



SECOND CITY THE CITY

*Legend of the
Five Rings*





THE CITY

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DEDICATIONS:

Rob would like to thank:

Our freelancers, for working hard under the deadline to make
this project succeed. Special thanks to Maxime "Daigotsu
Max" LeMaire, who stepped in to fill a hole and wrote three
chapters in barely two weeks!

The playtesters, for their continued efforts to make L5R's
mechanics the best!

My wife Rebecca, who finished the maps for this project despite
the ultra-distracting presence of our newborn baby!

Shawn would like to thank:

Z, for putting it on the line and approving such an ambitious
project. You're the best, boss!

Rob "Spooky" Denton, for stepping up and making the graphic
design even better.

Max, for being a champ.

John Wick, Greg Stolze, Pat Kapera, and Rob Vaux, for giving
us such a high standard of L5R boxed sets to compare ourselves
against. We stand on the shoulders of giants.



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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the first of the three books included in the Second City Boxed Set for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game, 4th Edition. This book, *The City*, details the actual city itself: its environment, its denizens, and the many interesting things found within it. Of all three books, it is perhaps *The City* which will be most difficult to adapt to campaigns that do not follow the canon storyline of the Legend of the Five Rings. After all, this city specifically represents the capital of Rokugan's settlements in a distant land, on the frontier of unknown territories and influenced heavily by exposure to gaijin trappings and culture. Still, there are many things in this book that can be mined for use in different campaigns, even in campaigns that have nothing to do with this sort of setting. As with so many other things in the 4th edition of the L5R RPG, take what you need for your games and leave the rest.

The History of the Second City

The events that would lead to the construction of the Second City were put into motion in the summer of the year 1173 of the Isawa calendar with an unprecedented proclamation issued by the Empress Iwoko I. However, the situation that gave rise to those events was itself put into motion many years earlier, with the death of a proud and storied nation known as the Ivory Kingdoms.

The Ivory Kingdoms was a vast and beautiful land, blessed with rich natural resources and ruled by a wise monarch known as the Maharaja. The Maharaja bestowed portions of his power and his lands to vast noble Houses, similar in many ways to the relationship between the Emperor and the Great Clans. There were, however, two significant differences between Rokugan and the Ivory Kingdoms. The first was that the people of the Ivory Kingdoms, who called themselves Ivinda, did not share the xenophobia the samurai caste of Rokugan maintained for most of their eleven hundred year history. The second was that the dominant noble caste of the Ivory Kingdoms, valiant warriors known as kshatriya, held a deep and fearful respect of magic, believing it to be the domain of gods and demons rather than mortal men. Instead, they embraced the sciences and mathematics. Religious matters were left to the brahmin caste, who focused on religious devotion and theological study rather than trying to learn the ways of magic.

When the end came, however, it seems magic would have served the people of the Ivory Kingdoms far better than all their knowledge.

The precise events surrounding the death of the Kingdoms are unknown. What is known is that a deadly and blasphemous group known as the Cult of Ruhmal, believed eradicated a generation previously, emerged from hiding and conducted a ritual of unprecedented scope and nature. This ritual allowed the dark and wrathful aspect of the great goddess Shiva the Preserver to achieve ascendance. The rise of this entity, Kali-Ma the Destroyer, signaled the end for the Kingdoms. Bolstered by the fanatical faith and rituals of her cultists, Kali-Ma began hunting down and slaying the other members of the Ivinda religious pantheon. The wrathful aspect of Shiva was among the most powerful and violent of the gods, and one by one the other gods fell to her rage, until none remained but the Destroyer herself.

Granted great power by their dark goddess, the Cult of Ruhmal sprang from the shadows in a brutal campaign of violence that caught the kshatriya and brahmin by surprise. Each massacre they carried out enhanced Kali-Ma's power, and she in turn gave them greater power as well. Over the course of just a few years, nine tenths of the entire population of the Ivory Kingdoms was sacrificed to the Destroyer, their souls imprisoned in metallic shells to create a vast army of demonic monsters. The final tenth of the population scattered and went into hiding. The Destroyer was victorious, and her vast legions were born.

It was this victory that brought Kali-Ma to the attention of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. Jigoku was a sinister and jealous realm, possessed of a frighteningly intense awareness and a relentless hunger for destruction and corruption. Its chosen Champion, Fu Leng, had repeatedly failed to conquer the mortal realm, so Jigoku abruptly shifted its patronage to Kali-Ma, uniting two pantheons of evil and alerting the dark goddess to the existence of another nation that could be destroyed and enslaved. Kali-Ma turned her attention to Rokugan, ushering in the vast and devastating conflict known variously as the Kali-Ma Invasion or the Destroyer War. (It was this conflict, completely unparalleled in scope, that forced the clans of Rokugan to reluctantly accept the assistance of the Shadowlands-corrupted forces of the Spider Clan.)

In the wake of Kali-Ma's death and the defeat of the Destroyer Horde, the Empress Iwoko I was placed in an impossible position: she could accept a lesser evil and spare her people the impossible hardship of additional war, or allow Rokugan to begin a slow and painful death. Seeing little choice, the divinely endorsed Empress made a bargain with Daigotsu, the new master of Jigoku. She granted Great Clan status to the Spider Clan as he demanded, then promptly banished the Spider from the Empire by commanding them: "Go forth, and conquer in my name." In return, Daigotsu agreed to restrain the Shadowlands Taint to those who accepted it by choice, reducing its ability to corrupt the mortal world.



More than a month later, at summer's end, what remained of the Spider Clan set forth on an overland march to the former Ivory Kingdoms, escorted by troops from the Unicorn and Dragon clans.

The initial journey was difficult, as the Unicorn guides were depending on maps more than four centuries old. It took the combined forces nearly two months to reach their destination, and they expected winter to be arriving by that time. The tropical climate and extremely mild winters of the Ivory Kingdoms were unknown to them (although the Unicorn suspected things might be different), and the group quickly began establishing a major camp designed to survive the sort of harsh, difficult winter to which they were accustomed in the Empire. While they waited for heavy snows that never came, their efforts brought forth a village and fortress that straddled the divide between the Kingdoms and the empty lands to the north, lands the Unicorn called the Western Wastes. (This settlement would eventually be named Journey's End Keep by the Unicorn.) In the meantime, the new settlers realized they were not facing a severe winter, and began to consider how to proceed.

Ultimately, it was decided a proper city should be constructed farther south, more within the borders of the region now being called the Colonies, so as to better make use of the new land's resources. They found a suitable location a few days' travel south of Journey's End Keep. Not only was it close to a number of valuable resources, including a major river that allowed access to the sea, but it was also highly defensible. Immediately, the clans involved began making plans for a military installation from which the exploration of the area could commence in earnest. The Rokugani do not have a word for 'fort,' of course, but that is essentially what they created. The work

proceeded very quickly thanks to the abundance of local resources, the skill of those participating, and the general uneasiness most felt over the unknown and sometimes dangerous wildlife around them. Within a few months they constructed a large, sturdy enclosure, the interior of which contained a camp of temporary structures to house the entirety of the expedition.

For the next few years, development of the city continued, albeit slowly at first. There were occasional conflicts with local wildlife and even a few attacks by the remnants of the Cult of Ruhmal that still dwelled in the wilderness. For the most part, however, the settlement was left in peace and its inhabitants gradually became more comfortable with their new surroundings. The Dragon Clan, tasked with oversight of the Spider, were generally acknowledged as the rulers of the settlement, owing as much to their relationship with the Empress as to their duty toward the Spider. The Spider themselves embraced their new duty by exploring the region around the city. The Unicorn occupied themselves with developing Journey's End Keep and the overland travel route between the Colonies and the Empire. They also managed to forge a southern trail along the river until they reached the coastline, where the Mantis Clan had established a number of small settlements on its own. This connection further increased the clans' sense of stability in their new environment, and more and more settlers traveled to the Colonies in search of adventure and opportunity. Within the first five years of their occupation they expanded the settlement's wall three different times.

Since then, rapid growth has brought thousands of samurai to live in what has come to be known as the Second City. Currently the Second City is one of the most populous cities in the world, at least as far as the Rokugani

are aware. Medinaat-al-Salaam is known to be much larger, and there is some debate as to whether the Imperial Capital of Toshi Ranbo is larger (certainly it is physically larger, but population is another matter). Other than that, the only identified larger settlement the Rokugani have ever encountered is the vast sprawling metropolis that surrounds the former Ivory Palace, the capital of the defunct Ivory Kingdoms. That entire city lies in ruins, and is avoided by samurai at all costs because of the deadly creatures that haunt its shadows.

in the destruction of several structures within the military encampment. The attack is rebuffed with minimal losses, however, and shortly thereafter the decision is made to expand the perimeter of the city's defenses. This is the first of three major expansions that the city will make during the course of its history.

YEAR 1175

First successful river trip between the Second City and the Mantis settlements on the coast.

YEAR 1182

The Divine Empress formally issues a decree installing an Imperial Governor of the Colonies to oversee the Second City and its surrounding environment. Ikoma Karatsu, a young but well-known Lion officer, is appointed to the position. Upon his arrival in the Second City, Karatsu orders an expansion of the size of the fortifications protecting the city, the second and largest of the three expansions the city experiences during its history.

YEAR 1189

Unseasonable storms of tremendous power devastate the entire region around the Second City, inflicting significant damage and destroying many buildings. Rebuilding begins almost immediately, and the Governor takes the opportunity to expand the city's military walls for the third and final time.

Timeline of the Colonies

YEAR 1173

The Destroyer War ends in Rokugan, and the Empress Iweko I issues a command for the Spider Clan to travel to the former Ivory Kingdoms and conquer that land in the name of the Emerald Empire.

YEAR 1174

The assembled clans in the Colonies locate the future site of the Second City and begin constructing a rudimentary fortification there.

Months after the completion of the nascent Second City, an attack by infiltrators from the Cult of Ruhmal results



YEAR 1191

In recognition of the success of the Imperial Governor and his just governance of the Colonies, the Empress signs an Imperial Decree creating the Imperial Explorers, a Colonial branch of the Imperial bureaucracy that recruits young samurai from all the clans to explore and map the former Ivory Kingdoms. The clans are encouraged to send their finest young warriors, and are rewarded for doing so by claiming a portion of each Explorer's finds for the clan.

YEAR 1193

The Imperial Governor, weary of partisan politics and the manipulations of certain parties in the Second City, establishes a separate compound for the training and administration of the Imperial Explorers. This compound is located a day's travel south of the Second City to ensure the organization cannot be manipulated for political gain. The move is not popular, but the Governor quickly rebukes any who offer dissent, and the more dissident clan delegations are soon silent on the matter.

