

WORLD OF DARKNESS:

TOKYO



A WORLD OF DARKNESS SOURCEBOOK FOR WRAITH: THE OBLIVION™

WORLD OF DARKNESS: TOKYO™

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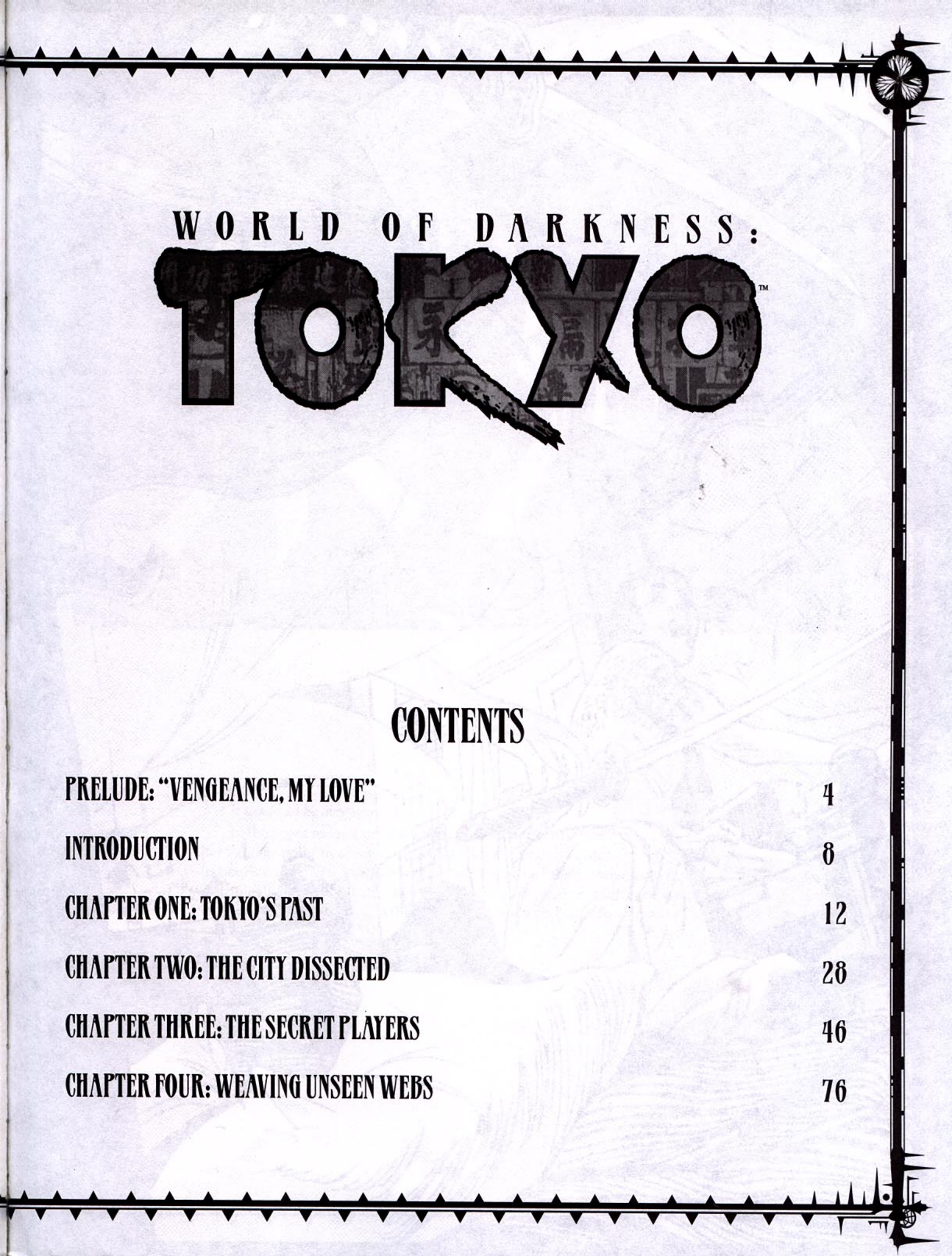
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Leiko created by Mark Cenczyk.



WORLD OF DARKNESS: **TOKYO**TM

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GHOST STORY: VENGEANCE, MY LOVE

It would all be over soon.

In the upper room, a small nightstand clock began to chime out 11 P.M. From her vantage point in occupied Tokyo, Leiko watched the timepiece run through its hourly course. She had been waiting just across the Fabric for the last five hours. Technically speaking, Leiko had been waiting for this moment ever since she entered the Jade Kingdom. In the larger sense, five more hours didn't merit a blink.



But Leiko was so damn close to the end. Every night she played and replayed the scene in her mind. The images, though painful, had almost become friends to her. The sound of the police siren. Leiko and her older brother Gedde tearing off down that alley. The shrill blast of the policeman's whistle was right at their backs. A chain-link fence blocked the alleyway. Leiko remembered Gedde boosting her up and over the crossbar then whirling around to face the cop. The last thing her brother said to her was *Run*.

Then the man swung a police riot stick and split open Gedde's skull like a rotten melon.

That was what kept Leiko going all along — the opportunity for payback. It was the reason she hooked up with that Renegade ship and its infuriating Russian captain and crew. Leiko went along with the *gaijin* for as long as she could stand it, participating in surgical strikes inland along the Japanese shoreline. Eventually, though, the Renegade band outlived its usefulness.

Leiko's chance came while she was leading fresh recruits on an inland patrol to search for wandering souls the Reapers hadn't yet discovered. Leiko was an old hand at this sort of mission; she and her brother used to lead the same kind of patrols through the mountain regions in the time after Gedde himself had harvested his sister's soul. But that was long ago — before the Reapers captured Gedde and, for a second time, tore apart the only family Leiko had ever known, took away the only person she had ever implicitly trusted.

Freeing herself from the Renegades to set out for Tokyo had been the easy part. She just split up her patrol, slipped away and never looked back. It was that simple. The recruits had probably been captured by Imperial patrols within a day or two. *They wouldn't have made it anyway*, Leiko thought. *Ancient history*.

OH, REALLY? she heard the voice say. AND WHO WERE YOU TO DECIDE THEIR FATE?

I did what I had to do, Leiko replied to the voice. *It was the only chance I had of finishing all of this*.

And what will you do when you finish it? Will it have been worth the effort? Will your rage vanish?

Shut up, Leiko hissed. She had come too far, expended too much effort, to back out now. *This was for Gedde*, she reminded herself. *A life for a life. Perfect balance*.

11:15 P.M. *What the hell was keeping this bastard?* Leiko had paid Mama Prine a shogun's ransom to find this cop, who had for so long remained a faceless silhouette to Leiko. Mama provided Leiko with a name — Eddie Toshio — and an address, and Mama said it was up to Leiko to do what she wanted with the information. Leiko had been waiting in Toshio's apartment all night, and she was prepared to outwait the Wheel of Ages if necessary. Eddie Toshio would return home eventually. Leiko would kill him. She would make him suffer. And just before he died, Leiko would look unblinking into this panicky little cop's eyes and watch all of the life ebb out of his carcass.

And then what?

11:48 P.M. Leiko heard the snicking of a key in the door. Toshio had come home. Leiko peered through the haze and focused her entire attention on him. He was slightly older than she anticipated, in his late 30s. He must have been promoted to detective because he was wearing a suit and tie and had his shield clipped to the front of his belt.

Leiko watched Toshio lock the door behind him and go into the bedroom. She followed his every move. He went over to a low-mirrored dresser, where he unclipped his badge and a belt holster holding a nickel-plated 9mm. He placed both items on the dresser and began to undress.

Perfect, Leiko thought. All she had to do was reach out, grab the gun, point it and shoot. Right in the gut. Shot with his own gun, in his own bedroom....

No, she thought. *He needs to suffer. He needs to feel the pain I felt*.

DOES HE?

Yes, dammit, he does.

WILL IT MAKE THINGS RIGHT AGAIN?

Right again? This son of a bitch killed my brother. He beat Gedde's head in like it was cardboard. It wasn't right before. There's no "again" to it.

WILL IT BRING GEDDE BACK—

Leiko let out an unholy shriek: "Stop it!" She caught herself. The voice was trying to make her so crazy that she'd blow her cover. It wasn't going to happen. She was going to see this through.

Toshio emerged from the bathroom wearing a towel. Leiko had been so preoccupied arguing with the voice that she hadn't noticed him go into the bathroom to shower. He went to the dresser and began to ready himself for bed.

Leiko looked around the room. It was furnished plainly, but elegantly. A large black lacquered bed stood in the corner opposite the dressing table. In another corner sat a credenza with a silver beverage tray and crystal decanters on it. A small nightstand stood next to the bed, and a pair of katanas hung over the headboard.

Do it now, Leiko told herself. Before you get talked out of it. Get it over with.

She felt her entire Corpus shaking as she stepped into the reality of the room. She moved to the credenza and grasped one of the heavy decanters. It didn't budge. Leiko concentrated harder and made a second grab for it. Nothing. She was growing increasingly frustrated. There he was, right in front of her, and her hands were useless. Leiko began to shake with rage, which started to agitate the cluster of decanters and glasses sitting on the tray. The shaking then filled the room. Toshiro turned and saw the walls beginning to buckle: an earthquake. His eyes darted around the room, then fixed on the exit.

HE'S GETTING AWAY, Leiko heard the voice say urgently. She let out a soul-shattering shriek and snatched up the decanter and flung it at the policeman's half-naked frame. She missed completely. Leiko picked up a squat scotch glass, with its sturdy base, and fired it at Toshiro's head. Not even close.

SEE? the voice said. YOU CAN'T KILL HIM BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT'S NOT WORTH IT. IT WON'T FIX ANYTHING....

Yes, it will. It has to. Toshiro dove for cover as another decanter whizzed past his right ear. It hit the dresser mirror and exploded into a shower of silver and crystal fragments.

DON'T YOU SEE? YOUR INDECISION HAS THE BETTER OF YOU. YOU CAN'T EVEN HIT YOUR TARGET. WHAT IF YOU KILL HIM? WILL IT STOP THERE? WILL YOUR HATE BE SATIED?

Leiko flung herself at the wall over the bed and wrenched free one of the katanas there. The force of her rage twisted the bolts that had kept the sword fastened in place. She tore the blade from its sheath and dove toward Toshiro's body, but she was so pent-up with fury that she couldn't control the weapon. Toshiro dodged the other way and Leiko embedded the katana's point into the wall. She pulled it from the plaster and stood there, funneling her entire preternatural essence into the sword. Leiko then lunged at Toshiro again and stabbed him in the leg above the right kneecap. He screamed in pain, stumbled and fell to the floor. He cut himself nastily on the fragments of mirrored glass that littered the room.

Leiko stood over his prone body, the sword hovering ominously in midair. GO AHEAD, the voice said, DO IT. REVENGE YOUR BROTHER.

For an instant, Leiko smiled to herself at beating down the voice. In one quick movement, the blade swept downward and entered Eddie Toshiro's stomach and punched through the back of his ribcage.

Toshiro curled into a fetal position and clutched reflexively at the katana protruding from his body. Leiko saw the blood welling up in his mouth as he tried to remove it from his midriff. He yanked futilely at the blade for a few seconds more, and then stopped moving altogether, the crimson of his life spreading over the glass-flecked carpet.

"For you, Gedde," Leiko heard herself say.

FOR GEDDE? the voice asked.

Yes, Leiko responded, almost too quickly. It's done. I did it. I told you it had to be done, and I did it.

AND NOW WHAT WILL YOU DO? said the voice. WHERE WILL YOU GO? YOU HAVE NO ONE TO TURN TO. YOU HAVE NO CAUSE TO FIGHT FOR. YOUR ENTIRE EXISTENCE HAS BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD THIS MOMENT. AND NOW THE MOMENT HAS COME AND GONE.

Dammit, shut up, Leiko said. *You will not take this moment from me.*

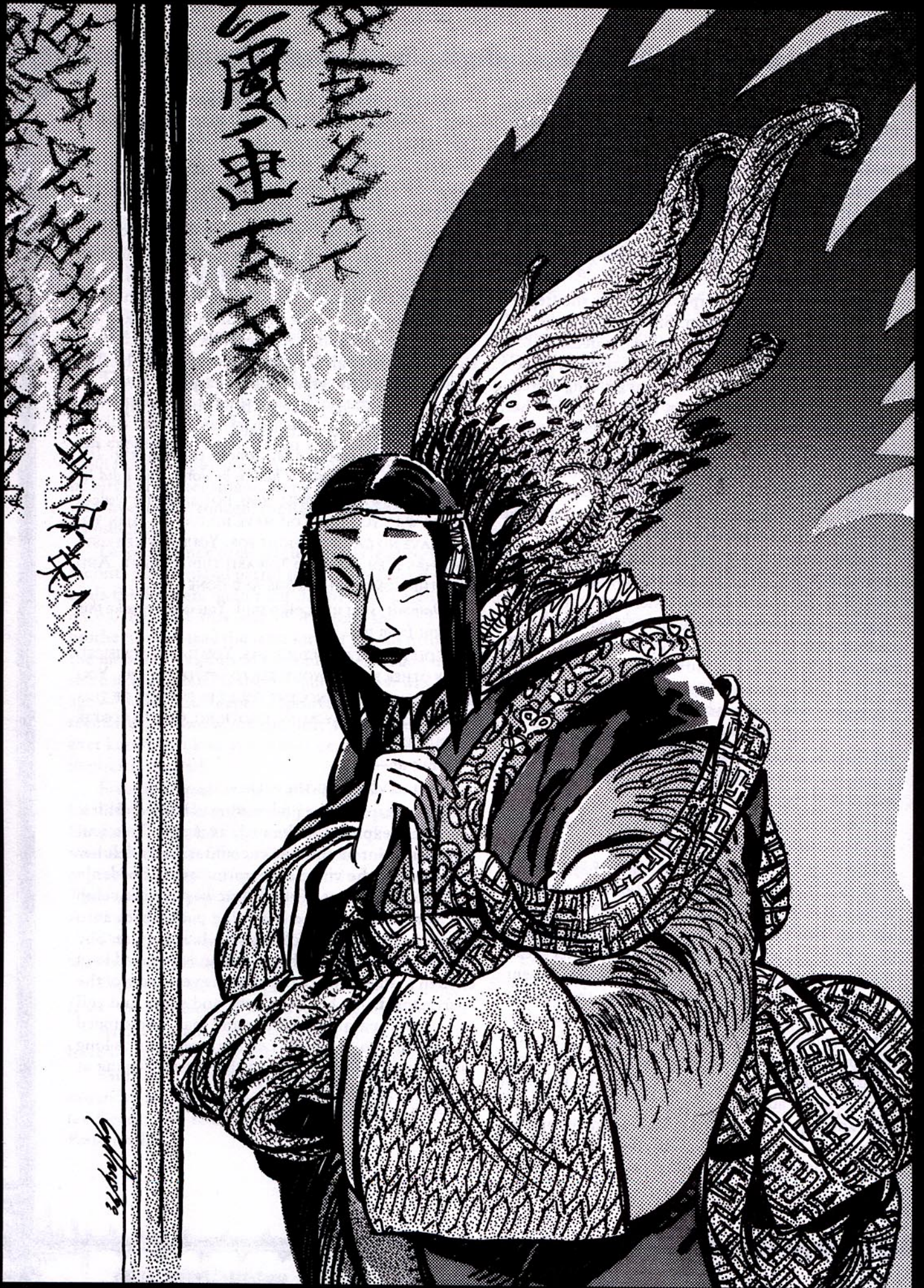
YOU TOOK IT FROM YOURSELF. YOU HAVE SACRIFICED EVERY OTHER PART OF YOURSELF TO SETTLE A SCORE. YOU HAVE ABANDONED INNOCENT SOULS IN PURSUIT OF THIS MOMENT. AND NOW YOU HAVE NOTHING. ONLY A CORPSE IS YOUR REWARD.

Shut up—

YOU HAVE JOINED THE FOLD.

Leiko stared at the lifeless form of Eddie Toshiro. She felt inexpressibly drained, as if all of her soul had been spent on this one encounter. Leiko felt her control over the voice evaporating away. Suddenly the roiling grayness of the Fabric began to envelop her form. Leiko felt herself being pulled back into the memory that was Tokyo in the Jade Empire. She raised her face toward the ceiling and screamed loud enough to shatter all of the glass in every room of the apartment. Leiko began to twist and shake and yell in a violent paroxysm of rage and fear. She slipped downward into the abyss. Leiko struggled for as long as she could, but the force of the vortex tugging at her frame was far too strong....

And then she vanished.



2004/10/12



INTRODUCTION

Although this book isn't my first project as a developer, it is the first book I'm developing for **Wraith**. Taking over creative responsibility for the game from Richard Dansky was daunting but irresistible because of the extraordinarily dense world-within-the-World-of-Darkness that he brought, ironically, to life. My feeling is that Rich (along with his many predecessors and collaborators) made the realm of the Restless Dead the smartest and most wonderfully detailed imaginary world in gaming. My hope is that what my own collaborators and I contribute to the world of **Wraith** with this book is consistent with those high standards. And if it's not, it's no one's fault but my own.

World of Darkness: Tokyo isn't *just* a **Wraith** book. Like any other volume bearing the "World of Darkness" surtitle, this one deals with characters and situations from all the game lines that share the gothic punk setting. Thus, you'll find changelings, Kindred, Kuei-jin, mages and

shapeshifters alongside the wraiths here, and you'll also find material for campaigns involving any of the aforementioned groups alone or for crossover campaigns. As is true of any White Wolf Storyteller game, feel free to use what's here as you find it or to alter it as you see fit. At the heart of the Storyteller system is the idea of making the stories you create in the course of gaming *your own*.

Beyond its **Wraith** connections and its treatment of the other World of Darkness games, this book also concerns Japan, another plus for me given my longtime interest in that nation and its culture. I assume full responsibility for any misrepresentations of Japan, its history or its language that may appear in these pages. My goal was to evoke the real Tokyo as much as possible in describing this book's fictional Middle Kingdom Tokyo. Judging how well that goal has been met is now, literally, in your hands.

Here's hoping you enjoy the tour.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Chapter One: Tokyo's Past discusses the history of the city, supernatural and otherwise.

Chapter Two: The City Dissected examines modern Tokyo's physical features and what unfolds behind the scenes here.

Chapter Three: The Secret Players identifies some of the movers and shakers in Middle Kingdom Japan's capital city.

Chapter Four: Weaving Unseen Webs offers several plots in both senses of the word — clandestine schemes that can also serve as engines to set chronicles in motion.

ON DATE NOTATIONS

In the Western world, years are annotated with the abbreviations B.C. and A.D. — Before Christ and *Anno Domini* (in the year of our Lord), respectively. The terms are so common in modern usage that the average Westerner scarcely thinks about the cultural and religious baggage they bear. As Japan lacks the West's heavy Christian influence on history and culture, this book uses the annotations B.C.E. and C.E. — Before the Common Era and Common Era. The years so designated correspond exactly to ones labeled under the more familiar system: B.C.E. simply replaces B.C., and C.E. replaces A.D.

Note that this book refers throughout to Asian vampires by the modern term "Kuei-jin," even though the word is strictly modern. This usage is merely for clarity.

LEXICON

Akuma — Demon; also, Kuei-jin that serve the Yama Kings.

Banality — Mortal disbelief that has deadly effects on changelings and their magic.

Chi'n Ta (or *shintā*) — Eastern Mages.

Chu-ih-yu — *Kamuii* attuned to the metal element.

Daityas — *Hsien* who have turned away from the August Personage of Jade, but who have not surrendered to the Yama Kings.

Dreaming, the — The collective dreams of all humanity.

Effigy — An Inanimae kith from the automaton city Capecia, a realm in the Dreaming; equivalent to "mannikin" in the West.

Gaijin — Stranger; foreigner.

Glamour — The living force of the Dreaming; changing magic.

Gumi — An extended Yakuza gang; a "family."

Hakken — Wolf-changer hengeyokai; a member of the Shadow Lord tribe.

Hengeyokai — Eastern Shapeshifters; the Changing Breeds of Asia.

House Bishamon — A powerful traditionalist *uji*.

House Genji — A powerful progressivist *uji*.

Hirayanu — Animalistic "commoner" *hsien*.

Hsien — Eastern changelings; more appropriately, spirits living in human bodies.

Immortal Guard, the — Powerful wraithly servitors of the Jade Emperor.

Kamuii — Nobles of the *hsien*.

Kithain — A self-referential term for changelings.

Kitsune — Fox-changer hengeyokai.

Kumo — Goblin Spiders; werespider servants of the Yama Kings.

Kura Sau — *Hsien* who serve the Yama Kings.

Nezumi — Rat-changer hengeyokai; a Ratkin.

Ronin — Masterless one.

Same-Bito — Shark-changer hengeyokai; a Rokea.

Senryo — The Japanese term for the Jade Empire's Shadowlands occupation.

Seppuku — Ritual suicide.

Shen — A blanket term for all Asian supernatural and Awakened creatures.

Shinma — *Hsien* who still follow the August Personage of Jade; Eastern term for Kithain.

Shogitai — Samurai who remain loyal to the previous shogun.

Uji — Territorial Kuei-jin families that control entire provinces.

Wani — The true form of a *hsien*, often awesome and terrible.

Yakuza — The Japanese mob; generally more tolerated and socially integrated than its Western counterpart, the *Cosa Nostra*. Also, an individual member of this organization.

Yama Kings — Powerful demons; Eastern counterparts to Banes and Malfeans.

Yomi World — The hellish home realm of the Yama Kings.

Yugen — Undifferentiated Chi.

Zaibatsu, the — The Japanese arm of the Technocracy.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Both Storytellers and players may find the following works useful in creating Tokyo chronicles. This list is by no means complete, but the included materials may help to evoke the otherness of Japan.

BOOKS

- Card, Orson Scott and Ferrell, Keith, editors, *Black Mist And Other Japanese Futures* — Five novellas that envision a range of science-fictional possibilities. Great inspiration for technomancer chronicles.

- Clavell, James, *Shogun* and *Gai-jin* — The history in these novels is, at best, inaccurate, but the books are handy resources on cultural differences and East-West conflict. *Shogun* is also available as a television miniseries for folks who don't want to plow through a 1,200-page epic.

- Kurosawa, Akira, *Something Like an Autobiography* — The great director's "life story" offers, among other things, marvelous insights into a Meiji-era household.

- Mishima, Yukio, *Spring Snow* — One of the best novels by this acclaimed author. It examines the culture and conflicting ideas of the pre-W.W.II Japanese populace (and includes a really sappy romance).

- Murakami, Haruki, *The Elephant Vanishes* — A collection of surrealistic short fictions by one of Japan's boldest modern writers. The tale called "The Little Green Monster" could take place in the Dreaming.

- Pyle, Kenneth, *The Making of Modern Japan* — A concise, detailed history of Japan from the 1600s to the present.

- Saga, Dr. Junichi, *Confessions of a Yakuza* — The memoirs of a Japanese mobster. This book offers a first-hand account of life in the Yakuza, the notorious criminal organization.

- Tyler, Royall, editor, *Japanese Tales* — Originally published as part of the Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore library, this book contains 220 stories of gods, demons and fools from five centuries of Japanese literature.

MOVIES

- *Mishima* (1985) — Paul Schrader's often delirious biopic about the author Yukio Mishima. The film's Philip Glass score is superior and stirring.

- *Mr. Baseball* (1992) — An unlikely recommendation for World of Darkness reference, this movie nevertheless illuminates the experiences of Westerners confronting Japanese xenophobia.

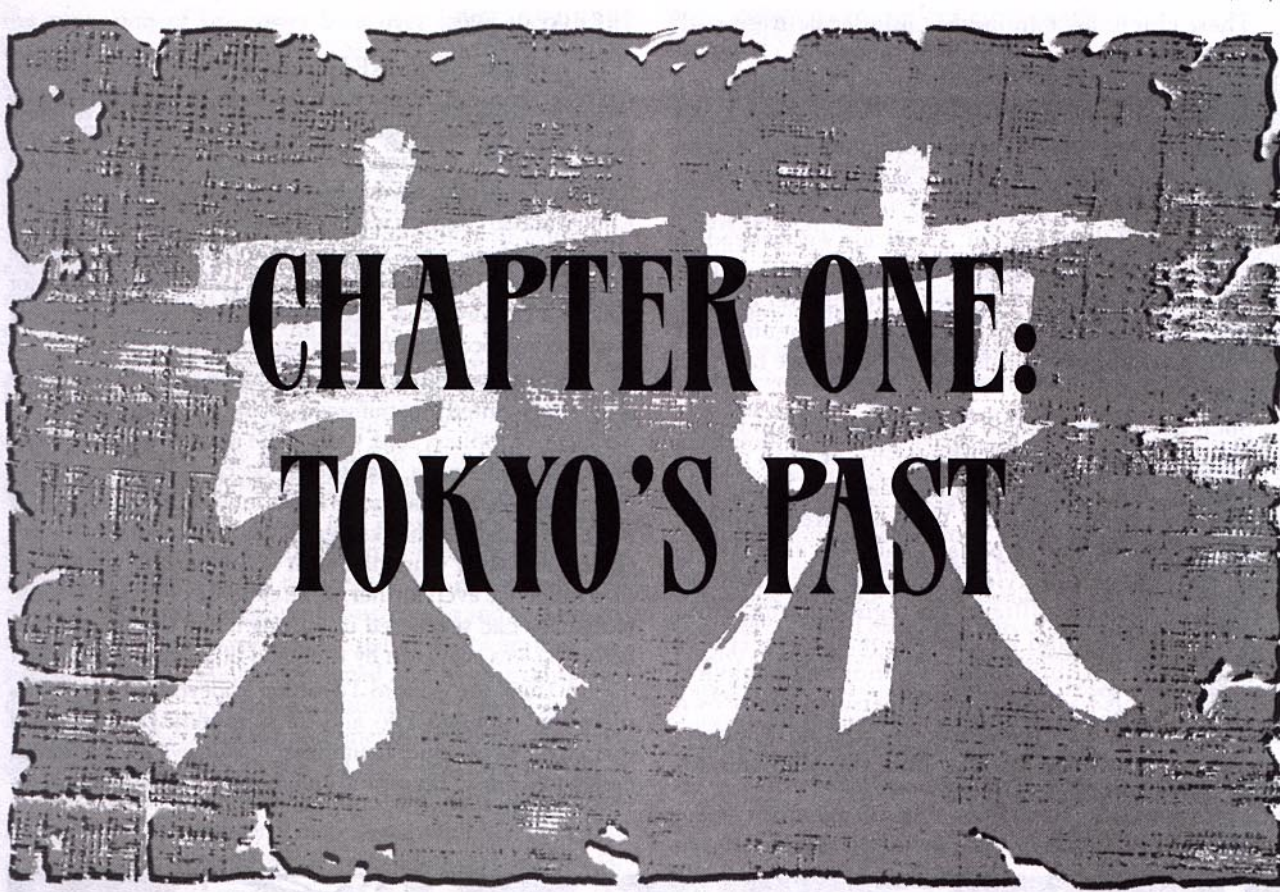
- *Pillow Book* (1997) Misanthropy and proximate eroticism, with body calligraphy, from director Peter Greenaway.

- *Ran* (1985); *Seven Samurai* (1954) — A pair of Akira Kurosawa films that outstandingly depict samurai and their culture.

- *Stray Dog* (1949) — A Kurosawa *policier* in which a Tokyo cop loses his gun to a criminal, then seeks to retrieve it.







CHAPTER ONE: TOKYO'S PAST

CIVILIZATION'S DAWN

THE TEMPLE ERA

Archeological findings on the Kanto Plain suggest that the area marked off by present-day Tokyo was inhabited by hunter-gatherer populations at least as far back as 2000 B.C.E. Remains of shell mounds (ancient burial sites) contain the first primitive records of these lost cultures; other digs have unearthed remnants of the Yayoi culture, a civilization that endured between approximately 300 B.C.E. and 300 C.E. Supernaturals flourished among these early peoples, some by posing as demigods and others through more and less subtle existences.

In 628 C.E., two fishermen brothers trawling the Sumida River netted a small statuette to the Buddhist goddess Kannon. They presented the figurine to their lord, the nobleman Haji no Nakamoto, who kept it in his home for personal worship. Two decades later, worshipers constructed a temple in honor of Kannon, and a copy of the statuette was placed in the central position of the shrine (the original piece remaining hidden). This temple, known as Sensoji, or the Asakusa

Kannon Temple, was the first religious shrine erected in what would later become Tokyo. Many scholars consider it to be the first of the city's permanent buildings, and it survives to the present day.

In 646 C.E., a new regional administrative system was put in place in an effort to halt sporadic warring among the different clans of ancient Japan. This new system defined Musashi Province, which encompassed the site of modern Tokyo. The unifying effort led to the construction of other temples over the next few centuries. In 733 C.E., the Jindaiji Temple was established in Chofu City, a smaller part of Tokyo, and was followed by the Kokubunji Temple, which was the first provincial temple under the new arrangements.

STIRRINGS

Chieftains established themselves among the population of the region and divided the land into their own personal domains during the next few centuries. These sections of territory, called *shoen* by the chieftains (after the name given to land parcels donated by the emperor to high Imperial officials), sat on high promontories in the region and were heavily fortified as a matter of course.

These chieftains were notoriously recalcitrant with regard to the central authority of the emperor. Their first rebellion occurred in 939 C.E. under the leadership of a warrior named Taira no Masakado. This warrior broke away from the emperor's court and attempted to found an autonomous state on the Kanto Plain. During a battle against an expeditionary force that was sent by the emperor to quell the rebellion, Masakado was beheaded. It is said that his head, once separated from his shoulders, flew into the air and landed in what would later become central Edo, the old name for Tokyo. A monument known as the *kubizuka* stands at the spot where his head supposedly landed.

Such object lessons did not dampen the independent spirit of many regional chieftains, or even that of members of the emperor's inner circle. During the Kamakura Dynasty, Shogun Yoritomo freed himself from the aegis of the Imperial Court because he regarded the courtier lifestyle as decadent and frivolous. He set up an austere, military-like regime on the Kanto Plain in 1192 C.E., and he based it on the precepts of the traditional warriors' codes of honor and behavior. One of his vassals was Edo Shiro Shigetatsu, whose own installation is said to have been located on a mound close to the sea. Some say that Edo, the old name for Tokyo, came from this person.

THE RISE OF EDO

The region known as Edo remained inconspicuous for the next few centuries. It rose to prominence in the 15th century under the Ashikaga shogunate. In 1457, the warrior leader Ota Dokan chose a location near the little village to build a fortification, which sat overlooking what is now Tokyo Bay. Known as Edo Castle, it was not especially outstanding among all of the other castles popping up throughout Japan at the time. Dokan died in 1486, and the castle deteriorated for almost a century, as a succession of eminently forgettable warlords and occupation forces captured the edifice.

Portuguese traders arriving in Japan in 1543 found the island fragmented into numerous feudal baronies, each led by a *daimyo*, or military lord. One of the most powerful of these lords, Oda Nobunaga, had already become strong enough to depose the Ashikaga shogun and murder a contingent of powerful Buddhist monks near Kyoto. He courted the foreigners and their Christian faith in an effort to expand his own influence even further at the expense of Buddhist lords. Nobunaga had succeeded in uniting much of central Japan before he was cut down by the hand of an assassin in 1581.

In 1590, the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Nobunaga's successor, captured Edo and its surroundings and turned them over to his chief lieutenant, Tokugawa Ieyasu. Ieyasu designated Edo as his capital city, using it as headquarters for



the expansion of his power base over larger sections of territory throughout Japan. In October of 1600, Ieyasu led over 100,000 troops to victory at the Battle of Sekigahara, which is considered to be the seminal battle in Japanese history between the *daimyo* from western Japan (led by Hideyoshi's heir), and those from the eastern part of the island (led by Ieyasu). Ieyasu soon proclaimed himself Shogun and quickly consolidated his power and spoils with Edo as the centerpiece. Edo Castle was rebuilt and generously expanded, and the once-quiet fishing village soon became the largest and most powerful city in the country.

Ieyasu's triumph had not gone unforeseen. During the half-decade immediately preceding the Battle of Sekigahara, Bone Flower Kuei-jin found more and more signs pointing to Tokugawa victory. The *uji*, abiding by their advice, moved closer to Ieyasu and offered support and alliance.

The *daimyo* who joined the Tokugawa cause before Sekigahara earned the classification of *fudai*, "inside." They included disproportionate numbers of Yin-influenced Kuei-jin who insinuated themselves close to power and contributed to the calculating and rationalistic nature of Tokugawa governance. As the shogunate weakened and Kuei-jin in power came to take their position for granted, the Devil-Tigers and Thrashing Dragons gained prominence by seizing for themselves what had not been granted them or their ancestors.

To cement his newly acquired authority, Ieyasu initiated an informal policy, *sankin kotai*, which required all territorial lords to reside in Edo every other year or half-year. It was an arduous experience for the *daimyo*. Wives and children dwelled permanently within the Edo city walls in residential estates, while their lords traveled frequently from Edo to their respective holdings throughout the year, taking long processions of retainers, vassals and servants in tow along the shogunate-controlled highways. The cost was nearly prohibitive, usually claiming almost 80 percent of a *daimyo*'s income. Nevertheless, the policy remained in force until 1862 and controlled over more than 260 *daimyo* under the shogunate's umbrella.

In real terms, *sankin kotai* meant a *daimyo* left his family as hostages in the Imperial city. Also, the travel enforced by the policy led to a massive boom in the development of roads and canals. Population centers sprang up to provide services to the entourages. Within decades, *sankin kotai* transformed the face of Japan, though its primary goal was simply to keep potentially rebellious *daimyo* spending money on things other than private armies.

Sankin kotai struck the hengeyokai hard; much wilderness fell to encroaching civilization. Breeds dependent on open ranges lost population very rapidly. The Hakken shrank numerically but made better use of the rapidly changing human environment. They secured positions of influence among the *tozama*, who were the "outside" *daimyo* who supported the Tokugawa later, or not at all. The Kitsune and Tengu carried on as always by exploiting and enjoying human folly.

EDO UNDER THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE

Edo underwent a remarkable physical transformation during the Tokugawa shogunate: Ieyasu initiated a massive rebuilding of the city and its environs, and he bolstered the castle's defenses through a series of concentric moats that spread outward from Edo Castle itself. Ieyasu also effectively rezoned the entire social geography of the city by delineating specific sections of the city for residence by certain social classes. The shogun and his family resided in the innermost circle, surrounded by the fortifications of important *daimyo*.

In order to bring the common folk in line with his plan, Ieyasu leveled Kanda Mountain and filled in the marshes near Tokyo Bay. The shogun employed massive numbers of construction workers, laborers and suppliers of consumer goods in the process, which set in motion two mainstays of modern Tokyo urban life: a massive population influx and a bustling commercial network. Increasing numbers of merchants and artisans made their homes in the *shitamachi*, low, man-made flatlands at the mouth of the Sumida River, which flows into Tokyo Bay. Foreshadowing the population density of the present day, the *shitamachi* was an extremely cramped area that comprised a myriad of separate residential, commercial and amusement quarters connected by a series of heavily trafficked waterways and canals.

To the Tokugawa administration, only two kinds of people mattered: peasants and samurai. Peasants paid taxes and grew food to support samurai. City-dwellers didn't count. The shoguns occasionally regulated how citizens dressed and behaved, but rulers made no serious effort to control or extract support from the emerging urban environment. Several kinds of *shen* prospered in this administrative blind spot. The White Chrysanthemum Court of wolf-changers dates from this era. Its werewolves fought encroachment by the Kumo Goblin Spiders under the cover of night, sometimes alone, sometimes alongside the urban Genji vampires. Wise Edoites knew to ignore the inhuman noises that sometimes arose outside their windows.

THE FLOWERS OF EDO

The overabundance of wooden materials used in the reconstruction and expansion of Edo left many parts of the city susceptible to fires, particularly the poor sections. Fires became the bane of the city under the Tokugawa shogunate; records indicate that as many as 1,800 fires occurred in the city during the (roughly) 250 years of shogunate rule.

The fires came at the beginning of the Tokugawa period. They happened mostly in and around the *shitamachi*. A combination of dense wooden buildings, straw roofs and a nonexistent municipal firefighting force led to some of the worst conflagrations in the city's history. In 1657, the Meireki Fire swept through the entire city in two days. Even Edo Castle burned. The fire claimed over 100,000 lives. The next year, a permanent firefighting force went to work protecting

the city, and new regulations restricted those specific construction and zoning practices that had allowed the fire to spread to such a destructive degree.

But such measures did not eradicate the problem. So common were fires in Edo that an entire vernacular evolved around their occurrences. The most common phrase was *Edo no hana*: the "flowers of Edo." Another word meaning "flower-fires," *hanabi*, exists in modern Japanese parlance as the term for fireworks.

THE SHOGUNS AFTER IEYASU

The descendants of Ieyasu wavered in temperament from authoritarian to eccentric. Tokugawa Iemitsu, the grandson of Ieyasu and third shogun, was an exceptionally harsh ruler who demanded that absurd amounts of respect and deference be shown by his subjects (he also exhibited a salacious desire for personal pleasure from women). It was Iemitsu who codified the heretofore unwritten principle of *sankin kotai*. He also established a brace of "inspectors general" called *ometsuke*, whose duty was to conduct surveillance over potentially troublesome groups within the city, such as certain less-than-totally-deferential *daimyo*, small enclaves of Christians and other subordinate groups.

Tsunayoshi, the fifth shogun, was the polar opposite of Iemitsu. Having presided over a revolution in culture and the arts, Tsunayoshi is widely viewed as a weak and uninspiring ruler. His legacy to the history of Tokyo is the promulgation of a series of bizarre codes called "Edicts on Compassion for Living Things." These statutes were basically animal-rights laws that banned activities such as falconry and all forms of hunting. Tsunayoshi soon expanded these laws into the realm of the near-crackpot. Reflecting their author's obsession with dogs and the welfare of these animals, the edicts made it a capital offense to harm any dog and insisted that canines be allowed free range within the city, be fed by the citizenry, and even be addressed in honorific terms. Abolished in 1709, these laws made Tsunayoshi known as *inu kubo* — the "dog shogun."

THE 18TH CENTURY

Edo had expanded to 1500 districts by the start of the 18th century. Country folk swarmed into Edo at a constant pace to swap their hoes for work as artisans, carpenters and litter-bearers. Trade grew at a rapid pace, which allowed the sons of peasants in and around Edo to apprentice themselves to firms within the city. The appearance of associations (rough guilds) helped to organize these apprenticeship systems, and many firms expanded to other parts of the city and to neighboring villages. The rich invested in conspicuous consumption such as houses, silk, porcelain and other baubles. Theaters, gambling houses, restaurants and franchise stores prospered.

CHRISTIANS AND OTHER ALIENS

In contrast with earlier times, serious interest in religious matters waned during most of the Tokugawa era. The spiritual fire kindled by the arrival of Buddhism in the seventh century died down, and that faith became one more element in the thick religious stew that is Japanese popular belief. There was never a shortage of devout monks and inspired preachers, but fewer and fewer of their neighbors paid them close attention.

Members of the Cabal of Pure Thought, listening to 17th-century tales of the wonders of Japan, saw opportunity there. Disguised as Dutch sailors, 14 Gabrielites sailed to Japan, where these mages spread out into the countryside and assumed the appearance of natives via Life magick. For 200 years, they and their genuine native disciples endeavored to preach the Christian way.

The project appears to have produced few results, though reformers including Honda Toshiaki, author of the 1798 book *A Secret Plan of Government*, may have been influenced by the Gabrielites. Honda argued that Christianity should be adopted or imposed as part of a program of modernization. Also, monotheism of various sorts sometimes enjoyed faddish popularity with various *daimyo*, but nothing came of it in the end.

Concerned by the decline in popular religious sentiment, Tokugawa Ieyasu and his heirs made several attempts to push Confucianism as a new state religion. It is eminently suitable for the purpose, as the religion emphasizes the necessity of everyone's remaining in his proper place within the hierarchy, and it teaches the virtues of submission and obedience. Fujiwara Seika and Hayashi Razan established a school of Confucianism at Edo and provided advice to Ieyasu. In 1670, the definitive official history of Japan, *The Comprehensive Mirror of Our Country*, emerged from this university. Naturally, Fujiwara and his disciples called little attention to troublesome Confucian points such as the concept of righteous rebellion.

While no great popular adherence emerged, the effort was vitally important to Kuei-jin. Taking advantage of Tokugawa interest in receiving Chinese scholars, members of the Jade and Blood Courts poured into Japan. From about 1610 until around 1710, Chinese Kuei-jin fought a bloody war against vampires that they saw as disloyal separatists. Finally, sheer weight of numbers turned the tide, and the Quincunx's last hope of retaining Japan ended in failure.

THE 47 RONIN

The beginning of the 18th century brought with it one of the most famous events in the city's history. The 47 Ronin Incident, as it is known, has been immortalized in plays, books, artwork and film. It was one of the defining moments in the history of shogunate and samurai culture for all Japan.

In 1701, the *daimyo* of the Ako province, Asano Naganori, traveled with his entourage to pay respects to the emperor in Edo Castle, as required under the principle of *sankin kotai*. However, while in the castle, Asano was insulted by one of the shogunate's officials, a man named Kira, whose dandyish demeanor was not very popular at court. At first Asano held his tongue and said nothing, waiting for Kira to desist. But as the attendant grew more and more insulting, Asano finally drew his sword and struck Kira lightly about the head with the flat of his blade.

Yet, Asano had committed a capital offense by drawing his sword within the walls of Edo Castle. He was immediately arrested, stripped of his noble rank and executed by being forced to commit ritual suicide. His samurai, of whom there were several hundred, dispersed, becoming *ronin* or masterless.

Forty-seven of these *ronin*, however, were determined to avenge their lord's death. Keeping their plans secret for nearly two years, 46 of the 47 *ronin* attacked the home of Kira on a snowswept night in December of 1702. They infiltrated the house, made straight for the bedroom and took Kira's head. The *ronin* brought the head to Asano's tomb in the Sengakuji Temple and presented it as an offering of their fealty to their dead lord. They immediately handed themselves over to the authorities, who were extremely reluctant to condemn the *ronin* to death at such an outpouring of loyalty.

But the law stood. In March 1703, the 46 samurai who'd participated were forced to commit suicide as their master had done. All did so without hesitation. Their bodies were buried with their *daimyo* and his wife at the temple at Sengakuji. In Japanese history and culture, the actions of all 47 *ronin* have become legend, and the tombs at Sengakuji are today a place of pilgrimage. A national holiday commemorates the courage and loyalty displayed by these warriors.

Few ever wonder about the fate of the 47th *ronin*, the one who didn't take his own life alongside his comrades. The Jade Empire's Restless Dead, of course, know the truth about him and can be convinced to share their knowledge.

THE CENTURY OF SCREAMING EARTH

Natural disasters became commonplace in Edo during the 1700s. An earthquake ravaged the city in 1703, which brought on the outbreak of fires and killed over 30,000 people. Floods followed in 1704, and on their heels came epidemics of measles, cholera and plague.

