

Legend of the Five Rings™

Otosan Uchi

Book 2



The Forbidden City: A Walking Tour

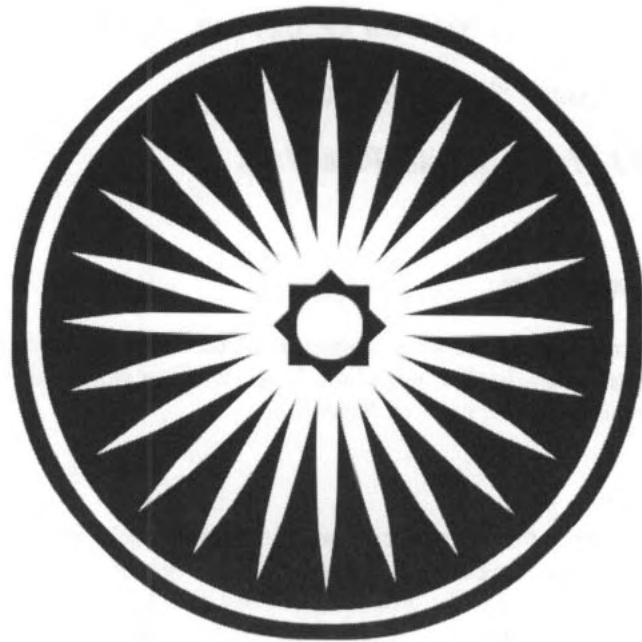
Otosan Uchi Tindercity and Waterways



Location Numbers detailed on pages 84-87 of Otosan Uchi: Book 1

Otosan Lichi

Book Two



The Ekohikei

The Forbidden City: a Walking Tour

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DEDICATION

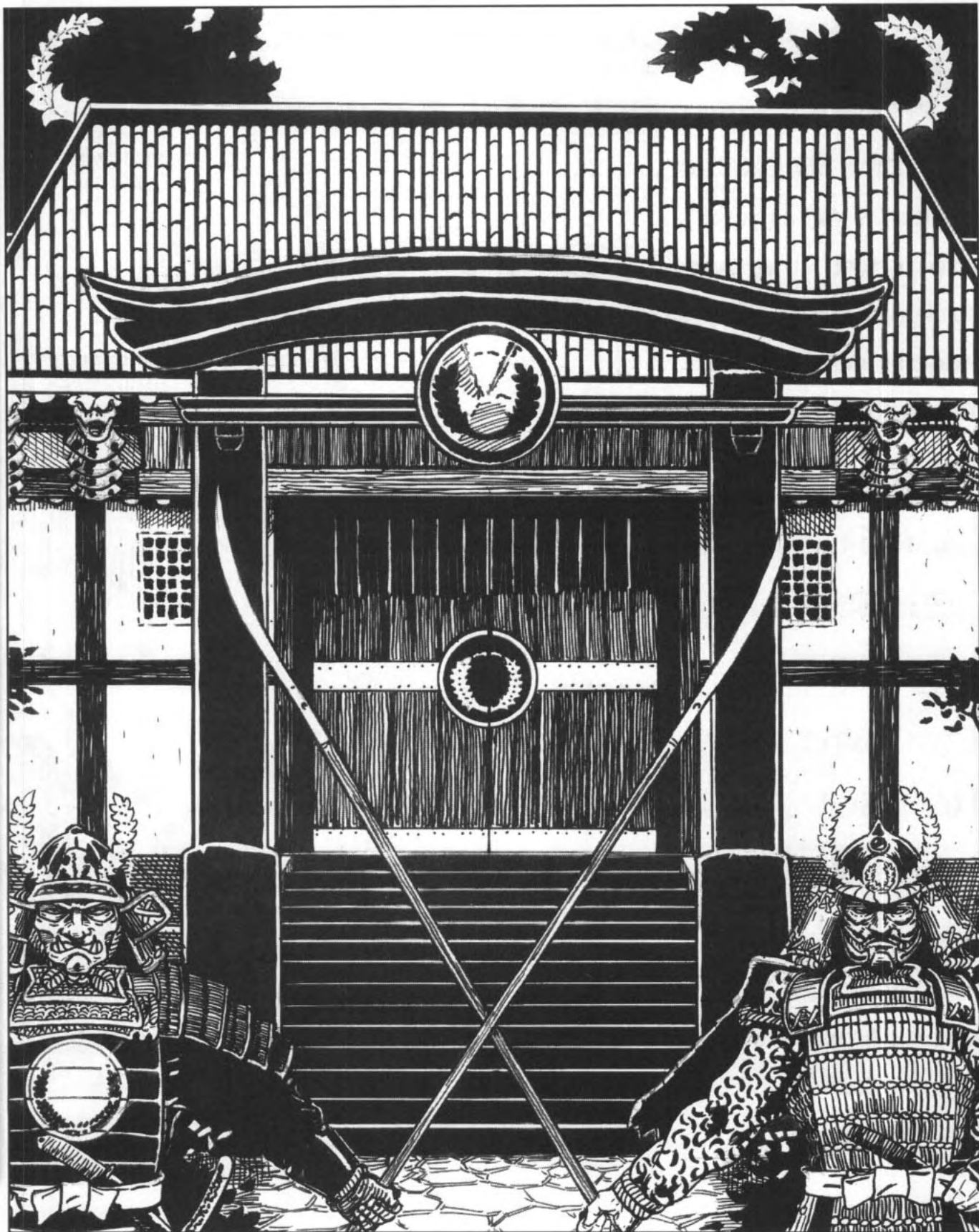
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Overview of the Ekohikei Districts

The first section of this book contains facts and details about the very core of Otosan Uchi – the Forbidden City and the four central districts which surround it. Each of the districts is described in its own section, including its military fortifications, social climate, entertainments, locations, and foremost personalities, and a selection of storyline hooks to help GMs run adventures there.

Here we present a general historical overview of all five districts (the Forbidden City as the region's "heart"), and describe various facets that are shared by each. Architecture and several cultural norms are discussed, along with a description of the castes within the most prized grounds in the Emerald Empire.

History of the Ekohikei

At the very dawn of the known Rokugani Empire, well before the dark brother Fu Leng brought the Great War upon the realms of mortal man, the eight Kami competed to determine which of them would rule their newfound paradise. Hida, Doji, Togashi, Akodo, Shiba, Bayushi, Shinjo, and Hantei gathered together and matched their mental, physical, and spiritual prowess upon a rise by the sea, and their newfound mortal charges gathered about them to observe as the fallen gods challenged one another for supremacy.

In the end, it was Hantei who bested his brothers and sisters, triumphant over all that lived and breathed. He stood upon the large hill where the tournament had been held – the first physical place that had felt the blood of the divine – and uttered a proclamation. "We shall build a mighty Empire, so that all may flourish. It will be a golden age, when gods and men can share the gifts provided by our creators. Each of us will have a duty, to our charges, to ourselves, and most importantly, to the beings that created us... our parents in the Heavens."

THE HANTEI DYNASTY

The hill upon which Hantei I made his declaration remains the most celebrated locale in all of Rokugan. The Imperial Palace now rests upon the site, surrounded by two concentric (though very rarely even or well-distributed) rings of buildings, bridges, gardens, lakes, river-canal, and people. Beyond that are dozens of smaller and less-structured districts, scattered throughout the countryside between the Imperial City and the Hub Villages. But the humble beginnings of this sprawling seat of power began with the area now known as the Forbidden City, and the "buffer" districts around it, which remained undivided during the first several decades of the Empire.

Together, the inhabitants of the fledgling city worked to make Hantei's decrees a reality. The first structures to be erected on the site of his momentous decision were a three-story palace and a set of surrounding walls. Though the walls were humble compared to such impressive structures as the modern Carpenter Wall, they were sufficient to house the inhabitants and visitors of the city for the foreseeable future.

For many years after the construction of the first Imperial Palace and its walls, the Empire was at peace (though perhaps a little strained from the sudden expansion of mortal influence under the guidance of the seven Kami). Emperor Hantei married, and sired his first (and only) child, Genji, "The Shining Prince".

Nearly ten years after the last stone was laid upon the tournament site, however, the Empire changed forever...

FROM "THOSE WHO WOULD SAVE THE EMPIRE", A TREATISE ON THE GREAT WAR, BY AGASHA GINDEN, IMPERIAL ADVISOR

...Fu Leng's hordes did not appear at full strength, ravaging the early citadels and castles of the Empire at will. The first goblins and ogres were seen at the very fringes of explored territory, plaguing the minor, 'uncivilized' settlements that had cropped up there. Reports of the coming of Fu Leng's minions took many months to reach Emperor Hantei, and were not at first credited. And so it was nearly a year after their initial forays outside the region now known as the Shadowlands before any seriously considered them a threat.

When he realized what the forces of the blighted realm truly were, Hantei ordered additional resources across the entire Empire be devoted to defense. Of particular interest to him was the Imperial City, which was – as it stood – scarcely prepared for a direct assault by supernatural forces. By Imperial decree the original structures of the city, palace and walls alike, were torn down and the best craftsmen of the Seven Great Clans requested to aid in their rebuilding. Work began on the new city as the first reports arrived of organized Shadowlands troops at the Empire's edge. Fu Leng had returned, and the Great War – which would last nearly a decade and scour the Emperor's lands forever – had begun.

Each of the clans played a role in the Imperial City's rebirth, committing architects, builders, and laborers for its construction, shugenja and monks for its sacrament, and soldiers to reinforce and train its armies. For a time, they all worked in harmony, setting aside their differences for the good of their Emperor and his lands.

But the work was long and hard, lasting from before sunrise to well after dusk each day, and as the weeks turned into months, the deep-rooted differences between the various clans began to show. Early after the foundations were laid, it was decided that the responsibilities for each would be clearly separated from one another, and defined so that none would have reason for dispute.

The Lion were given charge of collecting and unifying the many Imperial armies and unifying them under one banner, with one style of fighting, one raw intensity of purpose. For this, the Lion were perfectly suited, and the many legions who had sworn fealty to the Imperial Throne thrived under their leadership and grace. The Lion also built and protect the only two gates through the inner walls of Otosan Uchi. This they accomplished beyond all anticipation: their gates have never been penetrated by more than a handful of troops.



The Phoenix were granted the Eastern Wall – outside the Kanjo district – to build and guard as their own. Likewise, the Crane received a wall to build and maintain in the south, outside the blooming Chisei district. The Crab received the right to build the defensive line outside the Karada district to the west, and the Ki-Rin (Unicorn) likewise gained the final structure to the north, beyond the small, but growing, Hito district.

Second in scope only to the famous Kaiu Wall (which was erected using the Karada Wall as a model), these immense structures were carefully planned and built as one cohesive defensive line, regardless of the independence in their make. Hantei was very particular that the walls would be conceived and built apart, but would act as one when the time came to defend the city.

The Scorpion insisted that they help with the defense of the city, citing their invaluable knowledge of wards and deceptive defense techniques. But the Phoenix and Crane insisted that the resources of the Scorpion were better suited to work within the Imperial Palace itself. Initially, a few among the other clans spoke against this bold nomination, thinly veiling their distrust of the Emperor's "underhand" behind casual concern for the overall defense of the city.

But Hantei agreed with the Phoenix and the Crane, and accepted the Scorpion with open arms, on one condition – that they and any others who worked to rebuild the Palace would reside there for the rest of their lives. "No one shall live beyond the secrets of this place," Emperor Hantei said. "Only the blood of Hantei will remember."

The Scorpion – only too eager to assist the Emperor, and ideally suited for the task at hand – vanished within the halls of the Imperial Palace, never to be seen again. What marvels of architecture and defense they achieved we might never truly know, for scant details have ever been revealed.

We do know that they helped draw up the plans for the improved, six-story building, including the vast labyrinth of passages below, which more than one soul has perished trying to navigate. Their hallmark is evident within the Palace as well, its intricate (and often dizzying) interior elusively simple – at the first glance...

For our part, we remained largely outside the frantic building, watching from a distance as the walls went up again, stronger than before, and the Palace grew behind them, the tallest, more prideful spire in the Empire. Many have pointed to our indecision at this juncture and labeled us selfish recluses – or worse, shivering cowards. But of them, we have only one question:

If we had not remained outside the Great War, above the madness that consumed the rest of the Empire for more than ten years... who would you be listening to now?

THE BATTLE OF FOUR WINDS

The new Palace and walls of the Imperial City were completed in just under six years. At the time, they were easily the most awesome edifices within the Empire, and – as far as the Rokugani were aware – the world. Content that such mighty defenses would never fall, many members of the Seven Clans returned to posts within their own lands, helping their own people combat the roving armies of the Taint.

The Great War between Fu Leng and his siblings continued for three years after the completion of Otosan Uchi's new defenses. During that time, none of the Oni armies came close to the Imperial City, and only a few of the most powerful beasts broke through the outward defensive lines and entered the central territories nearby. Still, this unsettled the Emperor's advisors, who warned him to prepare for an imminent attack without delay.

On the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Kami from the Heavens, and the formation of the Empire, the advisors' worst fears were realized. Minor Oni scouts appeared along the southern Crane coastline, very near the capital. Doji troops were sent out to deal with them, but only a few survivors of the ensuing battle returned. Soon, scout reports confirmed that Shadowlands troops were withdrawing all along the edges of the Empire and gathering to the south of Crane lands in the largest army ever seen.

Imperial strategists and tacticians estimated that such a force would penetrate even the improved walls of Otosan Uchi, tearing down everything that Hantei and his siblings had achieved. But one among them offered up a bold (some might say desperate) plan. Isawa Misei, whose advice was much favored by Emperor Hantei, suggested that certain "enhancements" laid upon the walls might be enough to turn the tide when the horde arrived.

"What would such an endeavor require, Misei-san?" Hantei asked.

"Nothing less than the combined might of all the shugenja within the city, my lord..." Misei responded, "...and perhaps more."

"You have my blessing, Misei-san. Do what must be done to save the Empire."

For the next several days, as Fu Leng's armies gathered to the south and the Empire's forces scrambled to prepare for their approach, every shugenja within the city came to the Emperor's palace. In clan-segregated groups they performed lengthy rituals to bind Elemental forces into the walls their people had built.

The final days of the Great War became a race to complete the rituals before the Shadowlands forces arrived. Only two of the four shugenja cells succeeded by the time the minions overran the southern hub city of Mura Minami Chushin.

The Shadowlands horde, far too large to focus their attacks effectively, spread all about the Imperial City, swarming about the walls until the defenders could no longer see the beautiful plains or the cool expanse of ocean beyond. Only the savage panorama

of tainted flesh obscured their vision, as ogre trampled goblin, and Oni trampled ogre to climb the high walls.

What happened next – how the Shadowlands armies were repelled and the Empire saved at last – remains one of the most astounding events in Rokugani history, and is described throughout this book within further excerpts from *Those Who Would Save the Empire*, the definitive account of this colossal battle. Please see pages 19, 37, 58, and 70 for more on the four defensive stands of this conflict.

RECOVERY AND GROWTH

As related elsewhere in this book, the initial enchantments upon the walls of Otosan Uchi were quite effective against the forces of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. That is, all but one: a single Oni whose ability to move invisibly amongst humans and Elements alike allowed it to slip through the defenses and injure the young Emperor, who eventually died from the wound (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, pages 28 and 40, for more on the death of the First Hantei).

As a result, the shugenja placed additional enchantments upon the outer walls, modifying or increasing the power of their existing forces. These later enhancements remain, though their more blatant abilities have never been activated since (speculation suggests that they never existed at all, but were born from an ageless disinformation campaign by the Asako and Ikoma to dissuade potential attackers from approaching the city again.)

These are known as the Outer Walls of Ekohikei, regardless of the fact that the city has grown well beyond them and new walls have been erected to accommodate the capital's size. They have never fallen, and even the natural disasters that plague the city have little noticeable effect upon them. While around them, buildings and walls chip and crack, they remain pristine and perfect, an undying reminder of what is possible when the clans of the Empire work together. Any map of the city shows its three concentric rings of walls. The outermost wall, constantly under repair due to the frequent earthquakes, is the current city wall. The middle wall – what was once the outer city wall, known as the *Miwaku Kabe* – surrounds the Ekohikei. The wall around the very enter of the city encloses the Emperor's personal lands; the Forbidden City itself.

After the Battle of Four Winds, Hantei once again "blurred" the custody of his holdings between the various clans. It was decided that the clans should retain dominant control over the structures they had created, but also that a system of checks and balances would benefit the city as a whole.

After the Seppun and Otomo Palaces, district lines within the city were put in place; they divided the Forbidden City into five roughly equal parts, and the Emperor gave jurisdiction of them the clans who had had the most impact in their development. Although the borders between these districts have shifted greatly over the centuries, their number has always remained the same

– the Forbidden City, surrounded by four chief districts governed by the favorites of the Emperor and his kin.

After the Seppun and Otomo Palaces within the Forbidden City proper, the next buildings to be commissioned were clan embassies. These spread across all of the districts, again according to the influence of the clans in question. Several additional embassies have been established since these initial seven – one for the Minor Clans (except for the Fox, who remain near the Unicorn in Hito District), and a second for the Lion (when they realized that an Embassy near each of the gates they protected would be helpful).

Temples to Shinsei and the Kami followed, along with many elaborate structures devoted to the many Fortunes discovered and worshiped by the city's inhabitants. Dwellings, businesses, districts devoted to shopping and entertainment, and vast feats of aesthetic beauty all appeared and grew, eventually expanding well beyond the original architects' estimations. This region – beyond the Enchanted Walls – is known as the *Toshisoto* ("Outer City"); for more on its settlement, growth, and current conditions, please see the *Toshisoto Sourcebook*, included in this boxed set.

Architecture in the Capital

Understandably, the architecture within the Forbidden City and surrounding, favored districts is far more pleasant to the observer than that of *Toshisoto*. The buildings are generally higher, many piercing the sky above the Enchanted Walls themselves (though none obscure a view of the Imperial Palace, which towers over all). It is simply understood that none shall compare to this magnificent structure, which is described in detail in its own section (please see page 90 for more).

The most impressive buildings within the four districts that surround the Forbidden City (called the *Ekohikei*, or "Favored Ones," by the city's Ambassadors) are the Embassies and temples – those structures that were constructed first. Like the Imperial Palace, the citizens understand that none shall "out-bid" these places in theme or quality, as they were built by the honored ancestors who forged the Empire, and remain symbols of the integrity and prideful innocence of the Empire itself.

This understanding has resulted in a strange simplicity that prevents the Imperial City from competing for the role of most decorated, or even largest, city in the Empire. Otosan Uchi may be the most prized jewel of Rokugan, but it is certainly much smaller than other locations, which do not suffer under the weight of history. The Lion Hall of Ancestors, for instance, a single structure which spans many *li* (miles) and several catacomb-like floors, is without a doubt one of the most striking architectural feats known, and – at least in sheer size – dwarfs the Forbidden City itself.

An even more appropriate example (at least, in terms of spectacle) is the Kaiu Wall, whose mammoth bulk hovers over one hundred feet from the tainted ground below. The Enchanted

Walls of Otosan Uchi stand a mere sixty feet in height, and even the sixth floor of the Imperial Palace itself is only some hundred and twenty feet above street level.

MIWAKU KABE ("THE ENCHANTED WALLS")

The Walls surrounding the Ekohikei were built in haste, and not to please the eye. Except for buttresses, gates, and other exterior fortifications (and a large number of kanji on the Eastern Wall – see page 21), the stout walls had little appeal at their inception, something which eventually chafed upon the Imperials.

In 271, Asahina and Kakita artisans came in to apply their talents to the walls, to increase their beauty and thus improve the perception of the entire city. "After all," they were told, "it is as important that the Emperor be worshiped as feared."

The Crane spent several months working on or around the Enchanted Walls, never speaking with others of their work, or making any noticeable changes. Eventually, near the end of their tenure at the capital, several minor changes were made – the walls' surfaces were whitewashed, then colored a pale emerald to catch the light of the sun, landscapes near their base were improved, and the Great Waterfall (Location #764 on the Otosan Uchi map) was formed from the River of the Sun.

Covenant of the Crane

Rumors persist, however, that the true work of the Crane occurred during the *opening* months of their stay, when they scurried about the walls without apparent purpose. Stories abound of guards who observed the Asahina in deep meditation upon the highest ledges and fortifications, seemingly entranced by something they saw *within the stones*, and Artisans found molding parts of the walls like fresh clay.

The Isawa, who keep a close watch over the walls that their ancestors bound with Elements, lodged a formal inquest with the Emperor about the strange actions of the Crane. Their voice was heard – *once*, the answers they received, if any, have never been revealed, and remain one of the Phoenix's most closely guarded secrets. Many suspect that the Crane mystics somehow altered the walls, in ways not visible to the naked eye. Whether this is true or not, the special qualities of the walls have never been "activated" since, so any additional abilities have yet to be revealed.

Perhaps, as part of a long-lost covenant with the Crane Clan, the Imperial bloodline keeps one potential resource close, ready to be used in final defense of the Empire...

The Population Explosion

One unfortunate side-effect of building the Miwaku Kabe to stand forever is that adjustments can never be made for the growth of the city districts within its boundaries. As *Toshisoto* gained and gained in size, the Otosan Uchi's outermost walls were broken down and rebuilt; with near-limitless plains upon which to build around the capital, the rapid expansion of the lower caste populace has always been relatively simple to manage. But the

upper social classes living within Miwaku Kabe have no such advantage, and the buildings within constantly expand further and further outward as the city grows.

People of the Ekohikei

There is a marked difference between citizens of the Toshisoto and the Ekohikei. In game terms, the average Glory Rank of those within the Enchanted Walls is approximately 4.5, while the Outer City contains mainly those of lower social status. Of course, there are marked exceptions to this (Mirumoto Hojize in the Toshisoto and Kaiu Eto in the Ekohikei being two of the most notable – see their entries in this and the Outer City books for more), but by and large, the people of Otosan Uchi remain socially (and physically) segregated by the Miwaku Kabe.

This allows the environment within the Walls to grow independently of the surrounding districts (and, to some degree, the rest of Rokugan). Beyond being merely defensive, the Miwaku Kabe defends against parasitic vagrants and those who would exploit the rich resources available within. None are allowed to live in the Ekohikei who do not serve a purpose (all peasants fulfill a function which maintains the living standard of those within the Walls, and all samurai have a clan affiliation). Generally, ronin may not enter the Ekohikei, though any lord within the Walls has the right to invite them if he chooses (this makes them *his* responsibility, however, and so most nobles ignore this privilege).

Daily life is orderly and clean within the Imperial Capital. Disruptions of the status quo are rarely tolerated for long, and those who do not live up to their station or obligations are quickly and quietly removed. Servants and menial workers who serve within the Walls are culled from the best of the Empire, and are expected to remain as unobtrusive during their duties as possible. All peasants that work here understand that they have already achieved the highest honor available to them (unless they were somehow to “leap” to samurai status), and their actions are carefully guided by a combination of fear and self-respect.

SHIJI SURO (THE LOWER CASTES)

Though the lower castes have their supporters as well (and even a few crusaders), the social balance within the Walls slants decidedly in the favor of those with standing. Samurai are not just the top rung of the social ladder here; they *are* the ladder, hardly recognizing the lower castes unless they have to. Day by day, the innermost districts of

Otosan Uchi function with two invisible classes of people among the populace, who are called *Shiji Suro* (“Support”).

Monks

Monks maintain a special relationship with samurai, founded upon mutual respect and the fact that most lords respond violently to the mistreatment of religious figures. Thus, monks are allowed to travel through the Ekohikei with little interference from magistrates. Monks still require the sponsorship of the Sentaku Tribunal (see page 12) to enter the Forbidden City, and must obey the laws and social customs of each district.

Heimin

Mostly, *heimin* are ignored, unless they provide a service or accept coin for merchandise. Being a city-within-a-city, the Ekohikei acquires its foodstuffs from respected merchants and farmers within the Outer City; there are no *heimin* farmers within Ekohikei. With the most respected *heimin* unaccounted for within the Ekohikei, the public opinion of the rest has fallen even



further into decline. This disparity within the heimin caste has shifted others' perceptions of their presence in the city; simply put, they are just not as well-recognized within the Walls as in other "civilized" areas of Rokugan (including the Outer City itself).

Hinin

The lot of *hinin* is even worse. Being largely ignored outside the Walls, they are rarely even tolerated within. Those who serve no specific purpose to the citizens of the Ekohikei (such as criminals, gamblers, and most entertainers) may not enter, and eta only receive a small section of the Karada District as housing (they are needed to cart away the recently deceased and meticulously clean the many sacred and artistic items and buildings prized by the populace).

ATTITUDES OF THE NOBILITY

Since their foundation, the Ekohikei Districts have remained a nearly self-sufficient city-state, able to feed, clothe, and entertain their own. As demanded by its prestigious location and worth to outsiders, the Ekohikei have cultivated a large stockpile of resources, which are constantly replenished at the start of each new harvesting season. Per tradition established by the early Hantei line, this stockpile comes from the finest materials available in the Empire – rice and grains from the Plains of Battle, fibers and silks from the Yasuki and the Crane, steel from the Lion and Scorpion mines at the base of the Spine of the World Mountains, and so on.

Originally, this was intended to prevent a prolonged siege of the Inner City from "starving" the inhabitants, thereby forcing a surrender, but the "tradition of excess" enjoyed by the Hantei, Seppun, Otomo, Miya, and their guests has intoxicated their culture, setting a standard that they both expect and command. The people living in the Ekohikei, particularly those within the Forbidden City itself, express no remorse for any suffering that results from satisfying their "needs", looking no further than their own gates to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and glory of the Emerald Empire.

The most startling example of how this attitude manifests between the nobility and lower castes can be found in a simple tale spoken among the eta of Otosan Uchi (though never in a samurai's presence):

"It is no secrets that the masters [samurai] care little for our welfare, or even our names, but within the honored halls of the Palaces of Otosan Uchi, they do not even trust us to serve them. Oji-san [all eta refer to their elders as 'grandfather', regardless of their relation] once told me of his first lord's death. He said that the man, a haughty Otomo charged with protecting visitors to the Forbidden City, refused to acknowledge his presence, except to give him orders. He would not look at Oji-san when he spoke, and would not listen to anything the old man told him... not even when the words were 'Master, there is a ninja behind you...'"

Social Crusaders

There are those among the upper caste, however, who see through this blinding veil of superiority, and refuse to "forget" their lesser neighbors. Though social custom prevents them from elevating their own servants beyond their birth-status (with one or two sporadic exceptions), they can improve the daily lives of these *heimin* and *hinin* marginally, and work to ensure that they have a voice in Imperial decisions, especially when as pertains to the *shiji suro* themselves.

Many such nobles travel, and some even visit the Toshisoto on occasion. Having become quiet heroes of the large "under-class" within Otosan Uchi. They always receive the best service and merchandise available, and the respect paid to the lower castes is returned in kind.

Manners and Etiquette

Otosan Uchi is the only place in the Empire where the word of Hantei supersedes that of the Clan Champions and their daimyo. Elsewhere, Imperial decrees can often be interpreted or modified outright by clan representatives who feel that their interpretation is more accurate or effective. But here in the Imperial capital, Hantei's word cannot be twisted. The beliefs and biases of each Emperor define his decrees, guiding (and often restricting) the course of politics and daily life in Otosan Uchi. The present Emperor – Hantei the 38th – is old and tired, and dreams of a better tomorrow. His decrees are placid and controlled in comparison to those of many of his predecessors, and the city has assumed a state of relative calm during his life. His son, the brash and furious Sotorii, may change that, and many point to his coming coronation and anticipate the changes he will bring. Others silently worry, for they know that an impetuous Emperor can be as dangerous as he is efficient...

THE WILL OF EMPEROR HANTEI

As with any Hantei, the present Emperor feels strongly about certain matters of etiquette, which are most strictly enforced within the Enchanted Walls at this time. Hantei XXXVIII – being relatively lax in his opinions (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 101) – concerns himself principally with what he perceives as the very core of Rokugani culture, including all facets of the Celestial Order, especially the division of castes and treatment of 'unclean' individuals. Cases of 'justifiable homicide' are always heavily influenced by the social standing of each person involved, and when the survivor clearly ranks more highly than his victim, the offenses are often ignored. Consequently, many such decisions are assumed by the public. (This is also why most samurai are so uncaring of *heimin*, and ignorant of *hinin*; if the Emperor does not care for them, why should they?)

Ironically, in a time of warfare, Hantei XXXVIII is generally uninterested in matters of Bushido. Not a martial spirit, his mind is firmly rooted in peace and prosperity for all of Rokugan, and

cannot comprehend why others would choose to disregard that hope. The present war between the Lion and the Crane, raging so near the Imperial Capital and consuming so many resources, is a consistent problem for him, as are the relentless demands for additional support, favors, and deliberation from both sides.

Emperor Hantei XXXVIII is mainly interested in maintaining the balance for another generation, and his decisions reflect this attitude. He is careful to enforce those rules of law and formality that support this view, and does not consciously offend if he can avoid it. Unfortunately, the position of the Emperor rarely affords the luxury of indecision or soft words, and – especially in this time of near-constant turmoil and incessant dispute – Hantei XXXVIII finds himself with less and less opportunity to appease both sides.

Player Expectations

Roleplaying within the Ekohikei is a delicate matter. Not only do all of the standard nuances of social decorum apply, but the PCs are on display in perhaps the most public of locations possible. Incorrect phrasing of a question can cost a samurai valuable glory in a place like the Imperial capital, where all of the most important NPCs of the setting are present to observe them, and – being the hub of social and political gossip – rumors of their ineptitude can spread like wildfire across the network of Imperial courtiers and beyond.

Though it is unfair to increase the Glory penalties of improper PC actions and statements, GMs are encouraged to increase the number of *opportunities* for them to happen. This can be accomplished by placing them under *constant* social pressure and observation from the moment they enter the Ekohikei. Nobles requesting their attention or demanding that they act or speak a certain way can be particularly grating for PCs, especially if they are not informed of the restrictions when they first arrive in their presence. Magistrates charged with upholding an obscure (or unexpected) social custom within a District of the Ekohikei also present a valuable opportunity for this kind of interaction.

Take care not to be too brutal with this tactic at first. Players must be *taught* how to act within the Ekohikei, not *told*. Introduce the challenges gradually, then increase their frequency and intensity over time, reducing the length of “rest periods” between each new encounter.

Also, avoid tagging Glory loss penalties to early challenges of this nature. Players should always know about a change in custom if they are to be held mechanically accountable for it. The description of a district-specific law can be worked into the general descriptions of a location within its bounds.

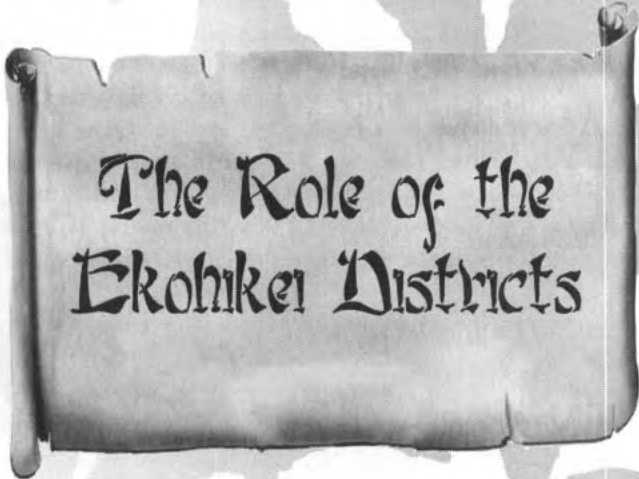
For example:

“There is a small weaponsmith’s shop before you, its shingles glistening with morning dew. As you enter its narrow doorway, you see a tall and dour samurai, obviously the owner of the

establishment, standing over a sallow patron. The second figure is prostrating before the first, bowing deeply before him, but his eyes never waver from the owner’s face.

“After his departure, the owner turns to you and welcomes you to his house, inviting you into his workshop. His voice is calm and level, with a pleasant tone, and his face is painted with a bright and cheerful smile. His eyes never leave your own as he bows before you and asks of the purpose of your visit...”

In this description, it is obvious that eye contact is an important part of local greetings and interactions. Should the PCs ignore this, looking away when they talk or bow, a GM might be justified in reducing their Honor or Glory. The engineered test has received a fair hearing, and their inappropriate action can only result in their shame, or worse.



Unlike the districts of the Outer City – which the Emperor leaves mostly to the administering governors – the Ekohikei are carefully monitored, their borders and internal politics observed and occasionally dictated by Imperial counsel. The Emperor himself (or his trusted aides) has hand-picked each of these governors to ensure their impartiality in all matters, and their dedication to the Imperial line.

Most importantly, however, a precise balance exists, implemented by the Otomo shortly after the end of the Great War. Each of the clans (with the exception of the Lion, whom we will discuss further in this and other sections of this book) has been assigned one district for its embassy. Without Imperial exception, all clan troops, ambassadors, and resources must be housed here, and all administrative and martial matters must be resolved.

Further, all of the major influential structures within the Ekohikei have been placed to prevent the clans from feeling slighted by their slice of the Imperial pie. Each of the districts has several important locations which they are responsible for (though not always those that the local clans would prefer; for example, the Temple of the Kami – clearly the purview of the Phoenix Clan under normal circumstances – has been granted to

the Lion and Unicorn, a point the Isawa never neglect to mention during their moments with the Emperor).

In a few cases, this delineation has infuriated clan nobles, who are unsatisfied with the value of their holdings. Countless Imperial audiences and court intrigues have revolved around this point of contention. Yet ultimately, the reasons for such a complicated distribution remain the same as they were when the city was founded: to ensure that each clan is exposed to themes, skills, and experiences they would normally ignore, allowing them to grow in their knowledge and ability; and to keep the clans roughly equal in power, ensuring that none grows too quickly or becomes a threat to their neighbors or the Imperial seat itself.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CLANS IN THE EKOHIKEI

Each of the Seven Great Clans serves a function within the Ekohikei. The Lion, for instance, have been placed in charge of all aspects of the military within the walls; they guard the gates of Miwaku Kabe and help train the armies of the Emperor. The Phoenix tend to the religious needs of the city. The Crane advise on courtly matters and administer the cases of those who cannot represent themselves in the Imperial Court. And the Crab do what they have always done – they protect the Imperial capital from the forces of darkness and corruption (which is more widespread

than would be expected in such a sanctified place – see the Karada District, page 65).

In this way, the Ekohikei districts of Otosan Uchi become a microcosm of the Empire, and a well-traveled samurai might find it fairly easy to navigate them. He would be familiar with the standard expectations of the clans, and therefore have a natural advantage over those who had never encountered them before. He would know how their cities are laid out elsewhere in the Empire, and could therefore find his way about. And his understanding of their practices would guide him through any local customs or traditions they may enforce during his stay.

THE SENTAKU TRIBUNAL

Otosan Uchi is the center of legislature and politics within Rokugan, the jewel of the Emerald Empire. The allure of power (or maybe the fame of the Imperial family) brings thousands of Rokugani to the city every year. Most seek to increase both their own status and that of their family by performing great deeds in the capital, or by impressing the Emperor.

Their often complex attempts to curry the Hantei's favor have often been both transparent and time-consuming, and some speculate (most often in jest) that if the Emperor had to indulge every visitor to the capital, he would never sleep, eat, or speak a



word himself. The constant deluge of requests and audiences would surely ruin him, and the Empire would suffer as a result.

The Otomo's answer to this problem is the Sentaku Tribunal, a collection of clan delegates who evaluate the requests of those who would enter the Forbidden City (whether they wish to speak with the Emperor or not; the time of all Imperial nobility is valuable).

The Sentaku serve as necessary filters between the average citizen of the Empire and Emperor Hantei. They ensure that he only hears the most important issues and – indirectly – that his presence remains divine in the eyes of the Rokugani public.

History of the Sentaku Tribunal

As stated in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 38, the first Hantei ruled the Empire with unswerving devotion. Still in their infancy, none of the clans' political agendas yet required more than his personal touch, and – with the Imperial roads still under construction – the number of people arriving to visit him was still manageable. During this time, the Empire formed and solidified into a close approximation of its current social and political status, and the Emperor was quite capable of handling the responsibilities of his position alone.

During the fourth century, demands upon the Hantei line intensified. The Gozoku Alliance, growing in strength and support by the day, handled most Imperial requests and visitors during this time. The Crane, Phoenix, and Scorpion administered much of the Emperor's time, and decided who would have the privilege of visiting him.

After the fall of the Gozoku and return of political power into the hands of the Imperial family, the Hantei and Otomo went to work restructuring Rokugan's political policies. Their principal concern was that no outside threat (clan or otherwise) could gain as much power and influence as the Gozoku had, and they worked to secure Hantei rulership over the Empire for all time.

At first, Empress Yugo-zohime attempted to take on the schedule of the first Hantei, listening to everyone who requested her ear, and taking a personal interest in every aspect of Rokugani politics. She was soon overwhelmed by the weight of trade agreements, political gambits, and complicated social disputes, many of which fell outside the bounds of common Rokugani law and required delicate judgment.

The Otomo strove to delegate many of the Empress' responsibilities, leaving only the most pertinent in her hands while carefully distributing the remainder so that no single person or group in the capital had decisive power. Many responsibilities were shifted to a staff within the Imperial city. This conglomeration of diplomats, shugenja, monks, and other 'neutral' parties eventually took charge of everything that did not absolutely require the personal attention of the Emperor, and returned Otosan Uchi to a state of relative calm and stability.

This group was called the Sentaku Tribunal.

Form and Function of the Sentaku

The word *Sentaku* means "choice", and that is precisely what these privileged men and women personify in the capital. They evaluate every request, and decide whether it merits the Emperor's attention. They also rule on all questions and concerns that do not require the Emperor's personal attention and "speak with the Emperor's voice" when doing so. Answers from the Sentaku Tribunal are considered law by everyone in the Emerald Empire, and may only be overruled by a member of the Imperial House or by the Emperor himself.

The Sentaku Tribunal divides itself according to a system put in place by the Otomo at its creation. Each District of the Ekohikei adjudicates matters in a select category. These categories were conceived to encourage balance between the clans and in the evaluation of claims, and break down as follows:

- Kanjo District (Phoenix, Scorpion, Lion): Religion and faith
- Chisei District (Crane, Dragon): Politics and social disputes
- Hito District (Unicorn, Lion): War and all things martial
- Karada District (Crab, Crane): Economy and mercantile issues

Note that there are Lion delegates in two different Districts. This is due to the fact that they have two standing Embassies within the Ekohikei, as dictated by their unusually broad scope of duty within the capital.

When a person wishes to enter the Forbidden City or obtain an audience with the Emperor, they must present their case to the Sentaku Tribunal. There is a building devoted exclusively to this procedure in each district, built shortly after the Otomo ratified the Sentaku in Otosan Uchi. Each of these is described in the respective District's 'walking tour', along with the delegates themselves, their personalities and biases, and what they need to be convinced of the validity of a case.

Eight delegates make up the Sentaku Tribunal, one from each of the Major Clans except the Dragon, and two apiece from the traditional rival clans Crane and Lion, which nominally balance one another out. These delegates are assigned to the Embassies of each of the clans within the Ekohikei, living there for the duration of their time with the Tribunal. They are picked from the most knowledgeable, skilled, and well-respected individuals of their clan or family, and must be approved by their Clan Daimyo before assuming their appointment in Otosan Uchi.

The First Three Sentaku

The first group put together by the Otomo comprised only three individuals – a bushi, representing war and martial matters; a shugenja, whose expertise was applied to questions of the kami and Elements; and a monk, whose inner balance was uniquely suited to questions of religion and the spirit.

But this design was soon found to be flawed. Few magical concerns came to Otosan Uchi – the Elemental Masters already handled such issues in the north. And soon enough, the potential

for imbalance among the clans arose again, and the Otomo worried that one of them might gain two or even three of the seats on the Tribunal.

So the Otomo restructured the Sentaku council within existing district borders, using the careful clan placement and fledgling Embassies to their advantage. They assigned the subject matter that each Sentaku council would administer, and set up the limits of Tribunal power. These revised rules of operation remain in place today, as does the original title of "Tribunal".

Whispers in the Shadows

Many claim that this was a long-term Otomo ploy for power, and supporters of this theory point to the fact that all potential audiences with the Emperor – even those supported by the Sentaku Tribunal – are first reviewed by an Otomo, who decides whether their request is worthy of the Hantei's consideration. "They are a conspiracy to subvert the Emperor's rule, and replace his law with that of his enemies," claim the most vocal. "The Sentaku are nothing more than a gross perversion of the Gozoku, loosely disguised as a public service!"

But skeptics contend that the Sentaku have saved the Imperial line from countless lifetimes of senseless prattle and debates that are far beneath his station. "How strong would the Empire be if the Emperor were too busy to rule?" they ask in response. "Who then would make the law?"



GM USES FOR THE SENTAKU

The Sentaku Tribunal offers Gamemasters a unique way of controlling adventures within Otosan Uchi, as well as handling PC requests to "meet the Emperor". When a PC asks to be allowed within the Forbidden City (even if he has a Glory or 5 or higher), he must first pass through the Sentaku Tribunal "weeding" process.

This process is different in every case, varying widely from District to District, and can form the basis for a great many scenarios within the Ekohikei and Outer City (or even elsewhere in the Empire). The Sentaku of the Karada District might ask the players to resolve a trade dispute occurring in Fox territory as part of their "application process". Or they might have to acquire the blessing of a retired sensei of a lost technique for those of the Hito District to sponsor them into the Forbidden City.

GMs could also work this process into an ongoing campaign, perhaps after the PCs' lord sends them to pass on an invitation to the Emperor...

Ekohikei Politics and Government

Ekohikei politics differs significantly from those in the Outer City Districts. Closely observed by the Sentaku, Imperial Magistrates, and other agents of the Imperial Family, the District Governors here have little time to develop independently from the greater whole of Otosan Uchi. The casual observer sees an underlying unity within the Enchanted Walls, such that the four governmental bodies – and the Sentaku outside them – seem to act with one mind, or at least one objective.

The truth is far less wholesome. The District Governors of the Ekohikei and Ambassadorial members of the Sentaku Tribunal bicker incessantly, vying for precious acknowledgment from the Emperor and his Court. Yet all of them know better than to disrupt the function of the Imperial Capital openly. This is a secret war – of words, leverage, and most importantly of all, power – guided by invisible hands within Otosan Uchi's facade of community and efficiency.

ORGANIZATION AND PRACTICES

Despite the fragmented and divisive nature of the Ekohikei, they function as one political entity within Otosan Uchi, and are represented in the Imperial Courts by one voice during the Emperor's annual assessment of the capital's affairs. This voice is chosen from among the four governors that administer the Ekohikei (see the descriptions in each District's "Seat of Government" entry for more).

All four governors must agree on their representative, however, which is not always possible. When they cannot unanimously choose one, an informal group of magistrates assesses the Ekohikei from the outside. The Emerald Champion chooses the magistrates, and their reports to him are often very critical (the assignment is not glorious, or even interesting, to most magistrates, who often take their aggressions out on the governors as a result). Bribery of these officials has proven difficult, given the proximity of so many other magistrates, but occurs occasionally.

Still, the Ekohikei governors know that the most efficient way of maintaining their own sovereignty is to assign their own

representative to the Emperor. All constantly strive to gain the votes of their peers so that they may work within the Forbidden City, which bestows a great deal of glory upon the chosen candidate. Consequently, all four devote much effort to lobbying for the support of the others. This results in a complicated system of internal affairs, favors, and promises between them that hinders proper administration of the Ekohikei. Shady deals behind closed doors keep the governors from their responsibilities, which must be taken up by their assistants or neglected entirely.

Magistrates assigned within the Ekohikei are well aware of these conditions and act with much more autonomy than elsewhere in the Empire. Only those infractions with far-reaching or serious implications are presented to the governors. Magistrates of the Ekohikei are well-known for their quick judgment and ruthless punishment; the local government rarely intervenes in their activities, and most criminal cases are resolved with brutal efficiency.

Thus, criminals must adjust their strategies to survive. With external crimes (e.g. smuggling, theft, or terrorism) all but shut down by the magistrates, the most inventive and manipulating criminal minds have turned their attention to internal targets, such as law-making practices, court functions, and neglected parts of government. This leads to great frustration for the magistrates, who realize that the criminal element has merely moved into a new and far more powerful forum where the magistrates have less chance of stopping them.

For more on magistrates in Otosan Uchi, please see "Magistrates and Law Enforcement", Book One, page 8.

FAVORS

Otosan Uchi's internal government relies upon the exchange of favors. Within the city, favors are legal and binding contracts, with attached values. They are subject to all the social obligations that go along with gifts; though the physical debt is forgotten as soon as the exchange ends, the sentiment remains. Months or years later, when the gift-giver needs help, the recipient must presumably do so. Refusing to repay a favor is a substantial offense, and grounds for a duel, or worse.

This process is frequently straightforward and temporary – a simple trade, with no further obligation. Generally, such relationships start at the lowest levels of power, between magistrates or other officials. The more influence a person gains within Otosan Uchi, however, the more intricate the favors become. The governors and Sentaku have forged extended "chains" of give-and-take, in which they both owe and are owed vast numbers of favors, with people who also owe and are owed. When any of them need something to happen, they contact one of their debtors, who might contact one of their own, and so on, until the desired need is met.

Political figures (including the District Governors, the Sentaku, and even the Imperial Magistrates on occasion) rely upon the favor system to manage their duties and acquire needed

resources. The finest representatives within Otosan Uchi can call upon dozens or even hundreds of skilled politicians, craftsmen, and artisans in their debt, many of whom are of much higher rank and standing within the city.

Governors and others in "precarious" positions within Otosan Uchi depend upon those who have benefited from their support to protect their positions; more than one has been shamed into retirement or *seppuku* to clear a substantial debt. Conversely, it is not uncommon for low-ranking bureaucrats and courtiers to gain status or important positions in the city through favors, rising by virtue of their ability to manipulate the system.

PCs WITHIN THE EKOHIKEI

During their stay within the Miwaku Kabe, PCs should have little difficulty gaining the attention of one or more governors, but the Sentaku are notoriously elusive. Members of the Tribunal are perpetually distracted by their duties, and PCs with a Glory Rank of less than 4 will be hard-pressed to obtain an appointment. A recommendation from one or more of the District Governors can go a long way in drawing their attention; the Sentaku wish to remain informed of the governors' business, and will see the PCs as a source of potential information.

Each of the four District Governors has substantial resources to draw upon, any portion of which may be devoted to the needs of the player characters should they successfully present their case. Potential favors include travel papers within the city (with the exception of entry into the Forbidden City, the bailiwick of the Sentaku), positions within Otosan Uchi, and negotiation between the clans and their agencies and schools. The governors are of particular use when dealing with one or more clans, as they come into regular contact with all of them, and have built up a large reserve of contacts, obligations, and favors.

Gamemasters may use the system of political and social favors to urge their player characters into action. Owing a noble in Otosan Uchi can be a powerful motivator and, if the noble's requests run counter to the PCs' standards, the cause of much drama. Also, when PCs ask to acquire objects, information, or assistance within the Ekohikei, they should be presented with a series of mini-adventures within the city, demanded by their benefactors.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL

Internally, the Ekohikei Districts are just as susceptible to corruption and turmoil as any other. Disagreements between the governors occur frequently, from disputes over the interpretation of a law to the present location of a district border. The latter are very common, as the Emperor has the right to redistribute any of the lands in the Empire as he sees fit; most newly-crowned Emperors take advantage of this right, enforcing their own political biases upon the clans and District Governors from the outset of their rule.

On the rare occasions when such a disagreement cannot be worked out between the governors, the final decision falls to the

Sentaku Tribunal. This policy angers most District Governors, who see the Sentaku as a mixed blessing; while the Tribunal's value in assisting the Emperor is obvious, their intervention in local affairs is often seen as an unearned extension of their influence.

The animosity between the Ekohikei governors and the Sentaku, subtly affects the rest of the city in many ways. Requests for entry into the Forbidden City are often mired in weeks or months of "evaluation" by governors wishing to slow or disrupt Sentaku activities (when visitors to the Emperor are delayed, it often falls to the Tribunal to resolve the situation, and they are made to look inept by the careful political spin of the governors). District policies that hinder Sentaku interests are questioned during assessments, or quietly brought to the attention of Imperial Magistrates (the Sentaku understandably pay close attention to the affairs of the Ekohikei governors, cataloguing any potentially exploitable legislature or personalities).

THE SENTAKU SYNDICATE

Considering the balance of power within the Ekohikei Districts, the Sentaku Tribunal often becomes the deciding force within the political arena. They have the Emperor's ear, or at the very least the right to enter the Forbidden City at will. They can counter the highest representatives of the Ekohikei government, and they come in contact with (and are owed favors from) nearly everyone within the Miwaku Kabe. Yet perhaps their most effective weapon is one that they do not control – at least, not directly.