YEAR 1198

Month of the Horse: The Imperial Governor of the Colonies, Ikoma Katsuru, is murdered. There is a brief period of confusion throughout the city, but order is quickly restored by the Second City Guardsmen.

Month of the Goat: Word of the governor's death reaches the Imperial City at Toshi Ranbo, and a replacement governor is quickly selected. Otomo Suikihime is selected and departs the Empire for the Second City immediately.

Month of the Rooster: Shortly after her arrival, the new Imperial Governor holds a contest among the samurai of the Second City, the winner of which will be appointed as her personal champion and representative. This position, which she calls the Ivory Champion, is won by a young and relatively inexperienced bushi of the Unicorn Clan named Shinjo Tselu.

WHO KILLED THE GOVERNOR?

In the canonical L5R history, the Imperial Governor is killed by a Dark Naga assassin, an agent of the corrupted Naga who are waging war against Rokugan. However, not all GMs will wish to use the Dark Naga storyline in their campaigns. In such cases the GM should feel free to have the Governor die through the machinations of some other faction, plot, or conspiracy – or even by accident.



The innermost portion of the Second City, sometimes called the Old City, is typically called the Imperial District. The Imperial District is derived from the original enclosure within the city's military fortifications, and as such was not that large during the early stages of development. Although the original fortifications have been expanded three separate times since the city was founded, the Imperial District remains smaller than might be expected for such an important city. Because of this, the buildings in this portion of city are typically multiple-story to ensure there is ample space to house all the residents. The largest single structure in the Imperial District is the Governor's Estate, a building probably too small to be referred to as a palace but which is often called such regardless. Other important structures within the Imperial District include the primary embassies of the Great Clans and the Minor Clan Alliance, the primary temple of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and various other Imperial holdings maintained by the Otomo and Seppun, with only a minor presence on the part of the Miya family.

Completely enclosing the Imperial District is the huge rectangular fortification known as the Military District. This is perhaps the most active of all the portions of the Second City, and hundreds if not thousands of guards are on duty here at all hours of the day and night. All of the clans maintain at least a token presence among the city's defenders, but there is a single commander to whom all the city's guardians answer. For most of the Second City's existence, this has been an individual selected by the defenders' most senior officers, with vacancies filled by consensus as soon as they occur. However, the new Imperial Governor has been shifting more and more responsibility for the same duties to her recently-created Ivory Champion. While not all the city's defenders have embraced this concept, a small elite force has been created that is referred to as the Ivory Legion, answering exclusively to the Ivory Champion.

Another very important figure within the military hierarchy of this district is the head of the Second City Guardsmen, which is essentially a Colonial version of the Imperial Guard but is comprised primarily of clan samurai rather than Seppun-trained guardsmen.

The first district to be created after the city grew beyond the walls of the Military District was the Temple District,

Layout of the City

The Second City is a vast city unlike any others known to exist save for three: the Imperial City of Toshi Ranbo; the so-called City of Lies, Ryoko Owari Toshi; and the gigantic gaijin city-state of Medinaat-al-Salaam across the vast northern desert known as the Burning Sands. Unlike those counterparts, however, the Second City was constructed with the intent to become a large city, a capitol representing a proud Empire in a distant land, and as such it was organized more carefully and has been expanded in a very orderly fashion throughout its existence. This has resulted in a much more orderly layout than most comparable cities enjoy. As a result, the Second City is carefully stratified into six clear districts, each of which serves a particular function for the city as a whole.



close eye on their investments and seeking out anything that might prove of interest to their endeavors.

If the Merchant District is among the busiest portions of the city, then surely the adjoining Artisan District to the south is among the quietest. This region was not an intended development, but rather sprang up between the Merchant and Peasant Districts when artists and performers set up residences in the area to be closer to the markets where they acquired their materials. All manner of arts and crafts can be found in this region, from noble samurai blacksmiths making weapons and armor to peasant silversmiths producing the most intricate netsuke imaginable.

There are numerous theaters and other venues for performances, not to mention geisha houses, and many scions of noble

samurai houses can be found here in the evening enjoying the talents of their poorer kinsmen. This is also the most beautiful district of the city, with tree-lined boulevards, numerous gardens, and abundant decorations.

The Peasant District adjoins the Military District along its southern border, and like the Merchant and Artisan districts, it lacks much in the way of defenses. The entire area is more of a sprawl than anything else, and it rivals the Merchant District for the dubious distinction of being the least orderly portion of the city. Still, members of the peasant castes from Rokugan are surprised at the quality of the homes found here, and the standard of living for most peasants is higher, sometimes quite a bit higher, than in the Empire. Creating the Second City was an act of back-breaking labor for everyone involved, not just the lower classes, and many samurai of the city gained a new appreciation for their vassals. They are not equals, not by any measure, but they are more respected than they might be back in the Empire. The general state of this district is also vastly improved by the presence of several Unicorn Clan holdings, primarily stables. As such, the district is generally cleaner and more presentable than other Rokugani cities to avoid offending the followers of Shinjo.

There are a small number of Imperial-administrated holdings outside the walls of the Second City that are, due to the details of their creation, considered part of the Second City. Most are fairly inconsequential; the most significant among them is the compound of the Imperial Explorers, which stands roughly a day's travel south of the city proper. There is still a small dojo for the Explorers within the city, the original that remains in operation, but the majority of the organization's day-to-day operations are overseen from the southern compound.

which adjoins the core of the city on its eastern edge. A secondary wall has been built to protect the Temple District, although compared to the Military District's formidable defenses it is only a pittance. As might be surmised from its name, the Temple District is the Second City's primary center of religion and academic study, containing numerous shrines, temples, and libraries. Many samurai, especially scholars and priests, choose to maintain private estates within the district in order to be closer to their work. Initially this was considered a dangerous practice, since early on the Second City was always expecting attacks, but over the years it has become more and more accepted as the imminent danger has diminished.

If any part of the city can rival the Military District for sheer activity, surely it is the Merchant District. The Merchant District adjoins the core of the city along its western edge, and does not enjoy much if any external protection. There are portions of the district that are protected by a wall, but in truth the term wall is quite generous, and a more appropriate description might be: "A particularly sturdy fence." There are many permanent structures within the district, but they are outnumbered by smaller temporary huts and tents that are constantly being erected and removed. Merchants of all stripes hawk their wares to all who come through this portion of the city, and since the road to the nearby river passes through this part of the city, almost everyone crosses this district at one point or another. Merchant patronage on the part of samurai does not carry quite the same stigma here as it does in the Empire, because so many samurai are interested in the recovery of lost artifacts and information from the now-dead Ivory Kingdoms. As such, it is not at all uncommon to see samurai, even high-ranking samurai, among the merchants of the district, keeping a

The Surrounding Lands

The area in which the Second City stands is the most thoroughly domesticated in the entire Colonies. This area extends northward to the northern border of the Colonies, encompassing several lesser settlements and fortresses, and southward for roughly the same distance; it is more or less the equivalent to one of the larger Rokugani provinces, although it has been subdivided between local rulers here. The settlers have trimmed back or outright removed the native plants wherever possible, trying to replace them with more familiar and acceptable plants imported from the Emerald Empire – a process that does not always succeed, given the differences in climate. This reclamation effort has proven to be one of the longest and most difficult battles the samurai of the region have experienced, and unlike mortal foes, the environment can never truly be defeated.

The majority of the land surrounding the Second City is arable, and a great deal has been converted to raise crops. Many of these farms raise what would in the Empire be considered secondary or exotic crops which the people of the Colonies require in order to supplement their diets – the local legume known as the lentil, for example, has become an important part of the Colonists' diet. There is also a fair amount of woodlands in the area, mostly native trees which have been preserved in measured quantities in order to provide an ongoing source of lumber for future construction.

Settlements larger than a handful of buildings are rare in the region around the Second City, as most prefer to live and work in family units and travel to the city for whatever additional needs they have. As the settlements move farther away from the city, they become larger and are often protected by clan holdings or fortresses.

Roughly an hour's travel west of the Second City is a major river which the natives called the Narmada and the Rokugani have named the Shinano. It runs north almost to the edge of the Burning Sands and south the entire length of the Colonies, terminating in two outlets at the southern coastline. Early in the colonization process, the river was the territory of a number of extremely large and dangerous predators, creatures the Rokugani were not familiar with and did not understand well at all. A handful of fatal encounters forced the leaders of the expedition to make sure there was ample distance between the river and the city; otherwise, the Second City would likely have sprung up directly along the riverbank. Since that time, however, the river has been gradually tamed and the creatures driven from the area, so there is now a large dock complex on the riverbank that connects to the city via a well-maintained road. There has been some talk of perhaps extending the city walls to the riverbank to facilitate further trade and growth, but so far this has only been talk.

More information on the lands of the Colonies, their layout, and their organization can be found in Chapter Six: A New World.

THE NATIVE POPULATION

As noted in the beginning of this book, not all of the Ivinda, native population of the Ivory Kingdoms, died at the hands of the Cult of Ruhmal. About ten percent of them survived, scattered across the ruined land of their former kingdom.

Once the Rokugani settlers arrived, the surviving natives had a decision to make. Should they accept the rule of these foreign invaders? Should they try to resist, despite their own dire circumstances? Or should they simply hide in the wilderness and live out their lives as best they could?

In general, only a small minority of the Ivinda chose to fight. The horror of their defeat by the Cult of Ruhmal left most of them with little enthusiasm for further action, and nearly all of the Kingdoms' military elite – the kshatriya caste – were dead. Those who do choose to resist have faced relentless attack from the Spider Clan, carrying out its Imperial mandate to conquer in the Empress' name.

