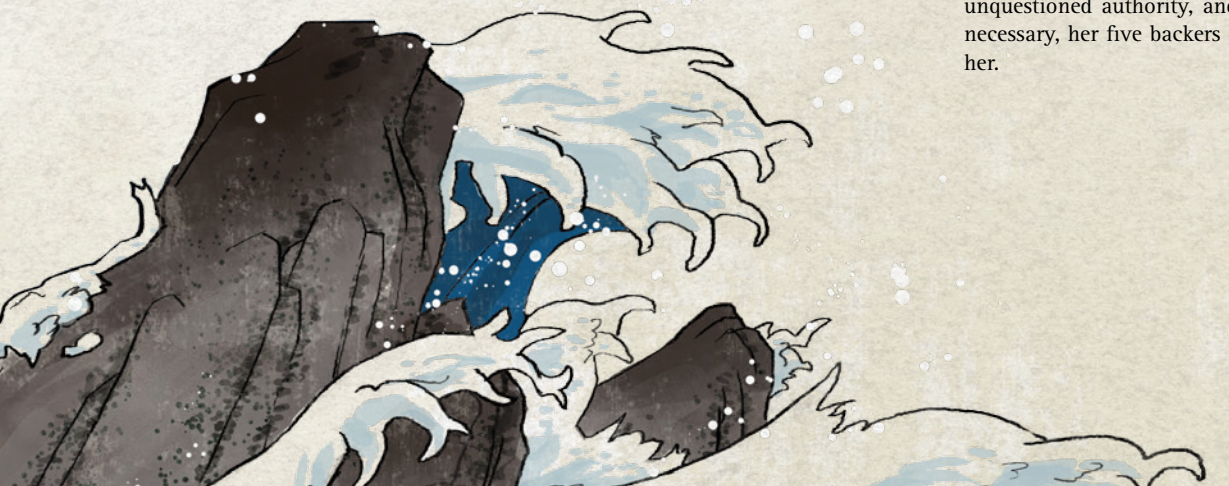
Kenji drew his master's wakizashi, ready to take his own life, and wrote out his death haiku. He had lost the one truly good thing in his life, and nothing would ever be the same. This, at least, he would do properly.

A cicada shell

is as empty as my soul

Darkness has prevailed

Staring at his own death, however, Kenji found he could not go through with it. He needed vengeance first, vengeance on the evil trickster spirit which had taken everything from him. He traveled on to Porisuko and took up his duties while looking for a way to destroy the mujuina. Since then, the trickster spirit has found it much more entertaining to show itself before pulling one of its pranks, as Kenji will do nearly anything to have a chance at killing the little creature. Kenji has vowed he will join Kuriko in the afterlife as soon as he finally kills the mujina. After all, his death poem is already written, and the punishment he feels he deserves awaits him as a promise on her shrine. For the mujina, of course, this is all dreadfully funny, especially since it knows he cannot possibly harm it.



Shiba Kenji, Imperial Tax Collector

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 2.5* *Glory: 3.0*

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 2

Skills: Commerce (Appraisal, Mathematics) 4, Defense 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Law 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 1, Polearms 2, Theology 2

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Daikoku's Blessing

Disadvantages: Cursed by the Realm: Sakkaku, Driven (Destroy the Mujina), Lost Love (Shiba Kuriko)

Meigumi

Current Leader of the Guards

Meigumi is the last person most people expect to see when presented with the leader of the Guards. She is a tiny girl, barely seventeen years old. Meigumi is kind, soft spoken, and gentle-hearted with both peasants and animals. There isn't a soul in Porisuko with a bad word to say about her, and many locals refer to her fondly as Mei-chan.

Meigumi was found as a baby on the steps of Mikoto's temple, with nothing but a daisho and a single piece of paper. The paper had her name, while the daisho was her birthright. The monks of the temple handed her off to the Guards, and the otokodate raised her as their own. She grew up the apple of their eye, her gentle nature endearing her to even the toughest and most stony-hearted ronin. It didn't hurt that her skill with the katana was exceptional. When she was old enough to start accompanying the Guards on jobs, she often found herself underestimated and ignored, which made the surprise of her skill all the more stunning. Although she often simply refused to kill anyone who threatened her or the men she accompanied, she could incapacitate most threats with a single flick of her sword.