Several members of the Sentaku Tribunal lend support to those criminals smart and calculating enough to escape the magistrates of the Favored Districts. They obscure the criminals' activities, arrange for them to be promoted to important positions, and introduce them to all the right people in the Imperial Capital. Using their vast array of friends and favors, they cultivate these individuals as fledgling nobility within Otosan Uchi, hoping that the favor will be returned in time. These criminals make excellent tools for the Sentaku, who often require scapegoats, information brokers, or simply people to perform tasks the Sentaku are unwilling to perform themselves.

The process of cultivating criminals is invisible to outsiders, and even the criminals themselves often have no idea who their benefactors are. Tribunal members work through intermediaries to prevent exposure of their involvement, and take special care when working with well-known or hunted criminals. Sometimes, when the services of a recognizable criminal or popular ronin are required, the Sentaku smuggle them into the Forbidden City, where no one will look for them. When the hunt for them has ended, and sufficient "revisions" to their appearance have been made, they return to the outside world – a new person, often with a new identity. This kind of favor is not only rare but incredibly dangerous for the Sentaku, who effectively "own" the charge thereafter.

The Sentaku Syndicate (as the few knowing outsiders refer to it) spans all of the Ekohikei Districts and extends into the Forbidden City. The criminals involved are invariably former masterminds of the district gangs and cartels driven out by the aggressive magistrates. Their former associates are dead, imprisoned, or in hiding, and not available to them even if they could be of any use: the Sentaku know better than to use larger groups of criminals and keep their isolated "tools" at arm's length.



Sentaku Opposition

Some members of the Sentaku Tribunal have nothing to do with this practice, and one or two who oppose it. They watch their corrupt peers from a distance, intervening when necessary to maintain the balance of power within the city, or to protect themselves or the interests of their allies. Player characters may be called upon by these well-intentioned Sentaku to thwart the activities of the other members of the Tribunal, or the criminals they command.

Kolat Intervention

An organization such as the Sentaku Syndicate cannot function in a territory as small as the Ekohikei without clashing with the Kolat. The Kolat have known about the Syndicate since its formation, and watch it carefully from their own positions of power. They only involve themselves directly when their own interests are at stake.

If such action becomes necessary, the Kolat act from their strongholds within the Kanjo and Chisei Districts. They either maneuver pawns into the Syndicate, or cautiously enter into bargains with its lower echelon in preparation for a time when they can wrest control away from the Tribunal. The number of brainwashed plants within the Syndicate is small, but growing. Some day soon the Kolat will be positioned for a precise strike against them, which will pave the way for their greater concerns within the heart of the Imperial capital itself...

Oyabun Interests

When the magistrates of the Ekohikei began to crush the crime-gangs and smuggling rings within their jurisdictions, the Oyabun withdrew into the Outer City, where their influence is stronger and their resources richer. For a long time they have jealously eyed the Ekohikei, but realized that they were not strong enough (individually or together) to reestablish their interests therein. The magistrates are simply too well-organized and too efficient for them.

Only one of their number has managed to make any significant in-roads beyond the Enchanted Walls – Ide Tenseko,

whose smuggling operations within the subterranean tunnels of Otosan Uchi is described in the Karada District, Location 65. Her lieutenant, a capable man named Tsuyuge, operates from the the Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom of the Kanjo District, and has opted to make contact with the Sentaku Syndicate. Tenseko hopes that this will strengthen both organizations, offering the Sentaku a hidden route in and out of the city, while giving the Oyabun access to the interior of the Forbidden City and a wealth of knowledge through the political machinations of the Ambassadors. For more on Tsuyuge and his activities, please see Location 68.

Military Presence in the Ekohikei

Otosan Uchi is the best-protected territory in the Empire. Tens of thousands of soldiers and magistrates are stationed here, guarding one or more of the districts, patrolling the perimeter of a city, or safeguarding particular locations. Etiquette demands that each clan devote some of their finest troops to the protection and operation of Otosan Uchi, and most have permanently assigned sensei to the garrisons to maintain the soldiers' edge.

Some speculate, though never openly, that this is a sign of weakness in the Emperor and his staff – if he is so mighty, why does he need so many to protect him? The answer is simple. The armies of Otosan Uchi are not meant to protect him; they are meant to glorify him. Long ago it was decided that the Emperor's entourage, particularly his standing forces, should exceed those of other lords across the Empire – though this is not always the case. The Isawa, for example, have always retained a much larger retinue of shugenja than the Emperor, just as the Mantis have larger fleets.

Visitors to Otosan Uchi are commonly overwhelmed by its beauty, splendor, and greatness. This reaction extends to its military forces, which may exceed even those of the great Hida Kisada.

This is all doubly true within the Ekohikei, where the Emperor makes regular appearances. Visitors quickly notice that the Hito District, home of the martial ambassadors assigned to the Sentaku Tribunal and managed by two of the most militant clans of the Empire (the Lion and the Unicorn), contains the largest

complement of soldiers. Hito is as fortified as any stronghold upon the Plains of Battle, housing a standing army of several thousand.

The rest of the Ekohikei Districts have large standing forces, although they rarely see combat in their time at the capital. Otosan Uchi has not been besieged since the Battle of White Stag, and the Miwaku Kabe has never fallen, so the troops within have few opportunities to put their talents to the test.

THE CLAN EMBASSIES

Each of the Clan Embassies within the Ekohikei has a military force drawn from the armies of its homeland. It is a great honor to be chosen for this post, even if it offers little chance of actual combat, and soldiers must perform above and beyond the call of duty before being considered. Many training schools across the Empire incorporate ideal positions into their training strategy; soldiers wishing to earn a position at Otosan Uchi must always strive for them.

Training for Embassy protectors is as thorough as that of any Clan House Guard, and the ratio of student-to-sensei after they arrive is far smaller than most are accustomed to. Brutal regimens and excruciatingly long patrols drive some to depression, mental breakdown, *seppuku*, or other methods of escape. Such lapses in discipline are rare, however, and the sensei and commanders have practiced the art of using such instances as motivation for their remaining troops.

Clan Embassies generally house both guardian forces and specialty troops who perform specific jobs within the district. The embassies always keep a complement of House Guard on hand for visiting dignitaries and other officials, who "borrow" the troops while they are in the city.

DEFENSES AND FORTIFICATIONS

Otosan Uchi is thought to be impregnable. The Enchanted Walls that surround the Ekohikei districts are one of the most impressive sights in all of Rokugan, second only to the Kaiu (Carpenter) Wall far to the southwest. Some sixty feet in height, separated by three immense blocks of stone and two gate houses. All five of these structures are similar in design – square with doorways leading into their interior from the roofs of the Enchanted Walls and ramps leading to their eighty-foot crests, for mounted traffic.

The interiors of these structures are devoted to supporting the military forces that patrol the Walls and protect the Ekohikei. Armories, barracks, war offices, and even two sets of holding cells can be found within. While the gate houses are hollow from top to bottom, allowing for effective coordination of units during a siege and command of the same during times of peace, the other three structures contain only two levels each, one level with the Walls and the other above them. This design precludes the need for additional soldiers to be posted on the lower levels of these blockades, allowing them to be used instead along the Walls and within the gatehouses.

Soldiers patrol the bridges over the River of the Sun – men stationed permanently along the Walls. The arches of the bridges peak at just over eighty feet in height, so they are both serviceable sentry points and pleasant stops during tours of the Imperial City. It is not uncommon for visiting nobles to request periods of meditation upon the bridges, where they can observe Otsan Uchi and the bay beyond at their leisure.

Centuries ago, the Emerald Champion assumed command of the troops along the Enchanted Walls from the Lion Clan. He was responsible for training and leading them during the assault of Fu Leng's horde one thousand years ago. But the Emperor has not forgotten the Lion's valiant efforts, and to this day, more Lions guard the Walls and gate houses than warriors of any other clan. Also, Lion *gunso*, *taisa*, and generals form the bulk of the command staff for these buildings, as well as the garrisons along the tops of Miwaku Kabe.

The Gate Houses

According to legend, the spirits of Rokugan's fallen heroes stand guard over the gates. During the Battle of Four Winds, soldiers reported that ghosts of the recently slain stood firm against the forces of Fu Leng, and there have been accounts of ghostly activity near the gate houses ever since. The Kitsu, who were involved in the gate houses' original designs, have only one response to inquiries about the legend: "Otsan Uchi is the home

of the dead as much as the living. We are each safer for the presence of the other."

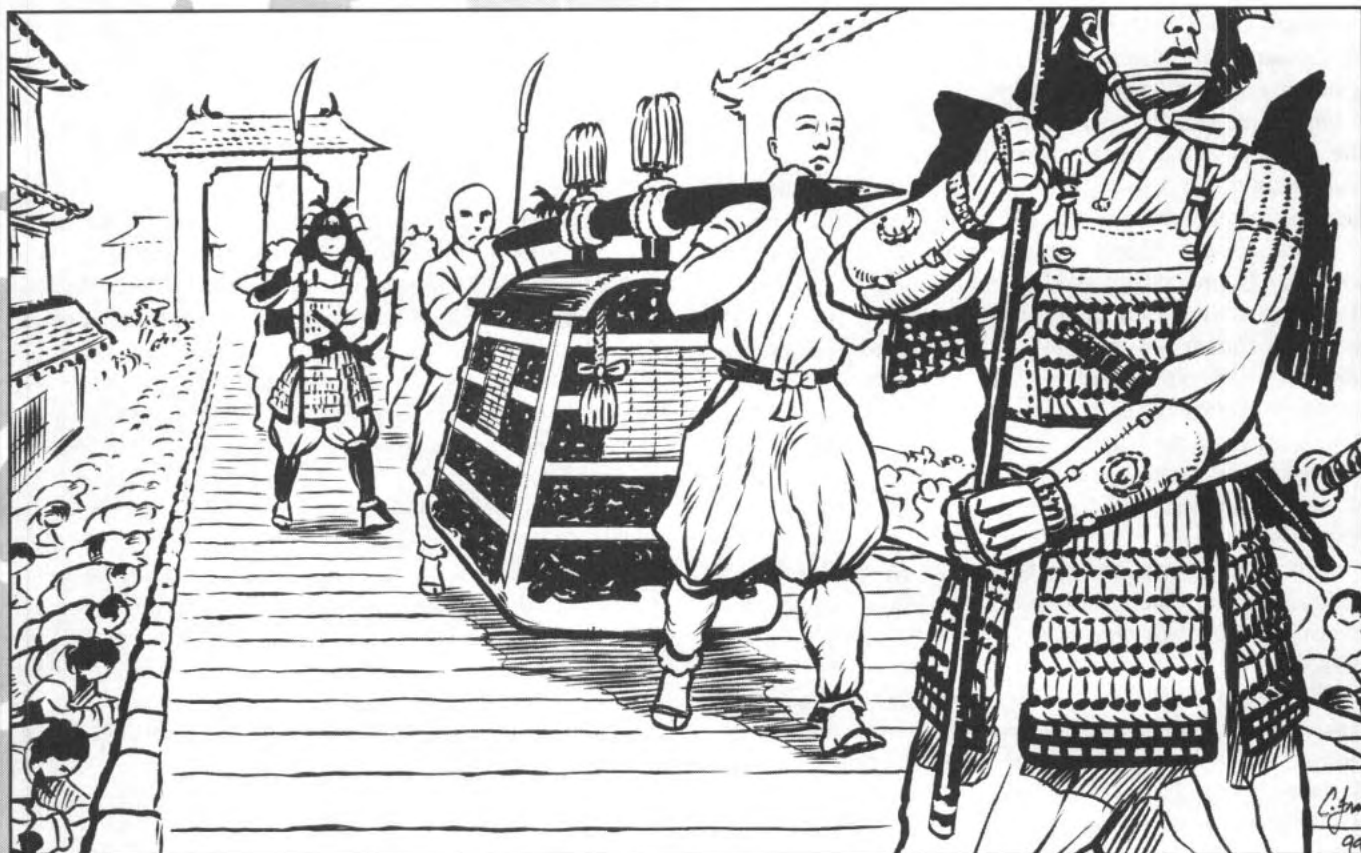
In fact, the Kitsu did indeed contact the ancestors and convince them to protect the Miwaku Kabe during the Great War, and through the present. Nearly any ancestor from any published *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG supplement (and many others) can be felt along the walls at any time. The spirits are particularly numerous near the gate houses, where their original bargain with the Kitsu occurred.

Average Ancestral Gate Protector

Rank 2-4 Bushi (commonly Lion); **Air 2**, **Reflexes 3**, **Earth 5**, **Fire 3**, **Water 2**, **Strength 3**, **Void 2**

Notable Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 4, Kenjutsu 3, Siege 3

Kitsu player characters should be allowed to see and interact with these ancestors according to the standard rules for Sodan-Senzo, located on page 53 of *Way of the Lion*. If the Gamemaster warrants it, other characters might also "sense" their presence (as a disturbing brush of wind, the feeling that someone is watching them or walking beside them, etc.). This should be adjudicated per the dramatic needs of the scene, not rolled for against a Trait or Skill, and be underscored for maximum effect.



The Lion Embassies

There are two Lion Embassies within the Ekohikei – one to the far south within the Chisei District and the other to the far west of the Hito. This unusual circumstance came about when the Lion were put in charge of training and commanding the defending armies of Otosan Uchi during the Great War. With gates at either end of the city, it was thought prudent to have two centers of command as well. Lion generals lead the troops from each of these locations, which were eventually given to the Lion by the Emperor when the crisis was over and the armies of the city incorporated into the forces of the Emerald Champion.

Today, the Lion use their unique advantage to keep tabs on the Unicorn, Scorpion, and Phoenix, who share districts with one of the two Lion Embassies. The extra embassy also grants the Lion an additional official upon the Sentaku Tribunal, which in turn affords them additional influence within the Forbidden City and another voice in the Emperor's ear.

The Forbidden City

The wall surrounding the Forbidden City stands some forty feet in height, jutting up within the center of the Ekohikei Districts with all the regal arrogance its interior demands. Though nowhere near as impressive as the Miwaku Kabe, it has yet to fall to any enemy force (collapsed pieces of its length have been swiftly rebuilt). The design is very similar to the Enchanted Walls, allowing engineers to easily familiarize themselves with both structures. Two gate houses mark the only breaks within the wall, and garrisons and stables have been erected upon its top.

The Emerald Champion himself (with help from the generals overseeing Miwaku Kabe) assigns soldiers to the wall, not the commanders of the garrisons. All of the guards rise from the forces at the Enchanted Walls, making them the “elite of the elite” in Otosan Uchi. Only one force in the city, the Emperor's personal House Guard, is more prestigious.

Arrow slits and defensive ramparts cover the exterior of the wall, spiraling up and about its perimeter. Soldiers defending the wall take up positions along these bulwarks, which can be cordoned off at several junctures, presenting assailants with one strongpoint after another that must be taken. This is extraordinarily difficult, as the offending force must fight uphill and in single file, with enemy archers and pikemen in easy striking distance. Climbing is another option, though it holds little appeal. Called “Fukorokuji's Death”, the sheer ascent crosses several strategically placed outposts along the way. Only one being has ever attempted the climb – the same monstrous Oni that slipped through the city's outer defenses and poisoned Hantei I – and even it was hard-pressed to defeat the wall's defenders.

Heart of the Scorpion

Unlike most of the Miwaku Kabe, the Northern Wall is riddled with interior chambers and halls placed there by the Scorpion architects of the Imperial Palace. The rooms are confusing even for those who have lived here for years, intended to allow a rapid

movement of large friendly forces from one part of the wall to another; some Scorpion claim that an entire army could be shifted during a battle at the wall, and no one would know their location until it was too late. Few believe such tales, but the vast and complicated cavern system below the city makes an impressive avenue of transport. Citizens of Otosan Uchi believe that the Scorpion architects relied on the caverns, while rendering the tunnels within the walls empty, booby-trapped, or part of a senseless maze intended to confuse and confine enemy troops. Considering the nature and history of the architects, this assumption may not be far off the mark.

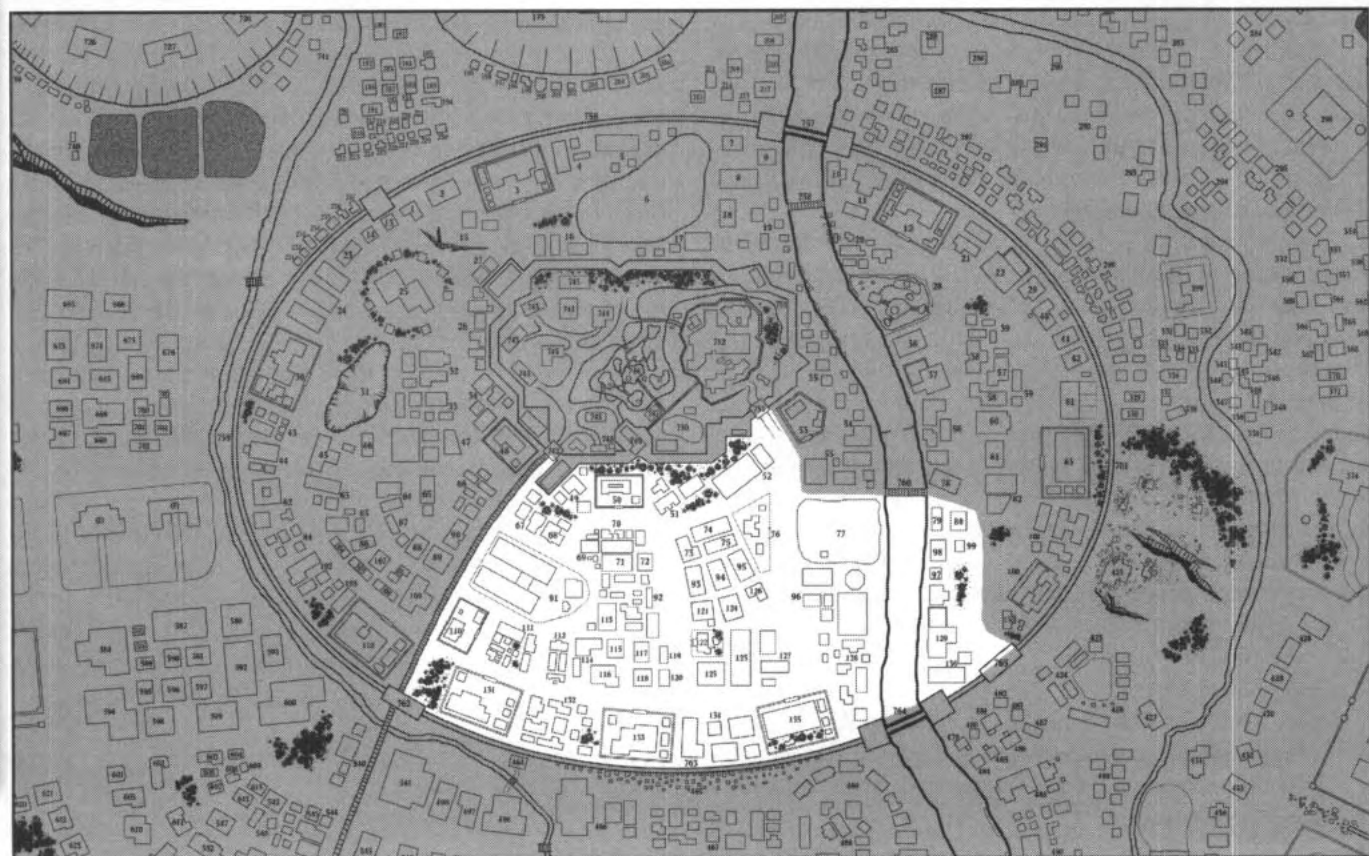
EMERGENCY SERVICES

All of the Ekohikei Districts house emergency response groups, trained to combat fires and direct the populace during earthquakes, monsoons, and tsunamis. Consisting of soldiers led by scholars, shugenja, and other specialists, these groups plan for natural disasters as well as sieges and uprisings within the city. Constant drills keep the emergency teams at maximum readiness for any possible problem.

The teams reside in nondescript training compounds where they can plan and practice out of sight of the general populace. Otosan Uchi is the crown jewel of Rokugan, and – though plagued with emergencies with disturbing regularity – must not be seen as weak or frightened. The compounds generally stand near the center of the districts, where they can respond quickly to problems that arise, but away from areas of public or political interest. Within the Karada District, for example, the compound is located inside the Yasuki Trading Grounds, disguised as the rear part of a silk works. In the Kanjo District, the compound lies inside the Emerald Champion's Training Grounds, where its presence is unassuming and even appreciated. The Hito District's compound takes up part of the northwestern Lion Embassy, where it can monitor the western half of the district with ease; the eastern half is monitored by the Kanjo compound, which is well-placed across the River of the Sun. And in the Chisei District, the emergency response teams stay in one of the Minor Clan compounds near its center.

The Forbidden City, for all its magnificence, has no ready emergency teams situated inside its wall. The closest team (within the Chisei District) is instructed to aid those within the Forbidden City first, tending to their own populace only after handling any crisis there. To compensate for the lack of emergency services, Forbidden City troops and court shugenja are often trained at the Chisei compound so that they can aid the Imperial families if they must.





Kanjo District

Province Rank:	8	Imperial Rank:	9
Population Rank:	6	Production Rank:	3
Relative Wealth:	8	Political Influence:	7
Crime Rank:	6	Corruption Rank:	5
Appearance Rank:	7	Popularity Rank:	8

The Guided Tour – Day 1

The low road you walk upon nestles along the right edge of the Emperor's grand and raised walkway, and stretches out before you like a glistening emerald snake. The dyed gravel beneath your feet has been pulverized, and feels soft and warm. The southern gate of Otosan Uchi's Inner City rises before you, dividing the massive expanse of the Miwaku Kabe in two. To either side, the fortified walls extend beyond your sight, wrapping around the Emperor's jewel like a guardian.

"Have you not been within the Enchanted Walls before?" comes the pleasant voice of an approaching Miya. "I would not ask, kind samurai, but your face reveals such... awe."

The stooped elder before you has seen the fresh side of life, and moved on. His face is a labyrinth of cruel wrinkles, coming together around two small, but dazzling eyes, which dance about you so quickly that you can scarcely keep up. He leans heavily upon an old, wooden cane, which clacks resoundingly upon the hard-packed earth beneath the road's surface with every step.

Despite his tender condition, he bows low before you, his arms extended out in either direction as a show of personal respect. When he rises, the life in his eyes returns, and he focuses upon you as a child would a new toy. "I am Miya Yorikago, your host during your stay here at the Imperial Capital. Please, consider me your humble and obedient servant. Should you need for anything, you have only to ask..."

Then, turning to lead you into the city, the monologue continues. "This will be a wonderful visit. Come, come. We should be on our way. No point wasting the sun..."

Exploring the Kanjo District

"An aged Shiba currently governs the Eastern District of the Ekohikei, one whose fierce dedication to Order and Purpose is felt with every step. Note the brilliant patterns painted upon the cobblestones and grain that we walk upon, for example. It is said that they contain special meaning that we cannot see, but our minds can feel. Every building within this district serves a special purpose. Follow..."

THE EASTERN WALL AND ITS PROPERTIES

Location #: 763

"Do you know the reality of the Battle of Four Winds, or merely what the legends say? It was a long time ago, after all, and few can remember every detail with precision. But I have studied the records, and learned the truth from the Lion and the Phoenix. Stay a while, and I will tell you how the war began..."

"The few stragglers who had remained outside the Walls were quickly consumed by the Horde's first offense. Sweeping waves of menace and disease rose up from the ocean depths and crashed against the Eastern Wall. The skies above were ripped open by the thunderous sound the monsters made when they realized that the kami sided with the humans at the barrier.

"Within moments, two of the largest Oni and many of their smaller brethren had fallen. But within their ruined gullets were the remains of countless Lion, Scorpion, and Phoenix, snatched from their points of defense along the Wall's outer perimeter. It appeared as if the humans would fall if for no other reason than sheer attrition.

"Long minutes of desperate fighting threatened to topple the magical structure, but the Isawa remained calm throughout. They watched the struggle from the barricades at the back of the Wall, the second-highest point in all of Otosan Uchi at the time. The urgent screams of their allies did nothing to move them, and for a time it was thought that they were in league with the enemy.

"But then, with the forces at the Eastern Wall all but depleted, something... incredible... happened. Someone noticed a distortion in the Wall, crying out in fear and wonder before he fell before the great Oni Lord Gamu. The soldiers and Oni at the Wall were bathed in a pale golden light erupting from the barrier, centered upon the names that had appeared there. One of them – the newest – was that of the soldier who had just fallen.

"Below, on the battlefield, several of the Oni who had slaughtered our forces bellowed out in pain, gripping their sides or crumpling into the earth. From within their bellies and around them, the spirits of the fallen defenders of the city – those of all the Great Clans and even the Lesser and ashigaru warriors – rose again to oppose them.

"Working in concert, the living and the recently dead returned the Oni's fire, and drove them back, out of the capital and into the sea. Since that day, none have threatened to penetrate this

Wall, though many have tried. Only the gaijin have left any permanent reminder of their visit, in the form of the rough craters their foul weapons left behind.

"What's that? The story of the other three Walls? Well, there is a time for everything, my friend, including the rest of the Miwaku Kabe. Come, we have much more to see here before we can pass on to the rest of the city..."

The Eastern Wall of Otosan Uchi's Inner City has been nicknamed *Homare* ("Glory") by the Isawa, who are quite proud of their magical masterpiece. The enchantments placed upon the Wall inexorably link its physical strength with the Glory of its defenders. Golden kanji upon its surface name every person who died along its length or upon its high fortifications, and their spirits bond with it. When the Wall is again assaulted, the spirits of the departed appear to combat the enemy forces, and their Glory physically reinforces it. One lifetime later, the soldier's spirit returns to Meido, to continue its course through reincarnation. Their duty upon the wall adds immeasurably to the journey.

The magical forces that bind the spirits absorb damage to the Wall and – like a living being – regenerate it over time. Only one attack upon the Wall has ever left permanent scars – the Battle at White Stag, when hundreds of cannon volleys struck it from offshore. The craters left by the attack remain behind, though none can say why. Even the Isawa, if they truly know, are tight-lipped. The only reasonable explanation is that the *gaijin* attacks were not in any way connected with the Elements binding the Wall, which most Rokugani can easily believe.

Over the centuries, the Eastern Wall has become something of a religious icon, cherished by all who visit its length. Temples have risen on both sides (nobility on the inside, all others outside), and people flock to them every year during the Festival of Triumph to worship at it. Pilgrims place scrolls inscribed with the names of those who died here, haiku, and other gifts within the cracks and holes left behind by the ancient *gaijin* attack. Ritual alcoves have also been created for this purpose.

Another special occasion along the Eastern Wall is the *Okuro Yoso*, a gathering of relatives and descendants of the fallen. When the spirits have served as many days at the Wall as they lived before falling there, they lay their burden down and pass into Meido. From the night before the event until the following sundown, relatives perform meditation and funeral ceremonies, but grieving is not allowed. At the moment of their release from duty, the magical kanji on the Wall dims and becomes a silver hue, and the crowds disperse. The deceased is forever after referred to as a hero of war.

The Bon Festival, otherwise known as the "Festival of the Dead", is another time of recognition along the Eastern Wall, for obvious reasons.

Mechanics for the Eastern Wall

There are two primary enchantments upon this wall. The first makes it nigh-impregnable. The Glory of every person who dies defending it is added to its base Wounds (500), which must be overcome to pierce its structure. This value remains as part of the structure's Wound count for a number of years equal to the number the fallen warrior lived, and are subtracted at the conclusion of the person's *Okuro Yoso* (see above).

Glory points added to the structure's Wounds do not regenerate damage to the wall; repairs must be made to return such losses. (Ten stonemasons can recover 1 Wound per day of labor; no more than 10 Wounds may be recovered in any full day of work.) These Glory modifiers are magical in nature, and support the structure spiritually. Many believe that invaders will feel the weight of fallen ancestors upon them when they assault the wall.

In addition the wall binds the spirits of the warriors whose life was sacrificed to protect it. For as long as his Glory is added to the Wall's Wound Level, his spirit remains as a spiritual protector. When enemies assault the Wall, all spirits bound to it appear within their ranks and engage in brutal combat until the attack ends, or until the enemy is destroyed.

These warriors are guided by a spiritual need, and augmented upon the battlefield by the Isawa magics protecting the wall, per the following template:

Fallen Guardians of the Eastern Wall

Air: +1, **Earth:** +2, **Agility:** +1, **Strength:** +1

Note: Guardians of the Inner City's Eastern Wall have no Void Points, nor may they call upon any abilities that require them. They may not communicate through speech, and appear only during assaults directly upon the Wall itself, vanishing as soon as the threat is contained or eliminated. Their Glory never changes from its Rank at death, except for modifications made in their memory (e.g. Points and Ranks they gained due to their heroic death, or lost due to scandalous revelations after they are gone).

Gamemasters are encouraged to use the Average Gate Protector statistics if they wish, or design fallen heroes of their own to defend the Wall during their characters' stay in the city.

Once released from their duty – at the end of their *Okuro Yoso* ceremony – defenders of the Eastern Wall receive their reward within the karmic cycle of life, their valiant efforts remembered by benevolent Lady Sun. In game terms, they gain 15 Karma Points to spend on their next incarnation (character), per the guidelines illustrated on page 3 of the *L5R Gamemaster's Pack*.

Because so few battles have been fought within Otosan Uchi over the last two generations, the Eastern Wall is currently close to its base Wound Level, and few ancestral spirits protect its length. Gamemasters are welcome to include a few minor skirmishes nearby, however, if they wish to invoke the Wall's enchantments.



THE SOUTHERN GATE INTO THE EKOHIKEI

Location #: 762

"The Southern Gate leading into the Inner City is the most heavily traveled; it hosts the Emperor's personal road, a raised mound of hard-packed earth, topped with planks of the finest wood from the Phoenix Woodlands and polished to a brilliant sheen. The Emperor's own pearl divers gather the stones flanking the Road of the Most High from the Bay of the Golden Sun, selecting them for their subtle charm, unusual shapes, smooth surfaces, and stunning beauty.

"We shall travel on Doro no Tasana Kibe – the Road of Fertile Hopes – where all save the Emperor himself must walk. It will take us through the Southern Gates and into the heart of the city, where the rest of our tour awaits. But first, a stop within the Gate House, where the Lion sentries will check our papers, and our spirits will suffer the scrutiny of the Kitsu and their careful allies beyond.

"Please, step within the arch..."

The Southern Gate House stands between two of the Ekohikei Districts – the Kanjo and the Chisei. This is another carefully plotted Otomo design, intended to help maintain the balance of power within the Inner City. Five Clans (the Dragon, Crane, Lion, Phoenix, and Scorpion) have ready access to this gate by virtue of their Embassies, but only one – the Lion – has a controlling interest in the gate's security. Between their militant impartiality and a steady stream of reports from the ancestors stationed at the gate (see below), the Otomo know that only those of proper rank and standing are allowed inside the Enchanted Walls.

Entry Into the Inner City

The first thing anyone approaching the gate sees is a large (15' tall) torii arch, forged entirely of crystal. Its edges run flush with the flanking walls of the gate house, ensuring that all who enter through this gate must pass underneath it. Rank 3 Akodo troops guard the arch at all times, and ask that visitors stand beneath it before entering the Ekohikei. Thus, while the soldiers study the visitor's travel papers, the visitor is directly exposed to the crystal, which will glow if they are Tainted.

The soldiers at the Miwaku Kabe gates come from the city's standing army, and are – by tradition – nearly all Lion. Captains of the Guard (there are several) come from any of the Great Clans, and occasionally from a Minor Clan. All soldiers at the gates receive several weeks of drill instruction at the Imperial Training Grounds (either under the Emerald Champion or within the Forbidden City, depending on their social stature). Volunteers for the duty are welcome, though they must still go through training and the majority of the current Captains must approve their assignment.

Training for these men and women includes defensive strategy and how to remain alert during long periods of tedium, as well as how to spot forgeries and lies. Those who wish to enter the Ekohikei under false pretenses must pass some of the most

intense scrutiny in the Empire. Transgressors are taken into custody and presented before an Imperial Judge-Magistrate, who decides their fate. Common punishments include imprisonment, exile, hard labor, and public flogging.

Average Soldier Assigned to Inner City Gates

Rank 3 Bushi (commonly Lion); **Air: 3, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Water: 2, Perception: 4, Void: 2**

Notable Skills: Appraisal and Investigation (both at least 2)

Average Captain of the Guard

Rank 4–5 Bushi; **Air: 4, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Water: 4, Void: 3**

Notable Skills: Appraisal and Investigation (both at least 3), Intimidation, Sincerity

A small cadre of Kitsu coordinates the ancestors that watch over the gate houses. They listen while the ancestors observe and judge visitors who stand beneath the arch, and relay the information to the Captain of the Guard. The visitor must be approved by both the Captain and the ancestors to continue through the arch and into the Ekohikei.

Matsu Nokori

Long ago, when Otosan Uchi was still young, a Matsu bushi named Nokori was commanded to organize the city's perimeter defenses and develop regimens for its soldiers. Proud of her early accomplishments with the Imperial Army, she turned her sights to battlefield conquests and other distant pursuits. When the Shadowlands Horde arrived at the city, she was one of the first soldiers upon the field, leading her troops with determination.

But after the fighting ended, she heard the first rumors of assassination from the Imperial Palace. One of the monstrous Oni had pierced the line and poisoned the Emperor.

Nokori was never the same after the Battle of Four Winds. She retained her post at the Southern Gate and the strength of her orders never faltered, but something precious died within her. Twenty years later, on the eve of her retirement, her men found her body within the War Offices at the Wall. She was staring out the window, as if waiting for the sun to rise, waiting calmly for something only she knew was coming...

Today, Matsu Nokori's spirit stands watch over the Miwaku Kabe, and the two gate houses in particular. She is legendary among the Kitsu; many have tried to lead her on to Jigoku so that she may find her place in another life, but she refuses, claiming that her work for the Imperial Line is not complete. "I am the paste between the bricks," she claims. "I cannot forsake my eternal duty." The other spirits collected about the city hold Nokori in great respect. She demands absolute dedication to the protection of the city, its inhabitants, and the Imperial blood, and refuses to allow another mistake occur on her watch.

Through the Kitsu, the Otomo have become aware of this long-standing ancestral support, and have decided to use it to their advantage. By their decree, and with the Emperor's blessing,

Matsu Nokori has been nominated an official representative of the Imperial House, and now organizes the spirits the Kitsu draw to the city. This has had a tremendous impact on the use of the spirits as a tool – both at the gates and elsewhere in the capital.

It has also partially restored Matsu Nokori's sense of her own honor, which means that she is one step closer to passing on to Jigoku and away from the influence of the Otomo. The Kitsu realize this, but have not informed the Imperial House. The process is far more helpful to Nokori if she is left to her own at this point. Soon, very soon, she will leave, and the simple efficiency of the spirit community will falter.

Gate Defenses

The original builders of the Miwaku Kabe erected both gate houses, and their work shows. They are incredibly stout structures, standing some eighty feet in height and tapered with a sheer slant in both the front and back. The sides adjacent to the Enchanted Walls split between gateways leading into their interior and ramps for mounted traffic across their roofs. Countless arrow slits, murder holes and channels and built into the forward and rear-facing sides, as well as several balconies where the Ikoma can rally the troops. The physical gates have three portals that visitors must pass through – the crystal torii arch outside, flanked by nearly unscalable (TN 30) ramparts and situated beneath an archer's row; a portcullis-style barrier, where archers and shugenja stand ready to strike those passing through the double-file hallway within; and a yoriki station beyond, where final processing of visitors takes place.

THE (EASTERN) LION EMBASSY

Location #: 131

"Ahead and to our right, you will see the heart of Lion ethics and honor within Ootosan Uchi – Kanshisato, 'The Guardian Home'. From the awesome spectacle of their meeting halls to the barren simplicity of their maze-like training grounds, the Lion have remained a staple of excellence and rigid perfection since the dawn of the city.

"Each of the Embassies within the Ekohikei hosts one or more Ambassadors, the voice of their Clan within the Walls. They represent all of their respective families in legal and social proceedings, and govern the Embassy as a Clan holding. The current attache from the Lion is Ikoma Kimura, famed Lion poet and consummate master of the martial arts..."

The first of two Lion Embassies within the Ekohikei has been built more as a display of clan honor than a diplomatic post. Unlike its western counterpart, the building is a sprawling mass of impressive architectural feats and aesthetic design. The main entryway is a long wooden platform stationed above a series of submerged rock gardens. The stones set in the soft earth below are painted with bright colors, and depict many of the most famous Lion battles in Rokugani history. The last mural, depicting the Battle of Four Winds, has been situated so that the sunlight reflects upon it for several hours each day, making it appear nearly three-dimensional. The Kitsu meditate before these natural paintings often, and claim that – with patience – they can immerse themselves in the events they present.

The interior of the building is divided into two sections. The forward areas are devoted to audience halls, court rooms, and other standard diplomatic chambers, along with the stables,

personal rooms, kitchens, etc. The rear half of the building is more interesting, though far less accessible to the public. A personal project of long-standing ambassador Kimura, these areas split into many small training arenas, separated by large swaths of labyrinthine corridors and dead-ends. Parts of the maze can be closed off, grouping the smaller arenas together for larger pools of students or complicated training scenarios.

Ikoma Kimura retains several master sensei on the premises. Generals of the Lion Clan periodically reserve the training

maze for troops stationed at castles.

Ikoma Kimura, Lion Clan Ambassador

Rank 4 Ikoma; **Air:** 4, **Earth:** 3, **Fire:** 5, **Water:** 4, **Void:** 4

Notable Skills: All Weapons Skills at 4–5, Athletics 4, Bard 3, Battle 4, Lore (Bushido) 5, Meditation 4, Shintao 4

Other Options: Balance, Leadership, Proud

Ikoma Kimura is absolutely committed to Bushido and to imparting its virtues in others, particularly the Lion. His training practices require unswerving intent and a kernel of natural talent, which he is quite adept at recognizing. Characters with the Balance or combat-related Advantages will immediately catch his eye, and might even be able to convince him to train them personally. Others may hope to make the short list of candidates to be seen by his sensei. Both training regiments require the PC devotes at least six months of game time to the effort, effectively removing them from play. In return, they gain five times their

MATSU NOKORI (6 POINTS)

Characters who choose Matsu Nokori as their ancestor draw upon her incredible organizational skills, but are stymied by her inability to see her own worth. Their every action is clouded by the shadow of former mistakes, and they are plagued by a sense that none think highly of them. Their Honor may never be higher than their Glory as a result. But when working in concert with others (*i.e.* when there are more people near them than they have Ranks in Honor), they may spend a Void Point to change any rolled total by a number equal to the number of people present, including the samurai. This modifier may not be larger than three times the samurai's current Honor Rank (rounded up).

lowest Trait in XP (rounded up), to spend immediately as they wish.

THE PHOENIX EMBASSY

Location #: 133

"Observe the subtle beauty of the Phoenix Embassy, surrounded on all sides by simple yet delicate gardens and vast, haunting groves. The low buildings within are hidden completely from all angles save the top of the Enchanted Wall above."

"We are not welcome by the Phoenix, I'm afraid. They are reclusive, dedicated to their silent researches. Their Ambassadors – chosen from among the Council of Masters themselves – are rarely seen at court, save in times of grievous imbalance between the Elements. Within the Imperial City, as beyond, the Phoenix remain the most dire hermits."

"They do keep wonderful pets, however, as you can see from the long line of cages and wells skirting the perimeter of the compound. Would you like to pet one? The Phoenix do not mind, so long as we remain to this side of the animals..."

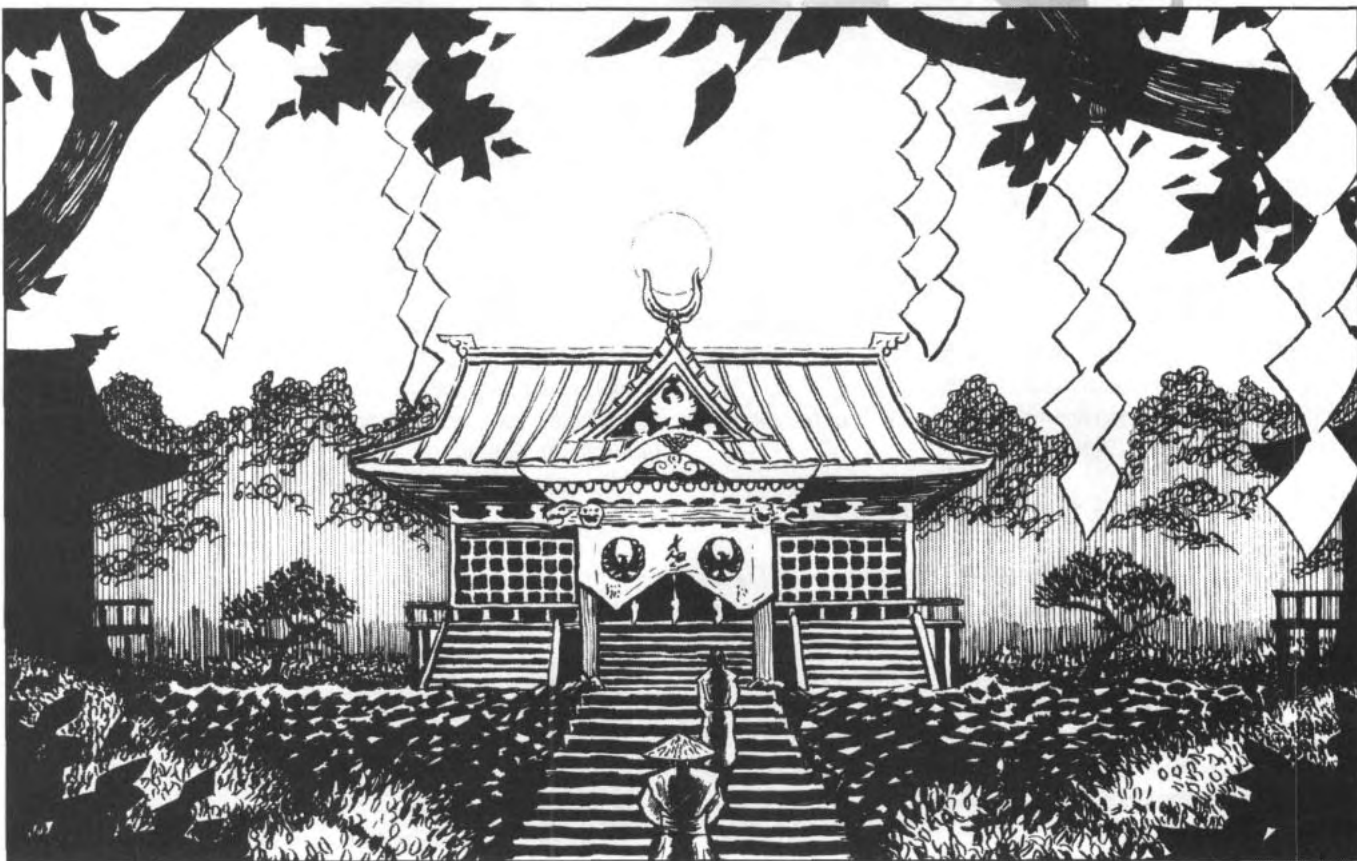
The Phoenix Embassy is hosted by a resident master shugenja, commonly one of the Five Masters or someone elected by them. Isawa Ujina currently serves this position; his reclusive nature lends itself nicely to his duties. He is responsible only for annual reports to Imperial representatives, and some interaction with the

Sentaku Tribunal; he typically delegates both duties to subordinates.

But there is another reason for Ujina's interest in the post. Recently, he has sensed a familiar "hole" in the Void within the Enchanted Walls. He suspects that the same horrible menace that bore his daughter now lurks near the Imperial Capital, and has offered to reside in the Phoenix Embassy to observe it. Over the last several months, he has sensed the Living Shadow within the Karada District to the West, hidden within the corrupt Taint there (see page XX for more). Ujina now sends regular scouts (Rank 2–4 Ishiken) into the Crab District, hoping to discover more.

His daughter, Kaede, has joined him at the palatial estate, and enjoys the solace the place offers. As the social "darling" of the Phoenix Clan, she entertains many visitors, though only those brave enough to venture past the alleged "defenses" of the compound. Akodo Toturi, her betrothed, and her rival and kinsman Isawa Tsuke, are common faces among them.

The Phoenix compound is surrounded on all sides by a moat-like water garden, small but cloistered groves which almost completely obscure Lady Sun, and an outer ring of animal domains. These cages, burrows, and recessed kennels contain a wide array of animals, all pets of the Phoenix and admired by visitors. Isawa Kaede often visits them when the sun is low and the air cool. Eta assistants maintain the animals' pens; they visit the compound regularly, but never enter.



Rumors suggest that these animals are an additional defense for the compound – that the Isawa see through them, or somehow “change” them to challenge those who offend the sanctuary. The truth, however, is that the animals protect the rest of Otosan Uchi from those within the Embassy. Ujina and Kaede built the ring so that visiting Ishiken would have a “sensory marker” to remind them of the outer edge of their territory. Beyond this ring, Ishiken use their abilities only with the utmost care, to prevent any mistakes which could send horrible atrocities among the populace of the city.

The Phoenix Embassy is one of the only locations in Rokugan which contains materials borrowed from the famed Isawa libraries. Transported here under tight security, the texts are guarded around the clock by Shiba bushi who have authorization to use deadly force against any who approach them without approval.

Isawa Ujina

Rank 5 Ishiken; Air: 6, Earth: 2, Fire: 4, Water: 4, Void: 8

Notable Skills: History 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore (Myth & Legend) 2, Lore (Ninja) 4, Lore (Void) 5, Meditation 4, Theology 3

Other Options: Lost Limb (Right Arm), Weakness (Earth)

Isawa Ujina has been the Phoenix Ambassador here for almost two years now, and has refused several offers to be replaced by other shugenja masters. Under his tenure, the compound has become a haunted, reclusive place to the Ekohikei populace, and gained a dangerous reputation which Kaede is working feverishly to dissuade (see below).

For more information on Isawa Ujina, see *Way of the Phoenix*, page 79.

Isawa Kaede

Rank 4 Ishiken; Air: 4, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Water: 4, Void: 7

Notable Skills: History 5, Kagaku 2, Lore (Shugenja) 4, Lore (Void) 5, Meditation 5, Shintao 5

Other Options: Clear Thinker, Dark Secret, Softhearted

Kaede is one of the only Phoenix living at the Embassy to regularly interact with those outside; the rest have taken on Ujina's attitude, and remain inside the natural border.

For more on Isawa Kaede and Tsuke, see *Way of the Phoenix*, pages 72 and 78, respectively.

THE TEMPLE OF ETERNAL REDEMPTION

Location #: 123

“Here we arrive at Shinden Eisuko, the Temple of Eternal Redemption. It serves as the last refuge for many wayfarers who come to Otosan Uchi with bright hopes and plentiful dreams, only to find sour loss and bitter despair. The Shintao priests within provide a safe home and warm meals to those in need. The current shinpu is Makasu, who has lived here for generations. He is as old as the wind, now long past visitors. But perhaps we can speak with one of the guests. Shall we?”

During Emperor Genji's reign, dozens of small Shintao temples were constructed near the capital, both inside and outside the Enchanted Walls. They included Shinden Eieisuko, which dedicated its efforts to salvaging the less fortunate of the city. Originally constructed by heimin workers as a refuge for their own, the temple fell into disrepair three hundred years ago, and eventually attracted the attention of the Yogo family, then housed at the Scorpion Embassy (see Location #135).

Shinden Eieisuko has been the crux of many scandalous rumors over the centuries, most of which stem from its Scorpion administration. The rumors span from the mundane (that the temple hosts a slave trader's “market” within the city) to the fantastic (that it holds one of the lost Black Scrolls). Makasu, Shinpu of the place for nearly twenty years now, vehemently denies all of the rumors.

Makasu, Shinpu of the Temple of Eternal Redemption

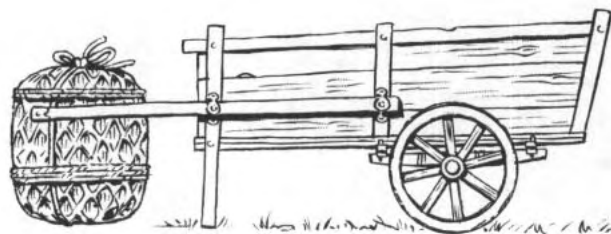
Rank 5 Yogo; Air: 4, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Intelligence: 6, Water: 4, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Astrology 4, Shintao 4, Theology 5

Makasu is very old (nearly 78), and is ready to move on to his next life. For many months after taking his post he fell under public scrutiny as a potential Scorpion plant (a suspicion that has plagued every Scorpion in the post). He denied the accusations, however, and eventually overcame them when it became apparent that the Scorpion held no interest in the temple or its activities.