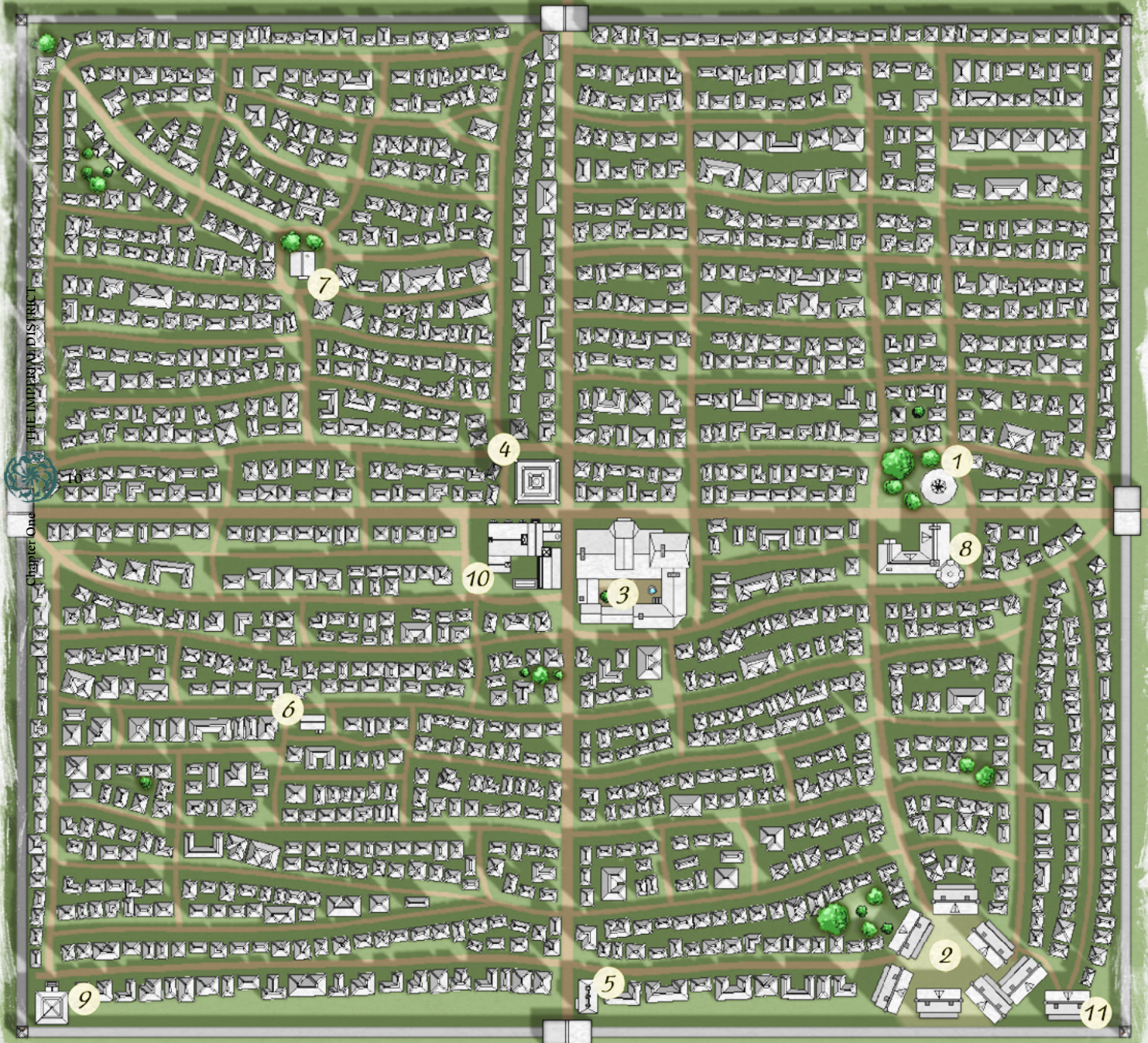
A fair number of the natives have, in fact, chosen to accept Rokugani rule and to live alongside the new Colonists as best they can. Needless to say, this has led to a fair amount of unease, tension, and culture shock between the Ivinda and the Colonists. Most Rokugani have tried to deal with the problem by treating the natives as peasants, but the real peasants who have been imported from Rokugan do not always care for this, and eruptions of violence take place from time to time. Still, the Colonies need every farmer and laborer they can get, so for the most part the natives are allowed to join the Colonists' communities, to work alongside the peasants, and to serve the samurai.

Almost as many natives who chose to submit to Rokugani rule chose to continue to live in the wilderness of their former kingdom, forming small isolated communities (sometimes in the ruins of old towns or villages) where they struggle to raise crops and to defend themselves from the dangerous native wildlife. With nearly all the kshatriya caste long since dead, these groups have little in the way of combat skills or weaponry, making even a simple tiger attack a serious threat to their survival. And of course there is the constant risk of discovery by the Imperial Explorers or the ever-more-aggressive patrols of the Spider Clan.



- 1 First Temple
- 2 Clan Embassies
- 3 Governor's Estate
- 4 Fuan-ti's Tower
- 5 Blades

- 6 Flawless Blossom
- 7 Great Bath
- 8 Ivory Champion's Residence
- 9 Magistrate's Outpost
- 10 Office of the Imperial Families
- 11 Minor Clans Embassy



THE IMPERIAL DISTRICT

Most of those who live in the Colonies believe the Imperial District of the Second City is the heart and soul not just of the city but of the entirety of the Colonies. Not everyone agrees, of course – the Spider would doubtless sneer at such an idea – but for the most part, those who come to the Colonies view the Imperial District as the approximate equivalent of the Imperial City of the Empire, Toshi Ranbo. And in a practical sense the two are indeed very similar. But while its function may be the same, there are several significant differences that make the Second City unique in Rokugani culture.

The Imperial District is home to some of the most powerful individuals in all the Colonies. Military influence is still perhaps the most significant factor in a person's presence and prominence here, and it is almost exclusively through the machinations of the Imperial District that the region's highest military offices are filled. Promotion through the ranks is always a possibility, of course, but ascension to senior positions in the various military forces depends on the endorsement of those within the Imperial District.

Perhaps because of the Colonies' general lack of major urban centers outside of the Second City itself, the courts and goings-on of the Imperial District take on an even greater level of importance than those of comparable cities in the Empire. Everything that happens here is magnified. This also magnifies the impact of the Second City's acknowledged difference in philosophy when compared to the Emerald Empire; the mood here is markedly more relaxed, less traditional, and vastly less xenophobic than any other Rokugani city in existence, all of which has led

to the city itself having some decided oddities that separate it physically and socially from its peers in the mainland.

One such oddity is the Imperial District's notable lack of certain features that are traditionally found in similar areas in other major cities. For instance, there are very few temples within the district, with only one of any significance: the First Temple. Similarly, there are exceptionally few public gardens, something typically found in abundance in noble quarters in the Empire. In the Second City's Imperial District there simply is not room for such things. Space is at a premium due to the unusual constraints placed on the district's size and its inability to expand beyond the protection of the Military District. For this reason, many estates and other essential buildings, such as the various clan embassies, contain larger than normal private gardens. With the lack of public amenities, most residents make do in their own homes. This has had the unusual effect of promoting the arts more so than in other cities, and in particular ikebana and the art of meditative gardening are valued highly by the occupants of the Imperial District.

Another and more particular way in which the Imperial District is distinct not only from other Rokugani cities but also from the rest of the Second City itself is the height of the buildings found there. Despite three separate expansions earlier in its history, it remains the one district that is entirely constrained in its physical area. Most of the families who have holdings within the district are unwilling to place any of their essential properties outside the protection of the military walls, no matter how remote the risk might be, and so the buildings in the Imperial District have gradually





evolved to be taller than those found anywhere else. The Governor's Estate, for instance, is much taller than most such buildings but contains a smaller ground area within its perimeter; the space available for diplomatic and political functions remains essentially the same, but spread across multiple floors. By far the tallest building in the district, however, is the one known simply as Fuan-ti's Tower, which is home to a number of estates that can be purchased on a short- or long-term basis from its creator, an enterprising architect named Miya Hokatsu.

The space constraints that limit the size of the district have also had an effect on the private residences within the region. Only the most wealthy and influential samurai can attain personal residences in this district, and those less important samurai who have duties within the Imperial District generally live in their clan embassies or in barracks within the neighboring Military District. The clan embassies themselves are further differentiated from the majority of such buildings back in Rokugan by the fact that there are at least two instances of Great Clans collaborating and sharing an embassy in order to conserve space. The most significant example of this is the combined embassy of the Crab and Scorpion clans, a large building that the more frivolous among the district's inhabitants refer to as the "Embassy of the Claw." While all of the Great Clans maintain at least some purely private holdings within the district, many

have chosen a spirit of collaboration to ensure they have an appropriate amount of at least semi-private space to conduct all their affairs in the manner they prefer.

Given the emphasis placed on the security of the Imperial District, it comes as no surprise to most that passage into and out of the district, while not actually restricted, is monitored at all times. This has been the case since the district was first enclosed by the Military District two decades ago, but was for many years treated more as a bureaucratic necessity than as a response to significant risk – after all, the presence of the Military District itself seemed to assure the Imperial District's security. The assassination of the first Imperial Governor changed this, and after that incident the head of the Second City Guardsmen, Akodo Tsudoken, reviewed the records maintained by the various gate guardians and was infuriated by their haphazard nature. He dismissed the entire staff after accepting the seppuku of their commanders, then instituted much more rigid policies to ensure anyone entering the Imperial District could be accounted for and therefore held responsible for any actions taken during their stay.

Relationship with Other Districts

The Imperial District is the nerve center of the Second City, and all other city districts are centered around it both literally and figuratively. The Temple District borders the Imperial to the east, the Merchant District to the west, the Artisan District to the southwest, the Peasant District to the south, and the Military District encloses it like shell.

The Military District

There is no closer relationship within the Second City than between the Imperial and Military Districts. In what many might consider a surprising show of right-mindedness, there are a large number of samurai within the Imperial District who recognize the many dangers the city has faced over the course of its two decades of existence have been survived solely because of the brave and skilled souls who populate the Military District. While there are always an unfortunate handful who allow a few years of complacency to override their good sense and look upon those in the Military District as pawns, the majority are more understanding, and give a great deal of support to their protectors and allies within the district. Likewise the resentment that many military men have for those who hold authority over them but know nothing of the reality of military life is lessened somewhat by this relationship.



The Temple District

The Temple District is a necessity of the Second City in order to properly tend to the spiritual and academic needs of the people who call the Colonies home. Under different circumstances, the holdings found within the Temple District might be located inside the Imperial District itself, but space constraints are such that a separate district was needed once the city's population began to grow significantly. With little to no room to construct the larger and more elaborate temples desired, the Governor eventually chose to establish a new district on the city's eastern border, ostensibly the safest area. A secondary defensive wall was constructed around the district, much smaller than the one protecting the Military District, but sufficient to demonstrate the Governor's proper devotion to theology and the pursuit of education. Many among the Imperial District frequent the Temple District regularly; piety and education are only appropriate and fitting for samurai of an honorable nature. The Brotherhood maintains the majority of temples in the district, naturally, and the counsel of senior monks is always of value to the nobles of the Imperial District. Last but certainly not least, the Temple District is home to many libraries and academies that serve as essential training grounds for the youngest generation of the Second City's social elite; many courtiers and of course a great number of shugenja conduct their training and lessons within the district.