The leader of the otokodate, Tsubasa, saw Mei as the daughter he never had. When he named her as his heir, a few of the younger warriors of the Guards objected, but they were quickly silenced when the band's five most formidable veterans stepped forward to pledge themselves to her, then turned and glared balefully at those who still seemed discontented. With these men at her back, Meigumi has little to fear. She leads the band with near-unquestioned authority, and when violence is absolutely necessary, her five backers are there to do such deeds for her.



Meigumi, Current Leader of the Guards

Air: 3 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 3
Agility: 3

Honor: 4.5 *Status: 0.0* *Glory: 2.1*

School/Rank: The Guard's Wrath (Insight Rank 2)

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 6, Medicine 3

Advantages: Hero of the People, Prodigy

Disadvantages: Momoku, Small, Soft-Hearted)

The City of Kudo Mura

Kudo Mura began life as nothing more than another small farming village at the southern end of the Hare lands. It was a quiet place, its residents attending to their duties and feeling little care for anything else. It continued in this way for many decades, neither growing nor shrinking, and doing little to place itself on any map. In fact, it was only once Kudo lost its Minor Clan patron, the Hare Clan, that other clans noticed its existence. For all its small size, Kudo was in a very fertile location, and the three remaining Minor Clans in the area each coveted it. None of them were willing to risk open conflict, however, and Kudo remained independent. Even after the Hare Clan was reinstated, Kudo remained an independent settlement.

Kudo changed little until ll69, when it was promoted to being the seat of the recently formed Minor Clan Alliance. Suddenly the little village was seeing more samurai in one month than it had in its entire history. Buildings went up at a surprisingly fast rate, and people from all over the Empire arrived at the suddenly prosperous city. The residents barely noticed when the Lion Clan moved troops in – the only change was the speed of progress, as Lion funding helped turn the village into a proper city. The Governor of the city made herself popular by making sure the original populace was not uprooted from their homes – instead, the city was built up around them.

Today, Kudo Mura is a bustling city, as large as many others in the Empire, and with an underbelly just as dirty. The city's main export is still its crops, most of which go to the surrounding Minor Clans. Samurai from every clan, Great and Minor, come here to treat with the Minor Clan Alliance. For samurai seeking more dishonorable pleasures, Yoshitaka, the local gang lord, is happy to oblige. This darker side of Kudo Mura has been around far longer than most realize, and has yet to make an impact on the Governor, Toku Kiyuko. Patrons of Yoshitaka's establishments hope it remains that way, since her reaction to discovering such disgrace is likely to be severe.

Brief Timeline

804 – Kudo established by the Hare Clan as a small farming village.

1123 – The Hare Clan is disbanded. The Wasp, Fox, and Sparrow contest for ownership of Kudo.

1125 – The Hare are reformed, but Kudo does not fall within the clan's new borders. All four Minor Clans reluctantly agree to share the town's crops between them.

1169 – Due to its central and unaligned position, Kudo is designated as the seat of the Minor Clan Alliance during the Winter Court at Kyuden Otomo. Through much political maneuvering, Toku Inao manages to get the Alliance to appoint her youngest daughter, Toku Kiyuko, as the Governor. The members of the Minor Clan Alliance each send a portion of their earnings to the city to help it grow, and rename it Kudo Mura.

1170 – Between the end of the Toturi Dynasty and the beginning of the Iweko Dynasty the Lion Clan occupies Kudo Mura to "keep the peace" between the Minor Clans, while making sure all the crops from the village are sent to Lion troops. This remains the case until the following year, when Empress Iweko I commands the Great Clans to withdraw from all occupied unaligned lands.

Location Guide and City Denizens

The Temple District

The temples of Kudo Mura are plentiful and well maintained, although they vary in size. The shrines to the Seven Fortunes and the Fortune of Virtue are the largest and most often visited by local samurai, but there are numerous smaller shrines to the various Fortunes involved in a peasant's day-to-day life.

A small patrol of Minor Clan bushi maintains order in the district. This patrol is mostly an honor guard, rather than any type of actual law enforcement, and is made up of older samurai who are on the brink of retirement or have become partially disabled in the line of duty. Their



leader, Ichiro Chiroku, is a Chui of the Badger clan who was wounded during the War of Dark Fire while helping to evacuate his fellow clansmen.