Ironically, the temple is indeed a front for Scorpion machinations, though most at the nearby Embassy know nothing about it. Makasu's allies reside at the temple's sister branch, outside the Walls, in the Meiyoko District (see Book One, page 55). The two temples discreetly support each other, and the outer temple only makes one pilgrimage inside the Wall: on the 6th Day of the Tiger, the eve of the Festival of Triumph, when the streets are crowded and scarcely anyone notices... except the Otomo, who watch everything that happens within the Enchanted Walls with unrivaled fervor. They know that Makasu will have to choose a successor within a few months, and are very interested his selection. As a result, they have placed a spy near the temple to watch the Shinpu.

His name is Kokei, and he sells candy.



Kokei's Cart

"How are you, my friend? Well, I trust. Good. I have some friends I would like you to meet..."

Kokei, Heimin Candy Seller

Heimin (no Rank); Air: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Water: 1, Perception: 4, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Etiquette 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3

Other Options: Absolute Direction, Bland

Kokei sells *chitose-ami* ("thousand-year candy") outside the Temple of Eternal Redemption, and watches the activities of the monks and priests there for the Otomo. He is blind (or so everyone thinks), and has practiced the mannerisms of the sightless well to lend authenticity to his performance.

Once per month, on the first evening after the new moon, an agent of the Otomo purchases candy from him and discusses the night air or current events. The candy's rice paper wrapping contains an account last month's activities at the temple. Should something happen that requires the immediate attention of the Otomo, Kokei faces his cart north, toward the River of the Sun, whereupon an agent meets with him by nightfall.

THE SCORPION EMBASSY

Location #: 135

"Is the chitose-ame enjoyable? Personally, I have always found that it parches the throat, but some are quite pleased with it. Ah, our next stop is the Scorpion Embassy, a structure of such incredible simplicity that I often climb the Eastern Wall to admire it from a new perspective. Notice how many areas within look on all the rest."

"Magnificent! Tage-sama is here! May I introduce you? She is quite stunning, a portrait of her mother's charms. And destined for greatness, I dare say, a shooting star fallen from the heavens..."

The Scorpion Embassy is by far the smallest of any of the Seven Great Clans, composed of three independent, single-story buildings. The layout of the inner court is utterly innocuous, with only one or two corners where private conversations may be held, or activities conducted in private. At night, torchlight backlights the buildings, casting shadows throughout the rooms – shadows which the attentive may easily discern.

The Scorpion were well aware of the need for privacy when work began on their Embassy, but they also realized that any attempts at secrecy or diversion in its floorplan would attract as many as it dissuaded. Consequently, their Embassy within the Ekohikei is very obtrusive, with no secret passages or hidden alcoves anywhere to be seen. No wall surrounds the buildings, and all doors and windows are easy to reach from the street.

The Scorpion Embassy is also very attractive, hosting many gatherings of political and social celebrities each season.

Shosuro Sadato, Scorpion Clan Emissary (Ambassador)

Rank 4 Bayushi Courtier; Air: 2, Awareness 5, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Intelligence 4, Water: 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Bard 4, Commerce 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Investigation 3, Law 5, Lore (Politics) 4, Oratory 4, Sincerity 5

Other Options: Gentry, Precise Memory

The Scorpion know that their interests in the Imperial Capital must be defended differently than elsewhere. They know that guile and intrigue will only sour their presence in the city and eventually harm their ability to act there at all. So they have established a long-standing practice of appointing the most honorable person available as their Ambassador within the Walls.

The current example is Shosuro Sadato, whose talents lie in the fields of courtly life and Imperial law. He can quickly and efficiently spot the loophole in nearly any rule, and mentally catalog immense volumes of information (including the copious interpretations of legislature over the years) at the drop of a hat. Coupled with his natural ability in public forums, Sadato is a formidable opponent in political circles, whose loyalty must almost always be earned for a law to pass or legal action to commence.

Shosuro Tage, Scorpion Clan Infiltrator (and Control)

Shosuro Actor 4; Air: 3, Awareness: 5, Earth: 2, Fire: 4, Water: 3, Perception 5, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Acting 5, Courtier 4, Lore (Literature) 3, Poison 4, Seduction 2, Sleight of Hand 4, Sincerity 4, Tessen 3

Other Options: Great Destiny (Avatar of the Goddess), Heartless

Tage is precisely what most Scorpion aspire to be – devious, ruthless, and brutally proficient. Yet somehow she has convinced her neighbors in Otosan Uchi that she is warm, ineffectual, and selfless to the core. Trained by Shosuro Hametsu, and later by Bayushi Kyoto, Tage has been exposed to all the wrong influences, corrupted by everyone she has ever cared for, and used as a tool against the most respected and highly-trained enemies of the Scorpion Clan. Kyoto has stationed her at the Embassy to counter Sadato's rigid adherence to the law, to force him into positions where he must work for the Clan first, and to betray the trust he has gained within the populace.

Yet within Tage's breast beats the heart of the brightest star within the Empire. She is the one of four Avatars of a distant Goddess, whose return promises imminent and permanent change for everything and everyone in Rokugan. Only a few have noticed this spark within the little Scorpion, and none have yet identified it.

Sadato knows the truth of her upbringing, and what she intends for him. Unfortunately, he has yet to discern a way around her complex schemes, all of which are completely underhanded, and well out of his experience.

SORROW'S FALLS

Location #: 764

"At the edge of the Ekohikei, where the River of the Sun meets and pierces the Enchanted Walls, stands the great cataract known as Sorrow's Falls. Many legends surround this spectacle, at least a few of which are true, I'm sure. We will have a better look at the falls from above, when we tour the Enchanted Walls themselves. But for now, we should continue into the city's interior..."

Like many locations in Rokugan, Sorrow's Falls obtained its name for a reason, though countless lies over the centuries have buried it deep. Today, only the Ikoma and the Scorpion know the true origin of the title. It was their mistake that named the falls, theirs and that of a woman named Ayamari.

At the birth of the Empire, when the Imperial Line was still naive and unsure how to cope with a factionalized community, the Hantei made occasional mistakes. Compromises had to be forged, not all of which were in the best interests of the the Rokugani people. And every now and then, the Emperor and his subordinates committed atrocities that could shatter the people's respect in the Son of Heaven if they ever became public knowledge.

The Scorpion – whose promise to the Emerald Throne included protecting its reputation – covered up the majority of these acts, while the Ikoma – ever the obedient servants of history – documented the truth within their detailed records.

Many decades later, well after the threat of Fu Leng passed, the Scorpion attempted to steal the documents detailing the Emperor's early mistakes. An Ikoma – a young idealist known as Ayamari – was convinced they intended treason. She took the documents herself, destroying all she could not carry, and fled into the night. Hours later, her body was found at the base of the great falls (previously known as Amaterasu's Tears); the magistrates determined that she had flung herself to her death.

The scrolls containing the errors of the Hantei line were never recovered, and few within either clan now remember they existed at all. But deep within the natural caverns behind Sorrow's Falls, where none but Lady Sun herself can see, lies a small package, tucked beneath a sitting stone. A thick covering of wax protects the contents from the falls' mist, and they have not been seen by any in over 700 years...

SEAT OF KANJO GOVERNMENT

Location #: 96

"Many believe that the original founders of the Kanjo District were somehow displeased with the early Hantei, a theory somewhat supported by the odd placement of their council buildings. As you can see ahead, the compound faces north, away from the Emperor's Road, and little care is taken to facilitate an Imperial visit. Whatever the reason for such placement, the politicians of the Kanjo District have always been notoriously

aloof. The district largely manages itself, you see, and they have much time to indulge in their own private enterprises..."

The Kanjo governor and his council oversee their subjects from several spartan buildings facing the River of the Sun, across from the Performer's Quarter of the eastern Hito District. The buildings are quite beautiful, but have been designed to facilitate the needs of its district officials, not to please the eye.

The largest structures serve administrative and courtly functions, while several smaller ones are used as living space and private meeting rooms by the governor and his staff. The Sentaku Tribunal have their own building within the compound, as they do in all four governor's domains, where they meet those who wish to gain entry to the Forbidden City.

Attitude of the Office

Order is the preeminent concern of Kanjo officials, a fact that should be readily apparent to any who walk the district's streets. They are well-maintained and kept free of vagrants and trash with an almost fanatical attention to detail, second only to the Forbidden City itself. Visitors should be prepared to deal with aggressive and meticulous questioning when meeting officials or magistrates of this district; antagonistic or evasive responses will quickly earn them a bedroll within the local *yoriki* station.



Spirituality also pervades within the district, as the many temples, prayer arches, and spots of religious importance attest. Proper adherence to established doctrine garners the respect of district officials; ignoring of the ways of the kami is not only sacrilegious, but reprehensible, and results in prompt and permanent ejection from the Ekohikei.

Shiba Kagi, Kanjo District Governor

Rank 5 Shiba Bushi; Air: 5, Earth: 5, Fire: 4, Water: 3, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 1, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Naginata 3, Shintao 4

Other Options: Allies (Isawa), Obligation (Isawa)

Shiba Kagi is the least effectual governor within the Ekohikei, though not for lack of desire. Born and raised among fine, well-intentioned, and outspoken Shiba, it he was as shocked as any other when the Isawa nominated him for the post. With someone so obviously objective in the Kanjo seat of power, he could enact real change, despite the district's history of political corruption.

But the truth of the situation became painfully clear to Kagi a short time after his appointment: the Isawa intended him to be a figurehead, someone who could present *their* cause with a trustworthy face. This would place the Isawa in charge of one of the most influential properties of the Empire, and in a position of power within the Imperial House itself.

Kagi responded vehemently at first, intending to resign his post or commit *seppuku*, but two figures approached him early in his first week and asked that he remain. Two long-standing members of the Sentaku Tribunal (see below) offered Kagi a chance to shrug off the Isawa and take charge of his appointed duty. Their plan carried a terrible price, however, one that Kagi is still not sure he has the will to pay...

Shiba Omoko (previously Isawa), Wife of Shiba Kagi

Rank 4 Isawa Shugenja; Air: 2, Awareness: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 3, Water: 2, Perception 5, Void: 6

Notable Skills: Astrology 4, Cipher 3, Courtier 4, Dance 4, Etiquette 3, Knife 3, Poetry 4, Sincerity 3, Stealth 2, Theology 4

Other Options: Benten's Blessing, Dark Secret (Liaison with Habu), Obligation (to Isawa Family), Voice

Omoko's relationship with her husband is unusual in that they truly love each other. Imperial diplomats arranged the marriage, and both feared that the pairing would be disastrous. But their life together has been both enlightening and joyful. Were it not for Kagi's appointment to governor of the Kanjo District, they might have been able to live out the rarest of luxuries in Rokugan – a storybook romance, with only death to part them.

Instead, Kagi was posted in the Ekohikei, and Omoko followed. At first, neither of them realized that their marriage had been only one part of a long bid for power by the Isawa, who

knew that Omoko's love for her family was greater even than her love for her husband. Shortly into his term they called upon it.

The Isawa instructed Omoko to seek a liaison with Habu, an Oyabun agent living in the district. They threatened Kagi's career – and his honor – if she failed to comply. Worse, they threatened her family status, promising dishonor and the Ritual of Forgetting if she refused. Having little choice, Omoko proceeded, which set the stage for the Ikoma's plan. Using evidence of Omoko's indiscretions with a criminal *heimin* to sway Kagi's hand, the Phoenix family launched a bid for power in the Kanjo, sure that the district was finally theirs.

Kanjo Representatives of the Sentaku Tribunal

Then, two men approached Kagi with a solution to his dilemma – Kitsu Tanagi and Bayushi Kijensen, two of the three Sentaku representatives for the Kanjo District of Otosan Uchi. They promised to support his true intentions for the district, and the Ekohikei as a whole (assuming the legislature was not counter to their own plans). In exchange, they demanded that Kagi catalog his wife's movements and collect evidence of her betrayal. They promised to bring this evidence to light when the time was right, revealing the Isawa's dishonor and eliminating the threat to political freedom in the district... and to Kagi's career.

All it would cost Kagi was his beloved wife.

Kitsu Tanagi, Lion Sentaku Representative

Rank 4 Sotan-Senzo; Air: 3, Awareness 8, Earth: 2, Fire: 4, Water: 2, Perception 5, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Craft (Origami) 3, History 4, Meditation 2

Other Options: Bloodlines, Contrary

Kitsu Tanagi loves to walk along the banks of the River of the Sun and speak with the ancestors who gather near the *kami* of the currents. Many of them are heroes and victims he grew up with, "invisible friends" he knew as a child and who have been by his side all along.

Tanagi is a sensitive man, prone to severe bouts of emotion. He knows better than to allow his temper to flare near others (even near the more judgmental ancestors), and has grown more reserved as time goes on. Secretly, he looks to the Ikoma and wonders at their marvelous role in society – their ability to cry out in ecstasy or rage against the wind. Tanagi longs to share their abilities more than anything else in the world.

In his professional capacity as a member of the Sentaku Tribunal, Kitsu Tanagi presents a composed and analytical front, but his opinions are purely emotional and subject to severe over-reaction. Proposals often rub him the wrong way or incite unexpected responses based upon some deep-rooted fear or bias. GMs should present him as unmanageably level until he must make a decision, when he goes with his gut reaction to the situation at hand.

Bayushi Kijensen, Scorpion Sentaku Representative

Rank 4 Bayushi Courtier; Air: 3, Earth: 3, Willpower 5, Fire: 4 Intelligence 6, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Bard 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Etiquette 3, Intimidation 5, Law 4, Lore (Politics) 4, Oratory 3, Shintao 3

Other Options: Idealistic, *Junshin*

The second man to approach Shiba Kagi is by far the more domineering of the two. Bayushi Kijensen has always known what he wanted – to be at the top of Rokugan's political ladder. Unfortunately, he doesn't always understand how to do this without involving bloodshed or betraying his own ideals.

Kijensen believes in a simple philosophy, one many of his clan would call "archaic" – that there is a path to greatness without dishonor. He embraces the Scorpion ethic of absolute dedication to the will of the Emperor, but refuses to believe he must embrace dishonorable actions (*i.e.* the underhanded designs of the Scorpion) to do so.

Kijensen is not sure where these radical thoughts originated, but he has always looked to more "rigid" clans – the Lion and the Crane – with a high degree of respect. His irregular beliefs have caused him limitless grief among his superiors. Training at the Bayushi Courtier School, which challenged his ethics on a daily basis, was especially hard. For a time, Kijensen believe he would be expelled (or killed) when he refused to learn the "art" of poison, but an unexpected sponsorship by the famed Bayushi Yojiro – the "Honest Scorpion" – freed him from that fate.

The sponsorship also allowed Kijensen to pursue his own interests as an agent of diplomacy. Showing great aptitude as a spokesman, Yojiro supported his claim, arranging a fair, unbiased field of opportunity for him. Kijensen has parlayed the chance into an illustrious career and prominent position upon the Sentaku Tribunal of Otsan Uchi, where he believes that he can now help other virtuous samurai who struggle against the yoke of "acceptable dishonor".

The years he spent at the school taught Kijensen many things, but most importantly, they taught him how to be forceful. His forthright demeanor and candid bluntness have caused quite a stir among his colleagues, and stung several influential enemies. It has also set him apart from his sponsor, shattering his former reputation as "Little Yojiro".

Bayushi Kijensen is not above using the Sentaku Tribunal to his own ends, but generally votes for the common good of the Empire. He avoids using the abilities he learned at the Bayushi Courtier School (his Rank Techniques), as they exploit the weaknesses of others. Yet he has been known to lash out at others with these "underhanded" skills when he believes they are a threat to his hard-earned position or one of the "pupils" he takes under his wing.

Isawa Tenjaku, Phoenix Sentaku Representative

Rank 5 Isawa Shugenja; Air: 2, Awareness 6, Earth: 3, Fire: 5, Water: 3, Perception 5, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Commerce 4, Courtier 4, Intimidation 4, Law 4, Lore (Underworld) 4, Manipulation 5, Sincerity 5

Other Options: Clear Thinker, Gentry, Overconfident

Beside the two figures described above, there is one additional member of the Sentaku Tribunal in this district – Isawa Tenjaku, the spearhead of his family's machinations surrounding governor Kagi and his wife. Acting through intermediaries, Tenjaku ensures that the interests of the Isawa are upheld within the district, hoping to bring it firmly into their hands by the end of the current season.

Isawa Tenjaku is ruthless, an expert with emotional terrorism. Taking a lesson from the Scorpion (one which they seem unwilling or unable to employ within the Enchanted Walls themselves), Tenjaku spots a person's greatest vulnerability and manipulates events to use it against them. Every encounter with the subject is calculated to weaken the target's resolve. In the end, Tenjaku's enemies are demoralized and can no longer oppose him or take their own lives.

Kagi has been spared the worst of Tenjaku's talents; in fact, the two have not yet met. Tenjaku believes that Kagi is his own worst enemy, and intends to use the Shiba's own honorable intentions against him. This can be accomplished through others for the time being, freeing Tenjaku to introduce himself into the scene at his leisure... and under the conditions of his choice.

Tenjaku has little influence within the Sentaku Tribunal, and has turned his attentions to other opportunities in the city. Occasionally, he will support a candidate to endear himself to him, or entangle a candidate in his terrorist web. PCs will find him evasive and antagonistic until he finds a use for them, at which point he becomes helpful and supportive. This is when he is most dangerous, however, and characters may find themselves trapped by his kindness.

RYOKAN NO SAIGO SEKURA (INN OF THE LAST CHERRY BLOSSOM)

Location #: 68

"And here we finally come to our last destination for the day, the Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom. Rooms have been arranged for us here, so that we may be within easy walking distance of our first visit tomorrow. Tsuyuge, our host, is an old friend of the Imperial House, and has promised us warm beds, hot baths, and an evening of quiet entertainment..."

The Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom is a small, squat structure at the confluence of two major roads within the Kanjo District. Consisting of several sleeping chambers and a central feasting room overlooking the intersection, the place has become a favorite of local and visiting samurai alike.

The owner, a short and rosy fellow by the name of Tsuyuge, has lived in the Ekohikei for many years, and made several high-ranking friends (and – by extension – enemies), including Isawa Tenjaku of the local Sentaku Tribunal, and Kakita Yinobu, a

prominent member of the Imperial Court. His humble roots have drawn many lower-caste citizens to the inn, including many from outside the Enchanted Walls.

This division of clientele is not as jarring within the inn as one might think. Tsuyuge has a way of making everyone feel at home, even when they would normally be at each others' throats. He commonly welcomes visitors at the door personally, and conversations flare up between unlikely people (e.g. warriors and monks, Lion and Crane) with unusual regularity.

Tsuyuge, Oyabun Lieutenant and Tea Merchant

Heimin (No School Rank); Air: 2, Awareness: 4, Earth: 2, Fire: 3, Water: 2, Perception 3, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Appraisal 3, Bard 3, Commerce 4, Etiquette 3

Other Options: Allies (Many), Benten's Blessing

Tsuyuge specializes in brewing tea. Collecting leaves and recipes from all across the Empire, he vies with Ryoju of the Chisei District (see Location #109) as the "finest" brewer in the city. Many have made a hobby of comparing the wares of both, particularly just after the first caravans of the spring arrive; this indulgence has become something of a tradition in Otsan Uchi for nobility and commoners alike.

Tsuyuge makes sure that his establishment is open to everyone of all castes save *hinin*; he is full of mirth, which he extends to those who visit him. But there is another, more sinister reason for his generosity - Tsuyuge serves an Oyabun named Tenseko of the Karada District (see Location 15), who uses the inn as an unobtrusive gathering place for the city's criminals. Ryokan no Saigo Sekura has become a second home to street-thieves, court schemers, and corrupt Imperials, using the buildings to finalize shadowy deals, plan murders, and observe visiting dignitaries from a discreet distance.

Influence and Relations with the Kanjo District

On the whole, the Kanjo District maintains good relations with its neighbors and the Imperial Houses. Visitors are welcome, so long as they adhere to the demands of local magistrates and respect the Emperor's property.

SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

The Kanjo District maintains an attitude of "productive hostility" to its immediate neighbors. Kanjo officials see Chisei to the south as a beautiful if somewhat naive social locale, while the northern Hito District is respected for its strength but ostracized for its rough appearance and demeanor. The Kanjo keeps both adjacent districts at arms' length, but continues to work with them out of necessity.

THE MAJOR AND MINOR CLANS

As would be expected, the Phoenix and the Scorpion are well-received by the citizenry of the Kanjo. But the Lion, whose second embassy to the northeast commands far more respect, have tepid relations with the district. They continue to provide an Ambassador as a token of honor, though the burden has largely fallen to the Kitsu Family in recent decades, and will likely remain with them for the indefinite future.

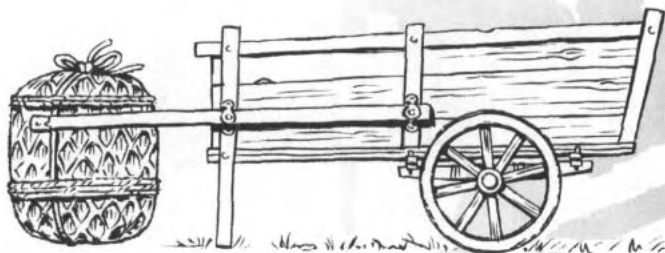
Most others, especially the Minor Clans, are ambivalent toward the Kanjo District. Few have a strict opinion of it, as most of its flaws hide behind a simple and unassuming smile. Peripheral to the two most traveled roads within the Ekohikei, the Kanjo receives a great deal of traffic but little attention, a fact that its officials celebrate daily.

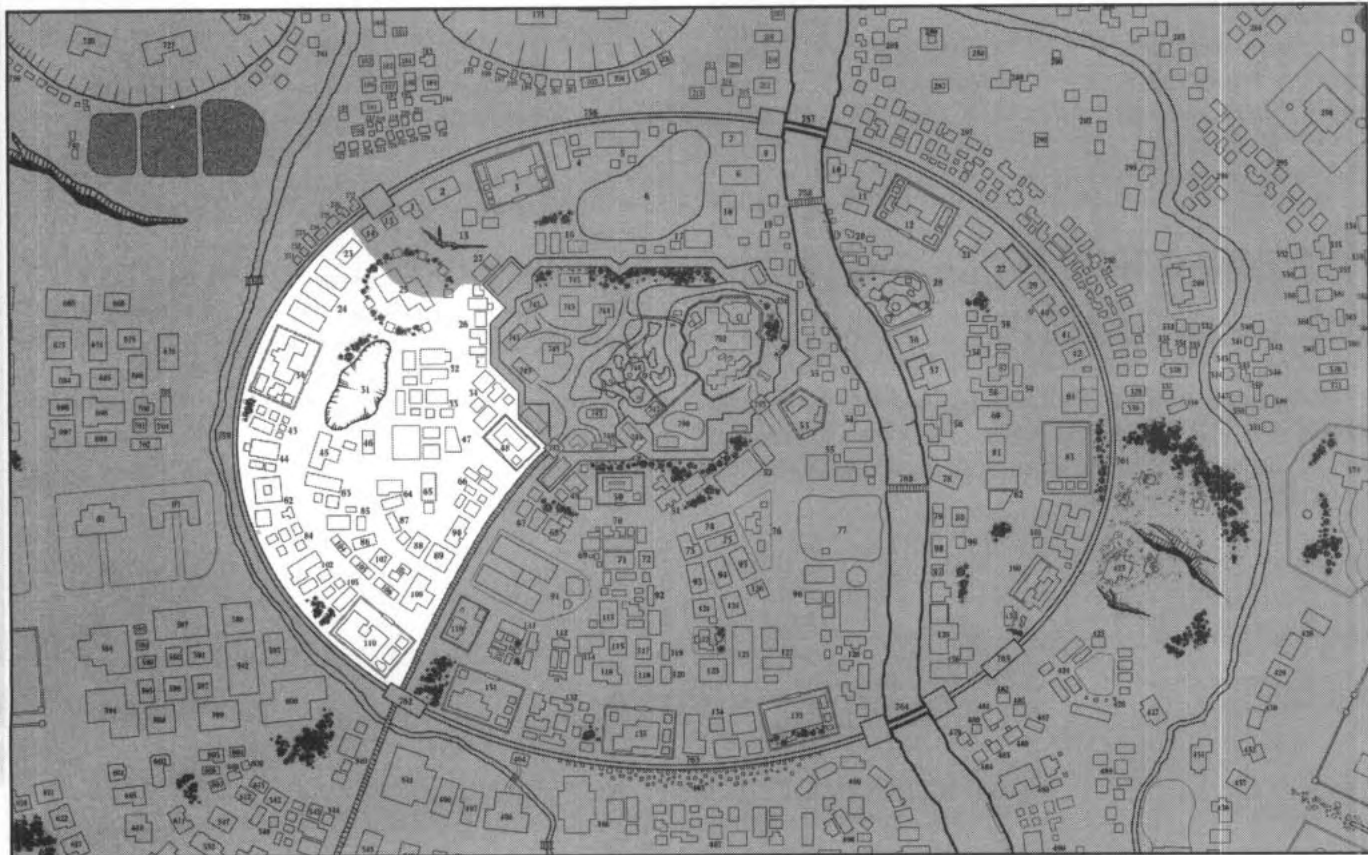
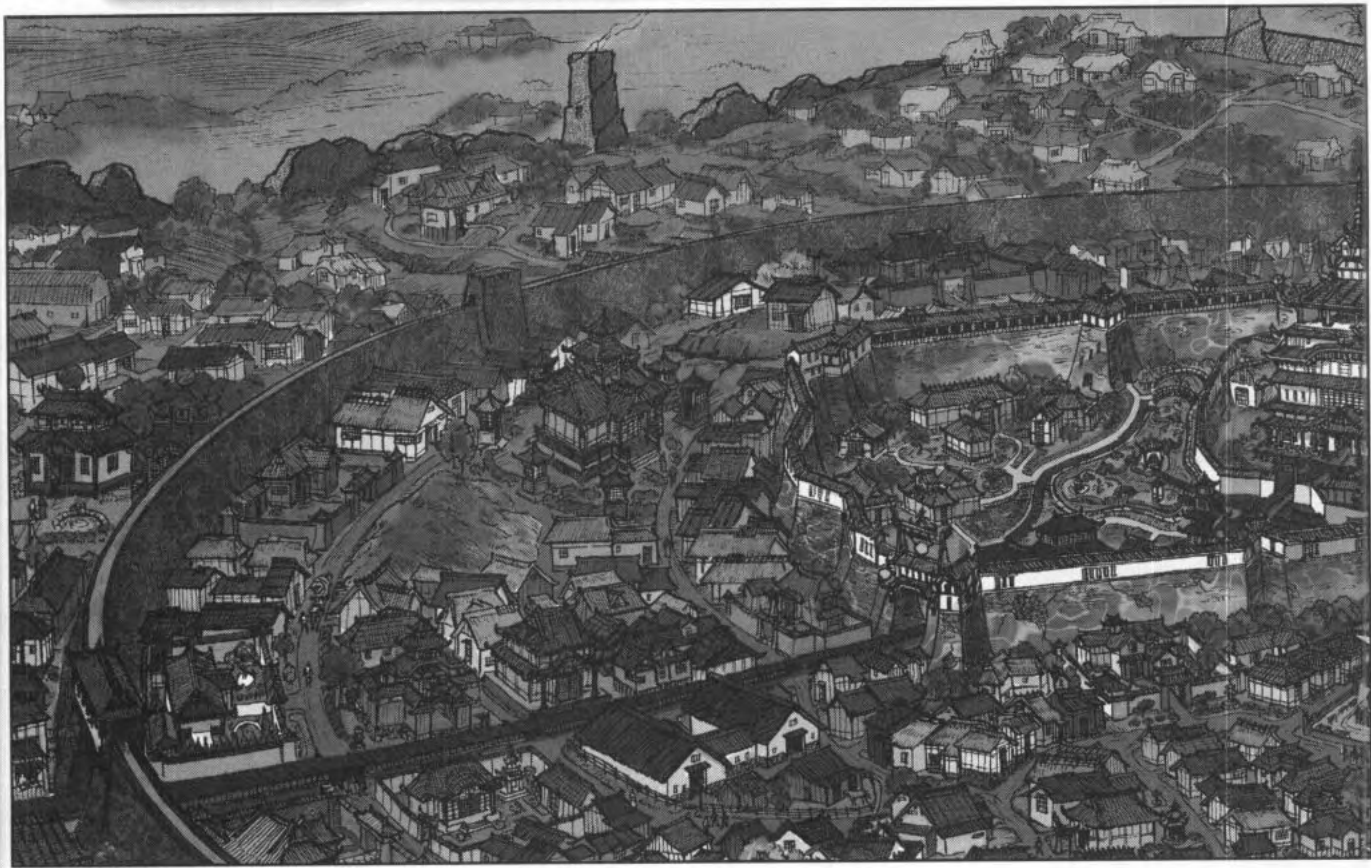
Customs in the Kanjo District

Beside the myriad events universally celebrated across Rokugan, a few demand special attention in the Kanjo. The Festival of Triumph, heralding the victorious defense of Otsan Uchi against the Horde of Fu Leng, consumes two days each year for the entire city (one for each day of the original battle). In the Kanjo, the Imperial Training Grounds shut down as the military receive a "social reprieve" to attend the celebration, and the only businesses commonly operating are tea and geisha houses.

The Kanjo District has another two-day event, called *Futatsu Shihai* ("Two Lord"), combining the festivals to the *Kami* of the Phoenix and the Scorpion. No other districts acknowledge this unique amalgamation.

The Kanjo also observes the Festival of Akodo, though nowhere near as fervently as the Hito District to the north.





Chisei District

Province Rank:	9	Imperial Rank:	9
Population Rank:	7	Production Rank:	4
Relative Wealth:	9	Political Influence:	8
Crime Rank:	4	Corruption Rank:	9
Appearance Rank:	9	Popularity Rank:	6

The Guided Tour – Day Two

The first pale stream of morning light pierces the darkness of your sparse sleeping room. Outside the barred shutters, the sound of fluttering wings draws your mind from the intoxicating clutches of sleep. Your vision clears as you blink to bring the world back into focus. Moments later, you hear a call from beyond your door.

Answering the door, you are greeted once again by the strangely soothing countenance of Miya Yurikago. Breaking into a wide smile, he shuffles past you and into the room, where he throws the shutters open and consumes huge gulping breaths of air. Turning upon his heavy cane, he stretches out his free hand as if to pluck an ethereal apple from the air, and booms, "Good morning! I trust you slept well. We have another long day of walking ahead of us, and we should be leaving soon. But there is time for a brief meal, should you require it..."

Exploring the District

"Unlike our previous tour, our travels today take us to a district conceived and constructed to please the eye and satisfy the mind: the Chisei District. It is the most beautiful locale inside the Enchanted Walls – with the exception of the Forbidden City itself, of course – and contains many of the greatest works of art in the Empire."

THE ROAD OF THE MOST HIGH

Location#: 563

"There are several points where the paths of lesser castes disturb the 'Emperor's Walk'; this is inevitable, since the Walk forms the border between the Kanjo and Chisei Districts. Like this one, these roads pass beneath the Road of the Most High. With the heavy planks of the Emperor's Road no more than a man's height above the ground, all travelers must bow to his grace if they wish to pass."

The Road of the Most High is a straight thoroughfare, cutting northwest through all three rings of Otosan Uchi before entering the Forbidden City. Though not the first structure to be built through these areas, it receives the utmost latitude; buildings have been moved or destroyed to accommodate it, and no less than twenty feet of open space (not counting the Road of Fertile Hopes) must surround it all times.

When the Emperor walks through the city on his road, all traffic beneath it must halt. All must bow before him as he passes; refusing to show the Emperor proper respect is a significant social infraction, subject to severe punishment. Even duels and crimes in progress have paused as the Son of Heaven tours his road, and may even come to an end if he intervenes or judges the participants.

Social custom demands that the Emperor's subjects kneel the moment they become aware of his presence. Occasionally, someone is caught passing beneath the Road of the Most High as he walks overhead; this is considered an incredible blessing upon the subject, but is only valid if the subject knows nothing of the Emperor's arrival; loitering near the Road of the Most High with the hopes of coercing the Emperor's blessing is a sign of gross distaste.

When the Emperor is not present, traffic and activity around the Road of the Most High follows the pattern around religious artifacts or places of worship. Travelers pay reverence to structure, and none save the *Kanrinin* ("Caretakers") touch the finely sanded wood planks or stones upon them. (For more on the *Kanrinin* and their duties in Otosan Uchi, see page 95).

HATAKE NO HENKYAKU SURUDOI ("THE FIELD OF SHARP RETURNS")

Location#: 109

"No blessings this day, it seems. Shall I suggest a brief respite?"

"The Field of Sharp Returns is known far and wide for its magnificent teas. Where the Inn of the Last Cherry Blossom has variety and the kindness of home to draw upon, this place relies instead upon quality. This distinction forms the basis of the rivalry between Ryuju – the master of this house – and our mutual friend, Tsuyuge."

"While this small building boasts several flavors of tea within, the leaves remain the same for each. The field surrounding the building is the sole provider of these leaves, which are said to be favored by the kami of the ground."

"The story tells of a prominent Crab lord of the Karada District named Ryoju: wealthy, popular among the noble caste, yet known best for his time as a general on the Kaiu Wall. He served the Crab diligently for years until a maho-tsukai tricked him into murdering his own lord. Consumed with grief, he considered seppuku, but was persuaded instead to take a position in the Imperial City, far away from the front line. Ryoju accepted, returning his family sword before embarking on this new chapter of his life.

"Ryoju was a kind and good-hearted lord, but his habits were uncontrollably lavish, and he soon found himself with little to his name other than this plot of land. The ground here was said to be haunted, and thus Ryoju ignored it until poverty forced his hand.

"When he arrived, he found nothing here other than the single plant we see before us now, then old and wilted, soon to die. The first night he spent here, he received a vision from the ancestor who had left him the land. The ghost directed him to dig at the roots of the plant, where he found a long steel case containing a heavy item wrapped in treated cloth. Opening the package, he found the very sword he had returned after his disgrace, buried since his break with the Crab.

"Betrayal welled within Ryoju and he lashed out at the spirit, knowing even as he swung the blade that he could do nothing to hurt it. Still, the ghost vanished when the blade touched it, and has not been seen again since. Ryoju thrust the katana into the soft earth before him, giving in to the rage that had ended the lives of so many goblins, ogres, and minor Oni. – right here, where the plant has flourished.

Following outburst, Ryoju sank into a deep and enchanted sleep. He awoke to find the small plant replenished, grown as if over an entire season. Its leaves were full and ripe, and smelled of the sweetest bloom. A passing old man found him amidst the field, where several more tea plants had cropped up, and picked a single leaf to chew upon. 'The finest I have tasted,' he claimed, 'and I have tasted many...'

"The sword was gone, but in its absence Ryoju's confidence returned. The tale ends with the founding of this place, the Field of Sharp Returns, and the beginning of Ryoju's celebrity here in the Chisei.

"Truth? Perhaps not. Some say that Ryoju himself first told the story, while others – many of whom are regular customers here – claim it was the old man, an Ikoma who spent many years dining here, before moving on. Regardless, the service is warm, and the tea just as warm. Shall we...?"



Just beyond the Road of the Most High, squarely rooted along the far eastern border of the Chisei District, stands a small building. The rooms are cramped, roughly divided between the personal living space of Hida Ryoju and his tea house, but visitors do not come for the scenery. The teas that Ryoju prepares here are legendary, held in much higher regard than the wider selection Tsuyuge offers in the Kanjo District. Ryoju's leaves derive exclusively from the field surrounding his establishment, which yield a full-bodied brew with a rich aroma. Many local residents recommend the place simply by pointing to the air around them and saying, "Follow the scent, and you will find it."

(Hida) Ryoju, Former Crab Lord and Tea Master

Rank 4 Hida Bushi; Air: 3, Earth: 3, Fire: 3, Water: 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 4, Hand-to-Hand 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Tetsubo 4, Wrestling 3

Other Options: Hands of Stone, Haunted (Ancestors)

Miharuko, Kolat Geisha

Rank 2 Ide Emissary; Air: 2, Awareness 4, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Intelligence 4, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 2, Honor: 1.4

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 3, Bard 5, Dance 4, Defense 3, Forgery 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Investigation 4, Knife 3, Lore (Underworld) 4, Manipulation 4, Oratory 4, Seduction 4

Other Options: Ambidextrous, Dangerous Beauty, Dark Secret (Kolat), Fascination (Samurai)

Other than Ryoju, Miharuko is the only other person who works at the Field of Sharp Returns, a slim and dangerous woman of twenty-three years. Born into the Kolat conspiracy, she has known little else in her life. Her natural beauty and reassuring smile guaranteed her a position within Kaouta's geisha network, a task she immersed herself in with vigor and enthusiasm.

Miharuko finds the allure of samurai culture exhilarating. She seeks positions where her talents could be matched against the finest samurai of the Empire, and has perfected a method of extracting information and favors from even the most stubborn warrior-poets. She specializes in luring out the emotions of samurai, robbing them of will and sense; when she can afford to, she even breaks them, making them her emotional slaves.

The Kolat remain in contact with Miharuko through a number of her recurring "customers", who are in fact other Kolat agents. They take the information she has obtained from her clients back to Kolat superiors outside the city.

Miharuko is the hub of Kolat activity in Otosan Uchi. Other agents – including the district governor Kakita Furuku (see page 36) – report their gains to her as well, which her masters filter out of the city for analysis and implementation. Often, the Kolat pass plans that will occur within the Enchanted Walls to her, and she gathers the personnel and resources needed to complete them.

When not consumed with her work, Miharuko tours the Inner City. Her reputation allows her entry into many places not commonly accessible to those of her social status.

SEAT OF CHISEI GOVERNMENT

Location#: 48

"The two most opulent buildings along the Road of the Most High belong the Crane. The Dragon - who have their own Embassy and by all rights should take joint responsibility for the area under the Otomo plan - have few of their order present, and rarely enough to manage politics or the populace. So the Crane manage nearly all the district's business alone. Fortunately, they are adept politicians, and well-versed in the intricacies of public management."

"The district courts and administrative buildings here open directly onto the Road of the Most High, and separate quarters have been constructed to house those Hantei who grace the Crane with a visit. Some even say that the Emperor walks through his own corridors - shielded from public view - when he arrives."

The government facilities of the Chisei conform to exacting specifications, determined by the finest architects and builders in the Empire. The shingles on both roofs are hand-painted, and replaced each year. The windows are hand-polished with wax to

sustain their sheen, and all the wood of the structures is lacquered a glistening auburn. The Crane ensure that their seat of government remains the most brilliant of all the Ekohikei. (This is not a difficult task, given the current political climate and governorship).

Attitudes of the Office

Though those of sufficient Glory may easily approach most governors in the Ekohikei, officials of the Crane are notoriously difficult to track down or gain the attention of. Kakita Foruku, the present governor of the Chisei District, is a prime example. He is aloof and distant under nearly all circumstances (i.e. unless the Emperor or a member of the Imperial Court is around), preferring the frenzy of the political "game" to quiet conversation over tea.

Foruku has a pervasive personality, always involved in as many aspects of his government as possible at any given time. While he is present in the district (that is, until things quiet down and he becomes bored), other officials mimic his sense of subdued chaos. Council members are blunt and unwilling to listen to anything they do not consider immediately relevant. Imperial magistrates walk briskly through the streets, their eyes darting about from one suspect to another, and trivial offenses are treated as serious crimes. Even the Sentaku are affected; proposals to enter the Forbidden City often become quasi-



interrogations, leaving many potential allies to the Throne shaken and uncertain whether they wish to continue.

Kakita Foruku, Chisei District Governor

Rank 3 Kakita Duelist; Air: 4, Earth: 2, Willpower 3, Fire: 3, Water: 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Calligraphy 3, Cipher 4, Courtier 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Law 4, Lore (Criminal Society) 2, Manipulation 4, Poetry 3, Political Maneuvering 4, War Fan 3

Other Options: Dark Secret (Kolat), Higher Purpose (Kolat), Irreproachable, Meddler

Kakita Foruku holds one of the most important posts in Otosan Uchi, and possibly all of Rokugan. He acts as the central political figure in the second-most influential district in the city (the first being the Forbidden City itself). Since the Dragon have so little interest in managing their affairs within the Ekohikei, the bulk of the responsibility has fallen to the Crane, and therefore to Foruku. This would make him the perfect target for blackmail or subterfuge – if he did not already belong to the Kolat.

Many years ago, Foruku consorted with a geisha named Miharuko (see Location# 109), a well-connected member of the ageless conspiracy. Over the four years that he visited her chambers, he became one of her “pet projects”. Today, he is little

more than a hollow shell, a tool and mouthpiece for the Kolat, controlled by his mistress Miharuko.

Foruku's position in Otosan Uchi, unchecked by opposition for control of the Chisei District's political resources, gives the Kolat an unprecedented opportunity to affect the Empire as a whole. Funneling ideology and contacts through the gates into the Forbidden City, gives them the leverage to focus on larger goals. Through Foruku and his associates within the Imperial Court (see pages 91-93), the Kolat hope to begin thinning the Imperial bloodline, arranging marriages that dilute the original Hantei blood.

Foruku has proven quite valuable to the Kolat, furthering their plans by years, if not decades. Still, they recognize the weakness of his position (someone as much in the public eye as he risks discovery with every concealed act). So the Kolat have reduced his duties in the Imperial City for now, instead arranging for him to travel to other parts of the Empire where he is similarly respected. There, he performs whatever twisted plots Miharuko has inserted in his mind, then returns to Otosan Uchi for another visit with his “mistress”. When the Kolat are ready to act within the Imperial City again, they will most certainly call upon Foruku's reputation as an anchor for their schemes.

Daidoji Aidogo, Chisei District Administrator

Rank 2 Daidoji Bushi; Air: 2, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Agility 3, Water: 2, Strength 4, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 2, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 4, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Wrestling 3

Other Options: Crab Hands, Hands of Stone, Kharmic Tie (Kakita Foruku)

When Kakita Foruku contends with matters of diplomacy or Kolat designs outside the city, administration of the Chisei District falls to his political assistant Daidoji Aidogo. Aidogo is unaware of Foruku's ties to the Kolat, too enthralled with his newfound influence to see the corruption within his new home. Aidogo is also blinded by a false sense of hero worship, derived from his gratitude to the Kakita for “saving” him from his previous life.

Aidogo was born among the peasantry of Foruku's home province in the Crane lands, and his fighting style has been heavily affected by his many years among commoners. More accustomed to bare-handed fighting than the use of a sword, Aidogo has often violently defended Foruku's honor when they are impugned. This has occurred infrequently of late, however, as Aidogo's inexperience has begun to show through his rough-and-tumble veneer. He is, after all, only a short way through his training, and not prepared to spar with heavyweight opponents.



Aidogo's reputation grew quickly after his arrival in Otosan Uchi, both for his abrupt rise from *heimin* brawler to political attaché, and for his unusual appearance. Aidogo never wears armor, even during training. Fabric rarely covers his arms (his kimono are tailored without sleeves), allowing everyone to see his thick muscles tracked with scars. The backs of his hands bear kanji, opposite the ritual tattoos of his Daidoji training. The left mark symbolizes "Force", while the two together are read as "Violence". He gains these marks while still among the *heimin* of the Crane lands, several of whom formed a gang that terrorized the locals; the kanji are their symbols. A PC who has traveled the Crane lands extensively might know their meaning with a successful Perception + Lore (Crane Provinces) roll; TN 20.

While Aidogo is in charge of the Chisei District (roughly six months out of the year, primarily during the winter), the attitude of local officials changes dramatically. Aidogo is less formal as Foruku, and more subject to emotions. His decrees tend to be less calculated, and the atmosphere on the street is less stressful while he is in charge. Most PCs will find him far more approachable than Foruku (unless they are daimyo or have urgent, daimyo-sanctioned business). And, of course, there is less chance of being drawn into a Kolat plot when they deal with Aidogo (unless they are using the Administrator against his lord, of course).

Chisei Representatives to the Sentaku Tribunal

The Chisei branch of the Sentaku Tribunal currently consists of only two officials – Kakita Foruku and Kitsune Miru (see page 36). Given Miru's naturally subordinate position among the Sentaku, the bulk of this district's Sentaku business falls to Foruku; this places the Crane (and, more importantly, the Kolat) in a position of power within another forum, one which offers them even more potential resources.

The Otomo have noticed this monopoly, and other parties have also quietly expressed their concerns about the balance of power within the city. There is little the Otomo can do against Foruku at the moment, however; he has firmly established himself (and his supporters) within the Imperial Court, effectively countering all opposition in the eyes of the Hantei. Plans exist to adopt a Dragon who will assume the clan's long-abandoned role in the Ekohikei, but a suitable candidate has yet to be found.

THE CRANE EMBASSY

Location#: 103

"The Embassy of the Crane Clan hosts the political elite when they visit the Imperial City – save those admitted to the Forbidden City, of course – and has gained a reputation as one of the most consistently refreshing estates in the Empire.

"This may have something to do with its annual re-creation by the occupants. Parts of the structure are repeatedly torn down and rebuilt during the Winter months, to appear fresh in the new year. This usually has more to do with fashion than utility, though changes will occasionally accommodate some current social or political trend. When the Yasuki family left the Crane,

for instance, the Clan demolished the entire wing their ambassadors had lived in. A new wing was similarly constructed for the Asahina when they were formed.

"The Shintao gardens, partially surrounding the central structures and forming their own domain within the compound, are perhaps the most telling example of Crane design. The Crane are famed for their artistry; since these gardens were designed and maintained by some of the most respected Ikebana masters of the clan. It is no surprise that they rank among the greatest influences in modern Rokugani aesthetics."

The Crane are one of three clans in Rokugan who pride themselves in their Ikebana ability. Of the other two – the Lion and the Dragon – only the latter have transcended the limits of the original art form. Both clans create "story gardens" (places where flora is arranged to relate a tale) but the Dragon gardens focus upon the literal and historical aspects of storytelling, while the Ikebana sites of the Crane have more liberal translations. They affect visitors spiritually and emotionally, leaving a different impression upon each person who experiences them. The biases, moods, desires, and philosophies of the viewers affect their impressions, and it is said that no two people who visit the Crane gardens together can agree upon the message contained within.

Crane Ikebana gardens are generally religious in nature, drawing upon Shintao iconography and images of the Fortunes and *kami* to elicit a spiritual or emotional response from the audience. Many visitors come to the Shintao gardens in an effort to evade a lingering depression or provide a clear and positive environment to work out personal issues.

Uses for the Crane Story Gardens

Gamemasters are encouraged to use the Crane Ikebana gardens as the setting for NPC encounters, player discussions, and other mundane encounters. They may then describe the scenery at their leisure instead of assaulting the players with a laundry list of random images, developing the gardens as an increasingly complex and changing environment. A collage tailored to the PCs' specific backgrounds can lead to moments of introspection without overwhelming the plot.

The best way for GMs to use the gardens is to tap into images and ideas that affect both the characters and the players equally, and to do so without tone or inclination. Diluting or muddling the imagery with opinionated or suggestive nuance detract from the stark presence Crane gardens are famous for. Plant the seed within the minds of the group, and allow them to derive their own impressions within the game.

Doji Shizue, Goodwill Ambassador / Courtier Apprentice
Rank 3 Kakita Artisan (Storytelling 2, Poetry 1); Air: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 4, Intelligence 6, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 4
Notable Skills: Artisan (Ikebana) 2, Cipher 3, Investigation 5, Lore (Myth and Legend) 4, Manipulation 4, Political Maneuvering 3, Shintao 4, Storytelling 5

Other Options: Cadence, Lame (Right Leg), Luck (2), Precise Memory, Soft-Hearted, Small

Doji Shizue often visits the nobility of Otosan Uchi and has her own permanent chambers in the Crane Home of the Forbidden City. But between weaving epics for the Imperial Houses, she spends her time at the Crane Embassy of the Ekohikei. Drawing upon the Ikebana gardens for inspiration, she loses herself for hours among the hedge mazes and Shintao rock gardens that dot the Crane compound, composing new material or simply observing the diverse beauty around her.