The Merchant District

The formal opinion of many within the Imperial District, if asked, is that the Merchant District is a necessary evil. Despite its unpleasantness, the pursuit of commercial interests is necessary for a settlement the size of the Second City to even exist, much less flourish as it has. Thus, many nobles of the Imperial District make a show of accepting the Merchant District without actually condoning it, somehow managing to portray it as a burden they must bear for being the rulers of Colonial society. The truth, as is so often the case, is somewhat less idealized: a great many members of the upper echelons of the Imperial District owe their vast wealth and resources to the many merchant vassals who labor in their name, and who send a large portion of their earnings to line the pockets of the haughty lords who find them so disdainful.

The Artisan District

The mere existence of the Artisan District is something of a conundrum for many among the nobility of the Imperial District. Alone among all city districts, the Artisan District was not planned or intended by the city's overseers. Instead, it sprang up as a byproduct of the needs of the city's various artisans. Depending as they do on the goods produced and sold in the Merchant District, not to mention the vital work conducted by the residents of the Peasant District, it was inevitable the city's various artisans began filling the physical gap between the two. To begin building outside the established parameters of the city's plan, to create a



new district altogether, is something many nobles found arrogant and presumptuous.

Despite this, however, the Artisan District is an extremely popular destination for the people of the Imperial District. The theaters and shops there are far more acceptable (and far less grotesquely commercial) than those found in the Merchant District, and everything from noble poets to peasant silversmiths can be found in the district, selling their beautiful wares for all who wish to purchase them. The district also houses the city's Licensed Quarter, an important destination for samurai who might otherwise crack under the stress of their duties. All but the district's most ardent detractors are forced to admit that having such valued but nonessential holdings located in a separate district helps keep the crowding and clutter within the city's center to a minimum, something the more aesthetically-minded nobles always keep in mind.

The Peasant District

Ostensibly, the Imperial District has no relationship whatsoever with the Peasant District. The entire district and those who call it home are utterly beneath the notice of the noble and august population of the Imperial District. The fact that the vast majority of servants who work in the Imperial District live in the city's southern reaches is inconsequential, at least as far as most samurai are concerned. The degree to which the social and political elite in this district depend on the peasants is something never acknowledged, and indeed something many never realize and would vigorously deny if presented with it. In that respect, there is little different in the relationship between courtiers and peasants here than in the Empire.

In some respects, however, this relationship is significantly different. Many samurai throughout the city were present for the creation of the Second City, and put in months and years of difficult work to see it completed. Although it would be inaccurate to say they worked shoulder to shoulder with the peasants, the common toil did create a greater respect among the general samurai population of the Second City toward its peasant citizens.





Important Personages

The vast majority of important personages who populate the Imperial District can be found in another book in this set, entitled *Second City: The People*. However, there are many who call the district home who are not members of the political or social elite, but who hold considerable power nonetheless. Some of those people are described in this section.

MIYA HOKATSU

SOCIAL VISIONARY

A young man gently easing into middle age, Miya Hokatsu is regarded by virtually everyone who knows him as something of an oddity. His parentage is through the Unicorn Clan, with a mother who managed to arrange a marriage to a Miya herald she fell in love with. As a child, he spent a great deal of time with his mother's family; this was considered rather odd, but since he was a member of the Imperial families, it was not openly questioned. It was during these years that Hokatsu formed a close and unbreakable bond with his maternal grandfather, a man named Iuchi Fuan-ti. Apparently not satisfied with the peculiar looks his name brought him, Hokatsu's grandfather was a scholar of all things gaijin, and instilled in his grandson that same interest, although Hokatsu's passion never burned as brightly as Fuan-ti's. Instead, Hokatsu's true passion was architecture.

Some of the greatest architects in Rokugan are the tiny Anou vassal family of the Miya, although they are not often spoken of in the Empire at large. During his years as a student, Hokatsu studied with the Anou as much as possible. He delighted in their mastery of the art, and although he never formally became an architect himself, he became as skilled as any of the Anou youth his age. Unfortunately, his desire to design new and exciting buildings, to combine his grandfather's knowledge with his own skill, was constantly thwarted by the rigid traditionalism that dominated the Empire as a whole. Even the Unicorn were not really willing to go as far in their designs as Hokatsu wanted. When

the opportunity came for a small number

of Imperial Heralds to journey to the Colonies, Hokatsu seized the chance and departed Rokugan for the first time in his life.

In the Colonies, Hokatsu has flourished in the more relaxed and accepting atmosphere. It is within the Second City that he has created a building unlike any other in the known world, larger even than the Governor's Estate. The Fuan-ti Tower, as his creation is called, is more than ten stories, and consists of a variety of private estates of varying sizes. Hokatsu leases these estates to others for variable lengths of time, although to him the money is purely secondary. Some of his guests have a permanent residence within the tower, while others call it home only so long as their business in the Second City requires. For his part, Hokatsu is delighted beyond belief... and now, extremely wealthy as well. He is presently petitioning the Governor to allow him to begin construction of new, similar buildings outside the Military District's northern border.

MIYA HOKATSU, SOCIAL VISIONARY

AIR: 3	EARTH: 3	FIRE: 2	WATER: 2	VOID: 3
AWARENESS: 4		INTELLIGENCE: 4 PERCEPTION: 4		
Honor: 4.4		Status: 3.4		Glory: 2.5

School/Rank: Miya Herald 2

Skills: Commerce 2, Courtier (Rhetoric) 4, Defense 2, Engineering (Construction) 6, Etiquette (Courtesy) 4, Horsemanship 2, Lore: Heraldry 3, Sincerity (Conversation) 4

Advantages: Great Potential (Engineering), Wealthy

Disadvantages: Fascination (Architecture), Lechery



MOBUHIME

MISTRESS OF WHISPERS

Mobuhime is a middle-aged woman who is absolutely unnoticeable to almost everyone around her. It might be more correct to say that she goes unnoticed to those of noble birth, because while few samurai ever even consciously recognize her presence, Mobuhime is among the most influential of the hundreds of servants who tend to the needs of the residents of the Imperial District on a daily basis. There are those who are responsible for interacting with the samurai class personally, the individuals who pass on the orders and commands to the rest of the servants, but even these people show deference to Mobuhime, for she is one of the most well respected among the lower echelons, and treating her with anything less than can result in a very difficult life for even the most high-ranking peasants.

The secret of Mobuhime's success, such as it is, is that she maintains an extensive network of friends and family with whom she speaks regularly. She has at least one contact in every major building in the entire Imperial District, and she adores rumors and gossip of all sorts. This is not an uncommon thing among servants, of course, but Mobuhime has a unique ability to sort out the truth from the ridiculous and the false, and tends to spread rumors that have at least an element of truth all across the Peasant District. Although obviously most samurai are immune to the worst effects of such rumor-mongering, the lower ranking members of the samurai caste can have their lives considerably complicated by perceptions created by Mobuhime's manipulation of rumor and gossip.

MOBUHIME, MISTRESS OF WHISPERS

AIR: 3	EARTH: 2	FIRE: 2	WATER: 2	VOID: 2
AWARENESS: 5		PERCEPTION: 4		
Honor: 3.1	Status: 0.0	Glory: 0.0		

School/Rank: None

Skills: Animal Handling 1, Craft: Weaving 3, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 4, Intimidation (Bullying, Control) 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 3

Advantages: Blackmail (numerous)

Disadvantages: Sworn Enemies (Several individuals who would exact terrible vengeance if they knew who spread the rumors that complicated their lives)

SEPPUN TORIKO

MISTRESS OF THE GATES

Seppun Toriko is the current Mistress of the Gates, responsible for monitoring all traffic in and out of the Imperial District, and has held that position since Akodo Tsudoken revised and tightened the policies on passage through the district gates. She and her hand-picked staff oversee the four gates that enter the Imperial District; she is responsible for controlling all access to the Imperial District from the Temple, Merchant, Artisan, and Peasant districts. (Ironically, the Military District is exempt – it is considered responsible for policing its own movements into and out of the Imperial district; although both Tsudoken and Toriko would prefer to place such travel under her command, neither of them possess the authority

to enact such a policy, and the new Imperial Governor seems content to continue restricting them in this manner.)

Toriko is well aware that her position as Mistress of the Gates is due exclusively to her status as a member of the Imperial families. As such, she cannot be accused of bias for any clan, or be expected to offer exceptions to any clan due to prior obligations. Ironically, however, Toriko finds herself in exactly that position. Otomo Akio, a wealthy Otomo who makes his home in the Imperial District (and coincidentally a man to whom her father owes a considerable debt of honor) is obsessed with cultural artifacts from the Ivory Kingdoms, and has numerous contacts in the Temple and Merchant districts who acquire new specimens for him. Because these items have not undergone the required inspection to ensure there is no danger to the people of the Second City, he has them brought into the Imperial District discreetly, and only through a gate when Toriko is personally overseeing it. Toriko's distress over this arrangement has increased of late, and as a result Tsudoken has begun to suspect she is suffering from some significant health malady. In truth, she is torn between her duty and the obligation she feels to the man who spared her father a significant disgrace. She would give a great deal to find a way to reconcile these problems, but as of yet no means of doing so has come to light.

SEPPUN TORIKO, MISTRESS OF THE GATES

AIR: 3	EARTH: 3	FIRE: 4	WATER: 2	VOID: 3
STAMINA: 4		STRENGTH: 3		
Honor: 5.1	Status: 4.3	Glory: 3.6		

School/Rank: Seppun Guardsman 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 4, Horsemanship 1, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 3

Advantages: Allies (Second City Guardsmen), Balance, Wary

Disadvantages: Dark Secret, Obligation



Location Guide

The Imperial District is home to fewer holdings than most other districts, owing to its dense population and relatively small size. However, the importance of individual holdings tends to be much higher, equaled only by the militarily vital locations of the Military District and a handful of major theological locations in the Temple District.

Blades

This simple building is often overlooked because of its completely unremarkable appearance. If asked, most who walk by it every day would likely say it is a private home or perhaps a storage building. Few ever notice the simple placard out front that says only "Blades." In truth, the building is both home and storage, but not in the traditional manner.

Originally, this small building served as a repository for surplus weapons, kept readily at hand for the residents of the Imperial District in the event the wall of the Military District was breached by attackers. Although that concern is a shadow of its former intensity, it has never fully abated, and thus the storage house has never been decommissioned. For the most part it contains simple weapons such as spears and polearms, but by tradition it also has a selection of heavier weapons such as tetsubo, ono, and dai tsuchi. Although not a topic for polite conversation, or one that should be broached lightly for fear of offering insult to the city's defenders, members of the Second City Guardsmen carefully and discretely instruct all newly arriving bushi (such as yojimbo and other such attendants) of the storehouse's location and purpose, cautioning them not to make use of it unless absolutely necessary.