On December 16, 1707, Mount Fuji erupted. It continued to do so until January 1708, and although Edo was distant enough from the mountain not to become a new Pompeii,



the resulting smoke and ash blackened the sky and rained white soot on the city for weeks. The earth began to shake again, and many feared another quake was imminent. Edo shut down, as people expected their lives to end at any moment. Many blamed Shogun Tsunayoshi's poor administration and bankrupt treasury for the disasters, which certainly appeared to be signs of the gods' displeasure with Edo's ruler. When Tsunayoshi was stabbed to death by the wife of his prime minister in 1709, the people (who were told the shogun had died of smallpox) welcomed his inauspicious demise with a feeling of relief. But the gods, it seemed, were not so easily appeased: A major fire in the Nihonbashi section of the city destroyed over 140,000 homes in 1721.

SHOGUN YOSHIMUNE

Yoshimune, the eighth shogun of the Tokugawa clan, ascended to the position in 1716. He was determined to right the financial mistakes made by his predecessors, and in doing so, he passed several striking reforms. In one of his most renowned deeds, Yoshimune ordered the 50 most beautiful women in the shogunate court to appear before him, and then he relieved the assembled courtesans of their duties. The shogun observed that since they could find husbands easily, the shogunate no longer needed to support them.

In addition to courtesan "downsizing," Yoshimune enacted other sweeping reforms during his reign. He promoted martial arts and reintroduced falconry among the samurai as means of keeping his warriors in top physical shape. Yoshimune introduced a written judicial code, an astronomical observatory, a botanical garden and a charity hospital to Edo. Outside Edo Castle, he also added a system of suggestion boxes, called *meyasubako*, in which citizens could leave comments or complaints about the running of the city. Yoshimune is said to have carried the only key to these boxes and to have sat up into the wee hours of the morning poring over their contents.



THE TOMORROW GARDEN

By the late 1700s, it was clear to many that the Tokugawa were in trouble. Internal disorder and dissent grew steadily. Across Japan, visionaries saw both need and opportunity for fresh approaches to the problems of the day.

The Meiji Restoration's intellectual roots lie in this era. Meanwhile, *shen* performed social experiments. Several *kamuii* joined together to form the Dreaming Futures League and embarked on the grandest of these schemes: the *Asita Niwa*, or Tomorrow Garden.

In one of the countless valleys of the Kanto Mountains, the League built customized realms of both Yin and Yang Dreaming. The *kamuii* used powerful artifacts and delved into realms normally left to the Kithain, among whom there remains speculation about how exactly the Easterners managed to reach so far into the Dreaming. (Western changelings who know the garden's origins and who encounter its creators always ask about this mystery. None has yet received a firm answer.) Over decades, the League carefully gathered dreams from Japanese of every class and district and pooled them into a collective image of Japan-as-imagined. In the 1820s, the experimenters took their model and copied it, again and again, through unused sections of Dreaming or places whose inhabitants the League drove out.

Then the actual project began. Each copy received special "pruning" to favor outcomes and to suppress others. With appropriate pushes, the garden made from echoes of Japan became a garden filled with visions of Japanese futures — what might happen if this or that trend continued or ceased.

To the League's horror and surprise, *none* of the futures it cultivated proved to be acceptable — from the one in which all Middle Kingdom supernaturals were displaced by their Western counterparts, to the one in which Japan ruled Asia with steely, Technocratic precision. Not one showed any promise of the reconciliation of Heaven and Earth that the fae sought. The League believed it could change the *details* of collapse and dissolution by enacting in the material world the alterations it had made in dreams. Nothing they could think to try would forestall the Sixth Age, however.

The League dissolved in 1867. It failed utterly to find a course of action that its members thought worth taking. Seeing no hope, the *kamuii* architects of the *Asita Niwa* withdrew forever into the Yin and Yang Worlds to seek in realms of imagination what material existence could no longer provide them. The Tomorrow Garden fell into neglect.

The failure of the League's experiment cast a permanent pall on *kamuii* efforts at divining the future. Partly from fear of what they might learn and partly from concern that the very act of divination clouds the truths they seek, no *hsien* have since embarked on any venture of a similar scale.

THE OPENING OF JAPAN

By the 19th century, Edo had undergone a watershed maturation; it had grown from a tiny fishing outpost at the mouth of the Sumida River to the largest and most intricate city in Japan. Despite this growth, Japan itself had been closed off to foreigners since 1639. There were a few representatives of Western nations on the island — some Portuguese, and later, several Dutch and English merchant companies moved through the cramped commercial areas of the *shitamachi*, and there were outposts of Christian missionaries. Japan locked itself in a state of self-isolation, while Edo grew to an impressive size on the island.

It was all to change in an instant.

On July 8, 1853, the inhabitants of the *shitamachi* areas of Uraga port in Edo Bay saw the appearance of a fleet of *kuroi fune*, or “black ships” — the general phrase used in Edo for foreign vessels. It was obviously not the first time such ships had been spotted. Earlier in the century, the people had seen the arrival of such lone traders as the *Mercator* in 1845, the *Columbus* in 1846 and the *Preble* in 1849.

These ships, however, differed from their predecessors: two massive steam frigates and two fighting corvettes from the United States Navy. Their sizes, shapes and unmistakable power filled the residents of Uraga with anxiety. The ships seemed almost demonic, cutting through the waters of Edo Bay and belching smoke like the Mount Fuji of old.

After the ships dropped anchor, a hailing boat set out toward shore. There, an interpreter announced that Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry of the U.S. Navy had come bearing a letter to the shogun on behalf of the President of the United States. The announcement threw the entire country into a state of heightened anticipation. News of the black ships' arrival was quickly exaggerated, until the figures of 100 ships and over 100,000 men were soon circulated. The shogun ordered all of his *daimyo* to prepare for war before he made any definite decision about the fate of the Americans. Meanwhile, people from villages all along the coast sped to the hills overlooking Edo Bay in the hopes of glimpsing the great black ships that sat in the harbor.

The shogun agreed to receive Commodore Perry, who came ashore on July 14 with an escort of 300 armed sailors. He delivered a letter from President Millard Fillmore and said that he would return in a year's time for a reply. With that, Perry returned to his ships, which saluted Japan off the coast and sailed away.

The contents of the letter caused great consternation among the ministers in Edo. Perry was sent to arrange a treaty that would open trade between Japan and the U.S., provide coal purchases for American warships and guarantee the safety of any shipwrecked American sailors within Japan. Opinion was deeply divided among the ministers, but one man named Katsu Kaishu pointed out that men who could build such great ships could not possibly be barbarians, and as the Americans wished to deal on a level footing with Japan, Japan had to reciprocate.



"REVERE THE EMPEROR"

Not everyone agreed with Katsu. The *ronin* wanted war with the Americans, mostly as a ploy to increase their own social positions. Merchants wondered how trade would affect the prices of their goods, and the women of Edo gossiped about the appearance of Perry and his men in the streets. The younger generation of Imperial advisors at the emperor's court liked the potential of normal international relations with other countries, as opposed to the insignificant number of foreign mercantile representatives living within their borders.

Other countries did not wait for the reply. English, Russian and French ships began to dock along the coast and in Edo Bay with increasing regularity — all wanting to conclude their own treaties with the island nation. It did not sit well with many Japanese, who proposed steadfast isolation under the rallying cry *Sonno joi* — Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians.

On February 11, 1854, Commodore Perry returned with nine *kuroi fune* and nearly 2,000 men. He received an affirmative answer and concluded a provisional agreement called "the Kanagawa Treaty," which initiated relations between the United State and Japan. Other similar arrangements were soon made with England, Russia and Holland. At this time, Japan also adopted its modern-day national flag — the red sun disc on a white background.

Almost as a signal of the gods' displeasure, earthquakes again rocked Edo in 1854 and 1855, igniting fires and causing over 100,000 deaths. But the provisional treaty was not to be derailed. On July 29, 1858, the final draft of the treaty between the United States and Japan was officially signed and sealed. The port cities of Kanagawa, Nagasaki and Hakodate were officially "opened" to foreign trade. Foreigners were permitted to live in Edo and move freely in and around the open port cities.

"EXPULSION OF THE BARBARIANS"

Many people — including the emperor in Kyoto, who had not signed any of these treaties — convinced themselves that the shogunate had collectively lost its mind. In response, the shogun initiated a crackdown against dissenters, during which it imprisoned dozens of its critics among the high-level samurai and nobles.

Servants of the Yama Kings recognized a situation pregnant with disaster. Their activities came perilously close to plunging Japan into nationwide chaos in the period immediately after the signing of the Kanagawa Treaty. Factions hostile to the shogunate and its dealings with the West attacked the treaties politically and the Westerners physically — Russian, British and Dutch officials were murdered in the late 1850s and into the 1860s. As the tide of violence rose, the Yama Kings sent an unprecedented number of their minions to Rise. The Demon Lords also provided extra sources of Chi for their servants among the Kuei-jin and fresh sources of outrage for the Goblin Spiders and other *hengeyokai*.

THE FIRST TECHNOCRATIC BLOW

Unbeknownst to anyone in Commodore Perry's mission, the Americans' strive to force down Japanese trade barriers succeeded better than it would have in calmer times. The court in Edo was in crisis: Tokugawa Iehoshi was deathly ill with a disease that resisted all of his physician's efforts. The disease came on quite suddenly, not long after Dutch traders brought word of the American fleet that had spent time in the Ryukyu Islands before coming to Honshu. Iehoshi died before Perry returned with the final American terms.

The emperor fell victim to Totori Wakamura, who was a Japanese engineer recruited by the New World Order a decade before Perry arrived. Totori arranged a subtle two-step attack on the shogun. First, he poisoned Iehoshi by introducing a toxic concoction into a specimen of well water. His contacts in the West provided him with a variety of possible tools; Totori settled on this one when the opportunity arose to join in a festival of honoring the shogun with products of the crafts. Over the course of two years, the shogun began wasting away, and it took extensive magical treatment to contain the corruption.

Secondly, Totori embarked on rituals to reinforce the Gauntlet and strengthen material reality in the Shogun's quarters. When he completed them, the spirits who'd effected Iehoshi's protection could no longer reach him, so he sickened and died. Totori did not survive much longer; palace guards caught him in the basement of the palace the following day as he was trying to remove the traces of his work. He resisted all efforts at interrogation and perished by dismemberment.

Shen try to claim Totori as their own, when *shen* who know the secret history of Japan gather for debate. Most *shen* who know about Totori believe he was a Devil-Tiger Kuei-jin striking a big blow. Minority theories cover the gamut of possibilities: Genji deciding that the time was ripe for innovation; unaffiliated follower of the Thousand Whispers Dharma hoping to get Japan, as well as himself, playing new roles; a Risen Jade Empire wraith softening Skinlands Japan's resistance; and even the truth.

Nevertheless, ports continued to open around the island as dictated by the treaties, and tensions mounted. Assassination attempts increased; the prime minister of the shogunate was murdered in March of 1860. Foreign delegations were

targets as well. In July of 1861, a band of 14 *ronin* viciously assaulted British representatives at the Tozenji Temple. The atmosphere grew more contentious throughout the remainder of that year. Foreign groups elected to have sailors from their own navies guard their residences. During the next six years, life in Edo became nightmarish for outsiders.

Relations between the emperor and the shogun worsened, too. The doctrine of *sankin kotai* was abolished by 1864, and the *daimyo* scattered from their homes within the city. Skirmishes increased between Imperial and shogunate forces. On November 20, 1867, Shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu abdicated his post and handed over control of Edo to the emperor.

SHEN AND THE SHOGUNATE'S END

Kuei-jin played major roles in the crisis that culminated with the shogun's renunciation of power and the restoration of political rights to the emperor. But they no more understood what they were unleashing than mortals around them did.

The Bishamon thought in terms of returning to the glories of the past. Even though the Choshu clan had met violent defeat in its effort to resume excluding Westerners from major ports, the Bishamon expected that the virtuous might of a new emperor would enable him to do so. They further expected that he would curtail modernization and restore the social fabric damaged by Tokugawa neglect. Bishamon generals, like the cousins Izawa Kosai and Izawa Nakamura, were willing to learn modern, Western-based weaponry only because they expected to be able to set the cannon and rifles aside someday.

The Genji, on the other hand, saw the Restoration in terms of boldly advancing to a new era. They anticipated a retreat from Japanese isolationism and particularism and an embrace of fresh possibilities. They looked forward to the vigor of ideas stemming from contact with Western supernaturals. Kuei-jin *daimyo* Ezo Hideyoshi and his retinue, who had been secretly importing Western tools for decades, joined with reactionary anti-shogunate forces in the expectation that once the shogun was deposed, the Genji could drive the Bishamon back into their respective lairs as well.

Neither side got what it wanted. Recriminations swirl into the modern day, and since all of the mortal participants are dead (though a few have drawn the Second Breath), the terms of argument focus on the roles of various *shen* in the events of those days. There is no sign that the debaters will ever reach agreement.

Neither *uji* seems to recognize that Mutsuhito, who reigned under the name Meiji, was 15 when he took the throne — matured by circumstances, but still of an age to be more susceptible to *hsien* influence than most adults (or than he would be in later life). The *kamuii* smile when a lone inquisitive Kuei-jin asks them whether they placed ideas in Mutsuhito's head, but they do not reply.

RESTORATION

It took time for *shen* not yet ready to enter the Sixth Age to suppress the Yama Kings' servants, who mounted resurgent attacks well into the 20th century. Further, the struggle demoralized the opponents of chaos. The mood among *shen* shifted from the vague recognition that someday a new, darker age would dawn to the realization that it could strike at any moment.

While supernatural strife continued, Edo officially opened itself to foreigners as a port city on January 1, 1868. The initial reaction was peaceful, but a large percentage of the native populace wished for the reinstatement of the shogunate, rather than of Imperial rule. The emperor received a proclamation demanding that the shogun be reinstated as the leader of Edo; if not, the people themselves would form an army to reinstate him.

In the end, the volunteer militia never materialized. The emperor's armies entered Edo without incident on April 24, 1868. Soon after, however, the armies encountered a band of *shogitai* — old samurai still loyal to the former shogun. After negotiations fell apart, the Imperial army confronted the *shogitai* forces in battle at Ueno Hill on July 4, 1868. Despite better artillery on the side of the Imperial forces, it took a whole day to overcome the holdout samurai. The next day, Edo ceased to exist.

TOKYO

Edo's population dropped by more than two-thirds after its takeover by the emperor, a reduction from 2 million to 600,000. Land prices plummeted; an acre sold for 25 yen. Grass grew in the deserted streets; food shortages were common, especially among the foreign delegations.

Meanwhile, an ambitious member of the Satsuma clan, Okubo Toshimichi, suggested that the emperor consider moving the capital from Kyoto. At first, Toshimichi put forth Osaka as a potentiality, but it was decided, in order to keep traditional authority in the city of the shoguns, to move the Imperial seat to Edo. On September 8, 1868, the Meiji era officially began in Edo. Six days later, the city was renamed Tokyo, the "Eastern Capital."

Deeper changes immediately followed, as Imperial rule ushered in a host of modernities. The first telegraph line in Japan connected Tokyo and Yokohama in 1870. In 1871, the postal service started to handle foreign mail and, in 1872, the first rail line between Tokyo and Yokohama began servicing the two cities. Primary schools were established. National newspapers appeared. Vaccinations became commonplace, as did advances in heating and power throughout the city's infrastructure. Roads were widened, and the first brick buildings sprouted up within the new capital.

The marketplace of ideas found its way to Tokyo as well. The *genroin*, a type of senate, was formed in 1875. Tokyo University opened its doors in 1877, and 1881 saw the appearance of the *jiyuto*, or "liberal party," which was the first official Japanese political party. On February 11, 1889, the Meiji Constitution became the law of the land. It modeled itself closely on the social and political customs of Western



countries, creating a new hierarchy of nobility (prince, marquis, count, viscount and baron) and a bicameral legislature (House of Peers and House of Representatives).

Cultural fads also swept Tokyo, reflecting the willingness of the Imperial regime to tolerate foreign influences. Mustaches on men appeared, as did clocks, sports clubs and horse racing at Ueno Park. Foreign restaurants were built, as was a Russian Orthodox church. Steamboats replaced wooden paddle boats on the city waterways, and many of the wooden bridges were upgraded to metal.

THE MODERN CENTURY

The modernization started in Tokyo spread to the rest of Japan, and the onset of the 20th century saw the tiny island nation defeat the European behemoth Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. But postwar life brought typical postwar letdowns, as unemployment rose and the economy sagged. In the summer of 1912, Emperor Meiji died. A year later, the last shogun, Keiki, passed away as well. The symbols of a former era had faded away in the capital city.

THE SHELTER OF THE SEA

The extremely bitter hatred Same-Bito feel toward Kuei-jin dates back to mid-19th century. In the beginning of the 1800s, American whalers started making significant reductions in the Pacific whale population, suddenly altering the weresharks' food supply for the worse.

The Bishamon made compacts with the Same-Bito. The extremely harsh penalties often meted out to shipwrecked American sailors are, in part, the consequence of those compacts. While the Same-Bito feasted on the crews of such ships as they sank, the Kuei-jin made sure that survivors would be unlikely to want to return. But the very harshness of these measures provoked American response, before and after Commodore Perry's advent, in the form of treaties that imposed penalties for continuing such abuse. The Bishamon could no longer discharge their part of the compacts without risking punishment both from mortals and from angry superiors. Then the Japanese fishing industry began to expand. Commercial whaling by Japanese fishermen opened up fresh vistas for the Kuei-jin. Gradually, the Bishamon no longer worried about upholding their compacts — not when they could indulge all of the various Dharmas by disregarding the Same-Bito.

The weresharks learn slowly, but they forget even more slowly. It will be a long, long time before they care to trust the Kuei-jin again, and in the meantime, a Kuei-jin traveling by sea in less than perfect safety risks the most violent of ends.

THE DEATH OF THE DRAGON NESTS

Kuei-jin tend to think in the long-term, once they get more than a generation past the Second Breath. The elders of the great *uji* construed the Meiji Restoration as one move in a cycle that would take decades or more to complete. Thus, they could allow some undesirable elements into the mix of strengthened Imperial culture, confident that there would be time to weed and prune.

The pace of developments caught elder Kuei-jin off-guard. They never developed a real sense of how quickly things moved in the Western world. Nor did they grasp how deeply Western ideas could take root in the minds of Japanese mortals who perceived the old order as fundamentally failing.

Manipulation by these elders therefore bore fruit not in a glorious new era of Kuei-jin leadership but in supernatural devastation. All *shen* suffered — even ones who generally profited from modernity — as dragon nests fell to unheeding machinery. Schemes laid by all the Ten Thousand Things fell by the wayside (literally, as roads and railroads spread across their territories).

The most prominent Kuei-jin suffered the most serious disgrace. In the decades since the Restoration, alliances between Kuei-jin and other *shen* fared better when one of the Kuei-jin acknowledged responsibility for having unleashed industrialization.

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

At 12:01 P.M. on September 1, 1923, a series of subterranean tremors tore through the city. A great number of wooden dwellings in the center of the capital collapsed, but the real damage was done throughout the afternoon. Temblors shook even brick buildings to pieces, including a 12-story Asakusa Park amusement tower that was built in 1890.

As it was the lunch hour, people fled to parks and gardens in hopes of finding solid shelter in bamboo groves (whose strong roots made them exceptionally solid). But the situation was worsened, as has happened so often in the city's history, by fire. Numerous cooking stoves overturned throughout the city because of the quake, sparking hundreds of fires across the downtown area. Most neighborhoods burned to ashes. Smoke roiled along main boulevards and through alleyways. A park under construction soon filled with over 35,000 newly homeless people, many of them clutching mattresses and clothes snatched quickly from their destroyed homes.

They survived the earthquake but did not escape the fires. Spread by the wind, sparks ignited the numerous bundles of cloth in the park. By 4 o'clock, the entire area was a sea of flames. All of the houses ringing the site were ablaze. Some people escaped by flinging themselves into the city canals, but soon the water boiled from the tremendous heat generated. The Great Kanto Earthquake, as it has been

called, claimed more than 142,000 lives and most of the capital city's neighborhoods. It spared no social rank: Princesses Yamashina and Kiroko and the young Prince Moromasa perished in the fiery hell of the park.

Violence surfaced in the wake of the disaster. In the days following the quake, roaming mobs of Japanese killed thousands of Tokyo's Korean and Chinese residents, whom the natives accused of starting the fires and of poisoning the city's wells.

RECONSTRUCTION

The city burned for more than 40 hours. The pressure to rebuild quickly was immense. Common urban wisdom — particularly in the commercial districts — had always held that if a business did not reopen within three days after a great fire, it would not reopen at all.

With that in mind, reconstruction began almost before the last fires were extinguished. On September 12, almost to reemphasize the determination of the city, the new emperor, Hirohito, issued a royal proclamation that would shape Tokyo's course and image in the modern century: "Tokyo, the capital of the empire, has been looked on by the people as the center of political and economic activities and the fountainhead of the cultural nation. With the unforeseen visit of the catastrophe, the city has entirely lost its prosperous contours but retains, nevertheless, its position as the national capital. The remedial work, therefore, ought not to consist merely in the reparation of the metropolis, but completely to transform the avenues and the streets."

The builders took their divine leader's words seriously. By the end of the month, over 30,000 buildings replaced the ones lost in the disaster. Crews widened main streets, moved over 250,000 houses and constructed three enormous new parks. During the next few years, the massive project led to the completion of the Yamanote Rail Loop in 1925 and of Japan's first subway in 1927. Four years later, Tokyo International Airport opened, swinging wider the doors to the rest of the world. And in 1932, the city proper began to annex a series of adjacent suburbs, villages and townships to form Great Tokyo City.

WAR

Japan became progressively more nationalistic after the accession of Hirohito to the Imperial throne in 1926. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, and the island power officially withdrew from the League of Nations two years later. In 1937, Japan declared war on China and managed to capture Peking and to control much of Asia's eastern seaboard. In 1940, Japan signed a three-part agreement with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, creating the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese *kamikaze* squadrons attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and destroyed much of the United States' Pacific Fleet. Not quite five months later, the

first American air raid hit Tokyo. Thirteen B-25s bombed and strafed the city; they caused 364 casualties and destroyed about 250 buildings. Similar raids continued intermittently for the next 22 months.

On the night of March 9, 1944, however, American forces commenced the first incendiary bombing sorties against Great Tokyo City. Waves of B-25s smothered the night sky. Their plan of attack was calculated to take out a city that had, over its long history, proven to be overly hospitable to fire. That night heavy winds swept in from the north and west and fanned the bombs' fiery results to unbelievable heights. Almost two-fifths of Tokyo went up in flames. The four wards bounded by the Sumida River and the Arakawa Drainage Channel nearly vanished. Between 70,000 and 80,000 people lost their lives that night.

The next wave of bombing came in mid-April and destroyed industries in the northern and western sections. May attacks took out the remainder of the Old City still intact after the March firestorms, as well as the main hall of the Imperial Palace and much of the city's transportation system. All totaled, American air squadrons launched over 4,000 air raids in 1944 and 1945. They sent the citizenry into fevered panic, which encouraged the eating of magic potions — such as breakfasts of rice and pickles, or even goldfish — to keep away the bombs. Outrageous rumors circulated, including one about the existence of a secret

squadron of Japanese planes fueled by pine resin that could fly across the Pacific, bomb all of America, and then fly back. By the time Hirohito broadcast his speech of surrender on August 15, 1945, much of Tokyo had been destroyed and as many people had been killed there as in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

POSTWAR YEARS

American occupation forces stationed themselves in the capital city from the end of the war until 1952. During the early postwar years, Tokyo was quite the black-market town with more than 60,000 less-than-legal stalls in operation. Vice also ran rampant, and previously respectable areas of the city became the haunts of ladies of negotiable affection. American GIs looked the other way while the shadow economy thrived in rubble quarters of the city; they even referred to the black market at Ueno as the "Ueno PX."

In addition to ignoring the black market, American occupation forces actively involved Japan's Yakuza families in the fight against Communism in postwar Japan. The defeat of the country had left its economy in shambles, which American businessmen regarded as the perfect opportunity to step in and make a significant impact on the rebuilding of the country. The biggest threat to these ambitions, the Americans thought, came from the left — in the form of the Japanese Communist Party and similar



THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY

In the 1930s, several slaves of the Yama King Emma-O decided that their master wasn't making sufficient progress toward the end of the world. They took matters into their own hands and commenced plotting with like-minded Spectres that were building influence in the American military.

By the late 1930s, war between Japan and the United States was all but inevitable. The Hasteners of the Age, as these agents of Oblivion dubbed themselves, decided to use the war to their own advantage. They sought to prolong the conflict long enough to waken appetites for destruction on both sides, then end the proceedings with the complete annihilation of the Japanese people. The Hasteners hoped that their scheme would unleash the full fury of the Sixth Age around the world.

The Western Hasteners oversaw the development of American plans for the use of gas weapons in Operation Olympic, which was the projected 1946 invasion of Japan. In 1945, the Chemical Corps estimated that the initial strategic bombing — not including tactical bombing to prepare landing zones or later phases of the invasion — might kill five million Japanese and seriously injure another five million. The Hasteners were pleased.

The Eastern Hasteners, meanwhile, swayed their unwitting servants in the Japanese High Command to prepare an order decreeing that, in the event of an American invasion, the Imperial army was to execute all prisoners of war, all interned enemy civilians and all enemy civilians in territories under Japanese control. Millions more deaths would result. The Hasteners were again pleased.

The atomic bomb and Gorool's subsequent rise spoiled everything. While the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs brought long-lasting contamination to Japanese dragon nests, the millions of deaths that the Hasteners had hoped for shrank to mere hundreds of thousands. Nor did the great storm erupt from the Yomi World with the full fury it might've had after another year of mass slaughter. Gorool's rampage brought the response of the *gaijin* Charon, who was able to nullify the lone Malfear; whereas Charon could've never countered the combined power of the Yama Kings unleashed.

Appalled at the unexpected interference, the Hasteners buried nearly all traces of their operations. Documents pertaining to the American plan lay in archives until uncovered by military historians in the fall of 1997. The Japanese plan leaked out in bits and pieces in the 1980s and '90s. After a few decades of dormancy, the dozen remaining Hasteners gathered following the fall of the Soviet Union to discuss plans for a second attempt. They haven't conceived a master plan yet, but they've weighed many options. A meteor strike, concealed until no effective defense could be mounted? Plague? Nuclear war initiated by some upstart nation on the Asian subcontinent?

There's time yet for such plots to reach fruition, and history favors the Hasteners' cause.

organizations. To combat the rising red tide, American forces turned to the Yakuza, who had been notoriously successful in battling labor unions in Japan in earlier decades. General Charles Willoughby, the head of G-2 (the American intelligence branch in the Pacific theater), gave money and materials to Yakuza gangs to clamp down on these leftist groups.

Among supernaturals, the Genji recovered from the horrible shock of defeat faster than most other Japanese *shen*. They recognized the opportunities for mutual profit in dealing with the Western supernaturals entering the country under the cover of the American occupation.

The Giovanni arrived first, as they were interested in exploring new opportunities for necromancy. A small community of Giovanni maintains a precarious existence on the fringes of the Ginza, where the members feed only at the sufferance of the Genji and steer clear of the Kuei-jin's greater struggles. Felix Levin, onetime pretender to the throne of San Francisco, keeps his followers in line.

Two Brujah cabals sprung up in the Kanda neighborhood. Without the looming might of the Genji, the competing factions would have no doubt gone to war in short order, but they attained an uneasy peace and avoided each other as much as possible due to their identical interests: Rival leaders Paul Banks and Derek Johnson dreamed constantly of each other's flaming death. Each sought simultaneously to assemble a definitive history of the Japanese *shen*. Their quests have dragged on to the modern night. The two vampires still meet with some *shen* under truces arranged by the Genji (who find the pairs' works-in-progress amusing reading).

The black markets in Tokyo had the same effect they'd had in defeated postwar Germany — they provided the crucial spark to restore economic flow within the city and give a much-needed boost to the local economy. By the time the occupation forces left, the government-run program to rebuild the city had already started. Its focus this time (in contrast with the 1923 post-earthquake reconstruction) was to revitalize the economy directly, rather than to restore Tokyo's infrastructure. With untiring native initiative (not to mention, a good amount of money in the form of American loans), the capital's business community began to thrive once again. A boom in Japanese profits coincided with the Korean War and concentrated a large percentage of executives in the rising city. Skyscrapers thrust toward the heavens above Tokyo once more. The subway expanded and hotels multiplied, catering to native businessmen from other cities on the island as well as to foreign tourists. Tokyo Tower, the Eiffel-like structure opened in 1958 to facilitate broadcast of the fledgling NHK national television network, became a well-known symbol of postwar progress.

THE MODERN ERA

By 1962, Tokyo's population exceeded 10 million. Two years later, Tokyo became the first Asian city to host the Olympic Games — an event that showed the entire world the marvelous pace at which the Eastern capital had resurrected itself from the ashes of war. That same year, the first of Japan's *shinkansen* — bullet trains — connected the capital with Osaka. But as modernization increased at a white-hot pace, older things perforce fell by the wayside. The Imperial Hotel, one of Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpieces, was pulled down in 1967. It had plenty of company.

CUTTING THE DRAGON'S TAIL

Japanese and Western Technocrats seldom mount successful joint operations, but when they do, they alter the social and physical landscape. The post-W.W.II real-estate boom is one of the real triumphs for the united Technocracy.

Starting in the 1950s, the Syndicate began routing a portion of its drug-related profits from the Asian continent into Zaibatsu coffers. The Zaibatsu used the money to influence the course of reconstruction and fresh development. Tremendous expansion of all kinds of construction would have happened with or without the Technocracy; what the Zaibatsu influenced was *where* buildings went up and certain subtle features of their design.

Forty-five years later, the Technocracy doesn't control *all* of the major dragon lines in Japan's metropolises... just most of them. Well-placed buildings disrupt old lines and open up new ones, which Zaibatsu "developmental engineers" promptly seal off for the faction's sole use. Minor changes to building codes (height restrictions, material specifications, and so on) configure the *feng shui* of Tokyo and other cities just the way the Technocracy wants.

The primary beneficiaries of this architectural chess are, of course, members of the Zaibatsu. But Chi does not flow with perfect precision. Zaibatsu neighbors experience mysterious good fortune. They gain subconscious incentives to keep the good flowing and, hence, become useful pawns in the protection of Zaibatsu interests.

Tactical use of dragon line and *feng shui* manipulation proved to be harder for the Technocrats. In fact, it was so difficult that the Zaibatsu has largely abandoned it. Just as good fortune spreads, so does misfortune. The Zaibatsu decided that this means of stamping out a prominent *uji* wasn't worthwhile if it came at the cost of four adjacent corporations for which the Zaibatsu had intended great things.



THE TENBO LIST

The Bishamon love tradition and loathe the modern age, but they aren't stupid. They use the weapons that come to hand in their struggle against the Genji. After W.W.II, the Tenbo family of Kuei-jin prepared a detailed analysis of Genji weaknesses.

After due consideration of the so-called "Tenbo List," the Bishamon set out to work on various fronts and used their government contacts to force liberalization of investment rules. Real estate, bonds and stock markets all "opened to the public," in the language of the political leaders who supported the move. The Japanese public gradually took advantage of the opportunities presented to them in the 1970s and '80s. In time, all of the affected sectors became overextended through a mixture of wishful thinking, simple ignorance and deliberate deception. The 1990s have seen multiple crashes due to strained links breaking and revealing the extent of debt accumulated; the Bishamon hope (and the Genji fear) for more.

So far, the Bishamon and their agents haven't been able to build much public sentiment in favor of turning away from a market economy, although they have certainly ruined some Genji schemes and delayed others through want of capital.

The Bishamon continue to manipulate and to hope.

The last vestiges of war uneasiness vanished in 1977 when the U.S. military base at Tachikawa was officially returned to Japan. A year later, New Tokyo International Airport, or Narita Airport, opened. Corporations funneled profits into research and development, and by the 1970s, Tokyo firms were filing more patents in the United States than Americans were. These events occurred in an atmosphere of ever-increasing economic growth. In 1984, the Japanese yen became an international currency and proved to be one of the stablest monies of that decade. Commercial and industrial districts throughout the city expanded at exponential rates.

The 1990s have been years of general economic downturn in Tokyo. Construction has leveled off, rents have dropped and many newly opened buildings have entire floors vacant or renters. Unemployment has been on the rise, and homeless are numerous (though, not ubiquitous). They fit themselves into train stations, parks and under the many bridges that traverse the capital city's canals and municipal waterways. There has also been growth among new religious cults in the city, which is a phenomenon possibly spurred on by the economic difficulties. Many of these new cults (including the Aum Shinrikyo) have accreted around various Koresh-type leaders. One cult's role in the nerve-gas attacks in the Tokyo subway in April 1995 fanned anxiety amid the city's populace. Such an assault at the heart of Tokyo only served to highlight, for many observers, the specter of an increasing crime rate in a city once thought as one of the world's safest in which to live.







CHAPTER TWO: THE CITY DISSECTED

Tokyo is a city in combat with itself. It boasts some of the world's most stunning temples, parks and gardens, yet much of the metropolis consists of some of the most dubious architectural achievements ever to have made it off the drafting table. At night, the towers of the city's financial giants thrust dizzyingly skyward and are outlined by a blinding neon glow that gives the capital its peculiar color. At street level, however, the attention to detail that graces the hordes of market stalls and street kiosks recalls the ancient traditions of the shoguns.

Such contradiction is not confined to the buildings, though. The attitude of Tokyoites toward the lifeblood of their hometown — business and technology — is far from devout. Citizens prefer to frequent the independent stalls of street bazaars rather than pack into the megalithic department stores in sections like the Ginza ward. Some of the oldest neighborhoods in the capital, ones consisting solely of wooden houses in old Edo style, sit canopied by busy transmetropolitan expressways and bullet-train rails.

Middle Kingdom Tokyo offers a great number of niches where *shen* can anchor themselves. The city's populace is a mobile entity, with over 22 million people commuting in, out and through the capital each day. Add this number to an indigenous population of nearly 12 million in the inner city, and 28 million with the surrounding suburbs; the degree to which to a Tokyoite vanishes in a sea of faces is staggering.

CENTRAL TOKYO

While Tokyo's hugeness is spread over dozens of wards and districts, the influence of the supernatural populations is still largely contained within the area of Central Tokyo. The city's hub holds the Imperial Palace and its environs in the ancient grandeur that was medieval and shogunate Japan. Barely a stone's throw from the seat of Imperial government lie the ultramodern districts, such as the Ginza and Kanda commercial sections. Amid the convergence of tradition and progress embodied in the neighborhoods here, a significant amount of interaction occurs among the *shen* population, not all of which is amicable.

THE IMPERIAL PALACE

Home to the emperor of Japan since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Imperial Palace stands on the old Edo Castle's foundations. The palace's outer perimeter, marked off by a series of walls and thick vegetation, takes about two-and-a-half hours to traverse, and it is as close as any outsider can come to the Imperial residence. The vast majority of the palace and its grounds remain the private dwelling of Emperor Akihito and his family. The grounds are open to the public on only two days of the year: January 2 (New Year's Day in Japan) and the emperor's birthday.

When Ieyasu, the patriarch of the Tokugawa shogunate, chose the old Edo Castle as his seat of government, he took great care to ensure that the fortress was virtually impregnable to attack. To accomplish this security, Ieyasu designed a complex system of moats that incorporated the natural flow of the Sumida River into the defenses of the old castle. He put almost 450 acres of palace landscape inside the great citadel, which included 99 gates and 28 armories for defensive purposes.

The inner sancta were divided into four sections called *maru*, or strongholds. The main stronghold of the shogunate, *honmaru*, was destroyed in the fires that swept Tokyo periodically after the Restoration. Of the original *maru*, only three remain: the *ninomaru*, or "second stronghold," which is the residence of the shogun's heirs and is now a garden; the *kitanomaru*, the northern stronghold, which is currently a public park; and the *nishinomaru*, which remains the private quarters of the Imperial family. The outer moats still divide the Imperial Palace from the rest of the city. A reconstruction of Edo Castle also stands on the palace grounds.

Despite its position as the virtual nucleus of the Tokyo metropolis, the Imperial Palace is a disquietingly calm complex, even in the Middle Kingdom. The harmonious balance of Chi forces and "dragon tracks" that converge within the compound make the palace a sort of central "preserve" for the *shen* of Tokyo — a place that the city's supernaturals visit from time to time — but that none seeks to claim lest the

harmony (and the Chi) there be undone. Hakari, the current Kuei-jin ancestor of Tokyo, makes his residence and seat of authority in the private quarters of the *nishinomaru*. The gardens and private sanctuaries also attract the city's *hengeyokai*, who discreetly seek peace and communion with the natural forces on the grounds.

THE EAST GARDEN

The East Garden of the Imperial Palace, the old *ninomaru*, is the only section of the Imperial Palace open to the public on a daily basis. The garden is situated at what was once the geographical center of the old Edo Castle. The onetime entrance to the castle, boxy-looking Otemon Gate, now stands as the East Garden's main entrance. The gate is constructed in a courtyard style, wherein visitors enter the outer portal into an open stone courtyard before passing through a second portal to the garden. The structure of this gate allowed defenders positioned atop the battlements to "box in" intruders and let them have it with everything they could throw or drop on them.

Within the East Garden is a massive traditional Japanese garden with meticulously maintained lawns, as well as a tea pavilion. Just inside Otemon Gate stands the martial arts training grounds, or *dojo*, for the National Police Agency. Built during the 1920s, the *dojo* is still used by NPA for practicing *kendo*, or Japanese fencing.





YASUKUNI SHRINE

The Yasukuni Shinto Shrine stands to the north of the Imperial Palace. It is a monument to Japan's war dead, and it houses a shrine to the 2.5 million souls who died in World War II — including numerous war criminals whose actions in places such as Bataan and occupied China rivaled what Mengele and his ilk perpetrated in the death camps of Europe.

The shrine itself is controversial. Its name means "peace to the nation" or "peace means war," depending on how much of a crypto-Fascist one's translator is. Allied veterans of W.W.II are discouraged from visiting the complex, but even such askance actions are usually overcome. The shrine itself is laid out in typical form, with two sets of gates — one steel, the other bronze — designating the main entrance. Entering the complex, however, remains an adventure. A common spectacle outside the main gates is a cluster of nondescript black vans blaring right-wing propaganda from rooftop speakers at the shrine's visitors.

TOKYO STATION AND ITS ENVIRONS

To the east of the Imperial Palace complex sits Tokyo Station, which is the central hub for bullet trains and streetcars that crisscross the capital's avenues and underground expressways.

North of the station is Nihonbashi Bridge, an old city landmark adorned with lamps and unicorn statuary; statues of lions flank either end.

At the north end of the bridge stands an iron pole known as the Zero Kilometer. This pole, erected by Emperor Meiji, marked the geographical center of old Tokyo, as well as indicated the starting point for the five major highways that led out of the capital. The south end of Nihonbashi Bridge was used during the Edo period for the posting of public announcements. More gruesome messages also appeared here: the heads of criminals having a "last look" at the Nihonbashi District — from the tops of pikes.

North of the bridge lies the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Japan's financial center. TSE houses a second-floor gallery where visitors can peer down at the lightning-quick activity on the trading floor. Videos and stock-trading games on computer allow visitors to control (virtually) the intricately networked global economy. Syndicate mages frequent the TSE and its trading floors to work their Entropy magick and to channel Quintessence from the vagaries of the global economy.

KASUMIGASEKI

The Japanese government's most important buildings congregate in this neighborhood, southwest of the Imperial Palace. The Diet meets here, as does the Supreme Court.

Strike Force Zero keeps at least one team in this neighborhood at all times. Various *shen* have, from time to time, succumbed to their urges and lashed out violently at the humans they blame for Japan's supernatural woes—from the loss of home rule in the afterlife to the withering of the people's belief. Organized groups know that striking at prominent leaders seldom does any good and may well provoke nasty retaliatory strikes. Yet, desperate individuals and small bands don't stop to reckon consequences rationally.

Kasumigaseki's press clubs (see sidebar) help bury this sort of incident. The press and government agree that the deranged acts of individuals can be of no significance to the general public. If a *shen* attack deserves any mention at all, it appears only in the context of a plea for government response to social needs, or something equally innocuous.

MEETING THE PRESS

Kasumigaseki hosts the largest *kinsa*, or press clubs. The major media corporations maintain little show of independence in Japan—the government and other news sources provide space and equipment in exchange for getting stories told in ways that make the *kinsa*'s hosts look good. Press clubs build an atmosphere of shared interest and reduce the chances that reporters might embarrass the government. What the Western world thinks of as independent journalism is very much a marginal undertaking in Japan.

The *kinsa* assumption of fraternal confidentiality makes it very difficult for outsiders to intrude, but Kuei-jin make the effort. Years or decades are required to establish one's right to participate in the press clubs. *Kinsa* membership is awarded to groups, not individuals, and both host and news organizations must approve any individual's participation. Kuei-jin learn to think in the long-term, and they can patiently position themselves. Once accepted into a *kinsa*, they are able to advance their own agendas (and their *uji*'s). And it's very difficult for Strike Force Zero even to detect such infiltration, much less neutralize it.

GINZA

The Ginza District, Tokyo's answer to New York City's Fifth Avenue, is home to Japan's largest department stores and to international high-fashion conglomerates, many of which trace their origins back to shogun-blessed stalls in the famous marketplaces of medieval Edo. The name "Ginza" means "silver mint," after the one Ieyasu founded here to produce his own currency in 1612. Since then, Ginza and commerce have never been separated.

Ginza has always been the measuring stick for Tokyo's modernization. After fire ravaged the area in 1872, merchants took the opportunity to reinvent the district in the style of a Western city. Tokyo's first brick buildings were erected in the Ginza quarter and illuminated by Japan's first gas lamps.

SHOPS AND GALLERIES

There are commercial districts in Tokyo that are bigger and brighter than the Ginza, but a combination of tradition and uppityness continue to draw crowds. Several major department stores make their headquarters along the Ginza strip, including the behemoth Mitsukoshi and the Sen-ai Building, a tower specializing in women's fashions. The Wako store, situated in the Hattori clock tower, specializes in clocks and watches.

Not all of the goods for sale in the Ginza are cutting-edge, however. The stores Mikimoto and Kyukyodo carry exquisitely set cultured pearls and brushes, inks and papers for Japanese calligraphy, respectively. The Matsuzakaya store opened its doors in 1611 as a kimono shop; it still carries the garments that made it famous. On Sundays, the entire Ginza District is closed to vehicular traffic and becomes the world's largest pedestrian shopping mall.

Alongside the clothing giants, in the Ginza's hundreds of alleys, are multitudes of art galleries and exhibition halls for painters and sculptors. Several of the major galleries also function as dealers and brokerage houses for the art they display, such as the Nichido and the Gekkoso, which have their own stables of "pet" artists. A large percentage of these galleries, however, often stand empty. They function as *ad hoc* exhibition halls for individuals or groups of artists who can scrape together the fees necessary to display their works for a week or two at a time. Such exhibitions are often nothing more than experiments in vanity and ego-massage undertaken by those *artistes* with money to spare.

YURAKUCHO

Abutting the Ginza to the northwest is the Yurakucho District. Its name is derived from the words *yu* (have) and *raku* (pleasures); voluptuaries both native and foreign agree that the area does not disappoint. During the immediate postwar occupation, American GIs commandeered whatever buildings had withstood the air raids and made the



Yurakucho a *de facto* red-light district. The place became home to several *abec hoteru* (love hotels), a few cheap chicken-and-beer stalls, and countless black-market dealings that transpired in the shadows of railroad trestles between Yurakucho and Tokyo Station.