Recently, Shizue has been attached to Doji Hayashi, the present Crane Ambassador to the Imperial City. Officially, she is his pupil, learning the intricacies of courtly grace through the virtue of his many years at the Emperor's side. Unofficially, Hayashi has dedicated himself to broadening Shizue's already wide range of knowledge. They commonly spend their evenings in the Ikebana gardens (parts of which were created and enchanted by Hayashi himself), discussing Shintao, or practicing the art of visualization (transferring a mental image of scenery to the gardens using Ikebana).

Shizue has recently embarked upon a personal project involving a grotto beneath the largest bridge in the compound. Few save Hayashi have seen her work so far, but those who do have quietly encouraged her progress. Visitors to the grotto express surprise at her uses of light and shadow, noting the subtle way that the two blend together in a uniform statement of change. A few say that the grotto is taking on a dark aspect as it nears completion, and worry for Shizue's emotional state, but most simply rationalize that - like her stories of late - she is exploring the less enlightened strata of the human spirit.

A few (including Kitsuki Yaruma; see page 92) see something deeply wrong with the grotto, and fear that Shizue is little more than a vessel for a living story of great antiquity. They say that control of the Ikebana is far beyond her fledgling ability. Such voices remain silent for the time, however, either unable or unwilling to interfere. For the time being, the story of the grotto continues to unfold, moving inexorably toward its fateful conclusion...

Doji Hayashi, Crane Ambassador and Ikebana Master

Rank 5 Doji Courtier (Retired)*; Air: 3, Earth: 2, Willpower 4, Fire: 3, Intelligence 5, Water: 3, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Artisan (Ikebana) 5, Courtier 5, Craft (Woodworking) 4, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 4, Herbalism 3, Kagaku 1*, Lore (Rokugani Flora) 5, Oratory 4, Painting 4, Shintao 4

Other Options: Colorblind, Forbidden Knowledge (Keikoku, see below), Higher Purpose (discover the story of the Shadow)

* Hayashi has not been among courtly circles for many years, and his techniques have degraded. He may not call upon the Rank 4 or 5 Doji Courtier Techniques any longer, and will only be able to train Shizue to Rank 2 in his School.

In Shizue, Doji Hayashi has found the perfect means of discovering the secret of the grotto, which he knows to shelter a very old and very reclusive *kami*. Hayashi discovered the spirit shortly after taking the post of Ambassador to the Ekohikei. (Having helped to design several areas of the gardens during his youth, Hayashi was a natural choice to replace the former caretaker.) While wandering the gardens, he became fascinated with the grotto and the complex patterns he could create through carefully placed plants and statues to obscure the sunlight. He had never had the ability to discern muted colors, so the many shades of grey present in the grotto appealed to his limited visual palette.

Hayashi soon noticed that the patterns took on a life of their own, and that some unseen force seemed to guide his hand as he forged the new Ikebana exhibit. Unfortunately, he was not strong enough to interpret all of the impulses that the grotto demanded of him, and he abandoned his work for a time while he researched the area. It became apparent that this phenomenon had occurred to at least a dozen Crane artists over the centuries, all with varied effects. More than one account suggested the presence of a supernatural entity influencing the artists' work, but no evidence of such a creature appeared. In the interests of safety, work on the grotto was discontinued, and a large bridge built over the site to prevent further emanations.

When Doji Shizue began studying under Hayashi, he allowed her to walk the gardens freely, drawing from them for her stories, which the Crane Clan desired to nurture for use at court. She was immediately drawn to the grotto, where she followed the instincts provided by the place, using the rudimentary skill with Ikebana she had learned from Hayashi to make it physical. At first glance, he knew that Shizue's creation was a new piece of the Shadow-Story he had attempted to channel, and encouraged her amateur attempt. The story has developed enough for Hayashi to make out central themes and an antagonist that threatens all of Rokugan. Worse, the images seem to hint that the story has yet to occur, that the Ikebana impressions of the grotto are somehow prophetic...

Keikoku, kami of the grotto

The force behind the Shadow-Story is an age-old *kami* named Keikoku which has resided here since the dawn of the Empire. Prior to that, however, Keikoku witnessed something far more dangerous - the creation of the Living Shadow as it avoided Amaterasu and Onnotangu at the beginning of time.

The story Shizue is channeling concerns the *kami* greatly - the potential threat of the Living Shadow and its (mostly) human agents in the Empire. The Ikebana depiction focuses on the uncreation of the world, the gradual blending of light and dark until nothing but the grey void remains. Gamemasters may introduce the Shadow (or develop Shadow plotlines) using the grotto and Keikoku. The PCs may notice familiar sights within the shadows under the bridge, or even be drawn in to replace Shizue if she is called away.

THE SOUTHERN WALL AND ITS PROPERTIES

Location#: 159

"During the Battle of Four Winds, the second Shadowlands offensive struck this wall. No one knows precisely what forces the Isawa bound to it, but the effects were staggering. As the goblins and undead ranks at the front of the slaving horde approached, the wall opened up, fading away until nothing but its massive outline remained.

"The substance of the wall dissolved to reveal row upon row of shadowy figures, each a phantom copy of the attackers. Those with bows and ranged weapons opened fire upon their adversaries while the others engaged the few that survived the barrage and entered the insubstantial wall. The lesser creatures fell quickly before the phantom army, leaving only their Oni lords and their necromantic human allies to continue the assault.

"Many of these powerful beasts entered the wall just as their counterpart phantoms began to form. The battle raged inside the enchanted wall, and citizens of the Chisei District began to flee, fearful that one or more of the Oni were sure to burst free into the city at any moment. Even equally matched, it looked as if the enemies would finally pierce Otosan Uchi's defenses and take the city.

"Then something miraculous occurred. Just as several giant Oni reached the wall's inner edge, the air about them began to darken. The Oni slowed as the shadowy wall surrounding them crystallized, hardening once more. Moments later, the wall's texture returned and the fighting ended. Another of Fu Leng's armies was gone, presumably destroyed by the enchantments of this structure."

The Southern Wall of Otosan Uchi is an enigma. An Isawa named Naigama conceived and executed the enchantments upon it, along with his pupils, who represented the best shugenja in the the Empire. All of them were consumed in the process, swallowed up by the walls they helped create. No one could be certain that the wall was protected at all until the second wave of the Battle of Four Winds, when the attacking Oni were mysteriously destroyed by an army of elemental doppelgangers and the wall itself.

At least, they were assumed to be destroyed.

Many shugenja believe that the Southern Wall consumed the Horde, or trapped it inside the physical structure like the Western Wall (see Location 756). With Isawa Naigama and his pupils dead, and none of his research or notes available, there was no way of determining the wall's true force save old-fashioned observation and field testing.

After the Battle of Four Winds, the Asahina requested the right to study the wall using their

tsangusuri techniques. Hantei II and his council found this a novel approach, and approved the request; the Asahina became the official guardians and researchers of the Southern Wall. Within weeks, they created and installed thirteen talismans, fashioned in the shape of mirrors made from their relative components (wood, fire, earth, water, and metal, in successive cycles). The mirrors were designed to observe the spirits of the wall, and eventually to make contact with them. Alternatively, the Asahina could use the mirrors to watch the spiritual patterns of the wall, looking for evidence of the Oni or other corruption.

For a thousand years, the Asahina have dedicated their finest shugenja to the task, posting them at the Crane Embassy in the Chisei District. The Emperor continues to receive reports on the research, along with the Crane daimyo and Asahina Masters, though they have by this time become academic. Few even read them any longer, considering the guardian at the Southern Wall more of a symbol than a source of information.

None realize the dangers inherent in such ignorance...



Asahina Imagari, Guardian/Researcher of the Wall

Rank 4 Asahina Shugenja; Air: 5, Earth: 2, Willpower 3, Fire: 4, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Astrology 4, Calligraphy 4, Craft (Fetishes) 4, Engineering 2, History 3, Investigation 3, Lore (Chisai Kami) 3, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Meditation 4, Research 4, Tsangusuri 4

Other Options: Bad Health, Forbidden Knowledge (Secrets of the Wall), Inner Gift (Psychometry)

Since taking on his duties at the Southern Wall, Asahina Imagari has focused upon the possibility of residual life confined inside or merged with the structure. Per established protocol, he visits each mirror once per day, then tours the rest of the wall, looking for abnormalities or other evidence of supernatural forces. Periodically, spells and rituals are cast upon controlled areas of its surface, which is then observed for a reaction; so far, this has yielded no appreciable result.

Unlike his predecessors, Imagari performs his duties more for himself than for the common good. He firmly believes that mighty spirits reside or are trapped within the wall – spirits which he can call upon or free to increase his and power. To this end, he supplements his regular findings with empathic impressions gained through the use of his Inner Gift, hoping to eventually make contact with the spirits.

Imagari keeps most of his research to himself, providing abridged notes to his superiors. So far, he has maintained the deception, mainly due to the age of the puzzle, and the Imperial Court's general lack of interest.

Recently, Imagari has fallen ill, suffering from a physical malady no shugenja or healer can identify. Some even claim that the illness is a curse, passed down from the blasphemous actions of Isawa Naigama and his students. Imagari grows weaker by the day, fatigue threatening his secret goal. He presses forward regardless, sure that he is close to a great discovery. Visions of monstrous beings plague his sleep, calling to him from somewhere very near...

Mechanics for the Southern Wall

The Southern Wall of Otsan Uchi was certainly the focus of great power during the Battle of the Four Winds, but it has remained idle since the Day of Triumph. None have discovered the secret ritual Naigama and his pupils cast, or managed to elicit any reaction from the wall. After meticulous probing, the Isawa, Asahina, and other shugenja have determined that there is little hope of reawakening the elemental forces there. Player characters, regardless of their actions, cannot achieve a better result. If any PC shugenja gains permission to use the mirrors atop the wall, they find faint and indeterminable impressions of what might be spiritual activity inside the structure – nothing more.



THE MINOR CLAN EMBASSIES

Location#: 30

"Built upon the deepest southern site within the Enchanted Walls, we find a low and level compound, as unassuming as it is innocuous. The buildings within are devoted to the legal, political, and social representatives of the Minor Clans. Small, you say? Yes, the lesser councils of the Empire have scant room to maneuver within the Emerald City, speaking as much for their allotted housing as for their influence among the nobles. It is a shame, really, but there is no other place for them."

"This compound was once occupied by the Fox, who were the first Minor Clan. They had equal footing alongside the Seven Great Clans, even though their words had less impact than the others'. Early on, some even looked upon them as a surrogate for the Dragon, whose inactivity within the capital is legendary."

"But then, with the foundation of the Mantis several years later, additional arrangements had to be made. Another building was erected near the Fox Embassy for the Mantis. Eventually, as the other Minor Clans formed, more and more space was allotted, until the area was full to bursting. The Ekohikei Districts once comprised all of Otsan Uchi, if you remember, and the memory of Fu Leng's Horde and the Battle of Four Winds was still fresh in the peoples' minds. None wished to build outside the Walls, in case another army marched against the capital. Most of the space within the Walls was already used, and so more... creative... designs had to be instituted."

"Today, all the Minor Clan Houses crowd into a single compound roughly the same size as the Great Clan Embassies. Most Minor Clans, knowing their place and realizing how little impact their presence has, choose to remain in their own homelands. But there are a few – most notably the Fox, Mantis, and Wasp – who retain permanent representatives here. If you stay in the city long enough, you will eventually have to meet with them. Let me introduce you..."

The Minor Clans in Otsan Uchi have very tight quarters, consisting of only three small buildings. The residents and visitors must tolerate far more personal closeness than most Rokugani. Permanent hosts have learned to cope with the odd living arrangement, and even developed ways of making visitors more comfortable. Even so, the close confines are often jarring, and the resident diplomat must make extraordinary efforts to calming flared tempers.

The compound must carefully conserve space, and most residents have only one small room to themselves. Personal belongings are small and portable, and commonly limited to necessities. All available yard space is devoted to Ryoshen's training grounds and the headquarters for his emergency teams (see below), and the compound's horses must stay across the Emperor's Road in the Kanjo District (Location #91).

Privacy is also an issue within the compound. With so little space to devote to "polite conversation", shoji screens and other common impediments to eavesdropping are nearly useless. The

diplomats often discuss sensitive matters outside the compound, where words cannot be casually overheard and lips cannot be read easily. Minor Clan Ambassadors often arrange meetings at tea houses or even near the walls, never the same place twice. PCs who need to speak to the Minor Clans may find themselves discussing trade agreements or naval diplomacy over tea at the Field of Sharp Returns.

Permanent Residents

There are three Minor Clan Ambassadors who have made the Embassy compound their home. They reside within the central (largest) structure, the apex of all activity inside the low walls. Together, the Fox, Mantis, and Wasp dominate the Minor Clan Embassies, acting as their voice, face, and hand.

Kitsune Miru, Fox Clan Ambassador and Sentaku Aide

Rank 3 Ide Emissary; Air: 3, Earth: 3, Fire: 3, Water: 3, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Commerce 3, Courtier 4, Etiquette 3,

Heraldry 4, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 4, Oratory 3

Other Options: Allies (Sentaku Tribunal), Benten's Blessing, Obligation (Sentaku Tribunal), Voice

Kitsune Miru is ideal for the Sentaku Tribunal's purposes. He serves as a Tribunal go-between, one of their most capable. He is intuitive and agile enough to keep up with the finest courtiers of the Ekohikei, yet gullible enough to fall for their countless schemes. The Sentaku use his talents and network of contacts to pave the way for minor negotiations (especially those they cannot risk involving themselves in personally).

Officially, Miru reports to Kitsune Meisuko (see page 92), a Fox Ambassador of impeccable standing who serves the unprecedented role of Imperial Courtier. She is the only Fox to ever join the Emperor's personal courts or reside at the Imperial Palace, and she revels in her political clout. Occasionally, she demands errands or tasks of Miru, her contact with the outside world. This calls him away from the city several times a year; traveling PCs might meet him upon the southern roads of the Empire during these periods. When not on the road, he can be found scurrying about Otosan Uchi for his two masters.

Yoritomo Hogosha, Pragmatic Mantis Ambassador

Rank 2 Doji Courtier; Air: 2, Awareness: 6, Earth: 2, Willpower 3, Fire: 3, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 2, History 3, Lore (Imperial Wars) 3, Manipulation 2, Oratory 3, Sincerity 3

Other Options: Ear of the Emperor, Great Destiny (bring Minor Clans together), Imperial Spouse, Lost Love (Kyosha)

Hogosha is the only Mantis representative permanently posted within Otosan Uchi. Officially, he acts on behalf of the Mantis merchant collective within the Imperial Court, ensuring that the Emperor's edicts are interpreted in ways that best serve their commercial interests. Though he is a skilled orator and adept in

his role, his true calling is that of peacekeeper. The Mantis Ambassador concerns himself with the well-being of the Empire as a whole. He commonly delegates smaller issues to one of his aides or trusted allies, focusing instead upon the broad picture. What actions can strengthen the bonds between the Major and Minor Clans? How can the integrity of the Empire be maintained in the face of progressive thought?

The Seven Great Clans often ignore Hogosha's actions, and seem incapable of looking past their own petty biases. But they have found an attentive ear among the Minor Clans, many of whom seem eager to adopt a more symbiotic relationship with other powers. As a result, Hogosha has become a bridge between them, facilitating relations that might otherwise never occur.

The Sentaku Tribunal considers Hogosha an unavoidable nuisance, and often places him and Kitsune Miru at odds with each other. Recently, it has begun collecting information about Kiyosha, Miru's beloved Miya bride, who died during a monsoon at the island lake of Nemuiyama three years ago. What they intend to use this information for is uncertain, though possibilities range from Shosuro intervention to bribery (if they can collect something which links Hogosha to her death).

Ryoshen, Wasp Ambassador and Bounty Hunter

Rank 3 Wasp Kyujutsu; Air: 4, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Agility 6, Water: 4, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Animal Husbandry 2, Archery 4, Athletics 5, Defense 2, Fletcher 3, Hunting 4, Investigation 4, Knife 3, Lore (Otosan Uchi Knowledge) 4, Stealth 5, Sleight of Hand 3

Other Options: Allies (Dragon and Magistrates), Ascetic, Combat Reflexes, Nemesis ("Togashi Kenjin"), Quick Healer

The elusive figure known as Ryoshen first came to the Imperial City nearly ten years ago, slipping in with forged travel papers identifying him as a Kitsuki Magistrate. He had easy access to the few Dragons within the city, including Togashi Kenjin (see Location 31), an old friend who had hosted the Wasp's family when they were both younger men. Ryoshen looked to Kenjin as a father figure, remembering how the Dragon had cared for him after both his parents were murdered by brigands.

On this occasion, Ryoshen arrived in the Imperial City with a very personal mission – to destroy a monstrous creature he had first encountered in the Shinomen Forest. The beast was like a cat, though it walked on two legs and moved with the speed of the fastest horse. Worse, it could shift its appearance at will, murdering and assuming the identity of whomever it desired. It attacked and replaced Ryoshen's traveling companion and best friend, Tsukemei, while they were en route to Reihado Shinsei. Later, the creature tried to consume Ryoshen as well, but he drove it off with a pair of well-placed arrows.

Or so Ryoshen thought. Weeks later, the shapeshifter resurfaced, stole the face of his lord, and began ordering the Wasp and his men into positions which threatened their lives. Several more of Ryoshen's friends died before he realized the deception

and confronted the monster once again. This time, it only narrowly escaped, suffering a second near-fatal wound in the process.

For weeks, Ryoshen hunted the beast across Rokugan, always one step behind it. The shapeshifter would assume a role among the populace of a remote location for a time, until Ryoshen closed on its position and it would move on. Each time, it seemed that the bushi had finally trapped the beast, when it would slip away once more.

Then, ten years ago, Ryoshen entered the Imperial Capital, where he was sure the shapeshifter was hidden. The first person he contacted was his old mentor, Togashi Kenjin, whose spiritual journey had brought him to the peak of Seppun Hill (see his description in Location 31 for more). The two discussed Ryoshen's mission for many hours, pausing only when Amaterasu's rise reminded them of the hour.

This meeting would prove to be Ryoshen's worst mistake, though one that he is still unaware of. After his first day of unsuccessful hunting among the cramped streets of the city, he returned to his friend for another evening of enlightenment. There, the body of the being he had tracked for so many months lay at the old Dragon's feet, its spine shattered and its face a pallid mask of fear.

Ryoshen asked Kenjin what had happened, and the old monk responded, "What has been is gone. Only I remain..."

Stunned by the abrupt conclusion of his long quest, Ryoshen asked the Togashi for advice. "What shall I do, now that all I have sought is mine?" Kenjin replied, "There is no greater teacher than a student. You must show the rest what you have learned."

Since that day, Ryoshen has remained in Otosan Uchi, residing within the Minor Clan Embassies, and busied himself with the business of passing on his knowledge of the hunt to the magistrates of the city. Having little interest in politics, Ryoshen has dedicated his remaining life to the enforcement of law - particularly here, in what he feels is his only true home.

Fascinated with the theme and function of the Imperial Magistrates, Ryoshen focuses his attention to their cause, assisting them whenever he can. He often advises younger and less experienced magistrates during challenging cases, and stories of his preternaturally keen hunting skills have reached beyond the Enchanted Walls. He is especially attuned to the streets of the city itself; the magistrates who work in Otosan Uchi consider him the finest hunter the capital has even seen.

Ryoshen donates the majority of the koku he earns to the Minor Clan Embassies or Togashi Kenjin, whose quick actions brought peace to his turbulent heart.

Or so he believes...



Extended Guests

Several ambassadors of the remaining Minor Clans (Dragonfly, Hare, Badger, Centipede, and Falcon) are present at the Embassies at any given time, yet none have permanent quarters devoted to them. Their representatives come and go, assigned and reassigned as the need arises; sometimes months pass between their appearances. These political factions almost invariably work independently of one another, and alliances made between them are temporary at best. Yoritomo Hogosha remains the foremost diplomat among them; his endearing attitude and boundless optimism often quell potential arguments within the small compound.

Empty Seats

Three Minor Clans rarely within the Ekohikei - the Hare, the Sparrow, and the Tortoise. The first remains embroiled in the Lion-Crane war, and the second concern themselves primarily with maintaining their meager economy at home. As for the Tortoise, they remain outside the city, as any upstanding Rokugani could tell you. They still maintain good relations with the political and social leaders of Otosan Uchi, and Kasuga Kemmei visits Hogosha monthly, if not more. (For more on the Tortoise Clan and their function within Otosan Uchi, please see *the Way of the Minor Clans*.)

SEPPUN HILL AND TOGASHI KENJIN

Location#: 31

"This small hill has been the site of several pivotal moments in Rokugani history, and remains the only parcel of land within the walls to avoid construction. Here, Seppun first encountered the Great Ones and received their precious message. And here, during the first days of the Empire, the Kami Togashi stood and watched as his siblings fought for the right to guide our fate. Many believe this place to be a confluence of spiritual activity, where the dead gather to rejoice in the glory of the living.

"Countless visitors come to Otosan Uchi merely to climb this low peak, hoping to catch a glimpse of the divine. Some visit regularly to meditate. But only one has dared to linger through the night - an old Dragon named Kenjin. He was an old Togashi whose body was covered with images, painted upon his skin with the blood of his kin, so that only his eyes remained unblemished: eyes that carried wisdom found only at the brink of madness. Legend states that he had been painted once too often, and that the ink had taken his mind, or his spirit; one moment from passing away from us, slipping forever into the void of death.

"He came to the Hill, leaning on a gnarled wooden cane, and waited, for what no one could be certain. In the end, a heimin asked him why he sat on holy ground, and he replied, 'I seek questions.'

"Confused, the heimin responded, 'Questions, Togashi-sama? Do you not mean answers?'

"But Kenjin explained, 'I have found all the answers I need. Today, I must know there is still more to search for.'

"Since then, people come to Kenjin with their questions – about the world we live in and those beyond. He always replies, but rarely has answers. He is an enigma to those who live here, and a spectacle to those who visit. We care for him. We bring him food and water, and hope that someday, he will regain the uncertainty that will let him rest..."

Togashi Kenjin is a familiar landmark in the Ekohikei. A worldly monk who asked for nothing more than the chance to help others, he gained a reputation for leaving those who come to him feeling less burdened by their problems. But ten years ago, something changed. He became more reclusive, less interested in his collection of questions. He began asking for something in exchange for his many long years of service to the city.

The reason for this is simple: Togashi Kenjin is dead, murdered by a shapeshifting creature known as Raniyah the Sly, who traveled from the distant Ivory Kingdoms (beyond the Shadowlands to the west) in search of new victims. She is a Rakshasa, one of only a dozen or so left in the world – ancient, immortal, and content only when entertained. It is unfortunate – most of all for the citizens of Otosan Uchi – that she has chosen them as her new playthings, and that she derives such pleasure from their pain.

Arriving with the Wasp bounty-hunter Ryoshen (see Location 30), Raniyah found Otosan Uchi a rich and untapped source of excitement, in which nearly everyone had a weakness she could exploit for her own amusement. Following Ryoshen to Seppun Hill, where he sought wisdom from his old companion, Kenjin, she concocted the latest way to torture him. During the evening hours, before Ryoshen's next visit, the Rakshasa approached Kenjin with a challenge. She revealed her true form to him – that of a tall and lanky cat-like beast – and offered him the greatest question he would ever hear if he could demonstrate the power of one of his tattoos. She pointed to the Chameleon as she spoke, and he knew what she desired. Curious, and unwilling to forsake such an opportunity, Kenjin complied, shifting his form to match hers.

Then she struck. With one decisive blow, his spine was cracked and his spirit ripped from the cat-like form. Using her natural ability, she adopted Kenjin's identity, and took credit for the "monster's" death when Ryoshen arrived. Then, drawing from his love of the hunt, she guided him into a position inside the Enchanted Walls which she could use to entertain herself, while continuing their little game in a new arena. Today, she relishes the control she has gained over her former tracker, urging him into one dangerous situation after another.

She has different uses for those who come to "Kenjin" seeking peace. Often, she pits one against another, and watches the two bicker, or fight, or duel. Raniyah loves to conceive and execute complicated designs using her "toys", and her heart leaps as her carefully prepared intrigues dissolve into utter chaos. The tragic ironies so common in Rokugan hold special interest to her;



scripting and directing the downfall of star-crossed lovers or noble lords.

Raniyah suffers from two potential weaknesses, stemming from the length of time she has lived with her current form and the spiritual strength of Seppun Hill. First, her appearance is not static; her "tattoos" shift and change periodically, and she occasionally gains or loses one altogether. (At first, she played with this condition, using it to confuse or startle her "food", but she has long since lost control of it.) Second, she may no longer have the ability to shift back into her native form. She has not done so in over two years, and Rakshasa – who absorb not only the likeness, but also the memories and emotions of their victims – are not meant to retain other forms for so long. The strange effects of the Hill upon her may "lock" her into Kenjin-form, preventing such a shift.

Raniyah the Sly, Rakshasa Terrorist And Dragon Impersonator

Not Ranked (No Techniques); Air: 7, Earth: 5, Fire: 3, Agility 5, Water: 3, Perception 6 *

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Astrology 2, Athletics 5, Defense 4, Hand-to-Hand 5, History 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Lore (Ivory Kingdoms) 4, Manipulation 4, Mimic 3, Mountaineer 4, Rattling Speech 2, Sincerity 2, Stealth 5, Traps 4

Other Options: Absolute Direction, Daredevil, Fascination (humans, esp. when toying with them), Heartless, Perfect Balance

Weapons: Claws 2k2

* Note that, being a non-human creature from outside Rokugan, this monster's Traits may exceed 5 without Shintao 3.

Gamemaster Uses for Raniyah

There are two primary ways to use Raniyah in Otosan Uchi adventures. The first, as described above, involves the characters visiting Togashi Kenjin at Seppun Hill. She may guide them into any number of uncomfortable, demeaning, or dangerous situations, any of which could form an adventure in itself. Also, if the Gamemaster is interested in a direct confrontation with an exotic enemy, the PCs could encounter Raniyah during one of her nightly "hunts" for food (one or more of the populace). The ensuing cat-and-mouse struggle across the roofs of the city might be an entertaining diversion from the standard magistrate game.

SOUTHERN GUARD POST

Location#: 13

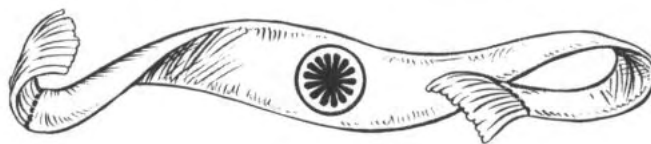
"One of the most defensible locations in the entire city, the southern guard post divides the Enchanted Walls to the south and west. A gate was planned here during the original design for Otosan Uchi, when the Enchanted Walls marked its outermost boundaries. But the immediate threat of the Shadowlands Horde, coupled with the independent construction of the revered Temple to the Seven Fortunes, revised the layout.

"So it became an independent guard station from which commanders of the city guard orchestrate divisions of men attached to all four Enchanted Walls. It serves a secondary headquarters for the military forces in the city during times of peace, but can easily be converted to a field operations center when Otosan Uchi is threatened. It has a straight line of sight to the outer walls – disturbed only by the Temples to the Kami – making it a unique hub of martial activity in the city as a whole."

The only entrances to this structure are on top of the adjacent Enchanted Walls, providing the military outpost inside with unprecedented security. Two portcullis-style barriers shelter the gates at the top of the walls; the remainder of the building's top floor is a barracks housing the hand-picked soldiers of the guard. Should these defenses be pierced somehow, the interior of the structure is constructed around one central staircase which opens onto additional soldier quarters on each level. For this reason, some of the most prized military artifacts in Otosan Uchi are kept

at the lower levels of this guardhouse. Even magical explosives and the strongest Oni have not breached these rooms; the walls are more than ten feet thick.

All of the corridors, stairwells, and interior doorways of this massive structure are large enough to accommodate mounted troops. At the lowest levels, riders must duck, but can still traverse the entire floorplan if they wish. Armories, vaults (for magical as well as monetary protection), barracks, command and war offices, training rooms (both for groups and individuals), and other chambers devoted to the military comprise this building's contents.



TEMPLE TO THE SEVEN FORTUNES

Location#: 25

"Here we come to our final destination for today, the Temple to the Seven Fortunes. Constructed on the border between the Chisei and Karada Districts, these buildings are devoted to worship of the Seven Great Fortunes and edification of the populace about their importance. Among the rooms within the central structure is a small classroom where noble children are tutored in proper reverence. Shall we sit in...?"

There is one small temple devoted to each of the seven primary Fortunes – Daikoku, Ebisu, Benten, Bishamon, Fukurojin, Jurojin, and Hotei. These buildings are like small pagodas, containing a cistern, several tatami mats, and an alcove for storing religious paraphernalia. Only a small number of people (perhaps thirty) can kneel within these structures at once, and standing is difficult. Surrounding these structures are several dozen feet of soft and well-tended grass, which become additional seating during festivals and other important religious events.

The central building houses one large multifunctional shrine, used for daily and weekly meditational services, community meetings, marriages, and other important events. This room is sunken several feet below the rest of the first floor, level with the ground below, and open in several places so that worshippers may stand upon bare earth within the temple. A collection of smaller chambers surround this room, including classrooms (separated by the age of the children), a large storeroom, and the personal chambers of Taro, the caretaker of the Temple.

Taro, Caretaker of the Temple of the Seven Fortunes

Not Ranked (Monk*); Air: 2, Awareness 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 3, Water: 2, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Astrology 1, Bard 2, Bojutsu 2, Calligraphy 3, Cipher 3, Craft (Wood-painting) 2, Etiquette 2, Falconry 2,

Meditation 2, Oratory 2, Painting 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 1, Stealth 1, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 2

Other Options: Ascetic, Crafty, Dark Secret (Kolai Informer)

Taro has resided at the Temple of the Seven Fortunes for the last several years. He is small of stature, with a shaved head and thin limbs and fingers. He often remains silent for several weeks at a time, as the Temples are open to the public and worshippers rarely require his assistance. His non-confrontational nature ensures that he leaves only the faintest impression upon visitors. Taro is nearly invisible, regardless of his high-profile position in the city.

This is the primary attribute that attracted the Kolai to him. Always interested in subtlety and grace, the conspiracy contacted him some time ago, playing his deeply-rooted sense of logic against his faith. Within weeks, they had stripped him of his spirituality, replacing it with their own non-religious agenda. He then transferred to the largely self-operating Temple of the Seven Fortunes, where his natural interests grew into an effective information-trafficking service for the Kolai. Pigeons, sparrows, and other small birds who roost within the temple spires dart over the Enchanted and Inner Walls, carrying coded messages from the Kolai of the Ekohikei to those at the Imperial Court and Outer City. He also paints complex murals upon the shingles and inner walls of the Temple, which often contain hidden meanings for his fellow conspirators.

Those who observe Taro's quiet hobbies assume he uses them as meditative tools or an outlet for his thoughts. Even Tatsuya, the wandering monk with nominal authority over Taro's endeavors at the Temple, is as yet unaware of the acolyte's secret masters.

But Taro's position is shaky at best. Though skilled at diplomacy, his abilities with deception are not yet as refined. It is possible that Tatsuya (or one of the player characters) might decode the hidden messages within his art, or notice that his birds always seem to follow the same flight pattern. The Kolai are aware of the precarious nature of Taro's activities, and striving to redistribute them, or cover them up. This, too, could provide players and GMs with potential story material.

Influence and Relations of the Chisei District

Due to the pervasive influence of the Crane Clan, the present alliances, feuds, biases and tendencies of the Crane may be applied when determining the responses and desires of the Chisei – with a few exceptions. The celebrated (and currently open) aggression between the Lion and the Crane beyond Otosan Uchi's walls is mostly sedate here; representatives of both Clans understand that their brethren outside defy the Emperor's Law, and are loathe to commit such an offense within the Hantei's own home. Since the declaration of war (during the events of *Legacy*

of the Forge), the Emperor has demanded that at least one member of the Lion and the Crane greet honored visitors to the Ekohikei arriving through the southern gate – where the embassies of both clans flank the Road of the Most High. This is both an open punishment of the disunity between the clans and a message to the outside world that the Lion-Crane war will end, or both clans will suffer.

Chisei relations with the Minor Clans vary somewhat from those of the Crane. Though the southern Ekohikei contains the richest architecture within the Enchanted Walls, the Crane are at a disadvantage in many other forums. Commerce, for instance, is far stronger within the Karada District to the West, where the Yasuki traders and oyabun merchants reside. Military strength focuses on the Kanjo and Hito Districts, where the Emperor's personal guard train, and the "barbaric" Unicorn and Lion have reigned for nearly a thousand years.

The Crane rely upon the Minor Clans in the Chisei to maintain the fundamental resources their political strength subsists upon. Without them, the Chisei would dry up, and the internal strife would deny the Crane their precious place at the Emperor's side. The other Great Clans are quite aware of this, and consistently lobby Yoritomo Hogosha and the other Minor Clan delegates to redistribute their support, or at least to dissolve their relationship with the Crane. As yet, Hogosha is unmoved by their advances; he realizes the potential benefit in their continued goodwill toward the Crane, and is more interested in the long-term returns it will provide the peoples of the Minor Clans than in immediate or personal gain.

SURROUNDING PROVINCES

Knowing that the establishment of their own mercantile interests in the Ekohikei will be challenged by the Yasuki of the Karada District, the Crane have ordered that negotiations begin with the Crab toward a trade alliance. The Crane are willing to offer a number of their finest diplomats and orators to the "barbarians", along with representation and protection within Crane lands, in exchange for a slice of the business in the Imperial City. The offer is lucrative, and the Crab have wisely chosen to investigate the option. They have frequently hosted the Crane governor and sent their own arbitrators into the Chisei.

More often than not, Furuku passes the brutes off to his assistant, Aidogo, whose inexperience and rustic beginnings have succeeded in entertaining them and gaining their trust. Several negotiators from the Karada now refuse to deal with any but Aidogo, demanding they conduct their business over a sparring session or drunken binge. PCs visiting the Chisei may cross paths with one of these boisterous crowds during their stay, and might even be invited to join in the festivities, where their opinions can influence the commercial policy for the entire city.

With the exception of the rarely subtle competition between districts along the Road of the Most High, the rulers and people of the Chisei have little to do with those of the Kanjo. The roads remain open, but only visitors, magistrates, and couriers regularly travel back and forth. Neither inherently mistrust the other, but the areas of each district remain largely segregated according to clans and families.

As for the Hito District, "where the *hinin* live beyond the River", the Crane – and the Chisei – have nothing to do with it. The Crane scarcely acknowledge the second Lion embassy (an intentional affront toward the Clan, who relish their position within the Hito), and treat the Unicorn with open contempt. "Barbarians, thieves, liars, and beggars. It's no wonder the River runs brown in the spring."

MAJOR AND MINOR CLANS

Outside their newfound acceptance of the Crab, Chisei relations with the Major Clans of the Empire mimic those of the Crane – the Dragon are aloof and remote, and therefore insignificant; the Lion are the enemy; the Phoenix are the source of all religious and magical thought, and must therefore be respected at all costs; the Scorpion are deceptive and dishonorable, to be observed and challenged, but never underestimated; and the Unicorn are simple and have nothing of value. To make matters worse, the Chisei District has fewer clan representatives than any other region in the Ekohikei, and has become a political bottle-neck, which only reinforces these stereotypical assumptions. Kakita Furuku refuses to devote the proper time to each request made of the Crane, and his assistant is hardly capable of handling delicate or complicated demands. The Minor Clans are hamstrung by the Sentaku Tribunal, who have become the default trouble-shooters of the district. In the end, no one has the time or will to evaluate problems or questions based on their individual merit, so they fall back on the mon of the visitor for an answer.

Customs of the Chisei District

Celebrations are very structured in the Chisei District, a by-product of rigid Crane tradition and the monastic discipline of the Dragon. On the first day of every new winter (also the first day of the month of the Rooster, or the Crane), an immense festival is held in honor of the Crane Kami, Kakita. This festival takes place concurrently held across Crane lands, but many lords converge on Otosan Uchi for the event because the Emperor also embarks upon his annual journey to Winter Court at this time. Crane lords attending the festival hope to catch his eye and be invited along until the spring.

Saijitsen no Kakita (the "Festival to Kakita") is an immense affair, concentrated in waves from the Road of the Most High

across the rest of the Chisei District. Assuming they have no pressing business outside the capital, Furuku, his staff, and their favored allies join representatives of the Minor Clans and honored guests at the gate into the Inner City, where they bid the Emperor farewell, and may retire easily after the festivities wind down. Others line the Emperor's Road as well – nobles, esteemed courtiers, and others of status given the finest accommodations with the best vantage points from which to observe the procession. Commoners (non-samurai *bugei*, general laborers, and *heimin*) must vie for standing room outside the buildings along the Road, clutching their cheap silks and linens around them in the early winter chill.

High above the Road, fireworks erupt into thousands of sparkling stars and streak across the heavens in arcs of fire. Children and the old play games of strategy and luck on the streets, while vendors offer mochi, sweet bean pastes, and pomegranate-flavored tea.

Saijitsen no Kakita is a time of playful rejoicing, tempered with an undertone of serious reverence to the fallen Crane hero. Duels frequently occur during this celebration, though very few are lethal; in fact, surprisingly few are even martial. As described in the *Gamemaster's Survival Guide* (pages 51-55), many Rokugani duelists seek perfection through alternate displays of skill, control, and grace. From children's games to the martial arts, duelists from all over consider the Saijitsen no Kakita to be one of the foremost arenas for proving themselves. Even craftsmen visit the Chisei during the month of the Rooster, hoping to sell their wares, or offer them up for challenge against those of others.

During the Festival to Kakita, masters stand or sit upon raised platforms, where anyone can challenge them. Others travel the crowds, seeking opponents among the wanderers. The superior duelist in such "public" contests are often determined by the audience, according to the rules and etiquette for exhibition duels (see the *GSG*, p. 52). Others duel privately – in back rooms, alleys, and secluded council chambers. With the excitement upon the streets of the Chisei, it is easy to lose track of those who do not wish to be seen, and many illegal or subversive challenges take place during this time as well.

A sparring organization known as *Kenka Kurab*, funded by the oyabun syndicates, often take to the streets during this period. While the populace of the Chisei celebrate their Kami, bushi of low honor join ronin, bandits, and *heimin* warriors within nondescript buildings and in the sewers of the city, ready to challenge each other in duels to the death. The finest warriors among them are offered lifetime positions in the crime syndicate sponsoring the event, while the rest are disposed of in the underground rivers of the city.

Martial arts contestants are bound by the strictest rules of etiquette and bushido. All martial duels held during Saijitsen no Kakita must be sponsored by a bushi or higher rank than either combatant, and only non-lethal weapons may be used. Retributive duels may not take place in the Chisei District during the festival, and those who use the challenge system for vindictive purposes

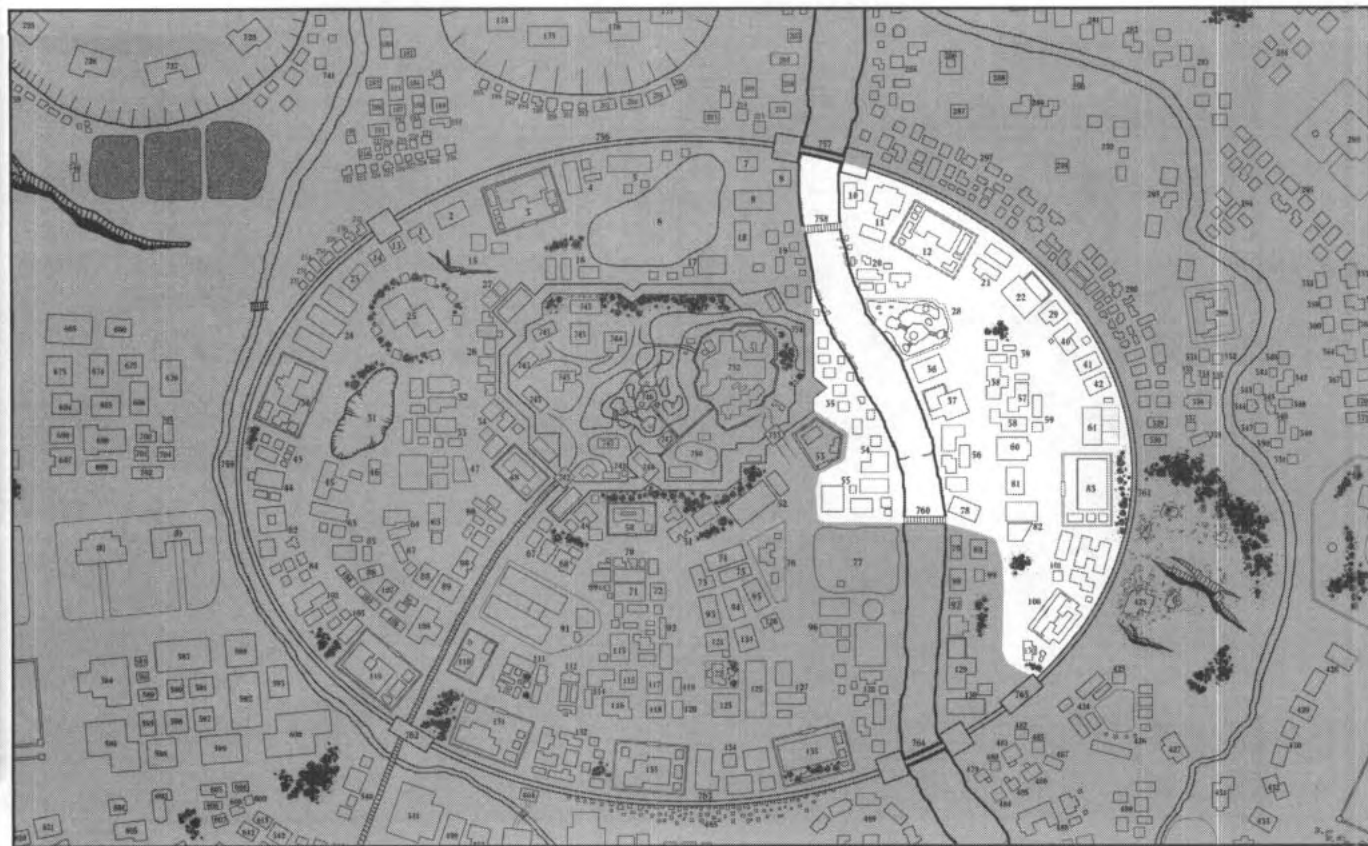
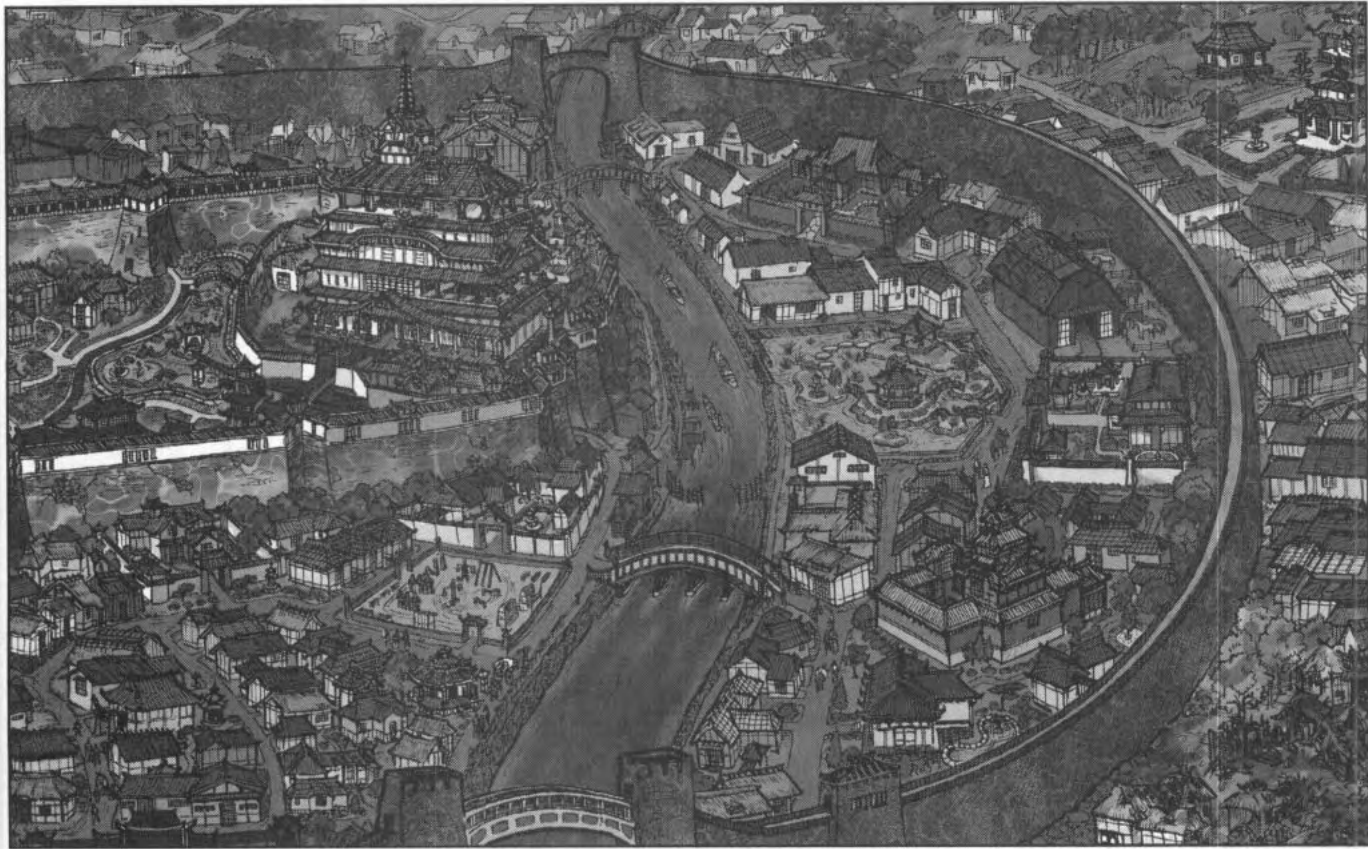
are held accountable for an unwarranted attack (murder if their opponent died during the duel), according to the Emperor's Law. Magistrates investigate such events as crimes, and punish offenders to the full extent of their authority.

Most martial duels consist of bushi "silently" sparring against one another, as described in the L5R Rulebook, p. 35. Two duelists make themselves "available" for competition (commonly by wearing a piece of light blue silk stitched with Kakita's personal mon), allowing others to approach or catch their glance from across the street. Both assume their stances, and moments later,

the challenge is concluded. The samurai bow, and continue on their way. Spectators know and respect this occurrence (common even outside the Festival), and step aside to accommodate the combatants.

Saijitsen no Kakita continues for one month, during which time the district practically shuts down. It does not seriously affect production or business, however, held as it is during the lull between harvest and planting season. A similar (though much smaller, single-day) - Saijitsen no Togashi - hosts the largest number of Dragons arriving in Otosan Uchi throughout the year.





Hito District

Province Rank:	7	Imperial Rank:	8
Population Rank:	5	Production Rank:	6
Relative Wealth:	5	Political Influence:	5
Crime Rank:	1	Corruption Rank:	2
Appearance Rank:	4	Popularity Rank:	5

The Guided Tour - Day Three

You are awakened by a sudden explosion of activity above you, emanating from the rafters high above your open window. Rising from your thin mattress to glance outside, you notice a large cloud of birds evacuating the roof-top aviary of the Temple of the Seven Fortunes. They rise high above the Chisei District and streak northward, passing the wall surrounding the Forbidden City.

"You are awake, then." Miya Yurikago's voice resounds within your sparse sleeping chamber, dragging your sluggish mind back into focus. "Good. We have a very long trek today before reaching the Hito District—

"What? Ah. The Karada District will be our last stop in the tour of the Ekohikei. There are several... obstacles preventing a direct tour through Crab territory." Yurikago's voice drops a notch and wavers, belying a deeper concern, and his eyes turn northwest, beyond the open window. Before you can respond, however, he steps toward the door, forcing his composure back to normal. "I have already commissioned riders to shorten our trip. We shall await you at Shinden Ebisu..."

Curiosity overwhelms you, and your gaze is lured northwest. Beyond the open window, bathed in the light of Amaterasu's morning glare, the edge of the Karada District can be seen — a single, low structure beside a gash in the earth, stretching nearly to the Inner Wall. Smoke rises from the building, trailing up and toward the massive, obsidian bulk of the Western Wall.

A crematorium and a wound upon the world...

THE ONI WARAI - PART ONE

"The fissure? It is called Oni Warai, 'the Oni's smile,' and it is a dangerous, inhospitable place. Rumors persist that it houses countless abominations lying in wait for the unwary, curious, or supremely naive. None save the fiercest Crab and Unicorn bushi dare to traverse its edge, limiting most travel in and out of the Karada and its merchant quarter to the western bridge and small craft darting across the River of the Sun, where we are headed now.