For much of its history this storehouse has been unmanned. At some point in the past decade, however, the head of the Second City Guardsmen granted permission for a ronin attendant to make a small and simple residence within the storehouse. This individual, a mute simply called Knives by those who know him, used the small area to create a tiny forge. The only sign he actually lives there as well is the meager tatami mat that sits in one corner of the forge; it seems Knives cares absolutely nothing for personal comfort, instead spending all of his time caring for and repairing the weapons in the storehouse. In the past three years, however, Knives has also used his little forge to create a small number of daisho he keeps in the storehouse. These blades are not exceptional, but nor are they poor quality. They are perfectly serviceable and sturdy, finer fare than many ronin carry on their own. A small number of wave men visit Knives for repairs or replacements, and he offers them his blades without cost – perhaps out of simple generosity, or perhaps because he remembers some similar situation in which he found

himself in past years. Regardless, the mute swordsmith is unique in that he has connections both among the city's guards and among the wave men who frequent the city, and is well regarded by both groups for his skills and his selflessness.

The First Temple

This unassuming structure is the sole major temple within the Imperial District, constructed long before the creation of the Temple District. The temple has no specific devotion, although it does favor the teachings of the Tao heavily and is maintained primarily by Taoist purists from the Brotherhood of Shinsei. Despite this, small chambers devoted to many Fortunes and to other sects within the Brotherhood are scattered liberally throughout the Temple; there is literally something for everyone, theologically speaking. Shugenja from all the clans regularly offer their services to the temple, and someone seeking guidance or counsel from a specific clan need only come to the temple on the proper day of the week to find it.

The leadership of the First Temple is somewhat notorious among the Great Clans (albeit not enough to tarnish the reputation of the temple itself) because the abbot of the temple, an ardent member and purist from the Brotherhood of Shinsei, is extremely exclusive about who he allows to serve the temple. Virtually none of the monks presently serving the temple have former clan affiliations, all being either born of peasant stock or from an undisclosed past. It is unknown why the abbot eschews any former clan affiliation, but many clan shugenja find his rule distasteful and somewhat offensive.

The Flawless Blossom

The Imperial District is not home to a great many venues for entertainment. The majority of such locations are found within the Merchant and especially the Artisan districts; most samurai do not believe there is a suitable amount of space within the Imperial District for such frivolous things, which would likely lower the tone of the district as well. But there are a few notable exceptions, and chief among them is the Flawless Blossom Tea-House.

Ownership of the Flawless Blossom is something of a mystery and a point of conjecture for many in the Imperial District. The operator of the house is a pleasant and exceedingly proper middle-aged man named Bomu, who politely deflects any inquiries into the ownership of the house by saying his master has instructed him not to speak of it. On one notable occasion, a rather uncouth patron attempted to press the issue, becoming somewhat belligerent; it was at that time it first became general knowledge that Bomu has among his staff a small number of exceptionally well-groomed, exceedingly polite ronin who serve as the house's security and protection.

The Flawless Blossom is popular among the highest circles of the Second City's citizens for two primary



reasons: the quality of its wares, and the discretion of its staff. It is not known who is responsible for the superb teas served at the Flawless Blossom, although the most common theory is that Bomu himself grows and blends the fine beverages. Not only is the house somehow able to keep an amazing variety of teas from the mainland Empire, but there are a wide assortment available that are unique to the house itself, created either as blends of existing Rokugani teas with new varieties from the Colonies, or entirely from Colonial materials. It is said there is something for literally every taste at the Flawless Blossom.

Finally, the discretion of the Flawless Blossom is something of a legend in the Imperial District. The staff there never speaks of anything that happens within the house, no matter how scandalous the meeting or high profile the guests. Moreover, money is never spoken of. There are no prices associated with anything available at the house. Instead, Bomu permits his guests to offer whatever price they feel the food and drink is worth. There are occasions when guests leave nothing, of course, but the majority of the house's regular patrons make a show of overpaying for everything, seeing such generosity as a status symbol. Bomu and his people are always demure and appreciative regardless of the situation.

Fuan-ti's Tower

As described earlier in this chapter, Fuan-ti's Tower is a unique building, the creation of the brilliant if unconventional architect Miya Hokatsu. At over ten stories the building is the tallest in the Second City, taller even than the Governor's Estate (if nowhere near as large in total area), and provides estates for dozens of samurai at a time depending on the configuration of the individual floors. Many find the building's unusual nature off-putting, but the more bold and adventurous residents of the Second City see it as brilliant and beautiful. One samurai remarked shortly after its completion that the building would invite the wrath of the Fortunes themselves because it "scraped against the sky and the Heavens beyond." Although this is certainly an exaggeration, the truth is that the view of the city from the top floor is absolutely breathtaking.

The representatives of the Imperial families within the Second City have taken particular interest in Fuan-ti's Tower. Many find it objectionable simply because of its unconventional nature, not the least of which is its peculiar name. However, even the most ardent of critics have been appeased somewhat by Miya Hokatsu's policy of reserving the uppermost floors for the private use of Imperial family members. Given the enormous expense involved in constructing or acquiring private residences within the Imperial District, and given the fact that space within the Governor's Estate itself is also limited, many Imperial family members are content to overlook Hokatsu's peculiarities and make use of his unique, if bizarre, creation.

Some regular inhabitants of Fuan-ti's Tower include:

Otomo Akio— This handsome courtier is a rising star in the courts of the Second City, currently holding a position as karo to the Chancellor of the Left. He has a large personal estate that dominates much of the tower's third-highest floor. Akio is a regular sight in important locations throughout the city, as well as the Ivory Court within the Imperial District itself. However, he rarely entertains guests in his home; the reason for his desire for privacy is his large collection of semi-legal and illegal gaijin artifacts from throughout the Colonies. He collects such things obsessively from multiple contacts and has them smuggled into the city with the help of Imperial District gate guards Seppun Toriko. For additional information on Otomo Akio, his motives, and his secrets, see Book 3 of this box set.

Tsi Umibe — This taciturn young smith represents the Oriole Clan in the Colonies, and he prefers to ensure his privacy by keeping quarters within the tower rather than maintaining chambers at the Minor Clan Embassy. Umibe is not particularly social and prefers to avoid as much unnecessary contact with others as he can. His purpose in the Colonies is to establish a forge for the Oriole and then create weapons and armor to gain wealth and favor with other clans. All this is intended to benefit the Minor Clan Alliance's attempts to expand their holdings into the Colonies.



The Governor's Estate

Hotaru Kyo – A representative of a little-known family back in the Empire, Kyo is quiet and unassuming, renting the smallest estate on the tower's first floor. He leaves the tower each morning shortly after sunrise and is absent from the Imperial District throughout the day, returning only at dusk. What he does is unknown, and some of the tower's other residents are quite curious about the nature and scope of his duties. Kyo politely declines opportunities to discuss it, and for now it remains a mystery.

Daidoji Kiri – This attractive young woman maintains private chambers on the tower's third floor. She is not well known among the district's inhabitants, although the Crane are of course familiar with her. She is in the Colonies by choice, and works as a merchant patron with at least a dozen different individuals throughout the Merchant District. Although it is not widely known, several years ago Kiri's family suffered a calamitous turn of fortunes that resulted in their financial ruin and the premature death of her father. She traveled to the Colonies with meager resources to try to rebuild and has struggled to create a profitable commercial empire here. She is extremely personally invested in her work, and spends virtually every waking minute overseeing her vassals. The merchants themselves are not particularly appreciative of her interference, but profits have steadily increased and continue to do so, so they grudgingly submit to her constant supervision. Other Crane look upon Kiri with distaste because of her voracious interest in such affairs, but she is utterly unconcerned with their opinions.

Without question the largest and most important individual building within the Imperial District is the Governor's Estate, the personal residence of the Imperial Governor of the Colonies, home of the most important court in existence outside of Rokugan, and the designated representation of the power of the Divine Empress of the Emerald Empire in the former Ivory Kingdoms. In truth, the estate is a pale reflection of the Imperial Palace it imitates, and could not hold a candle to the size and grandeur of most clan ancestral estates within the Empire's borders. In the Colonies, however, it is a major landmark and one of the oldest standing structures in the land, to say nothing of the political power it represents.

The primary function of the Governor's Estate is, of course, as a personal residence for the Imperial Governor. Its secondary purpose, nearly as important as the primary, is as the site for the Ivory Court, the local equivalent of the Imperial Court in Rokugan. It is here, in the large audience chamber near the estate's center, that the Governor holds court with her entourage, the heads of her various Ministries, and the delegations from the Great Clans, the Minor Clan Alliance, the Imperial families, and various other agencies and organizations with interests in the Colonies.

Interestingly, the Governor's Estate has no barracks for guards, a distinction that sets it apart from similar structures in the mainland of Rokugan. Given the proximity of the Military District, a barracks was not deemed as an efficient use of space by the first Imperial Governor, and as such the sentries posted to the Estate travel from the Military District to take their positions and fulfill their duties. Most are

members of the Second City Guardsmen, but a portion of each shift is comprised of soldiers seconded from the military forces in that district; the commanders there consider it an opportunity to examine their men's attentiveness during non-battle situations. The notoriously stern Akodo Tsudoken is quick to report any shortcomings on the part of those who are seconded to his forces for protecting the Estate.





The Great Bath

A major luxury for the inhabitants of the Imperial District, this building is the largest traditional Rokugani bathhouse in the Second City, and reserved exclusively for the noble citizens of this district. Although the structure itself is not particularly large, it was designed with a large number of customers in mind and makes extremely good use of existing space to ensure it can accommodate many patrons without seeming cramped. The baths make use of local mineral springs that are ritually purified by a priest, ensuring the patrons can enjoy their experience without any concern they might be made unclean or contaminated by the local environment. (This is generally not a problem in the contemporary Second City, but it was an issue of considerable concern during the first days of the colonization efforts.)

The administration of the Great Bath technically falls to the Imperial Governor, since it is not owned by any particular clan or individual. It functions almost exclusively on donations from those who make use of it. Fortunately for its staff, its services specifically cater to the wealthiest of the samurai caste, so funds are never an issue. The staff maintains a small but robust garden on the grounds, where they cultivate a variety of herbs and other plants that can add scents and other pleasant sensations to the bath waters. Likewise a wide array of incense, perfume, and other such substances are kept on hand, ensuring everyone who visits can enjoy the most relaxing and aesthetically pleasing experience possible.