Yurakucho has not changed much in the Middle Kingdom. Nightfall brings with it the familiar scent of grilled animal flesh, cigarette smoke and that cheap perfume which seems to be the standard for ladies of available intimacy the world over. Black-market representatives maintain independent operations along the streets and conduct business from briefcases or from the back doors of shops.

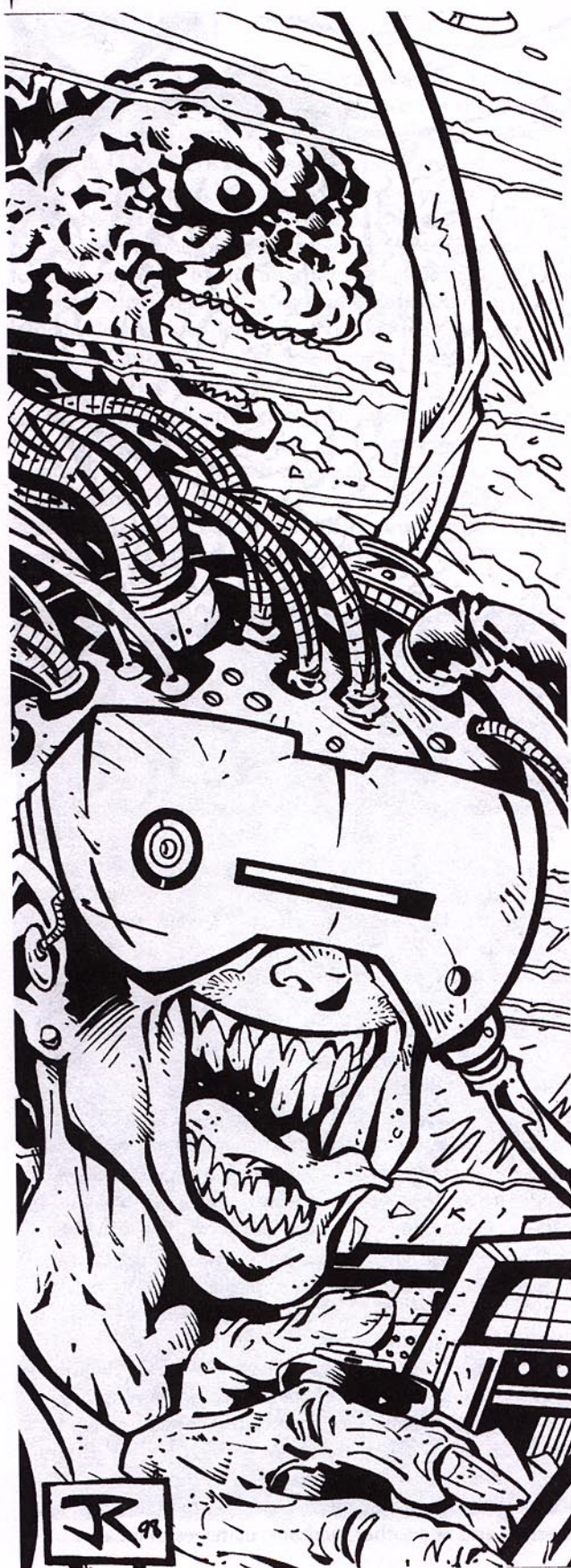
Yet, across the street — Sotobori-dori, specifically — is the polished glitter of a hyper-modern shopping and entertainment complex called the Mullion Building. Down the block from the Mullion sits the International Shopping Arcade, a 100-store area featuring electronics, kimonos and other traditional Japanese clothing, prints and jewelry. Despite the ISA's strong tourist-intensive appeal, however, the major amount of money made in the Yurakucho changes hands in alleys of the black-market district. Much of the illicit trade in the area is Yakuza controlled; some of the illegal wares are regularly funneled into the ISA by enterprising black marketeers and sold as legitimate merchandise.

TSUKIJI

The Sumida River runs along the edge of the Ginza; Tsukiji, in the northern part of the district, is an area reclaimed some centuries ago. Until 1899, all foreigners living in Tokyo had to live here. Now it's home to one of the city's largest fish markets.

More Western wraiths dwell here than anywhere else in Tokyo because their Fetters are here. The fish market begins its business at 4 A.M., and in the pre-dawn hours, the dark corners of Tsukiji feature peculiar manifestations. Vendors usually just shrug when a wraith, freshly engorged with Pathos, intrudes across the Shroud in a fit of anger, enthusiasm, or curiosity. Tourists are seldom on hand to witness such events.

The Jade Empire's Territorial Government sometimes sends in recruits to clear away the foreign spirits, but the locals know more about hiding than Jade soldiers do about finding. In the time between these usually fruitless raids, the Occupation contents itself with guards around the neighborhood to prevent rebellious elements inside from interacting with their counterparts outside. Thus, about a hundred Westerners eke out their existence here, gradually shrinking in numbers as one wraith falls to a Destruction Harrowing, as another becomes a Jade captive (and, shortly thereafter, Jade property) and as another, perhaps, manages to escape.



KANDA

This section of Tokyo dates back to the traditional commercial districts of old Edo. In contrast with the ever-progressive Ginza, the Kanda neighborhoods of shops and markets still retain the feel of pre-Restoration Edo. Many of the small market sections forbid the sale of particular wares, just as in the shogun era.

AKIHABARA

Akihabara is the electronics market for Tokyo, and probably, for the world. Within its maze of cramped stalls are gadgets of every conceivable sort that are produced by Japan's numerous electronics companies. Akihabara serves as a proving ground for these wares: If it doesn't sell here, chances are that it won't sell anywhere.

JIMBOCHO

Jimbocho, the "Town with God's Protection," houses the book shops of old Edo and new Tokyo. Over 200 of these shops and stalls fill up Jimbocho's 600 square meters, which is a godsend for students at any of the five major universities within the area of Kanda. The most famous of these emporiums, Sanseido, carries over a million volumes in an eight-story tower; it is Japan's largest bookstore. Down the road is Isseido, a world-famous secondhand bookstore that carries titles in over 50 languages.

The remainder of Jimbocho has hundreds of tiny, extremely specialized stalls. One stall carries only Russian books, while another specializes in old movie magazines. There are map-only, comics-only and cookbook-only stalls, as well as a few well-hidden places that concentrate on the sort of information valuable to *shen*. Several of these occultist shops carry long-unseen editions of Kuei-jin scholarship and the like for the buyer willing to pay an emperor's ransom.

UENO

Ueno Hill, the site of the final battle between the *shogitai* and the emperor's forces, is the center of one of modern Tokyo's oldest neighborhoods. The emperor made the area into new Tokyo's first public park, Ueno Park, after the battle. The park was to be a future site for international exhibitions and festivals — all to solidify in the minds of Japan and the world that the modern era had arrived on the island.

UENO PARK

Ueno Koen (Ueno Park) is the most prominent part of the Ueno District, for it covers 131 acres and is home to an impressive expanse of cherry blossom trees. Several museums are within the park's grounds, including the 10-story Tokyo National Museum, as well as the National Science Museum and the National Museum of Western Art, which contain works by artists such as Tintoretto, El Greco and Rodin.

East of the National Museum is the Kanjeji Temple, which is a five-story structure rebuilt after the original's destruction by fire in 1639. The Kanjeji's grounds hold a cemetery with the gravesites of many Tokugawa shoguns (most of the original mausoleums were destroyed by air raids). The Kanjeji itself stands on the grounds of the Ueno Zoo, which houses over 900 species of animals in a 35-acre complex.

The park occupies the site of the last organized Tokugawa Resistance to the Meiji Restoration. The souls of the Tokugawa loyalists who died here remain here. Territorial ministers captured them and subjected them to just enough of the *kuei-go* transformation to destroy their minds and bind them to the spot. They then left them here to wreak havoc on any foolish Tokugawa admirers seeking lost glories in the Shadowlands. Corrupted *hsien* sometimes meet nearby and use the bound wraiths as watchdogs.

In the 1970s, a band of Water and Earth *kamui* decided that the Yama Kings' victory was inevitable and set about preparing a special gift for their new masters. The oldest members of this cabal remembered the Tomorrow Garden experiment and brought whatever might remain of its tortured dream realms into Tokyo — to better inflict them on more people. Only six of the forced futures retained any coherent shape, but the *kamui* took what they could get and re-anchored them in the heart of Ueno.

Since then, Ueno Koen has acquired a small but growing reputation for strangeness. More romantic dreamers sighing over unobtainable loves commit suicide here than they used to. More families seeing the sights quarrel, and more lovers find minor spats flaring into serious fights. People who fall asleep here face worse fates.

The erstwhile dream realms attached to the park are now all havens of nightmares. Three of the six represent the continued dominance of military cliques similar to the one that brought Japan into W.W.II. These alternate Japans creak under the weight of endless wars, mass famines and plagues, but they never turn from the course of empire-building. The other three realms represent the future of Tokugawa efforts to resist the Meiji Restoration, again with endless warfare and suffering. In several of the dream-futures, the secrets of the supernatural races have been revealed, and the streets redden with the blood of purges and counter-purges. *Shen* fight one another and humanity in the quest for dominance.

Dreaming souls enter these realms easily, but they escape only with great difficulty. Even if wakened, they leave some portion of their minds trapped in one of the alternate Japans. Unless released through proper rituals, individuals so ensnared experience continued visions of these inexplicable places, and then they gradually sicken and die.

So far, the number of people affected this way is small — only a few dozen each year. Such a tiny percentage of mysterious deaths gets lost in the demographics of a city of Tokyo's size. But they would come to light if any *shen* made a deliberate search of death records and paid attention to signs of supernatural interference with humanity.

TOSHOGU SHRINE

Within the shadow of the Kanjeji pagoda sits the Toshogu Shrine. Once the first great Tokugawa shogun died, it did not take long for Ieyasu to be elevated to the rank of deity. In accordance with this new station, a host of shrines called *toshogu* sprang up all over Japan. The Toshogu in Ueno Park is the nation's largest. Built in 1627, the shrine is one of the few buildings from that period to have survived Tokyo's many fires, earthquakes and air raids in its original form.

Near its side entrance, the shrine boasts a peony garden with more than 200 varieties of the flower in bloom every year. The main pathway is arched by a double set of gates and lined with hundreds of stone lanterns that were given as gifts by *daimyo* during the shogunate period in honor of Ieyasu. The lanterns are ranked according to the wealth and prestige of their owners.

ALWAYS THE SAME BUILDING

Tokyo's constant battles with fires and earthquakes throughout its history have left the metropolis transfigured — for the worse, in the opinions of many. A building that has survived more than one natural or man-made calamity is rare. Over the centuries, entire grids of streets have met destruction in an instant, and many impressive buildings, temples and parks have been rebuilt several times.

Such constant reconstruction has had dire consequences in the Middle Kingdom. Particularly in the spirit worlds, the destruction of historic districts and sacred sites has caused their remanifestation in the Shadowlands and other spiritual realms. Those *shen* who have had the experience of seeing or journeying to the Wicked City speak of a jumble of building upon building that feeds the dead energy of that realm and that pushes the Middle Kingdom closer to the Age of Sorrow. They believe it's the constant reconstruction above corrupted Chi lines that fuels the growth of the Wicked City and accelerates the advent of the Sixth Age.

Others, however, believe the opposite is true; they say that the rebuilding of historic and sacred places to original specifications fills "vacuums" created by the disruption of natural disasters. For them, the painstaking effort to restore a temple or other historical landmark after its razing makes it the same building as before, and that such endeavors are a sort of salve to wounded Chi lines. The modern materials do not matter as much as invoking the spirit of the original builders. Rebuilders remaining faithful to that spirit, these observers say, allow the Chi to repair itself. To enslave one's vision to the transitory nature of centuries-old wood and stone is to ignore the spirit of the building itself — and that is the greater harm.

The practical efficacy of these theories can neither be proved or disproved. They exist as simple poles of debate within and among communities of *shen* as to Tokyo's future in the Middle Kingdom. Yet, these different worldviews can influence day-to-day interaction between traditionalist and progressivist supernaturals.

SHINOBAZU POND AND THE SHITAMACHI MUSEUM

Shinobazu Pond, a former inlet of Tokyo Bay, was converted into a freshwater pond during the early years of the Restoration. It has a man-made island at its center, on which sits a shrine to Benten (the goddess of the arts). The pond is currently divided into three sections: The northern area belongs to the Ueno Zoo; the western part is closed off for small-crafts boating; and the remainder of the pond is a bird sanctuary and holds approximately 15 bird species. During migratory season, nearly 5,000 wild ducks arrive at the pond from as far away as eastern Russia, and they stay on and around the pond until season's end.

Adjacent to the pond is the Shitamachi Museum, which is dedicated to preserving the memories of the old *shitamachi* areas of Edo. It stands as a sort of restoration village that is on par with the USA's colonial Williamsburg, Virginia or Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts. A handful of houses and shops from decades ago house exhibits on traditional life within the *shitamachi* neighborhoods.

Along with tourists and birds, Shinobazu Pond attracts a sight usually unfamiliar to Tokyo — the homeless, who congregate along the water's edge. Unemployment is low in Tokyo, but this factor only means a harsher existence for those unfortunate few who cannot land a job. These people routinely suffer from alcoholism, tuberculosis or other ailments that the city hospitals refuse to treat.

AMEYOKO ARCADE

Ameyoko, or "Confectioners' Alley," was a black market for sugar during the American occupation of the capital. It grew into a legitimate marketplace for trinkets and became the premier spot for end-of-the-year specialty foods. More than 500,000 people thread their way through the Ameyoko's claustrophobic avenues during the last week in December to purchase holiday foodstuffs from more than 500 stalls in the sellers' quarter. And rather than maintaining the relative discretion exhibited in places such as the Ginza or Akihabara, Ameyoko merchants are not afraid to hawk their wares at top volume and to enumerate their unbelievable bargains in street-level gutter talk — a throwback to these stall-keepers' *shitamachi* heritage.

ASAKUSA AND THE SENSOJI TEMPLE

In the Asakusa District sits the Asakusa Kannon Temple, known more familiarly as the Sensoji. It is the oldest temple in Tokyo and is probably the most revered religious building there. It is fronted by the Nakamise, a street of souvenir shops. The temple itself defies any resemblance to stereotypical notions of a house of worship: Old women gab in corners; businessmen spin prayer wheels; children chase each other across the temple grounds and coins drop ceaselessly into a huge offering box. And then worship starts. Hands clap to call to the gods, and bells ring and incense burns in hopes of driving away evil spirits.



RELIGION AND POLITICS

Japan has experienced a proliferation of new religions in recent years. Nearly 200,000 independent cults and offshoots of the traditional Buddhist and Shinto faiths exist here, which serves as a sign to many of the general spiritual void engendered by Japan's incredible postwar economic success. A lot of the older cults mushroomed from former street-corner operations into gigantic national enterprises, complete with marketing directors and overseas sales, whereas other cults still skirt the boundaries of permanent obscurity.

The government goes out of its way to encourage the spread of cults by offering excellent tax-exempt structures. As a result, some of the more unsettling groups, including the Aum Shinrikyo cult (responsible for the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system in 1995), are able to grow without a great deal of interference from the authorities.

The Tokyo subway attack prompted heavy criticism of the government's laissez-faire attitude toward many of these groups, and especially of Aum Shinrikyo. Although the individuals responsible for the terrorist attacks were identified and arrested, the Aum cult continues to grow due to the loose financial laws regarding religion. The cult's newest enterprise is software. Aum-underwritten and Aum-created programs and computer games appear on Tokyo merchants' shelves with increasing frequency since the subway attacks, which troubles many people. However, fear of being branded as anti-religious (and the possibility of initiating another wave of terrorism from the Aum or its sympathizers) makes the government slow to act, while the Aum gets richer off its technological wares.

IKEBUKURO

Northwest Tokyo began extensive renovation and development a decade ago, and now it has numerous landmarks, including the world's largest automobile showroom (Toyota Amlux), Japan's tallest building (60-story-tall Sunshine City, which features world's fastest elevator), and two of the world's largest department stores (Seibu and Tobu).

Thanks to these last two establishments, Ikebukuro holds the city's greatest concentration of mannequins — and mannikins, or effigies, which are *Inanimae* fae who lurk wherever mannequins exist (see the *Inanimae* sourcebook). In other parts of Tokyo, the effigy lords rule their respective stores, and perhaps nearby buildings, parking structures, and so on. In Ikebukuro, their rule covers whole blocks and extends into offices and stores. No *shen* attuned to the Dreaming passes safely through Ikebukuro without prior arrangement with the effigy lords (or rather, with their stewards, who include a wide variety of mannequins, toys and simulacra). Any display of magic or supernatural ability invites the attention of the always-inquisitive and ever-acquisitive effigies.

Remote corners of Seibu and Tobu not open to the public become Dreaming dungeons, where *shen* and mortals who've offended the store lords suffer multifarious torments. Naughty children who stuff candy wrappers into the pockets of store mannequins are regular guests; they recall nightmares in which they're force-fed endless bars of fetid chocolate. *Shen* who, in the course of their struggles, make the mistake of damaging store displays suffer far worse fates: Some serve fixed terms of imprisonment, others wait until the store's lord chooses to release them... and effigies do not change their minds cavalierly.

Chimerical and Dreaming wars sweep across Ikebukuro regularly — truces between the store lords usually last no longer than weeks or months. Such strife manifests in the waking world in minor ways: conflicts between drunks, auto collisions, or even clashes between wind-up toys that are "accidentally" released by sidewalk vendors.

SHINJUKU

Shinjuku District is large enough to rival, in its own right, any Western municipal giant. Within its streets are a host of arcades, shopping centers and strip bars. Possibly as a nod to the pace of activity going on within this heart of the modernist titan that is Tokyo, the offices of the city government moved to Shinjuku in 1991. Many of Tokyo's wards and prefectures are home to some of the city's defining monuments, buildings and ways of life. Shinjuku, conversely, is Japan wrought in miniature. The district manifests the collision of ancient and hypermodern, high-tech and lowbrow — the meandering pace of the eternal and the stress-heavy living for the moment that makes Japan what it is.

SHINJUKU STATION

The district's main station, Tokyo's "Palace of the People," is the confluence of several public transit and corporate freight railways. Underground are multilevel shopping centers and restaurants situated deep beneath the Kanto Plain. Each floor of the station connects to the next through a series of endless promenades. And nothing, from the most upscale restaurant to the dirtiest, most verminous sub-sub-basement, appears to have been left out of the loop.

More than two million people pass through Shinjuku Station's understructure each day, as they come and go on no fewer than nine separate lines. Hundreds of bums squat in crannies and corners. Rendezvous and assignations, illicit and otherwise, constantly occur throughout the station's levels. Adding to this chaos of crossing paths is the fact that all signs inside Shinjuku Station are in Japanese only, which is the final nail in any outlander's coffin of bewilderment.

At the station's eastern exit, a giant video screen towers over the Studio Alta building and flashes countless images at ever-present crowds of students and young professionals just leaving work. Down the street are the Shinjuku Historical Museum and the Hanazono Shrine, whose historical documents, artifacts and prayer services represent the traditional side of Japan in the electronic beast that is the district.

SHADOWLANDS TOKYO

Far more so than most Western cities, Tokyo is a new city. The bombing missions during the last year of W.W.II did hideous damage (and if the wraith of General James Doolittle were to fall into Japanese hands, the rest of his afterlife would not be pleasant). But long before war came to Tokyo, earthquakes, fire, and other forms of destruction happened first.

Rapid urban development creates a problem for the Shadowlands. Virtually every square foot of the city has more relics contending for space than can possibly be preserved, resulting in a healthy black market. In every neighborhood, there's a constant struggle between natives concealing goods from the Jade censors and those bureaucrats' efforts at rooting out such contraband. Relics that survive searches often end up traded to Western wraiths in exchange for war materiel.

Further, as a city in which land is precious, Tokyo simply lacks space for cemeteries in the Western mode. Cremation is ubiquitous here. Ashes rest in urns, which are then lodged in niches inside institutions bearing a certain resemblance to tube hotels. There are many more spirits seeking Pathos at any given mausoleum than can possibly gain access at any one time to the precious stuff. Again, difficult decisions require resolution.

WHO DECIDES?

The primary question confronting each neighborhood is, "Who decides?" Usually the answer is that the toughest thug, or small band of thugs, beats up anyone who refuses to take orders and, thereby, becomes *de facto* leader of the neighborhood. Force-based authority lasts until someone stronger comes along — mere days in heavily contested areas, and years or longer in out-of-the-way parts of Tokyo. Thugs and bullies must keep a careful eye on new arrivals to the Shadowlands and cull potential challengers; they must take care not to earn the ire of powerful forces based outside the immediate neighborhood. Paying the Jade Empire's levies may be humiliating, but it's better than not having power at all.

WOMEN AND MEN IN THE SHADOWLANDS

Skinlands Japanese society remains intensely patriarchal, indeed, outright misogynistic in many ways. It's changing, slowly and haphazardly, but women's choices here remain far more constrained than in the West.

In the Shadowlands, however, matters are somewhat more complex. Two opposing tendencies meet where the Dead gather.

First, the older Restless staunchly resist every measure of liberalization. The Dead change their minds more slowly than the living, as the former remain isolated from

sources of persuasion, as well as being dependent on a certain fixed image of things for their own identities. In the face of an increasingly strange society across the Shroud, they cling to old ways. Thus, wraithly women can end up with even fewer opportunities than they had in life.

Secondly, in the Shadowlands, form follows perception. Strong-willed women often gain strong Corpus, just as weak-willed men who were physically powerful in life can be scrawny in death. With Moliage, temporary transformations of infinite variety become possible, but when the effects of Moliage pass, self-image remains. A significant minority of Shadowlands authorities appear in ambiguous or androgynous form, and nobody can say for sure how many of them are women who've shaped themselves to take advantage of the opportunities at hand.

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

Fortunate neighborhoods depose their thugs and arrange a council of elders that distills the wishes of the people and the wisdom of the ancients to arrive at decisions that are at least traditional, if not always wise, at the present moment. They also must deal with the *Senryo's* rapacity, but such panels are likelier to find loopholes to exploit than any thugs and bullies. Neighborhood councils might care no more about individuals whose fates they decide, but they tend to be aware of the need to conserve spiritual resources. A neighborhood supply of souls is a renewable resource, but not instantaneously so.

Some neighborhoods surrender their decision-making authority to an external power. General Shi's Territorial Government staff appoints administrators to evaluate relics, regulate access to sources of Pathos, resolve disputes and, otherwise, keep the machinery of local society running smoothly.

Neighborhoods that are home to struggles between Occupation and Resistance forces may end up with no real stable authority at all. Such unfortunate areas settle things through chance, short-term bullying or other "leadership," or through whatever means may come to hand.

ACCESS TO PATHOS

If all of the wraiths in a neighborhood congregate at the local mausoleum at once, the stresses on the Shroud can spur supernatural manifestations and attract mortal attention. Much as some wraiths might want this situation to happen, most agree that such occurrences are typically inauspicious. But in classic "tragedy of the commons" fashion, very few wish to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of the common good.

There are two broad categories of solution.

Bullies put guards around the mausoleums within their claimed jurisdictions and allow in only wraiths who meet the leaders' criteria. This arrangement is great for wraiths

who enjoy their rulers' favor, but it is not so good for the rest; they must randomly harvest Pathos and are denied the strongest, most relevant expressions of emotion by the living. Thus, bully-dominated neighborhoods usually feature a flush, Pathos-rich minority and a starving, wan majority. The minority benefiting from this allocation of resources usually pitches in to protect itself, though some members take such advantage for granted until the balance of power shifts.

The elders' solution is to provide access on a rotating basis, generally with one schedule for normal days and a special schedule for festivals, holidays, and religious occasions. No individual prospers under such a scheme as bullies' favorites do, but then, no individual suffers as those who are excluded by neighborhood despots. It is not an entirely satisfactory compromise, but it works better than the majority of the alternatives.

(Note that not all bullies set up a permanent underclass and not all elders set up stable schedules of rotation. Any given solution may occur to any sort of decision-maker. The pairings here are the most common, but by no means universal.)

A third solution falls somewhere in-between the other two, or arguably, in a different direction altogether. The decision-maker designates an overclass and

an underclass, but the composition of each class varies by week, month or year. When the composition of classes changes, the assignment of individuals to one class or the other is usually done by luck — divination, secular game of chance or some other arbitrary method — rather than by personal choice of leaders. In most cases, the random solution produces less discontent than either of the alternatives. But like the bully's solution, it means that many of the neighborhood's inhabitants are Pathos-weak and unable to mount an effective defense against an attack from outside.

PATHOS AND THE RESISTANCE

Tokyo's extreme concentration of Pathos resources presents a serious problem for the Resistance. In Western cities, wraiths fighting against the ruling power can spread throughout the city and seek shelter while enjoying access to Pathos that is almost as good as what their enemies have. In Tokyo, that's harder to do. The ambient level of Pathos is generally usable, but the bright beacons of mausoleums stir temptations. However, if a neighborhood shares its mausoleums with the Resistance, there's that much less going to wraiths who reside in the area. Resistance leaders usually have to pay steady tribute in relics and Artifacts to compensate deprived souls for the Pathos harvested.



IN THE SUBWAYS

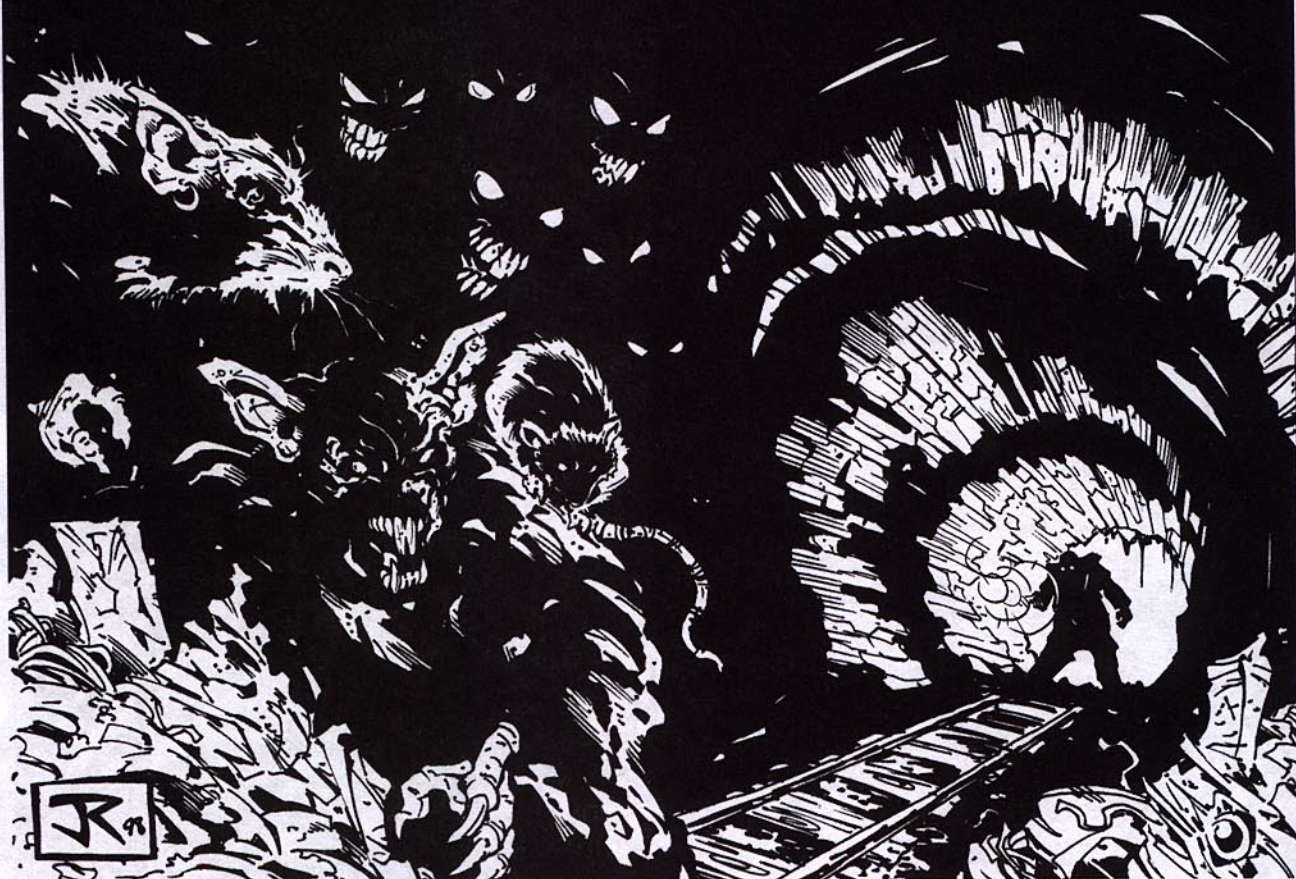
A loose-knit community comprising several thousand people lives in the Tokyo subways. This community includes service crews, snack- and newspaper-stand operators, homeless, drifters, artists, and others seeking shelter from the elements above. This populace has a far larger percentage of *shen* than the city at large — one per several hundred, rather than per thousand or tens of thousands.

Kuei-jin and others who seek to prey on the Subway People seldom last long. *Shen* who get shelter in the subways wish to avoid attracting attention, and many actually like their neighbors. In a city so full of bland, generic targets, the subway supernaturals think *why attract attention by doing things to the scandal-worthy fringe?*

Nezumi flourish among the Subway People. Other *hengeyokai* have little patience for or interest in the rat-changers; the rest of the *shen* don't know enough about the Nezumi to care. But the Subway People know their protectors and seek to repay that protection with such favors as they can manage. It's not a luxurious life, but it's a satisfying one. The wererats observe the city and gather information about the activities of the Emerald Mother's enemies. If other *hengeyokai* were ever to pay attention down here, they'd gain a vast wealth of intelligence.

Beneath the subway tunnels in use lie extensive air-raid shelters from W.W.II, along with remnants of early subway ventures, basements of buildings leveled in earthquakes, and all the other detritus of a city repeatedly rebuilt. Few adults ever come here, but children who live near points of access to the tunnels find ways in and play in spaces beyond adult supervision. From time to time, subway *shen* prey on these young visitors, but such behavior invites unwelcome adult attention — cleaning up, securing, demolishing, etc. So, most children who come in go out again unless they run into mundane dangers, such as gas pockets or collapsing ceilings.

The Wall is weaker in the subways than it is topside. Except where specifically reinforced — by the *feng shui* of Zaibatsu-dominated corporations, for instance — the Wall is 1 or 2 points lower than in the corresponding neighborhood above ground level. The Japanese people learn not to pay attention to peculiar manifestations they might see while riding to home or work, and over time, most humans simply tune out such sights altogether.



JR

KABUKICHO AND THE GOLDEN GAI

In 1872, the courtesans and geisha establishments within the city were dissolved. They re congregated in Shinjuku, in the area known as Kabukicho, and became Japan's largest center of prostitution until the end of W.W.II. Although legitimate theaters that feature performances in the *kabuki* style have also sprung up here, this section of Shinjuku has, for the most part, cultivated its seedier legacy. Discos, dives and cathouses blanket the area with an aura of unrefined, cheap pleasure.

Almost all of the fads and alternative crazes that swept the world at large after 1945 — antiwar movements, free love, artistic iconoclasm, the drug culture — had their Japanese debuts here. The mayhem that follows such emotional swells lurks beneath the surface of Kabukicho, and it has done so for over half of a century.

Golden Gai, or golden town, is a network of alleyways in east Shinjuku that is wholly dedicated to one of humankind's most time-honored practices: barhopping. Alley after alley of storefront bars line the Gai, all with second-story terraces, and all packed with the Tokyo equivalent of laptop philosophers and Western expatriate wannabes.

SHINJUKU GYOEN

The gardens in east Shinjuku were once the estate of the local *daimyo*, whose lands and titles were subsumed into the Imperial household after the Restoration. Following the end of the war, the estate opened to the public as a national park. Shinjuku Gyoen brings together the most beautiful of both East and West in these gardens. Paths snake their way through French and English gardens here that are all linked by rope and stone bridges, fountains, and serpentine waterways and ponds. There are more than 3,000 different types of flowers and plants within the Shinjuku Gyoen, and nearly 2,000 cherry blossom trees representing over 65 different species.

TOKYO METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OFFICES

Tokyo's epicenter of high-rise buildings is in west Shinjuku. Despite the city's less-than-stellar record with natural disasters, many insiders believe that the skyscrapers in west Shinjuku are completely quake-proof. The city government hopes so; it moved into a new office park in the district only a few years ago.

Opened in 1991, the TMG offices cost over 157 billion yen to construct (an obvious testament to the city's annual gross municipal product). The offices are a three-block structure, and they house over 13,000 government workers. The edifice's architect meant for it to invoke a people-friendly type of building. In Tokyo, however, such sentiment is hard to effect. The completed TMG complex, with its world's-biggest-silicon-chip façade, feels decidedly Fritz Lang-ish — but not as inviting.

THE YAKUZA

Organized crime in Japan begins and ends with the Yakuza — the vast underworld network of gangs that controls huge portions of turf in practically every major city on the island, including Tokyo. Little connection exists between the stereotypes of gangs in the Western world and the Yakuza, which has been an integral and semi-accepted part of Japanese society almost since its inception. Its modern-day incarnation maintains the atmosphere of dignity and loyalty that marked the great samurai class.

The origins of the organization mix history and legend liberally. Some accounts have the Yakuza starting as locally created volunteer militias that sought to protect small villages from wandering bandits. Other stories have it beginning as offshoots of the *ronin* class of unattached samurai, or even as feudal-era independent gamblers. Regardless of its origins, the Yakuza has carved a special place for itself within Japanese society (that of a better class of criminal).

Yakuza gangs are not secretive. On the contrary, each *gumi* (family) maintains a public office with the gang's trademark on the door. Members give out business cards and wear lapel pins to make their allegiances known. The activities of the Yakuza are extraordinarily diverse. It controls the majority of Japan's vice trade: prostitution, porn, gambling, drugs, extortion and leg-breaking — just a typical day at the office. But it also has stakes in legitimate businesses, ranging from street-corner stalls to some of Japan's largest technology and financial conglomerates.

On the local level, the Yakuza performs a lot of unexpected services for neighborhood populations: finding jobs for an old woman's son, providing legal advice and aid, acting as the local (legitimate) loan office, and even publishing small-circulation newspapers and magazines. The relationship between the Yakuza and the local populace is wrapped up in the organization's traditional "Robin Hood" image, which Yakuza members take pains to keep intact. These gangs have been known, after a particularly bloody inter-gang war, to call press conferences to announce the end of hostilities and to apologize for any inconvenience they might have caused. Yet this apparent approachability obscures a fierce code of loyalty and honor, one that has been inculcated into every member through intricate, centuries-old rituals. Stories of Yakuza members cutting off their fingers at the joint for behaving improperly within the organization underscore the intensity of member dedication.

In addition to personal loyalty to the organization, the Yakuza itself has, in recent years, allied with some of Japan's more extreme right-wing organizations — groups that want to see the emperor returned to his rightful seat as the divine head of Japan. Historically, such factions were the driving force behind Japan's move into the Fascism and militarism that started the invasion of China and that led to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The coordination between these groups and the traditional criminal underworld of Japan continues to produce some of the most egregious examples of political corruption in the country.

SHIBUYA

Compared to Shinjuku, the Shibuya District is almost prim and proper, which is an odd characterization considering that Shibuya is nearly as crowded and filled with humanity as its southern cousin. Shibuya is popular for nightlife entertainment of a reserved sort: Upscale malls, department-store towers and elegant, wood-heavy bars rule here.

NHK BROADCASTING CENTER

The NHK Center at NHK Tenji Plaza, the national headquarters for Japanese public television, was once the Information Center for the 1964 Summer Olympics. This 23-story building houses all of the studios for NHK Television, as well as a 4,000-seat auditorium that features an 8,000-piece pipe organ. The NHK Hall is designed for opera and concert performances, and many of Japan's, and the world's, most celebrated entertainers have held court within its cavernous space.

YOYOGI SPORTS CENTER AND YOYOGI KOEN

The Yoyogi Sports Center was, like the NHK studios, originally built for the Olympics. It houses a 15,000-seat water sports arena and a 4,000-seat basketball court. Across from the Sports Center is Yoyogi Koen (Yoyogi Park). During W.W.II and the subsequent occupation, the park contained Japanese barracks and, later, American ones. In 1964, it became the Olympic Village. After the world left Tokyo and the flame was extinguished, Yoyogi Koen was turned into a public park. Hundreds of young people journey to Yoyogi Koen every Sunday to dance, to hang out, and to see and be seen by their peers and slightly taken-aback elders.

BAMBOO-SHOOT CHILDREN

On Sundays, Yoyogi Koen attracts hundreds of youths who are the showy, exhibitionist crowd; their communal behavior has earned them the nickname of "bamboo-shoot children" — Japan's answer to the "flower children" of 1960s America.

The bamboo-shoot children come to the park to rebel. Dressed in bargain-shop fashions that have made the transition from outmoded to outrageous, the children find that Yoyogi Koen provides the perfect release from the pressures of their frenetic lives — to succeed, to get into a university, to rocket up the corporate ladder. The mood in the park on any given Sunday is one of mass collective desperation, as these stressed youngsters almost struggle to squeeze as much from their fleeting adolescence as they can. They are not always successful; many succumb to the streets, prostitution, drugs or gangs, for the tension between society's expectations of them and their own personal predilections is too great to handle.

LOVE HOTEL HILL

As its name implies, Love Hotel Hill is a warren of side streets in Shibuya filled with dozens of prostitution houses. The hill itself is an architectural student's cram session. Nearly every branch of world architecture, from Gothic castles to onion-domed mosques, from pagodas to Palladian mansions, is represented in the "stylings" of these private establishments. The Hotel Meguro Emperor, the largest and most famous, is constructed in the manner of a Bavarian castle, complete with turrets, battlements and crenellations. Coats-of-arms line the halls inside. With names like "Charm," "Edelweiss," "Giant," "Emperor" and even "Air France," the hotels on this strip cater to every possible taste.

ROPPONGI

This district is the playground of Tokyo, and it's the place where Orient and Occident cross paths most frequently. It is Tokyo's main club scene, where native and visiting youth come to thrash, retro, mosh and stage-dive in ubiquitous multitiered disco houses. By 9:00 P.M., Roppongi radiates the feeling that every single party person in the city is packed into its streets. The Zojoji Temple here is home to the worshipers of Jizo, the patron saint of travelers and souls of departed children. Many call this juxtaposition a perfect match.

TOKYO TOWER

Built in 1958 as a broadcasting antenna, Tokyo Tower is modeled after Paris' Eiffel Tower. Yet, it is over 100 feet taller than its inspiration. Observation decks are situated at 150 and 250 meters up, and the tower itself has an aquarium, a wax museum and a virtual-reality center at its base.

THE CLUBS

Roppongi used to be a peaceful ward of Tokyo — until the clubs arrived. Now it is one of the highest rent districts in the metropolis, due to the proliferation of night spots, bars and discotheques over the last few decades. The Square Building is the most famous club complex, with seven dance halls and karaoke bars jammed into a 10-story building. Down the street is the Almond, another multistoried pink building that is a landmark (the location is also known for its overpriced coffee bar).

More notorious and less savory than the conventional clubs are the ladies-service bars, which emerged in the late 19th century. The modern incarnation features attractive foreign women as waitresses and hostesses who do just about anything to please their customers, depending on the prices paid. Services range from smiling prettily to sitting on laps to full-fledged prostitution. The women range from very willing to all-but-slaves, kept captive by a ruthless boss who holds their passports, beats them, and cuts deals with the local



police to avoid any inconvenience for himself. Some women come from Europe and America hoping to earn a nest egg for future plans (and a handful even succeed), or to escape dreary lives, or for various other reasons. Most soon want to leave.

The American occupation government made a concerted effort to stamp out such establishments but did not succeed. Ladies service bars laid low for a few years, then came back stronger than ever in the late 1950s. Many Japanese, both human and supernatural, find grim satisfaction in humiliating the beauties of the cultures that devastated Japan.

The Genji like nightclubs. In the hullabaloo of it all, they observe the cutting-edge of social change and mingle unnoticed near the spiritually unperceptive. The service bars in particular give them a chance to notice potentially troublesome Westerners. Once in a while, a Western gentleman with chivalric ambitions tries to make a stir. He is promptly suppressed. Such provocation is good for uncovering old-fashioned Westerners; customers who retain these old-fashioned values may well be old-fashioned, having lived longer than normal humans.

Service bars can be found along most minor streets in the Ginza and Roppongi. Helpful flunkies bear signs along the main streets to direct potential customers.

For people who visit clubs in search of genuinely different experiences, there are the “metaphysical clubs.” In such establishments, Kuei-jin have things to teach such seekers.

The range of metaphysical clubs is as broad as the range of the Ten Thousand Things. Few become major successes — most people don’t want quite that much reality in their escapist entertainment — but some are lasting features of the social landscape.

For example, Swirl, a nightclub just down the block from Roppongi Station, allows in only 50 customers at a time. Ten Kuei-jin “work” there, and they mingle with the crowd to apply the art of Equilibrium and send their customers careening down the paths of Chi imbalance. The regular clientele include many of Tokyo’s most promising avant-garde artists.

Animation, on the other hand, is a club that the Genji want to suppress, but it moves in the manner of Western raves, and its scouts are alert enough to keep customers from falling into Genji clutches. Its hosts use the Blood Shintai ability Blood Awakening to animate the furniture in the night’s chosen locale. Depending on the vampires’ moods, the furniture might dance with patrons, scurry around to avoid being captured, or even attack. There’s no predicting what might happen on any given evening, and the uncertainty is part of the appeal for regular customers. Club



Animation comes to the Ginza only when its hosts find construction sites they can take over for the evening. Most nights it must meet in some lower-priced, less chic part of town. But Ginza nights form the nucleus of Animation legends. The club's customers generally have no idea of what's going on, and most assume that what they experience here is the result of exotic drugs.

Club Rebound's owners are a mix of native Japanese and Japanese-Filipino immigrants. They share the bond of Flesh Shintai mastery and entertain the crowds with mood-altering Lotus Clouds and the thrill of dancing, with someone literally spread across the room. As with Animation, most customers assume that the supernatural transformations their hosts display are mere hallucinations; the rest suspect ingenious special effects are at work.

Ghost Flame is a Yakuza bar: Customers must either be Yakuza members or have invitations to join the organization. The establishment's managers offer the usual service bar features but add a floorshow featuring applications of the Ghost-Flame Shintai. The show sometimes includes uses of Ghost-Flame as a weapon against rebellious hostesses, which only increases its appeal to the Yakuza.

LANDMARKS AND OTHER NOTABLE LOCALES

NARITA AIRPORT

Like many modern airports, Narita lies well outside the metropolis it serves. A miniature city of offices, shops, hotels and services caters to the travelers passing through — many of whom never even get as far from the terminal as Tokyo proper. Within a few minutes' walk of debarking lie all the legal pleasures of Japan (and many of the illegal ones).

Strike Force Zero has at least one team working in or around the airport because Kuei-jin gather thickly here. Tourists likely know nothing about the threat of Chi harvesting. Thus, Kuei-jin who arrange influence with hotels, video arcades, and other places people come together for distraction might feed easily.

Most Western supernatural creatures enter Japan through Narita, so all *shen* who care about the intruders mount watches. Whether the *shen* hope to deal with, feed on, or simply confuse the foreigners, it is here that the first encounters typically take place. Careless Western supernaturals do not leave the vicinity of the airport, at least, not intact. Narita's nighttime security force maintains complex and very private records of the supernatural clashes they deal with. Strike Force Zero supplies airport security with some advanced weaponry and monitors.