"It is fortunate that the Crab have stewardship of the Karada, just as their brethren guard the Empire's most perilous frontier. I fear that without them watching over Oni Warai, the priceless landmarks surrounding it — the Temple of the Seven Fortunes, the Imperial Museum, and even the ancient Crab Embassy buildings — would be consumed.

"What? No one is sure of the true danger lurking within the fissure. Only a handful of those who entered its depths have returned, and they are without sense or mind. Some have come back blind or mute, or subject to severe fits when near flickering light or quick movement. All are insane.

"As I said, the fissure is dangerous. More adventure than I am willing to undertake, when appealing surroundings are but a short ride away...

"I shall forgive that remark..."

Exploring the Hito District

"The Hito District. Now this is a place where you can feel safe. Perhaps too much so on occasion. Bushi of the Lion and the Unicorn Clans patrol the streets of the northernmost segment of the Ekohikei day and night. Both have incorporated the policing of the District's streets into their military training, making routine patrols a matter of honor and glory. Consequently, there is much chest-puffing, elite posturing, and proud arrogance, even by those who only wish to visit.

"Traveling the Hito District without papers is reckless, as the sentinels here are known for their rash arbitration and quick tempers. Offenders are often jailed for suspicion, their guilt determined later. And since the judges here are just as forthright as their field officers, the vast majority of suspects end up cuffed, imprisoned, or killed for crimes that they may not have committed. It is an imperfect system, though an effective one. Crime in the Hito District is almost unheard of.

"The military mind prevails everywhere in the Hito. Artistic symmetry gives way to cold, unrelenting simplicity. Everything moves and reacts in perfect unison, according to a routine everyone expects. Surprises are rare, and quashed at the first available opportunity.

"Edges are sharp here. Watch what you touch."

DORO NO SHIKKARI KIBE ("THE ROAD OF FAST HOPES")

Location#: 760

"The northern entrance to the Forbidden City hides behind the Imperial Palace, the training grounds of the Emperor's Personal Guard, and a close perimeter of walls. The road extending from this entrance is called Doro no Shikkari Kibe, or 'The Road of Fast Hopes', and it is used primarily by heimin servants and laborers who deliver foodstuffs and supplies from the Outer City.

"Doro no Shikkari Kibe is obscured so that honored guests arriving down the Road of the Most High will not be subjected to the presence of the lower castes; after all, who wishes the commoners to interrupt an otherwise enjoyable visit? But to enter the Hito District from the Kanjo, we must converge with them for a brief time. Nowhere else in Otosan Uchi do the peasant and samurai classes intermingle so closely or so frequently, though I promise that the experience will be brief.

"Few linger on the bridge between the districts, as it is a place for refuse and outcasts. Though the Hito magistrates patrol it often, peasants still linger here to discuss their lot and dream of a better life. The most degenerate samurai are known to hover near the edge as well, though for a completely different reason; the most dejected and dishonored sometimes end their lives here, granting it the name Hashi Sanban Kirizu (the "Bridge of the Third Cut"). Their blood spills into the River, soiling its brilliant surface, and their bodies soon follow, tumbling from the heights of Sorrow's Falls. Few are recovered, though the shame they have accepted in death remains.

"Crossing the River of the Sun into the Hito District, we find ourselves at one of the most heavily-trafficked intersections of the city. Before us stands the Temple of the Kami – which I will introduce shortly – while the Road of Fast Hopes continues toward the northern gate through the Enchanted Walls. Another road branches from here as well, meandering through the center of the Hito District before coming to an end at the second Lion Embassy and the western bridge.

"Eventually, beyond the Mizuaki Kabe, the Road of Fast Hopes spills out into the Peddler's Market of the Outer City. But within the Hito District, it adjoins the Performer's Quarter, where some of the most talented artists of the city can be found – like this unlikely pair..."



Kakita Naru, Romantic Artisan

Rank 3 Artisan (Music 3); Air: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Water: 2

Notable Skills: Animal Husbandry 3, Artisan (Music) 4,

Athletics 2, Bard 4, Calligraphy 3, Dance 4, Music (Hichiriki) 4

Other Options: Bad Fortune (Mute), Bland, True Friend (Soshi Kokei)

Kakita Naru has a natural gift with music, one which prompted his entry into the Kakita Artisan School despite the intentions of his adopted family. The couple who raised him were Asahina shugenja; normally, they would have nurtured his talent, but they were bound by a promise made to his true parents moments before they died – that he would continue their tradition and train with the Iaijutsu duelists after his *gempukku*.

But Naru was never satisfied studying the art of the sword. He would sneak off at every opportunity, find some secluded vale or canyon where the acoustics were good, and indulge in his true passion – evoking the soft and airy tones of the flute. Then, several months into his training, one of the Artisan Masters overheard his music, and immediately demanded to know the young Kakita's identity, "the source of such unfathomed beauty."

After discovering that Naru was committed to the dueling school, the Artisan Master embarked on a crusade to free the boy from his duties. Believing Naru to be a prodigy, he fought ardently with the boy's parents and sensei to gain him as a student, and eventually succeeded. Though the Iaijutsu trainers were perturbed at Naru's release, his adoptive parents privately rejoiced. They knew that he would finally have the chance to fulfill his life's dream, with or without tradition.

Naru is a troubled man. Though largely shielded from the shame of betraying his true parents' dying words, he often recalls them when he is depressed or worried. Also, a long scar which runs along the neckline of his kimono reminds him of his final day with the dueling sensei. An accident, they claimed, but one which stole his voice forever...

Today, Kakita Naru has come into his own as a musician. His expertise with the *hichiriki* has placed him in high demand among the nobility of the Empire, and he often travels from one territory to another for most of the summer months. And twice over the last five years (including the last), he has been invited to spend Winter Court beside the Emperor's own entourage, performing for the host and honored Imperial guests.

This year, however, Naru declines all offers, and refuses to leave the Emerald City. Using his travels with the Emperor this last winter as a shield, he claims to be on retainer with an unidentified noble of the Forbidden City. He is lying.

During Winter Court at Kyuden Seppun last season, he observed an aide to Miya Hiyoko (a retired Imperial of great standing within the Emperor's Court). The aide was gentle and meek, with a simple exterior that betrayed a complex mind. Her handsome features were graced (some would say marred) by a life of coarse and rugged experience. Where many maidens of the court were merely delicate flowers to pluck and collect, this one was a veritable garden of delight. Naru longed for his voice so that he might speak to her of her untold fortunes...

Yet there was more to the young woman than Naru could guess. She was not available, not to one of his stature.

She was *heimin*.

Biko, Orphaned Peasant Storyteller

Not Ranked (*Heimin*); Air: 2, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Water: 2, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Animal Husbandry 4, Appraisal 2, Bard 3, Commerce 2, Courtier 1, Dance 2, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 1, Music (Singing) 4, Oratory 3, Poetry 2, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 1, Theology 2

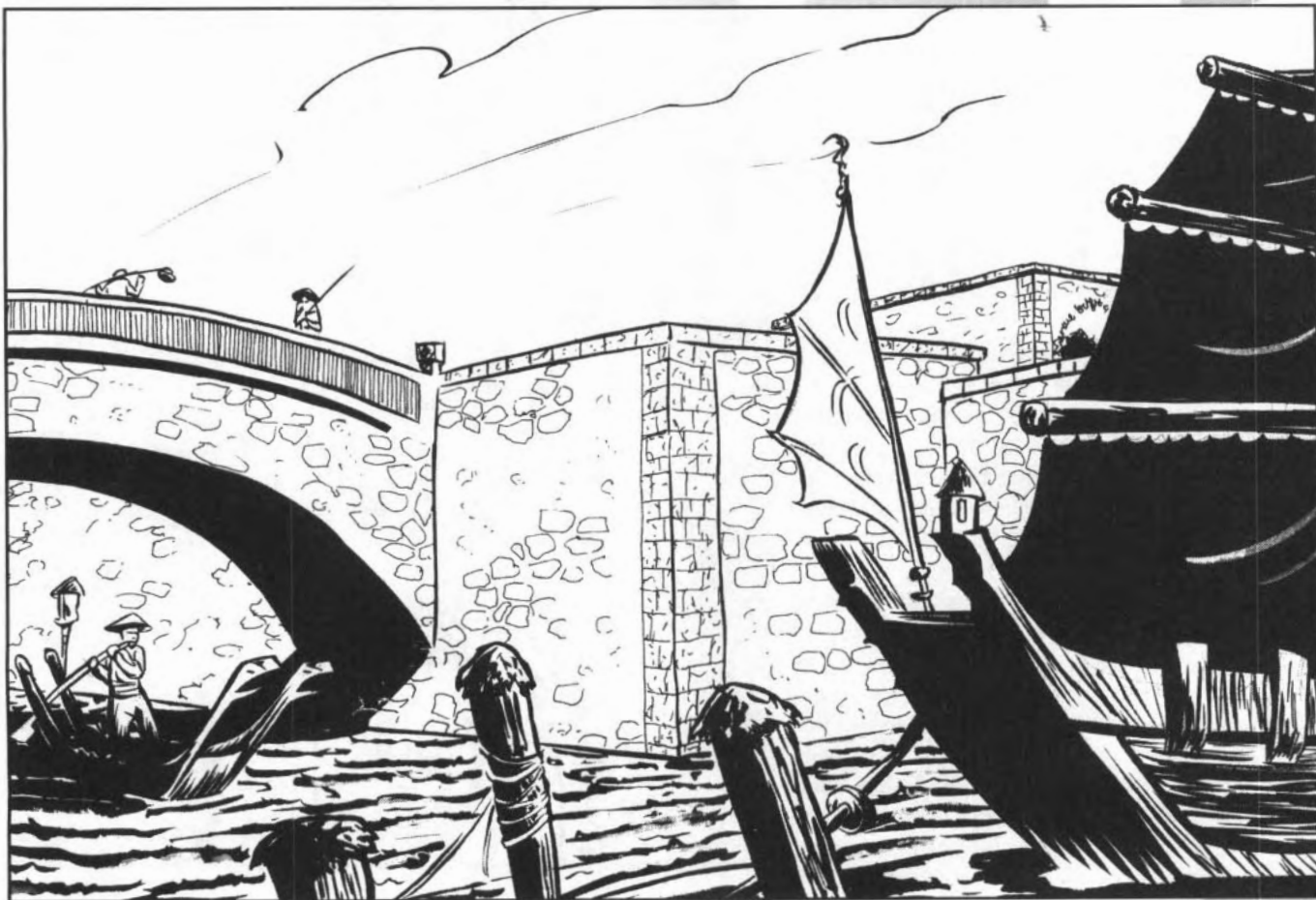
Other Options: Patron (Kakita Yinobu), Voice

Biko understands tragedy. As a child, she watched her parents strive to make a life for her and her siblings in the Outer City of Otosan Uchi. The twins (an older brother and sister) had supported the family when both parents grew too weak to work, joining the ranks of so many other servants within the Imperial Palace. They would rise before dawn and make their way to the Inner City before most of the occupants were awake. There, they would clean, mend, labor, and serve the residents and guests until late into the night, after many of the Imperials had retired. Like their parents before them, life was a day-to-day drudgery with no end in sight. Then one evening, the visitors at the Phoenix Guest Home (Location #743) received a platter of poisoned sweets. The resulting investigation sent every servant who came in contact with the platter or the food to their death.

This event shattered Biko, who now had to take on the burden of caring for her ailing parents. She despised the Imperials for their rash and uncaring judgment, knowing that her siblings could not be at fault. But she also knew that a simple *heimin* girl could never hope to avenge such a decision. Further, she had no hope of avoiding the same terrible fate that had befallen every other member of her family. With no skills or knowledge to draw from, she would have to join the servant class in the Forbidden City; fortunately, with so many hundreds of servants inside the Inner City Walls, it she could easily blend in, avoiding the shamed past her siblings had left behind.

She worked as a gardener for many years, pruning and sculpting the hedges and flower patches of the Forbidden City. Never did the thought of vengeance for the arbitrary deaths of her brother and sister cross her mind. Instead, she lulled herself into a routine, working by the rhythm of her own lilting voice, which her mother had always said was "blessed by the kami of the wind".

Biko's voice would eventually be her release, the same way Naru's music had prevented a wasted life among the Kakita duelists. Miya Hiyoko, an elderly Imperial who had retired to the *Saigo no Iki* (the "Last Breath", Location 748), heard Naru singing one evening during a lengthy walk. The noble was enchanted,



and sought it out among the Garden Maze near the Otomo Guest Home (Location 745). When Hiyoko finally came upon Biko, the *heimin* halted her singing, afraid she would be punished, but the Miya insisted that she continue, claiming that it was the most beautiful thing she had ever heard.

Days later, Biko was visiting Hiyoko at *Saigo no Iki*, singing or reading to her until she faded off to sleep. Within a month, it had become the servant's sole duty. She walked along the Road of Fast Hopes each morning, just as her parents had. The Miya treated Biko well, even befriendng her when others were not looking. For the first time in her life, Biko knew happiness. Soon, she even managed to bury the horrors of her past.

Biko is currently unaware of Kakita Naru's infatuation with her. She walks through the Performer's Quarter every morning, never realizing that he watches her with a desiring eye. She has often stopped to watch him play, which he tries to do whenever she passes by. She finds the coordination of his dual presentation with Soshi Kokei (see below), intriguing. But they are samurai, and she is merely *heimin*, and if her past has taught her anything, it has been that some things are simply beyond her reach.

Soshi Kokei, Wandering Showman and Disguised Ronin

Rank 4 **Kuni Shugenja**; **Air**: 3, **Awareness** 5, **Earth**: 2, **Fire**: 4, **Intelligence** 5, **Water**: 2, **Perception** 4

Notable Skills: Acting 5, Archery 4, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Calligraphy 4, Defense 3, Explosives 5, Horsemanship 2, Intimidation 4, Meditation 4, Rhetoric 3, Shintao 3

Other Options: Death Trance, Social Disadvantage (Ronin), True Friend (Kakita Naru)

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Amaterasu's Anger, Benten's Touch, Echoes on the Wind, The Fires That Cleanse, Force of Will, The Fires of Purity, The Fire From Within, Heart of the Inferno, Inflammation, Mists of Illusion, Secrets on the Wind, Wings of Fire

Soshi Kokei is Kakita Naru's current traveling companion, and truest friend. They have known one another for several years, since Kokei volunteered to travel with a caravan of performers that Naru belonged to. The two hit it off remarkably well in the first days, and were near-inseparable thereafter, billed as "The Scorpion and the Crane" once they learned that their individual talents complemented each other so well.



Yet Kokei has a dark side that he has hidden from Naru, one that may spoil their friendship and threaten any chance of true love between him and Biko. Kokei joined the performers' caravan years ago to evade a band of magistrates that were hunting him for the murder of his sensei.

Before encountering Naru and utilizing his spells as performance art (and eventually enhancing Naru's own music with them), Kokei was a combat shugenja for the Kuni. He took the battlefield to exterminate large targets (particularly denizens of the Shadowlands), and to immobilize or cripple human enemies. He excelled in his position, and would have eventually gained the rank of General had he not lost control and dispatched two units of Lord Hida's finest – including his own sensei – in an awesome display of fire and blood. He knows in his heart that it was just the Hida war training, that he had simply succumbed to the haze of violence around him, but the Crab would have none of it. Kokei (then known as Kasumi) was hunted down for his "crime", to be executed by the Clan Daimyo himself.

Today, Kasumi/Kokei remains a fugitive from the Crab Clan, using his spells and daring intellect to maintain a new identity. He travels with Kakita Naru, adapting his training to his new role as an entertainer. He has come to enjoy the performance, the thrill of each new dazzling fire he creates to accompany Naru's music. And he has come to care deeply for Naru himself, a man whose unbridled passion is refreshing to the war-hardened criminal.

Kokei would do nearly anything for Naru, which is where the dilemma comes in. The shugenja has watched Naru's infatuation grow into something truer, deeper, more genuine. He empathizes with the musician's pain at loving one of lower caste, and not being able to speak of his feelings for her. He has lingered in the Performer's Quarter far longer than he would like in order to indulge Naru's obsession, hoping that one of their impromptu performances might win her over. But so far, she has remained silent.

Recently, Kokei has taken a more active interest in joining the two together. He has followed Biko to her home in the Outer City and slipped into the Forbidden City to observe her routine, in the hopes of discovering something about her that he can use to bring them together. He knows that they share a love of fine music, but has also discovered that they share a sense of tragedy. Both are fueled by horrible events in their past which drive them together, and apart. Kokei feels that they must overcome the residual doubt of these events if they wish to be happy.

Beyond that, Kokei has discovered that Biko's patron – Lady Miya Hiyoko – hopes to bring the *heimin* into the Forbidden City as a permanent resident of the *Saigo no Katei*, to take her away from her adoptive parents in the Outer City. This would drive the wedge between Biko and Naru deeper, perhaps too deeply for the dream to recover. Kokei struggles every day with this new revelation. He has the power and the skill to eliminate Hiyoko and the "Imperial threat" to his friends, but can he bring himself

to commit murder again – this time in cold blood? And if he could, what would come after...?

THE TEMPLE TO THE KAMI

Location#: 100

"Legend claims that the greatest human was among the first, formed of the sliver of earth trapped within the swirling pool of Lady Sun and Lord Moon's blood. Isawa, the celebrated founder of the Phoenix's most illustrious – and perhaps most powerful – family. The first human to realize the awesome might in mortality.

"He was also the first to commune with the kami... here, at this site, just beyond the river from where it all began... where the gods fell to earth and forged precision from the chaos of early creation...

"...

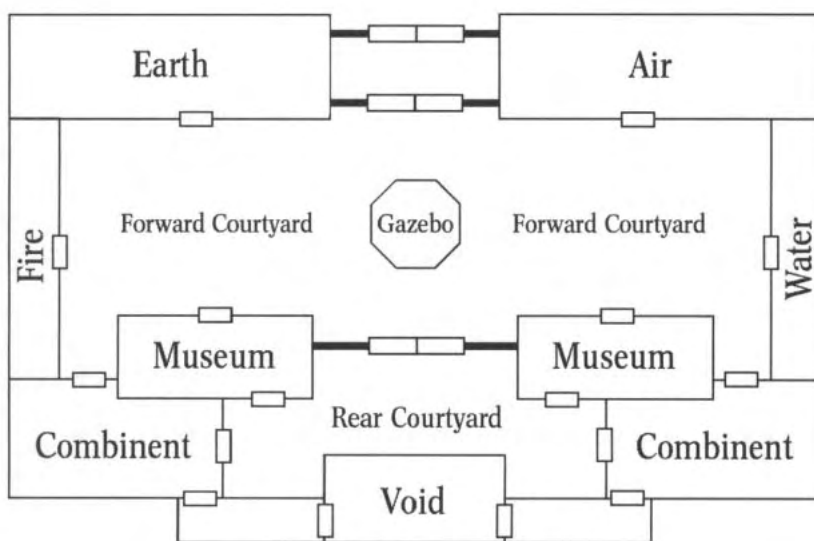
"I apologize. Sometimes I am lost before the incredible gift the gods have given us. Places like this fill me with a sense of nostalgia for the early days, when things were less... complicated.

"Regardless, scholars believe that the Temple of the Kami was built upon the site where Isawa watched the early contests between the Kami of the Heavens. They also believe that when the last strike had fallen and Akodo swore his eternal vow to his brother Hantei, Isawa himself shed a tear. The tear was born of all the Elements – Water in body, Fire in Spirit, Air for the emotion which spawned it, and Earth for Isawa's own will. It was the last tear upon his face, they say, and filled with the essence of Void. It was a moment of perfect clarity, captured in space and time.

"Isawa understood the world. Not in the way that you and I conceive it – not as sight and sound, taste and texture – but as the Elements which composed it. He could see the divine, the structure upon which reality hangs. Days and distance meant nothing to him; he was freed from the natural bonds we take for granted. And in the end, this opened the door for him. This is why he was great.

"Here, when Isawa's tear touched the physical earth, there rose up a tower of might. Few could see it, and the Kami upon the far plain were oblivious, perhaps because they all shared a common familiarity with the moment, too absorbed to see beyond the majesty of their own historic juncture. But the tower was here, seen by only a handful of men and women who went on to become Isawa's strongest apprentices, and some say the first Council of Five.

"Isawa and his followers presented themselves to the Hantei shortly after the Great Contest. There was newfound wisdom in his eyes, the legends state, which seemed to swirl within itself like twin beating hearts. He claimed that he had found new magic within the world around them, four elements bound together by the perfect union of Lady Sun and Lord Moon. He called them kami, a new race of beings, immensely powerful but infants in the



Temple to the Kami

"The rest is history, as most know it. This building, the Temple to the Kami, remains to this day. It has settled over the centuries and looks much like any other structure within the city. But inside lie wonders beyond imagination, bound by the will of the kami in service to the Empire. Many of them are beyond the reach of any mortal, but the outer ring is open to the public. I can show you, if you like..."

The Temple to the Kami consists of three individual buildings, linked together at their edges. The "outer ring", as it is called, is a set of two L-shaped walls, facing the entrance and the Road of Fast Hopes. Visitors can enter either of these structures, or pass between them into a courtyard and the inner buildings beyond. The interiors of these buildings are divided into four areas, each composed entirely of one element. The Earth room is formed from wood paneling, held together with vines. The "floors" are soft earth, which seems to move beneath the feet of those who enter (no footwear is allowed within the Temple).

The Water room is perhaps the most inviting. The walls are cool and fluid to the touch, and ripples form where human skin comes in contact with them. Shugenja claim they can see images within the concentric circles that spiral outward, but others are left to marvel at the complex beauty surrounding them.

Those entering the Air room feel a chill rise within them, as if a breeze has caught them unawares. The walls and fixtures here appear like crystallized glass, rough to the touch and covered with frost-like grit. The air here is sharp and stings the lungs, and non-shugenja who remain here too long become woozy.

Lastly, the Fire room is a long hall built from mahogany and other polished dark woods. A great fireplace comprises one entire side, while hundreds of candles adorn the walls. The ground is a thick layer of ash, which no amount of stamping will crush entirely. Visiting shugenja claim that the candles and hearth erupt into large plumes of flame revealing intimate secrets in spectacles of sight and sound. Others simply find the place attractive, or romantic.

The kami in all of these chambers are strong and numerous, but they only reveal what a shugenja is ready to see. Since the early days of the Temple, when unready shugenja would arrive seeking enlightenment only to find insanity or blessed death, the kami have been careful about what secrets they impart, and how they are presented. Today ill-prepared shugenja simply cannot find the entrance; the kami obscure it from their vision, or rearrange the physical portal so that it cannot be found.

world, just as Isawa and his kind were. They needed guidance, and companionship, just as much as the humans did.

"Isawa requested that a temple to the unseen kami be built on this site, to honor the magical gift they had offered him and his followers. Hantei was skeptical, uncertain such a power could exist without the Children of Heaven being aware of it, but Isawa would not be refused. With one word, a single wall of wood, vines, and packed earth erupted from the spot, bursting into the sky with furious defiance. Another word, and a barrier of blazing light crashed through the ground, rising to meet the first on one end. Two more words for two more walls, one of cascading, crystal-blue water fed from an invisible source, and another, of crystalline air, made solid before the Hantei's astounded eyes.

"Do you believe now, Emperor?" Isawa asked. Overwhelmed by the immense power hidden within his new world, Hantei replied, 'Lord Isawa, you have my blessing. Take the land you need. Give them what they need to remain here, beside us.'

"Isawa was stern, and said, 'They have already taken what they need for you, and they are all around us - every minute of every day. They have been here since the first breath of man...'

"He then walked between the walls the kami had formed. From the center rose a pillar of swirling force, light within sound contained by a single thought. At first, Hantei feared that Isawa had given his life to the kami, or been consumed by their might, but he later appeared to the north, where Gisei Toshi was eventually built.

The same can be said for the rear courtyard of the Temple, its buildings, and their upper floors. All the most closely-guarded mysteries of the physical cosmos are contained within, previously the sovereign domain only of the kami themselves. But with Isawa's affinity for the Elements, the kami saw that humanity was ready to receive their gifts. Here, the "inner ring" of the Temple to the Kami has fulfilled that purpose.

The rooms within the inner ring are shown on the map above, but only three are described here. Two are museums of sorts, containing the most powerful nemuranai in the Empire. Alcoves and display cases line the halls of these places, containing mighty items of all varieties. Items judged too powerful to be safely stored anywhere else in the Empire come here, where the many thousand kami can protect them. Skeptics cite that an unguarded temple is a poor receptacle for such power, but history has proven them wrong. Thieves who wish to enter these places have never found their way in, thanks to the manipulations of the guardian kami, and those few who have entered with such intent have never returned. When the kami feel that a message is needed to dissuade other thieves, they leave the remains of such victims behind, reduced to their base components or simply a smoldering pile of ash.

The Void Room

The final established room stands at the very peak of the rear structure, and contains nothing unusual to the uninitiated eye – simply four walls and an arched, wooden ceiling. But to shugenja of the proper caliber (Insight of at least 300), the room rips the world open, exposing them to the invisible world of kami in all their glory. Here, Void, Earth, Air, Water, and Fire work together in a way that is simply *understood*, even by the visitor. While they are here, shugenja are one with all Elements at once, and capable of magic far beyond any ever conceived.

Combinant Rooms

The remainder of the rooms within the Temple's rear building are left to the GM to construct and describe, though they can use the established pattern as a model. Each is the symbiosis of two or more Elements, such as Fire and Water (steam), Earth and Air (dust), Earth and Water (mud), or Water and Air (sleet). A sample room of this type follows:

Within the Dust room, vision falls to only a few feet at any time, as features are lost within a deep cloud of stale and heavy grit. Wind predominates here at all times, and the kami's attitudes can be seen in the speed and regularity with which the dust flies about you. Swirling funnels formed around a single character might indicate agitation or anger, while a perpetual haze of settled dust might mean that the kami are disinterested, or asleep.

Powerful kami must merge with those of another Element, and Shugenja of less than Rank 4 are thus ill-prepared to accept

the reality they would find here. The combinant Elements are aggressive and frightening, and the uninitiated who witness them might suffer from a phobia involving the Element, or even lose Trait Ranks. In general, Gamemasters should ask for Contested rolls from shugenja with a School Rank of less than 4, using the following convention:

- The character should roll a number of dice equal to his Ring Ranks in the two primary Elements present in the room, keeping a number of dice equal to *the lower of the two Rings*. For instance, in the Dust room, a character with an Earth of 3 and Air of 2 would roll 5k2.

- The Gamemaster should roll a number of dice equal to the strength of the two primary Elements in the room (e.g. Air 3 and Earth 4), keeping a number of dice equal to *the higher of the two Elements* (same example; the GM rolls 7k4).

Kami here are always perceptive enough to know the strengths and weaknesses of humans present, and exploit them to protect the rooms or remove the disrespectful.

If the kami succeed at their roll, they can either:

- Create an effect intended to prevent the character from doing something, or force them to do something (see below for an example), or

- Apply Wounds equal to the difference of their rolls. (If the character's roll was a 23 and the kami's was a 30, the kami would inflict 7 Wounds upon the character that Turn).

For instance, in the Dust room, PCs who tried to harm the contents might find themselves lost, perpetually returning to the exit. Or they might find themselves choking on the grit swirling around them until they leave.

Character success allows them to move freely within the room, doing as they please – for one turn. After that, they must Contest against the kami again, unless they have somehow appeased the spirits. This process continues until a resolution is reached (either the kami are satisfied or the character is killed, or incapacitated).

Gamemaster Uses for the Temple of the Kami

Gamemasters may ask themselves why anyone would ever want to enter the Temple's inner ring. The answer is simple: more kami reside in this place than anywhere else in the Empire (save perhaps a few Isawa locales, which fluctuate according to the brief attention spans of the spirits). Kami are simply *drawn* to this place. To them, it is holy.

This allows the Gamemaster to impart special, high-power spells, effects, and even School ranks to characters of sufficient Insight who can convince the kami they are ready. Since the first terrible mistakes they made with early humans, kami have been careful about who receives their gifts and under what circumstances. But here, inside the halls of the Temple of the



Fortunes, they have free rein to control their surroundings and the physical world. They can test the humans who come here all they like before releasing new wonders to them, and ensure that they are safe from their curiosity and ignorance at the same time.

Gamemasters should *always* challenge PCs who come to the Temple seeking enlightenment. Such challenges can include, but are by no means limited to:

The Outer Ring:

- Low-level quests (such as obtaining a single item containing a kami the Temple spirits wish to speak to).
- Impressive spell-casting (TN 10–20 or higher).
- Challenging the kami with a Trait of the Elemental Ring opposed to the kami's Element (TN 10–20 or higher).

The Inner Ring:

- High-level quests (such as obtaining a recently-awakened nemuranai of substantial power).
- Impressive spell-casting (TN 25–40 or higher).
- Challenging the kami with a Trait of the Elemental Ring opposed to the kami's Element (TN 25–40 or higher).

The Void Room:

- Challenges in the Void room are always incredibly difficult and of massive scale (an entire campaign of adventures could be run *inside* this place).

Rewards of proving themselves to the kami can include, but are not limited to:

The Outer Ring:

- Asking a question with a sensitive or elusive answer (one that the kami might normally evade, or not respond to).
- Learn a new spell.
- One reroll that the PC can use during the next adventure.
- 2–3 Experience Points (to be spent only on Skills or Traits used in the challenge).

The Inner Ring:

- Raising a School Rank (the PC must still have acquired the proper Insight on his own prior to receiving this gift).
- Learn a new Spell as an Innate Ability (the PC must still meet the Mastery Level requirement for the Spell).
- A minor magical item, talisman, or fetish.
- Elemental Attunement with one Element used in the challenge.

The Void Room:

- Prizes within the Void room can include any information, benefit, or gift the GM feels the kami are capable of.

Tests within the Temple to the Kami

Player characters challenging the kami of the Temple should always be introduced to the spiritual world on a scale they are unfamiliar with. Kami are shrewd creatures, and have carefully studied humanity since their first encounters with them. They know what humans are capable of, and what they can

comprehend. But when a PC engages a kami to better himself, he is opening himself up to *their* world. He is leaving himself *vulnerable*.

Those who enter the world of the kami with guarded spirits are both offensive to the kami, and by their very nature ignorant of the gifts they are trying to be granted. They *cannot* succeed in the kami's tests. Like bushi, they simply experience the world as everyone sees it – nothing more, nothing less.

Tests against the kami are always solitary. Characters cannot aid their friends within the Temple; physical intervention ends a test immediately, and turns the kami against the challenger and the others involved. A challenger may occasionally convince the kami they are worthy of another chance, but such attempts must be sincere and evocative to the Elemental spirits.

Gamemasters are encouraged to use the five senses when describing challenges with the kami. Reality literally explodes for the challenger (walls erupt into flame, with tendrils reaching out and surrounding the PC, or the floor dissolves into a whirlpool of stinging mist). Only the challenger and any other shugenja present can see the challenges (though none save the challenger are ever directly affected by them, unless they intervene). The physical environment returns to normal after a challenge is concluded.

Failure during a test in the Outer Ring should be jarring and disorienting for PCs. They should be left feeling drained, perhaps without the ability to Sense, Commune, or Summon for a time (GM's discretion, based on the extent of their defeat). Failure in the Inner Ring should have serious ramifications, which could include Enlightened Madness with the Element they used or even the loss of spellcasting ability for a number of weeks or months.

The Courtyards of the Temple

Perhaps the best-kept secret of the Temple to the Kami is the rear courtyard. This small terrace looks very similar to forward courtyard, with the addition of a raised gazebo-like structure before the central building. Built directly upon the site of Isawa's Tower of Void, the gazebo acts like a magnet for strong kami of all Elements.

Non-shugenja characters entering the gazebo will notice nothing out of the ordinary. Kami are always individual and powerful, more than would be expected in such a place. They are also capable of great miracles, should the shugenja suitably appeal to them (remember that these kami are hard to please, and as apt to ignore a PC shugenja as aid him).

Only shugenja of extremely high Insight (300 or more) may sense the true power of the gazebo, just as in the Void Room. Such shugenja may look out over any of the railings and see the Void plane as clearly as the physical. Further, if they are willing to risk their physical shells, they can slip out into the Void, traveling through the plane as an Ishiken does (use the rules for the Sense Void Spell, which the PC may use as long as his

physical form remains in the gazebo; see *The Way of the Phoenix*, page 60 for the Spell and rules for using it).

Shioda, Caretaker of the Temple to the Kami

Not Ranked (Monk*); Air: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Intelligence 4, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Astrology 2, Bojutsu 1, Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 3, Herbalism 2, Lores (Various, Ranks 2–3), Meditation 4, Poetry 2, Shintao 5, Sincerity 2, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology 3

Other Options: Allies (Tetsuya, Council of Five), Ascetic, Bland, Clear Thinker, Curse of the Kami, Obligation (Caretaker Post), Soft-Hearted

The present caretaker of the Temple of the Kami is a quiet, unassuming monk named Shioda, who – like Taro of the Temple to the Seven Fortunes – reports to the wandering ascetic Tatsuya. He has resided at the temple for over twenty years, and none know his true origin. Even his former clan is unknown, and he refuses all questions concerning his past. Shioda carries his burden alone.

Shioda never leaves the temple grounds, nor does he interact with those who visit. As far as anyone knows, he has not spoken for at least two decades. He silently cleans, polishes, and repairs the temple and nemuranai stored there, and prunes the gardens within the courtyards. Those who watch him in his duties note the painful expression of guilt hidden behind downcast eyes, and can feel little but sorrow for him.

Shioda's self-reproach stems from the event that brought him to the temple in the first place. Twenty years ago, he was a bushi, though his clan remains secret. He was traveling through the Shinomen Forest when the ghostly figure of a small and sickly boy appeared before him. The boy's name was Ukairo, and he was the latest (and only) candidate for the Acolyte of Air. Apparently, he showed greater potential for enticing and controlling the kami of air than any shugenja in over a hundred years.

Knowing that Ukairo was not long for the world (he was dying of a rare skin ailment), the Phoenix had directed him into the Temple to the Kami, to determine if he could hold the position of Acolyte. He breezed through the challenges of each room, but weakened as he entered the final chamber, Void. Several hours into his test, his body slowly began to fail, and – with the power of Void enhancing his senses – he realized that he would never survive the ordeal unless he could slow his skin's degeneration. Again calling on Void, Ukairo projected his spirit out into the world to search for the root that would temporarily slow the disease. He found only a few specimens within the Shinomen Forest.

Ukairo's spirit explained his situation to Shioda, who agreed to find and bring the root back to Ootosan Uchi. But he arrived too late; a shallow husk within the rear courtyard's gazebo was all that remained of the boy. Shioda was overcome with grief at his

failure, and went in search of the temple's caretaker to arrange for Ukairo's body. But he could not find him anywhere. When he tried to leave the temple, he found doors and windows sealed by an invisible force. As he struggled with the main doors, Shioda could hear sounds all around him. The wood creaked, the wind whistled, the fires crackled, and the water seeped through everything.

Shioda was haunted.

Since that day, he has cared for the temple and kept to himself, believing that Ukairo's spirit is angry at his failure. The truth is that the kami themselves are the angry ones, having released Ukairo from his duty long ago. To them, it is a simple matter of retribution. Shioda was responsible for Ukairo's death, because he took responsibility for his life. Until Shioda pays the debt (by serving the temple for the rest of his days), the kami will bind him here, reminding him of his failure.

THE NORTHERN WALL AND ITS PROPERTIES

Location#: 761

"There was a great pause between the Second and Third Battles with Fu Leng's Horde. After losing so many of their forces when the Southern Wall solidified around them, the armies of the Shadowlands had to regroup. It seemed for a time that the fighting might finally end, that the city would be saved. But in truth, the Oni lords were simply biding their time, watching Otosan Uchi from the northern shores. It was as if they were waiting to exploit some long-forgotten weakness.

"There was a weakness – one they had arranged well before their arrival.

"When the Hantei decided that the perimeter of the Ekohikei should be enchanted to help defend against the approaching Shadowlands Horde, several parts of the surrounding walls had been damaged by earthquakes. No item may be enchanted unless it is whole, so teams of engineers worked feverishly to restore the structures in time for the assault. Heimin craftsmen and builders worked through each day and night; during one such evening, under cover of darkness, the Horde struck.

"An Oni Lord had captured one of the heimin overseers and broken his mind, making him a slave-puppet of the enemy. Over the following weeks, the overseer ignored or sabotaged several critical lengths of the Wall, relaying the weakened locations to his Oni masters. Eventually, the shugenja assigned to enchant the

Northern Wall discovered and destroyed the slave-spy, but time had run out and the Horde was already upon the capital city. The wall could not be repaired or enchanted in time, so the Unicorn, Lion, and Fox defenders would have to make do with what they had – including several unstable patches along the wall.

"Then the commanding Ki-Rin general – Otaku Tozuken – came up with a daring plan.

"The third wave of Fu Leng's legions crested the eastern hillside while the Moon was low behind them, striding across the grassy plain like a glimmering and roiling cloud. The Ki-Rin and Lion had positioned forces at the ramparts along the face of the Northern Wall, but held the bulk of their troops in reserve. When the fighting began, the first ranks vanished into the cracks within the wall, luring the Oni into the weakened patches.

"As Otaku Tozuken suspected, the bulk of the enemy was directed at the widest section of weakened stone, while the rest spread out to approach the other sabotaged areas. The Oni broke through the wall's outer line easily, burrowing through the softened interior with frightening speed. Then, just as the Shadowlands front line was about to erupt into the Ekohikei, the upper levels' supports began to give way, burying several dozen Oni and their corrupted minions beneath sixty feet of stone. The defenders quickly overwhelmed the monsters on either side of the trap, forcing the remainder to retreat toward the sea.

"The principal challenge during the third defensive of the Battle of Four Winds came from the smaller groups who had entered other parts of the wall. They were met by isolated units of Ki-Rin, Fox, and Lion bushi,

who had prepared their own ambushes inside the wall. They had converted the softened sections of the wall into trapped mazes, where the Oni were constantly confronted on all sides by enemies that were far more familiar with the terrain. Eventually, the remainder of the Shadowlands forces were defeated or pushed back outside the wall to rejoin their routed allies."

The Northern Wall of Otosan Uchi has been fully restored since the Battle of Four Winds, and stands as tall, proud, and unblemished as its counterparts. Unlike the other walls, however, the interior of this structure is mostly hollow, built around reinforced mazes of ambush-ready tunnels. These lead out onto

ANCESTOR: OTAKU TOZUKEN (3 POINTS)

The Ki-Rin general whose ingenuity won the city its third victory during the Battle of Four Winds is celebrated as one of the champion tacticians in Rokugani history. A memorial for him has been constructed within the crystal gatehouse over the Road of Fast Hopes (Location XX), overlooking both the Hito District – which he saved – and the Peddler's Row and geisha district beyond the wall – which he made possible. His sword is held within the hand of a statue in his likeness, pointing outward toward the sea, where the Shadowlands Horde retreated at his hand.

Characters choosing Tozuken as an ancestor gain a near-supernatural intuition when planning battles with limited resources. They may keep one extra die with the following Skills: Battle, Engineering, Siege, Traps, and War Fan when preparing for battle. This modifier only applies if the character is leading the defense, and has at least one day to plan for the attack. This modifier may be applied to rolls on the Battle Table when all other conditions are in place.

ramparts and crenelated platforms along the wall's exterior, allowing defenders to rally against an enemy from above. Narrow siege paths connect the platforms, leading from the top of the wall to the ground far below. During battles, the enemy can be lured along them in single file, then ambushed by defending troops on neighboring platforms or those above. Enemies that capture these platforms and enter the wall find themselves in a convoluted labyrinth that only the Unicorn, Lion, and Fox guardians know how to navigate.

The labyrinth is riddled with traps, dead ends, and places where the defenders can strike without warning. Perhaps the worst of these designs are the 'murder galleries', large open halls that welcome claustrophobic attackers. Several murder galleries dot the complex, each extending at least three floors up into higher floors, with balconies overlooking all corners of the room. Defenders on these balconies can attack those in the gallery with yumi, dai-kyu, or nage-yari. No position inside are safe, and attackers often wait in hiding until several ranks of their foes have entered before raining volleys down upon them. Few of the scattering troops escape.

Mechanics for the Northern Wall

The shugenja assigned to enchant the Northern Wall asserted until their deaths that they had fulfilled their duty to the Emperor after the Battle of Four Winds. But if they did, none have ever seen the fruits of their labors. To date, no one knows for sure if the Northern Wall is enchanted at all.

THE UNICORN EMBASSY

Location#: 83

"The largest embassy grounds in Ootosan Uchi belong to the Unicorn, mainly due to the presence of the Otaku training stables, which hold up to a hundred of the finest steeds in the Empire at any given time. But ironically, much of the Unicorn Embassy remains vacant, unused since the time when all the clan's families dabbled in Imperial politics.

"The Moto currently 'occupy' the Unicorn Embassy, which few save other Moto actually visit. Other clans have little interest in the Unicorn as a whole, but the Moto... well, even the barbarians won't have them."

Contrary to popular belief, the Unicorn Embassy is not a breeding ground of greed, lechery, and vice. In fact, it is one of the best-kept holdings in the Ekohikei, every inch of it polished to a shine – even the parts that go unused for months at a time. The Otaku maintain the stables on the west, while the Shinjo and Ide devote their services to the district's military defense and training (and are housed elsewhere). But the Unicorn Embassy is the home of the Moto. Few reside anywhere else in the Ekohikei, and even fewer within the Forbidden City. This is especially true recently, given the events of last year's Winter Court (see page 95 for details).

Moto Ujiaki, Captain of the Unicorn Guard (Ootosan Uchi)

Rank 5 Moto Bushi; Air: 2, Reflexes 4, Earth: 4, Fire: 4, Water: 3, Strength 4, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Athletics 3, Hand-to-Hand 2, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lance 2, Lore (Lion Clan) 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Meditation 3, Stealth 3, Tetsubo 3, Yarijutsu 2

Other Options: Brash, Quick, True Love (Matsu Mikiu, see the Second Lion Embassy, Location 12)

The most recent addition to the Unicorn Embassy's complement of Moto bushi, the dour Ujiaki has a striking presence, dressing all in white with a long, flowing cape of heavy layered silks. His wooden mask is thick and strapped to his face with worn *kasuri*, dyed to match his clothing. None have ever seen his face, but he has painted the mask itself in the shape of the Moto family mon, surrounding his leering eyes and widely grinning mouth.

Though Ujiaki is not physically imposing, those who meet him tread with fearful respect. His practiced stance is level and he never speaks in public, engaging in conversation only with the geisha he frequently visits. On the battlefield, he is known as *Shiyuki* (a Moto colloquialism meaning "White Death"), after the trail of blood left behind his flowing cloak as he streaks through the enemy.

Ujiaki gained such a reputation that the Emperor himself offered him a position as a captain of the Imperial Palace guard. He retained this post until the fallout between the Imperial Houses this last winter (again, please see page 95), when his actions relegated him to the Unicorn Embassy. He has remained in charge of the Embassy bushi ever since, and has kept himself and the rest of the Moto out of the limelight as much as possible.

THE FOX CLAN EMBASSY

Location#: 101

"Fox Clan bushi used to live at the Unicorn Embassy; the Moto have far more room than they need. But recently, it seems that the Fox and the Moto have had a disagreement of some sort, and the Fox have arranged with the Hito governor to assume control of the property immediately to the east of the Unicorn Embassy. This structure is small and shielded from the streets of the Hito by a dense line of trees, which – as I understand it – suits the new tenants perfectly..."

The function of the magistrate in Rokugani society is to maintain the Emperor's Law. They are his eyes beyond the valleys and the lakes, where none can hear his decrees. They are his voice when diplomacy and etiquette fail. And they are his hands, enforcing his Law wherever they go. Magistrates are the hub of all justice within Rokugan; without them, civilization would falter, degenerating into a flurry of 'might-makes-right' challenges before the entire system collapsed.

Yet sometimes, even magistrates are fallible...

The Mondai Ketsu

When a situation arises that the magistrates cannot resolve, and no alternative measures, they call upon Kitsune Sojin (the 'Fury of Hantei' see below). Sojin represents the Imperial Line's final response to extreme circumstances, commanding a unit of soldiers, courtiers, merchants, and diplomats hand-picked from all the Great and Minor Clans. His group (called the *Mondai Ketsu*) answers to no one save the Emperor himself, and are equipped to handle nearly any situation. Most members are trained by two or more clans – even if the clans oppose each other – providing them with a well-informed and unbiased perspective from which to approach a case.

The Mondai Ketsu arrive at the site of a problem as soon as they can, assess the situation, and resolve it in the most direct manner possible. This requires summary judgment of those involved and often forceful implementation of their decision. Like all magistrates, the word of Kitsune Sojin and his band is considered Imperial Law, and may not be questioned by any save the Emerald Champion or Clan Daimyo.

The Mondai Ketsu has a long and frightening history of bloodshed, and often indulge in extreme measures. In the forty-odd years since their inception, the Mondai Ketsu have acquired a reputation for violent efficiency. (Other magistrates often invoke their name to urge people into working with them; this tactic works well among the superstitious lower classes, who see the Mondai Ketsu as 'demons in disguise').

Many suspect that the Emperor has set intentionally brutal parameters for the Mondai Ketsu, perhaps as a lesson to those who would disobey his will. With near-divine authority, they cut through the 'enemies' of the Empire with impunity, rarely permitting their foes an honorable death. Worse, they destroy their enemies through striking designs, as if scripting their downfall in advance. Allies are stripped of power, resources destroyed; eventually, the enemy's honor shatters and his will to fight dwindles. Then the Mondai Ketsu strike – quickly and precisely – leaving no trace of disobedience. The process is calculated to not only destroy the will of the enemy, but also to serve as a warning to other potential subversives.

Such tactics are not uncommon between enemies in Rokugan, but the fact that the Emperor uses such "uncultured" contrivances upon his own people does not settle well with some. Lovers of peace and champions of diplomacy (chiefly the Phoenix and Crane) continue to speak against the Mondai Ketsu in the courts, and word has reached as far as the Forbidden City itself. No argument has swayed the Emperor as yet, however – the Mondai Ketsu remain within his retinue, awaiting an uprising to quell.

The Mondai Ketsu are constantly developing as a team. Each member learns from the others, and new methods are devised each time they encounter something unprecedented. Since their reputation has darkened across the Empire, desire for their services has waned; the Hantei only calls upon them infrequently, so they devote even more time to their studies and their training, honing their skills to a razor's edge. If they need

training in a particular skill, they are "loaned" to the appropriate dojo. The dojo master attends to the samurai personally, imparting upon them all the information he can. When they emerge, they have another weapon to add to the Mondai Ketsu's growing list.

Relations with the Unicorn

The Mondai Ketsu – particularly their leader Kitsune Sojin – have a feud with their neighbors, the Moto of the Unicorn Clan. Until recently, the Mondai Ketsu lived within the walls of the Unicorn Embassy, along with a handful of Fox Clan bushi and periodic visitors from their homelands. But when Moto Ujiaki became Captain of the Unicorn guard and moved onto the Embassy grounds, he immediately began to clash with Kitsune Sojin. These conflicts rapidly escalated until even their subordinates began fighting.

The Otaku and other neighbors complained, worried that the violence within the Embassy walls would end in drawn steel and spilt blood. The involved parties mutually decided that the best course of action would be to find the Fox their own holding. Weeks later (and just in time according to many witnesses), the Kitsune were granted the derelict houses between the Unicorn Embassy and the Temple to the Kami. They have spent the last several months renovating the old buildings, which are only now returning to their former glory.

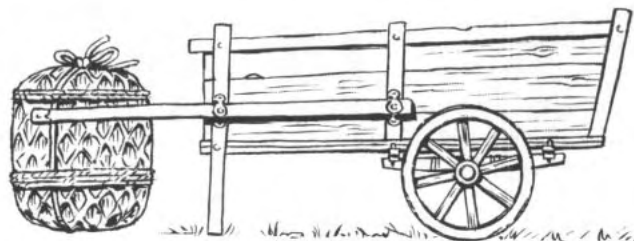
Kitsune Sojin, Commander of the Mondai Ketsu

Rank 5 **Seppun** Miharuru; **Air:** 4, **Awareness** 5, **Earth:** 5, **Willpower** 6, **Fire:** 4, **Water:** 4, **Perception** 5, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Appraisal 4, Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 5, Bojutsu 4, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Gambling 3, Hand-to-Hand 4, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 4, Ichi-Miru 3, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Manipulation 3, Obisaseru 4, Shintao 3, Siege 4, Stealth 2, Torture 3

Other Options: Adopted (into Imperial House), Bad Reputation (the 'Fury of Hantei'), Combat Reflexes, Death Trance, Irreproachable, Large, Social Position (Imperial Bloodline)

They speak his name careful reverence, and those who glimpse his arrival are wont to flee or surrender in dishonor. The brooding Kitsune Sojin is the champion of the Emperor's vengeance, a harbinger of bitter retribution who leaves harsh lessons in his wake. When only a child – scarcely old enough to reason for himself – his family was attacked and killed by a band



of wave men intent upon stealing their annual taxes. He, too, would have been murdered had it not been for the honorable efforts of Kakita Higune, the magistrate who had come to collect the funds. The magistrate's heart went out to the boy, and the two returned to the Imperial Capital together. Higune called in several favors in the city, which he used to place Sojin in a good home among the Seppun.