Chiroku is a loud, boisterous old man who wants little more from life than the chance to leer at the shrine maidens as he makes his rounds. There was a time when he sought to do more for his clan, but his recent injury has given him a new outlook on life. He feels he has served his clan as he was meant to, and now he only awaits his next turn on the karmic wheel.

Temple of the Fortune of Virtue

One of the first temples erected in Kudo Mura after its promotion was a temple to the Fortune of Virtue, Toku. There were several reasons for this, starting with Toku Kiyuko wanting a reminder of her father to be with her and her mother, Inao, in their new home. However, Kiyuko also truly believes that virtue is a vital aspect of human nature and should be revered and taught as much as the Code of Bushido. Virtue is something even non-samurai can understand and appreciate. She hopes the temple will inspire Kudo Mura's residents to follow the path of virtue rather than sinking into debauchery as some cities have, such as Ryoko Owari, Toshi Aitate, or Zakyo Toshi.

The Temple of Virtue is the largest temple in the city. Several monks maintain the well-manicured gardens surrounding the walk which leads to the entrance. A set of ornate double doors, carved with stylized images of Toku himself, lead into the temple proper. The interior, by contrast, is surprisingly simple. Centered in the back of the main chamber is a statue of Toku – a replica of the original in Ryoko Owari. Incense and candles burn at all hours in front of the statue, usually accompanied by a small pile of offerings from visitors hoping to attract the benign attention of the Fortune.

To the sides of the main temple are the living chambers of the monks who attend to the temple. There is also a small library where copies of the Empire's classic theological writings are kept. Unbeknownst to most, the library is also home to a copy of every legal document that Toku Kiyuko signs in the name of the Minor Clan Alliance. This is one of the many precautions she has adopted from her mother's advice. If something should happen to the city, or to Kiyuko specifically, the monks of the temple can come forward with any of the documents that may be in question.

The Gilded Cage

The Gilded Cage is little more than a bad joke on the part of Yoshitaka, the local gang lord. It began when Yoshitaka decided to expand his criminal empire to include a geisha house. Unlike most geisha houses, however, these geishas' contracts are never available for sale, nor are the women allowed to buy out their own contracts. Once a woman belongs to The Gilded Cage, she will never be free again. On occasion a geisha will try to run away, but Yoshitaka's men quickly hunt her down. Sometimes she is brought back, somewhat the worse for wear. Other times she is never seen again. Regardless, no one escapes the Gilded Cage.

The Gilded Cage is intended to be a more respectable establishment than Yoshitaka's gambling den, so appearances must be maintained. The exterior of the house is well-kept and a signboard shows a lovely colored bird singing inside of a golden cage. A low fence surrounds the house, more for looks than any actual function. In the back is a beautiful garden with plenty of private corners for customers and their companions of the evening.

The inside of the geisha house is just as luxurious as the outside. Beautiful silk screens divide the main room into smaller areas, each exquisitely painted with nature scenes. Dark red silk pillows are casually tossed around the rooms for guests to sit on, while the sandalwood tables give off a pleasant and subtle scent. The girls themselves are dressed in the best kimono that money can buy, each girl's station within the house clearly defined by her outfit. The famous Friendly Traveler Village sake is served here, along with tea from the Crane lands and fish brought in from the Mantis Isles. Nothing but the best for Yoshitaka's clientele, and his patrons repay him in kind.

The okaa-sama of The Gilded Cage, Honoka, is an ancient woman. She stoops under a hunched back, born of age and time, and the ronin who bodyguard the house like to joke (out of her hearing) that her face has more crevices than the Seikitsu Mountains. She keeps a stern eye on the women who work for her, making sure no improprieties occur within her household. She verges on cruelty when teaching the young miko their trade, pouncing on every inaccuracy or misplaced gesture with the viciousness of a tiger. The return on this pain is that her miko become some

of the best-trained geisha outside of the Crane or Scorpion lands. Honoka is also fiercely protective of her charges, and watches the customers like a hawk. At the first hint or sign of impropriety or danger, the guest is removed and politely requested to never return. Few customers are willing to cross Honoka, and as a result The Gilded Cage is one of the most civilized locations in Kudo Mura, outside of the court itself.