YUUGI TOTO GOKU

Tokyo and environs have many theme parks, from a branch of Disneyland to parks that enshrine the lives and settings of famous toy characters. The Friendly Fish and his neighbors are the star attractions at Yuugi Toto Goku, Friendly Fish Land. Parades, theme rides, exhibits, and more all tie into these simplistic little characters with a very complex backstory.

New Suns Inc., the company that owns the park and manufactures Friendly Fish merchandise, even publishes *Kaisou Shinbun*, "Seaweed Times," which is a weekly newspaper covering its characters. Like the papers for Hello Kitty and other merchandise lines, this one sells right next to other newspapers at periodical stands.

Several *uji* composed of young Kuei-jin make their homes in Friendly Fish Land. They can mingle with the crowds only during winter, when the days are shortest, but they find something comforting in being surrounded by people who radiate a great deal of love and affection. On occasion, they put on their own midnight pageants for the pleasure of their peers.

Yin-aspected Kuei-jin have a horrible time in and around the park (as they do at most of the island's theme parks). Although a great deal of very careful reasoning went into such parks' designs, the mortals who patronize them are anything but rational. Wraiths starved for Pathos would find it to be a gold mine of positive emotions, but the very cheer they'd like to feed on raises the Shroud so high that they can't approach. Conversely, Yang-oriented creatures who don't need a fix of violence at the moment come to soak up the atmosphere, and many *hsien* mingle here.

While wraiths cannot approach the park directly, they congregate as nearby as they can. They also waft along the subway lines that link the park with downtown Tokyo to harvest the Pathos of satisfied families returning home.



THE DRAGON WHO OVERSLEPT

The last major natural disaster to strike at the heart of the city was the Great Earthquake of 1923. The loss of life and destruction of property that were its legacies are still being addressed as this great Asian giant approaches the end of the millennium. Architecture and construction have advanced significantly since the tragedy, and municipal authorities have labored feverishly to initiate feasible escape plans and disaster networks that they hope never to have to put into effect. Over the last several decades, Tokyo has undergone a transformation in its appearance and infrastructure that can be interpreted only as the city bracing itself for the worst.

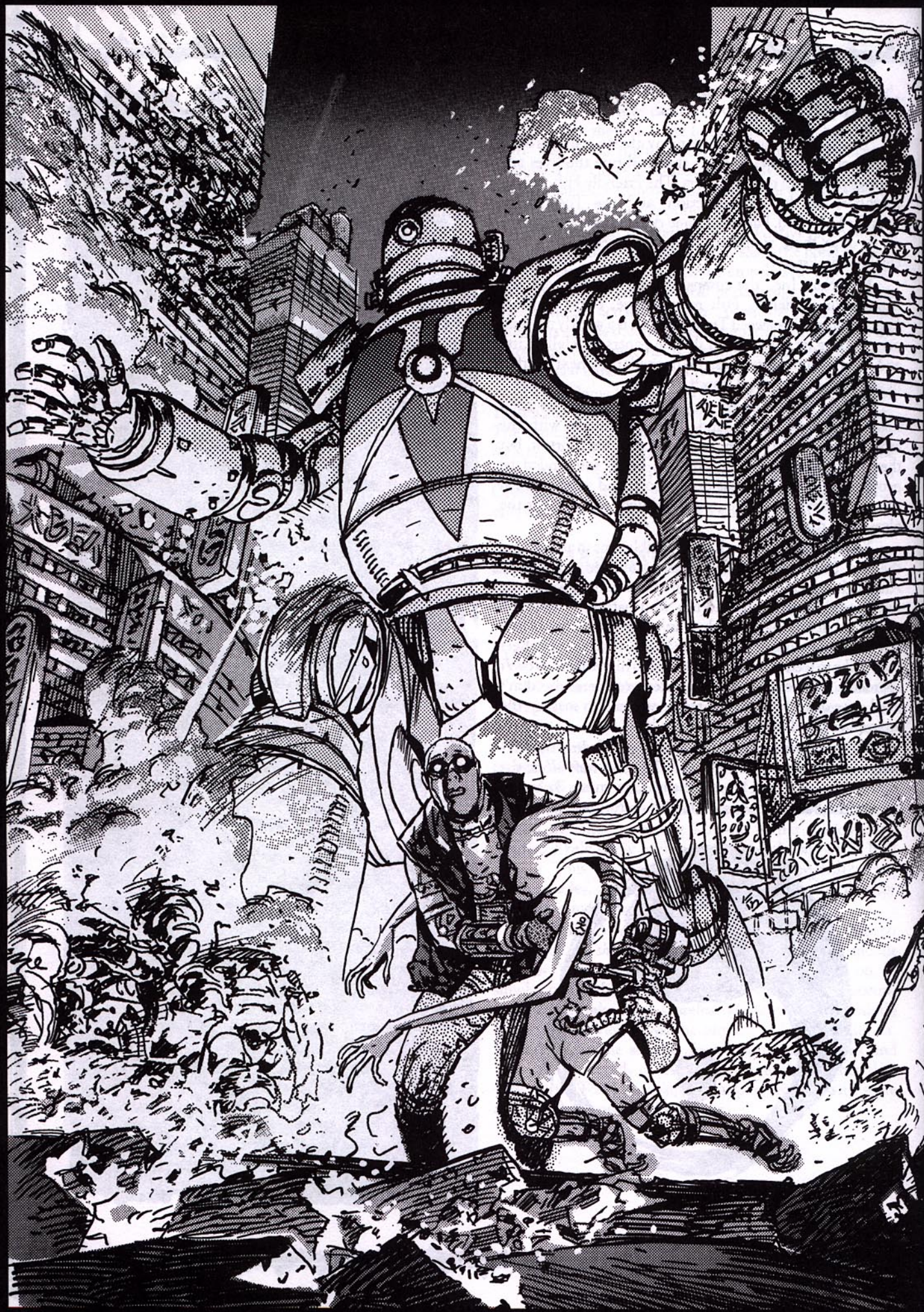
Because the worst is coming.

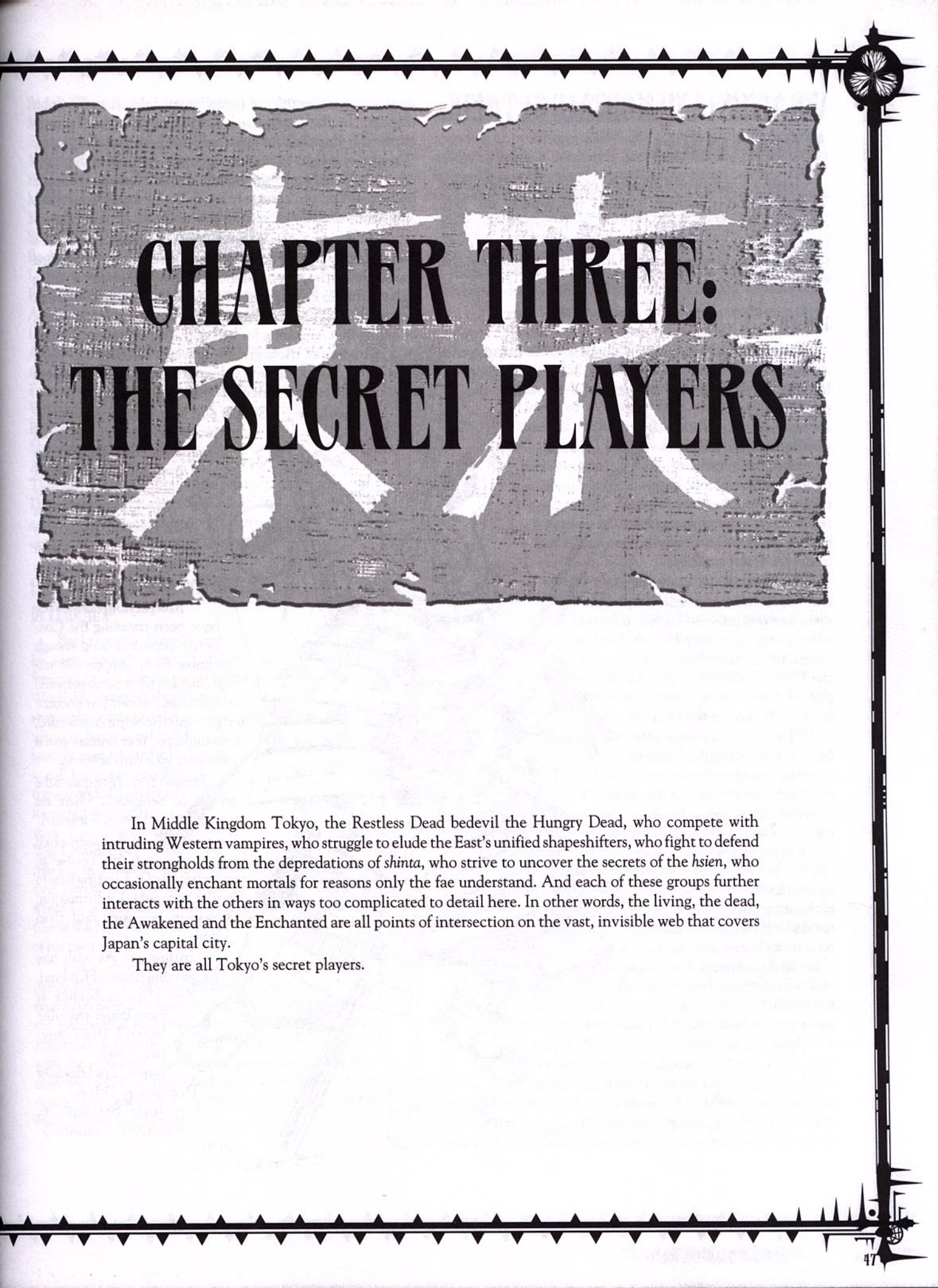
Many in the scientific community say that the worst, the next major earthquake, is long overdue. Tokyo has had, on average, a major earthquake every 60 years. The projected date of the next one has long since passed, and this fact lingers in the collective subconscious of over 20 million people — that tomorrow may prove to be the day when the dragon finally wakes from its long slumber.

Over spans of time ranging from an hour to several days, an estimated three million people are expected to die in the next quake, according to seismologists. The inevitable fires of Tokyo, the "flowers of Edo," will wreak incredible amounts of damage on the metropolis. Gas mains and chemical storage facilities will burst and loose their contents to create conflagrations to surpass anything ever seen in the city's history. Streets will become impassable as flames billow everywhere, utterly destroying abandoned vehicles and street stands as citizens flee toward official safe areas — assuming that those areas have not themselves been collapsed by the tremors. Tokyo's modern skyscrapers will probably survive the destruction with no more than a few bouts of swaying. But anything on their roofs, including such items as multiton air-conditioning units, will plummet dozens of stories and obliterate whatever is below them.

This projected municipal apocalypse will destroy more than 70,000 buildings, flood more than four square miles of land, ignite more than 3,000 fires, and render nearly 3.5 million people homeless.

The next quake will toll Tokyo's reckoning, for both mortal and *shen* populations. Many assume that such an event will usher in the Sixth Age and possibly bleed the chaos and pain of the Wicked City, or even the Yomi World, into the enormous spaces sundered by the disaster. All *shen* keep this fact in the back of their minds, for they know that whatever horrors the actual quake unleashes, there are far worse ones to follow. Every supernatural in Tokyo regularly ponders with the utmost gravity the Age of Sorrow's ineluctable advent, just as every *shen* considers the role he is likely to play at that fearsome time.





CHAPTER THREE: THE SECRET PLAYERS

In Middle Kingdom Tokyo, the Restless Dead bedevil the Hungry Dead, who compete with intruding Western vampires, who struggle to elude the East's unified shapeshifters, who fight to defend their strongholds from the depredations of *shintu*, who strive to uncover the secrets of the *hsien*, who occasionally enchant mortals for reasons only the fae understand. And each of these groups further interacts with the others in ways too complicated to detail here. In other words, the living, the dead, the Awakened and the Enchanted are all points of intersection on the vast, invisible web that covers Japan's capital city.

They are all Tokyo's secret players.

WRAITHS (AND MORTALS OF THEIR ACQUAINTANCE)

Japan's Underworld remains part of the Conquered Territories and, therefore, is under the sway of the Jade Emperor. Many wraiths here work to undermine Yu Huang's hegemony. Yet, perhaps even more of Japan's wraiths choose to collaborate, to work with the invaders and maintain the status quo....

YON-CHI

Background: One of Japan's most famous historical events during the shogunate era, the 47 Ronin Incident has risen to legendary stature among the people. Even today, the populace reveres the eponymous group of samurai who sacrificed their lives to avenge their dead lord. A national holiday commemorates the occasion, thus reinforcing the importance given by the Japanese to loyalty and honor in the service of another.

Yet, as with so many legends, reality becomes obscured. Forty-seven *ronin* are remembered in the tale, but when it was done, only 46 took part and owned up to their deed. The fate of the 47th *ronin* has been ignored, or glossed over, or forgotten by everyone who knows the tale.

That is, *almost* everyone. In the Jade Kingdom, where time swallows nothing and no one, wraiths know the end of the story. Every so often, those Restless who dwell in the Conquered Territories of Japan meet a wandering samurai. His face is forever obscured by the classical battle helmet of the shogunate warrior. He speaks little, and he befriends no one, so he owes allegiance to no Circle or family. The people of the Conquered Territories call the wraith "Yon-chi," an abbreviation of *yonjushichi*, which is Japanese for 47.

Yon-chi is said to have been cursed by the Yama Kings for his cowardice and disloyalty, which are two traits that carry disgrace even into the spirit worlds. His punishment is to wander the spirit worlds and seek forgiveness from his fellow *ronin*, whom he deserted at the moment of reckoning. In addition, Yon-chi

must assist the wraiths of Japan by any and all means at his disposal. In the Conquered Territories, it means he must battle the Imperial Reapers and the power of Yu Huang. Wraiths who fight in resistance groups or those who turn to the new, otherworldly religions for deliverance from the hell's cross Yon-chi's path occasionally. He appears, gives aid, and disappears as mysteriously as he came.

And he gives the Reapers hell twice over. Yon-chi is a samurai, after all, and he's had nearly three centuries to refine the arts of battle. Any resistance group would give everything to have him in its camp on a regular basis. The Jade Emperor would likewise give anything for the dead warrior's services, or failing that, anything for his head. Yon-chi wants nothing to do with any of these groups, however. He belongs to the pain of the Yama Kings and to his duties to his fallen brethren — the way of the loner and mercenary.

Image: Simply put, Yon-chi is a samurai. He is always seen garbed in the full samurai's costume, with the traditional battle helmet obscuring his face, except for his eyes. His eyes are those of one who knows far too much pain and who knows that he is the cause of all of it.

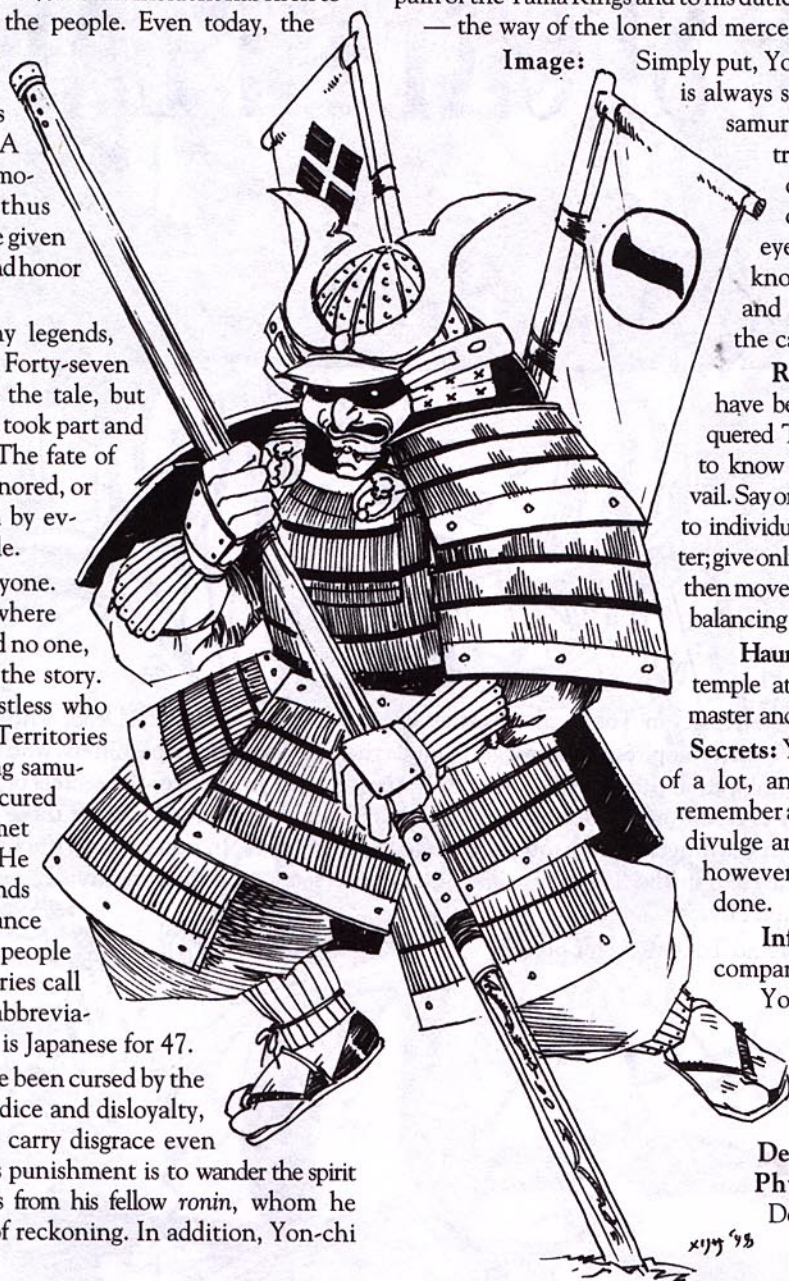
Roleplaying Hints: You have been traveling the Conquered Territories long enough to know every conceivable travail. Say only what needs to be said to individuals whom you encounter; give only the help that is needed, then move on. Your primary goal is balancing your own account.

Haunt: Yon-chi frequents the temple at Sengakuji, where his master and brethren are interred.

Secrets: Yon-chi has seen a hell of a lot, and it is his course to remember all of it. Getting him to divulge any useful information, however, is easier said than done.

Influence: As with any comparable figure of his kind, Yon-chi's influence is more larger-than-life legend than anything else.

Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Driven
Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5



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Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 5
Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Expression 3, Search 3, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Ancient Weapons 6, Disguise 3, Martial Arts 6, Melee 4, Stealth 5
Knowledges: Area Knowledge 4, Enigmas 4, Military Science 5, Occult 2, Philosophy 3
Backgrounds: Artifact (Yon-chi's katana) 5, Eidolon 3, Legacy 4, Memoriam 4, Notoriety 4
Passions: Make amends for cowardice (Restitution) 5, Assist Japanese wraiths against the Jade Empire (Help) 4
Arcanoi: Argos 4, Fatalism 3, Outrage 4, Way of the Soul 3
Fetters: His gravesite 5, Sengakuji Temple 4
Willpower: 9
Pathos: 8
Shadow: The Perfectionist
Angst: 6
Thorns: Aura of Corruption, Infamy
Dark Passions: Disregard your duty and embrace Oblivion (Despair) 5, Surrender to the Jade Emperor (Treachery) 4

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DANFORTH DEVEREAUX

Background: Dan Devereaux led his men through some of the bloodiest firefights in the Pacific theater during World War II. He lost more than half of his men in seemingly interminable conflict, men whom he had trained and disciplined himself, men whom he had come to call his own sons. When the war ended, Devereaux requested assignment with the Tokyo War Crimes Commission as a researcher and interrogator. He presided over hundreds of private prison-house sessions, during which he questioned, browbeat and abused captive members of the Japanese military as revenge for the slaughter of his men.

To Devereaux, stationed with the American occupation forces in Tokyo at the time, his men had died for no good reason. He made it his singular duty to procure the justice that had been denied his fallen men. The American authorities, however, were more concerned with the specter of Communism possibly engulfing the defeated nation, so they absolved many of the worst war criminals in order to have native forces to cast against the encroaching Red hordes.

Devereaux ruled his section of Tokyo with a despotic flair. He clamped down on the black marketeers whenever he could, rounding up prostitutes and roughing up back-alley merchants, whom Devereaux constantly accused of hiding his platoon's killers. He quickly gained a reputation for brutal caprice and the nickname "the blond devil." His focus on revenge blinded Devereaux to any exercise of restraint. It fostered a feeling of entitlement within him that he could control every single aspect of these people's lives. One night, while "interrogating" a teenage prostitute in an upper room in the Yurakuchō, Devereaux lost control and beat her to a bloody, lifeless pulp.

The walls began to close in on Devereaux soon after that. A court martial found him (barely) not guilty, but it was the beginning of the end for the officer. Two weeks later, Lt. Col.

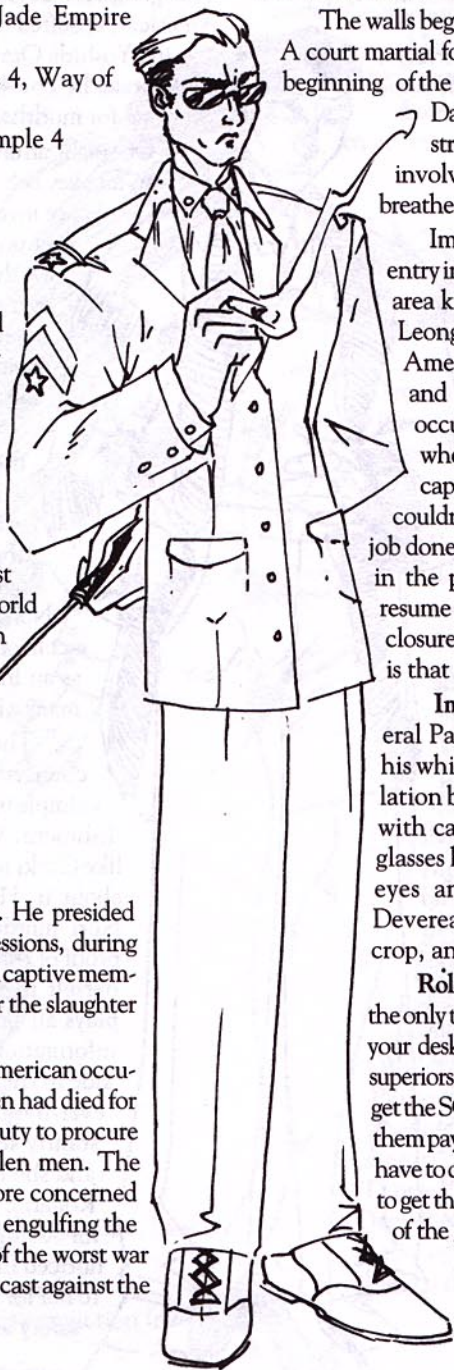
Danforth Devereaux got his throat cut in a side street in the Golden Gai District. Everyone involved — even his American superiors — breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Imperial Reapers took Devereaux after his entry into the Jade Empire. Learning of the soldier's area knowledge during his lifetime, General Shi Leong of the Imperial forces decided that the American would be incredibly useful as a contact and collaborator in the still-chaotic streets of occupied Tokyo. Devereaux now carries on where he left off during his postwar days in the capital. Yet, unlike the U.S. Army, Shi Leong couldn't care less about how Devereaux gets his job done, or about how many necks he has to break in the process. For Devereaux, it is a chance to resume the twisted path on his way to some sort of closure. For the wraiths of Tokyo, all that matters is that the blond devil is back.

Image: Danforth Devereaux is the son General Patton wished he'd had. Standing six-four, his whitish-blond hair is close-cropped in a regulation buzzcut. He wears his dress grays festooned with campaign ribbons. A pair of mirrored sunglasses hides his eyes — supposedly the last set of eyes any wraith wants to trade gazes with. Devereaux carries a working sidearm and a riding crop, and he uses both with alarming regularity.

Roleplaying Hints: As far as you are concerned, the only thing a Jap is good for is being a paperweight on your desk. Press on with your assignments from your superiors; you are confident that sooner or later you'll get the SOBs who murdered your men, and you'll make them pay. Your men would want it that way. And if you have to deal with some Chinaman for a superior officer to get the job done, so be it. Improvisation is the name of the game in these parts.

Haunt: Devereaux quarters himself in the old Imperial Hotel, home to the Imperial Occupation forces.



Secrets: None.

Influence: None.

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Bravo

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 4, Leadership 3, Melee 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Investigation 3, Law 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Notoriety 4

Passions: Avenge his men (Vengeance) 5, Serve the Jade Emperor (Duty) 3

Arcanoi: Mnemosynis 4, Outrage 2

Fetters: The alley in the Golden Gai 5

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 7

Shadow: The Rager

Angst: 6

Thorns: Death's Sigil, Tainted Relic (riding crop)

Dark Passions: Lead Spectres into Occupied Tokyo and wreak havoc (Destruction) 4, Destroy self to reunite with fallen men (Despair) 4

WILLIAM "YANKEE BILL" PRINE

NORIOSEMI "MAMA" PRINE

Background: William Mather Prine, the scion of an old Boston Brahmin family, graduated from Harvard Business School with a Ph.D. in international finance and fluency in Japanese. His career as an international consultant for a top investment firm in Boston made Prine a millionaire by the age of 35. His specialty was acting as a liaison between Japanese and Western firms, a sphere in which he built up an impressive client base and extensive networks of contacts in real estate and currency futures.

It wasn't long before the board members presented Prine with the opportunity to head up the firm's Tokyo division — an appointment he quickly accepted. As a Westerner in Asia, Prine went through the usual bouts of culture shock, but his background helped him weather them better than most. Through a Tokyo division subsidiary, he met a woman, Nori Osemi. They fell in love and were married within the year.

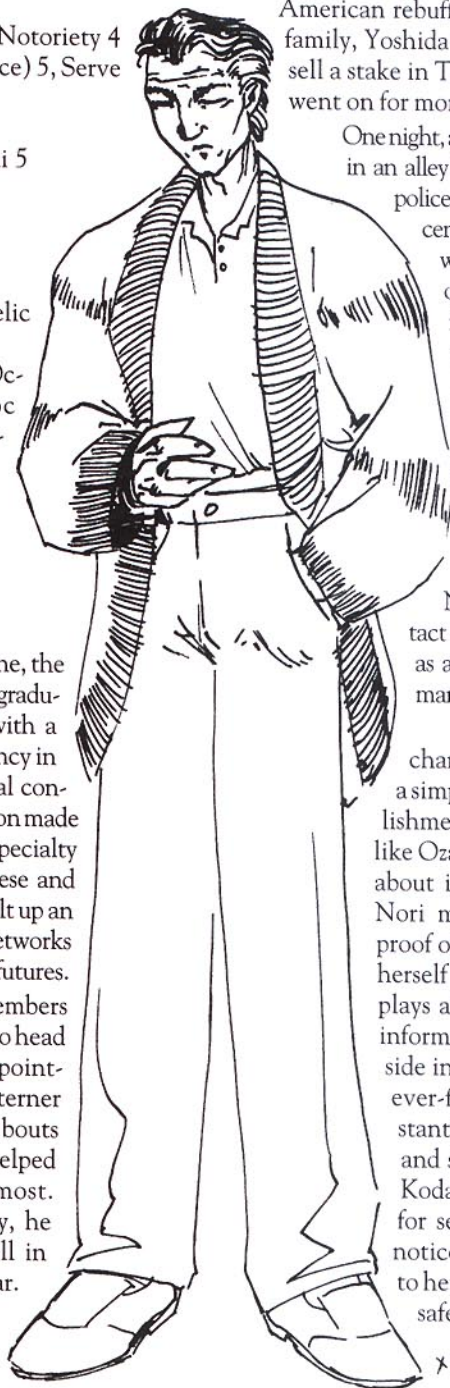
On his 40th birthday, William Prine did what many people only dream of doing — he retired. He resigned from the firm, took his personal bankroll and, with Nori, bought part ownership of a Roppongi District nightclub called "The 48th." William was an instant hit with the club's clientele. His command of the Japanese language and culture earned him the nickname "Yankee Bill." Nori worked as the club's entertainment director, and The 48th soon caught the fancy of the entire city.

Eventually, it also caught the attention of some Yakuza, who approached William, now majority owner of the club. The gangsters demanded a piece of the action, but the American rebuffed every offer they made. The head of the family, Yoshida Ozaki, made it clear that the couple would sell a stake in The 48th to Ozaki's organization. The dance went on for months, and the Prines refused to give an inch.

One night, an unknown assailant stabbed Nori Prine to death in an alley behind the club. William was devastated. The police investigated every lead, including William's recent underworld visitors, and concluded that Nori was the victim of a random mugging. Despondent over the loss of his wife, he sold a controlling interest in The 48th to Yoshida Ozaki. He remained managing partner in the club, but he'd lost his *wunderkind* entrepreneurial fire.

Nori emerged from the vicious attack in the cramped streets of conquered Tokyo. Her Caul was taken by a gang of Renegades that was gleaning the streets of new souls to save them from the Imperial Reapers. Adapting quickly to the free-for-all of the spectral city, Nori stayed with the Renegade band as a contact in one of the Roppongi's neutral clubs. Acting as an information broker, she became known to many who had dealings with her as "Mama" Prine.

The 48th became a Yakuza enterprise and changed from an upscale entertainment club to a simple upscale prostitution and gambling establishment. William detests the presence of people like Ozaki in The 48th, but there is little he can do about it. He is convinced that the gangster had Nori murdered, and he constantly searches for proof of that fact. Nori, meanwhile, has immersed herself in the middle of conquered Tokyo. She plays all sides in her role as a buyer and seller of information; her position is too valuable for any side in the conflict to double-cross her, or for the ever-frantic Reapers to collect her. Nori constantly seeks to contact her surviving husband, and she has found a providential ally in Emiko Kodano. Emiko works at The 48th and has a gift for seeing into Nori's world. William has also noticed Emiko's talents, and he regularly appeals to her for word from his dead wife, for news of her safety and the identity of her killers.



× 11 1/2

Images: William Prine is in his late 40s, Ivy League-lean, with salt-and-pepper hair and cobalt eyes. His facial features droop ever so slightly in a perpetual mourning for his dead wife. He also drinks too much, which is a weakness revealed by the blood vessels around his patrician nose.

At the end of her life, Nori Osemi Prine is 33, with long, jet-black hair and striking green eyes. In death, she wears the practical business suit and corporate heels in which she met her demise. Nori is pretty despite the multiple knife wounds that scar her Corpus.

STATS: WILLIAM PRINE

Roleplaying Hints: Ozaki's presence in what was once your club is the most egregious insult to you. You discreetly fixate on obtaining proof of his complicity in Nori's murder. Although you cannot be dissuaded from this course, Ozaki's aura makes you uncomfortable in its... otherworldliness. Tread surely but lightly around him and his lieutenants.

Secrets: None.

Influence: "Yankee Bill" still has many contacts within the international business community and is well-respected by all of them. He regularly accepts invitations from municipal leaders to consult on fiscal projects, and he's always willing to keep his hand in the game — mostly to take his mind off his wife.

Nature: Driven

Demeanor: Conformist

Physical: Strength 3,

Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 5,

Manipulation 5, Ap-

pearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, In-

telligence 6, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athlet-

ics 3, Empathy 3, Expression

5, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 2

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 5, Fire-

arms 1, Leadership 5, Technology

3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Computer 3, Finance 6, Law

3, Linguistics 3, Politics 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4, Status 5

Numina: True Faith 4 (representing his conviction in himself)

STATS: NORI OSEMI PRINE

Roleplaying Hints: You have been fortunate in your ability to adapt rather well to the atmosphere of occupied Tokyo, and you have managed to play all sides off one another while staying out of the fray yourself. Yet, your role as an information broker, though valuable, remains tenuous, especially with Imperial spies who practically crawl out of the woodwork. The presence of the young Emiko in your husband's former club nearly has you jumping out of your Corpus, and you are willing to do anything to regain contact with William. Be careful about whom you share this information with, though.

Haunt: An old "love hotel" and nightclub in the Roppongi, in the shadow of The 48th.

Secrets: "Mama" Prine seems to know most of the secrets that cross her path in occupied Tokyo, and she is willing to sell any of them for the right price.

Influence: None.

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Mediator

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Awareness 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Guile 2, Intrigue 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Leadership 2, Meditation 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 2, Computer 2, Finance 4, Linguistics 2, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Memoriam 1, Notoriety 2, Status 4

Passions: Watch over William (Love) 5, Assist wraiths against the Jade Emperor (Loyalty) 3

Arcanoi: Fatalism 2, Keening 3, Phantasm 1, Way of the Merchant 3

Fetters: William Prine 5, the alley where she was murdered 4

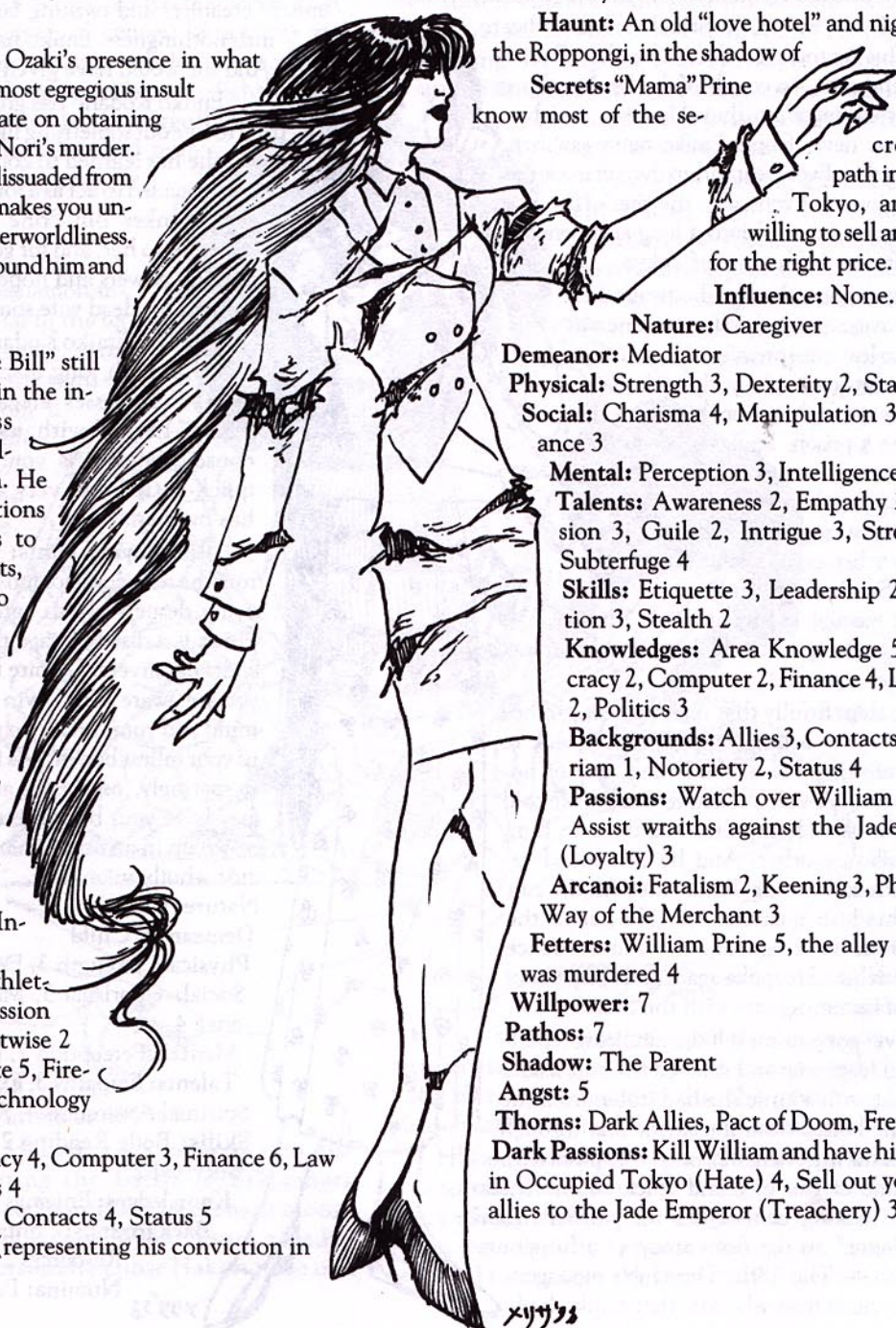
Willpower: 7

Pathos: 7

Shadow: The Parent

Angst: 5

Thorns: Dark Allies, Pact of Doom, Freudian Slip
Dark Passions: Kill William and have him join you in Occupied Tokyo (Hate) 4, Sell out your wraith allies to the Jade Emperor (Treachery) 3



EMIKO KODANO

Background: Emiko Kodano moved around a lot while she was growing up. Her parents were members of a religious cult, the Wandering Star. The cult spent its time roaming the main island of Honshu. The leader of the cult, a grinning snake who called himself *the Wandering Star*, led his followers on interminable "pilgrimages" throughout the wildernesses of rural Japan. They barely lived off the land and the charity of the towns they serially skirted. Star's teachings, if they could be called such, consisted of much this-and-that about tapping the "inner sight" of one's soul through meditation and ritual purification.

When Emiko was 11, the Star chose her mother to be part of his "entourage." Soon after that, Emiko's father left the cult — a couple of the Star's retainers simply escorted him off into the wilderness one night. His body was never found. Emiko rarely saw her mother after that. Every year within the cult made the child more insular. Eventually, the Star's "family" settled down and moved into a long-abandoned Shinto shrine on the outskirts of Tokyo.

The atmosphere changed drastically thereafter. Pilgrimages stopped; in fact, no one was permitted to leave the premises. No communication with the outside world took place. As with so many organizations of its type, the cult became a prison. Emiko eked out her meager existence in the haggard ranks of the cultists. On the eve of her 18th birthday, her surrogate mother and father came to her and broke the happy news: The Star had chosen Emiko to be the next member of his entourage. The occasion of her birthday would be her official entrance into his inner sanctum.

Emiko slept fitfully that night. She lay in bed and stared at the ceiling, hoping herself sick to hear a comforting voice. And then, out of nowhere, her father's voice called to Emiko. He told her what the Wandering Star had done to him, and to Emiko's mother. And he demanded revenge. The next evening, Emiko sat with the cult leader in his lush quarters. He told her of the presence of her inner sight and the transcendence of living with him. He spoke again and again about the glory of becoming one with the Star....

He never got past his self-aggrandizing repetition. Emiko leaped up and stabbed the cult leader in the throat with a knife she had stolen from the kitchen. She bolted from the shrine and through the streets of the little neighborhood. She pushed through the labyrinth of the city and stuck to the shadows. Constantly looking behind her for pursuers, Emiko finally collapsed on the front stoop of a Roppongi District club — The 48th. The club's manager was an American man who saw that Emiko had

been through the fright of her life. Unwilling to leave her to the streets, he took her in and gave her a job in the counting room. Emiko became quite astute at her work, and she graduated to running the books for the friendly American, whom everyone called "Yankee Bill."

But Emiko couldn't shake what had happened that one night. She began to hear her father again and even to see a shadowy wisp of him on occasion. It didn't stop there. Other voices and apparitions appeared to Emiko; many were of people she had never seen before. Emiko, through her fragmentary hallucinations, soon entered a crazed realm of ghosts, unholy creatures and twisting buildings spiraling upward into nothingness. Emiko had found her inner sight. And she would have given anything to be rid of it.

Emiko Kodano has grown up in The 48th and tried to live out something like a normal life. Over the years, she has learned to control her inner sight and been persuaded to act as a fortuneteller for entertainment. Yankee Bill Prine has been exceptionally generous to her, and for good reason: He knows of Emiko's powers and hopes that she can help him contact his dead wife someday.

Image: Emiko Kodano is in her late 20s, tall and thin with long black hair and rich, brown eyes. She dresses elegantly and occasionally carries herself with more than a little self-consciousness. As young as she is, Emiko is quick-witted and very aware of the effect she has on men.

Roleplaying Hints: You grew up closed off from the real world for most of your life, and you are trying desperately to catch up on life's lessons, which is a disadvantage that makes you prone to bouts of naïveté. Despite this handicap, however, you are aware of the twin assets of your analytical mind and your innate sexuality. Use both of them to your fullest benefit. As for your other talent, use it sparingly, especially around Yankee Bill. He may have your best interests at heart, but you've grown up in an atmosphere too empty to put your trust wholly in anyone.

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Child

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

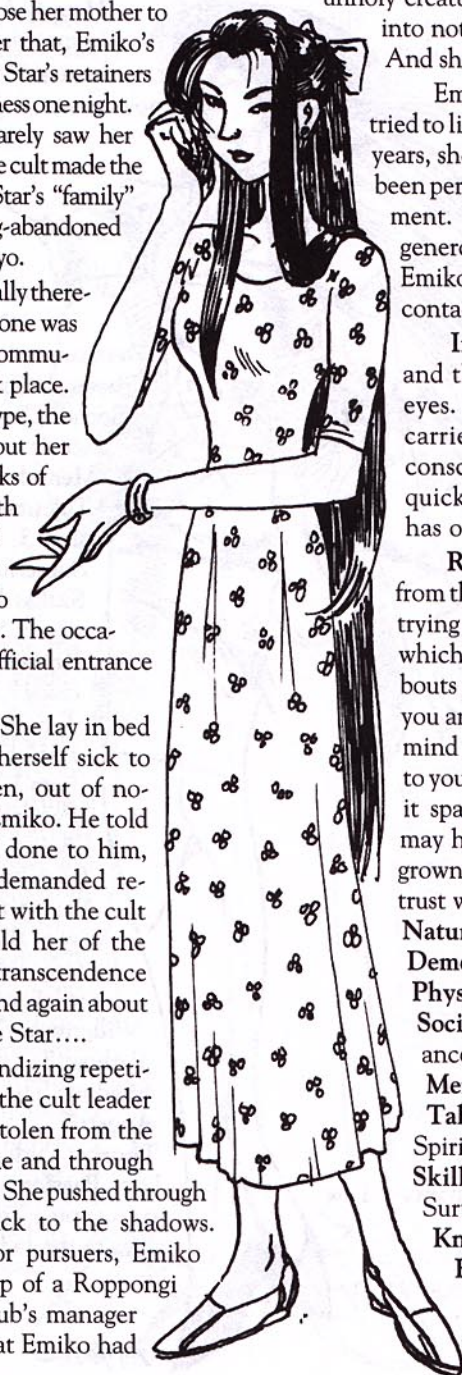
Talents: Empathy 3, Expression 3, Normalcy 2, Spiritual Awareness 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Body Reading 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 1, Mentor (Prine) 2, Resources 2

Numina: Psychic Abilities 3



KUEI-JIN

Vampires indigenous to the East were once known throughout Japan as *gaki* or *ketsuki*. Today, in the interest of presenting a (wholly false) unified front to the encroaching Kindred, many use the artificial "Kuei-jin" label to distinguish themselves and other "proper" vampires from the Western barbarians. Although the issue may seem picaresque, it inspires strong feelings among some Japanese vampires, many of whom felt superior to outsiders even before drawing the Second Breath. It's not unusual for fights to blossom over this topic among less temperate Kuei-jin (away from Kindred eyes, of course). Ancestors and other elders frown on such fractious behavior, however, and punish it severely. Gathered elders are slightly more civil about the matter but are arguably more contemptuous of the fabricated term — in their own subtle ways, naturally.