Sojin is an outsider in Otosan Uchi and among the nobility of Rokugan. He remains a practical man at heart, inexperienced with the subtleties of Imperial society. He has just enough social knowledge to mingle with those he must, but focuses the bulk of his life on martial studies. Even though his mon and armor signify peace, he is one of the most fearsome combatants among the Emperor's personal retinue.

THE HITO WATER GARDENS

Location#: 28

"These lovely gardens are a replica of the Emperor's own island maze within the Forbidden City, reconstructed here so that 'the masses could partake of the Emperor's glory'. Regrettably, several imperfections exist in the second design, caused by the designers' misunderstanding of the original. You see, the Emperor hired the finest artisans and shugenja to build the Imperial gardens and draw the kami to them. They accomplished many amazing feats which could not be duplicated by those who created this place. In the end, the water gardens of the Hito remain a testament to the Emperor's virtue, though a hollow one..."

One of the primary differences between the Hito water gardens and those in the Forbidden City is their sources. While the Imperial gardens are self-contained and must be drained once a year (during Winter Court, while the Emperor and his entourage are away), the gardens of the Hito redirect water from the River of the Sun, creating a current that runs between the islands and underneath the bridges before spilling back into the River just before the breakers. The lack of sediment in the Hito water reduces the emerald color to a more uniform blue; the Hito water is only a few shades darker than that of the River of the Sun itself.

Though originally built as a smaller representation of the Imperial Water Gardens, the Hito island maze has grown well beyond its original confines. Today, it is roughly twice the size of the Emperor's gardens, with many secluded spots for private conversations or quiet mediation. When the Imperial Court hosts particularly large gatherings, the Hito water gardens accommodate the additional visitors. During such times, the Unicorn and Lion guard the premises, and none may enter them without Imperial permission.

During all other times, however, the gardens are a popular destination for courtiers, merchants, and romantics of all social classes. Crowds and individuals stroll over the bridges or pause at the gazebos at all hours of the day, their outlines visible by the faint light of distant torches.



THE SEAT OF HITO GOVERNMENT

Location#: 11

"Though they may not appear impressive, these small buildings nestled against the Northern Wall are the home of Ide Ukuri, the district governor here. He is a likable man, I am told, though I have very little in common with him. They say he is a merchant at heart, but I would say 'peasant'. He and his assistant consort with the lowest classes and rarely appear at court. Were it my decision, he would have been replaced by Ide Tadaji years ago, but the Court says that Ukuri maintains important relations with the Outer City, so he remains... for now.

"The Sentaku here are most capable, though. Historically, they have the best record for any Tribunal cell in the city's history. Only those who truly deserve to be admitted into the Forbidden City are given the sponsorship of the Futago Gekide..."

There are only four members of the Hito District government – Ide Ukuri (the governor), Ikoma Gomuri (his assistant), and the two Sentaku representatives, Matsu Kori and Otaku Geshiko. These four handle all internal matters, though it is obvious to outsiders whose workloads are heaviest. Without the aide of counselor, diplomats, or courtiers, Ukuri and his assistant have taken on the majority of the district government's functions. Because their duties consume so much time and effort, they have gained a reputation for 'ignoring' issues until they fester into problems. But otherwise, the present situation suits Ukuri and Gomuri well, as they both prefer direct interaction with their subjects to making disconnected and impersonal decisions.

The government facilities in the Hito mirror the simple dispositions of its occupants. They look more like a minor noble's home than anything official – four single-story buildings that have grown together over the years. The drab exteriors blend with the Northern Wall and buildings around it, making it hard to find unless you search for it. Once inside, there is little



variation from one room to another, with everything serving a specific purpose, or else forgotten.

Ide Ukuri, Governor of the Hito District

Rank 4 Ide Diplomat; Air: 3, Earth: 3, Fire: 3, Intelligence 4, Water: 2, Perception 4, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Appraisal 3, Commerce 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 3, Gambling 2, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu 3, Law 4, Lore (Peasant Culture) 3, Oratory 3, Sincerity 4

Other Options: Allies (Various, among the *heimin*), Antisocial (with nobility only), Bad Reputation (with Imperials)

Ide Ukuri is very approachable, and well-liked among the *heimin* of his district. (Though he would never admit it, he holds a special place within his heart for the *eta* and *hinin* as well.) He keeps a well-mannered house, treats his servants with equal respect, and listens to all visitors (no matter their social standing or their complaint) with equal attention. This policy – coupled with his forgiving administration and association with the peasants – has earned him the ire of many Imperials, including Ide Tadaji, who is rumored to be the next in line for his post.

Ukuri relies upon Ikoma Gomuri to advise him when his emotions cloud his judgment, or when a situation requires

calculated repair. Since their appointment together several years ago, the two have become fast friends.

Ikoma Gomuri, Assistant to Ide Ukuri

Rank 3 Ikoma Bard; Air: 2, Awareness 3, Earth: 3, Fire: 3, Agility 4, Water: 3, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 3, Bard 3, Calligraphy 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Heraldry 3, History 4, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 2, Nofujutsu 2, Shintao 2, Wrestling 3

Other Options: Hands of Stone, Lechery, Quick Healer

Most of the time, Ikoma Gomuri serves as the Hito governor's able assistant – meek, resilient, and adaptable. He resolves civil disputes with frightening speed and clarity, and readily handles nearly half the district's administrative duties by himself. But there is another man beneath the docile bard that most citizens know. At heart, Gomuri is a thrill-seeker and hedonist beyond measure. He indulges in opium and sake, gambles away gifts from other diplomats, and visits countless geisha houses – sometimes as many as five a night.

Gomuri's current fascination revolves around two members of the Hito Sentaku Tribunal – Matsu Kori and Otaku Geshiko. During late evening meetings, Gomuri's mind gravitates toward their ferocious charm. He has even begun to court the two samurai-ko, enduring *noh* theatre with Kori one night and vanishing off into the woods surrounding the city with Geshiko the next. (Underneath his shallow exterior beats the heart of a rugged hunter, whose mind soars beside the jagged intensity of the Otaku.) Eventually, Gomuri will have to make a choice between the women (seeing them both constitutes a significant breach of etiquette), but for now he continues to enjoy life in the moment, reveling in the company of both.

Hito Representatives to the Sentaku Tribunal

The Sentaku Tribunal in the Hito District caters to the military applicants who wish to enter the Forbidden City. Hito representatives of the Tribunal always come from the standing military or appointed by the martial sensei of the district. The current Tribunal are particularly notorious for their exacting methods and abrasive decisions. They bicker incessantly over every application, citing a candidate's shortcomings in the public forum of their own court and debating their reasons for entering the Forbidden City down to the smallest possible point. Most people are find their raw emotional intensity too much to bear, and withdraw their applications, fleeing to less volatile surroundings.

This is the key to the success of the Tribunal in this district. Only those who are genuinely devoted to entering the Forbidden City have the tolerance to endure their unorthodox questioning. Shame and personal embarrassment weeds the remainder out. Ironically, those who have received the sponsorship of Matsu Kori and Otaku Geshiko have become some of their closest friends.

Matsu Kori, Lion Representative to the Sentaku

Rank 5 Bushi; Air: 3, Reflexes 5, **Earth:** 4, **Fire:** 3, **Agility** 5, **Water:** 4, **Void:** 4

Notable Skills: Appraisal 3, Archery 4, Athletics 3, Battle 4, Hand-to-Hand 3, History 2, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Rokugani Art) 4, Music (Various) 2-4, Oratory 3, Painting 2, Poetry 4, Sincerity 5

Other Options: Patron (Miya Yoto), Small, Wealthy (6 Points)

Contrary to their public reputations, Matsu Kori and Otaku Geshiko are the best of friends. Their families are 'old nobility' of the Hito District, and the two bushi have known each other since childhood. Until their *gempukku*, the two studied under the same sensei and sparred against one another daily.

But where Geshiko is a warrior to the core, Kori has an eye for elegance and beauty. Fine works of art inspire her, and she pays greater attention to her appearance. Some might call her a *haneko* ("feather", or soft) as long as they were prepared for some blunt trauma: she is still a skilled bushi, regardless of her taste for the arts.

She inherited the majority of her family's holdings when her last surviving uncle died in the Lion-Crane war, but has liquidated the assets, devoting them to the acquisition of new and more exotic fineries. She passes these on to Miya Yoto, who shares her love of art and has made her a standing offer to split the cost of new discoveries. Together, they two maintain a veritable museum in one wing of the Miya Palace, which draws hundreds of spectators each year. (For more on this collection, please see Location 749). Kori remains a silent partner in this enterprise.

Early in Tribunal proceedings, Matsu Kori remains calm and collected, allowing Otaku Geshiko to control the questioning. But as Geshiko's interrogation picks up speed, Kori intercedes, defending the candidate's position. The two allow the candidate to grow accustomed to their attitudes, then swap roles. Kori is not as skilled with forceful questioning as her companion, but her passive-aggressive demeanor can usually support her half of the interview.

Otaku Geshiko, Unicorn Representative to the Sentaku

Rank 4 Battle Maiden; Air: 4, Reflexes 5, **Earth:** 3, **Stamina** 4, **Fire:** 2, **Agility** 4, **Water:** 3, **Perception** 5, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Animal Husbandry 3, Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 2, Falconry 4, Horse Archery 5, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 4, Intimidation 5, Kenjutsu 4, Oratory 2, Sincerity 3

Other Options: Absolute Direction, Compulsion (Hunting), Gentry, Way of the Land (environs surrounding Otosan Uchi)

The domineering half of the Hito Sentaku Tribunal is Otaku Geshiko, the daughter of the present Hito District Governor. Geshiko has immersed herself as fully in the world of the Battle Maidens, rejecting the calm composure of her Ide parentage early in her life. Between interrogations of Sentaku candidates, she indulges in her greatest passion - hunting - in the hills and

cliffsides outside the capital. For Geshiko, there is no greater thrill than chasing down elusive prey. She invites those who impress her (including Ikoma Gomuri) along during these forays, or for a quick field exercise on the Plain of Fast Troubles.

During Sentaku proceedings, Geshiko is quick and furious with her questions, rarely pausing for a breath or allowing the applicant to get more than a word in. She specializes in humbling candidates, belittling them with sharp comments about their intentions, stature, reputation, or appearance before leaving them to Kori's tender mercies.

THE (WESTERN) LION EMBASSY

Location#: 12

"The last noteworthy location in the Hito District is the second Lion Embassy, representing the bulk of the clan's influence in the city. From here, the Lion recruit, organize, and train their mighty armies, to be fielded against the Crane or offered up as reinforcements for the Emperor. The head of these forces - and most respected Lion sensei in the Ekohikei - is Akodo Matoko, a rikugunshokan retired from the field of war. This evening he has made time for us to dine with him. Consider him your best source for knowledge of Otosan Uchi's military strengths, weaknesses, and methods."

Akodo Matoko, Lion Army Commander (Otosan Uchi)

Rank 5 Bushi; Air: 3, **Earth:** 3, **Fire:** 3, **Water:** 3, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Archery 4, Astrology 3, Athletics 5, Bard 4, Battle 4, Bojutsu 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Dance 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Hand-to-Hand 3, Heraldry 4, History 4, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Lion Ancestors) 4, Oratory 2, Shintao 3, Siege 3, War Fan 2

Other Options: Balance, Death Trance, Dishonored, Heart of Vengeance (Crane)

Matoko has suffered several slights in the last few years. Before the current hostilities between the Lion and the Crane flared up, the clans kept up a healthy dialogue with one another. They traded resources, and periodically nobles from both clans would marry, to cement the peaceful will of the Emperor.

Akodo Matoko was one such samurai, a renowned general of the fielded Lion armies and a landed noble with the ear of the Emperor himself. She was married to a Crane general named Daidoji Uragirin, who merged his land at the edge of the Plain of Fast Troubles with her own after the ceremony. Their territory was considered pivotal to keeping the peace between the clans: it contained one of the principal roads between Otosan Uchi and the heart of the Empire. For nearly twenty years, the two lived in harmony, regardless of the derision they received from their hot-headed brothers-in-arms.

They even bore a child, whose subtle features and fiery nature might have become a crowning symbol of peace between the Lion and the Crane. They named her Mikiu, and bickered playfully about her training. Matoko wanted her to follow in the

proud footsteps of hardened military leaders, while Uragirin was interested in honing her duelist abilities, so that she might make her own path.

None of these dreams came true, however. With the onset of the Lion-Crane war, both spouses were drawn into battle for their own clans. Matoko, who had risen quickly in the ranks of the Lion armies, had the clout to speak out against her assignment, and pleaded with her superiors to allow her to stand down. She did not wish to fight the clan that had brought her so many happy years, and she refused to destroy the image of harmony that her daughter had grown to believe in.

Uragirin, however, was not as well established within the ranks of the Crane, and the hint of fear that Matoko had always taken for hesitant respect turned out to be utter cowardice. Rather than stand up against the Crane generals, or fight for his family, he vanished into the north to join them in combat. He did not even have the strength to face Matoko and Mikiu, to say goodbye as a warrior and a poet. Instead, he simply ran, guarding the honor of his clan before his own flesh and blood.

Matoko immediately withdrew her petition to be excluded from the fighting, and joined the Lion armies on the field, silently hoping she would meet Uragirin among the enemy. She yearned to release her anger toward her husband, to resolve the hatred seeping through her spirit. She fought with a fury born of the worst betrayal, thinking only of Mikiu, whose home had been shattered by the war, and her husband, who engineered the deaths of hundreds of her friends and family each day. The go-hatamoto she commanded took heart from her determination, and rapidly gained a reputation as one of the most bloodthirsty regiments of the Lion army.

But Matoko's anger and drive eventually undermined her intentions. Several weeks ago, toward the end of the first year of the Lion-Crane war, her contravention of the code of bushido became obvious. She sent entire daibutai into battle against clearly insurmountable odds, ordering hundreds of Lions to their deaths in pursuit of her own agenda. Her commanders attempted to reign in her bloodthirsty impulses, to focus her anger toward defeating the Crane without destroying the Lion in the process, but to no avail. In the end, her command was destroyed. The family daimyo relieved her of active duty and placed her in a position where her talents could be used without threatening her subordinates.

Matoko was made sensei and rikugunshokan to the Lion forces in Otosan Uchi – technically a promotion (she now answers directly to Akodo Toturi) but also an exile intended to protect the rest of the Lion from her. The Miya spoke for the Emperor when she took the new position, saying that it was for Matoko's "valor upon the field of battle", and most of the Lion forces have accepted that, whether they believe it or not.

Today, Matoko remains a Lion Ambassador to the Forbidden City and chief administrator and trainer of the Lion in the Imperial Capital. Though proud of her post, she understands how she gained it, and the thirst in her heart remains unquenched. Her

daughter, Mikiu, has taken over the family duties at their former home, but spends much time with her mother at the Lion Embassy in Otosan Uchi. Matoko appreciates this, but might feel differently if she knew the true reason for Mikiu's recent visits...

Matsu Mikiu, Lieutenant in the Lion Armies

Rank 1 Bushi; Air: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 3, Agility 4, Water: 2, Perception 3, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Bard 2, Battle 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Heraldry 2, History 2, Horsemanship 3, Horse Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore (Lion Ancestors) 2

Other Options: Dangerous Beauty, Dark Secret (Liaison with Moto Ujiaki), Gentry

The daughter of Akodo Matoko and Daidoji Uragirin is now known as Matsu Mikiu by virtue of her acceptance into the Matsu bushi school after her gempukku. She should have entered school at about the same time open hostilities erupted between the Lion and the Crane erupted, but because of her parents' unique position, she never had that choice. To avoid further friction



between the clans, the Imperial House offered her the option of entering the school of her choice, save the Akodo and Daidoji bushi schools, where her parents had been trained. Mikiu chose the Matsu school, which suited her fiery temperament and rash fighting tendencies.

After completing her initial training, Mikiu requested (and received) leave from her sensei, to tend to the lands her parents had founded together. Most of the time, she lives at the handsome estate Matoko and Uragirin built there, tending to their holdings and defending the local peasants until the war is over, when she hopes the family will be able to come back together. Though she visits Matoko in Otosan Uchi frequently, and sees the pain and hatred in her mother's eyes, she cannot yet accept that her world has been shattered forever.

Recently, Mikiu has acquired a secondary motive in visiting Otosan Uchi. She is infatuated with an impetuous Moto named Ujiaki, stationed at the Unicorn Embassy (Location 83). She knows that her mother would never approve of their romance, however, and has kept it a secret. They often meet at her family estate or along the Northern Wall to speak of dreams they may yet have to surrender if their love comes to light.

Ujiaki has expressed an interest in her family's plight, and thinks Mikiu is selfish for ignoring her place on the battlefield with the Lion. She cannot bring herself to abandon her mother, however, or take sides in her parents' dispute. For now, she remains committed to peace at their home, so that her family – now shattered forever – will have somewhere to return to when the chaos has passed.

Peace Through Force

The second Lion Embassy serves many functions, including the vital task of supplying the trained soldiers who patrol the districts of the Ekohikei. Yet it has another purpose, one the Otomo planned when they placed it along the western River of the Sun. The second Lion Embassy stands directly between the Embassies of the Crab and the Unicorn, and maintains an uneasy peace between them. While often allies, the two clans are too militaristic to avoid the occasional conflict. The Unicorns' defensiveness coupled with the Crab's bull-headedness can turn an otherwise harmless *faux-pas* into a bloody brawl. As the Emperor's Right Hand, the Lion must keep both clans in check, and prevent any misunderstandings from getting out of hand. The second Embassy is ideally placed for this function.

The Otomo are well aware of the precarious nature of their creation. The Ekohikei survives through careful planning and a vast network of allies placed in the proper roles. One such ally, Akodo Matoko, controls the second Lion Embassy and the Lion armies in Otosan Uchi, though more for her rage and popularity among the troops than for her skills. As long as Matoko remains in favor of peace, the fragile harmony in the city will remain.

Influence and Relations of the Hito District

Everyone understands that the rulers of the Hito District are the watchdogs of the Ekohikei, and by extension all of Otosan Uchi. Since the bulk of Hito dwellers outside the district are highly-trained (and often very strict) samurai, most citizens assume that everyone else in the district follows suit. Consequently, dwellers in the district (and especially their officials) are viewed with hesitant respect. Visitors take great care to follow the rules of Bushido near their magistrates and soldiers, and all watch their tongues when speaking with those who live in the Hito.

SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

The Hito District is physically segregated from the rest of the Imperial Capital. The River of the Sun splits it away from the Karada and Kanjo Districts, while the Northern Wall stands between it and the Outer City. Contact with the rest of the city is extremely limited; many citizens of Otosan Uchi go their entire lives without entering or even discussing the Hito District. Those who do usually regret the experience, unless they are Lion or Unicorn themselves, or can adapt quickly to the pervasive martial lifestyle.

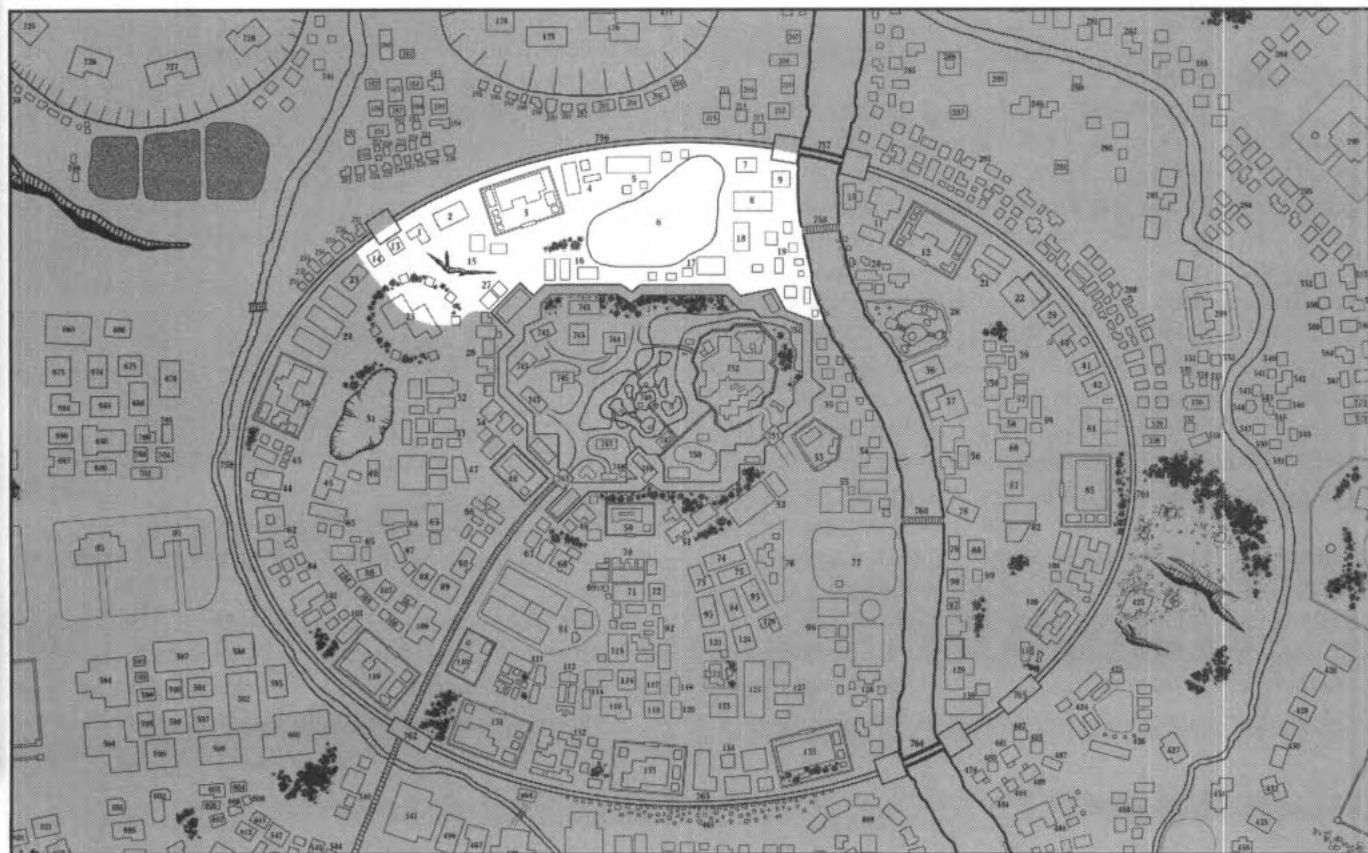
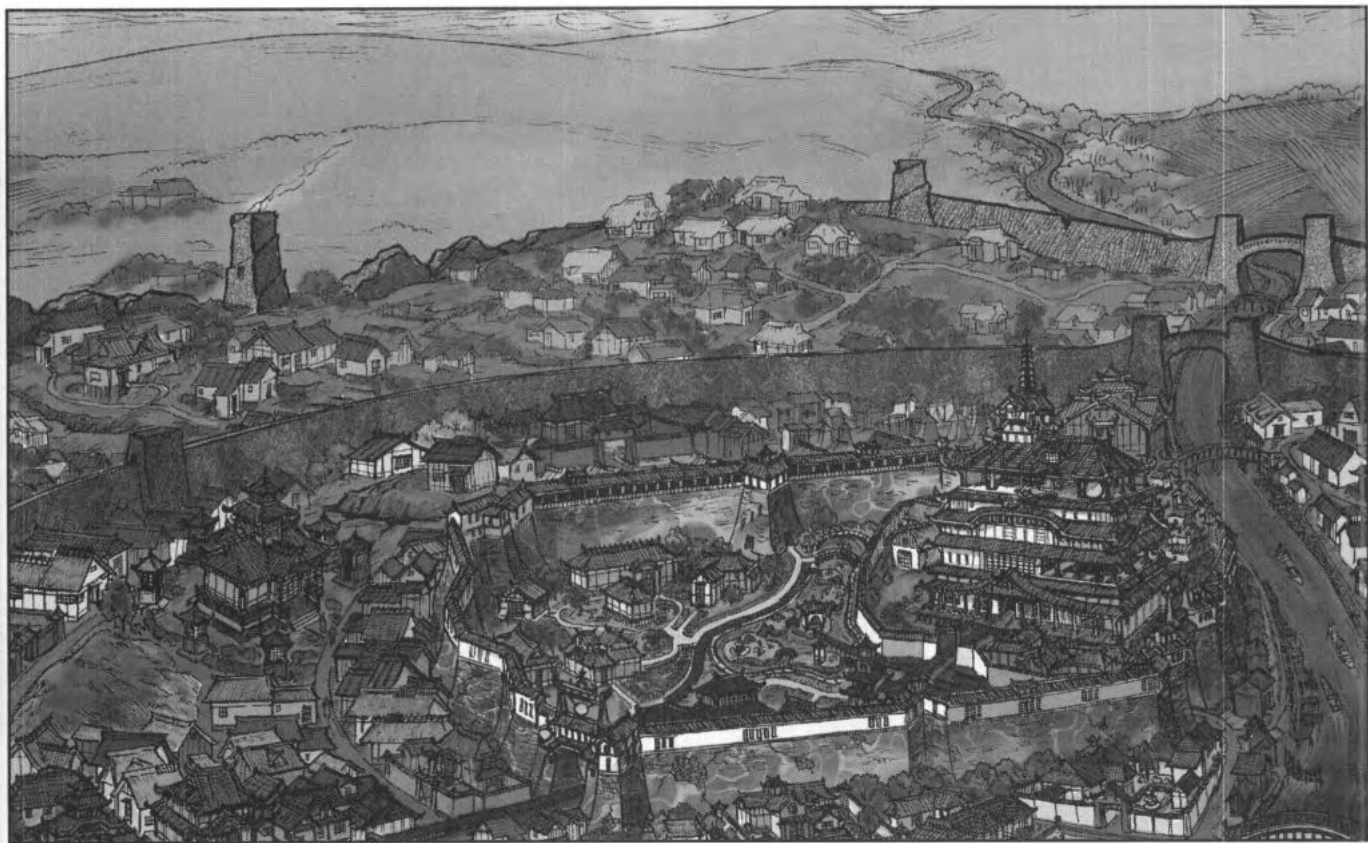
MAJOR AND MINOR CLANS

The Lion and the Unicorn feel right at home in the Hito, treating the entire district like their own personal training ground. Every person they meet is a challenge, every place they go another experience to learn from. But others find the place a barren, hollow realm, with no flavor of its own beyond dull military protocol. The Crab, in particular, find the Hito District dry and disenchanting, filled with megalomaniacal and uncreative automatons.

Customs of the Hito District

Most of the festivals and ceremonies in the Hito District center around the River of the Sun. The "River of Stars" festival along the riverbanks (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, pages 67–68) is a time of great fancy and wonder. The Hito Water Gardens fill with estranged and forbidden lovers on this night, when all look the other way in favor of romance.

The Bon Festival is another favorite of the Hito District, when the River of the Sun supposedly swells with the spirits of the dead. Those seeking forgiveness or communion converge along the banks and send offerings to the dead on small floats. Meanwhile, the old and dying wade into the river, seeking reunion with their ancestors and an honorable release from the trials of this life.



Karada District

Province Rank:	6	Imperial Rank:	7
Population Rank:	5	Production Rank:	8
Relative Wealth:	9	Political Influence:	2
Crime Rank:	8	Corruption Rank:	9
Appearance Rank:	2	Popularity Rank:	2

The Guided Tour - Day Four

The morning sun is just cresting the Eastern Wall of the Miwaku Kabe as you cross the western bridge over the great river flowing through the center of the city. Peasants line the banks on both sides, using long pikes to drag in the refuse and garbage cluttering the golden-brown waters. Most of the floating debris is mundane, likely arriving from the western districts of the Toshisoto, but one draws your eye - a dead seagull, its body warped and grey. The bird's legs still twitch as the peasants drag it to shore, even though it appears to have been dead for many hours. When you point this out to Miya Yurikago, you receive only a mumbled reply, with a sidelong glance to the Western Wall.

The heimin below continue their work, occasionally looking toward the district across the waters and gesturing rudely, or spitting to the morning wind...

Exploring the Karada District

Miya Yurikago's words arrive with a heavy sigh. "The Karada District hides within the Forbidden City's shadow, a loud and obnoxious step-child of the city. As you can see, the Crab have a strong presence here - as the nobility say, 'sumu to issho ni

Karada', or 'he lives with the Crab'. This place houses the middle-castes of the Ekohikei - merchants, craftsmen, and geisha. As such, nearly everyone frequents it, and it has become a social hub of sorts inside the Miwaku Kabe. The roar of traffic can be heard for miles in all directions, and often continues until the first light of day.

"But there is a drawback to such utility. The streets here are crowded all the time, and pools of darkness obscure illicit activities. I shudder to think what happens after dark here, when the magistrates have little influence. Rumors persist that the Yasuki and Daidoji vie for control of the district's underground trade, and that the conflict has reached a peak of late. With the Lion and the Crane depleting their resources at an alarming rate, and the drain on Imperial funds increasing, the two merchant leagues have an unprecedented opportunity. Nothing good can come of two such powerful adversaries competing in the streets, and the Otomo actively support military jurisdiction of the district. Yet I fear that they may be too late, that the Yasuki and Daidoji are already prepared for war..."

SEAT OF DISTRICT GOVERNMENT

Location#: 19

"The governor of the Karada District is Hida Reitaan, a disreputable man with a history of rude outbursts. He rarely appears on the streets of his own district anymore, and there is talk in the Imperial Court of forcing him to retire soon. I cannot say how I feel about the man, for we have only met once, under questionable circumstances - famed citywide go tournament at the Iris Festival several years ago. All I can say - for or against him - is that he has become terminally reclusive, with little to offer the city any longer but sorrow and history."

Hida Reitaan, Governor of the Karada District

Rank 4 Bushi; Air: 4, Earth: 4, Fire: 2, Agility 3, Water: 3, Strength 6, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Battle 4, Commerce 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 1, Gambling 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Oratory 2, Shintao 4, Siege 3, Sincerity 2, Tetsubo 4

Other Options: Antisocial, Dishonored, Great Destiny (Hero of the People), Haunted (by the Armies of Hokori), Large

As a child, Hida Reitaan idolized his father, the former governor of the Karada District. Reitaan never knew the love of his mother, who was killed while leading Unicorn forces against a resurgence of the Shadowlands, and he spent nearly all of his time with his bereaved father Ryokai. When Ryokai became governor of the Karada District, charged with cleaning up the corruption in the Ekohikei, Reitaan came with him. The boy followed everywhere the elder Hida went - even into the worst dens of iniquity in the entire city. The two were inseparable.

Ryokai's greatest love aside from his son was go. The two would play for hours during the Trade Festival each year (see Customs of the Karada District for more), and developed a series



of hand signals to denote moves so that they could play across the room during tedious public functions. Ryokai found an exquisite board and pieces while abroad with the Crab armies, which he gave to his father during the Iris Festival ten years ago.

Soon after, however, something changed in Ryokai. His temper grew, and he started to berate his retainers and visitors. Reitaan returned home as quickly as he could, only to find his father a completely different man. He was angry all the time, and flew into uncontrollable rages without warning. The Sentaku Tribunal had already recommended his removal from office, which the Imperial Court was seriously considering.

Further, Ryokai's fascination with *go* had blossomed into an obsession. He lost sleep playing, and had no less than a dozen games in progress at once. He would challenge anyone who was close enough to talk, and ordered his assistants and friends to play with him. He was also a poor loser, slipping into tirades or even violence when defeated. Most who knew him (or had even heard of him) were wise enough to simply let him win, which only fuelled his obsession. Ryokai began to believe that he was unbeatable.

Reitaan was at a loss. He watched in horror as the man he had idolized fell into public disgrace. The Karada District – once a model of efficiency and conduct – was degenerating into competition and immorality. With its governor compromised, the

darker elements of the district populace came to the fore, and the Karada became just as corrupt as any of the Toshisoto districts.

Finally, the court decided to remove Ryokai and bring in a successor as quickly as possible. In a particularly cruel gesture, the Otomo informed Ryokai that he would train his own replacement, a slight which only worsened his behavior. Reitaan watched as the division between his father and the governor-to-be (an idealistic Otomo named Ujihiro) grew deeper and deeper. Soon, their hatred for one another was visible to all in the Karada courts.

On the day of his 'retirement', during the Iris Festival, Ryokai again entered the city-wide *go* tournament. He insisted that he use his son's gift in every round, a point which none of the judges objected to. Few of his challengers put up a proper struggle (they were aware of his tantrums), but his last opponent was none other than Otomo Ujihiro. Their match was short, and Ujihiro quickly overwhelmed his rival. After the last move, the Imperial criticized Ryokai severely, blaming him for all his faults and the condition of his district and its people. Then – in a shocking display – he drew his wakizashi and committed seppuku on the spot, his blood spilling upon the board Reitaan had given his father.

Ryokai was consumed with grief as the Otomo's words sunk in. He knew that his enemy was right – he had failed his Emperor and destroyed his district. The elder Crab committed seppuku himself later that night – privately, in his own chambers. Ryokai was buried with his *go* board in a plot behind the governor's home. His final missive to the Imperial Court related his desire to pass the governor's position to his son, so that his own blood might make right his mistakes. The Emperor approved the request, and Reitaan became the new governor of the Karada District.

Reitaan initially made a great effort to compensate for his father's last years in office. But three years ago, his demeanor began to change as well. Though not subject to flights of rage in the same way his father was (at least, not yet), he suffers from severe depression and an inability to face hard decisions, two traits that greatly worry the Otomo advisors to the Imperial Court. He has not played *go* once since his father's death.

Coincidentally, a tree sprouted from the site of Ryokai's grave just before Reitaan's change. The tree has grown at an abnormal rate, reaching fifteen feet in three years, which has drawn much conjecture and supposition from the populace. Recently, the tree's bark has grown old and brittle, cracking into the shape of a *go* board; at least one witness has claimed that the image has leaked clear sap, not unlike tears.

Reitaan refuses to look at the tree, walking along the banks of the River of the Sun to avoid it. Rumors claim that he is haunted by Ryokai's spirit for his failure to fulfill the former governor's last wish. If this is true, however, Reitaan is in no mood to respond, remaining hidden within his audience room while the Karada District slips back into social decay.

The Armies of Oni no Hokori

Reitaan's haunting has nothing to do with his father. It involves Ryokai's beloved go board, which Reitaan gave him, and which remains buried with the elder Crab. Centuries ago, an Oni named of Hokori met a unit of Crab in the Shadowlands. The samurai commander, experienced with fighting inhuman foes, knew that he could not defeat the monstrous beast in battle, and was surprised when the Oni offered him an alternate avenue to victory. He challenged the commander to a game of go, offering his own life if he lost a single game. In exchange, however, the Oni would claim one of the commander's men for every game it won.

The commander knew that all of his men would certainly die if he refused, so the two sat down to a go board. The first game was quite equitable, but in the end, the Oni bested the Crab and demanded one of the soldiers. The horrified commander watched as one of his men dissolved, screaming, into one of the pieces on the board. The next round also went to the Oni, as did many more, each ending with another man vanishing into the board.

Eventually, the Crab commander had no more men to challenge the Oni with, and offered himself for one last game. The Oni accepted, besting the shaken commander easily, and forcing his spirit into the last piece. The spirits of the Crab and his men remain trapped in the pieces today, their spirits writhing in eternal torment. The go set eventually left the possession of the Oni, who watched gleefully as each successive owner succumbed to the raving words of the fallen Crab bushi.

If anyone discovered the truth of the board and consulted a well-educated shugenja with Lore (Shadowlands) of at least 4, they would find that the only way to release the spirits is to track down Oni no Hokori and destroy it.

Attitudes of the Karada Office

Hida Reitaan relieved his last three assistants and refuses to take another, calling them 'meddlesome hens.' He wishes to impose martial law on the District, however, as the crazed spirits in the go set seep into his soul. The governor only accepts requests from high-ranking or renowned soldiers and commanders; otherwise, he ignores the rest of his district, allowing it to run itself.

Karada Representatives of the Sentaku Tribunal

There are currently two Sentaku representatives in the Karada District, who counsel the Ekohikei mercantile groups and represent them in the Imperial Court. (Generally, merchants are not allowed in the Forbidden City, so the Sentaku mercantile branch acts on their behalf rather than allow them entry into the heart of the capital.) Unlike the rest of the district, there is little competition among the Sentaku here, who are principally concerned with aiding the people of the Karada.

Yasuki Maro, Crab Representative to the Sentaku

Rank 3 Yasuki Merchant; Air: 2 Awareness 5, Earth: 2, Willpower 3, Fire: 3, Water: 2, Perception 5, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Appraisal 4, Bard 4, Commerce 5, Craft (Fables) 4, Defense 1, Etiquette 3, Gambling 4, Heraldry 3, Intimidation 3, Knife 2, Manipulation 4, Oratory 4, Seduction 4, Sincerity 5, Sleight of Hand 3

Other Options: Clear Thinker, Precise Memory

Maro is a master storyteller, though none of his tales are true. He has a knack for spotting the central theme in any conversation and spontaneously generating a 'lost fable' that revolves around it. The morals of these stories always support his position or argument, but are carefully disguised to elicit a positive response from the audience.

Maro commonly uses this ability to help fulfill his role on the Sentaku Tribunal. When merchants come to the Karada Sentaku with a conflict, he 'convinces' both parties of whatever option most benefits Otosan Uchi. And when the Tribunal receives unreasonable complaints or demands, Maro always calms the merchants down with a fable that displays their 'error'.

Daidoji Jikkyo, Crane Representative to the Sentaku

Rank 3 Kakita Bushi (Merchant); Air: 2, Awareness 4, Earth: 3, Fire: 4, Water: 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Appraisal 3, Athletics 3, Battle 2, Cipher 3, Commerce 3, Courtier 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Oratory 2, Stealth 3

Other Options: Allies (many in the Ekohikei), Ambidextrous, Bad Reputation (Shady Dealings), Cadence, Idealistic

Daidoji Jikkyo is dedicated to the prosperity of the Karada District, regardless of its leadership. He ignores the rumors and mud-slinging about the current governor, and focuses instead on the problems that need to be solved. He is fiercely loyal to the merchants the Sentaku represent, and concentrates primarily on their plight. When Imperial demand for their services is higher than they can accommodate, he often uses his clout at the Court to justify their position. He uses his knowledge of unconventional channels (such as the Tortoise Clan's secondary supply routes - see Location 793-795) to aid them when problems arise.

Unfortunately, Jikkyo's colleagues have noticed his activities, and are convinced that he is using his position in the Karada District to conduct illicit trade. Were not for his calculated web of deception, and a large number of allies who will testify on his behalf, Jikkyo would already have been removed from office.

SHINDEN YARUKI JUKKO

Location#: 5

"The newest temple inside the Miwaku Kabe is perhaps the most popular, and certainly the most controversial. The unorthodox beliefs and practices of Shinden Yaruki Jukko gained critical acclaim when they were first adopted and then endorsed

by Kaiu Eto, an esteemed architect responsible for many of the finest structures in Otsan Uchi. A master sculptor, Eto's work can be identified by the presence of finely carved images across their surfaces. The Yaruki Jukko temple, for instance, newly built over the remains of a collapsed dojo, bears the likenesses of the fourteen monks who perished in the temple's original location near Kenson Gakka, during the Battle of the Humble Turtle..."

Easily the fastest-growing faith in Otsan Uchi, Shinden Yaruki Jukko houses nearly ninety *sohei* (warrior-monks), who find its practical blend of Shintao and Bushido quite appealing. The monks' faith reflects the original Shinden Yaruki Jukko (located on the border between Scorpion and Lion territory at the base of the Spine of the World, and destroyed in a battle between the clans last year), focusing on rigid application of their warrior training and isolated meditation on the path of self-discovery. All Yaruki Jukko monks learn, train, and pray alone, but encourage community in all other endeavors. They believe that no one but the individual can ascertain his own path to enlightenment, and that one's steps along the path must balance between the spiritual and physical worlds. By ignoring either, you ignore half of yourself.

They use mirrors as the principal device for spiritual exploration (thus the faith's name, the "Order of Courageous Reflection"). Fourteen full-length mirrors line the walls of the temple's dojo, used for practicing kata, and as meditational aids. A statue of Shinsei rests in the dojo's center, visible behind the monks as they stand or sit before the mirror. Each hopes to see the image of Shinsei before them in the mirror as well, meaning they have achieved enlightenment.

Recently, two monks - Shinrai and Yasoko - claimed to have seen the statue of Shinsei move as they lost themselves in the mirror. But when they turned to see if it really had, Eto's sculpture was unchanged. Their assertion has caused much furor among the other monks, who argue constantly about the meaning of the so-called 'visions'. One, a skeptical ex-shugenja named Kaego, has even embarked on an investigation to disprove their claim. His current theory revolves around the terrible history of the Western Wall (see Location 756) and the effect it may be having on the mirrors (which are mounted on the temple's rear wall, where the building touches the Miwaku Kabe).

Most of the controversy surrounding the temple involves the large number of retired samurai flocking to join them. Many say that the popularity of the faith is unnatural, yet remain supportive of Kaiu Eto, a virtual hero in the Ekohikei.



Kaiu Eto, Shinpu of the Yaruki Jukko Temple

Rank 5 Kaiu Engineer; Air: 2, Earth: 3, Fire: 2, Intelligence 5, Water: 2, Perception 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Armorer 4, Bard 4, Battle 4, Bojutsu 2, Calligraphy 3, Craft (Sculpting) 3, Engineering 5, History 4, Meditation 3, Oratory 4, Shintao 4, Siege 4, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 3, Traps 2, Weaponsmith 2

Other Options: Leadership, Social Position (Honored Elder)

For the first 30 years of his life, Kaiu Eto was largely ignored. He was cursed from birth with the name of a shamed uncle who had betrayed the clan. He never learned why his parents' decided to stunt his social growth; they died shortly after his *gempukku*, and Eto was relegated to the status of second-class samurai (below *buke*, but not quite *bonge*).

But then, all of that began to change. One of his earliest designs involved a series of remote outposts for the Unicorn in the barren realm of Heigen Kori (the Ice Plain). No assault was ever expected at such a worthless location, and the Unicorn hardly batted an eye when the Emperor assigned Eto and a team of *heimin* to construct the defense there. Fifteen years later, a horde of brigands invaded through the mountain pass. Though they numbers almost a thousand, the skeleton force the Unicorn had posted there easily routed them. According to them, Eto's designs (which channeled the invaders onto spots of thin ice) were solely responsible for the victory. Several more of Eto's structures and tactics were tested, all of which proved near impenetrable.

After that, the shame of his name was forgotten. He received a battalion of engineers to command and sent to the most cherished holdings of the Empire to improve their defenses. The finest generals consulted him before they departed to war, and he quickly gained a reputation as one of the finest engineers in history. The adoration of the masses followed quickly behind the accolades of his colleagues and employers. Eto became a celebrity, receiving gifts and friendly welcome everywhere he went. When he finally retired two years ago, the entire Empire lamented the loss of his talents.

But Eto's choice to found a new branch of the Order of Courageous Reflection has brought him under fire once again. Critics of the faith charge that it defies the Celestial Order with its heretical fusion of Bushido and the Tao. The controversy has once again resurrected the spectre of his named. "Kaiu Eto's popularity," the critics claim, "is no reason to embrace his questionable heritage."

Others are more concerned with Eto's effect upon the populace of the Karada District, and Otsan Uchi as a whole. His public disputes with Tokiuiji about the disgraceful treatment of the peasant castes continue to cause friction between the samurai and the *bonge*. Many fear that the palpable tension among the lower classes may not subside, and may even provoke a violent eruption akin to the Buke Rebellion.

Bayushi Sozui, Scorpion Impersonator / Shadow-Servant

Rank 4 Bayushi Bushi; Air: 2 Reflexes 5, **Earth:** 3, **Fire:** 4, **Agility** 5, **Water:** 2, Perception 3, **Void:** 1

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Archery 4, Athletics 3, Bard 2, Battle 2, Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Explosives 2, Hand-to-Hand 4, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Locksmith 2, Lore (Subterfuge) 3, Manipulation 4, Mimic 4, Poison 3, Sincerity 3, Sleight of Hand 3, Stealth 3, Traps 2

Other Options: Ambidextrous, Combat Reflexes, Daredevil, Driven (Scorpion Agenda), Insensitive

Shadow Points: 3 (Stealth, Swiftiness, Insubstantiality) – see *The Way of Shadow*, page 153

Kaiu Eto is not the true source of tension within the Karada District; it stems from a Shosuro-trained Bayushi named Sozui, who has instigated many criminal disturbances over the last year. Her most recent (and effective) terrorist campaign has been the orchestration of the Lion-Crane war (documented in the adventures *The Silence Within Sound* – found in the L5R GM's Pack – and *Legacy of the Forge*), but she has since moved on to much larger targets. Currently, her operations are focused around three pivotal goals:

- Gather and train a personal army of warriors who are susceptible to the Shadow (the monks of Yaruki Jukko).
- Encourage instability between the castes and social circles of the capital (primarily through Eto and his political rival, Tokiuiji – see above and Location 6).
- Undermine the leadership of the capital, and instill confusion and terror within the Imperial Court (see Location 92).

Sozui's ultimate goals are presently linked with those of the Scorpion Clan (see *The Scorpion's Sting* adventure book, in this boxed set), which parallel those of her Shosuro masters for the time being. Ultimately, however, she will come to blows with the Scorpion as well, once the Living Darkness fully absorbs her and its intentions splinter away from those of the Great Clans.

THE WESTERN WALL AND ITS PROPERTIES

Location#: 756

"The final heroic defense of the city during the Battle of Four Winds came quickly, and without warning. After the bitter defeat of Fu Leng's forces at the Northern Wall, only a tenth of their original number remained, led by a single Oni Lord named Medatsu. Knowing that ultimate victory or defeat depended upon the humans' ability to regroup and plan, Medatsu commanded his war-weary legions to swing around to take the last – seemingly undefended – wall.

"But the wall was not undefended, nor were we unprepared. The Kuni, masters of binding, had come up with a daring strategy to eliminate the last units of the Horde. They would capture the enemies inside the wall, to be expelled and banished or destroyed one at a time once the city had recovered from the attack. The Isawa Masters questioned the sanity of the plan, unsure whether the monsters could ever be removed once they were bound with

the structure. But time permitted no other options, and so the consolidated strength of all the living shugenja in the city were brought to bear against Medatsu's forces. They drew the corrupted army in using minor offensive magic, convincing Medatsu that Fu Leng still held a chance of taking the city, then enacted the ritual of binding as the enemy crashed into the Western Wall.

"Over three hundred of Fu Leng's legions vanished into the wall, never to be seen again, including Medatsu himself. The fears of the Isawa proved correct, however, and the demons were never excised from the wall. They remain to this day, trapped inside a tomb at the very heart of the Empire, the greatest threat we have ever faced this close to home. A reminder of the folly of our youth..."

The Battle of the Four Winds ended, but there was no resolution to the war with Fu Leng. Even today, the howls of the goblins, ogres, and Oni bound within the Western Wall can still be heard through the streets of the Karada District. Many claim that this is why the merchants and buyers of the place scream so loudly around the clock; so that they can drown out the wretched cries of history, looming over the district like a phantom.

No one lingers near the Western Wall for very long unless they are drunk or suicidal. Even though no one has ever seen anything erupt from the Wall, paranoia continues to run wild about the haunting effects of visiting there for too long. And over the centuries, this fevered anxiety has spread to include the whole of the Karada. Voices rise from open fields, the ground moves beneath one's feet, and travelers throughout the district experience uncontrollable mood swings. One or two people have even claimed that they felt claws reaching out from the wall when they weren't looking, as if to drag them beneath its dark and pitted surface.