Discretion is always an issue at a bathhouse, and the Great Bath is no different. Because of its lack of a single owner or patron clan, there are perhaps fewer concerns regarding the privacy of patrons than might otherwise be the case. Still, one never knows who might be listening, so there are limits to what most samurai will discuss here. The occasional rendezvous between lovers is about as scandalous as things ever get at the Great Bath, or at least such has been the case so far. Gossip, however, runs as rampant as might be expected for such a location.

The Great Clan Embassies

A tight cluster of moderately sized multi-story buildings surrounding a single elegant garden courtyard, the embassies are not immediately recognizable to most first time visitors from the Empire because of their relatively modest size compared to embassies found back in Rokugan. While most clans would prefer larger accommodations, the truth is the delegations present in the Second City can make do with the size of their embassies with very little actual inconvenience... other than the perceived indignity.

A unique aspect of the Imperial District's size is the presence of some combined embassies. The most notable of these is the single embassy shared by the Crab and Scorpion clans, two clans who in modern times share an extremely close bond both in the Empire and in the Colonies. Both clans maintain other holdings within the city, with the

Yasuki family of the Crab having many interests in the Merchant District and the Scorpion maintaining a large number of estates throughout the city, but this is where their affairs are handled for official business pertaining to the Ivory Court.

Another combined estate, one of the largest buildings in the entire compound, is the one maintained by the Dragon. The larger building was afforded to them because of both their early role in establishing the Colonies and their duty of overseeing the Spider Clan in the Colonies (and perhaps also because of their direct link with the Divine Empress). Although the Spider do not maintain their own official embassy (their Clan Champion does keep a large residence in the Peasant District), they are permitted to occupy and use a portion of the Dragon embassy to conduct their affairs in the Ivory Court.

The Ivory Champion's Residence

This personal estate is actually quite modest in size and scope despite its sudden and increased importance in the political and military landscape of the Second City. Until a very short time ago, the building was actually a magistrate's station and served as the primary outpost for Colonial Magistrates in the district (as most of their actual holdings are in the Military District). With the elevation of young Shinjo Tselu to the position of Ivory Champion, however, the Imperial Governor commandeered the estate for use by Tselu and his hand-selected underlings. At present the estate contains private chambers for Tselu, quarters for up to two guests, an office that doubles as a chamber for meeting with guests or detainees, a small reinforced room to hold those who have been arrested, and its most recent addition, a small stable that can accommodate only three horses; there simply was not room to expand it to hold anything larger.

As might be expected, the estate has become a significant center of activity since the creation of the Ivory Champion. Tselu conducts his affairs here virtually every day, save when his duties take him elsewhere or when the Imperial Governor requires his presence.

Magistrate's Outpost

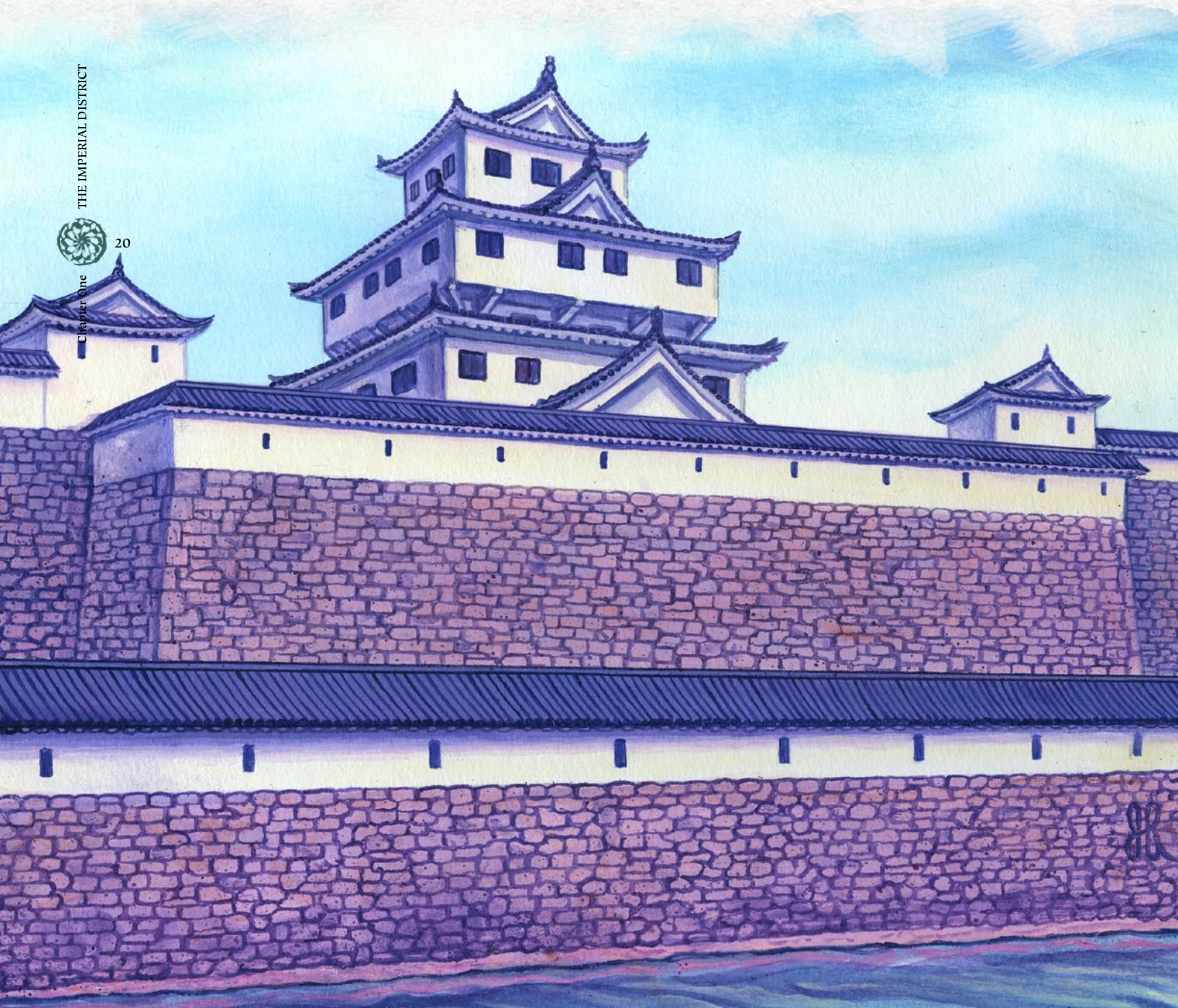
Similar to the current Ivory Champion's estate, this small building is quite unassuming. It is located in an out-of-the-way corner of the district, and differs from the other estates chiefly in that it houses Imperial Magistrates (those who report to the Emerald or Jade Champions back in Rokugan) rather than Colonial Magistrates who answer to the Imperial Governor. Anywhere in the Empire, a posting as an Imperial Magistrate would be an incredibly powerful and prestigious appointment. With the ascension of Otomo Suikihime to the position of Imperial Governor and her creation of the Ivory Champion, however, the position of those stationed here has dropped precipitously,

to the point where many are at least partially ostracized by the highest circles of society for fear of gaining the disfavor of the Imperial Governor. Fortunately, this has so far not led to any unpleasant spectacles – the individual Imperial Magistrates posted to the Colonies are generally of a sort neither accustomed nor interested in traveling in the highest social circles.

Regardless of the social status associated with the posting, there are rarely more than one or two staff in attendance at this small outpost. There are about a dozen total magistrates assigned here, but they are often absent traveling through the Colonies for one reason or another, pursuing mandates passed down to them from their superiors back in the mainland Empire or following up on requests for assistance from throughout the Colonies.

The Minor Clan Alliance Embassy

The lone embassy located separately from those of the Great Clans is a humble estate granted to the Minor Clan Alliance. If the presence of the Great Clans in the district is smaller than in the Empire, then the presence of the Alliance can only be described as tiny. The Minor Clans are extremely interested in expanding their influence into the Colonies and reaping the benefits of the vast natural resources there, but the majority of the clans rallied under the banner of the Alliance simply do not have the manpower or resources to devote to such a difficult undertaking so far away from their homes.





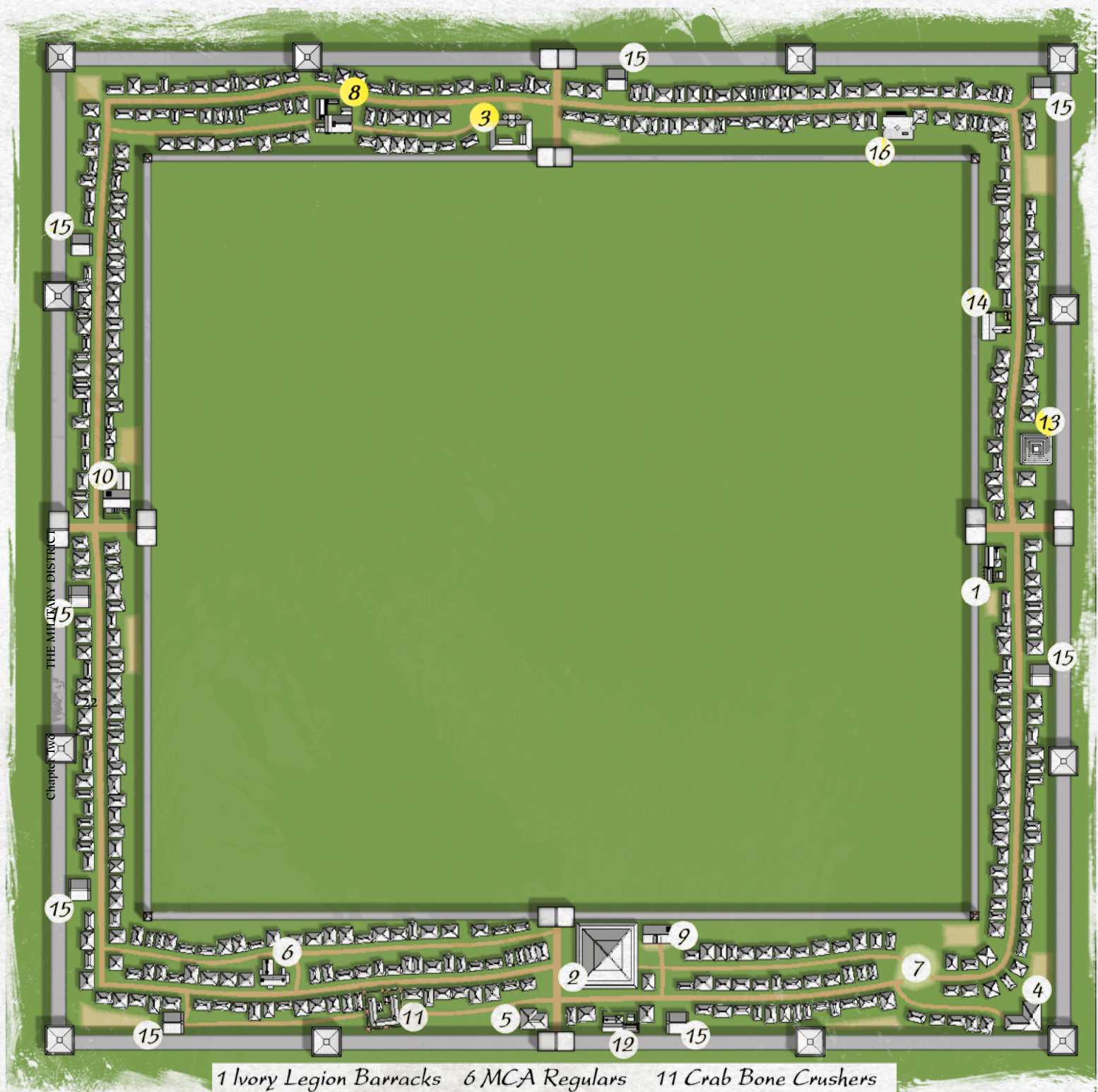
Presently, those who are stationed at the embassy are struggling to find a means of generating resources on their own without having to rely on the extremely limited supply of money and material from the Empire. Toward that end they have sponsored a large number of minor merchants and artisans in the city's outer districts. So far, while these endeavors have managed to pay for themselves, none have yet provided the sort of financial windfall the Alliance seeks. The Governor's recent pronouncements encouraging the clans to explore and exploit the Colonies have encouraged the Alliance; they hope to discover some as-yet untapped resources that will provide them the funds they need to truly exploit the advantages of the Colonies.