HAKARI

Hakari, the current Bishamon ancestor, has been influential in the *uji* since the Tokugawa shogunate. In this century, he has observed the transformation of Japan from a defeated and physically obliterated nation to a world superpower at the millennium's close. He has seen everything from earthquakes to war to whirlwind technological change during the span of his unlife, and he agrees with very little of it. Hakari is from the old guard of Kuei-jin, those factions that pride themselves on their fealty to the ancient Dharmas and that lament the Westernization which has gripped a significant percentage of young Kuei-jin ever since the surrender in 1945.

In his mortal life, Hakari was a samurai who distinguished himself during the Battle of Sekigahara through his masterful leadership as a lieutenant alongside the great Tokugawa Ieyasu. When Ieyasu acceded to the shogunate, he personally chose Hakari to be one

of his close advisors, given the samurai's natural affinity for strategy and his ironclad loyalty in the service of his feudal lord. Hakari soon became one of Ieyasu's most cherished ministers, and many times was the only person with whom Ieyasu communicated on important matters.

Hakari committed *seppuku* upon the death of Ieyasu, according to the custom of the time. He spent his *kôa* in close communion with other *shen* and supernatural forces of the island as he learned the intricacies of the several spirit realms. During this self-imposed asceticism, Hakari dedicated his second existence to the perpetual service of the shogunate. He returned to Edo during the reign of Tsunayoshi, the "dog shogun," and insinuated himself back into the leader's household under the guise of a gardener for the shogun's vast estates.

Fearful of drawing attention to himself, Hakari kept to the shadows and botanical houses during the daylight hours, when he would provide a sympathetic ear to the shogun. At night, he visited Tsunayoshi in the shogun's quarters for a private audience. It was not long before Hakari attracted the attention of other Kuei-jin, who were affronted at such a comparative upstart having access to the shogun, battle hero or not. One night, a small group of vampires decided to teach Hakari a lesson and set upon him as he made his way to an audience with Tsunayoshi. They

so sorely underestimated the old samurai and were never heard from again. Word soon spread throughout Edo's Kuei-jin community that the newcomer had made clear exactly who had the shogun's attention.

Hakari continued to play the role of *eminence gris* in Edo Castle throughout the reign of Tsunayoshi and his descendants. When the shogunate fell in 1868, and Japan was officially opened to foreigners, Hakari's once-resented role within the Imperial Palace came to be seen



as vital in determining the country's new direction with regard to the outside world. The course of the next few decades induced a steadily mounting panic among many Kuei-jin *wu* in the nation's new capital, as the city shifted further out of native Japanese control (and Kuei-jin influence).

Throughout all of this confusion, Hakari bided his time. He took care not to anger any of the Kuei-jin factions fighting over the island's Chi deposits and spiritually pure sites. The horrors of the war, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the devastation of the capital proved to many that the presiding ancestor no longer possessed the Mandate of Hell required to govern the rubble metropolis. The time had come to choose a successor who would save the city.

Several factions emerged from the smoke and ashes of the surrender, and each put up candidates who were then deemed unacceptable by the others. It was the moment Hakari had been waiting for. He stepped forward and offered to take the position of ancestor for as long as was necessary to restore the city to its former glory and health. After careful deliberation among their respective bodies, Hakari was chosen as ancestor of Tokyo.

Hakari has held this position for the last 50 years. He enjoys the unparalleled distinction of being the one candidate that each of the major factions tolerates. The Old Imperials, longing for the "good old days" of the shogun, see Hakari's connection to the Tokugawa clan as evidence of his holding the Mandate of Hell. The Haniwa regard Hakari as an able protector of the capital's secrets and relics, whereas the New Imperials believe that Hakari's longevity acts as a line between Earth and Heaven (just as they regard Emperor Akihito as a suitable stopgap while a true son of Japan is being located).

Hakari is content to let these groups debate among themselves. His sole concern is in facing the Sixth Age. Tokyo's ancestor maintains his court within the seclusion of the Imperial Palace. He prefers to let his right-hand man, Yoshida Ozaki, take care of affairs at street level. And Ozaki does so with unnerving efficiency. The present state of Western vampires within the capital has never sat well with Hakari, but the seduction of young Genji to corrupt Occidental ways especially infuriates him. Hakari blames such young Turks for the decay that beckons the Sixth Age. Rumors of a quick, Ozaki-led purge have arisen, but such tales have circulated for years. However, the fact that these stories are little more than rumor does not preclude the possibility of them coming true someday.

Image: Hakari is short and compact, about five-nine, with long straight gray hair and a thin, drooping mustache. In his guise as a gardener, Hakari dresses in drab work-clothes, which he dons while working in the

grottos and other sun-shielded portions of the palace gardens. For his appearances as ancestor, however, Hakari is always decked out in his ceremonial warrior's garb, which evokes potent images of the fire that still courses through his being.

Roleplaying Hints: You have been present at the island's greatest changes in the modern era, and you have developed your own inflexible opinions about the relative benefit of Japan's modernization. Your own feelings are not completely congruent with ones of the various groups vying for control over Tokyo's Kuei-jin populations; however, you understand the importance of appearing neutral toward each group concerned (if you are to rule with their support — or at least without their opposition). Make no mistake, though — you act swiftly if there is a chance of the *gaijin* getting the upper hand in any part of the city.

Haven: The Imperial Palace's private quarters, unseen by mortals for all but two days of the year, are Hakari's dwelling place.

Secrets: As ancestor, Hakari is in close contact with his coevals around the island, and he remains the guiding force behind any island-wide policies regarding the mixing of Kuei-jin and Kin-jin.

Influence: Hakari enjoys considerable influence and *de facto* control over those Kuei-jin who acknowledge his authority as ancestor. In addition, through his right-hand man, Yoshida Ozaki, Hakari also has pull with the mortal population.

Nature: Traditionalist

P'o Nature: The Barbarian

Demeanor: Director

Chi Balance: Yin

Direction: North

Dharma: Path of a Thousand Whispers 7

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 3, Etiquette 5, Martial Arts 6, Meditation 4, Melee 4

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 4, Rituals 5

Disciplines: Cultivation 4, Equilibrium 5, Internalize 4, Tapestry 4, Yang Prana 1, Yin Prana 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Herd 2, Horoscope 2, Rites 3

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 3

Soul Virtues: Hun 4, P'o 2

Willpower: 8

YOSHIDA "COUSIN" OZAKI

Background: Cousin Ozaki is the leader of the Silk Tiger clan, which is among the largest Yakuza families in the capital. He is also the eyes and ears of Hakari and serves his lord with a zealotry unparalleled in Middle Kingdom Japan.

Ozaki's loyalty to Hakari is ironclad. Theirs is a relationship that grew from the junior Kuei-jin's quest to purge the personal demons lingering from his past life. As a young soldier in the Imperial guard, Ozaki took his duties very seriously. He was sent to Ueno Hill on the day Edo fell and thrown into the heat of battle. His first kill was an older *shogitai*, whom Ozaki shot in the chest at point-blank range. Ozaki and the emperor's forces won the day, but it left him unfulfilled. The sight of the classic warrior, armed only with the traditional katana, attacking the better-equipped Ozaki seemed vulgar, matter-of-fact — wrong.

The more Ozaki dwelled on what transpired that day, the less honorable he felt about the battle. It began to consume him until he was overwhelmed with shame. He went to the Ueno Hill graves commemorating the battle, took out his sword (which had been reduced to a simple wall ornament) and committed *seppuku*. It was the only way to balance the deed he had done.

Ozaki's return to the Middle Kingdom and his linking with Hakari have cemented a complementary working relationship. His rise to the status of a major player in the Tokyo underworld allows Ozaki unlimited access to the typically shadow-cloaked places frequented by Kindred and Kuei-jin. Ozaki also owns a controlling interest in The 48th nightclub, which is a major node of information at the heart of the illicit dealings that transpire in the metropolis. Ozaki is a demonic bastard, but he is also a reasonable businessman, like any of his fellow Yakuza. He is as much a part of the give-and-take between the law and the place of the mob in Japanese society. But Ozaki has a far more important agenda in operation, and he means to accomplish it by any means necessary.

Image: Ozaki is the epitome of the successful Yakuza chief. He stands six-two with coarse, spiky black hair and ice-blue eyes (thanks to contact lenses). He dresses in dark, muted colors and often wears an ankle-length olive trench coat, both to give the illusion of more height and to conceal any number of lethal instruments on his person.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you reap the obvious benefits that befall a crime boss, your primary obligation is to Hakari. You believe that acting in the service of your samurai elder can assist you in finding the inner peace lost after what you considered to be a shameful kill at the battle of Ueno Hill. Thus, you are unquestioningly faithful to the ancestor, even to the point where his policies conflict with your own organization's goals. This dichotomy doesn't sit well with some of your lieutenants, however, and the potential for internal strife in the Silk Tiger clan is bubbling up to the surface.

Haven: Ozaki splits his time between the Silk Tiger clan's offices in the Golden Gai District and his newfound piece of turf, The 48th, in the Roppongi.

Secrets: Apart from being privy to many of Hakari's plans, Ozaki is also up-to-date on many of Tokyo's vices — after all, he provides most of them.

Influence: As chieftain, Ozaki reaps the benefits of the quasi-mystical role that the Yakuza plays in Japanese society. He also acts as the voice of Hakari outside the walls of the Imperial Palace. If an order comes from Ozaki, it's considered to come from the ancestor himself.

Nature: Architect

P'o Nature: The Slave

Demeanor: Fanatic

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: East

Dharma: Devil Tiger 6

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5, Leadership 3, Streetwise 5

Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 3, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Finance 2, Law 3, Linguistics 2, Politics 3, Rituals 1, Torture 3

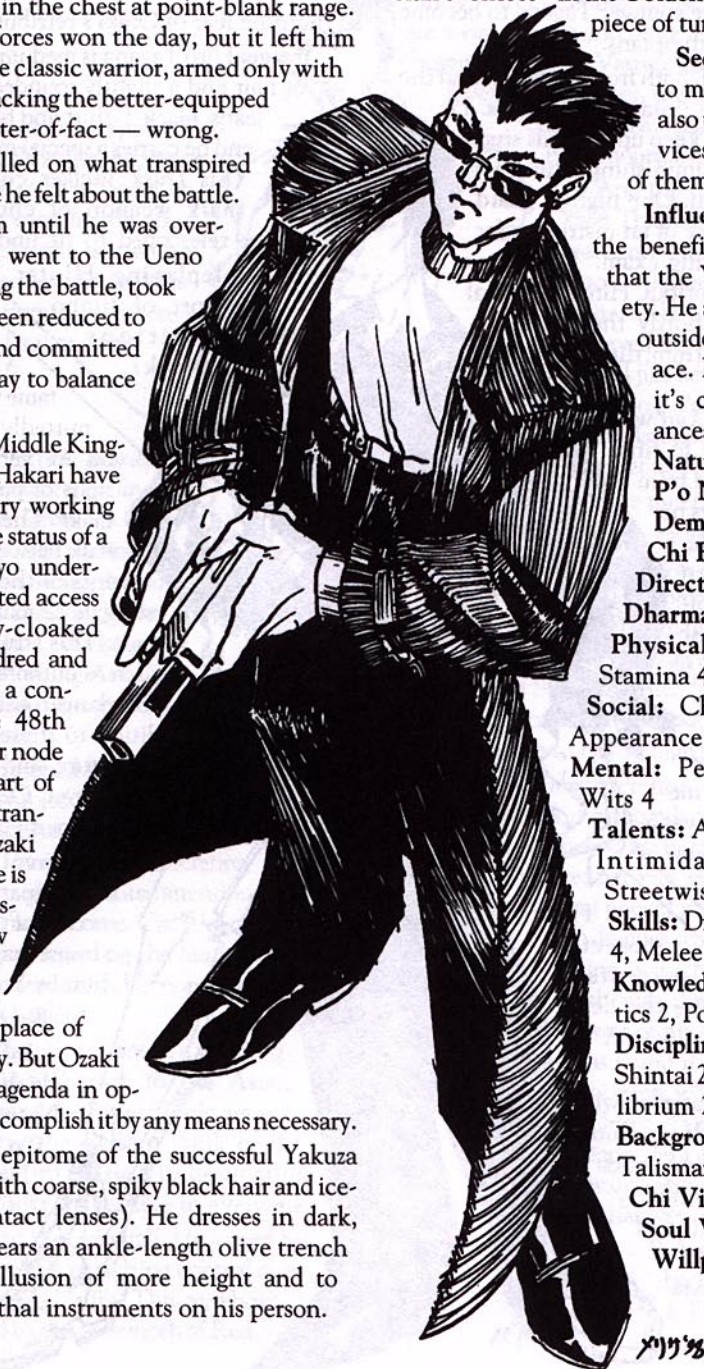
Disciplines: Black Wind 2, Demon Shintai 2, Ghost-Flame Shintai 4, Equilibrium 2, Yang Prana 3, Yin Prana 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5, Jade Talisman 2, Mentor (Hakari) 5, Rites 1

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 2, P'o 4

Willpower: 7



HIRO TAGANA

Background: From a very early age, Hiro Tagana was fascinated by show business. His father was a prominent player in the National Theatre company, and Hiro grew up envisioning himself following in his father's footsteps. The requirements for Tokyo's most exclusive drama school, though, were prohibitively high. Being a legacy guaranteed Hiro nothing.

Hiro steeled himself for the highly selective entrance exams. He sacrificed meals and sleep as he pushed himself to come out on top. Hiro was accepted. The examination committee saw potential for the younger Tagana to become one of Japan's most respected thespians.

Yet the pressure to succeed, both from his father and the school, led Hiro to take some unsavory shortcuts. He started using amphetamines to keep up with his studies, but that route resulted in diminishing returns for Hiro — as well as an addiction. One night a guard caught Hiro searching the office of an instructor for the questions from an upcoming exam. The drama school and Hiro's father were furious. Hiro's dismissal from the academy followed shortly thereafter, and his father officially disowned him, throwing Hiro into the street.

With no home, no job and a growing addiction, Hiro was desperate to find some sort of income. He drifted from one bit-part to the next, in plays no one had ever heard of. His addiction became too much for even the most liberal playhouses to tolerate, and even tiny, slapdash production companies refused to let him audition.

Hiro drifted into a *bosozoku*, one of the many motorcycle gangs that claimed turf in the metropolis. The gang Hiro chose was a low-level pipeline for a Yakuza family, whose *oyabun* found use for Hiro as a bagman. On his first job, Hiro decided to make a score of his own and he skimmed a percentage off the top before closing the deal. He ended up at the bottom of Tokyo Bay.

Hiro Tagana later crawled out of the murk and found himself on the shores of the Sumida River. He fell upon an unlucky midnight jogger and slashed her throat to drain her Chi. Then Hiro went to clear his debts with the Yakuza chieftain.

The chieftain, "Cousin" Ozaki, was impressed by the sheer fact that Hiro had returned at all. The mobster offered the fledgling vampire a second chance. During the time of Hiro's *kôa*, the fallen performer would be able to live out his dream. Ozaki had a lot of pull with the Japanese filmmaking industry, and he paved Hiro's way to stardom. His movies, the *Dusk Walker* series of action-adventures, have made him a cult sensation and have plastered his face on billboards and kiosks all over Tokyo. But fame has come at a price; Ozaki uses Hiro to smuggle contraband, which is a dodge that becomes ever more difficult as Hiro's fame increases. The danger of detection is foremost in Hiro's mind, almost more so than the fear of Ozaki's retribution.

Image: Hiro Tagana is medium height with a bushy mass of hair and a slightly rounded face. He dresses in dark jeans, black T-shirt and black motorcycle jacket, and he carries a special metal fighting staff (his *Dusk Walker* character's trademark weapon of choice), which can be telescoped to fit under the jacket.

Roleplaying Hints: You are caught in a sort of limbo between your personal ambitions and your debt to Cousin Ozaki. Although you revel in the fame you receive from your (admittedly trumped-up) film career, you are very aware of Ozaki's oversight of practically every move you make. The tightrope you reluctantly walk between Ozaki and the enticements of the mortal world makes the struggle to maintain your stability difficult. This struggle can lead to slip-ups, such as outbursts in public or on the set, or more dangerously, an imbalance of Chi. In addition to these issues is the question of your future, and whether once your *kôa* is completed, Ozaki will expect your loyalty in perpetuity.

Haven: Hiro resides in a penthouse apartment in the Kabukicho section of the Shinjuku District. It is a home magnanimously provided for him by Yoshida Ozaki.

Secrets: None.

Influence: Very little outside the entertainment industry.

Nature: Loner

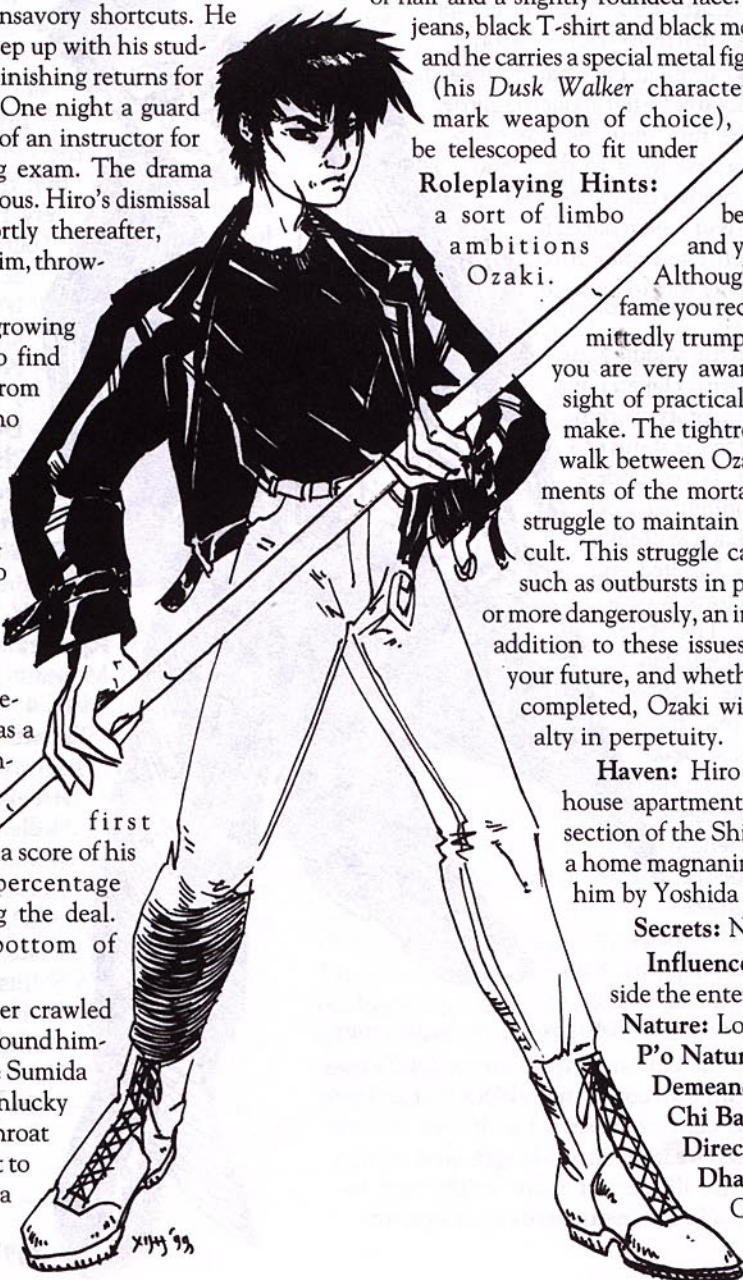
P'o Nature: The Deceiver

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: South

Dharma: Resplendent Crane 3



Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2, Martial Arts 3, Melee 3, Performance 4, Stealth 3
Knowledges: Computer 1, Law 1, Occult 2, Politics 1
Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Yang Prana 3, Yin Prana 2
Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Herd 2, Horoscope 1, Nushi 1
Chi Virtues: Yin 2, Yang 3
Soul Virtues: Hun 2, P'o 1
Willpower: 6

KINDRED

As is the case in any Asian metropolis, Kindred in Tokyo exist here largely at the sufferance of the city's Kuei-jin. While some alliances between Eastern and Western vampires do occur in Japan's capital, most relations across this divide are strained. Of course, any notion that Kindred are unified by this inimical environment is fleeting at best and fatal at worst.

PRESTON VARRICK

Background: Preston Varrick learned from a master. And when your master is Oliver Thrace, one of the darkest forces of Clan Tremere, you learn fast and well. Varrick was one of Thrace's top lieutenants during the elder vampire's days as a "fixer" in London. When Thomas Wyncham offered Thrace the long-dormant assignment of reinfiltrating Asia, Varrick naturally stepped into the void created by his mentor's departure.

Varrick took up the unfinished business left by Thrace and added some new "projects" in the realms of intimidation and torture. He soon surpassed his teacher in ingenuity and ruthlessness. Varrick's lack of discretion on more than one occasion brought unwanted attention from mortal authorities. The Tremere Inner Circle found itself in an unenviable position regarding the future of Preston Varrick. They had to silence him, but none of the members wanted to lose such a talent.

It was Wyncham who finally proposed a winning alternative: Let Varrick join Thrace in the Asian project. The other members of the Inner Circle agreed, and Varrick set off to form the Eastern flank of the Tremere's pincer movement into Asia. His destination was Tokyo. The solution looked agreeable to everyone.

For Varrick, it seemed to be a windfall. He joined his old teacher in the common cause of gaining control over two-fifths of the world's kine. And unlike Thrace, whose efforts had been stonewalled by the behemoth of Red

China and the return of Hong Kong to Chinese control, Varrick had free reign over arguably the most Westernized metropolis in Asia. And if he succeeded in taking Tokyo....

Varrick reached the Japanese capital in late 1993. He promptly went to work, under the cover of the Tokyo offices for a London import company. From this position, which financed a lucrative smuggling trade of drugs and other contraband, Varrick funneled great amounts of stolen goods into the many markets dotting the city. He made the right contacts and greased all the right palms and let every single Western Kindred know who the new boss was.

Four years passed, and the situation had altered significantly. Varrick's contacts disappeared. The local Yakuza gangs ate away at more and more of his turf. The Eastern vampires began to undercut Varrick's power base. The Tremere worked feverishly to stanch the bleeding in his piece of the city, but only so much can be accomplished during the night hours, even in Tokyo.

And the takeover bid was going nowhere. Oliver Thrace had regressed more and more into serial frenzy. He became increasingly unstable and concocted paranoid notions of the Inner Circle's desire to be rid of him. Varrick never really believed any of his former mentor's ramblings. And just before the return of Hong Kong to China, Varrick spoke to his old mentor for the last time. The two men finalized plans to meet in Tokyo the next month.

The meeting never took place.

Varrick is caught in the calm before what he believes to be the biggest storm ever to hit the Tremere Asian project. The Inner Circle remains very coy with him in its recent dispatches. Varrick is beginning to believe the Tokyo post is another form of Siberian exile. Yet, the mandate from the Circle is crystal clear: *Take Tokyo at all costs.* Such costs may prove to be too high for Varrick to pay.

Image: Preston Varrick appears to be in his mid-30s, and he stands about five-eleven. He wears his hair slicked back. His usual attire is a dark double-breasted suit with white shirt and matching blood-red tie and pocket square. He carries a pocketwatch that doubles as a Thaumaturgical focus — its casing is inscribed with a few magical sigils. Although the bauble contains none of the power of his mentor's walking stick, Varrick has found it to be useful on more than one occasion when dealing with a recalcitrant subject. Varrick has developed the vampiric equivalent of a nervous tic, as he fingers the watch absently in futile desire for control of whatever crisis is at hand.

Roleplaying Hints: As the leader of both a multinational company and a Tremere chantry, you exude an aura of precise control in your



dealings with subordinates and colleagues. But the current situation regarding Thrace and the Asian project (not to mention your still-rough ways with Japanese etiquette) have frayed your nerves more than usual. You have seen your once-substantial hegemony within the city slowly erode, for the ties among the Inner Circle, Thrace and yourself have broken down. You must maintain as much of your power as possible, but you are no fool, and you always have one eye on the nearest exit should your fiefdom collapse. One thing is clear, however: You will not go down without a fight.

Haven: The Tremere chantry, located on the top six floors of a maximum-security skyscraper near the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

Secrets: As the eastern fork for the taking of Asia, Varrick is up on much of Wyncham's overall plan; his relationship with Thrace also makes Varrick privy to his old mentor's opinions and interpretations on the "real" story of how the Middle Kingdom works. Thaumaturgically speaking, Varrick did, after all, learn much of what he knows from Oliver Thrace. His own skill in the Discipline, however, is limited to a few minor talents — nothing on the level of Thrace's abilities to bind and summon demons and to commune with the Yama Kings. Varrick's relative novice status may soon change, though.

Influence: Unlike his mentor, Varrick has benefited from the more Western-friendly (in mortal terms, anyway) atmosphere of Tokyo. But he has come to question his importance within the larger network of Clan Tremere itself, and he has entertained notions of dissolving all ties with the Inner Circle if he does not receive some clearer objective.

Clan: Tremere

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Judge

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1602

Apparent Age: mid-30s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5, Leadership 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Computer 2, Finance 5, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 5, Necromancy 2, Obfuscate 4, Thaumaturgy 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Mentor (Thrace) 5, Resources 5, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 3

Humanity: 3

Willpower: 8

MAGES

The Zaibatsu, Japan's Technocratic faction, dominates the magical scene in Tokyo. The Traditions and Crafts survive here in part because the Zaibatsu doesn't — yet — see them as targets that warrant the full attention of its reality adjusters. But more magic flourishes in the shadows than the Technocrats realize.

THE TRADITIONS

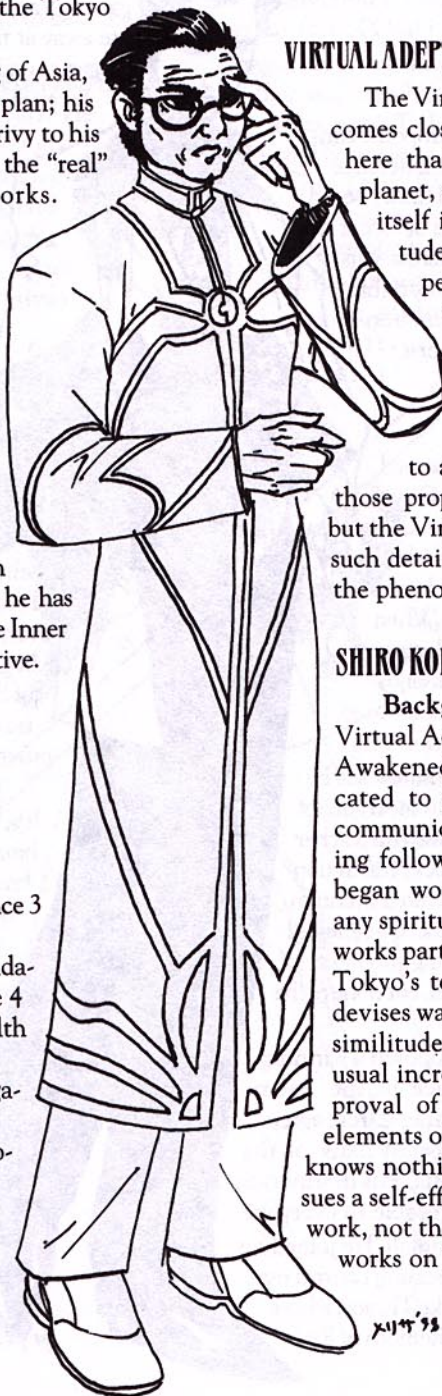
VIRTUAL ADEPTS

The Virtual Adepts love Tokyo. The Web comes closer to the surface of material life here than almost anywhere else on the planet, as the city's population immerses itself in a sea of data. The Tokyo attitudes toward electronics help: The people of the metropolis put more emotion and sense of self into their gadgets than most Westerners do after childhood. Real-estate costs contribute to this phenomenon — people who cannot expect ever to afford a home of their own direct those proprietary sentiments elsewhere — but the Virtual Adepts pay little attention to such details. They concern themselves with the phenomenon, not its causes.

SHIRO KOIKE

Background: Shiro is one of the senior Virtual Adepts in Tokyo. Fifty years old, he Awakened late, after a life already dedicated to the electronic enhancement of communications technology. His Awakening followed a crisis of faith in which he began wondering whether there might be any spiritual significance to his work. Shiro works part-time as a consultant to several of Tokyo's television networks, for which he devises ways to increase resolution and verisimilitude of transmitted images without the usual increases in bandwidth. With the approval of his mentors, he is introducing elements of trinary logic. The general public knows nothing of him — he deliberately pursues a self-effacing privacy with the motto "the work, not the worker" — but programs that he works on have a growing popularity.

Shiro's fans include a number of Genji Kuei-jin, who are considering how best to approach him



and introduce him to the realms of spirit. They have no idea that he is anything other than a highly talented human artist/engineer.

Image: Shiro is physically undistinguished, with average height and build and no real distinguishing features. He goes to Tokyo's best tailors and follows their recommendations implicitly, so he always looks fashionable; he changes the style of his glasses every six months to keep current with changing materials technology. When conversation turns to computing and its impact on society, his interest flares and he becomes animated. Shiro usually dominates any ensuing exchange.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a happy man, one of the fortunate few who not only get to pursue their dreams but who also find that their dreams matter in the scheme of things. If it doesn't concern computing, telecommunications or the Ascension War, you probably don't care much about it. But you care a lot about not surrendering your city and country to the Five Metal Dragons.

Chantry: A small but lavishly decorated apartment in Shinjuku, not far from his office.

Secrets: Shiro has a thorough understanding of what the Awakened in Japan are up to, but he knows almost nothing of other *shen*. His mundane and magickal aptitudes combine to give him ready access to information about mortal affairs throughout Japan. Shiro focuses almost exclusively on high-tech industries.

Influence: Shiro directly controls the small band of Tokyo Virtual Adepts. Through his work, he has earned the respect of technophiles both mortal and otherwise, and were he to make requests of them, they'd do their best to comply.

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Architect

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: Virtual Adepts

Sect: Chaoticians

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Expression 2, Instruction 2, Intuition 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Meditation 3, Research 3, Technology 5

Knowledges: Computer 5, Culture 1, Enigmas 4, Investigation 2, Law 1, Science 3

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 1, Forces 3, Mind 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Influence 3, Node 2

Arete: 5

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 2

THE TECHNOCRACY

VOID ENGINEERS

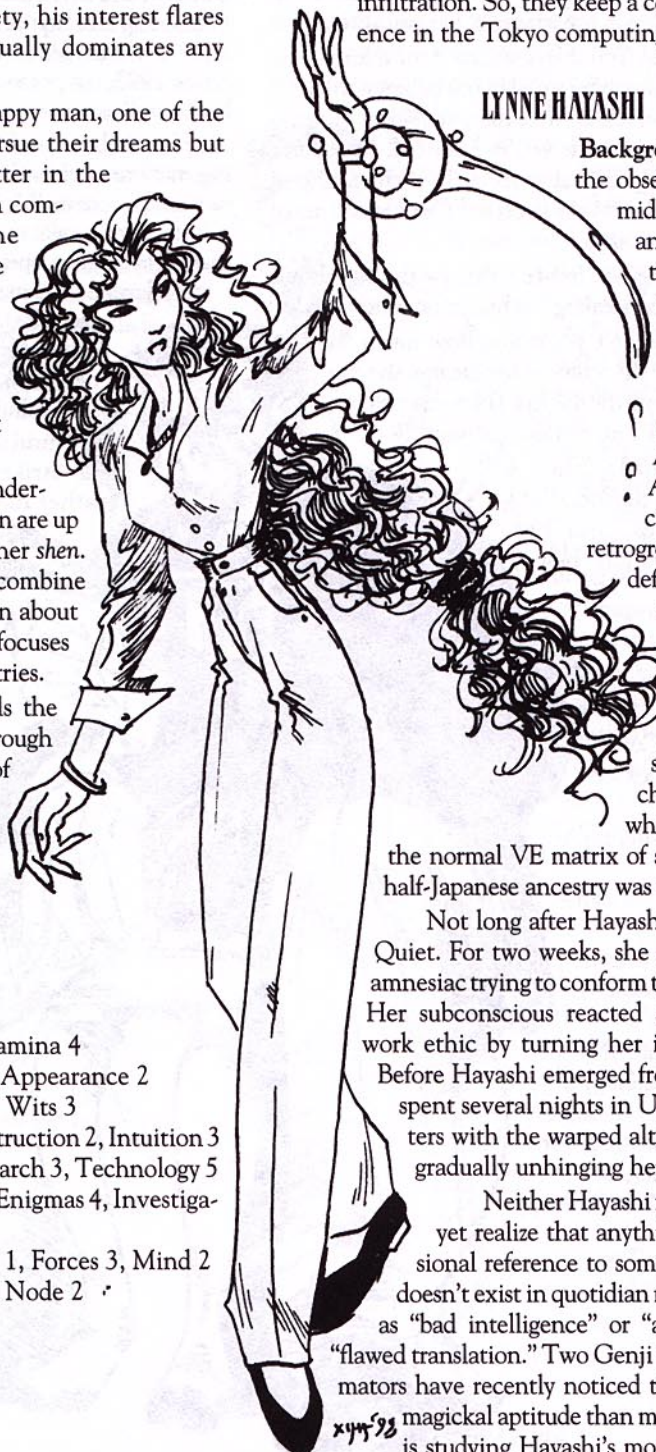
The Void Engineers are extremely curious about Japanese experiments with simulated environments. These Technocrats see in the environments the potential to explore new realms and the possibility of a new front for Virtual Adept infiltration. So, they keep a constant, if minor, presence in the Tokyo computing scene.

LYNNE HAYASHI

Background: Hayashi is part of the observer corps. Still in her mid-30s, she has established an international reputation for her innovations in computer-generated landscapes — breakthroughs based on the algorithmic underpinnings of the art. Hayashi Awoke under Virtual Adept tutelage but became dissatisfied with the retrogressive Traditions, so she defected to the Technocracy. Because she has more active fervor for the cause of "one Reality" than many Void Engineers, she was an obvious choice to go to Tokyo, where she is removed from the normal VE matrix of social interactions. Her half-Japanese ancestry was an added bonus.

Not long after Hayashi's arrival, she fell into Quiet. For two weeks, she wandered Tokyo as an amnesiac trying to conform to her sense of "normal." Her subconscious reacted against her martyrlike work ethic by turning her into an utter libertine. Before Hayashi emerged from her fugue state, she spent several nights in Ueno Park. Her encounters with the warped alternate Japans there are gradually unhinging her mental equilibrium.

Neither Hayashi nor her distant superiors yet realize that anything is wrong. Her occasional reference to some feature of Tokyo that doesn't exist in quotidian reality can be written off as "bad intelligence" or "a misunderstanding" or "flawed translation." Two Genji freelance computer animators have recently noticed that she shows far more magickal aptitude than most mortals, and the pair is studying Hayashi's movements. They hope to



cultivate her as a contact with the Void Engineers on the grounds that having one more thread of connections could come in handy.

Image: Hayashi shows her mother's Irish ancestry far more than her father's Japanese lineage. She's five-eleven and has curly red hair. (She's the constant target of unwanted advances from novelty-seeking Japanese businessmen.) Her dress is typical Silicon Valley: comfortable shirts and slacks. Since her experiences in Ueno Park, she often has a distracted look, as fragments of alternate Japans intrude upon the fringes of her perceptions.

Roleplaying Hints: You drove yourself for a long time because you knew how much teetered in the balance with the Ascension War, and you feared that the enemies of progress and unity might triumph. Now you're haunted. You don't quite know what's going on, but it seems as if the fabric of Tokyo life frays around you every so often. You want to make these waking nightmares stop.

Chantry: A Void Engineer front company at the waterfront, with "warehouse space" concealing Technocratic operations.

Secrets: Hayashi doesn't yet realize how much she knows. If she can identify the source of her dreams, she can lead the Void Engineers into the thick of Tokyo *hsien* affairs, but for the moment, she's wrapped in confusion.

Influence: Very little. She's still finding her way through the social labyrinth of Zaibatsu ties, and her behavioral eccentricities don't help.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Follower

Essence: Dynamic

Convention: Void Engineers

Sect: Border Division Core

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Expression 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Medicine 1, Research 3, Technology 2

Knowledges: Computer 3, Culture 2, Enigmas 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 2, Science 3

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 2, Time 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Dream 3, Library 1, Node 1

Arete: 3

Willpower: 6

Quintessence: 3

Paradox: 3

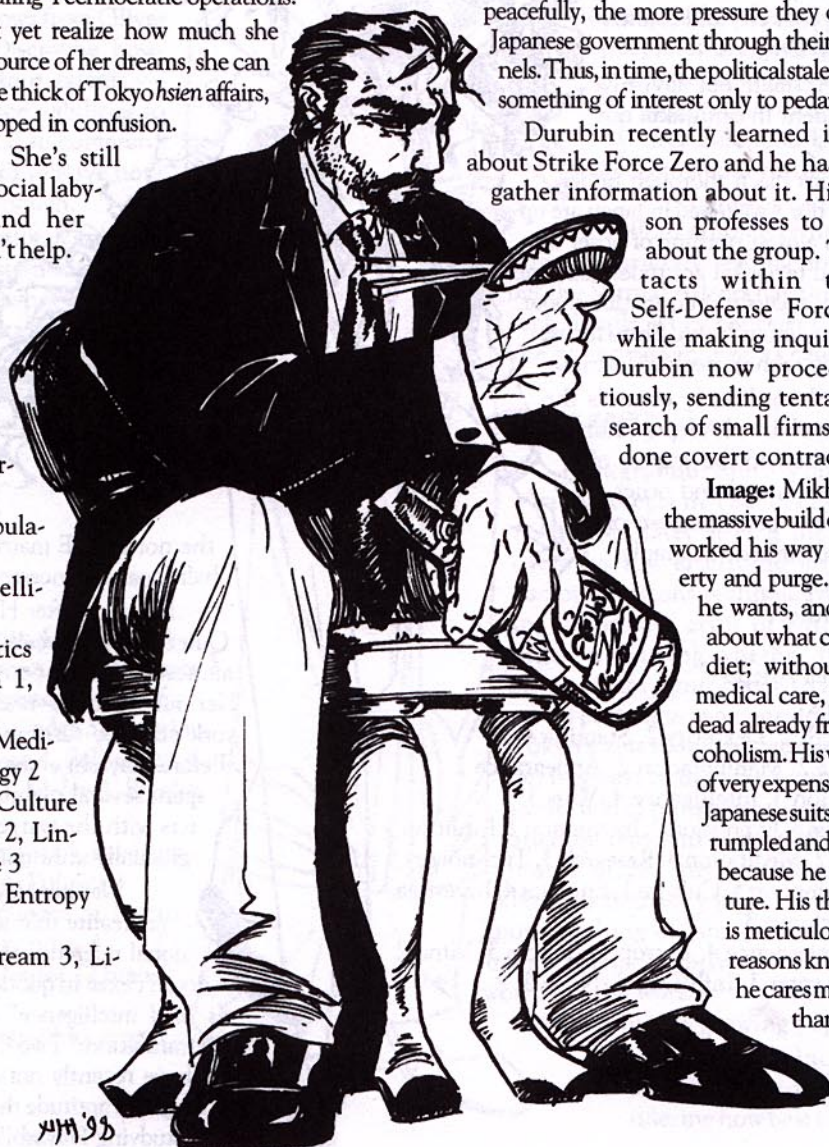
MIKHAIL DURUBIN

Background: Durubin has served the Syndicate for more than 40 years. While Communism was the doctrine of the day, Mikhail made contacts throughout the apparatus and played an important part in building a Russian organized crime network. In the 1980s, when it became clear to observers with sources inside the bureaucracy that the Soviet Union could not endure, he turned to working among Russian nationalists. Durubin and his colleagues sought — not very successfully — to build up an alternative to the reactionary, religious nationalism that emerged as the major political rival to Communism. Since 1992, his primary mission has been the building of ties between Russian enterprises and neighboring countries.

For the last year, Mikhail has taken part in Russian/Japanese negotiations over Sakhalin Island and the mineral rights in the surrounding ocean. While the politicians posture at each other, he painstakingly works out quiet Japanese investment and profit-sharing in Russian operations. The Syndicate theorizes that the more Japanese businesses have concrete reasons to cooperate peacefully, the more pressure they can exert on the Japanese government through their own back channels. Thus, in time, the political stalemate can become something of interest only to pedants.

Durubin recently learned in vague terms about Strike Force Zero and he has been trying to gather information about it. His Zaibatsu liaison professes to know nothing about the group. Two of his contacts within the Japanese Self-Defense Force disappeared while making inquiries about SF0. Durubin now proceeds more cautiously, sending tentative queries in search of small firms that may have done covert contracting for SF0.

Image: Mikhail Durubin has the massive build of a Russian who's worked his way up through poverty and purge. He now eats all he wants, and he has no idea about what constitutes a good diet; without Technocratic medical care, he'd probably be dead already from obesity or alcoholism. His wardrobe consists of very expensive European and Japanese suits, all of which look rumpled and ill-fitting on him because he has terrible posture. His thinning gray hair is meticulously styled — for reasons known only to him, he cares more about his hair than any of his other features.



Roleplaying Hints: The material world means little to you. Your concern is with *power*, specifically with protecting and expanding opportunities to profit through the matrix of economic associations. Some people help you; they are allies, for the moment. Some people oppose you; they are enemies to be subverted, exploited and destroyed. Everyone else matters only insofar as they might be customers. You are courteous enough to avoid offending allies and customers too regularly. When you're not negotiating, you're out gratifying your appetites, thanks to the opportunities you and your associates have created so far.

Chantry: The offices of the Russo-Japanese Economic Alliance, in Kasumigaseki. At the start of the decade, it was a minor business venture that the Syndicate transformed into a flourishing center for diplomacy and commerce.

Secrets: The Alliance has an extensive set of dossiers on *shen*. Durubin takes reality deviants seriously. He has a thorough personal knowledge of the corruptible members of Japanese government and of leading industrial firms.

Influence: Durubin controls outright many small firms that specialized in trade with Russia and then found themselves subject to blackmail or other illicit manipulation. He has lesser control over several major manufacturers in Japan, due to information he has

"harvested" from his partners — stuff they might prefer not to see in the public record. Further, he is a known force in Japanese trade politics and is one of very few Westerners who have regular access to important kinsapress clubs.

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Essence: Pattern

Convention: Syndicate

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Leadership 2, Research 4, Survival 2, Technology 4

Knowledges: Culture 5, Enigmas 1, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 4

Spheres: Entropy 3, Forces 3, Matter 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 2, Avatar 3, Chantry 2, Influence 3, Node 2, Resources 4

Arete: 7

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 3

JOEJUKISHIRO WATANABE

Background: Joejukishiro directs the Zaibatsu's Tokyo operations. Ironically, he wields influence through a decidedly Western technique: With support from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, he comes in as interim manager of ailing computer firms and puts them on a better footing before turning authority over to a new board of directors trained for the task. Then he's off to the next company. Because Watanabe deals with multiple firms in great detail each year, he has excellent opportunities to discover promising souls and recruit them for the cause. Most firms contain no potential recruits, but over the course of a year, he usually finds one or two to usher along... or to kill, if they prove to be troublesome. (The Zaibatsu has no desire at all to help swell the ranks of any other Awakened group.)