The Isawa (and on occasion, the Kuni and the Asahina, see Location 759) have probed the Wall to ascertain the dangers it represents, and possibly find a way to expunge the evils within. Several researchers were driven insane when they tried to commune with the kami of the Wall, which seem to have been absorbed or subdued by Medatsu's forces. Eventually, it was determined that the Wall posed no immediate danger – the Shadowlands Horde would have already freed itself if it could – and the investigations were abandoned.

But the threat of the Wall has not vanished altogether, regardless of the Isawas' findings. Several tangible effects of the Kuni binding can still be felt, the largest of which being the activation of a tremendous fault line through the city. Stretching from the far southwest toward the shores to the north of the Tortoise land (Location 463), the chasm has steadily widened for generations. Most (including many Kaiu Engineers) claim the chasm is a product of the unstable environment, irritating the shifting foundation of the city, but others (mainly theorists at the fringe of respected society) point to a string of disappearances within the Karada District over the last several centuries, and



accounts of “monsters under the city” (see Book One, page 84) as proof that the Western Miwaku Kabe is still very dangerous.

Mechanics for the Western Wall

The Western Wall of the Ekohikei is not enchanted with any particular power. Instead, Gamemasters are encouraged to use its influence to produce elements of horror or suspense in the Karada (and surrounding) Districts. The mirrors of the Yaruski Jukko Temple, for instance, might become gates into the wall – or worse, out from it – when one meditates in front of them. A monk possessed by the corrupting force of an Oni could present a daunting challenge for the PCs; or they might have to find a way back out of the Wall once their spirit is trapped there. The Imperial Museum of Antiquities (Location 4) provides many similar plot hooks when affected by the Wall.

GMs looking for a more direct threat might arrange the release of one or more of the monsters trapped in the Wall, providing the PCs with a more accessible (if not as easily defeated) target.

THE TRADING GROUNDS

Location#: 6

“After the Yasuki broke with the Crane, they were no longer welcome in the Chisei District. But the Karada welcomed them with open arms, happy for the influx of trade and increased visibility they would bring. Back then, as you can imagine, the city looked very different, not the crowded place you find today; the displacement of the bulk of its mercantile district was not

inconceivable. So the Yasuki moved, taking their tents, blankets, and commodities with them.

“Now the Trading Grounds of the Ekohikei have become the very heart of the Karada District, thriving as never before. Every year, they grow in popularity, always offering the finest edibles, crafted items, and works of art. All four districts inside the Miwaku Kabe trade here almost exclusively, and supplies and gifts that make their way into the Forbidden City invariably pass through here. Even though they have never gained a collective name, these trading grounds are known across the Empire for their variety and quality.”

Nearly half the surface of the Karada District consists of the sprawling Yasuki Trading Grounds. Though the Daidoji, Tortoise, and others use the grounds for their own mercantile interests as well, the land is considered the sovereign territory of the Yasuki Family, and they are held responsible for its upkeep (as well as the taxes derived from sales there – a constant source of Crab contention). Nearly any commodity may be found here, and the prices are generally comparable to those found in the Toshisoto for the same items.

The “streets” of the Karada Trading Grounds shift constantly as a result of merchants arriving and departing, or increasing or decreasing their selections. Entire blocks of merchants band together to form “peddler-mazes”, in which potential buyers are herded past a broad number of sellers before they can leave. Magistrates, while welcome in the trading grounds, do not maintain stations inside their borders. The Yasuki, Daidoji,

Tortoise and others are expected to police themselves, as well as their patrons. According to law, three or more uninvolved merchants may testify to a thief's guilt once he leaves the trading grounds, who is then taken into custody and tried accordingly. (Unethical or vindictive merchants often use this law to their advantage, framing innocents or even rival merchants).

A series of beautiful lanterns illuminate the grounds, hung upon lines of heavy silk just over six feet in the air. The light from these lanterns varies in color, according to the particular neighborhood. Ideally, they are supposed serve as a general guide, but the lanterns are rarely when "streets" through the merchants shift, leaving visitors who rely on them at a loss. A local legend states that the lanterns are magical, and that the nearest one goes out when a lie is told. Whether this legend is true or not, the merchants here remain among the most honest in all the Empire.

Tokiuji, Heimin Instigator

Not Ranked (*Heimin*); **Air:** 3, **Earth:** 2, **Fire:** 2, **Intelligence** 3, **Water:** 2, **Void:** 4

Notable Skills: Acting 3, Animal Husbandry 2, Appraisal 2, Athletics 1, Commerce 1, Craft (Many), Dance 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Forgery 3, Gambling 3, Nofujutsu 3, Oratory 3

Other Options: Ambidextrous, Luck (6 Points), Meddler

Tokiuji is perhaps the best known man in the Karada Trading Grounds, a buke *sosha* ("runner") who transports people or items through its confusing corridors. A stout supporter of his own caste and notorious trouble-maker, Tokiuji has been responsible for many altercations between samurai and *heimin* in the city. His rash methods and excited chattering prevent him from gaining support from the citizens, but he has earned a reputation as a remarkable agitator of the masses. His sharp comments about the "plight of the *heimin* under the heel of the Seven Great Clans" and bitter criticism of the division of labor within the Empire have intensified over the last year, reaching several influential and often reactive *heimin* and their samurai masters. Arguments have erupted over Tokiuji's off-handed remarks, spurring conflicts long after he has moved on.

The authorities still haven't realized Tokiuji's part in these disturbances, and have only recently begun to look. Were they more observant, however, they may not only have identified him, but learned of his recent romance with a noblewoman named Ikoma Shoniko – his rant did not begin until he began seeing her. In truth, Shoniko is another guise of Bayushi Sozui (page 70), who is using Tokiuji to plant seeds of dissension among the masses.

IMPERIAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES

Location#: 4

"Centuries ago, a Kuni Witch Hunter arrived in the capital with a gift for the Emperor – a statue of a humanoid creature that appeared so real that the Emerald Champion stared at it for an hour before he was sure it was not breathing. The Imperial Court, shocked at the Kuni's offer, demanded that he remove it, but

Hantei ordered that it remain. The Emperor was enthralled with the vision, calling it 'living history'. The Kuni ensured the Hantei that he could produce additional specimens, of whatever creature the Emperor desired. This place was constructed to house them..."

The Imperial Museum of Antiquity was founded by Kuni Hazu, a brave (and some might say foolhardy) man who traveled across the world to experience new cultures. On one such trip, he learned in a magical process which preserved the life essence of a living being, trapped within its own hardened shell. The results of this ritual are extremely life-like, which fascinated Hantei XVIII, the first to see them. He accepted Hazu's gift and – thinking it was merely an elaborate (or perhaps magical) work of art – commissioned the Kuni to craft more. Hazu complied while a structure was erected to house this marvelous new collection.

Kuni Hazu traveled the Empire and beyond, capturing and petrifying one incredible being after another, eventually filling the Emperor's Museum to capacity. An additional wing was erected, then another, before the master-craftsman's career finally ended. (Hazu's body was found shredded at the edge of the Shinomen Forest, and it was generally assumed that he had met some foul creature while searching for new inspiration).

Since, the museum has become home to a vast number of historical oddities, which have mixed with the petrified creatures until there is little distinction between them. Kuni Hazu's legacy has been forgotten by all but one dedicated student of history...

Kuni Kessau, Curator of the Dobutsukan

Rank 5 Kuni Shugenja; **Air:** 2, **Earth:** 1, **Willpower** 4, **Fire:** 1, **Intelligence** 8, **Water:** 1, **Perception** 4, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Advanced Medicine 4, Appraisal 5, Astrology 3, Calligraphy 4, Cipher 3, History 5, Investigation 4, Lore (Many, esp. concerning historical topics), Research 4, Shintao 4, Stealth 3

Other Options: Bland, Forbidden Knowledge (Artifacts), Higher Purpose (Complete the Binding Ritual, see below)

Kuni Kessau has long suffered from a serious breathing ailment, which has confined him to a wheelchair. He resents the derogatory name his precious museum has acquired (*Dobutsukan*, or 'menagerie'), but grew too weak to fight about it long ago. He is far too concerned with his studies to pay attention to derision.

Like the eta servants he cherishes so much, Kuni Kessau tends to blend into the scenery at the museum; even visitors who once bowed respectfully to him have forgotten that he still lives. And this is just as Kessau wants it. He knows that he is dying, and works furiously to solve the age-old puzzle of Kuni Hazu's creations in the short time he has left. He knows that they are alive, and that the ritual that bound them in their present form is fading, but is unsure how to slow or stop the spell's decay. He

fears that – should he warn the city or fail in his researches – the museum (his ‘masterpiece’) will be destroyed.

Ikoma Megami, Assistant Curator of the Dobutsukan

Rank 1 Ikoma Bard; Air: 2, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Intelligence 3, Water: 2, Void: 2

Notable Skills: Appraisal 2, Bard 1, Calligraphy 2, Cipher 1, Heraldry 1, History 1, Investigation 2, Sincerity 4, Theology 4

Other Options: Driven (discover the source of the artifact decay), Patron (Kuni Kessau)

Kuni Kessau’s assistant (and replacement once he dies) is Ikoma Megami, a Lion bard in charge of keeping track of the museum’s rotating inventory (many pieces are kept in storage when new exhibits arrive), maintaining supplies, and welcoming visitors. Megami is a caring person with a weakness for forceful and rugged bushi.

Recently, Megami has been charged with preparing the museum for the night before the Emperor’s birthday, when the Hantei traditionally visits and walks its halls. (Each Hantei remains the night, guarded by the Lion defenders of the museum while he fasts and meditates alone among the exhibits). But this year, Megami has found several imperfections among the older pieces, as if they were suddenly corroding...

THE CRAB EMBASSY

Location#: 3

“Ah... Kuni Fujiko. The Ambassador to the Crab. A wonderful woman with a heart of purest jade. So unlike her detestable...”

“Hello, Fujiko. How does this afternoon find you?”

Kuni Fujiko, Crab Ambassador

Rank 2 Kuni Shugenja; Air: 2, Reflexes 3, Earth: 2, Willpower 4, Fire: 2, Intelligence 4, Water: 2, Perception 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 2, Kenjutsu 1, Law 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Meditation 4, Oratory 4

Other Options: Allies (Imperial Court), Ear of the Emperor, Gullible, Idealistic

The present Crab Ambassador to Otosan Uchi is a delightful young woman named Kuni Fujiko. Though her inexperience is obvious to all who meet her (she is only 24 years old, 9 beyond her gempukku), her infectious smile and bright demeanor have won her the title “darling of the Imperial Court”. She is cherished within Imperial society, given more leeway in her duties and reactions than nearly anyone, and invited to the most exclusive celebrations. Even the Emperor himself is enraptured with her, and she has received a standing offer to accompany him to Winter Court for as long as she remains in the city.

Fujiko is a competent courtier and a well-meaning diplomat. She is hindered only by her lack of practical knowledge, a facet of her development most men in the Imperial Courts are more

than willing to overlook. Unfortunately, Fujiko’s naiveté extends also to matters of her own family; she has defended Kuni Yori against charges of *maho* on more than one occasion. (Those convinced of Yori’s guilt no longer discuss the topic near Fujiko; everyone knows she will simply lash out in response.)

Several weeks ago, Fujiko was assigned an assistant – a Hiruma diplomat who could supposedly train Fujiko to handle her position alone. Hiruma Maroke has moved into the Crab Embassy and now travels with Fujiko every time she visits the Forbidden City. Maroke is rarely seen in the Karada District; she presumably spends the majority of her time indoors. Actually, Hiruma Maroke is yet another guise of Bayushi Sozui, who is using Fujiko’s relationship with the Imperial Court to further her goals (see Location 71). Since Maroke’s first appearance in the Forbidden City, tension within the Imperial Court has spiraled out of control, and delicate – often violent – debates are the order of the day. One of the worst topics of late has been the potential for another peasant uprising in the Karada District (see Locations 6), and what can be done to prevent it.

THE ONI WARAI – PART TWO

Location#: 15

“It is growing dark, and we have a very long day tomorrow. We will finally be entering the Forbidden City in the morning, but until then, we must return to the Temple of the Seven Fortunes, across the Oni Warai from here. Yes, I am aware of my previous warning, but I am afraid that our journey across the Karada District has taken far longer than I anticipated, and we are expected by Taro before nightfall. Come, we shall requisition a Hida guard to ferry us along the chasm’s edge...”

The Karada District is physically alienated from the rest of the city on all sides. The Miwaku Kabe stands to the west, while the Forbidden City lies to the east. The River of the Sun flows along its northern edge, and can only be traversed by way of the aforementioned bridge between the Karada and the Hito. Finally, the Karada’s most obvious feature lies to the south – the Oni Warai (‘the Oni’s Smile’), a deep crevice spreading from the Forbidden City wall almost to the edge of the Western Miwaku. The Oni Warai often emits a steady stream of mist in the winter months, when the tides raise the water level in the subterranean passages beneath the city. But there is much more hidden within its clefts and channels – perhaps the greatest threat of all to Otosan Uchi, even though it has no interest in the Imperial Throne...

Oyabun Interests in the Ekohikei

The sewers of Otosan Uchi supposedly house all manner of inhuman beasts – legends spread by the true occupants to dissuade the curious and bold. Through the bulk of the sewers are abandoned, and many of the connecting tunnels are unexplored, the underground’s heart is the base of operations for Ide Tenseko, one of the most brilliant criminal leaders in Rokugan. Nearly two

decades ago, she came here to establish a smuggling circle in the capital city, and was immediately countered by a corrupt Tortoise bushi named Kasuga Kumon who had already laid a claim to the Karada Trading Grounds.

Tenseko went to work gaining allies and playing various magistrate and courtier circles against one another, eventually gathering enough resources to challenge Kumon. She arranged for him to be arrested and convicted on trumped-up charges, which both eliminated him and freed up control of his established operations. It also threw the rest of Otsan Uchi's criminal community into disorder, allowing her the time to grow beyond their ability to challenge her claim.

Today, Ide Tenseko heads one of the largest, most influential smuggling operations in the Empire, with "trading" hubs in every district of the city and in most major towns and ports along the eastern coast of Rokugan. Even oyabun beyond the Plains of Battle and the Spine of the World deal with her on occasion.

Ide Tenseko, Oyabun Mastermind

Rank 5 Merchant; Air: 2, Awareness 5, **Earth:** 2, Willpower 6, **Fire:** 2, Intelligence 6, **Water:** 2, Perception 3, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Bard 4, Cipher 4, Commerce 5, Courtier 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 5, History 3, Horsemanship 2, Intimidation 4, Kenjutsu 2, Law 4, Lore (Diabolical Schemes) 5, Music (Biwa) 3, Sincerity 4, Stealth 3

Other Options: Balance, Blackmail (Many), Can't Lie, Crafty, Heartless, Luck (9 Points), Overconfident

Ide Tenseko is a planning genius, devising complex strategies which rely on hundreds of independent factors, even if their actions are difficult to predict. But she derives the greatest pleasure from personally executing those plans, especially when faced with an unexpected challenge (such as a particularly efficient or intuitive magistrate on her tail). She often lures opponents into her subterranean island lair (see Location 778), where they are faced with intricate puzzles and traps she had laid in advance. Among such obstacles is her most prized possession, a Naga Asp she purchased from a trapper just after her arrival here...

Kyaku, Tenseko's "Pet"

Rank 2 Asp (No School); Air: 1, Reflexes 4, **Earth:** 3, **Fire:** 1, Agility 3, **Water:** 3, Akasha: 1

Notable Skills: Athletics 4, Hand-to-Hand 4, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4, Stealth 2, Yarijutsu (Naga) 4

Other Options: Abomination (Albino, Night Vision), Acute Smell, Enlightened Madness, Venom (Neurotoxin, Rank 2)

Kyaku was born with only the faintest skin tone, which faded within the first two weeks of his life. His eyes were always a pinkish yellow, and sensitive to light, and the Naga worried about leaving him to his own in the Shinomen (as they do with all abominations). But tradition forced their hand, and Kyaku was

abandoned – as all abominations are – among the deepest gullies of the forest, where direct sunlight was rare.

Shortly after, he was caught and domesticated by a heimin trapper, who nurtured him to health. The heimin named the Naga newborn Kyaku and trained him to fight, expecting to earn a pretty sum at the Hida ring-matches. But Ide Tenseko spotted the Nage nearly a year later, just before his first challenge, and was immediately enthralled by the voracious creature. She purchased him, and has since provided him with only the finest food, weapons, and training. She has never been able to cure Kyaku's taste for human flesh, but her kindness has had an impact; he is unable – or unwilling – to attack her. To all others, Kyaku is a vicious predator, but to Tenseko, he is a loving pet, and perhaps her closest friend.

Influence and Relations of the Hito District

The Karada District associates with its neighbors and the rest of Otsan Uchi on many different levels. Due to the affectionate response Kuni Fujiko has received in the Imperial Court, the district is rapidly recovering from the stigma that it is full of barbarians, thieves, and liars, and is gaining a marginal reputation among the political circles of the Empire. Help from Ikoma Shoniko has been invaluable in this regard.

Socially, however, the Karada District remains among the least respected in all of Otsan Uchi (second only to the Hinjaku District in the Toshisoto). The general disregard for the governing Crab Clan is compounded due to the district's physical isolation and the antagonistic nature of most of its occupants. Were it not for the affluence of its trading grounds (responsible for more than a third of the trading for the entire city), the Karada District would surely have been relegated to a "slum of the Chisei" long ago.

Finally, the Karada District is influenced by far more exotic characters and powers (like the Western Wall and the Oyabun network), which have made it very attractive to fringe elements such as *maho*-users, field magistrates, and criminals of all kinds. Karada is the very heart of most conspiracy theories and esoteric speculation in the Imperial Capital.

SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

Even though the Karada District is more physically isolated than the Hito, it maintains much greater contact with the outside world than its neighbor. The Yasuki Trading Grounds host more visitors than nearly any other region of the Ekohikei, which creates a ready flow of foot-traffic through the Chisei and Hito as a result. Other than this – and the limited, though influential, contact it upholds with the Imperial Court – the Karada District continues to be ignored by the rest of the city.

MAJOR AND MINOR CLANS

As would be expected, the Crab have firm control of the Karada District. Since the Yasuki Break, they have filtered a large percentage of the city's trade through their coffers, and improved their standing in the Empire significantly. Several other clans – most notably the Crane – have extended their general animosity with the Crab to their District in the Ekohikei as well. Other citizens openly rebuke Karada natives when they travel to other parts of the city, regardless of their own standing. Trade negotiations are always difficult for them, and they are similarly strained in the political and social arenas. The Lion carefully watch the potential threat the district's criminal element poses for the city, the Phoenix are only interested in researching the Western Wall and the legendary Oni Warai, and Unicorn seek to undermine the Crab's strangle-hold on Ekohikei trade. Only the Dragon seem uninterested in the Karada – or at least, no more interested than they are in the rest of Otosan Uchi.

Customs of the Hito District

It is said that all Crab occasions revolve around death and bragging, and the same can be said in the Karada District. Death, for instance, manifests here in the Bon Festival, which district residents handle very differently than the rest of the Empire. Spirits are not believed to visit the Karada (perhaps due to some corrupting influence, such as the Western Wall or the Oni Warai). Shugenja in the Karada District find themselves alone during the Bon Festival, ignored by the kami and the spirits alike. No one puts out offerings for the wandering dead, nor are fires lit to lead their way. Indeed, from a distance, the whole of the Karada appears to fade away during the last week of the Month of the Dog. While the people of the Hito District place candles in small floats to push out into the River of the Sun, their neighbor across the currents lies quiet and empty, its citizens hidden within their homes or praying inside temples. During the Festival of the Dead, the Karada becomes a ghost.

By comparison, Shouting Day (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 68) and the Festival to Hida – held on the fourth day of the Month of the Tiger and the third day of the Month of the Boar, respectively – are boisterous times, when noise and furor take precedence somber acceptance (and some would say, fear). Hundreds of Crab and Unicorn attend both these celebrations, and focus on who can successfully drown out or overbear those around him.

Excitement runs high in the Karada District during these days, and minor brawls often break out among the participants as their passion mounts. These have even been incorporated into the festivities, and it is now commonplace to see bushi sparring in the streets while their spouses argue over their performance. Industrious merchants often construct small, make-shift arenas for the fighting, charging the audience for a glimpse of the violence. The most popular arena to date runs along the edge of

the Oni Warai, inside a temporary fence erected every year prior to the event. Paying spectators line the higher ledges of the crevice while those with little money (or too much pride to pay) stand across from the ring in the Chisei District. Winners of this particular contest receive a portion of the ticket sales for their challenges, and may fight as long as they like. The Oni Warai fights have long been among the most popular attractions during the Shouting Day and Hida festivals, but have recently come under fire by magistrates due to the actions of one of last year's participants. Hida Okisa, a monstrous man who has dominated the Oni Warai scene for the last several years, lost control and hurled his Crane opponent into the deep end of the crevice, where he vanished from sight. Kakita Edei has not been seen since, and search parties sent in to find him have found only bloody tracks leading further into the sewers. Hida Okisa is currently serving a life sentence in the Palace of Remorse (Location 375), denied the seppuku which would otherwise erase his shameful act.

Shouting Day causes further trouble among the District's *heimin* class. Led by Tokiuji (see Location 6), the peasants of the Crab form large mobs before dawn that do not disperse until well after midnight the following evening. Together, these crowds stalk the district's streets, calling out their plight to anyone that will listen, and mocking those who oppose them. Tokiuji took advantage of his popularity this last winter, leading the *heimin* to the gates of Shinden Yaruki Jukko, where he goaded Kaiu Eto and his monks until the engineer nearly exploded in rage. The intervention of a group of nearby Tortoise builders was all that prevented open bloodshed; the event sparked a month-long debate among the provisional city government, and was reported directly to the Emperor upon his return from Winter Court.

By Imperial decree, Shouting Day and the Hida Festival will now be heavily patrolled in the Karada District. The district government has opposed the decision, of course; Kuni Fujiko has lodged a formal complaint in the Imperial Court, arguing that the citizenry is being improperly punished for the acts of their servants. But so far, she has gone unheard. How the Hantei's proclamation will effect this year's celebration remains to be seen.

The final public ceremony held in high esteem among the Karada is the Trade Festival (*Saiten Torihiki*), which lasts for seven days every year. It begins every summer, when the winter rains have abated and the roads once more become clear. Shipments from all over Rokugan arrive during this period, making it one of the most lucrative times of the year to the city's merchants and traders. Over time, the period evolved into a formal festival. The Yasuki trading grounds explode with activity, as every merchant in the district turns out his best wares. The crowds swell to record numbers, hoping to find some rare item or expensive trinket to purchase. Many merchants cut prices on their wares to attract more customers, and use all manner of outrageous advertising tactics to entreat passersby. The Festival also includes crafts competitions, artisan displays, and the famous "Shouting Day" – a contest between Yasuki merchants to see whose voice carries the farthest.





The Forbidden City

Province Rank:	10	Imperial Rank:	10
Population Rank:	2	Production Rank:	0
Relative Wealth:	10	Political Influence:	10
Crime Rank:	2	Corruption Rank:	8
Appearance Rank:	10	Popularity Rank:	10

The Guided Tour – Day Five

You are once again awakened by a sudden explosion of birds from the aviary above the Temple of the Seven Fortunes. They spread out around the building and strike out and away beyond earshot. Miya Yurikago is already standing in your doorway with a gleeful smile, leaning on his worn cane. "This is my favorite part," he says, "introducing the Forbidden City. You have come a long way, and seen much, but the Emperor's own marvels yet await..."

Exploring the Forbidden City

"The Forbidden City has been home to the Imperial Families for a thousand years. It lies upon the very field where the ancient Kami first touched the earth, and every man and woman of royal blood has lived here for a time. It is Tamashi, the 'heart' of Rokugan, and you are about to join in the ranks of its most honored visitors..."

SOUTHERN GATE INTO THE FORBIDDEN CITY

Location# 742

"One of the largest, most impressive structures in Otosan Uchi, the Southern Gate into the Forbidden City stands over seventy feet high, and is – like the gates through the Mizwaku Kabe – built directly into the surrounding wall. The entryway itself is lined

with a tower torii arch, bearing a crystal and jade representation of the Imperial Mon. Above that, we can see the central guard station for the entire region, where the Emerald Champion and his lieutenants watch over the Ekohikei.

"Unlike the Mizwaku Kabe, the ramparts surrounding the Forbidden City are enclosed atop the wall, with frequent defensive fortifications along their perimeter. Remember, these walls were the original city walls, early in the Empire when we believed that the capital would grow only so much. Today, the walls remain, a testament to the early builders and the accomplishments of our ancestors.

"The Road of the Most High continues through the Southern Gate, leading through the Forbidden City to several of the Clan Guest Homes – which we will see in a moment – and the Palaces of the Imperial Families themselves. Let us enter..."

The Southern Gate into the Forbidden City is one of the most heavily guarded locations in Otosan Uchi. The Emperor's own Army splits three ways at any given time – between here, the Northern Gate, and the Imperial Training Field (see Location 750). They are also supplemented on occasion by members of the Empress' Guard (a primarily Doji force currently on assignment outside the capital) or sponsored units and individuals from the Seven Great Clans. Commission to a sponsored unit is among the highest honors a bushi can receive – defending the Emperor as a representative of his clan. In order to join, the bushi's clan daimyo, family daimyo and all superior officers must recommend him to the Emerald Champion or one of his Magistrates, who must then give final approval.

Besides the samurai protecting the Southern Gate, a plethora of magical enhancements stand ready to repel any intruders. Though its mundane appearance makes the gate appear unprotected, two powerful designs lurk invisibly within. First, the torii arch embedded in the gatehouse is made from magically-reinforced crystal (painted black to hide its nature). It constantly resonates a field of protection from the Shadowlands Taint inside the arch, which repels or destroys all Tainted beings that attempt to step through (they instantly take 3k3 Wounds, and must make a Willpower roll vs. a TN of 20 to avoid being stunned for another round – when they must take the Damage and roll their Willpower again).

Secondly, the Imperial Mon mounted in the gate's arch acts as a focus for two dozen talismans (in the shape of mempo) distributed to the Captains and commanders of the Imperial Guard and other defenders of the gate. At any time, samurai wearing one of these talismans can transmit a vocal message of less than 20 words to any or all the others wearing the mempo – through the crystal and jade mon in the arch. (Should the mon on ever be destroyed, the mempo would be rendered useless; further, if the mon on any of the mempo are destroyed, that samurai is cut off from the communication.) Satsume and his lieutenants keep these magical enhancements in utter secrecy; only the commander of the gate's forces knows of the talismans.

CLAN GUEST HOMES

Location# 743

"Six of the Great Clans retain permanent guest homes within the Forbidden City, where honored visitors and members of the clan stay. Some visitors, of course, are personally invited by the Emperor or one of the Imperial Families, and thus remain at one or more of the Palaces. You, for instance, have rooms prepared at the Miya Palace, atop the Eastern Wall of the Forbidden City... there.

"There are nine Guest Homes in all – one for each of the Great Clans except the Dragon, who stay with others during their rare visits – and one for each of the Imperial Families – Miya, Seppun, and Otomo. The homes are arranged in a particular fashion, with the Crane given the most space after the Imperials (they have the largest number and greatest frequency of guests), and 'less desirables' receive smaller buildings toward the outer edge of the compound. The Crab and the Scorpion, for instance, cannot be seen as we enter the Forbidden City; the Crab Home stands far to the west, behind and entirely obscured by the Seppun House, while the Scorpion Home is lost within a copse of trees to the right. The Unicorn, while barbarians, are situated immediately to our left, at the end of a private road. Their privileged location is a result of the Fox Clan's rejuvenation of their territories several centuries ago, during which time the Fox Daimyo remained in this esteemed home.

"Some of the Empire's best-known heroes, courtiers, and diplomats can be found here for months at a time. As we enter the latter part of the year and Winter Court approaches, that number increases. If you desire, I can present you..."



The bulk of the Forbidden City is a labyrinth of precisely-tended gardens, strategically-placed recesses for private conversation, and spectacular works of art, landscaping, and construction. The Great Clans have received small territories, buried deep in the Forbidden City's southern edges, upon which they may build whatever they desire – with two conditions: 1) they must always maintain a guest home that can house their visitors (so that none of the Imperial Families are forced to take them), and 2) nothing may be erected that insults or threatens the Emperor, his staff and friends, or the capital city as a whole.

None of the Clan Homes have walls (there is little point, when the Forbidden City itself is surrounded by three), but they are spread out and distanced from the Road of the Most High, where they cannot be unintentionally approached. This is a conscious measure of the Otomo, who wish to guarantee the privacy of the Great Clans (a necessity in the Forbidden City).

Each of the Clan Homes is different, designed by a member of the clan that resides there. The servants for each are either imported by the respective clan or (with the clan's permission) placed by the Otomo and the Miya.

Guests of the Clans

The following individuals can be found at their clan's guest home most of the year (unless they accompany the Emperor to Winter Court – when the Forbidden City is largely abandoned). The statistics for each show improvements they have made if the character has seen print before, and include brief descriptions of their duties and activities.

Bayushi Goshu, Scorpion Clan Diplomat

Rank 5 Bayushi Courtier; Air: 2, Awareness 6, Earth: 2, Fire: 3, Intelligence 4, Water: 2 Perception 5, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Acting 2, Bard 3, Courtier 3, Etiquette 4, Forgery 2, Heraldry 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Knife 2, Law 3, Manipulation 5, Oratory 4, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3

Other Options: Allies (Many), Bad Reputation (Court Manipulations), Blackmail (Many), Clear Thinker, Heartless, Precise Memory, Read Lips

Goshu spends much of his time at court (especially the Imperial Court, of which he has never missed a session since his arrival in the city). As the Scorpion Clan's chief representative in the Forbidden City, he must properly present their image to the Emperor and the Imperial Families and ensure that his clan's interests are considered in matters of political import. Although he has never been invited to the Imperial Palace, he does not seem to care; the finest rooms of the Scorpion Clan Home are his alone, and he has three servants who obey him alone. When not engaged at court, Goshu can be found in the guard houses along the Forbidden City wall, above the Scorpion's Tale (Location 751), lost in thought about his latest discourse.

Bayushi Yojiro, "The Honest Scorpion"

Reference Location: *Way of the Scorpion*, p. 58

Improved Statistics: Willpower 3; Bard 2, Cipher 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 2, History 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Law 3, Lore (Scorpion Clan) 3

Yojiro has traveled a lot lately between Otosan Uchi and the lands of the Lion and the Crane. Earlier this year, he went on an extended sojourn and was not seen for many weeks; rumors quickly spread about his whereabouts and activities. He was seen only twice – once at Kenson Gakka shortly after it fell to the Crane, and again in the wreckage of Toshi Ranbo after the first volleys of the Lion-Crane war. Then, several weeks ago, he returned to the Imperial City, where he began frequent visits to all the Clan Homes and the Imperial Palace. No one is sure what his intentions are, or why he guards his movements so carefully, but many feel they will find out soon. He has become more and more agitated recently, as if something horrible is on his conscience.

Hida Gembu, Yojimbo of the Lion Clan Guest Home

Rank 2 Bushi; Air: 1, Reflexes 3, **Earth:** 4, **Fire:** 2, **Agility** 3, **Water:** 2, **Strength** 5, **Void:** 2

Notable Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Intimidation 4, Kenjutsu 2, Tetsubo 4

Other Options: Benten's Curse, Kharmic Tie (Ikoma Tsanuri), Large, Strength of the Earth (4)

Hida Gembu is a misfit in the Forbidden City. Simple and quick to judge, he grates on the inhabitants of the Imperial Capital. He is only here by the grace of Bayushi Goshui's sponsorship; several months ago, Gembu saved a Scorpion caravan from goblins, and Goshui was so impressed with his prowess that he contacted the Crab's daimyo to arrange for his reassignment to Otosan Uchi. Soon after, Goshui offered Gembu to the Lion, as a karo for their Guest Home, which allowed him to escort dignitaries back and forth from the Imperial Palace. Just as Goshui hoped, Hida Gembu has made quite an impact at Court, where his enormous bulk and knack for speaking frankly (and without consideration) are a jarring distraction. Goshui has scored a minor coup in Gembu, who dishonors the Lion while throwing off the rhythm of the other courtiers. And the situation may improve for the Scorpion as well: it would appear that Gembu has become infatuated with Ikoma Tsanuri...

Hiruma Miroke (see Location 19)

As discussed on page 71, Hiruma Miroke is really Bayushi Sozui, an Scorpion impersonator trying to plant the seeds of discord among the leading courtiers and peace-makers of the Empire. In her guise as the Assistant Governor of the Karada District, Miroke/Sozui keeps a room at the Crab Clan Home and often visits the Imperial Court. She has little time for dalliance,

even if she desired it, and so Miroke/Sozui is only found in either of these two places, or in one of her other guises in the Karada.

Ide Tadaji, Unicorn Clan Diplomat / Imperial House Guest

Reference Location: *Way of the Unicorn*, p. 70

Improved Statistics: Air 5, Willpower 4, Perception 4; Lore (Politics) 5

Ide Tadaji spends most of his "free" time away from court with his friend Shosuro Taberu, or in study with his former sensei Iuchi Daiyu. He and Taberu are perpetually locked in at least one game of go, and their boards can be found beneath a wooden awning on one of the islands in the Imperial Water Garden (Location 746). Unfortunately, Tadaji's schedule often conflicts with his friend's, so the boards remain idle for days at a time. Both pass by frequently to make a move, however, sliding a heavy azure stone (collected from the Road of the Most High) across the table to signify the other's turn. At all other times, the board remains a quiet curiosity; passersby understand that none other than Tadaji or Taberu may touch it when a game is in play.

Ikoma Tsanuri, Heir to the Lion

Reference Location: *Way of the Lion*, p. 67

Improved Statistics: Rank 2 Akodo Bushi; Air 3, Fire 3; Athletics 3, Battle 4, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Lion) 2

With the Lion-Crane war in full swing, Akodo Tsanuri has been relegated to a post at the Imperial City. Though her martial prowess and grasp of tactics ensured her a position with the military during times of peace, she is considered too valuable to risk now, when the blood of Lions flows freely across the Plains of Battle. Tsanuri resents this decision, and visits the Lion dojo to work out her aggressions.

Ikoma Ujiaki, Chief Diplomat of the Lion Clan

Reference Location: *Way of the Lion*, p. 68

Improved Statistics: Earth 5, Void 4; Bard 4, Heraldry 4, History 4, Oratory 4

Ikoma Ujiaki is the only diplomat of the Great Clans who sees more to the Lion-Crane war than meets the eye. He suspects that a third party is urging hostilities along (Bayushi Sozui; see Location 19, and above), but he has yet been unable to pin down the culprits' identities. Part of the problem is that he assumes a large number of people must be responsible, since so many factors are involved. He is also distracted by his duties at court; the war has given him a new chance to redeem himself at the Imperial Court, and show up Kakita Yoshi in the process.

Iuchi Daiyu, Unicorn Researcher

Reference Location: *Way of the Unicorn*, p. 73

Improved Statistics: Air 4, Fire 3, Water 3

Even though his sleeping chambers are here, the preoccupied Iuchi Daiyu spends very little time in the Forbidden City. He typically vanishes shortly after dawn and does not return until well after sunset. In between, he roams the halls of the Imperial Museum (Location 4), where he has recently begun to hear 'voices' among the exhibits, as if they were talking directly to him...

Kakita Ichiro, Crane Clan Courtier

Rank 2 Doji Courtier; Air: 3, Earth: 2, Fire: 3, Water: 2, Perception 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Appraisal 2, Commerce 2, Courtier 3, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 2, Law 1, Manipulation 1, Oratory 2, Political Maneuvering 4, Sincerity 4

Other Options: Cadence, Social Position (Imperial Courtier)

Like Ikoma Tsanuri, Toshimoko's son is safe at Otosan Uchi while his father is out waging war against the Lion. He spends most of his time with Kakita Yoshi, learning from the daimyo's experience at court. When Yoshi is away from the Imperial City, Ichiro stands in for him.

Kakita Torikago, Minor Imperial Chancellor

Rank 3 Doji Courtier; Air: 4, Earth: 2, Fire: 2, Intelligence 3, Water: 2, Perception 3, Void: 3

Notable Skills: Calligraphy 2, Cipher 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 3, Forgery 3, Heraldry 2, Investigation 3, Law 3, Lore (Great Clans) 3, Manipulation 4, Oratory 3, Political Maneuvering 3, Research 3, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, Sleight of Hand 3

Other Options: Allies (Otomo, Sentaku Tribunal), Blackmail (Many), Cruel, Ear of the Emperor, Irreproachable

Several years ago, Kakita Torikago was an insignificant diplomat in the Chisei District. He judged simple complaints of the populace and sat in during the governor's court, but was never given any true responsibility - until the Sentaku aide for the district, Kitsune Miro, asked him to assist in a minor trade dispute which had grown beyond his ability to contain. Torikago stepped in as the arguments between the Yasuki and Daidoji merchants worsened, and was pivotal in resolving the feud. Soon after, Miro asked his superior, Meisuko, to recommend Torikago for a post in the Forbidden City, where his talents could be used to their full potential. Meisuko pushed Torikago's application through, and weeks later, the Otomo sponsored his entry into the Imperial Court. Today, Torikago nominally represents the Crane at court, while secretly reporting subversive behavior and potential threats to the Emperor back to the Otomo at their palace. His work takes up all of his time, and he can commonly be found at one of the palaces, discussing one issue or another.

Kakita Yoshi, Kakita Family Daimyo

Reference Location: *Way of the Crane*, p. 85

Improved Statistics: Intelligence 5; Heraldry 5, Law 5

It is amazing how Kakita Yoshi remains involved in every major event in the Forbidden City, even when away at Winter Court or visiting the homeland of the Crane. With an army of assistants, political allies, and spies spread across Otosan Uchi, he is often aware of potential problems before they flare up, and wields tremendous power to carve politics in the Empire. Yoshi is always visible at court and in the background during important social functions, but rarely comes to the foreground until he is needed, or something of interest happens. Then he is just... there.

Shosuro Taberu, Scorpion Diplomat/Imperial House Guest

Reference Location: *Way of the Scorpion*, p. 61

Improved Statistics: Acting 3, Athletics 1, Defense 3, Forgery 5, Manipulation 2

The "Poison Crane" has spent many late evenings at the Imperial Court with Bayushi Kachiko of late, and there is talk that he may move out of the Scorpion Clan Guest Home. In the meantime, however, he has taken long detours on his way to the Imperial Palace - both to make his move at the go board in the Imperial Water Garden (see Ide Tadaji, above), and to observe the training of the Imperial Guard.

Tetsuya, Shinpu of the Four Holy Home Villages

Not Ranked (Monk)*; Air: 4, Reflexes 5, Earth: 4, Willpower 5, Fire: 5, Water: 3, Perception 5, Void: 6

Notable Skills: Advanced Medicine 3, Athletics 4, Calligraphy 5, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Hand-to-Hand 5, Lore (Many) 3-5, Shintao 5, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology 5

Other Options: Allies (Brotherhood), Clear Thinker, Hands of Stone, Noble Birth, Perfect Balance

Tetsuya has no permanent home, but keeps residences at many different locations throughout the city, its surrounding environs, and beyond. He only rarely visits the Imperial Court, but spends a good deal of time in the Forbidden City working to keep the Emperor's temples running. He visits the Temple to Hantei on occasion and engages in long conversations with the Emperor. The Imperial Guard does not tolerate interruptions of these talks, and so the Emperor often goes 'missing' for several hours (or days) when Tetsuya arrives.

Yasuki Taka, Merchant King

Reference Location: *Way of the Crab*, p. 73

Improved Statistics: Intelligence 5, Perception 6; Bard 4, Gambling 5, Heraldry 4, Stealth 3

When not traveling the roads, cities, ports, and villages of Rokugan, Taka might be found here in the Forbidden City hawking discounted wares to the Imperials. Once, long ago, he would set up shop among the islands of the Imperial Water Gardens, offering trinkets and rarities to the courtiers as they discussed matters of war and politics. But he has since been

'chastised' for his impertinence, and now spends most of his time 'where the real action happens' – among the soldiers at the Imperial Training Grounds. Taka finds the 'backside' of the Forbidden City far more to his liking than any court.

THE OTOMO GUEST HOME

Location# 745

"Nearly any location in the Forbidden City can double as the 'official' locale of the Imperial Court if needs be, but it is most often the Imperial Palace, the Water Gardens, the Seppun Guest Home, or here. All four have the proper atmosphere for diplomacy, and are readily accessible to members of all the clans. The Otomo Home, however, has been carefully planned for discretion and utility. The garden maze alone can accommodate several dozen at once."

Only those Otomo born outside the Hantei's bloodline *must* live here, but many others choose to. The Garden Maze and indoor arboretum make this one of the most picturesque places in Otosan Uchi, and most of the Water Gardens may be viewed from the second-floor patio.

THE SEPPUN GUEST HOME

Location# 744

"Toward the 'rear' of the Forbidden City we find the Seppun Home. Few Imperials live here, as most have Hantei blood and may live in the Imperial Palace itself; the majority of the building has been given over to the Seppun Dojo, a mystical place few have ever entered. It is said that sensei of the dojo have lived more than a century and show no signs of age. If this is true, then perhaps the Seppun truly are born of the Son of Heaven..."

Surrounded by chrysanthemum gardens and intricate waterfalls, the Seppun Guest Home is best known for the dojo which consumes most of the ground floor (and all of the second and third). Entrance into the Seppun dojo requires an invitation. At least two sensei are known – Kogoshi and Masamitsu – though neither has been seen outside the Seppun Home in years. Glimpsing them is considered a favorable omen, but looking for them is a demand for ill fortune. When they appear, it is always some distance away – when they cannot be identified for sure – and they are always seen to be training no more than a single Miharu. Their students swear to secrecy before they leave the dojo, and tell outsiders only that the sensei are a 'portal to the divine'. This may be true, as the near-legendary abilities of their students attests.

THE IMPERIAL WATER GARDENS

Location# 746

"It is said that one of the reasons the Dragon do not come to the Forbidden City is that Hantei VI – when considering a vast Water Garden to surround the Imperial Palace – chose the Crane Artisans to construct it. Regardless, the Imperial Water Gardens

stand as one of the Emperor's most magnificent possessions. The garden islands constitute one of three entries into the Imperial Palace, and often host several independent celebrations each night."

The Imperial Water Gardens comprise an intricate maze of artificial 'islands' between redirected currents from the River of the Sun. Small bridges connect the islands, which are decorated with gazebos, fountains, and arches bracing lanterns at shoulder height. Many of these lantern-arches are mounted above the water, to control the intensity of light on each island.

With variable illumination and only one watch-station along the perimeter, it is easy to move about on the islands without being seen. Careful observation still reveals the activities (though likely not the sounds) on adjacent islets, but vision beyond that is blurred at best. The Water Gardens are perhaps the best place to hide in the entire Forbidden City.

Statues of famous Imperials line the shores of the gardens, said to be the talismans responsible for the area's calming effects.

THE TEMPLE TO HANTEI

Location# 747

"From this vantage in the gardens, we can make out a small structure at the end of a long bridge leading across the open water. The wooden ramp slowly ascends beyond the structure, supported upon the shoulders of a long line of finely-crafted statues, eventually leveling out with the mounds which support the Imperial and Miya Palace. Can you see? The small structure is the Temple to Hantei, a private home to which the Emperor retires on occasion. No one is allowed there without the Emperor present, and then only if he has invited you first. We will move on. There are many more things to see..."

The statues supporting the Emperor's walk are carved in the likenesses of his ancestors, and a new one is crafted when each Son of Heaven dies. With each new pair of statues (the lifetimes of two Emperors), the bridge is redesigned so that they may be inserted beneath it.

The single-story 'Temple' is actually more of a home, where the Emperor can escape the insanity of the Imperial Palace. It was erected by Hantei II (Genji) as a place where his father could pass on in peace after the Battle of Four Winds, and has become the resting place for the Hantei and their most cherished guests ever since. Twenty Honor Guard watch the building and bridge at all times, even when the area is unoccupied.

SAIGO NO IKI ("THE LAST BREATH")

Location# 748

"When honored Imperials enter their twilight years and decide to retire from political life, they are said to take their 'last breath'. Their final day in service to the Son of Heaven takes place at the location of their choice, where every living person who has benefited from their life is invited before them. Each receives a

final gift to remember the Imperial by, and a grand feast is held in their honor. During this celebration of their life, they may say or do anything they wish, and are allowed one final request of the Empire, which the Hantei must grant. Requests have been refused only when they would result in war or great strife. Even vindictive and impertinent requests are honored, though the Imperial shames his family for asking. After they have taken their 'last breath', honored Imperials reside here like royalty until they are gone.

"No. I... apologize, but visitors are not welcome at the Last Breath. Retired Imperials deserve their privacy, and we must be getting to the palace. It is growing dark..."

The Last Breath nestles against the mound where the Miya Palace rests, and care of the residents falls to them. In all ways, the Miya are responsible for those who have taken their Last Breath, and the heralds often devote up to twice as many caretakers as residents in an effort to ensure their continued happiness. At least three Miya to record everything that the retired nobles say, to be transcribed for posterity in the Imperial Libraries of the Phoenix – with one exception...

Miya Hiyoko, Retired Imperial

Rank 4 Doji Courtier; Air: 1, Awareness 7, **Earth:** 1, Willpower 2, **Fire:** 2, Intelligence 4, **Water:** 1, Perception 4, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Bard 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 4, Dance 4, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 5, Lore (Otosan Uchi) 5, Music (Singing) 1, Oratory 4, Poetry 4, Sincerity 3

Other Options: Benten's Blessing, Lost Love (Miya Yurikago)

The oldest Imperial currently residing at the Last Breath is Miya Hiyoko, a woman of nearly seventy-three. She has outlived nearly all the courtiers and aides that served Hantei XXXVII, 'her Emperor'. A brazen and outspoken woman, Hiyoko went blind many years ago, and has taken on a personal assistant named Biko (see page 49), a heimin woman from the Higshikawa District. Hiyoko's choice to replace her Miya aides with a peasant has caused quite a stir within the Imperial Court, most of whom were not even aware she was still alive before this event.

Contrary to her husband's words, visitors are welcome at the Last Breath, and Miya Hiyoko can be an invigorating source of conversation. She has led a full life, and is more than willing to share stories of her time among the last two generations of Otosan Uchi's nobility with those who will listen.

"KIBO" (HOPE) — THE MIYA PALACE

Location# 749

"We owe a great debt to the Otomo for their kind words to Hantei II, and this place constantly reminds us of that obligation. When our ancestor, Miya, returned from his two-year trek, he was greeted by a trusting heir and grateful populace, and it is all due to the great Otomo Family. May we never forget that..."

Miya Satoshi, Daimyo of the Miya Family

Rank 2 Doji Courtier; Air: 3, **Earth:** 2, **Fire:** 3, **Water:** 2, Perception 3, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Acting 2, Bard 2, Commerce 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 1, Heraldry 2, Intimidation 3, Law 3, Sincerity 2

Other Options: Brash, Contrary, Heartless, Spoiled

The Miya Palace was built atop an outcropping of the Forbidden City's wall, redesigned when Hantei Genji offered them their own house. Although they are physically separated from the Imperial Palaces of the Hantei, Seppun, and Otomo, the Miya maintain a healthy presence on the Imperial Mound and in court. Foremost among their representatives is the present daimyo of the family, Satoshi, whose father (Yoto) retired shortly after Winter Court this year. Heralding the faults of ronin and the lower castes, Satoshi has devoted the majority of this year to recovering from the debacle here at the capital during last Winter Court (see page 93), and is not currently speaking with his father.

Miya Yoto returns the favor, and has taken the opportunity to further develop the art collection he and Matsu Kori (see Location 11) have founded in the bowels of the palace labyrinth. Few have ever seen the precious illustrations, sculptures, and poetry the silent partners have gathered, but Yoto intends to change that. He has already declined to accompany the Emperor to Winter Court this year to put the finishing touches on the collection before presenting it to Hantei in the spring. (This decision haunts his son, who fears the elder Miya intends another meeting of the lesser classes while he is away.)



Exploring the Forbidden City

— Day Six

For the first time since your arrival in the Imperial City, you awaken to the sweet mercy of a human voice, not the crazed fury of your surroundings. No flocks of birds or shouting merchants disgrace the air here. The Miya Palace is utterly still as you rise to greet your host once more, and pleasant scents waft through the door behind him.

"Good morning." His voice rings with the joy of a man at home. "Today, we will finally see the Imperial Palace, but first a trip to a part of the Forbidden City many honored guests never see..."