It is also one of Yoshitaka's most profitable operations.

Daikoku's Own Luck

This seedy gambling house can be found in a back alley of 'Old Kudo,' the portion of the town which pre-dates the arrival of the Minor Clan Alliance. It is built on the site where Yoshitaka placed his original gambling house, but it has been much expanded since then. The exterior would lead a samurai to believe this is just another run-down hut like so many in the area. There are usually two or three ruffians lounging outside the door who will quickly stop anyone they don't recognize from entering. One must visit the house with an existing patron in order to gain admittance. The prospect of facing well-trained samurai in a fight is far from intimidating to these men, who find it an exciting prospect – they respect no one except Yoshitaka, regardless of station.

Inside the large hut is very different from its exterior. The place is always lit, even late at night. There are two rooms, the first taking up most of the available space. Long tables circle around the room, usually surrounded by peasants and ronin wagering away their hard-earned money. Sitting at the center of each of these tables are more ruffians, members of Yoshitaka's gang, who watch to make sure that if there is any cheating it goes in favor of Yoshitaka. The second room is guarded by another thug, along with a heavy wooden door with a complicated lock. Inside is Yoshitaka's office, where he keeps the gambling house's earnings – some of which are simply I.O.U.s from dependable patrons.

Governor's Court

The court of Governor Toku Kiyuko is a colorful one, one of the most diverse and energetic courts in the Empire, second only to the Imperial Court itself. This is not due to any décor or style, but rather the sheer number of different clans represented. At least one ambassador from every Minor Clan in the Empire can always be found here, and representatives from all of the Great Clans visit regularly as well. Here agreements are made and alliances forged to protect the interests of the Minor Clans and their Alliance, during times of turmoil and prosperity alike. Although the Minor Clans do not always work in concert with each other, they try to at least avoid hindering one another in their treaties and arrangements.

The court of Kudo Mura is surprisingly prestigious for being so new. There is usually at least one Minor Clan Champion present keeping an eye on all proceedings – most often Kasuga Taigen of the Tortoise or Toku Kyoji of the Monkey, although others have been known to make an appearance on occasion. Prominent Great Clan diplomats visit regularly as well. (More information on the Court of Kudo Mura can be found in Masters of Court, p. 167.)

Marketplace

Like most city marketplaces, the market of Kudo Mura is packed with merchants and customers from sun-up to sun-down. Hawkers cry out their wares, and peasants and samurai alike peruse the selections the merchants offer. Because Kudo Mura was once a farming village and has only recently grown into a city, there is little call here for exotic goods, and most of the products offered are locally made or transported from the nearest Clans. Even so, as Kudo grows larger, more and more items from across the Empire are beginning to make their way into the market, and Great Clan merchants are starting to see a chance for real profit. No doubt the selection of goods will expand in the future.

In the center of the market is a large deer-chaser clock. Its steady tak-tak is barely audible over the din of the day's business, but echoes eerily once the market clears out for the evening. The clock often serves the locals as a meeting place, and a small garden is being built around it to facilitate this. Merchants hope that if the meeting place is made more beautiful and restful, their customers will feel more refreshed and thus more willing to buy their products.

Important Personages

Toku Kiyuko

City Governor

Toku Kiyuko is the youngest daughter of the great hero Toku, founder of the Monkey Clan, and his wife Inao, formerly of the Shosuro family. Inao was always a shrewd courtier and it is clear her daughter Kiyuko did not fall far from the tree. From a young age Kiyuko proved her talents time and again, excelling in all the womanly arts. For a time her parents considered keeping her at home and continuing her training to be the perfect wife. It was when Kiyuko reached the age of twelve that Inao began to notice her daughter's talent for easily wrapping the other samurai children around her fingers, usually without their even realizing what she was doing. In fact, Inao was not sure Kiyuko herself consciously knew she was doing it. After a discussion with her husband, Inao decided to rekindle a connection with her former clan – the Scorpion. Kiyuko was sent to the Bayushi Courtier School.

From the Bayushi, Kiyuko learned how to subtly control and manipulate the people around her, but she never enjoyed these lessons the way her classmates did. She had too much of her father in her – she was too honest, too honorable, to truly embrace the ways of manipulation and blackmail. Even so, she learned the lessons her sensei taught, and was quickly one of the best students of her dojo. She understood that although she did not

like manipulating people, there were times and situations when it was the best or even the only course of action.