Watanabe compensates for the Western bent of his work with an intense traditionalism in all other aspects of his life. He is well-known among schools that teach the ancient arts and crafts as a generous patron and as a sometimes-diligent (if not very talented) student. He gives generously to political groups that promote reduced entanglement with the West and expanded Japanese influence among other Asian nations.

Image: Joejukishiro is the very image of the new traditionalist businessman. He dresses in immaculate dark suits, with tie and handkerchief displaying his family chop or some *kanji* words he regards as relevant to his current project. Away from home, he favors kimono, or at least some elements of pre-Western garb along with his suits. His appearance gives no clue to his age — he is fit, perfectly groomed and unwrinkled. His eyes convey a cold appraisal, and he *never* shows his emotions to anyone but his closest associates.

Roleplaying Hints: All of your life you've lived in the shadow of outsiders: the American occupation, then (as you Awakened and developed your magickal talents) the Technocracy. You believe fervently in the goal of One World, but you want it to come about on Japanese terms, not Western ones. Your energy goes toward the goals of Japanese independence and dominance. Anything that might distract you from it is to be ignored; nothing that might help you advance it is to



be neglected. "Obsessed" is the term your associates usually apply to you; "foolish" is one (of the kinder epithets) you often apply to them.

Chantry: A converted Ikebukuro storefront that houses your computer consulting service and conceals your residence. The most secret room holds trophies of Zaibatsu sorties against effigy lords and other reality deviants.

Secrets: Watanabe knows the affairs of the Japanese and Western Technocracy in intimate detail. Through his concern with traditional arts, he's come into contact with reality deviants hiding in reactionary enclaves, so he has a good sense of *shen* forces in and around Tokyo.

Influence: Since Joejushiro helps shape and implement Zaibatsu policy, to some degree, all of Japan is what he says it should be. In mundane as well as magical ways, he has strong influence throughout the network of startup businesses and computing firms.

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Director

Essence: Pattern

Convention: Zaibatsu

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Expression 4, Instruction 1, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2, Martial Arts 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Do 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 2, Leadership 4, Meditation 2, Research 3, Technology 4

Knowledges: Computer 4, Cosmology 2, Culture 3, Law 3, Linguistics 3, Science 1

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 3, Mind 3, Spirit 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 1, Influence 4, Library 3, Node 3

Arete: 6

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 4

Paradox: 3

THE CRAFTS

THE WU-KENG

Hong Kong is the great stronghold of the Wu-Keng, a Craft whose founding members struck a bargain with demons by trading 3,000 years of service for the opportunity to rule China when the term expires. Two years remain (See *The Book of Crafts*, p. 111, for details). Tokyo is the group's second greatest stronghold and home to one of the six surviving *chou yan* — the order's founders — and a handy base of operations for striking at the order's enemies (real and perceived) in China.

FOOTBINDING

The Chinese custom of footbinding arose from a long-standing preference among Chinese men for women with small feet. It began among the aristocracy and spread to other classes, and it ended with the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty.

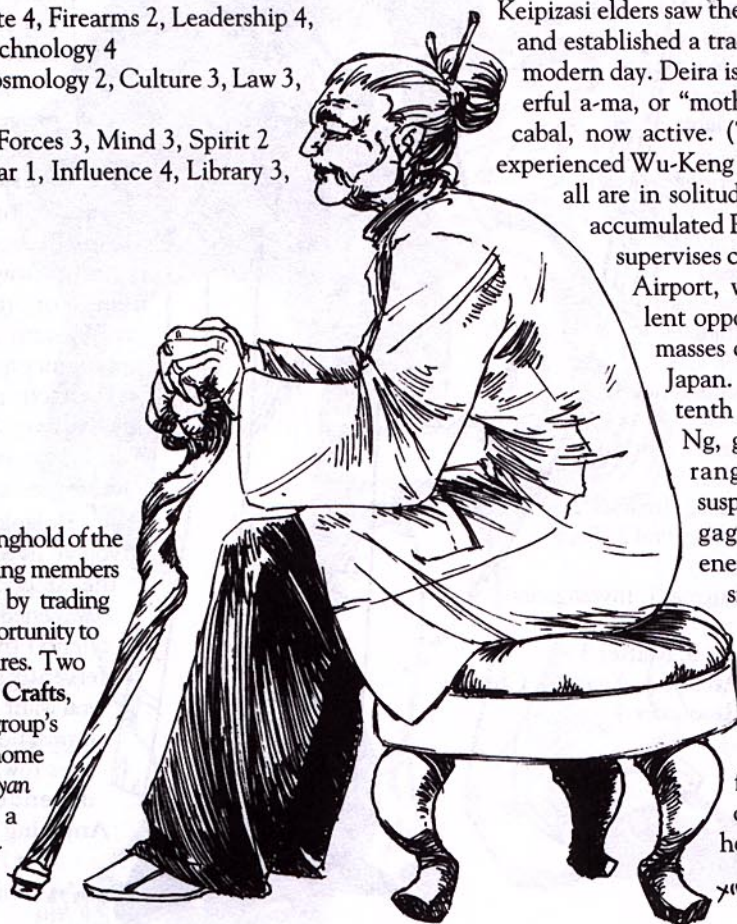
Footbinding begins in childhood, before puberty. A girl's feet are wrapped in cloth that keeps them pinched to slow their growth. Over the years, her arches are repeatedly broken and shoved up, then her feet are rebound — some women had feet with toes no more than three inches from their heels. It's impossible to walk long distances on feet treated this way; even less thorough binding greatly limits a woman's mobility. It means constant pain, a greatly increased risk of infection, and other complications.

KEIPIZASI DEIRA

Background: The Keipizasi family has served the Wu-Keng for almost 1,600 years. The two became entwined during the era of the Azure Dragon Court's arrival in Japan.

Keipizasi elders saw the opportunity for power and established a tradition lasting until the modern day. Deira is the island's most powerful *a-ma*, or "mother" of a Wu-Keng Ng cabal, now active. (There are a few more experienced Wu-Keng elsewhere in Japan, but all are in solitude trying to purge their accumulated Paradox damage.) Deira supervises cleaning crews at Narita Airport, which gives her excellent opportunities to survey the masses coming into and out of Japan. Her servants, about a tenth of whom belong to a Ng, gather information, arrange difficulties for suspected enemies, steal luggage radiating magical energy, and perform other small tasks.

The old *a-ma* has cultivated many Ngan over the 60 years she has practiced her craft. The board of directors for the Tokyo Stock Exchange includes three of her disciples; the senior floor manager of the Takashima



Department Store is another. Because of Deira's nocturnal visits to the latter, she is aware of the War Between The Stores (see p.86), and she seeks a Ngan among the major toy manufacturers to cultivate new lines of influence in the situation.

Deira defends her servants well. One of her cherished subordinates is a target for Joseph Lederer's next rampage. When he strikes, she is sure to mobilize her forces to identify the culprit and punish him. Deira can, through her contacts, gain access to police and social-service agency reports on unusual events, and many *shen* underestimate the extent to which coordinated action by mortals can identify, isolate, and eliminate supernatural menaces.

Image: Deira blends in with the broad ranks of elderly Japanese women who perform arduous physical labor for a living. She is bent by arthritis — she uses magic to remove the pain, but not the other symptoms — and stands less than five feet tall. Her hair went entirely gray years ago, but her eyes remain clear and alert, constantly moving to track possible targets of interest. What distinguishes Deira from many of her fellow laborers is her attitude of command: She expects (and gets) deference from the crews who keep the airport tidy and functional. But even when dealing with persons other than her subordinates, she shows no more than the most minimal self-abasement. Deira dresses in simple functional dresses and sturdy shoes, on- and off-duty.

Roleplaying Hints: You make yourself one of the lowest in society as part of the bargain that will soon (oh, so very soon) make you one of the highest. You care deeply about the well-being of all who serve you now, people whom you will exalt when the demonic bargain is complete. Like all Wu-Keng, you live with the constant agony of footbinding, and you look forward to venting your pain on anyone unlucky enough to stand in your way.

Chantry: Custodial offices in the lowest level of Narita Airport's North Terminal.

Secrets: Deira knows almost everything about the people who pass through the airport, *shen* and mortals alike. She knows when Western supernatural creatures come and when (or if) they go. She knows when *shen* go abroad, what they take with them and what they bring back.

Influence: Deira dominates the Wu-Keng community in Tokyo and also the community of "invisible workers" who maintain the environment and are expected to blend in with the furniture.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Conformist

Essence: Primordialism

Craft: Wu-Keng

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Instruction 2, Intuition 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Leadership 3, Meditation 3

Knowledges: Cosmology 1, Culture 3, Lore 3

Spheres: Entropy 3, Forces 4, Life 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Arcane 4, Avatar 1, Influence 2, Mentor 2, Node 2

Arete: 7

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 5

THE WU LUNG

Tokyo is one of the only rallying locales outside Hong Kong for the Wu Lung, the "Dragon Wizards" who once ruled China behind the scenes before being expelled by treacherous allies (see **The Book of Crafts** for details). Above all else, the Wu Lung hate the Communist government of mainland China, which is the principal architect of Wu Lung humiliation and the fundamental obstacle to the Wu Lung's return to glory.

WA REISIN

Background: Wa Reisin has been senior sifu to the few Wu Lung in Tokyo since the end of the American occupation. He presents himself to the world as a coordinator of anti-Communist ventures. Meanwhile, he organizes relief for refugees, support for governments and businesses seeking to contain Communist political and economic strength, and education to warn the world of the ongoing Chinese menace despite the Soviet Union's downfall. Reisin does all of these things sincerely, with an added dimension of which the public knows nothing.

The Chinese expatriate community in Tokyo comprises two groups that disagree with each other as strongly as both do with the Communists. On one hand are the traditionalists, who seek to replace the Communists with a new dynasty promulgating the classical virtues. Traditionalists typically dislike modernity and are prepared to accept industrialization only within the rigid confines of Confucian social order. Those who value culture above race look favorably on the early Qing emperors; traditionalists who feel that culture depends on race seek to emulate the Han and Ming Dynasties. The modernists, on the other hand, agree with the Communists that the empire had to go. They anchor their hopes in the short-lived Chinese Republic and in the efforts of sages like Sun Yat-sen and Lu Xun to draw on the best of tradition within a modern framework.

The Dragon Wizards lead the traditionalist cause. When the opportunity arises, they strike blows against modernists that are just as harsh as those they aim at Communists. (Subtle political distinctions are not part of Wu Lung thinking: Never mind the intricacies of alliance and intellectual school, they say, the rulers of China are "the Communists," and all, therefore, are targets.) Wa Reisin enjoys widespread respect for his articulate advocacy of the anti-Communist cause and for his occasional successes in working out deals with the Japanese community.

While most Chinese refugees prefer to go to countries that have not waged such vicious war on China this century, a significant number of extremely wealthy businessmen and former warlords live in and around Tokyo. Their pledged support can sway marginal coalitions toward accord or make shaky trade agreements prosper. Wa himself seldom practices the real magick of his Craft these days, though he closely scrutinizes the training of recruits. "A thousand roads converge at the capital," as the Confucian saying has it, "and all wise practices lead to the glory of the Middle Kingdom."

In the 1970s, Wa became unexpectedly good friends with several prominent Bishamon Kuei-jin. In one sense, the association makes no sense. If both the Wu Lung and the traditionalist Kuei-jin were to triumph, their countries would again face violent conflict over the right of Asian leadership. But until that day, they have common enemies. Wu Lung doctrine commits its members to the eradication of all Kuei-jin; Wa Reisin rationalizes that such an order must be interpreted in the light of the mandate to rule China, thus Kuei-jin who do not seek authority over China need not be exterminated just yet. For their part, the Bishamon see an ally who hates the Quincunx as much as they do and who can strike with weapons outside their grasp. Best of all, Wa and the vampires can relax for an evening's quiet discussion on the fine points of neo-Confucianism or on racial failings of the countries surrounding Japan and China.

Image: Wa Reisin cultivates an appearance that draws on caricatures of the Chinese sage. He is bald but has a flowing white beard that he keeps carefully trimmed. By preference, he dresses conservatively, but when he seeks to fully convey the sage image, he wears embroidered robes over a comfortable suit. His expression leans toward the somber, but he laughs readily — all as part of his chosen image. Wa radiates an air of concern and sympathy, and he listens patiently to those around him. His underlying contempt emerges only in private.

Roleplaying Hints: You care deeply about the Wu Lung's goals, but you aren't obsessed by them; you are merely strongly motivated. You refuse to sacrifice political duty to culture, without which politics mean nothing. Thus, you see your role as patron of the arts and teacher of the young to be just as important as the diplomatic battles you wage in boardrooms and ministry offices. You find it strange that some of your closest friends would be neither human nor Chinese, but fate is full of surprises. Because you have these

friendships, you savor them, and when possible, you aim to advance their causes as well as your own. They do the same for you. Although you can never truly rest until the Communists reach their ash-heap in history, you have a good life and believe that you serve the moral order well.

Chantry: A mansion that perches on a significant node in Aoyama.

Secrets: Wa knows the affairs of Chinese expatriates (apart from the Wu-Keng, who are the great blind spot in Wu Lung perception) and the Chinese government in intimate detail. As a result of his long service, Wa Reisin also understands a great deal about the inner workings of the Japanese government, including the role of the Zaibatsu. Through his friends, he's learning more about the Bishamon and their view of Kuei-jin society.

Influence: Wa leads both the public force of traditionalist Chinese expatriates and Tokyo's scattering of Wu Lung. He has little direct authority but ample powers of persuasion (backed by a capacity for blackmail) with many Japanese businesses that operate ventures in China. In the last decade, Wa has also become a regular guest on news and analysis TV programs and, thus, helps shape Japanese public perceptions of China.

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Judge

Essence: Pattern

Craft: Wu Lung

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Expression 4, Intuition 2, Intimidation 3

Skills: Do 1, Etiquette 4, Leadership 4, Meditation 2, Research 3

Knowledges: Culture 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Law 4, Lore 3

Spheres: Forces 3, Mind 4, Spirit 2

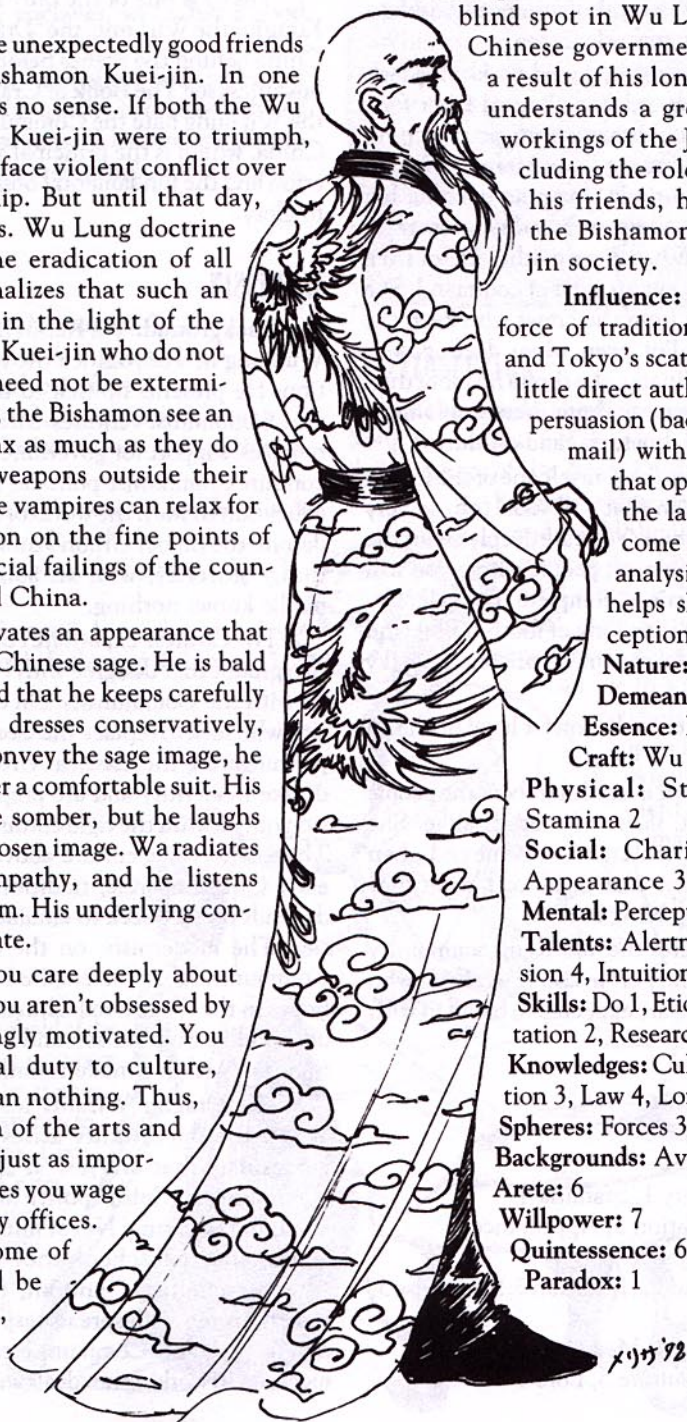
Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Influence 3, Node 3

Arete: 6

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 1



SHAPESHIFTERS

HENGEYOKAI

The Middle Kingdom's shapeshifters organize themselves into courts, which are roughly equivalent to the septs of the West. However, hengeyokai society at large construes itself as the Beast Courts of the Emerald Mother, which is a potential source of confusion. Simply put, a court is a community of like Changing Folk such as Nezumi or Hakken; the Courts are all such communities as a whole. (For more information on the shapeshifters of the East, see the Hengeyokai sourcebook.)

OZATU JUNICHIRO

Background: Life as an undercover agent for the Emerald Mother suits Ozatu Junichiro. He works in the executive offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing. He is one of the few Hakken who fight effectively on an urban battleground against the evils of the age. The rest of his pack lives along the northeastern coast. When he discovered a talent for dealing with humans (and others) in cities, he and his pack constructed a cover identity for him, one more bit of misdirection. It has worked: Zaibatsu agents who mount routine sweeps for *shen* in government have never suspected him of being anything other than the talented young administrator from Nagasaki that he claims to be.

Ozatu is part of a movement within the ministry that seeks closer cooperation with environmental-protection regulators in order to better protect wilderness and wildlife. While the biggest industrial combines hold as much power as ever, popular sentiment among younger Japanese favors more attention to conservation. Ozatu capitalizes on such feelings. His briefings and reports for ministry superiors can make the difference between success and failure in crucial debates.

After-hours, Ozatu takes part in Shinto revival activities by joining meditation and study groups. Without ever directly exerting leadership, he folds in the realities of hengeyokai concerns with what can sometimes be exuberant superstition-building.

Image: Ozatu is a nondescript young professional. He cultivates an average appearance in his efforts to avoid standing out in a crowd. Ozatu has no particular distinguishing marks, wears no unusual clothes, shows no behavioral twitches, does not speak too loudly or too softly... only his ideas (and his secret nature) mark him as different.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a young man with an old burden — the survival of your kind and, indeed, of nature as a whole in the face of growing darkness. You take this mission very seriously; there's little room for fun in your life. Only on your vacations, when you can secretly return home for a week or two, can you relax and be your true self. You don't know how long you'll be able to keep up this double life, but you work hard at it and hope for the best. To the outside world, you're an earnest champion of the environment and a devout student of Japan's ancient religion, which are pursuits that make you part of the new traditionalist movement.



Home: A small apartment north of Ueno.

Secrets: Ozatu guards the secrets of the hengeyokai, and he knows a great deal about the activities of those breeds that serve the Yama Kings.

He also knows about Kueijin activities insofar as they affect his conservation and religious concerns.

Influence: Ozatu has a great deal of influence on his ministry's politics—he lacks clout himself, but he provides both information and interpretation to individuals who *do* have the clout. Thereby, Ozatu shapes the course of policy-making. His unusual dedication

gives him an advantage in the endless struggle for ministers' attention, as he has stronger motivation and is willing to persist longer.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Hakken

Nature/Demeanor: Director/Confidant

Physical: Strength 2 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 2 (4/5/5/4)

Social: Charisma 3 (3/3/3/3), Manipulation 4 (3/0/1/1), Appearance 1 (0/0/1/1)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Expression 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 3, Performance 2

Knowledges: Computer 2, Investigation 3, Law 3, Linguistics 2, Politics 3, Science 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Resources 2, Rites 2

Gifts: (1) Persuasion, Speed of Thought, Spirit Speech

Renown: 3 Wisdom

Rage 4, Gnosis 3, Willpower 6

Rank: 1

Rites: (Mystic) Rite of the Questing Stone, (Minor) Bone Rhythms, Prayer for the Prey

HASHIMOTO TAKAI

Background: Hashimoto is part of the Nezumi community that lives underneath Tokyo. She recently found herself thrust into a position of leadership, quite against her will or expectation.

Several tourist children got lost in the Ginza last year and reported remarkable experiences in the sewers there. The Zaibatsu sent in Strike Force Zero to investigate. SFO eradicated a variety of reality deviants. Among the slain were two senior members of Hashimoto's sentai, or pack. She and other young adults were chosen for positions of authority. The more mature survivors of the massacre no longer trusted their own judgment in its wake.

Hashimoto does her best to administer justice for her sentai. She harshly punishes anyone whose actions threaten to reveal the pack's existence to outsiders. The pack has strong ties with other Nezumi, with Kitsune, and with some Kuei-jin of the Thousand Whispers Dharma, who explore Tokyo byways. If it were up to Hashimoto, the pack would cut itself free of these ties and disappear to safe quarters, but she's not been able to persuade the other pack members of the wisdom in such a course of action. In the meantime, Hashimoto watches and judges.

Image: Hashimoto spends most of her time in Rodens form. When called upon to take Homid form, she appears as a young derelict, with filthy clothes and a lack of hygiene. Her Rodens voice carries subtleties of nuance and tone; her Homid voice is scratchy and rough.

Roleplaying Hints: You're in over your head. If your elders had done what they were supposed to do, you wouldn't have to do their jobs now. You'd love to

throw it all aside and run away, but the sentai needs you. Sombre duty is the cornerstone of your life. You live for the day when confidence in your pack's seniors (both yours and theirs) is sufficient to let them step back into their leadership roles and let you get on with a more satisfying life.

Home: The Ginza sewers.

Secrets: If it moves in the shadows of Ginza, Hashimoto knows about it. She either watches it herself or receives the reports of pack members who do.

Influence: Very strong in her pack; none elsewhere.

Position: Lantern

Breed: Rodens

Auspice: Knife Skulker

Tribe: Nezumi

Nature/Demeanor: Alpha/Judge

Physical: Strength 2 (3/1), Dexterity 4 (8/6), Stamina 2 (3/4)

Social: Charisma 2 (0/0), Manipulation 3 (3/1), Appearance 1 (0/1)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Firearms 2, Leadership 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Mentor 2, Rites 3

Gifts: (1) Darksight, Heightened Senses, Persuasion

Rage 5, Gnosis 5, Willpower 5

Rank: 2

Rites: (Punishment) Voice of the Jackal, (Ratkin) Rite of the Birthing Plague



DENSOSU ITO

Background: Densosu works with various volunteer groups concerned about the plight of Japanese people dwelling on the Asian mainland. In an age of resurgent nationalism, Japanese folk often do not fare well at the hands of vengeful populaces or jealous officials in Siberia, Mongolia, and northern China. Ito is one-quarter Mongolian, and he uses his ethnic ties for as much leverage as he can get.

It's not an easy or productive line of work. Japan remains the target of enormous hostility, which is the legacy of its brutal Imperial domination during the 1930s and '40s, followed by economic domination until the Japanese bubble began to burst in the '80s. While there's no widespread or organized violence yet, mainland bullies who dream of power find exploiting anti-Japanese sentiment a good path to power. Many of Ito's colleagues fear that within a few years, anyone who appears Japanese or can be shown to have Japanese ancestry may have to abandon Northeastern Asia. Densosu remains unconvinced, but he is not inclined toward great hopes.

But all of these concerns are, in part, cover. Ito's deeper concerns lie with the Khan — the great weretigers who once roamed the thick forests to the south of the Asian tundra. Few of his people now remain, and ethnic conflicts threaten their human Kinfolk. In the wild, the tiger Kinfolk have almost disappeared, and zoos will never be welcome homes. Perhaps the time for survival has already passed, but Densosu does not grant himself the luxury of despair.

Image: Densosu conforms all too well to Japanese stereotypes of the lower classes and foreigners. He's tall, burly and quite hairy. He chooses to make no effort at concealing these "unfortunate" features, and he combines Ainu motifs with the Mongolian-influenced clothes he wears.

Roleplaying Hints:

In a society built on concealing the lie, you speak the truth. If others find it ugly, so much the worse for them. You have no time to waste on coddling others — they must face the consequences of the world they've helped build. You save courtesy for individuals who've demonstrated themselves to be deserving of respect; it's too precious to waste on fools.

Home: A small apartment near Ueno.

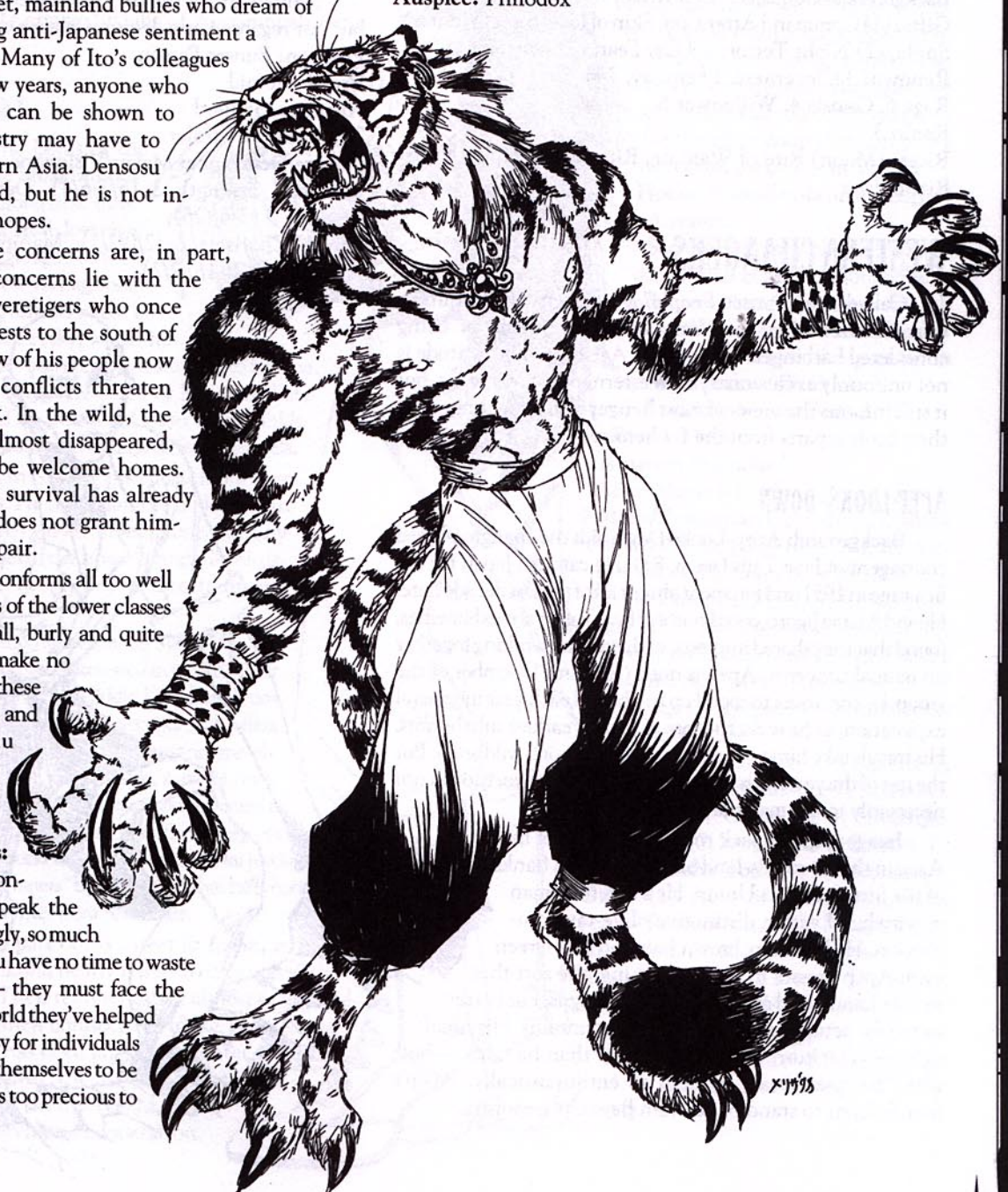
Secrets: Ito knows everything about Khan activities in Northeastern Asia and a fair amount about the other *hengeyokai* there. He knows almost nothing about the Japanese *shen*, nor does he have any great interest in them.

Influence: Among people who deal with resource conservation and ethnic protection, Densosu's views carry a great deal of influence. Few like him, and many fear the bad consequences of his rejection of Japanese etiquette, but they respect his accomplishments and marvel at his sources of information.

Position: Courtier

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Philodox



Tribe: Khan
Nature/Demeanor: Alpha/Survivor
Physical: Strength 3 (4/6/7/5), Dexterity 4 (5/6/6/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)
Social: Charisma 2 (2/2/2/2), Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 1 (0/0/0/1)
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Style 2
Skills: Acrobatics 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 2, Survival 2
Knowledges: Culture 3, Investigation 2, Law 3, Lore 2, Politics 3
Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Den-Realm 3, Resources 1, Secrets 3
Gifts: (1) Command Attention, Skin of Jade, Sweet Hunter's Smile, (2) Night Terror, (3) Cat Fear, (4) Dragonroar
Renown: 3 Cleverness, 3 Ferocity, 3 Honor
Rage 6, Gnosis 4, Willpower 6
Rank: 3
Rites: (Moon) Rite of Warding, Rite of Claiming, (Need) Rite of Fear

WESTERN CHANGERS

Called the "Sunset People" by Eastern shapeshifters, werecreatures from the West suffer the stigma of being considered harbingers of the Sixth Age here. The attitude is not uniformly exclusionary of Westerners by any means, but it still informs the views of most hengeyokai in dealings with their counterparts from the far hemisphere.

APEP-LOOKS-DOWN

Background: Apep-Looks-Down aids the changing-breed contingent of Five Tails (see p. 83). He came to Japan for the first time in 1951 and has spent almost all of the last decade here. He and Atama Jigoro, coordinator of Five Tails' various branches, found that they shared interests, so they began working together on mutual concerns. Apep is not a "full-time" member of the group; he continues to spend up to a half of each year in general exploration, as he seeks the lore of Japan's earliest inhabitants. His travels take him to the far north and remote, wild areas. But the rest of the year, he is usually in or around Tokyo, though not necessarily in the material world.

Image: Apep's pack roams the plains of inner Asia, in the no-man's-land on the southern flanks of the former Soviet Union. He's a slender man of wiry build with a distinctive olive-tan complexion. He has short brown hair and pale-green eyes. Apep dresses in sturdy clothing, the sort that inspire Land's End and Eddie Bauer designs, but better suited for actually scrambling over mountains. His usual manner is taciturn — he listens more than he talks — but when he does speak, he does so enthusiastically. Apep's friends learn to stand back when he starts gesturing.

Roleplaying Hints: Japan is a troubled land. From the ongoing evils in the Yin World to the spreading corruption in the Yang World, there's much for you to worry about here. The greatest evils are in the Yin World, where you cannot easily go. But you can gather information to assist others who are able to do something there, so you do it. You love travel above all else. You long to see the truth of a mystery nobody else has probed — that your passion can do good is a double blessing.

Home: In Japan, a hostel near Mount Fuji; in Kazakhstan, a stretch of steppe designated as a wilderness preserve.

Secrets: Apep knows as much about the Jade Empire and its activities in Japan as any nonwraith. He also knows more about the hengeyokai and *hsien* than any other Western supernatural.

Influence: Very little. He's respected for his knowledge but not regarded as a decision-maker or leader.

Position: Sunset Person

Breed: Homid

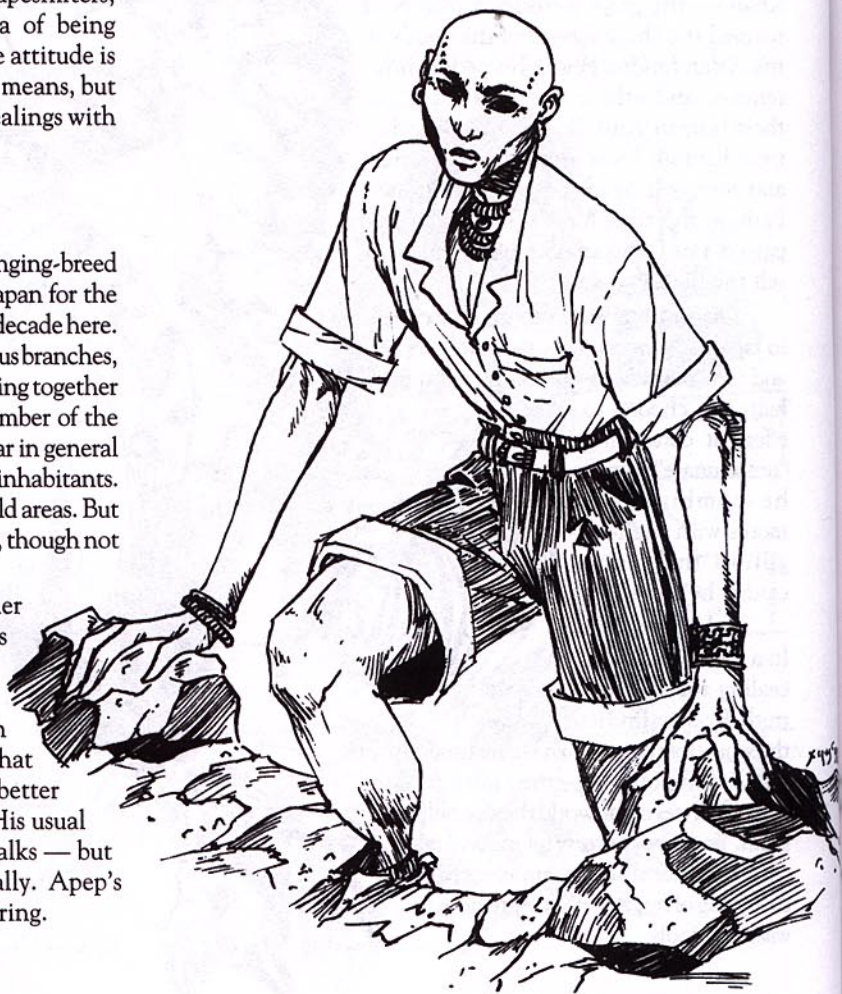
Auspice: Galliard

Tribe: Silent Strider

Nature/Demeanor: Maker/Visionary

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/7/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 2 (2/0/2/2), Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)



Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Expression 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Performance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 3, Law 1, Linguistics 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Rituals 3
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Resources 2, Rites 4
Gifts: (1) Mindspeak, Persuasion, Speed of Thought, (2) Messenger's Fortitude
Renown: 2 Glory, 4 Wisdom
Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6
Rank: 2
Rites: (Death) Gathering for the Departed, (Mystic) Rite of Becoming, (Renown) Right of Accomplishment, Rite of Passage

NIKOLAI ZADEREVSKY

Background: The Lords of the Summit faction of the Shadow Lord Tribe seeks allies among the *shen*. The Lords hope to find fresh leverage for their ongoing struggle against Western rivals and some new vantage point from which surprising attacks might be mounted. Nikolai Zaderovsky, whose human and wolf ancestors both have ancient ties to Siberia, volunteered for the duty after three of his immediate predecessors returned to Russian Garou strongholds dismembered and each shipped in nine different parcels.

So far, Nikolai can boast of his efforts more than his accomplishments. He has a number of deals with Hakken of the northern provinces, but none with any of the substantial forces of the home islands. Kuei-jin notions of honor run deeply and in directions not suitable for the Lords.

Nikolai is a recognized figure among Tokyo *shen*. He speaks earnestly to young *shen* interested in making their mark on the world beyond the Middle Kingdom. From time to time, some of his audience accepts such offers because typically they must flee after having gravely offended a powerful senior. On the side, Nikolai occasionally deals with Japanese industries seeking access to Siberia's mineral wealth. The profits from these deals enrich Shadow Lord coffers around the world, and Nikolai justifies interaction with "Earth rapers" by stipulating that he is better able to police their activities from the inside.

During the early part of his career in Japan, more than 15 years ago, Nikolai nearly fell into collusion with the Goblin Spiders. Their representative almost succeeded in fooling him about their connections to the Yama Kings. Since then, Nikolai has been an ardent fighter alongside Tokyo *shen* against the Kumo, and he has earned a reputation as (in this regard, if no other) someone deserving of cooperation.

Image: Nikolai looks like a Russian legend sprung to life. He stands six-six, with a muscular build and long black hair that he braids with exotic cords. He dresses in bright colors and intricate patterns, the better to emphasize his self-chosen separateness from the crowds. Japanese tend to be appalled by his loud, forward manner, though he impresses some young people as a man living out the freedom they yearn for, but feel unable to obtain.

Roleplaying Hints: You have very carefully crafted the image of your life into that of the "Noble Russian Hero." In reality, you began life as a member of an undistinguished farming family. You've exploited quirks of genetics to play the part of a noble or mythic figure, which often stands you in good stead, except when dealing with troublesome Japanese. You're secretly gnawed at by a sense of failure, and you constantly seek for the great coup that can prove the correctness of your actions.

Home: A small villa on the edge of Aoyama.

Secrets: Not many, beyond the mundane lore of business negotiations.

Influence: Among Japanese *shen*, almost none; among the Russian Shadow Lords, a fair degree of respect for his efforts in this difficult place.

Position: Sunset Person

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Shadow Lords

Nature/Demeanor: Competitor/Gallant

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 3 (3/3/3/3), Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 4 (3/0/4/4)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 2, Streetwise 2

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Performance 2, Survival 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics 2, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Resources 4

Gifts: (1) Aura of Confidence, Fatal Flaw, Persuasion, (2) Resist Pain, Staredown, Strength of Purpose

Renown: 5 Glory, 5 Honor, 1 Wisdom

Rage 6, Gnosis 4, Willpower 8

Rank: 4

Rites: (Death) Rite of Binding, Rite of Spirit Awakening



MAKO SAHURA

Background: Mako Sahura grew up in privilege and received his education in the finest schools. The youngster's assuming leadership of his father's export company was always presumed to be his destiny, though he seldom gave the idea much consideration. He felt that what was expected would come to pass when the time was right. Before that, however, Mako intended to live his life to the fullest. He spent years training himself in the martial arts, and he reveled in the ancient traditions of his family, often listening to his grandfather tell tales of when their ancestors were among the favored soldiers of the emperor. Perhaps it was the code of honor Mako learned from these tales that led to his unexpected death.

When Mako saw a schoolgirl being assaulted, he moved to intervene on her behalf. What he did not see was that there were multiple assailants. The four drunken American GIs were all skilled fighters, and despite their intoxication, they managed to beat Mako senseless. He had the satisfaction of seeing the girl escape before he lapsed into unconsciousness. Desperately worried over what would happen if their crime came to light, the soldiers hid the evidence.

The men dragged Mako to the harbor, where they avoided the few people walking through the area. They stuffed the boy into a packing crate and weighted it with whatever heavy debris they could find. At one point, Mako began to stir, only to have his skull cracked open with a lead pipe.

Mako sank into the depths without witnesses to his fate. The girl he saved never spoke up about the incident.

Later that night, Mako, reborn as a chu-ih-yu — a vengeance demon — rose from the harbor. His rage was fierce, and the men who'd killed his host body soon regretted their actions. The newspapers recounted the brutal beating deaths of four American soldiers and speculated that the actions were the work of a large group. They were mistaken, for Mako always works alone.

Mako carries on his life as the son of a very powerful businessman, and he still intends to run his father's company someday, as the mortal shell he now inhabits possessed traditional family values. But

the nights of Mako Sahura are not as they once were. There are not celebrations and parties. The woman he was dating has moved on with her life because she was confused by his sudden separation from her and his refusal even to discuss the matter. Mako spends his evenings answering the prayers of people who've lost loved ones to violence, and whenever possible, the answer he gives is written in the blood of his victims.

Image: Mako Sahura is a tiny young man in his human form, but when revealing himself as a chu-ih-yu, he towers above most others. Nearly seven feet tall in his wani form, Mako wears dark, flowing robes and carries the weapons of his ancient calling. His silvery skin complements his stark, alabaster hair and emphasizes his luminous white eyes. Frighteningly long talons stretch from his fingertips.



Roleplaying Hints: Were it not for the honor of the Sahura family, you would gladly remove yourself from human society. As it stands, however, you must take the time to deal with mortals every day, and the burden of living a double life is taking its toll. Always remember that the innocent should be protected and treated with honor. The exact opposite is true of the guilty. Those who live by the sword die by yours.

Home: Traditional family home in the Tokyo suburbs.

Secrets: Mako concerns himself only with the secrets of the guilty.

Influence: He is feared by many of the Kuei-jin and other *shen* who are foolish enough to make mortals their prey. Mako avoids the politics of the supernaturals, save to punish individuals whose creed is violence.

Court: The Worldly

Legacies: (Yin) Hermit/(Yang) Paladin

Seeming: Hsien-jin

Kith: Chu-ih-yu

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 4, Empathy 3, Melee 3, Persuasion 3

Skills: Ceremony 2, Etiquette 4, Leadership 2, Martial Arts 4, Meditation 1, Security 2

Knowledges: Computer 3, Divination 3, Investigation 3, Politics 2, Science 3

Tan: Tieh Tan – Metal Alchemy (3), Nei Tan – Internal Alchemy 2

Elemental Affinity: Metal

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 4

Tao: 3

Chi: Yin 5, Yang 3, Yugen 8

Willpower: 7

AMIKO TSUNWATA

Background: Amiko Tsunwata died in the womb, making a place for the *suijen* who now lives her life. She works at the docks while in her mortal form, but only when she feels like it. Most of her time is spent keeping debris from polluting Tokyo Bay. Amiko's human family has not heard from her in some time, and she seldom bothers to give them much consideration. She travels through the city and visits different shrines to gather Yugen and intelligence.

Most of Amiko's life as a mortal has been characterized by arguments with her parents, whereas her *hsien* existence is often filled with debates between herself and other members of the *kamuii*. She is heavily involved in *hsien* political arenas, and she routinely urges war against the *Zaibatsu*, which is responsible for much of the pollution the *kamuii* fight to remove.

Amiko would see the modern era come to an end if she had her way, and she never hesitates to sink an occasional ship to prove her point. And when she does so, she causes few (if any) fatalities. Amiko values mortal life and fully understands the importance of mortal prayers to her survival.

Image: Amiko is tall and lean, with long black hair and gray eyes. In her *wani* form, she wears robes of blue and green, lighter in shade than the blue of her scaled skin or the green of her hair. Amiko's eyes often flash with the anger of the storms she can generate, and her mouth can take on a cruel expression of contempt.



Roleplaying Hints: You live by a very simple philosophy: You're a god, and you expect others to treat you that way. The *kamui* are more significant than any other *shen*, but you know better than to even try explaining such a thing to other supernatural entities. The *Zaibatsu* and the *gaijin* are your foes, though you try not to advertise that knowledge. While you seldom fight them directly, you like to make sure they know where you stand on their offensive presence in Tokyo. When it comes to the commoner *Shinbatsu*, you expect obedience — less than that is a reason for proper punishment. Your attitude of superiority causes you no end of trouble, but contrary to what your associates say, it is not an attitude that time can erase (or so you believe). What they don't realize is that your brash exterior hides a calculating mind and a patient spirit that await the right time to strike out at the invading forces from the West.