THE IMPERIAL TRAINING GROUNDS

Location# 750

"The bold and the ignorant say that so many troops in the Forbidden City are a sign that the Emperor is weak, but they are wrong. It is a sign that he is mighty. At the very dawn of the Empire, our ancestors established the practice of honoring the Hantei through strength, and these grounds served as a marshalling point for his personal troops. Today, only the most distinguished soldiers may train here, among such esteemed units as the Imperial and Honor Guards."

Tucked behind the Temple to Hantei and the Miya stronghold, and beneath the brilliant gaze of the Emperor's Palace, stand the Imperial Training Grounds. This is the territory of Hantei's most treasured troops – the Empress' Guard, whose duty it is to protect the wife of the Hantei, the Imperial Guard, who physically defend the Imperial City from all outside threats; and the Honor Guard, Hantei's personal legion, responsible for the Emperor's personal welfare. It consists of a wide field, two barracks, a war office, stables, and a commander's home.

Ironically, there is little need to use these soldier's mighty prowess – at least on the battlefield. The Tortoise train each of these units to respond to emergencies (such as earthquakes, fires, and other natural disasters) when they occur in the Forbidden City. All of them are technically controlled by the Emerald Champion, Doji Satsume, but usually answer to lesser commanders. A revolving pool of the Empire's finest bushi train them in the various martial arts, should they ever be needed. Otosan Uchi hasn't come under attack since the Battle of the White Stag, but the men here train harder than any other bushi in Rokugan. The Emperor demands constant vigilance.

Seppun Murinaga, Sensei of the Imperial Army

Rank 5 Miharū; Air: 3, Reflexes 5, Earth: 4, Fire: 2, Agility 3, Water: 3, Void: 4

Notable Skills: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Battle 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Falconry 2, Heraldry 2, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Obiesaseru 4, Shintao 4, Yarijutsu 3

Other Options: Dark Secret (Inner Gift), Inner Gift (Precognition), Leadership

Seppun Murinaga has lived in the Forbidden City all his life, teaching its troops and training only with the sensei of his ancestral home. He is an intense individual, often disturbing others with his severe approach to life. Even after he has become familiar, the feeling remains – piercing stares, clenching his fists as he speaks, and a rigid, nearly unmoving stance – all signs of his unswerving and meticulous demeanor.

Murinaga hates abnormalities in his regiment, and becomes very agitated when they occur. He feels nothing but contempt for the Toshi no Ichi Festival (see Customs, page 93), for instance, when peasants are invited to join his honored soldiers on the training field. He wishes for nothing less than a violent uprising at these times, so that the peasants can be shown their true worth.

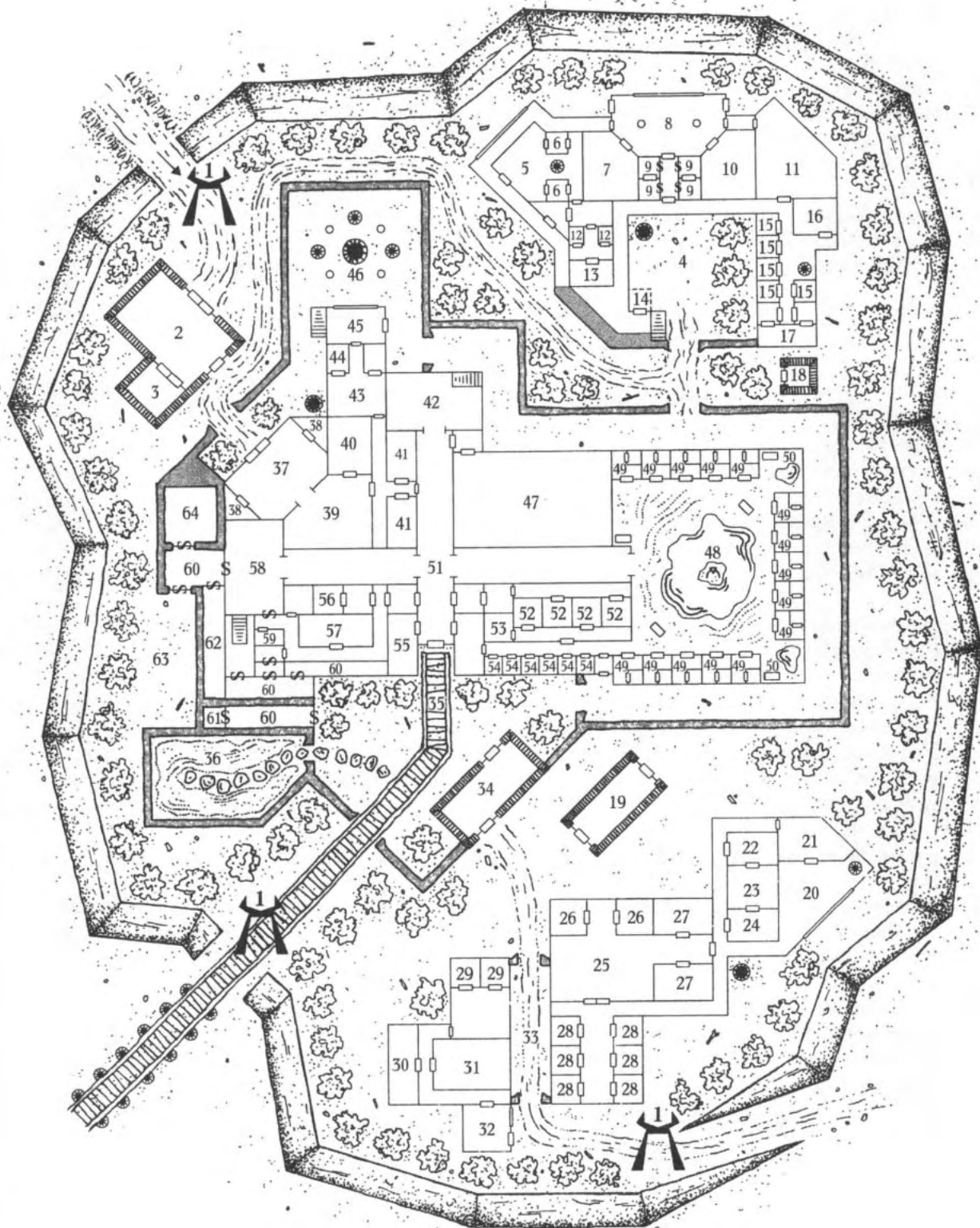
THE SCORPION'S TALE

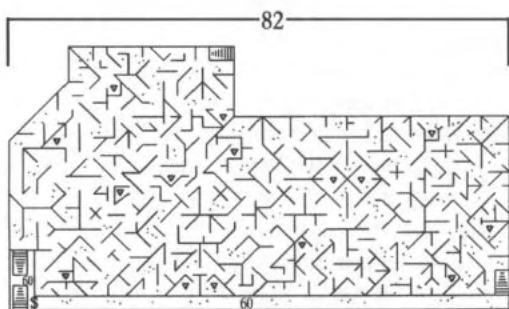
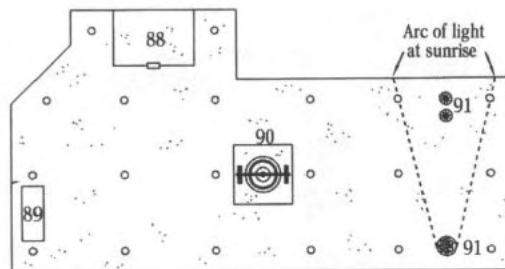
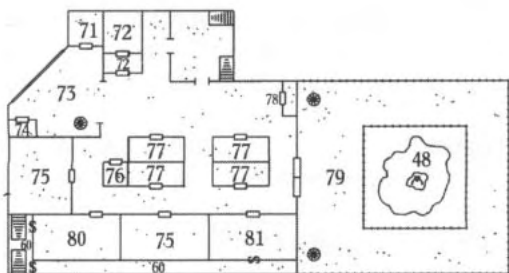
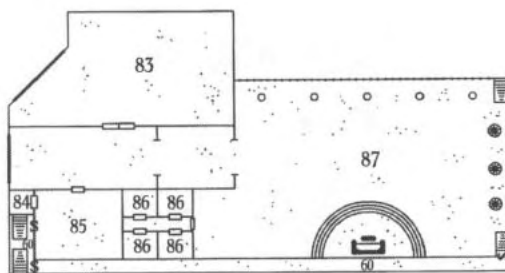
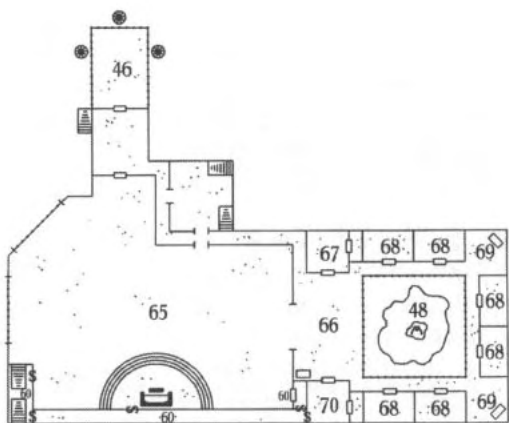
Location# 751

"As I have said, the Scorpion constructed the Imperial Palace, vanishing within its deep halls after they devised its defenses. None of the builders ever left the Palace, content to remain with their creation until the end. But one of them – an infamous Yogo named Koreyasu – managed to leak his precious knowledge, on the eve of the structure's anniversary. A scroll arrived in the hands of the Kaiu and Asahina, detailing a last wish, a final design of immense scope to decorate the walls behind the Imperial Palace. According to the scroll, the design would 'forever immortalize the achievements of the first builders.'"

"Three years later, the design was completed – a series of incredible waterfalls along the Forbidden City wall which redirected a portion of the River of the Sun into the Imperial Water Gardens, cascading down the wall itself. Kami of incredible power were charged with protecting the wall from erosion, but the water spirits received the most important task – to reflect the light of each morning's sun from the waterfalls, depicting the early days of the Imperial City and the Battle of Four Winds from one end to the other. The effect is mesmerizing. Even today, Imperials line the Water Gardens and Courts of the Palace to enjoy the sunrise and relive the Scorpion's Tale."

The Scorpion's Tale is majestic to behold, a rainbow image captured and enhanced by the spirits of the River. The image towers over sixty feet in height and dances across the Forbidden City wall as if it were alive. The generals of the famed Battle of Four Winds; the Oni Lord Medatsu and his legions; the tiresome work of all Seven Clans as they prepared for Fu Leng's final onslaught. Every moment of Otosan Uchi's birth is revealed in glorious and vibrant color.





Torii Arch



Trees



Packed Earth Foundation



Gate



Arch way



Door (Shogu)



Secret Door



Railing



Window



Wooden Platform



Well



Pillar



Stationary Lantern



Dias

▼ Lantern

But Yogo Koreyasu's design is more than just a flashy trick of the light; it is a message. Once a year, when the afternoon sun sets at just the right angle behind the Imperial Palace, another image is cast upon the grand waterfalls: the tremendous, curling tail of a scorpion, poised as a defiant reminder of the Scorpion's sacrifice for their lord – and the fact that no one else was willing to do the same.

The Imperial Palaces

"The Imperial Mound occupies roughly the northern third of the Forbidden City, and is commonly referred to as the 'Imperial Palace,' even though there are three independent structures rising above its surface. The Otomo Palace is built around Doro no Shikkari Kibe on the east end of the Mound, and is the only part of the Palace Grounds most ever see – particularly servants. The Seppun Palace is hidden behind Hantei's own, nestled between the central structure and the Forbidden City wall, where the Scorpion's Tale flows into the gardens below. The Seppun building was reduced in size a century ago, when a courtier misidentified it as the Imperial Palace while traveling through the Toshisoto. Now much shorter than the Imperial Palace, the Seppun structure remains mostly behind the Wall, and is visibly discernable as a lesser home."

THE GATES ONTO THE IMPERIAL MOUND

Location #1

"Watch your step as you cross onto the Mound. The Scorpion wards here can be disorienting at first. I myself have never found this a problem, but as the wards are focused on confusing the senses..."

IMPERIAL WARD TNs

Labyrinth	40	Third Floor	20
Ground Floor	10	Fourth Floor	30
Second Floor	15	Fifth Floor	40

These "gates" are actually only jade torii arches, which extend just beyond either side of the roads leading to the Imperial Palace. They were set in place by the Soshi Masters who enchanted the place, and act as the outer edge of their wards. When someone passes the invisible perimeter they form (whether they pass through an arch or not), they are subject to the ward's effects. Unless they have Hantei Blood, (a new Advantage: see Book One, page 96), or are being led by someone who does, they must roll their Perception against the following TN or become hopelessly lost:

The floorplans of the Imperial Palaces are largely easy to navigate (with the exception of the Shadow Maze, which is intentionally deceptive), but these wards make them seem more complicated, sending visitors in random directions. The effects are purely hallucinatory, but most people leave the Palace with the impression that it is much more convoluted than it really is.

One final note about the gates onto the Imperial Mound. Most courtiers believe that there are *four* gates, even though only *three* are visible on the map. The last is left up the GM.

THE SEPPUN PALACE

Locations #4–#17

"Only the first floor of the Seppun Palace is open to visitors, and it houses all non-Seppun residents. Public libraries and gardens are also found here, as is a smaller dojo which demonstrates a select number of Seppun techniques. An atrium on the south side of the Palace provides some of the best scenery for reading from the precious Seppun scrolls, and the 'game' room near the courts offers myriad amusements. Altogether, the Seppun Palace is well worth a visit, and its occupants can be very helpful in securing time with the Emperor if you befriend them."

Kyuden Seppun is considered the foremost holding of this Imperial Family, although they maintain a Palace in the capital to remain close to their Emperor. The Seppun have always been important to the Hantei, a fact that anyone visiting this place may immediately discern. The centerpiece of their atrium is a statue of Hantei XIX, given to the Seppun by his father just before the young boy's coronation. It is kept on display for visitors, and has a separate staff to care for it.

The Seppun Courts connect to their libraries and 'kyogi' room (where games and distractions of all types entertain the courtiers). This compact area of the Palace is designed to ensure that visitors feel safe and unmolested by the Seppun Miharu protecting them and patrolling the grounds. In actuality, several false walls within the corridors open into 'spy chambers', small alcoves where Seppun may discreetly observe their guests. Few places in the courts are safe from surveillance.

The upper floors of the Seppun Palace are closed to all but family members; they contain living quarters, servants' domiciles, personal courts, and the restricted family histories. All that the Seppun truly require is sequestered with them in the upper floors. Some Seppun have ignored the ground floor completely, living out their entire lives within the top two levels of the palace.

The Miharu dojo in the Seppun Palace only demonstrates maneuvers and regiments of the first two Rank Techniques, and never enough for someone to learn from – even if they were to visit the dojo for extended periods.



IMPERIAL MOUND LOCATIONS

#	Location	Page	#	Location	Page
1.	Gates onto the Mound	88	47.	Feasting/Audience Hall	
2.	Imperial Stables		48.	Rock Garden/Secondary Courts	
3.	Stable Storage		49.	Guest Rooms	
4.	(Seppun) Palace Courtyard		50.	"Private" Meeting Areas (w/ benches)	
5.	(Seppun) Atrium		51.	Grand Hall ("The Way")	
6.	(Seppun) Viewing Rooms (for statue)		52.	Support Services (Kitchens, etc.)	
7.	(Seppun) Library		53.	Storage (for servants)	
8.	(Seppun) Courts		54.	Servants' Rooms	
9.	(Seppun) "Spy Rooms"		55.	Greeting Room/Genzan (Lessers)	
10.	(Seppun) <i>Kyoji</i> ("Game") Room		56.	General's Rooms (Unused)	
11.	(Seppun) Dining Room/Audience Hall		57.	War Offices (Unused)	
12.	(Seppun) Sensei's Living Chambers		58.	Imperial Library	91
13.	(Seppun) Dojo		59.	Storage (Unused)	
14.	(Seppun) Greeting Area/ <i>Genkan</i>		60.	Secret Rooms/Hallways	91
15.	(Seppun) Guest Rooms		61.	Emperor's Sanctuary	91
16.	(Seppun) Honored Guest's Room		62.	Hidden Armory (Honor Guard)	91
17.	(Seppun) Servant Chambers/Kitchen		63.	<i>Shi-kojin</i> Garden/Emergency Route	91
18.	<i>Cha-no-yu</i> Shrine ("Tea Hut")		64.	Emergency "Court"	91
19.	Courtesan Compound		65.	Emperor's Audience Hall	91
20.	(Otomo) Observation Chamber		66.	Emperor's Courts (Public)	91
21.	(Otomo) Servants' Chambers		67.	Diplomatic Chambers (Clan Ambassadors)	
22.	(Otomo) West Courtrooms		68.	High-Ranking Guest Suites	
23.	(Otomo) Central Courts		69.	"Private" Meeting Areas (w/ benches)	
24.	(Otomo) East Courtrooms		70.	Diplomatic Chambers (Clan Champions)	
25.	(Otomo) Dining Hall/Audience Room		71.	Meditation Room/Minor Shrine	
26.	(Otomo) Residents' Rooms		72.	Servants' Rooms	
27.	(Otomo) Imperials' Rooms		73.	<i>Karame</i> (Observation Chamber)	93
28.	(Otomo) Guest Rooms		74.	Imperial Family Alcove (<i>Tokonaka</i>)	
29.	(Otomo) Commanders' Rooms		75.	Guest Daimyo Rooms	
30.	(Otomo) Armory		76.	Private Meeting Room	
31.	(Otomo) Barracks (Imperial Guard)		77.	Permanent Residents' Rooms	
32.	(Otomo) Yoriki Station		78.	Storage (for servants)	
33.	(Otomo) <i>Doro no Shikkari Kibe</i>		79.	Patio Court (opens onto Rock Garden)	
34.	Guard Station (Honor Guard)		80.	Jade Champion's Room (Sealed)	94
35.	Road of the Most High (Emperor only)		81.	Emerald Champion's Room	94
36.	Hantei's Shintao Garden	90	82.	Shadow Maze	94
37.	Greeting Area/ <i>Genzan</i>		83.	Emperor's Suite and Private Rooms	
38.	Imperial Family Alcove (<i>Tokonaka</i>)	90	84.	Private Audience Room (Kakita Ryoku)	
39.	Sentaku Hall	90	85.	Kakita Ryoku's Rooms	
40.	Sentaku Offices	90	86.	Emperor's Courts (Private)	
41.	Sentaku Rooms	90	87.	Imperial Throne Room	95
42.	Maigo no Heya (Wayfarer's Station)	90	88.	Shrine to Hantei's Ancestors	95
43.	Imperial Temple (Kami/7 Fortunes)		89.	<i>Washime</i> (Observation Deck)	95
44.	Monk/Priest Chambers		90.	<i>Shori Raimen</i> ("Thunder's Voice")	95
45.	Kitsu Meditation Cell for Pyre (#46)		91.	Amaterasu's Blessing	95
46.	Funeral Pyre	91			

THE OTOMO PALACE

Locations #20-#33

"The Otomo serve as the meticulous guardians of detail and cultural uniformity in the Empire, and are also mindful of the Emperor's safety. Toward this noble end, they have absorbed physical defenses of the 'lesser' road onto the Imperial Mound into their Palace. The Road of Fast Hopes passes directly through the Otomo Palace, where its yoriki and military commanders check the travel papers and intentions of every visitor. Be mindful of them; though their purpose is honorable, the Otomo watchdogs are brutally efficient. They would just as soon kill you as ask your business, and have full authority to do so."

Unlike the Seppun Palace, this is the primary home and courtly center of the Otomo Family. Administrative functions are conducted within easy walking distance of the family's personal rooms, and little goes on here without the knowledge of all. This is one of the main reasons that many Otomo live in private homes and discuss business elsewhere in Ootosan Uchi.

THE IMPERIAL PALACE OF THE HANTEI

Locations #34-#91

Miya Yurikago grins meekly as he directs you to look up at the towering structure before you. "The Imperial Palace," he begins, his voice laced with fatigue. "Home of the Hantei for the last thousand years, center of the living Empire, and grand testament to the ingenuity and tenacity of our culture. This is the final stop on our tour, where the grand dimension of the Imperial City is laid bare for us. Let me show you..."

36. Abodaisu Daitan ("Bold Counsel")

"It is said that Fortune favors the bold, and if anyone is proof of this, it is young Hantei II - Genji - who dared to redefine religion and the spiritual world by consolidating the religions of Shinsei and the Fortunes. Beyond this simple gate lies a Shintao garden built as a gift by the Phoenix, whose proposal spawned the present faith of the Empire. The garden was originally intended to stretch all the way around the edge of the Imperial Mound, so that all could share its beauty. But after Genji's walk through the small expanse we see here, he decreed that none but his own blood would ever step upon the sacred stones. A short wall was built around the area, and Imperial Guard posted at the Otomo Palace watch it at all hours of the day."

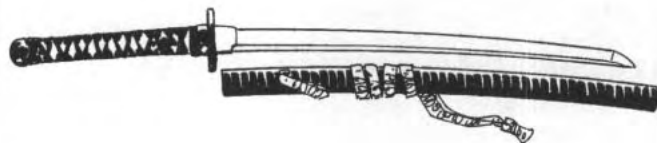
Many legends surround the Abodaisu Daitan and Genji's momentous walk. History records that he paused for a great time with every step, looked around as if surrounded by something no one else could see, and spoke to the wind. His words were simple, but clear: *Watashi wakaru* ("I understand"), and *Watashi ni shitagau* ("I comply"). He spoke seven times, to seven visions only he could see. Then, at the end of his walk, he turned and knelt before them, his arms and head low in supplication. Seppun and the others were stunned, and bowed quickly to remain lower than

their lord. They did not rise for several hours while the Emperor alternately prayed and meditated to the spirits around him.

Seppun speculated much later that the Seven Great Fortunes visited the Emperor, and that they had counseled him at every step along the path. This has given birth to many similar legends over the years. The most prominent one holds that the spirits of the Thunders visited the Emperor and granted him secret truths of their war with Fu Leng. Regardless of what truly happened, each Hantei comes to Abodaisu Daitan when in need of advice, stepping boldly from stone to stone in search of it.

38. Imperial Family Alcove (Tokinaka)

"The collected shards of Imperial history are gathered together for the benefit of visitors. We find the Ancestral Sword of the Hantei suspended here amidst a complex floral arrangement that is cultivated directly from the soft earth below. The servants and shugenja of the Emperor ensure that the vines, flowers, and colorful plants here never wilt or die, vibrantly showcasing the alcove's contents."



39-41. Sentaku Station (Visitor Check Point)

"Hello, Sentaku-san. We are here to tour the Palace. Here are our papers..."

As a last line of defense, the Sentaku control the forward block of corridors within the Imperial Palace, where they inspect the travel papers of all trying to enter. Such papers must have the mon and seal of the Sentaku Tribunal; anyone without such papers is turned away. At least two Sentaku-chosen sentries are on duty here at all times, and they have full authority to refuse anyone who does not meet their requirements.

42. Meigo no Heya (Wayfarer Station)

"Sometimes, people become lost in the halls and gardens of the Imperial Palace, so Michido - guards of Hantei blood - stand at the confluences of particularly confusing passages, both inside and outside the structure. These places are called Meigo no Heya, or 'Wayfarer Stations.' Several Michido are posted at all times, so that one or more can patrol the Imperial Mound, looking for those in need of direction. If you are ever unsure of your

destination, seek one of these guards out. If you become lost, remain where you are, and eventually one of them will find you."

43-46. Funeral Pyre

"The easternmost wing of the Imperial Palace is devoted to a two-story funeral pyre, supported by three statues in the form of the Elemental Dragons of Fire, Water, and Air. A fourth statue - of the Earth Dragon - juts out from the Palace itself, leaning over the pyre in angry defiance of those who would disturb the venerated ceremonies held here. Only Imperials are cremated here, where the populace of the Forbidden City can observe their final rites from the Water Garden twenty feet below."

Alcoves have been carved into the four Dragon statues, where Honor Guard stand watch over the bodies of fallen Imperials during the night before their cremation. These guards are replaced by Kitsus for the 35 days following the ceremony, while the Imperial spirit makes its way to Jigoku.

58. Imperial Library

"Here we find the collected wisdom of the Hantei, Miya, Otomo, and Seppun lines dating from the beginning of history. The library contains journals kept by the historians of all four Imperial Families alongside scrolls of ancient insight from all the clans. The lack of focus here is sometimes annoying to those seeking specific knowledge, but to all others, the Imperial Library offers a wealth of information waiting to be discovered. I recommend spending an afternoon here, soaking up random anecdotes of past Hantei and the valiant efforts of the Miya. It can be most illuminating."

60. Secret Rooms / Hallways

"Surely you are mistaken. How could a man vanish through a wall, let alone a bookcase...?"

The Imperial Palace is rife with secret passages and chambers, constructed by the Scorpion builders. Nearly all of them are known by the Emperor and those who live here (such as Bayushi Kachiko), but a few - most notably the passages into the Imperial Throne Room (#87) and Kakita Ryoku's Chambers (#85) - remain undiscovered. It is extremely difficult to find the portals within this hidden system, requiring three additional Raises.

61. Emperor's Sanctuary

This place was forgotten long ago, when Hantei XXVI died before passing its location on to his heir. (Traditionally, the location of the Sanctuary was restricted to the Emperor, and it was his responsibility to pass the information along.) Were someone to find this place today (five Raises), they would unearth several amazing items: a near-complete history of the relationship between the Shosuro and the Emperor, linking the Scorpion to hundreds of assassinations, betrayals, and schemes, and hinting at their connection with the Living Shadow; several gifts from the Unicorn upon their return from distant Empires, including a living scarab beetle encased in amber and an astrolabe forged of

perfect crystal; recorded conversations between early Hantei and Togashi, portending the future of the Empire and beyond; forbidden discoveries of the Phoenix Masters; and maps of Meido scrawled in the hand of a long-forgotten Sotan-Senzo.

62. Hidden Armory (Honor Guard)

When the defenders of the Emperor are called upon to fight for his life, this is where they turn. The armory stores katana of the finest caliber, some forged by Kaiu weaponsmiths and using techniques long since lost, alongside armor and other weapons of like make. This area is staged like a museum.

63. Shi-kojin Garden / Emergency Route

A small grove has been cultivated here for those who live within the Imperial Palace. When the annoyances of court and tensions of the Forbidden City are too much to bear, many retire here to reflect and unwind. A close canopy of trees surround the cool pond and welcome patch of grass, obscuring visitors from unwanted attention - even from above. Note that it is possible to find this place by walking along the edge of the Imperial Mound, but this approach requires a tough climb through the heaviest forest around the Palace - and at least two Agility + Athletics rolls of at least 30.

64. Emergency "Court"

The Emperor's second court (*Kakokyu*) was designed as a shelter for the Imperial Families in case of siege. It is large enough to house twenty comfortably, or thirty with a little effort. Once, when some feared that the Palace might come under attack, this place was well-equipped and always kept full of food and supplies for the intended occupants. But today, with the throne unthreatened for centuries, the *Kakokyu* lies empty, unprepared for the worst.

65. Emperor's Audience Hall

"The Imperial Court, as it is always called, can actually be described as the organization of the entire Forbidden City, working day-to-day to keep the Empire running smoothly. But here, in the Imperial Palace, the Emperor's own Court meets daily for six months a year. Hantei generally remains here, in this room, where a smaller version of his throne on the fifth floor can be found. His personal courts continue throughout this level of the Palace, but he can be found here."

66. Imperial Courts

"The inhabitants of the Palace vary month to month, but there are a number of people who can always be found here. Let me introduce you..."

Bayushi Aramoro, Yojimbo to Bayushi Kachiko

Reference Location: *Way of the Scorpion*, page 52

Improved Statistics: Stamina 4, Water 4; Acting 3, Iaijutsu 6

Aramoro is only here in the Imperial Court to protect his charge, Bayushi Kachiko. Yet he remains the finest duelist in all the Forbidden City, and is regularly asked to stand in for Scorpion courtiers, diplomats, and their allies.

Bayushi Kachiko, Advisor / Aide to the Emperor

Reference Location: *Way of the Scorpion*, page 53

Improved Statistics: Willpower 5; Dance 4, Manipulation 5, Oratory 4, Seduction 6

Bayushi Kachiko has lived at the Imperial Palace for nearly four years now, and is an accepted link in the Emperor's entourage. She attends nearly every political function.

Emperor Hantei XXXVIII

Reference Location: *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 101

Improved Statistics: None

In the Imperial Capital, the Emperor is considered a religious and political icon, and worshiped accordingly. Within the cloistered halls of the Imperial Palace, this is doubly true. Here, the Emperor's every word is absolute truth, and his every desire is an immediate reality. The Imperial Court revolves around Hantei XXXVIII, even if he is too weary to direct it.

Kakita Ryoku, Court Advisor to Hantei XXXVIII

Rank 4 Doji Courtier; Air: 2, Awareness 7, **Earth:** 2, **Fire:** 2, Intelligence 5, **Water:** 1, Perception 6, **Void:** 4

Notable Skills: Astrology 4, Bard 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette 6, Heraldry 5, History 3, Lore (Imperial Folklore) 4, Lore (Otosan Uchi) 4, Manipulation 1, Oratory 4, Sincerity 5

Other Options: Dependent (Hantei XXXVIII), Ear of the Emperor, Kharmic Tie (Hantei XXXVIII), Social Position (Imperial Court Advisor)

Born and raised in Otosan Uchi, Kakita Ryoku has spent nearly twenty years at the Emperor's side. She is his Oba-san (Aunt), destined by blood to perform the duties of Advisor. She greets all visitors to the Palace and ensures that their stay is pleasant, but her nephew trusts her with much more; no one in the Empire is closer to him, or more trusted with his secrets, than she. When Hantei is at a loss, he turns to Ryoku.

Kakita Yinobu, Crane Clan Master Orator

Rank 4 Kakita Artisan (Poetry 3, Jester 1); Air: 3, Awareness 7, **Earth:** 2, **Fire:** 2, Intelligence 4, **Water:** 2, Perception 5, **Void:** 3

Notable Skills: Acting 4, Artisan (Jester) 2, Artisan (Poetry) 5, Bard 4, Calligraphy 2, Courtier 4, Etiquette 3, Lore (Myth and Legend) 2, Manipulation 4, Oratory 6, Political Maneuvering 5, Shintao 2, Sincerity 3, War Fan 4

Other Options: Balance, Cadence, Meddler

Yinobu is a sharp and witty opponent in the political arena, relying upon his natural speaking ability to defend the Crane at court. Recently, he has worked to rein in and incorporate the wild and brutal techniques of the Jesters, slipping thinly veiled insults and confounding riddles into conversation. Already a master at redirecting dialogue, this is a natural extension of his own methods.

Kitsuki Yaruma, Dragon Clan Liaison to Imperial Court

Rank 5 Kitsuki Magistrate; Air: 4, **Earth:** 3, **Fire:** 3, **Water:** 3, Perception 5, **Void:** 4

Notable Skills: Appraisal 5, Archery 3, Athletics 3, Courtier 4, Defense 2, Heraldry 3, Herbalism 2, History 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 3, Law 4, Lore (Many) 3-5, Nazodo 5, Painting 4, Research 3, Stealth 3

Other Options: Lost Love (Cheniko), Social Position (Liaison)

Kitsuki Yaruma has been the official line of communication between the Imperial Court and the Dragon Clan for nearly thirty years, and spends much of his time traveling between Otosan Uchi and the mountain territories of his clan. He often creates detailed paintings of the locations he's visited, which he offers to others in the Imperial Court as a way of breaking the ice.

Kitsune Meisuko, Emissary of the Fox Clan

Rank 4 Fox Shugenja; Air: 4, **Earth:** 3, **Fire:** 4, **Water:** 3, **Void:** 2

Notable Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 2, Herbalism 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Law 2, Oratory 3, Meditation 4, Sincerity 2

Other Options: Social Position (Courtier), Taboo (Cannot tell the complete truth) – see *Way of the Minor Clans*, page 35

According to many of her clan, Kitsune Meisuko has been 'domesticated'. Her rapid ascension through the Empire's confusing diplomatic channels has earned her a reputation for accepting 'popular' outside ways in favor of her own clan's. Her refusal or inability to excel in the training of the Fox Clan has aggravated the situation, convincing most of her people that she has forsaken her roots as well. But ultimately, Kitsune Meisuko can only help the Fox in her current position; she is liked at the Imperial Court, and improves the clan's stature in the eyes of the Emperor. Where Ryosei proved that the Fox were worthy and honorable warriors, Meisuko is proving that they are just as able in the court.

Otomo Sorai, Otomo Family Daimyo

Reference Location: *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 104

Improved Statistics: Heraldry 4, Law 2, Lore (Seven Clans, Otosan Uchi) 3, Manipulation 6, Obeisaseru 3

Sorai has been ominously quiet since Winter Court. Perhaps he is waiting for the right time to disclose the Miya's mismanagement of the Forbidden City (see page 93), or maybe he has discovered some other vital information or plot. Whatever the case, the Otomo are following his lead.

Note that several of the characters above have Skill Ranks of 6. These NPCs are legendary heroes of Rokugan, and defy the standard L5R conventions and limitations.

In addition to the dignitaries above, the following people can regularly be found here at the Emperor's Court: Bayushi Yojiro (see *Way of the Scorpion*, page 58), Doji Shizue (see *Way of the Crane*, page 84), Ide Tadaji (see *Way of the Unicorn*, page 70), Ikoma Tsanuri (see *Way of the Lion*, page 67), Ikoma Ujiaki (see *Way of the Lion*, page 68), Kakita Yoshi (see *Way of the Crane*, page 85), and Shosuro Taberu (see *Way of the Scorpion*, page 61).

As usual, Gamemasters are encouraged to include any NPC (established or of their own creation) here at Imperial Court, according to their taste and style of play.

73. Karame (Observation Chamber)

"The Imperial Courts often convene throughout the first three floors of the Imperial Palace, the rest of the Mound, and even below, in the basin of the Forbidden City. This is especially true when the Emperor calls for the clans to gather here for a special announcement or peacekeeping effort. The Imperial Court can sometimes number in the thousands, spread as far as the eye can in all directions.

"This place – the Eye of the Crow – was once favored by Shinsei during early courts when there was no more to Otosan Uchi than the Forbidden City. Later, after Shinsei vanished, the Otomo claimed the spot in order to observe the courts from a favored vantage point. Today, they have also moved on, or up, I should say, to a less public viewing area on the Sixth Floor. Now the right to this choice location during Court is lobbied as a favor between visitors. I am not sure who retains it now..."

74. Imperial Family Alcove (Tokonaka)

"Here we see the daisho received by those appointed Jade Champions, while the post was still active, along with their armor. The showcase is simple, without many of the frills associated with most tokonaka displays; there is still much debate over the importance of the Jade Champion's position – mainly between the Phoenix and the Crab."



80. Jade Champion's Room (Sealed)

"Since the Council of Five eliminated the post of the Jade Champion, this room has remained sealed. But three centuries ago – just after the Battle of the Cresting Wave and other Shadowlands incursions renewed talk of the Jade Champion's lost duty – the palace learned that something occupied it. A human voice called out from behind the door, calling to be released so he might find his sword and rise up against the swelling might of maho in the Empire. Phoenix Inquisitors arrived to investigate, but determined the sounds to be a hoax, most likely perpetuated by the Scorpion, or other trouble-makers. Still, the voice occasionally echoes through the halls, as if the spirits of Jade Champions past are luring people to the room and begging for release..."

The personal chambers of the Jade Champion are actually haunted, but not by any spirits that held the post in life. This is simply another Phoenix ploy to undermine the position of Jade Champion, protecting the integrity of their own Inquisitors, and ensuring their secrets remain their own. The ghost haunting this room belongs to a bushi killed during the Battle of Stolen Graves (see Location 272-274). He was tricked by a *maho-tsukai* into killing several of his own men, then died himself before he could perform *seppuku*.

Shiba Nakafusa, Yorei (Goryo, Rank 4 Bushi in Life)

Air: 2, Agility 3, Earth: 4, Stamina 5, Fire: 4, Water: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 6k4

Rolls For Damage: 5k1 (hands)

TN to be Hit: 20 (may only be hit w/ magical/crystal weapons)

Armor: 5

Wounds: 12: -1; 24: -3; 36: Dead

Were the PCs to recover Shiba Nakafusa's lost sword (currently on display within the memorial for those who fell against Iuchiban's undead troops, and return it to him, he could complete his final act and begin his journey into the spirit realm. Of course, PCs who assume the ghost is speaking of the Jade Champion's weapon, on display elsewhere on this level (see Location 74), could get into serious trouble – the weapon is a highly revered artifact.

81. Emerald Champion's Room

"Between the Lion-Crane war and his many responsibilities in the field, Doji Satsume can rarely be found here. His chambers – filled with trophies of his accomplishments as a warrior, hunter, and magistrate – remain untouched by all except the servants, who keep it clean for his return."



82. Shadow Maze

"Close your eyes, and take my hand. It is easiest if you do not try to reason out this place..."

The whole of the fourth floor of the Imperial Palace is a Scorpion ward, designed to protect the Emperor and his family on the upper levels. On the surface, the floor appears to contain a labyrinth of rice-paper walls, backlit by dozens of lanterns in strategic locations, which cast distorted shadows upon the walls. When someone walks through the Shadow Maze, everyone else in the maze can see at least part of them, cast upon the thin walls, but never where he actually is. Often, a single person appears in several different locations, confusing and intimidating opponents.

The optical illusions of this place require a Perception + Stealth roll of 40 or more to ignore. Otherwise, visitors become hopelessly lost, reduced to feeling their way through the corridors with no chance of discovering an exit, and besieged by horrible images projected through the walls. Those who fail this check are subject to a Fear effect with a Rating of 4, which rises by one each hour they remain trapped in the Shadow Maze.

The lanterns and walls here are regularly shifted about so that no one can "train" themselves to ignore the effects of the maze. The Emperor keeps a number of Honor and Imperial Guard with Hantei Blood (see Book One, p. 96), who are immune to the Scorpion wards, and can enter the maze to contend with invaders if needs be. (These guards have never been needed, and the Emperor's advisors have recommended dissolving their post, but the Hantei have always retained them – just in case.)

Finally, though one or two have tried over the last thousand years, the Shadow Maze cannot be destroyed. The rice paper walls are enchanted, and will not burn, nor may they be cut with

a katana. For all intents and purposes, they are like thin, opaque versions of heavy stone castle walls.

87. Imperial Throne Room

"Step quietly around these statues, and over to the opposite staircase. The Emperor is not here right now, and the Imperial Throne Room – indeed, this entire floor – are off-limits to all without his presence. Yes, Kakita Ryoku does live here, but she has special dispensation. She is the Emperor's aunt, after all. Yes, that is where Shinsei gave the Emperor the Tao; now go!"

88. Shrine to Hantei's Ancestors

"The sixth floor of the Imperial Palace is open to the air and sun, so that Hantei and his most favored guests may bask in the elements. This is the only walled structure here – the Shrine to the lineage of Heaven. The interior is closed to all but the Emperor's own blood, but others may make offerings and pray beside the locked door."

89. Washime (Observation Deck)

"From here, we can see the far edges of the Imperial City in all directions, as well as the rolling hills, coastlines, and ocean beyond. Majestic, is it not?"

90. Shori Raimen ("Thunder's Triumph")

"When Shosuro returned from the Shadowlands, bearing news that Fu Leng had fallen, this bell could be heard as far away as the Plains of Battle and Kyuden Seppun. Since then, it has rung only a few times – when the whole Empire has a reason to celebrate. That is what this place is for – unity."

91. Amaterasu's Blessing

"Finally, we come to Amaterasu's Blessing. I am not familiar with the craftsman of this startling piece – only its beauty. A crystal and jade Imperial Mon on the east, and statues of Hantei bowing before the Sun Goddess on the west. When the sun rises each morning, the light filters through the mon, illuminating the statues with impossible grace. Shall we stay and watch?"

Imperial Influence and Relations

The policies and practices of the four Imperial Families vary greatly, and are presented here as an indication of the general style and potential reaction of each during play.

THE HANTEI

There are two distinctly different mindsets within the Hantei Family. Among the younger, less experienced nobles, it is common to ignore policy and develop a minute-by-minute 'need list'; nothing but the most pressing issues are dealt with, and everything is put off until the absolute last second it can be done. Older Hantei have grown out of this behavior, 'lashing out' at their younger cousins by immersing themselves in the deep end of the political pool. For them, scheming, bartering, courtship, and the making and breaking of clans is the order of the day. Older Hantei tend to relish grand, sweeping gestures and melodramatic or ironic moments, engineering them for their own amusement if possible.

THE SEPPUN

Peace through religious grace; that is the motto of the Seppun Family, who focus on maintaining social order within the Empire and keeping the records of fanatic deeds of piousness and virtue. The Seppun frequently proselytize during court, or subtly hint at the 'correct' course of action between the clans.

THE OTOMO

When the security of the Emperor is at stake, nothing is sacred. The Otomo know this well, and ensure that the clans act in the best interests of their absolute lord. Like the elder Hantei, the Otomo are masters at political intrigue; many enjoy the complex nuance of the Imperial Court a bit too much. Still, they always make sure to avoid direct implication.

THE MIYA

Lastly, the Miya act as a bridge between clans and the other Imperial Families, seeking amicable solutions to problems as they crop up. Their fondest desire (and highest order of business) is to make sure that everyone leaves court feeling that they have accomplished something – and also, that they have done so without hurting anyone else. Of course, with so many clans in the

Empire hating one another (and at least two currently at war), the task of the Miya is a daunting one.

Ultimately, the primary function of the Miya is to herald the Hantei and keep the peace between the Imperial House and the clans. This, if nothing else, they can control more often than not.

Imperial Customs

Besides hosting the Imperial Court itself, the greatest Imperial honor a clan may receive during the winter months is being named *Kanrinin* ("Caretakers") for the Forbidden City while the Emperor and his entourage are away. Until Spring, the Kanrinin command the servants of the Imperial Families, maintain the properties of the First District, and resolve the issues brought before the Throne to the best of their ability. (Fortunately, there are few significant issues during the winter; most important nobles are with the Emperor; predominantly, the Kanrinin are faced with the Otosan Uchi's internal issues alone.)

Different Kanrinin are chosen each fall, and since the first Winter Court, it has been left to the Miya Family to decide who should accept this esteemed duty. (The Otomo have their hands full securing the Emperor as he travels across the Empire, and the Seppun are consumed with preparations for the Emperor's journey and winter living arrangements.) The Miya have always taken great precautions to ensure that the Imperial Capital is in good hands while they and the other Imperial Families are gone.

But the Miya may soon find themselves without this responsibility, especially if the Otomo have anything to do with it. This last winter, while the Emperor hosted court at Kyuden Seppun, Miya Yoto used his position to invite the Three Man Alliance to care for the Palace, along with a collection of ronin. Yoto claims that this was meant as a lesson for his 'bigoted' son, who cannot accept 'lesser' samurai as a true facet of Rokugani society. (For more on the continuing debate within the Miya household over the integrity and importance of lesser samurai, please see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 103.)

His son, Sotoshi, was furious, but knew that he had no power to counter his father's terrible decision. So he secretly asked a number of Moto to spend the Winter in the Unicorn Guest Home, knowing that their presence would infuriate the minor clans, eventually proving that the lessers were incapable of such tasks. Sotoshi arranged for the Moto to arrive after he and his father were already gone at Winter Court, so that none could challenge his defiant solution.

When the Moto appeared at the Southern Gate into the Forbidden City, they were immediately countered by Yoritomo. "Why are you here?" the Mantis asked. "The Three-Man Alliance was asked here as *Kanrinin*, and we are fully capable of the task." The Moto provided their own invitation, also bearing the seal of the Miya Family, and demanded that they share caretaker duties through the winter. A bitter feud ensued, which none of the low-ranking Imperials left in the Forbidden City were prepared for.

This continued for the duration of the winter, until the Emperor and his entourage returned to find the startling repercussions of the Miya's decisions.

Several dozen incensed nobles, district governors, and inhabitants of the Ekohikei waited for the Emperor, and demanded his attention. They claimed that the Kanrinin virtually ignored the rest of the city, too busy with their own trifling arguments to arbitrate for them. The Moto and the Minor Clans fought amongst themselves while trade and border disputes were left to fester. The Imperial Court – normally little more than a formality during the winter, anyway – ground to a halt while the Mantis and the Moto argued over jurisdiction. An unprecedented 32 duels were reported, 14 involving the ronin Dairy.

The Emperor ignored the group of disgruntled subjects and entered the Forbidden City, where he found his favorite statue missing. The Miya, gathered together at the entrance to the Imperial Mound, apologized profused and claimed that it had been stained by the weather and was being cleaned elsewhere in the city.

The Emperor pressed on, finding several minor inconsistencies along the Road of the Most High – stones out of place along the road's edge, replanted grass and floral arrangements, and pockmarks across the walls of the Palace that were ominously reminiscent of arrow fire. Yet he continued into the Palace, the soul of patience, sure that the responsible parties would pay with their lives as soon as he was safe in his own home.

The final insult was still to come, however. On the ledges outside the Third Floor of the Imperial Palace stood several immense gilded cages, containing a number of pristine white seagulls. Gifts to Hantei V, the birds had been bred for centuries and kept as pets of the Emperor. Hantei XXXVIII had fed the gulls every day, and was quite fond of them. But when he came to their cages this day, the gulls were dizzy, and unable to walk or fly correctly. Furious, the Emperor demanded an immediate audience with all the Imperials who had remained at the Palace through Winter Court. One by one, the terrified nobles were dragged before Hantei, to answer for the mistakes of the Kanrinin. 21 men and women were killed or committed seppuku before the truth came out.

Through frightened rambling, the facts became evident. The Moto arrived after the Minor Clans, demanding to be included in the decisions of the Kanrinin for the duration of the winter. Yoritomo and his followers refused at first, but their hand was forced by the sealed documents Sotoshi had given the Moto daimyo. The two Kanrinin forces attempted to work together, but their anger and frustration with one another grew until they eventually came to blows. They fought duel after duel, though never in the Forbidden City, where the Imperial and Honor Guards would have cut the offenders down. Instead, the duels spread out into the rest of the Ekohikei, where immeasurable damage was done to local buildings, gardens, and scenery as the Kanrinin resolved their issues.

During the last days of winter, as the Emperor was no doubt en route back to Otosan Uchi, his precious seagulls were released.

Without hesitation, Tsuruchi (who was on the Palace Grounds at the time) leaped into action. Grabbing his yumi and several 'humming bulb' arrows, he charged up the stairs until he reached the Third Floor. Then, standing inside the Karame – just above the open cages – he began loosing arrows into the air. One by one, the gulls plummeted into the Water Gardens, where they were retrieved by Moto guardsmen.

After the interrogations were complete, the Emperor ordered everyone away, and considered his response for two full days. Then he brought Yoritomo, Tsuruchi, the Moto, and others together for a brief meeting. Tsuruchi had – regardless of his methods – performed an honorable deed in saving the Emperor's pets, and was remanded, then released. The rest of the Kanrinin (of all clans) were put to work returning the Forbidden City and Ekohikei back together, precisely the way it was before their arrival. None were allowed to go home until the work was finished.

The ultimate fate of the Miya and their right to choose the Kanrinin are still unsure. The Otomo have stepped in to oppose their ancient allies, questioning their competence and value to the Empire. The Miya, under the careful guidance of their new daimyo, Sotoshi, are trying to divert attention to the Minor Clans, ronin, and 'barbaric' Moto, whom they say are the real problem. Sotoshi has taken responsibility for the presence of the Moto, but plants the rest of the damage firmly in the hands of his father.

A Final Goodbye

As the first morning rays pierce the clouds to gently touch the Imperial Palace, the Mon of the Emperor ignites with proud fury. The light is magnified and streams across the Palace roof like a spire of living flame, engulfing the statues to the west in a radiant, glowing circle. A tear slips from Yurikago's eye as the circle grows, until it finally explodes across the Imperial Mound and the Forbidden City in a wash of sharp color.

The very next moment, your Miya guide is sullen, his shoulders slumped and his face a pallid mask of sadness. "We have come a long way, you and I, and seen all the wonders of the Hantei's precious jewel. We have shared moments of true honor and beauty. We are linked. And so it is with great sorrow that it must come to this, even if it is for the good of all."

"I am retiring, leaving the post of Imperial Herald to take my Last Breath. You are to be my successor. I know, it is unexpected, but I have thought long and hard over this, and I am sure of your ability. I have given you all the knowledge I may, but do not worry, the rest will follow. Yours will be a glorious career, filled with the greatest adventures and finest stories any has ever known."

"The Emperor's words are yours now. Respect them. Protect them. They will guide you in your mission, for they are the dazzling stars fallen from Lady Sun's eyes, which light the canopy of the sky through the eternal night..."