As Kiyuko grew up, the physical traits of her family line became more and more obvious. It was often remarked (usually accompanied by a sly smile) that Kiyuko bore a certain resemblance to her great aunt, the legendary Bayushi Kachiko – but she also retained a beauty solely her own. The combination was devastating to her male classmates, and when the time came for her gempukku, late at the age of seventeen, she received several offers for marriage as well as requests to stay on with the Scorpion. She politely refused all offers.

When Kiyuko returned to the Monkey Clan, she told her mother of everything she had learned. Inao was pleased with her daughter's progress, and sent her to attend the Monkey Clan court and learn what she could of its attendees. When Kiyuko had mastered everything there was to learn from this small court, Inao sent to her on to bigger and bigger courts, always representing the interests of the Monkey Clan.

Kiyuko returned to the Monkey lands in 1165 for her father's funeral, and visited Ryoko Owari for the initial blessing of the shrine Toturi I erected in Toku's honor, naming him the Fortune of Virtue. Although Kiyuko has never openly expressed how she feels about having a Fortune as a father, it seems obvious she wishes to follow his example.

In the winter of the year 1169, Toku Inao learned of her brother Shosuro Yudoka's death from Scorpion Champion Bayushi Paneki. With her husband and brother both dead, she found the title of Monkey Clan Champion hung heavily on her shoulders. She spent the rest of the Winter Court making sure her children were well provided for – naming her oldest son as the new Clan Champion of the Monkey. She worked with Kasuga Taigen to create a single city where the Great Clans could find a member of any Minor Clan without needing to travel the Empire. They chose Kudo, with its convenient central location, with the understanding that Inao's youngest daughter Kiyuko would become the city's governor. Her work complete, Inao retired from the rule of the Monkey Clan and traveled to Kudo with her daughter, where she took up a post as advisor.

Kiyuko accepted her new appointment gracefully, and has fit into the role her mother provided quite well. She suffered the Lion occupation of 1170 with singular patience, and managed to make Kudo Mura grow and prosper using Lion funds and provisions. Although her court is still fairly small, Kiyuko is sure it will continue to expand under her and her mother's guidance.

Her life is not without challenges. Tortoise Champion Kasuga Taigen has apparently issued orders to his samurai for Kiyuko to marry a Tortoise and thus bring Kudo Mura under Tortoise control. Inao has worked hard to make sure her children rise as high as possible in the Celestial Order, and she is not about to marry her youngest daughter to a member of the Minor Clans. Nor does Kiyuko herself have any interest in marrying a Tortoise samurai, a man from a Clan she sees as slimy and underhanded. With her mother at her side it is all but assured she will never have to do so.

Toku Kiyuko, City Governor

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 3 Water: 3 Void: 4

Intelligence: 4

Honor: 5.7 *Status: 5.5* *Glory: 3.0*

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 3, Minor Clan Diplomat

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 3, Calligraphy 5, Commerce 4, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 7, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation, Courtesy) 7, Games: Letters 3, Games: Kemari 3, Games: Sadane 3, Investigation 1, Lore: Heraldry 5, Perform: Dance 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Tea Ceremony 2, Temptation 1

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Dangerous Beauty, Voice

Disadvantages: Idealistic, Low Pain Threshold

Kasuga Taisuke

Tortoise Ambassador

Kasuga Taisuke was just another courtier until opportunity knocked on his door, in the form of his Clan Champion, Kasuga Taigen. Taigen had been busy at the Empress' Winter Court and it had mostly gone in his favor. The only thorn in his paw was that a Monkey was in charge of his newly made city of Kudo Mura. Taisuke was recommended to Taigen as a decently skilled courtier with few enemies. Taigen immediately promoted him to the position of Ambassador and sent him to Kudo Mura. Taisuke would represent the Tortoise in the new home of the Minor Clan Alliance, and he would answer only to Taigen. Taigen informed him that when he was not representing his clan in court, he was to work on persuading the city's new governor, Toku Kiyuko, to marry a Tortoise. Taigen left it up to him as to who exactly Kiyuko should marry, so long as it was a man of the Kasuga family. He also left an unspoken threat – if Taisuke failed him, Taigen would unmake him as quickly as he had made him.