Home: Ohari Trading Company, at the harbor.

Secrets: Amiko knows about almost everything that happens at the docks and around the harbor.

Influence: Amiko has great influence among the *Shinbatsu* of her area, primarily because they fear her, but also because her claims that the Westerners are ruining Japan make sense.

Court: The Classicists

Legacies: (Yin) Fatalist/(Yang) Dandy

Seeming: Hsien-tsu

Kith: Suijen

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Empathy 4, Intuition 2, Persuasion 3, Shentao 3

Skills: Ceremony 5, Drive 3, Etiquette 1, Leadership 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Cosmology 2, Divination 1, Occult 3, Politics 4

Tan: Shui Tan — Water Alchemy (5), Nei Tan — Internal Alchemy (3)

Elemental Affinity: Water

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 4

Tao: 4

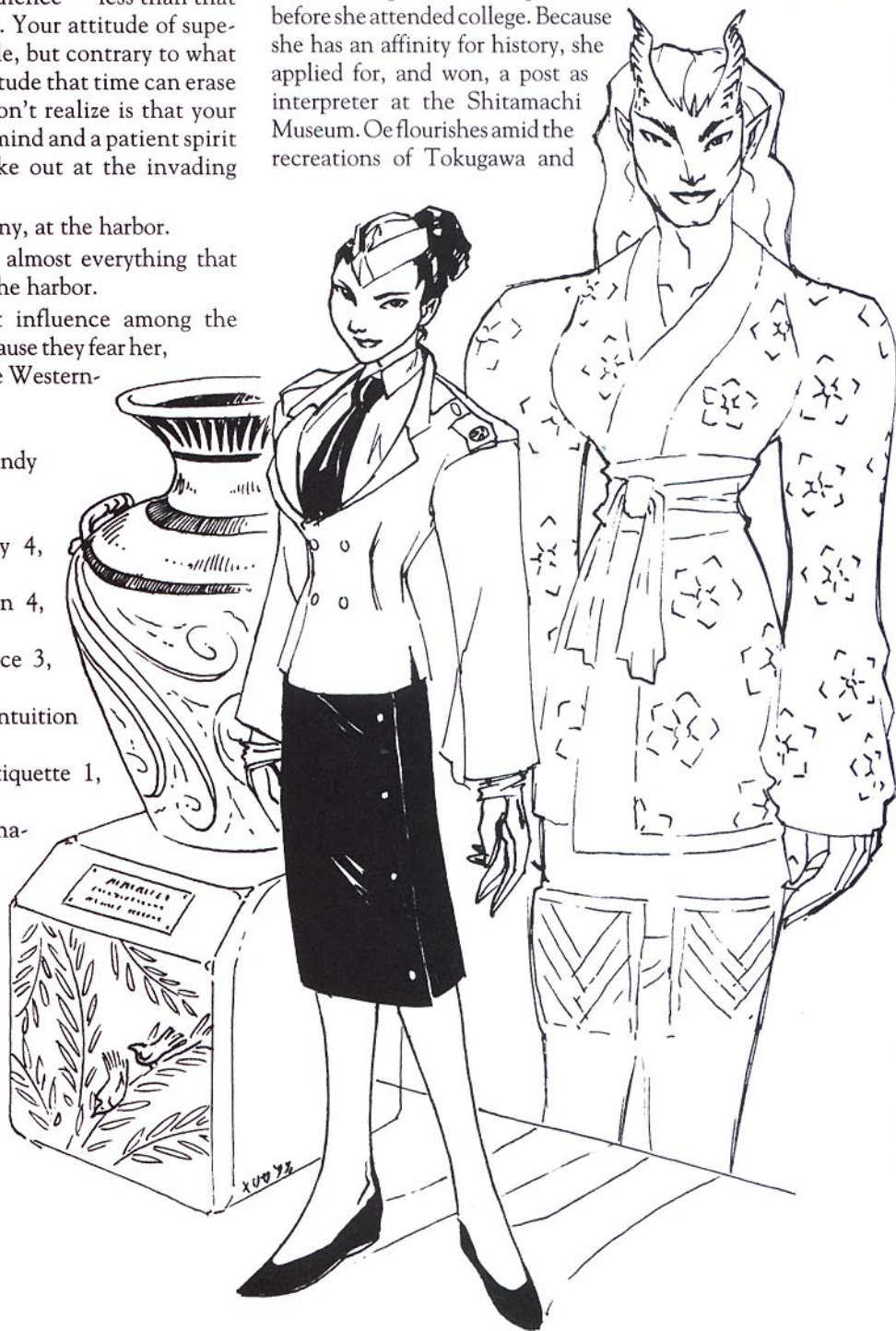
Chi: Yin 4, Yang 5, Yugen 8

Willpower: 7

CHANGELINGS

OLIVIA MAKIKO OE

Background: Oe is a Japanese-American whose parents work in the U.S. Embassy. She awoke to her changeling nature while at boarding school and somehow managed not to succumb to Banality in the midst of it all. After graduation, Olivia persuaded her parents to let her work for a while before she attended college. Because she has an affinity for history, she applied for, and won, a post as interpreter at the Shitamachi Museum. Oe flourishes amid the recreations of Tokugawa and



Meiji homes and factories, soaking in the Glamour generated by those Japanese eager to make a close connection with their pasts.

She gets along very well with the chu-ih-yu who live in the area; her innate sense of justice matches theirs, and she helps explain the peculiarities of Western life and thought that bear on the judgments they make when resolving *hsien* disputes. Olivia can never be accepted as truly one of the *hsien*, but she comes as close to acceptance as any Westerner can.

Recently, Oe detected signs of the cultivated dreams of alternate Japans, and she believes that they're responsible for the strange mental and spiritual disturbances afflicting *shen* who sleep in the park. She seeks to gather other changelings living in Tokyo to explore the matter more thoroughly.

Image: Oe stands out even in her human seeming, at nearly six feet in height with a willowy figure that suggests art of the Kamakura era. But rather than possessing the somber mien of an aristocratic lady, Oe wears a bright smile. She's far more outgoing than her Japanese customers. She wears the conservative uniform of a museum docent while on the job. In her off-hours, Olivia favors bright colors and exotic designs, more in keeping with Hibaya teen nonconformists than with the usually placid *hsien* culture. She avoids creating too scandalous a wardrobe by incorporating traditional motifs and styles copied from the museum's exhibits. In troll form, Oe towers over almost all *hsien*, and she would be a menacing figure if she weren't so cheery.

Roleplaying Hints: You love your life. You work among treasures and antiquities that, for you, bridge the gap between past and present by day, and between cultures at night. What could be better? If only the chu-ih-yu weren't so prone to such formality. And you do worry about the strange disturbances in the Dreaming. You wish no harm to come to the fine people who sustain your life with their hopes or to the many fascinating *shen* who move among the people.

Home: Shitamachi Museum, Ueno Park.

Secrets: Oe knows a great deal about the lives (and unlives) of Tokyo's *hsien*. They have a difficult time, as the Technocrats hate creatures who inspire wonder and discontent with the beautiful toys the Zaibatsu offer humanity. Oe does what she can behind the scenes to run interference against these nuisance mages.

Influence: Still small, but rising steadily among the *hsien* as they realize the skill and dedication she brings to her work.

Court: Seelie

Legacies: Sage/Troubadour

House: Liam

Seeming: Wilder

Kith: Troll

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Empathy 3, Persuasion 3

Skills: Crafts 3, Etiquette 4, Leadership 2, Performance 3, Security 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 3, Lore 4, Politics 1, Science 1

Arts: Primal 1, Soothsay 1, Sovereign 1

Realms: Fae 3, Scene 2, Time 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Resources 2

Glamour: 5

Banality: 2

Willpower: 4

ANNA EASTEN

Background: The super-banal Middle American housing tract where Anna Easten grew up could have destroyed anyone's spirit. Once she learned her true nature and she understood the threat the place posed, Anna struck out on her own and spent five years roaming the world. She watched the sun rise over a new city every week.

When Anna got to Japan, she settled down. She has no interest in the affairs of her fellow Western changelings, but she is fascinated by the supernatural beings of other traditions. The *Nezumi* Anna often visits aren't as keen on her as she is on them, but she's proven her usefulness time and again in uncovering useful information that lies outside their reach.

Tokyo brims with dark secrets for Easten to learn, from civic corruption to war criminals leading lives as venerable citizens to wife-beating and child abuse. Easten loves rooting out all of them. She shares as much as is necessary to protect *shen* from their various predators.

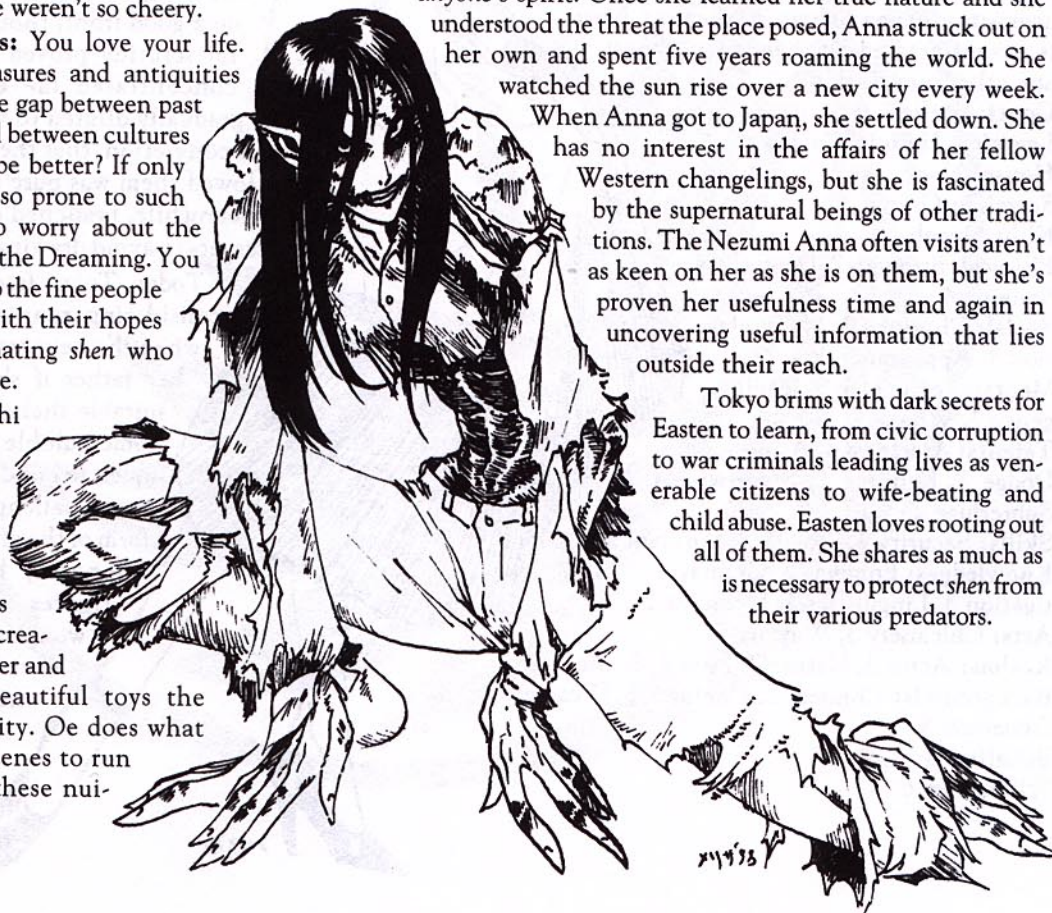


Image: Anna thinks of her image as "Old High Derelict." She puts no effort into grooming or wardrobe so she smells badly and her clothes hang in tatters. Observers could guess nothing of her ethnicity and have a hard time determining her gender. In her fae seeming, she looks very much like the ghouls of horror movies that she loved as a child.

Roleplaying Hints: You sought the rising sun for years and now you've found it — and you flourish in the shadows it casts. What a banquet of sorrow and secrecy that spreads before you, and how few rivals you have. Few other sluagh come to Tokyo, and they tend to have aristocratic interests, very unlike your own. The sewers are yours; you take somber pleasure in your possession. You seldom rest long in any one den, and you prefer to move about at whim in search of new things to know.

Home: For the moment, Ginza sewers.

Secrets: Easten sees the sordid side of human life throughout Tokyo, and she finds it endlessly fascinating. She also knows a great deal about the affairs of the Yin World in and around Tokyo.

Influence: She wields no authority among the Nezumi, but they respect her knowledge and sometimes return the favor by assisting her in the acquisition of new secrets. At the least, Easten is more tolerated by them than almost any other non-Ratkin.

Court: Seelie

Legacies: Hermit/Wayfarer

House: None

Seeming: Grump

Kith: Sluagh

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 3, Kenning 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Security 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Greymyre 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2

Arts: Chicanery 3, Wayfare 2

Realms: Actor 3, Nature 2, Prop 2, Scene 2

Backgrounds: Chimera 2, Contacts 2, Dreamers 2

Glamour: 5

Banality: 5

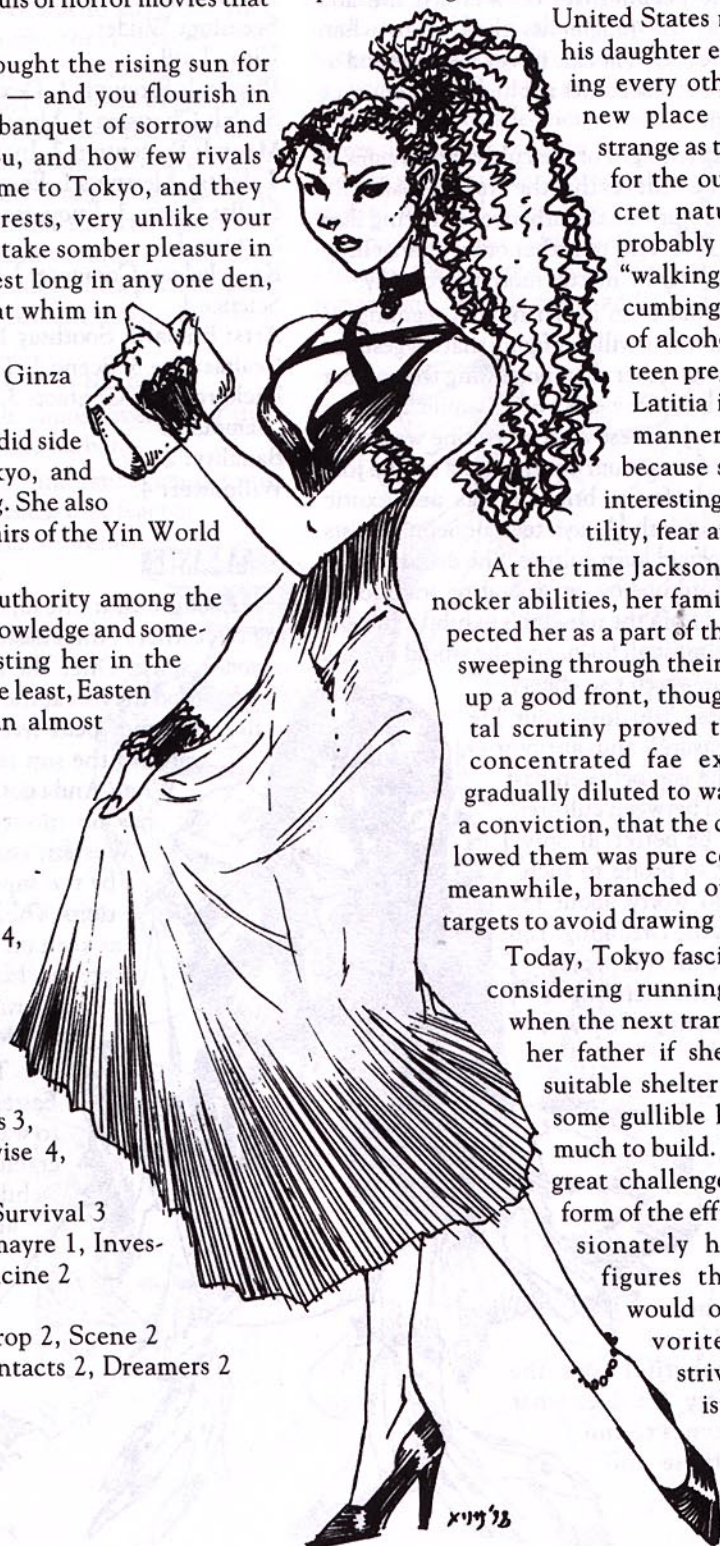
Willpower: 6

LATITIA JACKSON

Background: An Army brat's disconnected existence was Latitia Jackson's burden, thanks to her father, who was an analyst for military intelligence. His frequent reassignments to work with various allies of the United States meant the only life his daughter ever knew was moving every other year. And each new place was as culturally strange as the last. If it weren't for the outlet of Latitia's secret nature, she would've probably joined the ranks of "walking wounded" by succumbing to a combination of alcoholism, drug use and teen pregnancy. Ostensibly, Latitia is a quiet and mild-mannered teenage girl... because she's got a far more interesting way to vent her hostility, fear and tension.

At the time Jackson first came into her nocker abilities, her family immediately suspected her as a part of the sabotage that was sweeping through their home city. She put up a good front, though, and mere parental scrutiny proved to be no match for concentrated fae exertion. Suspicion gradually diluted to wariness, and then to a conviction, that the destruction that followed them was pure coincidence. Latitia, meanwhile, branched out to strike at other targets to avoid drawing too much attention.

Today, Tokyo fascinates Latitia; she is considering running away from home when the next transfer order comes for her father if she can arrange some suitable shelter among the *shen* (or some gullible humans). There's so much to build. There's also the first great challenge of her life, in the form of the effigy lords. Latitia passionately hates the inhuman figures that dominate what would otherwise be her favorite haunts, and she strives to make their existence as miserable as possible. To date,



Latitia has been no more than an irritation to the lords, but with sustained effort or the discovery of allies, she could become a formidable nemesis.

Image: Jackson is an African-American teenage girl who dresses in trendy fashions and grooms herself to reflect the styles of popular movie stars of the moment. She doesn't talk much, and apart from a highly unusual grasp of technical matters, Latitia sounds much like her peers when she does.

Roleplaying Hints: For a long time, you were just angry. Then you found the changeling outlet for your anger. Now you've got an actual enemy, the effigy lords and their rule, and you focus the accumulated frustrations of a boring, hateful life onto them. You don't pay much attention to the rest of your life: You get through school with adequate grades, you don't upset Mom and Dad too often, and you have some friends (or acquaintances) to hang out with. But none of it *matters*. You live to strike the next blow against the effigies, to free the dreams of department stores everywhere.

Home: An apartment on the outskirts of Harajuku, where various army liaison families live.

Secrets: Jackson doesn't yet know much about Tokyo's secret life, but she has already studied the effigy lords and their domains very carefully. In short order, she might be the city's living expert on the subject... except that few others would know to ask about the present state of effigy regimes.

Influence: None

Court: Unseelie

Legacies: Rogue/Fatalist

House: None

Seeming: Wilder

Kith: Nocker

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Security 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Computer 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Linguistics 2, Science 4

Arts: Legerdemain 3

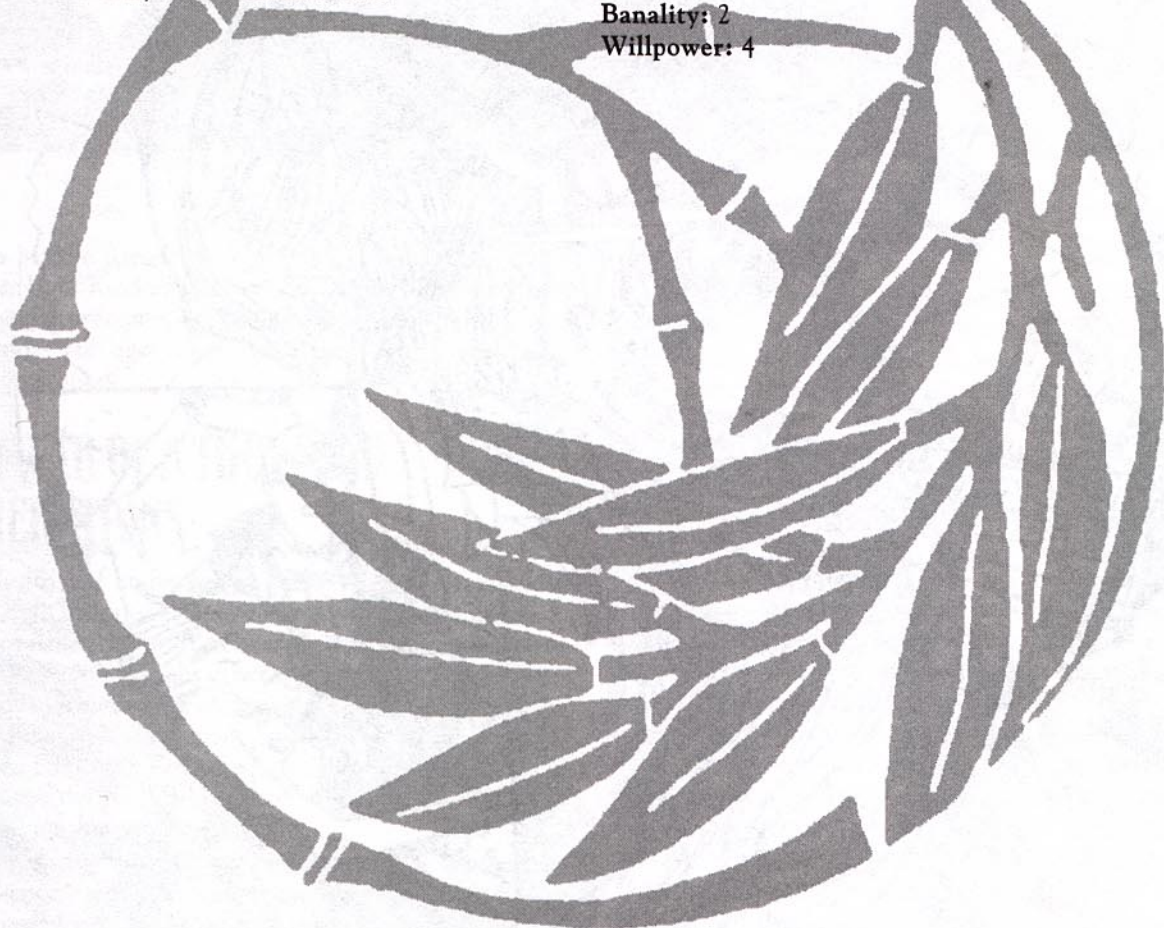
Realms: Actor 1, Prop 3, Time 3

Backgrounds: Chimera 3, Treasure 2

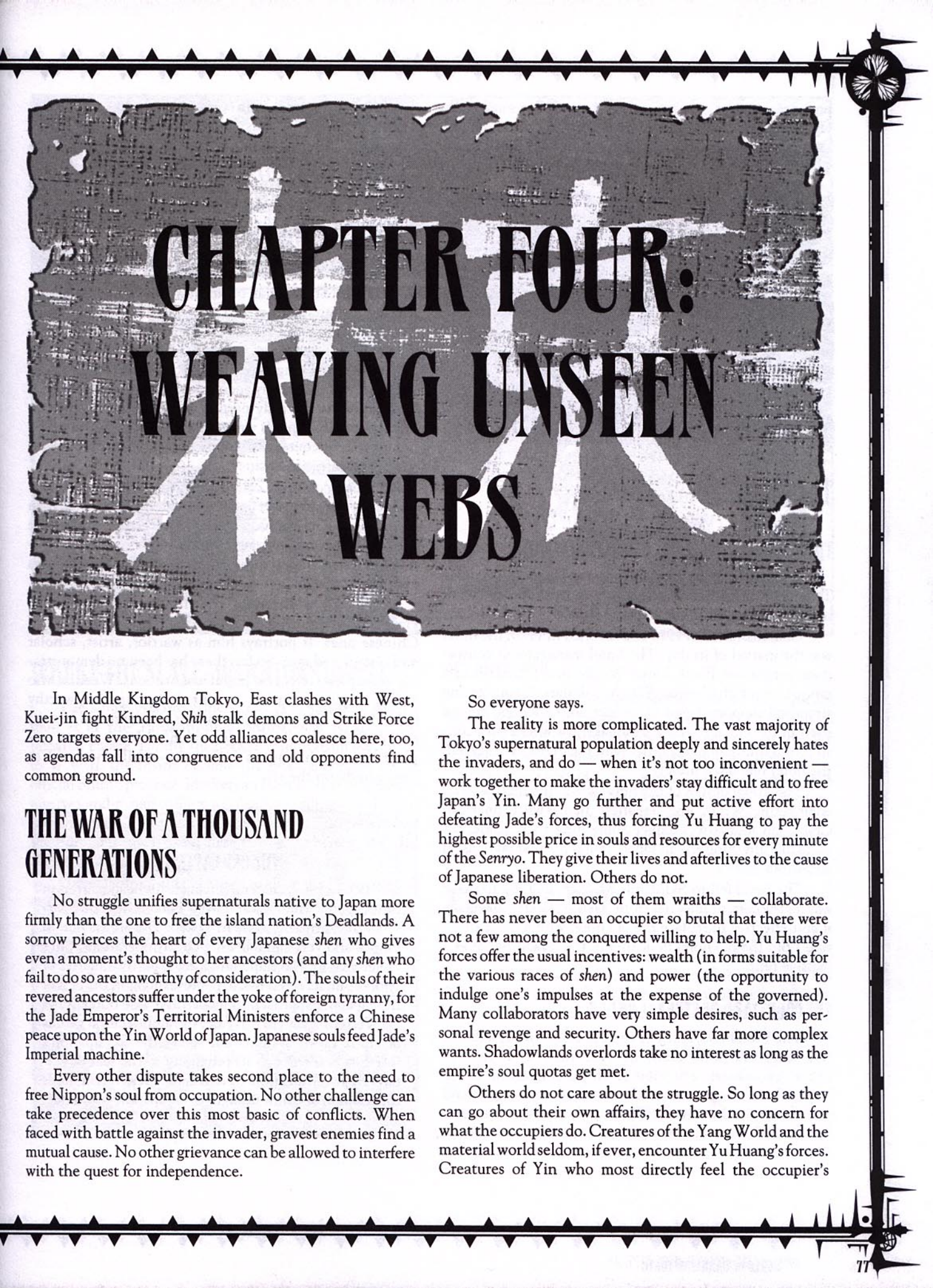
Glamour: 5

Banality: 2

Willpower: 4







CHAPTER FOUR: WEAVING UNSEEN WEBS

In Middle Kingdom Tokyo, East clashes with West, Kuei-jin fight Kindred, *Shih* stalk demons and Strike Force Zero targets everyone. Yet odd alliances coalesce here, too, as agendas fall into congruence and old opponents find common ground.

THE WAR OF A THOUSAND GENERATIONS

No struggle unifies supernaturals native to Japan more firmly than the one to free the island nation's Deadlands. A sorrow pierces the heart of every Japanese *shen* who gives even a moment's thought to her ancestors (and any *shen* who fail to do so are unworthy of consideration). The souls of their revered ancestors suffer under the yoke of foreign tyranny, for the Jade Emperor's Territorial Ministers enforce a Chinese peace upon the Yin World of Japan. Japanese souls feed Jade's Imperial machine.

Every other dispute takes second place to the need to free Nippon's soul from occupation. No other challenge can take precedence over this most basic of conflicts. When faced with battle against the invader, gravest enemies find a mutual cause. No other grievance can be allowed to interfere with the quest for independence.

So everyone says.

The reality is more complicated. The vast majority of Tokyo's supernatural population deeply and sincerely hates the invaders, and do — when it's not too inconvenient — work together to make the invaders' stay difficult and to free Japan's Yin. Many go further and put active effort into defeating Jade's forces, thus forcing Yu Huang to pay the highest possible price in souls and resources for every minute of the *Senryo*. They give their lives and afterlives to the cause of Japanese liberation. Others do not.

Some *shen* — most of them wraiths — collaborate. There has never been an occupier so brutal that there were not a few among the conquered willing to help. Yu Huang's forces offer the usual incentives: wealth (in forms suitable for the various races of *shen*) and power (the opportunity to indulge one's impulses at the expense of the governed). Many collaborators have very simple desires, such as personal revenge and security. Others have far more complex wants. Shadowlands overlords take no interest as long as the empire's soul quotas get met.

Others do not care about the struggle. So long as they can go about their own affairs, they have no concern for what the occupiers do. Creatures of the Yang World and the material world seldom, if ever, encounter Yu Huang's forces. Creatures of Yin who most directly feel the occupier's

presence are most concerned with the war. But some of Yu Huang's servants and allies move beyond the borders of Yin existence. Nobody completely escapes the war, except through willful blindness or withdrawal to some pocket realm.

A WORD ABOUT CONQUEST

The Japanese word for "occupation" is *senryo*. In life, wraithly natives of a somewhat recent vintage applied the term to the U.S. military bureaucracy that remained here after the end of W.W.II. In the present day, however, mention of "the *Senryo*" among Japan's Restless always refers to the Jade Empire's presence here. Ironically, the term comes to Japan from China — just like Yu Huang and his Imperial forces.

THE OCCUPATION

THE SEAT OF GOVERNANCE: OLD IMPERIAL HOTEL

General Shi Leong presides over the Japanese Occupied Territory from administrative offices in the Imperial Hotel, halfway up the hill to the Imperial Palace.

Commissioned in 1913 and finished in 1923, the hotel was the marvel of its day. The hotel management consortium contracted Frank Lloyd Wright and offered him a unique set of challenges. Wright's design, incorporating structural supports based on rudders and anchors, proved itself in the Great Kanto Earthquake just weeks after construction finished. Every other building in the vicinity fell; the hotel remained intact.

The visual design of the hotel was as distinctive as its engineering. Wright fused Japanese themes with American Craftsman motifs to produce something that, while not quite like anything else in Japan, found popular favor as an auspicious edifice.

The hotel fell to Skinlands wreckers in 1967 to make way for the current Imperial Hotel. (Rising land values made it cost-effective to replace the old hotel with a taller structure.) But the old hotel flourishes in the Shadowlands as a massive relic.

THE COURTYARD OF ETERNAL ORDER

The broad courtyard of the old hotel holds a dozen five-story-tall poles made of True Jade. General Shi orders prominent enemies of the Occupation to be impaled on these poles to demonstrate the might and earnestness of his forces. Three poles hold short-term victims, who are mounted for periods from one day to one year. The general's staff chooses victims to

emphasize particular points of current policy. The other nine poles hold victims for periods of a year or more. One man, Major Anthony Wayne Pinch, has been there since 1946. The poles used to stand in the Shitamachi administrative center but were moved with the staff in 1967. (The victims get taken down for healing just before they'd escape into Oblivion.)

THE GALLERY OF THE SEVEN GLORIES OF YU HUANG

General Shi is a man of cultural aspirations. In life, he was but a simple farmer and occasional bandit; all of his position and prestige came through loyal service after death. He ordered the creation of the Gallery of the Seven Glories of Yu Huang as part of his ongoing effort to show Japan's Dead the advantages of fealty to the Jade Empire. The gallery is the only part of the Imperial Hotel constantly open to Japan's wraithly general public (carefully monitored, of course, by guards using *kuei-go* prepared at the Yasukuni-jinja Shrine).

Statues, paintings, calligraphy, and performances trace Yu Huang's rise to power first on one side of the Shroud, then on the other. The emphasis throughout is on the intelligence and virtue that naturally accompany victory, while instructive placards point out the specific moral failings that led his enemies to ruin.

A recent addition to the displays emphasizes Yu Huang as the fulfillment of *Japanese* virtues as well as Chinese ones. It portrays him as warrior, artist, scholar and disciplined sage. So far, there has been no demonstrably widespread effect on popular sentiment. Wraiths who find it inspiring usually thought the occupation worthy beforehand. The gallery may have some marginal benefit to the Resistance by keeping talented local artists employed — and thus out of the forges — while they work at propaganda on the sly.

THE OLD CAPITAL

Before 1967, General Shi made his headquarters in Shitamachi, where more of old Edo architecture survives than anywhere else in Tokyo. The area is rich in Pathos and very suitable for wraithly operations. Shi's preference for the Imperial Hotel is partly a matter of symbolism: It represents, in popular thought, the best of the Japanese approach to modernity. The hotel draws on Western ideas (in this case, the architectural genius of Frank Lloyd Wright) but serves the Occupation's interests best through its proximity to the seat of empire. By governing from its relic halls, General Shi lords the triumph of Chinese might over Japanese resistance.



WHERE THE SLAVE-WARRIORS DWELL

The single greatest concentration of Japanese warrior souls is at the Yasukuni-jinja Shrine, just north of the Imperial Palace. During the decade of militarism leading up to W.W.II, the shrine became the most important site in official Shinto practice. Markers and ceremonies commemorate two-and-a-half-million war dead, including some leading war criminals. The site is tremendously rich in Pathos, and the Shroud is much lower here than elsewhere in the city, due to continued meditation on the war dead.

General Shi could not afford to allow the Japanese souls attracted to the site to remain free. In short order, they would have been a dangerous threat to what stability Shi's regime has. So, he requested assistance from the Immortal Guard in 1935. Yu Huang studied the general's request, decided it had merit and dispatched a contingent of the Guard. The powerful wraithly corps swept through the area, destroyed thousands of souls and took the survivors prisoner. *Kuei-go* trainers followed the Guard.

Since 1935, the shrine in the Shadowlands has been the Occupation's largest *kuei-go* pit. The most loyal sons of Nippon (and a few heroic daughters) become fodder for the Occupation war machine here.

OUT OF THE PIT

Few places hold more symbolic value to the Japanese Resistance than the shrine. Both organized and unorganized guerrillas make continual efforts to break in and free the prisoners. Unfortunately, they never have much success.

The best planned raids might secure the release of only a few dozen captives. Most just give the trainers a few more candidates for conversion. Serious Resistance leaders do what they can to discourage efforts at liberation, but to no real avail.

AGAINST OBLIVION

The dark currents of Shadowlands Tokyo provide altogether too much nourishment for wraiths and Spectres who feed on Dark Passions. Teen suicide, wife-beating, and the less severe realities of patriarchal and misogynistic life generate abundant Pathos. So do unsuccessful efforts by discontented individuals to break free, as their hope-filled daydreams subside into quotidian drudgery.

This situation creates a problem for the Territorial Government; it's difficult to govern a population when too many subjects succumb to Catharsis. Spectres and Harrowings disrupt the bureaucratic routine.

General Shi therefore maintains a special corps of shock troops to keep Oblivion's forces at bay. Territorial courts grant temporary pardons to convicted Japanese subjects willing to serve in the Dread Militia (so called because dread is the primary emotion experienced by its ranks), and Shi authorizes bonuses to families that provide volunteers. Few militia soldiers survive a full tour of duty, but those who do earn further benefits. The militia tracks down Spectres and seeks out wraiths on the brink of Catharsis to keep them in custody until such crises pass.

THE SCALE OF GOVERNANCE

Approximately one wraith in a hundred works as part of the Territorial Government.

Most perform menial work, as do their counterparts who serve the other institutions of the Necropolis: maintaining inventory records, cleaning facilities, heavy lifting and so on. These laborers form the lowest tier of the Conquest staff — the Night Workers (even though many of them toil during the day).

The Twilight Workers come next in rank. Wraiths at this level do work that may call for some measure of discretion (such as bookkeeping), or that calls for dealing with wraiths who do not directly serve the Occupation (such as licensers).

At the top, the Daylight Workers labor in ways that call for individuals to exercise some minute authority. They supervise offices, set bureaucratic policies, etc.

LABORING WITH HANDS AND MINDS

Confucian scholars separated society into two categories: those people who labor with their hands and those who labor with their minds. Like any government, the Occupation needs both. General Shi always seeks to develop a broader staff of loyal, trustworthy Japanese — whom he trusts to a very limited degree.

THE PRAGMATIC

Collaboration motivated by pragmatism thrives when extremes of prosperity and poverty take hold at the time new wraiths cross the Shroud.

After a life of unhappiness, some wraiths seek security, comfort and a chance at all they were denied in life. In Japan under Jade rule, the safest path to the creature comforts of the Shadowlands is collaboration.

Collaboration in times of prosperity arises from the flipside of these concerns. Wraiths who enjoyed happy, comfortable lives suddenly find themselves facing a difficult afterlife. If they want to maintain something approaching their previous condition, they need powerful sponsors. That means the Jade Empire. So, they turn to collaborating.

The pool of pragmatic collaborators, therefore, falls to its lowest levels when Skinlands conditions are at neither extreme. It rises when Shadowlands denizens see Imperial might expanding, and it shrinks when the empire suffers visible setbacks. Such defeats lead the pragmatic to seek other sources of protection and sponsorship.

THE AMBITIOUS

Beyond security, some wraiths seek power, either for its own sake or as the means by which they can gratify their various passions.

In Shadowlands Tokyo, the most prominent routes to power run through the hallways of the Occupational government. So, power-seekers travel those hallways.

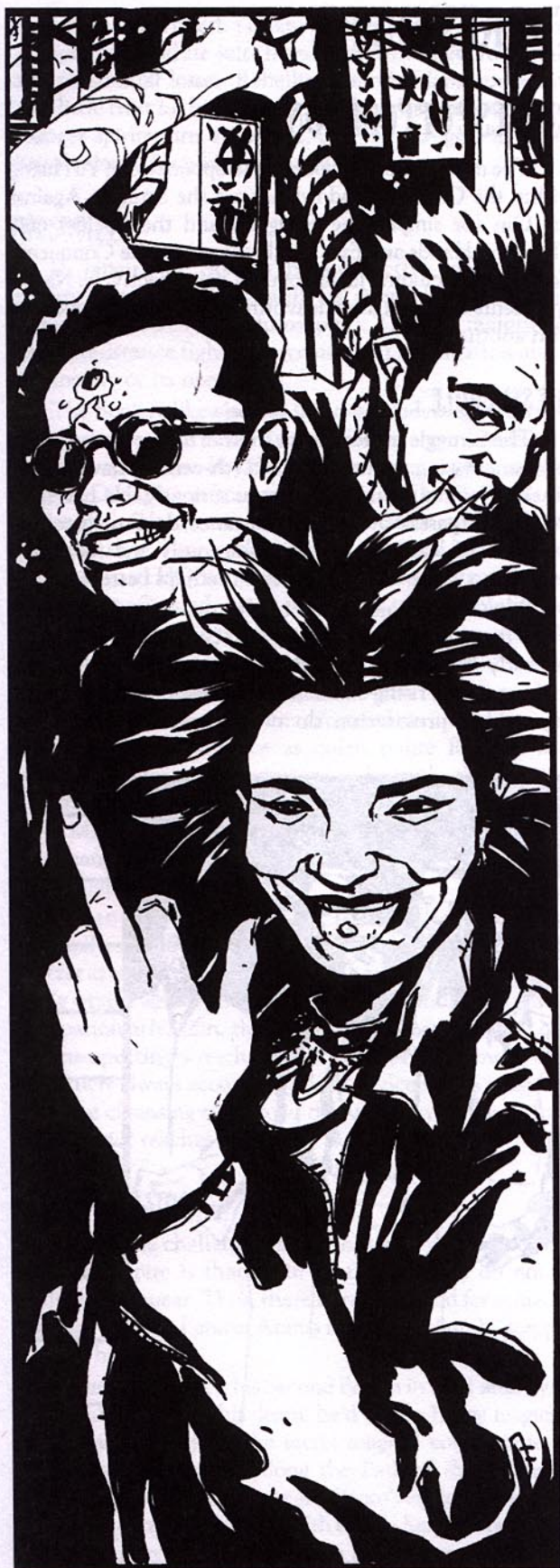
Yu Huang never allows non-Chinese servants to attain positions from which they can give orders to a great number of Chinese souls. The Jade Empire is for the Chinese, and the Conquered Territories exist to lessen the burden that reaping souls and relics places upon the people of the Yellow Springs. But few Japanese power-seekers are looking for power over the Chinese. They would not refuse the opportunity, perhaps, but what they really want is power over other Japanese. They want to control people like themselves. To this aim, Yu Huang has no objections.

Power-seekers need more supervision than other kinds of collaborators. In pursuit of personal advantage, they are likelier to neglect their duties to the Occupation as a whole. Yet if placed in positions that offer them little scope for self-aggrandizement, they become sullen and inefficient. General Shi's solution is to assign them work such as collecting relic levies and confiscating the resources of wraiths executed, enslaved or exiled. A moderate level of corruption and graft in such undertakings hurts no one whom Shi need care about (as long as Imperial quotas are met) and it keeps the power-seekers happy.

THE YOUNG

Tokyo has a disproportionate number of young wraiths. Filled with loathing for themselves and hatred for the sundry institutions that promised (but failed to provide) support, some try to become as un-Japanese as possible. Of the young who survive more than a few weeks in the Shadowlands, about 10 to 15 percent of each year's "crop" joins the Occupation government.

Most young wraiths lack useful skills or they suffer the impairment of fanaticism. Wraiths simply looking for an opportunity to hurt other Japanese get their wish by becoming expendable shock troops, tossed into situations needing soldiers and saving General Shi the expense of wasting trained warriors.



But some of the young serve more useful functions; they may become part of the Occupation's traveling groups of didactic entertainers, or gofers in the Imperial Hotel (and the many other administrative buildings), or stoop laborers on construction projects. They serve — for a while — with very little complaint. They gradually start looking beyond their roles as cogs in Jade's engine of destruction. At this point, most go to the forges, but again, some survive.

If young wraiths can temper their loathing with a bit of rational judgment, they can become important in the lower and middle levels of Occupation administration. General Shi prefers that the majority of the officials whom Japanese subjects encounter be Japanese. From clerks to office managers to consultants, the Occupation needs wraiths who know the area better than foreigners do.

Each year, a few young wraiths working for the Occupation are seized by guilt or fresh fanaticism and they attempt to strike at the beast from within. The courtyard poles at the Imperial Hotel typically hold one or two such rebellious bureaucrats just to encourage correct behavior among their colleagues. Most of the young who survive and attain permanent positions hang on to them, however, and they pass into Oblivion only because of damage to or loss of Fetters — or any motivation apart from conscience.

THE REJECTED

The Japanese defeat in W.W.II was a terrible, crushing blow to many souls. Their expectation was that virtuous effort would be rewarded. Having met the ultimate humiliation, some decided that the virtue taught them was false. They sought alternatives.

Some of these seekers found intellectual and spiritual homes in the Imperial reform movements. Others turned inward, drifting away from society altogether. And among the Restless Dead, some served the Occupation.

This impetus isn't quite the same one that drives the Youth Brigades. The Rejected, as they call themselves, are adults. Many lived long, full lives before dying. They are not driven by youthful passions and the memory of hormones, but by a profound despair. The Rejected do not rush to join the Occupation, but once committed, they tend to remain loyal.

Many wraiths who died in old age take on Corpora that appear substantially younger than their chronological age at death. The Rejected almost never do. They see themselves serving as constant reminders that a lifetime of loyalty to Japanese ideals brings no reward. They want their appearance to discomfit wraiths who still think the rewards of Japanese culture warrant its sacrifices.