The Office of the Imperial Families

Although there are relatively few members of the Imperial families living in the Colonies, those who do stay there demand their own estate. Ostensibly the purpose of this building is to offer a place of business for the various branches of the Imperial bureaucracy that the three Imperial Families oversee. In reality, the estate is essentially private quarters for the Imperials in the city. The one branch of bureaucracy that does see significant business within the estate is the Imperial Treasury.

The Empire's current Imperial Treasurer, a stern but principled woman named Seppun Ritisharu, tries to maintain an extremely close record of all significant financial concerns taking place in the Colonies. She keeps at least a handful of agents in the Second City at all times, and has visited the Colonies no less than three times herself, a fact that the more traditional members of her family find somewhat scandalous. Regardless, Ritisharu considers the vast quantities of valuable resources constantly flowing from the Colonies to the Empire to be something her particular branch of the Imperial bureaucracy should monitor very carefully. The merchants who work in the Merchant District would give a great deal to see the meticulous financial records stored by the Treasury at this estate, to say nothing of the significant financial assets kept in the vault there. To the Imperials it is not an excessive amount, of course; merely an operational budget for personal use and the local bureaucracy. To most others, however, it would allow them to live the rest of their lives in luxury.





- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Ivory Legion Barracks | 6 MCA Regulars | 11 Crab Bone Crushers |
| 2 Hondo no Vari | 7 Dueling Grounds | 12 Tsukoden's Blades |
| 3 Tarantula's Lair | 8 Ivory Daggers | 13 Bishamon's Followers |
| 4 The Dojo | 9 The Mess | 14 Thunder's Daughter |
| 5 Stray Wolves Inn | 10 Shiba's Flames | 15 Last Line |
| | | 16 Rajya ke Varisa |

THE MILITARY DISTRICT

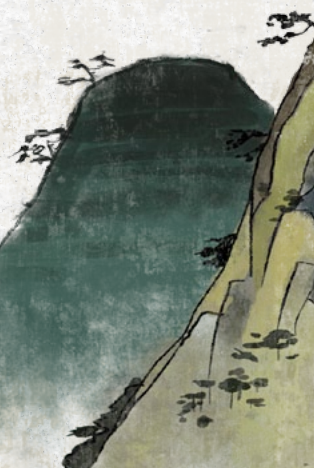
From the very creation of the Second City, the settlers from Rokugan knew they would be facing great dangers. Strange monsters and animal predators, old forgotten magic, the remnants of the Cult of Rhumal and other hostile gaijin – all pointed to the necessity for the city to have a strong military defense. Luckily, Rokugan had been tempered by centuries of war of all kinds, and the samurai who built the city were fully prepared to protect it as strongly as needed. Initially it seemed unavoidably necessary to protect the city on all sides, and this gave rise to the characteristic ring shape of the Military District, completely enclosing the core Imperial zone of the settlement. Although the city has long since outgrown this initial design, the Military District remains the formidable heart of its defense, and by completely surrounding the Imperial district it is able to closely watch over the city's most important individuals and locations.

Most samurai in the city are thankful for the daily work of the Military District. While some (especially in the Unicorn Clan) might relish the prospect of exploration, the great majority of Rokugani settlers feared the strange perils they might face in the distant lands of the Colonies. That they were constantly defended by such a formidable military structure greatly eased their anxiety and allowed the city to grow and flourish far more rapidly than it might otherwise have done. The success of the modern Second City is generally considered a permanent testimony to the prowess and dedication of the Military District. Nor does this accomplishment accrue solely to one or two clans; the forces of the City Guardsmen are built from the samurai of many clans, and operate in an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual exchange rarely seen before. Of course,

different attitudes and philosophies do remain within the ranks, and tempers flare when allegiances oppose, but nobody in the Second City is very surprised to see a Crane warrior training in the tetsubo with a Crab friend, or a Phoenix officer leading a patrol of mostly Mantis samurai.

The main focus of the Military District was and still is the mighty external wall, constantly manned and inspected for potential improvements and repairs. The early settlers called in many political favors to obtain the best Kaiu engineers to work on the wall, and to this day the Crab samurai present in the Second City are heavily involved in its maintenance and operation. The wall is simple stone without any adornment, just shy of twenty feet tall and almost twice as wide, allowing soldiers to march quickly all around the perimeter. Reinforced towers are located at the corners and at the four gates that penetrate through to the Imperial District; the walls also sport an array of Kaiu-designed siege engines. While some have complained at the cost of such machines (and among the more courtly, of how they mar the wall's aesthetics), most senior officers are veterans of the Destroyer War who refuse to take any unnecessary risks or forego any defensive options.

The four sets of gates pass directly through to the four inner gates that access the Imperial District, allowing transit directly to and from the core of the city. Samurai of the Military District can theoretically also use the inner gates to cross directly to the opposite side of the Imperial District, but such would be considered an imposition on the already cramped inhabitants of the inner city, so most movements of troops usually circle around the Imperial District – which the commanders view as a nice bit of extra endurance training.

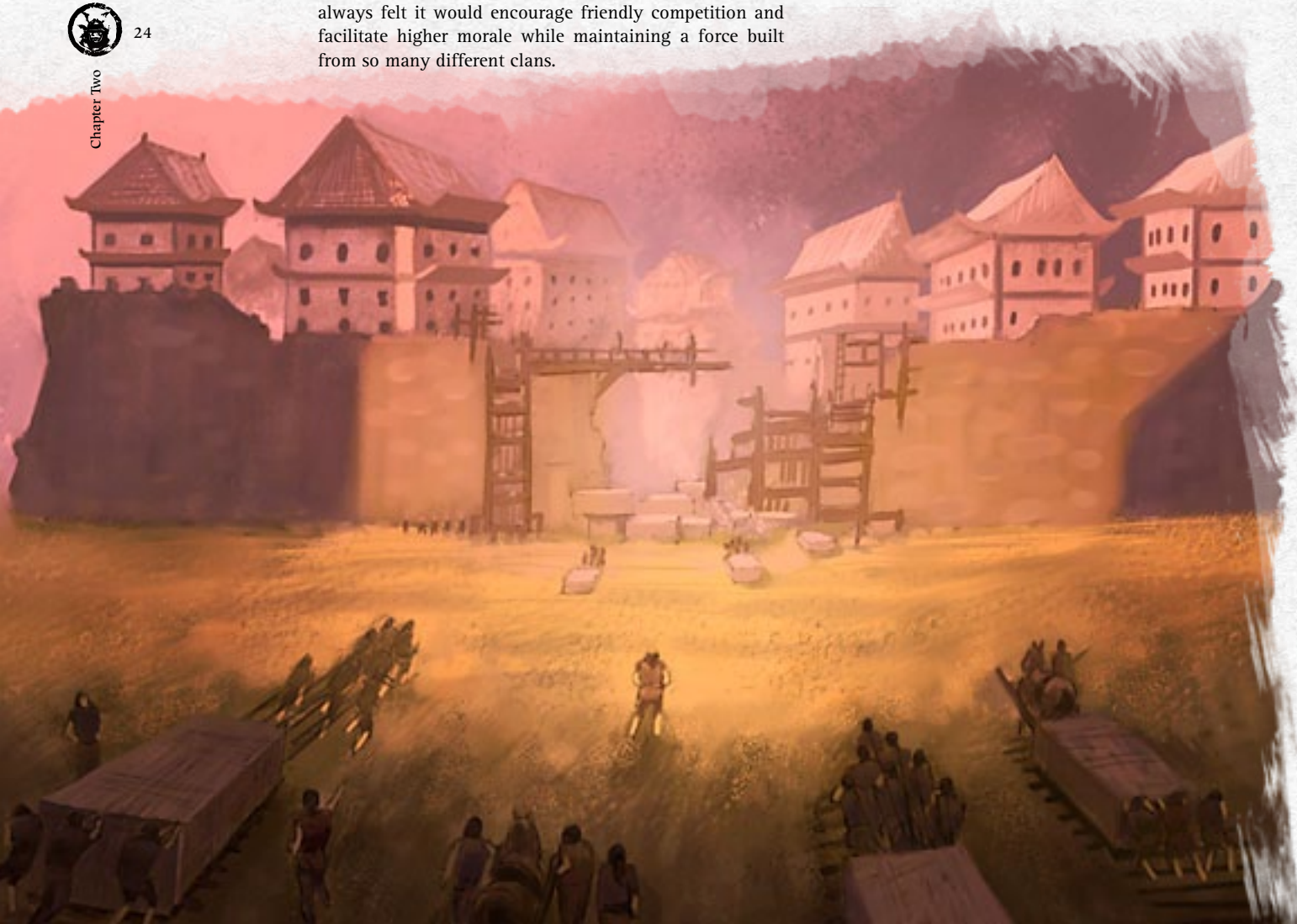




The narrow streets of the Military District are crowded with barracks, stables, dojo, and all other manner of buildings which support war and security. There is a wide diversity of architectural styles, since all the Great Clans have garrisons present along with the Minor Clan Alliance, the Imperial families, the Second City Guardsmen, the Ivory Legion and even a small number of ronin. What the buildings share in common is a strong, sturdy, and practical design and appearance; they are made to be ready to withstand assault and to facilitate troop maneuvers. Thus, the District is surprisingly well organized despite its somewhat jarring mixture of clan colors and physical designs. It is also notable that the designs here, while showing to the full the traditions of their respective factions, show almost no influence from the native architecture of the Ivory Kingdoms – in contrast to many outlying structures and settlements in the Colonies, where the local climate has had much more influence on building design.