Upon arriving at Kudo Mura, Taisuke immediately made his way to the court to meet his new Governor. He was completely unprepared for what he saw. Taisuke had expected Kiyuko to take after her father or brothers, bushi with bushi's instincts. Instead he was presented with a vision of perfected womanhood. Taisuke was sure no woman could look that good and have a brain between her ears too, but he was quickly relieved of that misapprehension as well. He swore to himself then

and there that not only would he not fail Taigen, but he himself would be the one to marry Kiyuko. One could not wish for a better prize.

As the weeks in court have passed, Taisuke finds himself admiring Kiyuko more and more. She rebuffs all of his advances and suggestions so elegantly that he cannot help but be even more impressed. Her presence, position, and lineage draw other samurai hoping to succeed where Taisuke has not, but so far Taisuke has yet to see a suitor who makes him sweat. He will be the victor in this race, he is sure of it.

Kasuga Taisuke, Tortoise Ambassador

Air: 4 Earth: 2 Fire: 2 Water: 2 Void: 3
Willpower: 4

Honor: 2.0 *Status: 2.8* *Glory: 2.0*

School/Rank: Tortoise Smuggler 3

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Commerce 5, Courtier 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Courtesy) 4, Investigation (Notice) 3, Lore: Underworld 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 6, Stealth (Shadowing) 3, Temptation (Bribery) 6

Advantages: Allies (Kasuga Taigen 4/1), Clear Thinker, Crafty

Disadvantages: Driven (Marry Toku Kiyuko), True Love (Toku Kiyuko), Obligation (Kasuga Taigen)

Yoshitaka

Local Gang Lord

Yoshitaka has had a rough life, but he's managed to survive and even prevail. When he was a child his mother told him of his father – a handsome man dressed in dark blue and gray who swept her off her feet...for one night, never to be seen again. He was samurai, and that meant Yoshitaka was samurai too. Sometimes he wishes his mother had stayed silent on the matter. Maybe he would have been happier just being a peasant in a field somewhere. Instead he got it into his head that being a samurai was a noble and glorious thing, something every boy should want. When he was twelve, he left home to seek out a samurai's life. Instead, he found the Forest Killers.

They taught the boy what they knew. They taught him a samurai could take where peasants could only beg. They taught him the sword was the only truth – one side was life, the other death. They taught him money could get you into places and things your sword alone could not. Most importantly, they taught him "Bushido" wasn't anything but air, a fantasy only nobles could afford to believe in. Real men did not indulge such fantasies.

Eventually, Yoshitaka tired of the grueling and dangerous life of banditry. He left the Forest Killers, wandering the Empire until he found a quiet little farming



village named Kudo with no samurai at all. Yoshitaka set up in an empty house in the back streets of town, and introduced the peasants to gambling. He prospered, and the occasional samurai who did pass through often spent some time and money in his new establishment.

Everything was going well for him until a large group of samurai arrived in town. They declared Kudo to now be Kudo Mura, and informed the inhabitants, Yoshitaka included, that they would be a part of the new capital of the Minor Clan Alliance. Yoshitaka liked the sound of that, for growth meant money. He watched as the sleepy town was transformed in just a couple of years into a full-fledged city. And as the city grew, so did Yoshitaka's influence over its seedier parts. A few other ronin moved in, but they quickly learned that Yoshitaka was the lead man in town and became his followers. After them came lesser peasants who couldn't find a place of their own in this new city. With the wealth he built up he expanded into other fields, starting a geisha house as well. He was becoming a man of import.

Everything was going well until that *woman* came into town. That Monkey woman. She brought with her a hoard of new samurai, and while a few gave him business, most were of the 'noble' variety and condemned him as an outlaw. Ever since her arrival he's had to keep a lower profile and run things from the shadows. Still, it isn't all bad. Business is better than ever, and so long as Yoshitaka stays out of sight, the woman is barely aware of his presence. Everything should be fine as long as things stay like they are.