THE VISIONARIES

Every two to three generations, a wave of synthesizing sentiment sweeps through the Japanese intelligentsia. After visionaries die, they sometimes join the Occupation government in hopes of using it as a platform for implementation. After all, here is a solid Chinese presence in the heartland of Japan. Were it not for the annoying complication of it being a brutal military regime, the circumstances would be ideal to create the New Asia here and now.

Visionaries seldom do much good in the serious front-line duties of killing dissidents, overseeing chain gangs and the like, but they are useful to the Occupation in administrative and behind-the-scenes roles. They justify their cruelties as integral to the process of influencing the system from within. The very fact of the visionaries' presence, they reason, marks a synthesis of the two now-opposed cultures.

To Japanese resisters, the visionaries are among the worst of collaborators, for they are difficult to bribe as they're not collaborating primarily for gain. They can be swayed only by logic or rhetoric, and they resist persuasion. And once committed, they stay committed. Visionaries can rationalize nearly any atrocity as contributing to the greater good.

THE RESISTANCE

CHINESE OPPOSITION

The most organized, widespread opponents of Yu Huang within the Chinese Shadowlands are the Struggle Against the Qin (or simply, the Struggle) and the Society of a Thousand Hands and Eyes. Both operate in the Conquered Territories, including Japan, but not very effectively. Native opponents see them as endeavoring to replace one overlord with another.

THE STRUGGLE

The Struggle makes a great show of native leadership in its Japanese wing, in the person of 19th-century naval officer Yintaro Koichi. He takes his duties seriously. He hates the Occupation passionately. In this instance, the Struggle chose well. Koichi leads his forces courageously and forcefully. Japan is no worse off for his efforts (perhaps better).

But Yintaro Koichi lacks intellectual rigor. He was one of the many old-school officers who committed *seppuku* in the early decades of the Meiji Restoration after proving unable to meet rising standards of professionalism. Innovation and improvisation do not, intersect courage and



persistence in his mind. Yintaro thus settles into tactical and strategic ruts, and he jolts from them (into new ruts) only after substantial losses. Rebellious-minded Japanese spirits have little trust for him unless they share his traditionalism. Younger spirits turn elsewhere, and the Struggle in Japan shrivels slowly for want of renewal.

THE SOCIETY

In Japan, the Society became active more than a century ago, but it has built its strength carefully (in keeping with its overall philosophy). The vast majority of active Resistance fighters have no solid information about the Society or its operations.

The Society likewise has Japanese leadership. Turn-of-the-century industrialist Ryuichi Tenzo coordinates the Society's operations in Japan. He shows enough loyalty to keep the Occupation from seizing his assets, but he bends the rules sufficiently to maintain his reputation among Resistance fighters. Tenzo seldom ventures from his Chuo-ku Harbor District HQ, which is a Jade-sanctioned "pawn shop" that sells confiscated minor relics *back* to the people from whom these items have been stripped. Tenzo construes the service he provides as a means to curry favor with the Senryo, which he seeks to subvert from the inside.

Tenzo's staff members have fostered an image throughout the Tokyo Resistance as quiet, polite Restless who mediate disputes and preserve calm. In truth, they are *p'o*-consumed to a wraith and inevitably must fall prey to the Dread Militia. For now, however, with Tenzo as their clueless front man, these agents of Oblivion carry out their schemes under dual layers of falsehood.

Tenzo Enterprises calls its conflict-mediators "reconcilers," and behind the façade of public peacemaking, they act as recruiters for the Hive. When they see a promising young wraith who is not overtly rebellious enough to attract Occupation attention, they offer advice that is sure to lead the unsuspecting wretch straight into a Harrowing. Tenzo reconcilers always accompany their advice with a smile and say, "The cleansing river flows through many hidden channels before it reaches the sea."

THE COORDINATORS

One of the challenges facing *shen* who wish to strike at the Jade Empire is that their existing quarrels do not all suddenly disappear. Thus, there's pressing need for someone to bridge the gap. Futatsu Atama *uji*, a Genji family, stepped into the breach.

Atama Jigoro drew his Second Breath in 1601 after dying at Sekigahara. Before his death, he'd been a hedge magician with dreams of uniting the secret magical communities of Japan. As he progressed along the Path of the Thousand Whispers, he revisited that dream. Jigoro's explorations of the Shadowlands revealed the breadth of Jade Empire oppression. His modern-day organization began taking shape early in the

18th century when he fell in love with Omo Keiki, who drew her Second Breath in 1710. Omo's time in the Yomi World was harsher than Jigoro's and it pointed more strongly to ties between the Jade Emperor and the Yama Kings.

The name "Futatsu Atama" was first applied by Jigoro's rivals within the clan. It means "Two Heads" and mocks the unusual closeness and mutuality of his relationship with Keiki. His network, when it had become extensive enough to warrant a name, won the label "Gohon Shippo," or "Five Tails." Omo sometimes draws cartoonish illustrations of a two-headed monster with tails representing Kuei-jin, hengeyokai, *shintu*, wraiths and *hsien*. Jigoro's insight was that he, as someone sympathetic to all of their concerns, could coordinate their efforts.

THE FIVE TAILS

Several dozen *shen* throughout Asia work in association with the Two Heads. The supernaturals' operations have a wide range: mapping out Jade's Byways through Yin realms, recruiting spies and collaborators within the Occupation government, raiding isolated contingents of Imperial troops or outposts, making connections with Stygian wraiths to share information, and in some cases, sowing misinformation among rival Resistance bands to keep them from tangling with one another.

ORGANIZED OPPOSITION

Only a handful of wraithly groups bears the burden of opposing the Jade Empire. The oldest of them dates back to the initial invasion, nearly a millennium ago. The constant war continues to take its toll on their Psyches, and it is a tribute to sheer force of will that their members didn't all become ravaging Spectres long ago.

FIST OF NIPPON

The young wraith Kitagawa Hideo leads Japan's newest and largest organized resistance. Fist of Nippon dates back only to the short-lived era of Japanese freedom after W.W.II and the Fifth Great Maelstrom.

Kitagawa died in a car accident as a teenager during the American occupation and worked in Jade's Territorial Government as a minor clerk. During those years, he developed unexpected aptitudes both for personal combat and leadership. In the early 1960s, Kitagawa's clerical duties alerted him to the ragged, uncoordinated mob that would become Fist of Nippon. He helped conceal its existence as he worked to transform it into an increasingly disciplined force. Unable to muster great numbers of warriors, he concentrated on tactics of disruption and sabotage.

In the late '60s, Kitagawa began to travel from his Kyushu sanctuary to instruct Resistance efforts elsewhere. The name "Fist of Nippon" arose spontaneously, along with graffiti featuring the

emblem of a clenched fist silhouetted by the Japanese flag's red sun. Kitagawa declines military rank, insisting that he's unworthy of it, but he consults with numerous Resistance leaders.

Kitagawa explores other sources of assistance. He's found common ground with his counterparts in other Conquered Territories, and even with anti-Yu Huang factions within the Jade Empire itself. Kitagawa and his advisors study the techniques of non-Asian wraiths, too. In recent years, his followers have begun applying Inhabit to circumvent the Occupation's usual defenses for Citadels. Other foreign Arcanoi are coming due to the Fist of Nippon's Enlightenment Corps.

The Fist's exact membership is something of a mystery. As with any organization that must remain hidden and dispersed, some branches claim inflated numbers, while others understate their ranks. More than 50,000 wraiths undergo annual readiness training, however, and about half of that number serve on one or more missions each year.

NIPPON ASCENDING

Nippon Ascending is the oldest and second-largest Resistance movement (eclipsed in recent centuries by the Million Swords). The initial Jade invasion took place in the chaos preceding the rise of the Kamakura shogunate, and a great many souls were eager to wield more influence in the Shadowlands than they had been able to achieve in life. After a chaotic beginning, Nippon Ascending coalesced around the leadership of the Ujinomo clan, a minor family of the Kanto Plain who demonstrated a knack for Shadowlands warfare.

In the present day, Nippon Ascending includes three detachments of about 5,000 wraiths each, plus untrained volunteer auxiliaries totaling two to three times as many (depending on the vagaries of the moment). Each detachment consists of three "spears": the Spear of Skill, the Spear of Strength and the Spear of Great Weight. The Spear of Skill is always smallest, generally with fewer than 500 members, and consists only of wraiths with high aptitude in combat-useful Arcanoi. Spear of Strength members are familiar with Shadowlands weaponry. The Spear of Great Weight includes all of the rest — wraiths promoted from the auxiliary ranks but lacking any useful skills (i.e., cannon fodder).

The Second Detachment operates in and around Tokyo. (The First patrols the shores of the Sea of Japan, whereas the Third ranges throughout the Home Islands to make surgical strikes against Occupation strongholds.) General Ujinomo Dazedu oversees the detachments' efforts from a variety of command posts. The detachments usually disperse into units of 10 to 50 soldiers, who present themselves as harmless families going about their business.

The Second Detachment cannot make swift, bold moves as can the Third or the First; once the general selects a target, his troops spend weeks slowly surrounding it. They use the cover of religious holidays or momentous events in the Skinlands to gather like a random throng. Then they strike and disperse back to prearranged sanctuaries throughout the city and its outskirts. On occasion, the Spear of Skill acts alone, and the coordinated efforts of several hundred wraiths all applying Keening or Phantasm (for example) can be devastating.

In the early centuries of the Occupation, Nippon Ascending and the occupying forces both went to extremes. The Ujinomos arranged mass attacks that cost them the souls of too many soldiers, whereas the Occupation responded with cleansing strikes that depopulated whole neighborhoods. Both sides have since realized that souls are precisely what the war is about and are not to be squandered. Otherwise, the Resistance will have no more personnel and the occupiers will have nothing to send back to the Yellow Springs.

There is a serious problem that the Ujinomos do not recognize. Intellectually, they realize that a spirit of nihilism and despair, a harbinger of the Sixth Age, stalks the Shadowlands. But filled as they and their associates are with the passionate vision to fight until victory, the Ujinomos do not consider it to be a serious problem. They do not realize that growing numbers of their troops are now Spectres.

The Yama Kings hate (and envy) Yu Huang's empire as much as the Japanese do, yet they do not cavalierly sabotage effective campaigns against Yu Huang's troops. They do, however, recruit more and more servants from the ranks of the Resistance, and when necessary, they prune ones who seem overly hostile to the idea of joining the forces of chaos and annihilation. By the time this development comes to the attention of the Ujinomos, it may well be too late.

MILLION SWORDS

Million Swords dates back to the Tokugawa era. It formed from a handful of *tozama* clans that were executed for plotting against Ieyasu. They entered the Shadowlands set upon vengeance, only to find a far more dire opponent. They formed Million Swords to unite all Japanese who struggle against the Jade Empire.

In reality, of course, they are nothing of the sort, though it seems that many of the senior generals believe their own propaganda. Their thinking is that only scattered small groups are effective. Million Swords is more militant and less organized than Nippon Ascending. It preserves the structure of largely independent *daimyo* and small bands of samurai, who lead huge uncoordinated masses of peasant soldiers. Nippon Ascending is far more open to leadership by individuals who were not of the "proper class" in life. Million Swords is closed to all but the *daimyo* and samurai classes.

This conservatism forms part of Million Swords' appeal. Lower-class souls who seek an answer to the appalling situation understand what Million Swords offers them. Precisely because it is better attuned to the realities of the Shadowlands, Nippon Ascending seems strange and sometimes threatening. So, Million Swords makes up in numbers what it lacks in other regards.

Million Swords' total strength is about 20,000 wraiths, but its presence in Tokyo, no more than 3,000, is smaller than that of Nippon Ascending. The force is divided into two contingents: the Black Knives and the White Knives. The Black Knives harass the Occupation's lines of support and communication. Million Swords commanders realize that their troops cannot survive a frontal assault — or rather, that they could but would never survive a counter-attack — so they concentrate on actions that make it difficult for the Occupation to carry out its routines. The White Knives engage in small-unit operations with a very high degree of risk.

UNORGANIZED OPPOSITION

DOOMED CHILDREN

Japan has one of the highest suicide rates among industrialized nations, particularly of adolescent and pre-adolescent self-snuffity. The cultural pressure to perform and to refrain from displays of negative emotions makes for hellish lives for many students. Every day, some break under the strain and kill themselves.

Many of these young suicides enter the Shadowlands. Most go on to meet an unhappy fate. They arrive thinking themselves to be at last free of the strictures that bound them in life, only to find matters much worse on the far side of the Shroud.

Survivors learn how to keep a low profile. But not everyone, and particularly not every student who went to the grave out of fear, frustration and despair, wants to continue the sort of existence he fled from the first time.

Occupation policy about impromptu musical exhibitions and other gatherings without explicit political ramifications varies. Every few years, squads round up the Elvis imitators and other "ideologically confused elements" to send them off to the soulforges or to the Yellow Springs as slave labor. At other times, the patrols just make trouble for groups that make trouble for the patrols.

But some forms of dissent are always punished. The Youth Historical Movement, for instance, uses Moliate to shape teenagers into likenesses of great heroes from Japan's history. It trains them in martial arts as well. The Historicals then go



forth and fight patrols in commemoration of the Japanese who chose death over dishonor (and they usually get to join their inspirations in paying the final price). The Monster Boys and Demon Girls put on parades for which they Moliate themselves into re-creations of great mythical beasts. Their goal is to ambush patrols that come to round them up. Stalking such parades long ago became the patrols' least favorite duty.

THE NEW DIVINE WIND

Starting in the late 1980s, a fresh wave of Shinto enthusiasm swept some parts of the intelligentsia. Adherents of the creed enter the Shadowlands to find a totally unacceptable situation. They have no time to deal with organization or strategy; they want the invaders punished *now*.

Divine Wind (or the *kamikaze*) seeks to purify Shadowlands Tokyo by fire. The loyal sons and daughters of Japan are willing to pay any price necessary to drive out the foreign devils. Nobody else's concerns matter. Heedless of any other significance Territorial Government buildings might have, Divine Wind warriors aim to burn down, or otherwise destroy, relic structures important to the Occupation. The group's record is questionable. It has increased the number of homeless souls without doing significant damage to the Occupation.

GOBLIN SPIDERS

The Goblin Spiders seek the triumph of the Yomi World, but on their own terms. While the Kumo lords' list of enemies overlaps extensively with that of the Occupation, targets have been known to escape when Goblin Spiders and Jade soldiers turn to fighting each other for the right to make the kill.

There aren't many Goblin Spiders in Tokyo. Their great strongholds are near sites of potent, tainted Chi, and though the capital city is polluted, it has few such sites. But some nest in Tokyo Bay, where they prey on all manner of traffic.

MUTUAL ENEMIES

Some forces in Tokyo are inimical to the Occupation and to the Resistance.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE STORES

Of the dangerous unaligned forces, the Colored Mannequins are the most ubiquitous.

In the Dreaming, the realm of Capecia holds complex populations of automata of all kinds. Organic beings here serve only as labor and as chimerical husks for Capecia's automaton "children." (See *Dreams and Nightmares*, p. 78, for more details.) One form of dream-machine created in Capecia is the mannikin. Mannikins are faceless creatures adorned with markings whose geometry eludes comprehension by creatures of flesh and blood.

Over the last 50 years, the mannikins (or effigies) have infiltrated Tokyo. The first effigy lords came in the final years of the American military occupation, when many new stores sprang up. These *hsien* bring their followers into the waking world through different means. Today, every major department store in Tokyo belongs to one effigy court or another. (So do most minor stores, though not all.)

Within each store, mannikin rulers collect tribute from the chimerical creatures that dwell there. Most stores are independent "city-states" at war with their neighbors over territory. Some effigy lords manage to unify several stores for a while, but either their underlings revolt or outside competition unites just long enough to topple them.

Mannikin warfare can have consequences for the Shadowlands. Chimerical warfare can disrupt a carefully laid ambush, or distract a patrol, or prevent *shen* from finding sanctuary at a crucial moment. The effigies belong to the Western paradigm, which flourishes in Japan due to the incorporation of occidental themes into the Japanese worldview. Mannikins have no interest in the affairs of other *shen*, but they take any intrusion into their department store domains very seriously. For most *shen*, mannikin-ruled retail outlets exist primarily as menaces to be avoided, but the lure of treasure or information is too strong sometimes.

The major obstacle to negotiation with the effigies is that their goals are, literally, incomprehensible. They see the universe in terms that are fundamentally different from the perspectives of living beings.

ZENREI BUNRAKU

The Fifth Great Maelstrom left countless servants of the Yama Kings and their Malfean counterparts far from home. Many Spectres quickly became prey, slaves or commodities, but some studied their new environment and struck deals with the supernatural beings of their new land. Zenrei Bunraku, or Soul Puppetry, is one of the most successful such movements.

Spectral Puppeteers from the Labyrinth found the condition of Japan invigorating. Tainted Chi, the impending Sixth Age, the destruction of dragon nests — all were tremendously appealing. *Gaijin* Spectres struck deals with Tokyo's Goblin Spiders and with malevolent Kuei-jin. Together they set out to bring disorder to Tokyo.

Zenrei Bunraku is small, with fewer than two dozen members, but they have skill (and in the case of the Japanese members, long familiarity with the locale). They make a difference — for the worse from the point of view of anyone not anticipating chaos with pleasure.

Zenrei Bunraku works in teams of three, imitating the practice of mortal practitioners of *bunraku* puppetry. In the human art, the *omozukai*, or leader, controls the puppet's right arm, hand, and head. The *ashizukai*, or second, controls the legs. The *hidarizukai*, or third, controls the left arm and hand. Zenrei Bunraku manipulates not individuals, but

organizations, with a division of labor that parallels the human art metaphorically. In the Spectral art, the *omozukai* attacks the senior leaders of an organization. The *ashizukai* takes control of flunkies and junior subordinates. The *hidarizukai* concentrates on the individuals who act as liaisons and contacts with other groups.

Destroying organizations is difficult. Sufficiently dramatic failures attract attention, both human and supernatural, and lead to the removal of the apparently deranged mortals. The chief accomplishment of Zenrei Bunraku thus far is the 1967 bank panic. Otherwise, most of the puppeteers' efforts have ended in limited pain and suffering. But they direct their energies toward someday shattering the whole of the Japanese economy.

The other supernatural beings of Tokyo do not yet realize the existence of Zenrei Bunraku. The various *shen* who have helped foil its schemes thus far have dealt only with isolated Zenrei Bunraku plots. The clues lie strewn among the *uji* and other groups, waiting for someone to put the pieces together.

OTHER ENTANGLEMENTS

IMPERIAL RESTORATION

The one thing virtually all supernatural beings in and around Tokyo agree on is that Japan needs new leadership—an authority capable of consolidating the warring sects into an effective and harmonious whole. What they do not agree on are the terms under which this unity should flourish, or who should lead it.

KUEI-JIN FACTIONS

THE OLD IMPERIALS

Most Bishamon believe that the 1946 disavowal of Imperial divinity was the greatest of all the blows that Japan suffered during and after the Second World War. They believe that Akihito, by accepting the current situation, proved himself undeserving. The Bishamon desire his removal, once the forces behind the scenes identify a worthy heir and build popular support for a renewed declaration of Imperial divinity. Only with a true Son of Heaven on the throne can Japan survive the impending terrors.

A splinter group within the Old Imperials, the Phoenix Phalanx, believes that the Japanese people need to face more crises to recognize their one true course of salvation. The Phalanx's leaders awakened too late to their wayward wrongheadedness, with the realization that *akuma* among them had seized control of the group. The Phoenix Phalanx now instigates crises and exploits existing ones, and it attempts to maneuver the other Old Imperials into dealings with the Yama Kings.



THE HANIWA (GUARDIANS)

At the beginning of the Imperial era in Japan, the practitioners of *kofun*, or "tomb culture," buried their honored dead in earthen mounds circled by cylindrical statues of people, animals and places of residence. These representations were called "haniwa"; they replaced human sacrifice in *kofun* custom.

In the 1940s, a modern-day organization calling itself "the Haniwa" emerged from the shock and outrage that *shen* of every kind felt at Hirohito's renunciation of divinity. Resplendent Crane and Thousand Whispers Kuei-jin joined loyal *hengyokai*, wraiths, and *hsien* to keep Imperial secrets and relics of governance safe.

Members of the Haniwa believe that the first critical wrong step of the modern age was the Meiji decision to move the capital from Kyoto to Tokyo. The capital became disconnected from dragon lines that might have saved the emperor from confusion, evil influence and simple error. The Haniwa wants to destroy the Imperial Palace in Tokyo to force a return to Kyoto.

THE NEW IMPERIALS

Most Genji believe that the events of 1946 are valid and that, in fact, Hirohito did forsake his divinity when he capitulated to the Americans. For the last 50 years, Japan has had no bridge between Earth and Heaven. Genji delight in watching progress unfold, but they remain aware of the modern world's spiritual void. The New Imperials search for someone among the Japanese who is worthy to become the new emperor. Such a person must have ties to the Imperial bloodline (as there is but one Imperial family) but must be independent of the corrupt fools of recent generations. In the meantime, Akihito is an acceptable place-holder — he seems content with his position and makes little trouble.

THE METSUKU

The *ometsuke* were the Tokugawa secret police, whose duties included searching out subversion and discontent. As the New Imperials coalesced into a faction in the 1950s, they founded a new organization to mimic the original force. Only Kuei-jin participate; the Metsuke regard all other *shen* (including most Kuei-jin) as potential enemies for having failed to prevent the collapse of the Imperial era. They are paranoid, accountable to no one, and prone to acting on odd logic. Their ranks are small — no more than a few dozen individuals belong — but they leave a trail of devastation and corpses wherever they go.

THE NEW COVENANT

Identifying one culture or another as heirs to the lost tribes of Israel is an age-old pastime for overly credulous would-be intellectuals. On the fringes of the university scene in Tokyo (and on the World Wide Web), one sometimes encounters individuals who earnestly explain that Japanese culture reflects a "Hebrew legacy." Some Outer Imperials subscribe to this notion and seek the new emperor among the Jewish population of the world. Most members of this minor faction believe that the Sixth Age will end as the Sabbath Age begins, when God renews His covenant with humanity and ushers in a golden age of peace and happiness under the leadership of Hebraic Japanese.

Advocates of the New Covenant explain their views calmly but enthusiastically — and at very great length — if given the chance.

THE TEACHERS

Two Teachers recently founded *uji*, the Ascending Mist and the East Margin, advancing the New Imperial cause through media manipulation. Most of their members reside in Chiyoda and Shinjuku, near the big networks. Some exercise influence as managers, some infiltrate news outlets as consultants, and others manipulate mortals from the shadows.

The Teachers promote a two-pronged message. First, progress is good and vitally necessary for Japan to fulfill its potential. Second, progress flourishes best when anchored in the matrix of traditional belief. The Teachers are laying the foundation on which to rally public support for a new spiritual empire. It may take decades, but they have time... or they would, if it weren't for the looming Sixth Age. The "short-timers" among both *uji* feel that the quest for the new emperor must become public within the next decade, whereas the "long-timers" prefer to wait a full generation.

So far, the Teachers have managed to settle their disputes peacefully. If a rash of violent, gory deaths suddenly strikes Tokyo broadcasting, or if slain Kuei-jin begin turning up in expensive neighborhoods, it could be a sign that peaceful compromise has exceeded its limits.

THE OUTER IMPERIALS

A few *shen* interpret the 1946 proclamation to mean that no Japanese is now fit to be emperor. They seek a new emperor among all the other races of the world, to inaugurate a reign of ruthless tyranny long enough to purge evil from the Home Islands and permit virtue to rise anew. They welcomed the American occupation as the first step in the purge and see the Sixth Age as the necessary next step in the renewal of

Japan. Akihito must be deposed and the vestiges of the Imperial family wiped out to help the Japanese people confront the harsh realities of the moment.

THE ANTI-IMPERIALS

The smallest and newest of the factions, the Anti-Imperials believe that the Imperial era is over. Whether or not Hirohito was right, and whether or not the situation was entirely propitious, the reality is that the divine emperor no longer exists. The Anti-Imperials spend most of their energy trying to keep the New and Old Imperials from doing something irrevocably rash. For this tiny faction, the others' obsessive concern with resurrecting the past weakens the ability of all *shen* to deal with the real issues confronting Japan.

THE FIFTH FACTION

Eastern cosmologies recognize five elements. The Kuei-jin had five courts originally, and the Quincunx restored the five-fold division in recent times. There are five directions, and a five-fold balance exists between virtues. Consequently, completists among scholars of Kuei-jin society look for a fifth faction of supernatural beings regarding the imperial issue, but they're disturbed to find that no such group exists. Efforts to set one up for the sake of the symmetry have so far been fruitless. Some *shen* with no particular feelings about the Imperial struggle refer to themselves as members of the Disinterested Faction.

THE FACTIONS AND OTHER RACES

In general, creatures other than Kuei-jin who benefit from or who do not fear modernity tend to be New Imperials, while those inclined toward tradition favor the Old Imperial vision. Tradition technomancers favor the Anti-Imperials, as do some of the supernatural community's deepest-reaching mystics.

JACOB LEDERER'S REVENGE

Jacob Lederer was one of the many Dutch sailors shipwrecked on the main Japanese island of Honshu and put to death for the crime of being a European in the wrong place. Upon death, he became a Mortwright driven by a potent combination of hatred and fear into the service of the Yama Queen Tou Mu. Lederer performs a variety of duties for her, but his driving ambition is to inflict endless punishment on the descendants of those Japanese responsible for his suffering in life.

Strong in the Arcanoi Inhabit and Pandemonium, with just enough talent in Lifeweb to trace blood lines, Lederer prowls Japan in search of targets. When he thinks he's found a "guilty one," he proceeds to drive the individual to suicide or an "accidental" death. He has a bizarre psychological block against directly committing murder, but not against making his targets' lives unbearable.

Tokyo is currently home to four such targets: a long-shoreman, a gardener at Narita Airport, a subway-train operator and a game-show host. Lederer identified them only recently, and he just began his campaigns of torment. Supernatural beings who oppose Lederer's goals, for whatever reason, should take care: If they harm him, they face the wrath of Tou Mu, who treasures Lederer as a rare *gaijin* toy.

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

Part of China's touring collection of treasures from Imperial tombs is currently in Tokyo at the National Museum in Ueno Park. *Shen* schemes swirl around this exhibition of antiquities.

Yu Huang assigned Colonel Wing Daiya to lead the unit of wraiths guarding the artifacts. He and his soldiers have abilities suitable for affecting the material world as well as the Shadowlands. Among their powers are Alchemy, Embodiment, Outrage, Pandemonium and Puppetry. Colonel Wing is rather young for a high-ranking Jade Empire official — he died during the Taiping Rebellion last century — but he has demonstrated conspicuous bravery and intelligence in battle and complete loyalty to Yu Huang. (On the other hand, because Wing is young, Yu Huang does not risk losing a more experienced senior officer. Yu Huang is no fool.)

Ueno Park is home to another scheme altogether, namely the reanchored dream realms from the Tomorrow Garden. Colonel Wing does not yet know what is wrong with his immediate surroundings, but he knows that *something* is amiss here. Some of the soldiers dispatched to find the source of the strange disturbances never returned. Others came back delirious, with no useful recollections of what they encountered. Wing *can* call on the Immortal Guard. The exhibit includes three of the terra-cotta statues that serve as shells for the Guardsmen, but the matter is delicate. Should the colonel summon Guardsmen to a situation he could have handled with his existing force, he faces a very long stay in Hell. If, on the other hand, he waits too long and his men or the artifacts in their care suffer losses that the Guardsmen could have prevented, then he could still wind up in Hell. Colonel Wing confronts a most vexing crisis here, and he's perched on the brink of a Harrowing.

Many Japanese *shen* wish to destroy the exhibit for symbolic reasons ("China cannot defend its sacred symbols"), practical ones ("As relics, these items can be potent tools") or both.

The Sun Wind is among the more destructive supernaturals. The Sun Wind *uji* comprises fallen Bishamon and the Genji. Its *akuma* leaders use the motto "Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a good start." They dream of a Japan given over entirely to wastelands of tainted Chi. To that end, they foment unrest, both on the small scale — selling stolen military nerve gas to would-be terrorists — and on the national scale — escalating tensions between Japan and its neighbors. A diplomatic brouhaha over the unexplained destruction of some precious Chinese antiquities is just the leaders' sort of thing. Their efforts to sneak bombs into the museum have all ended in failure, thanks to the alertness of Colonel Wing's forces. Sun Wind is now considering the merits of loading a plane with explosives and crashing it into the museum.

The Strategic Resources Development Cell of Tokyo's New World Order branch has a different agenda. It hopes to call the reliability of Japanese security procedures into doubt and then offer more trustworthy alternatives. The NWO realized long ago that controlling security services for corporations and governments offers a back-door route to controlling the targets themselves. The Technocrats calculate that a general rush by Japanese firms to engage NWO front operations is likely, following a strategic theft and desecration. But their plans suffered a setback when preliminary scouting revealed numerous and varied reality deviants in the area. They therefore summoned a team of HIT Marks to "simplify" the supernatural complications before proceeding.

The New Imperials have no plans of destruction or mayhem of their own but suspect that others do. They feel that Japanese souls capable of striking an effective blow against the Chinese in this regard might have imperial potential, so they watch carefully from concealed positions... which they do not realize that the NWO has identified.

FIRE IN THE STRAITS

The tension between Japan and Russia over control of Sakhalin Island and the Tatar Strait (and by extension, over all the resources of Northeastern Asia) continues unabated despite radical changes of government on both sides. Actual physical conflict, what little there is of it among humans and *shen*, takes place mostly up north. But diplomatic battles rage in Tokyo. Here, Japanese policy is made. Therefore, here too are spies, lobbyists and their ilk, congregating in the hopes of influencing policy.

To the Bishamon, only one issue matters: the ancient territorial integrity of Japan. All other concerns are secondary. Most Genji share a desire for Japan's greatness, but they recognize that belligerence on this point may cost Japan opportunities for success on other fronts — ones just as important or even more so.



WHOSE TECHNOLOGY?

Japan owes its place in the modern world economy mostly to circumstances it neither sought nor desired; responses to the harsh reality of imposed "openness" fueled modernization. Japanese progress has relied mostly on the innovative use of fundamental breakthroughs made elsewhere.

The Zaibatsu, the Japanese arm of the Technocracy, maintains uneasy relations with its Western counterparts. Under a single hierarchy, the Zaibatsu brings together the different factions of mages that divide into separate Conventions in the West. But the Conventions also send representatives of their own, who allegedly work as "guests" of the Zaibatsu.

The Western Technocrats see the Zaibatsu as their somewhat backward younger sibling: a follower, not a leader. The Zaibatsu mages see the Westerners as arrogant and blind, busily forcing Japanese experience into molds that do not apply. Zaibatsu leaders remember how the New World Order's predecessors sent only piddling resources when the Meiji Restoration blossomed and great opportunities opened — and how the Syndicate, expecting its own way, callously barged in after W.W.II.

Whether Western Technocrats realize it or not (and most don't), all of them undergo constant surveillance here. The Zaibatsu hoards knowledge that the Conventions don't realize the Japanese possess, and it operates an extensive network of laboratories in addition to the ones it declares to the Conventions. While the Zaibatsu's leaders speak the language of Technocratic unity, they practice something very different.

FENG SHUI IN TOKYO

Tokyo's extremely high population density means that each new building or construction project alters the *feng shui* affecting hundreds — or thousands — of people. Knowledgeable observers can trace the rise and fall of factions among Tokyo's secret masters in the history of architectural innovation.

The late 1980s and early '90s saw a proliferation of ugly, alienating designs. Some of them were nothing other than bad design choices, but some were the intersection of Zaibatsu and Bishamon concerns that Japan's people not become uppity and ungovernable. The two groups manipulated their respective underlings, and where their orders coincided, the mages and vampires got more than they ever expected.

The collapse of mortal vigor serves both the Zaibatsu and Bishamon agendas. Now comes an era of rival impulses. The Bishamon seek to extend the inward turn and link it to a general abandonment of modernity. The Zaibatsu, on the other hand, wishes to unleash a tighter, more disciplined post-industrial Japan on the world. Many

showcase buildings of the 1990s feature peculiar combinations of classical Japanese and Western motifs with modernist and hypermodernist elements.

The flow of *feng shui* through such structures is, at best, unreliable. The people working in one office might receive fresh vigor and intellectual insight while their next-door neighbors suffer from perpetual confusion and illnesses. Walking down long galleries can expose people to alternating streams of good and bad Chi. Decision-making is difficult and inconsistent in such surroundings. The confusion in Japanese policy on many matters rises in part from the bad *feng shui* where policy-makers gather.

TAKING STOCK

No creature of the night can directly manipulate the local stock market; that feat requires ghouls, servants and intermediaries. But due to global telecommunications, *shen* whose lives begin with the setting sun may wield tremendous influence over other nations' stock markets.

Six P.M. in Tokyo is six A.M. the previous day in New York and nine A.M. the previous day in London. A Tokyo Kuei-jin can therefore rise comfortably, enjoy a leisurely start to the night, spend some hours managing affairs in London, take a break to feast on some suitable source of Chi, and then spend the rest of the night fucking with the Dow Jones Industrial Average. With minor scheduling shifts, the unseen market player can participate in other exchanges as well. Only the major Asian markets require regular use of agents. Instant access to the major stock exchanges, commodities markets and other trading centers costs a lot of money, but well-connected Kuei-jin have a lot of money, or they have access to it.

Cautious or paranoid Kuei-jin operate through intermediaries hired in the cities where the major markets operate. Foreigners spending a great deal of money, operating only at night, occasionally attract attention. Technology enables humans, as well as *shen*, to do this sort of thing, and the vast majority of distant market manipulators never learn of the Second Breath, the Yin and Yang Worlds, or any of the other foundations of *shen* existence. As long as the foreigners' credit is good, few local market managers care. When scrutiny does come, it often does so wrapped in xenophobic rants about (depending on the locale) the Yellow Peril, the immoral West, decadent Americans or some other bugaboos. The ranters usually discredit themselves without any help from their targets.

Two complications threaten this quietly lucrative life.

First, other *shen* engage in the same enterprise. By far, most of what happens in stock markets and the like reflects purely human affairs. But some of the stranger sideshows of merger, sellout, takeover, and so on reflect the economic phase of war between supernatural groups. The Bishamon like to arrange long-term schemes that leave Genji investments suddenly hollow and worthless; the Genji retaliate

with development programs that encroach upon the traditionalists' enclaves. Astute hengeyokai and *hsien* know that soul-shattering, dream-eroding corruption may be fought with dollars and yen as well as with claws and swords. But the Yama Kings' servants include financial wizards with blackened souls. These acquisitive robber barons use the markets to their masters' advantage. What wraiths with *Inhabit* or *Puppetry* seek to gain from the markets may conflict with the goals of Kuei-jin, the Kindred or other creatures.

Second, local markets face threats from abroad. Just as Kuei-jin work directly on the markets elsewhere, so do Kindred, wraiths and others prey on Asian markets. *Uji* with a sense of self-preservation, therefore, allocate competent members to oversee the proceedings at the Tokyo Stock Exchange and other financial centers in and around the Middle Kingdom. Back-tracking to find whether a given local trader is working for himself, for a consortium of speculators from America or Europe, or for someone more sinister (such as the *Ventrue* or *Stygia*) seldom proceeds quickly.

BETTER THAN PHLOGISTON!

Several Sons of Ether have come to Tokyo to study Japanese pre-scientific traditions. They think that the Yang World might be a fertile source of energy with which to liberate the world from its petrochemical dependence, if only they could harness it properly. Being true men and women of science, the Sons of Ether have little time to waste on foolish superstition and have managed to offend both Bishamon and Genji in short order. Depending on who the characters are, they may wish to discipline (perhaps, fatally so) these intruding upstarts, or to protect them while sending them on their way, or perhaps to help them. *Shen* seeking to hasten the Sixth Age into reality might find schemes to subdue the Yang World to be just the thing. In every case, however, the Sons of Ether have their own agenda and surprises.

BLOOD TYPE

Japan's entertainment industry typically provides much more information about its fictional characters than its Western counterparts do. One such bit of trivia, for no reason readily apparent to mortals, is blood type. Fans can readily learn the blood types of all their favorite characters.

Western supernatural beings visiting Japan might start to wonder about this phenomenon. Some fans make a point of choosing their favorite characters on the basis of blood type. Is it a Kuei-jin scheme? Or is it merely cultural detritus? Either way, Westerners who wonder aloud about the practice draw attention to themselves.

SPEAKING WITH THE MOUNTAIN

In the Dreaming, Mount Fuji is an even more pristine wonder than in the waking world. And it is home to one of the Stone Men, which are rocky creatures that live for thousands or even millions of years, and whose conversations stretch over centuries. No mortal being lasts long enough to communicate meaningfully with such beings — but Kuei-jin do.

The Last Snow *uji* has spent 900 years making the acquaintance of the Fuji-Soul, as they call the Stone Man there. Last Snow Kuei-jin routinely enter the Dreaming and speak with the Fuji-Soul. He (or she, or it) seems concerned about something and has dispensed with pleasantries after a mere 300 years. Since then, the Fuji-Soul has been learning how much the *uji* knows about the ancient supernatural forces of Japan. Early in this century, the points of common knowledge established, the Fuji-Soul began adding new information.

So far, it's not clear just what the problem is. Something is "waking up" and will "shake the land." A young *uji* member interrupted in 1950 to ask whether the Fuji-Soul meant the Dreaming or the waking world, and that point is being clarified now.

The *uji*'s elder members maintain quiet domiciles in Tokyo's most expensive neighborhoods. Were anything to happen to them, records of their conversation thus far with the Fuji-Soul would be a most interesting prize. Alternatively, the *uji*'s work might come to light if someone traveling in the Dreaming (or monitoring it from outside) wonders what business Kuei-jin have on Mount Fuji.

THE BLACK WHISPER

The followers of the Path of a Thousand Whispers seem to have had more than their share of rotten luck throughout Japanese history. Modern Kuei-jin sometimes speculate that a curse afflicts followers of the Dharma. Just consider the record:

- The 1638 Christian rebellion at Shimabara. It was an uprising that ended in mass execution for the rebels and expulsion of foreign Christians. It was neither led nor directly inspired by Kuei-jin, but as it grew, it gathered support from Hollow Reed Kuei-jin, who saw the opportunity to add new roles to their experience of the world. All they reaped was death and the loss of possibilities, as Christianity became a proscribed doctrine.

- Kuei-jin played an important part in building consensus for the Meiji Restoration, and Thousand Whispers adherents were prominent among them. The move was intended to reinvigorate Japanese tradition and to better respond to the challenges of modernity. Instead, it turned Japanese society upside-down, led the living along ever-more-treacherous paths of change, and it widened the gulf between elder Kuei-jin and mortals.

WHAT IS BANAL?

The boundary between invigorating dreams and banal, stultifying soul-rot exists somewhat differently in Japan than it does in the West. In particular, much of Japan's mass-media entertainment sparks a deeper and more complex identification by its child fans than is usually the case in the United States.

Japanese toy companies provide detailed character backgrounds, laying out histories, families, likes and dislikes, and evolving stories. Merchandising serves purely commercial purposes — Japanese manufacturers place as much value on planned obsolescence as their Western rivals do — but it comes wrapped in narrative justification.

With the building blocks of cartoons, games, albums and theme parks, in addition to information about birthdays, favorite foods and countless other details, Japanese children often construct deeply immersive fan fiction. They pour the frustrations of urban life and familial deficiencies into their work. Many Japanese children have far denser fantasy lives than their American counterparts.

While the raw material is often banal in the extreme, what the audience does with it is not. *Hsien* move and prosper among dreams that might be harmful to changelings not raised to appreciate such nuances. But for fae who understand, it's a luminous world.

COURTESY IN ALL FORMS

Japanese culture places a high value on various forms of ceremonial activity. But it is difficult to properly brew and serve tea or paint an artful calligraphic scroll when in something other than human form.

Never willing to pass up a challenge to demonstrate superiority, some of the *hengeyokai* — except the *Kitsune*, who suffer no loss of aptitude in nonhuman forms — have developed special compensatory skills.

The normal Skills of Etiquette and Expression are at +2 difficulty while a *hengeyokai* is in *Glabro* form and +3 while in *Crinos* form. But for each such Skill, there is also a special form taught only to *hengeyokai*, which has no difficulty penalty while the artist is in *Glabro* form, and only +1 difficulty while she's in *Crinos* form. They involve a combination of simplified movement and very careful training (drawing on soft martial arts techniques) to compensate for lack of fine motor skills.

The simplifications prevent individuals using the *hengeyokai* ceremonies from achieving the highest pinnacles of artistry. But then, most human beings come nowhere near the summit, either. Careful, lifelong students of the *hengeyokai* forms can, and sometimes do, achieve great renown for their accomplishments.

THE NEW SUNS SECRET

Borushima Kiro is one among many Japanese executives who rose to prominence after the American occupation ended. The Japanese economy had many niches, and several entrepreneurs saw potential sales in catering to the emotional needs of people (both adults and children) dealing with the stress of defeat and recovery. Borushima enjoyed success, but nothing particularly dramatic.

However, Borushima differs from most Japanese business owners in one important regard: He's dead. He died as a young man in a car crash, a few years after founding New Suns, Inc., the holding company for Friendly Fish Land. He returned not as *Kuei-jin* but as one of the *Risen*, thanks to contact with wraiths who could teach him the Western technique. When at last his body began to fail, Borushima studied the Puppetry Arcanos. Since the 1970s, Borushima's consciousness has moved from body to body and relied on plastic surgery to keep the appearance of his Consorts plausibly consistent.

Friendly Fish Land has been an invaluable tool in Borushima's ongoing search for new hosts. Scattered throughout the park are numerous representations of the eponymous grinning carp that whisper nonsensical fortunes in "Janglish," which is the Japanese/English mishmash language popular among young people. Visitors to the park typically step close to good ol' Friendly to hear what the beloved character has to say. What they don't realize is that each fish conceals video relays that feed images directly to the park's executive office, which a select few visitors eventually get to know through means they could never have imagined.

Strike Force Zero suspects Borushima's condition (due to astute analysis of photographs in chronological sequence — images that suggested erratic aging and inexplicable height variations on the CEO's part). However, SF0 supervisors do not wish to deal with the problems that would accompany slaughtering the creator of so many beloved (yet, secretly malevolent) characters. In this matter, as in others, infiltration and subversion are the tools of choice: A Zero Team, disguised as Friendly Fish's park-wandering chums, now reconnoiters the park.



WORLD OF DARKNESS:

TOKYO

WELCOME TO THE INVISIBLE CITY

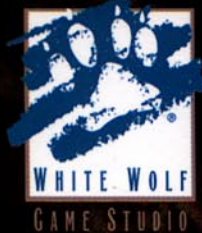
...But clearly, *you* can see what mortals cannot, for you are one of Japan's *shen* — and your kind thrives in this neon labyrinth. If you wish to meet Tokyo's Restless Dead, you can, but beware the Jade Emperor's troops. Kuei-jin and Kindred circulate here as well, but take care whom you choose as friends — for you shall make powerful enemies, too. Changelings and Garou? They are here also, but meddle in their affairs at your peril. You say their whims don't concern you? You will soon learn, my friend, that in the Middle Kingdom, there is no middle ground.

WE TRUST YOU'LL ENJOY YOUR STAY

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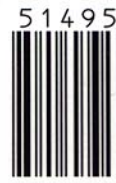
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