Yoshitaka, Local Gang Lord

Air: 2 Earth: 3 Fire: 2 Water: 3 Void: 2

Honor: 0.0 *Status: 0.0* *Glory: 1.0*

School/Rank: Forest Killers, Fireman Gang Lord (Insight Rank 2)

Skills: Athletics 2, Commerce 4, Games: Gambling (Fortunes and Winds, High-Low) 7, Intimidation (Bullying) 5, Knives 3, Lore: Underworld 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Slight of Hand 3, Staves 3, Stealth 5, Temptation (Bribery) 5

Advantages: Crafty, Large

Disadvantages: Greedy, Infamous (Gang Lord), Insensitive, Social Disadvantage (Ronin)



New Mechanics

New Disadvantage: New Disadvantage: Bounty [Social] (2, 4, or 6 Points)

A price has been placed on your head due to your involvement (or suspected involvement) in a crime. The severity of the crime itself dictates the cost of this Disadvantage, the amount of the bounty on your head, and who will be willing to hunt for you. A minor offense (2 points) generates a bounty of 1-5 Koku, and generally only magistrates from that province, or ronin who hunt for bounties, will search for you. To identify you as a bounty target, the hunter must make a Lore: Law / Perception roll at TN 25. A serious offense (4 points) generates a bounty of 10-15 Koku. Any magistrate from the Clan which assigned the bounty will be aware of it. To identify you as a bounty target, the hunter must make a Lore: Law / Perception roll at TN 15. A violent or heinous act (6 points) generates a bounty of at least 20 Koku. Magistrates from every Great Clan are on the lookout for you, and you are likely to be executed in short order if taken into custody. The offended Clan may even send a specific request to the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunters if your crime was exceptionally awful. To identify you as a bounty target, the hunter must make a Lore: Law / Perception roll at TN 10.

New Disadvantage: Wanderer (2 Points)

You get lost easily. Even with written directions in hand you never seem to be able to find the place you're looking for. You practically can't get anywhere – even in a city you know well – without a guide. You suffer a –15 penalty when using the Navigation emphasis.

Ronin Path: The Guards' Wrath [Bushi]

The Guards are a ronin otokodate based in a remote town. They hire out their members to protect merchants and courtiers, earning funds to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort. In contrast to many ronin bands, the Guards are a fairly honorable group, and do their best to carry out their contracts honestly and successfully.

In game terms, the Guards' Wrath Technique can also be used to represent any group of reasonably honorable ronin who hire themselves out as guards or escorts.

New Ronin Path: The Guards' Wrath

- Technique Rank: 2
- **Cannot be Forest Killers or Tengoku's Justice.**

Technique: The Guards' Wrath

The ronin of the Guards are taught defensive techniques designed to keep both themselves and their clients alive (so they can be paid). When you take the Guard Action, your TN is not reduced.

New Ronin Path: Fireman Gang Lord [Bushi]

Many ronin join local criminal gangs, where their skills can quickly bring them to a position of prominence. The infamous fireman gangs of Ryoko Owari have developed a technique for maintaining control of the patrons in the gambling houses and other dens of iniquity they control. This technique can also be used to represent any local crime lord who reigns over his own small territory like an underworld daimyo.

New Ronin Path: Fireman Gang Lord

- **Technique Rank: 2**

Technique: Master of the Dice

Your menacing presence ensures that all goes as it should in your establishment. You may add your Ranks in the Intimidation skill to the total of any Contested Social roll you make.

New Alternate Path: Minor Clan Alliance Diplomat [Courtier]

Minor clan samurai who deal with members of the Great Clans are in constant danger of angering them with a misplaced word, action, or even a look. Minor Clan samurai who have survived the minefield of the courts long enough are often sent to the Minor Clan Alliance's court in Kudo Mura. There, they can learn from the best diplomats in the Alliance, studying how to sooth the ruffled feathers of Great Clan samurai and, more importantly, how to avoid ruffling those feathers in the first place.

New Ronin Path: Minor Clan Alliance Diplomat

- **Technique Rank: 4**
- **Replaces: Any Minor Clan School 4**
- **Requirements: Character must belong to a Minor Clan**

Technique: The Courts of Kudo Mura

The diplomats of Kudo Mura are masters at dealing with the needs, desires, and whims of their superiors. When conversing with a samurai from one of the Great Clans or the Imperial Families, you gain +3k0 on all Contested Rolls using the skills of Etiquette or Sincerity.