One tradition of the Second City's Military District, born from the fact that so many units stationed there were cut off from their traditional clan hierarchy at home, is the colorful naming of the barracks and of the soldiers who live in them. Proud banners display the location of "Shiba's Flames," the "Crab Bone Crushers," or "Tsukoden's Blades." While some courtiers who pass by frown at the unusual names and exotic mon hanging in front of each and every barracks, the city's military commanders have always felt it would encourage friendly competition and facilitate higher morale while maintaining a force built from so many different clans.

Walking through the small streets of the District, or the large main roads which run through it, is an interesting experience. The streets are always crowded, since the inhabitants are charged with many different tasks including not only direct military operations but also security patrols, escorting of important personages, and assisting the local magistrates. However, in contrast to what one might encounter back in the Empire, those crowds are composed overwhelmingly of samurai – the number of ashigaru in the Second City (and indeed the Colonies as a whole) has been kept to a minimum, since every farmer and builder is needed for the Colonies' survival and expansion. The Military District comes the closest to a purely samurai environment as one is likely to find anywhere, with only the bare minimum of servants needed for menial tasks – all of whom live on the other side of the wall in the Peasant District. Of course, such a high concentration of armed warriors cannot avoid a few violent incidents. While the camaraderie fostered by common duty is quite real, the mainland often sends its less conformist samurai to the Colonies, resulting in quite a few high tempers. Duels are a frequent happenstance, although the vast majority of them are to first blood, and the less disciplined samurai even go so far as brawling with each other. Out of pride such incidents are rarely reported to superiors, and the officers tend to turn at least a half-blind eye to what they excuse as "extra drilling" or "off-duty relaxation."



Relations to Other Districts

While the Imperial District might be the nerve center of the Second City, the Military District is the bone and muscle protecting it and tying the rest of the city together. Its inhabitants actually often use the names of the other Districts as directions: Temple is east, Merchant is west, Artisan southwest, and Peasant south.

The Imperial District

Being completely surrounded by the Military District, the Imperial center is never far from the soldiers' thoughts or lives. As the two main samurai districts of the city, they cooperate on a daily basis and can be considered as two sides of the same coin. Many of those attending the Ivory Court are also bushi and have at least some involvement in the military operations nearby, if only to want to attend training lessons or displays of martial skill. Similarly, officers of the Military District are regularly invited to the Imperial District to receive praise or punishment for their actions, to attend an audience with their superiors, or to meet with their clan's embassy. And several important personages like the Ivory Champion, the City Commander, and the head of the Second City Guardsmen move constantly to and from each district.

To be sure, while relations between guards and nobles are better here than in most parts of the Empire, they are not perfect. Some warriors complain about the constant and seemingly useless comings and goings of the courtiers, and some politicians politely hide a sigh of contempt at the crude and violent nature of their protectors. But in the Second City these are the exceptions rather than the rule, and most samurai in the city know the Imperial District owes its ongoing life and prosperity to the Military District.

The Temple District

The relationship between the Military and Temple Districts is a somewhat complex one. While the samurai with the most important profiles are usually sheltered in the heart of the city, many of them frequently venture in the temples to pay their respects to Shinsei, the Fortunes, and their ancestors. In addition, many shugenja, scholars, and monks from the various clans reside in the Temple District on a permanent basis. This creates a security risk, since the Temple District lies outside the city's main wall.

Despite the frequent requests from Akodo Tsudoken, the monks of the Temple District have politely refused to strengthen the modest wall surrounding it. Respect for those of religious avocation compels Tsudoken to accede to their wishes, but he nonetheless maintains a strict patrol regimen throughout the area.



A separate relationship between the two districts involves the practice of hand-to-hand martial arts. The presence of so many monks, both those of the Brotherhood of Shinsei and lesser numbers from the Dragon Clan (and even a few from the monastic orders associated with the Spider Clan) means there are many practitioners of the Way of the Open Hand in the Temple District, and these monks are often willing to teach the soldiers of the Military District or even play the role of sparring partners. Given the mix of clans and traditions present, martial arts have flourished in the city and there have been several tournaments of varying scale. Of course, monks never miss an opportunity to teach the Way of Shinsei, and as a result a surprising number of bushi in the Second City are quite knowledgeable in the Tao.

The Merchant District

As befit the traditional samurai attitude, the warriors of the Military District rarely have more than contempt for the merchants to their west. Unlike the nobles and courtiers in the Imperial District, few if any of the soldiers in the Military District are merchant patrons, and therefore they have very little interest in flows of coin. Of course, armies still need supplies, so quartermasters still work with the Merchant District – they just make sure their business remains quick and straightforward. As inhabitants of the city, the various merchants and traders do receive protection from the local troops, but in contrast to the Temple District there has never been much pressure from Akodo Tsudoken to expand or improve the minimal and incomplete wall that surrounds the Merchant District.

Soldiers sometimes visit the district to spend their stipend on gifts or curiosities, or to visit its entertainment facilities (although the Artisan District is the preferred destination for such activities). Needless to say, the occasional inappropriate behavior is heavily frowned on and further damages the reputation of the district in military eyes. Instances of violent crime are dealt with





quickly and harshly, which coupled with the lack of commercial acumen of many samurai means most illegal activities take place in a subtler manner. Smugglers are widespread in the District but attract almost no attention from the city's garrison.

The Artisan District

While it is an offshoot of the Merchant District, the Artisan District generally receives a much more favorable opinion from the inhabitants of the Military District. They do enjoy the various entertainments and distractions available in this district (which are considerably more extensive than in the Merchant District), but they also have another reason to visit this part of the city: being so far away from the Rokugani mainland, the soldiers need a continuous supply of new weapons and armor which the smiths and craftsmen of the Artisan District are only too happy to provide. Moreover, due to the constant dangers of the Colonies and the extensive cross-training among the garrison, it is common for many a samurai to supplement their equipment with one or more extra weapons, further expanding the marketing opportunities for local craftsmen. A Kakita duelist carrying a naginata or a Bayushi bushi with a tetsubo slung across his back is something seldom seen on the mainland, yet here such additional purchases are tolerated and sometimes even encouraged by senior officers.

The Peasant District

As previously mentioned, the peasants of the Second City enjoy somewhat more respect from ordinary samurai than they would back in the Empire. Ordinary samurai are well aware of what an important role the peasants have played in the construction, growth, and success of the city, and for their part the peasants are equally well aware of the many threats from the jungles of the Ivory Kingdoms, threats which are always pushed back by the weapons of the samurai. Some visitors have noted a certain similarity between the more comradely samurai-peasant relationship here and that found among these castes in the Crab lands of the Empire.

The few ashigaru which the Second City holds are posted here, patrolling the streets and dealing with the occasional outbreaks of petty crime. Still, Akodo Tsudoken makes sure at least one samurai unit goes through the roads of the Peasant District daily, a duty which holds less stigma here than it might back in the Empire.

One area to which these improved relations do not apply is the *eta* community at the edge of the Peasant District, which is all but ignored by the Military District.

Important Personages

The vast majority of important personages who populate the Military District can be found in book two of this set, entitled *Second City: The People*. However, many different individuals populate this area, and a few of the more important or famous ones are listed below.

AKODO TSUDOKEN

HEAD OF THE SECOND CITY GUARDSMEN

A veteran of two wars and countless minor battles, Akodo Tsudoken now serves the Empire in the distant lands of the Colonies. Here he has faced the death of his friend, the first Governor of the Colonies, and the trials of serving his successor, a woman he suspects to be somewhat close to madness. Every day, he feels the weight of his age a bit more, but he is not ready to give up yet.

Born to a middling-level branch of the Akodo family, Tsudoken was always expected to become an officer, and it filled both his parents and himself with pride when he did. Although he was not a prodigy, Tsudoken was a patient and organized man with an eye for detail and a strong sword arm, qualities which immediately won him the attention of his superiors. By the time of the Khan's March, Tsudoken was already commanding his own legion in the Lion armies, and although the war cost his unit many men, his strong performance in maintaining discipline and fighting the Unicorn at every opportunity drew even more favorable notice. He went on to distinguish himself in the subsequent Destroyer War as well.

When he learned he was being sent to the Colonies, Tsudoken was shocked – as indeed most Lion would have been – at the prospect of leaving his homeland for a strange and distant place filled with gaijin and other abominations. But the post of head of the Second City guardsmen, a new group akin to the Seppun Imperial Guard but drawn from all clans, needed a strong hand and the Lion were not about to let such an honor pass to someone of another clan. Tsudoken was surprised and relieved to find another Lion samurai, Ikoma Katsuru, occupying the position of Governor when he arrived, and the two soldiers quickly became friends, making it much easier for both of them to embrace their new roles in the Colonies. Tsudoken and his men faced countless enemies and dangers over the years, defeating them repeatedly while remaining above reproach in their personal conduct.

However, just as it seemed the Second City might be secure enough for Tsudoken to finally consider retirement, tragedy struck when Ikoma Katsuru was murdered. His replacement was a haughty, mercurial woman from the Otomo family, a woman who had no interest in the details of Tsudoken's duties. Indeed she has now shifted many of his former responsibilities to her new favorite, the so-called Ivory Champion. While the shame of this weighs

heavily on him, Tsudoken also feels a burning need to avenge his dead lord and friend. Then, perhaps, he can offer his seppuku or simply retire to a temple.

A strongly built man who is always cleanly shaved except for a neatly trimmed moustache, Tsudoken has visibly aged since arriving in the Colonies, with more gray hair on his head than black. But he refuses to slow down in any way, and he still possesses surprising facility with the blade, the result of years of dedicated practice and training.

AKODO TSUDOKEN, HEAD OF THE SECOND CITY GUARDSMEN

AIR: 3	EARTH: 4	FIRE: 3	WATER: 4	VOID: 3
REFLEXES: 4	AGILITY: 5			
Honor: 7.2	Status: 5.7	Glory: 6.1		

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 5
Skills: Battle (Mass Combat) 6, Defense 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: History 2, Sincerity 3, Athletics 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 4, Investigation 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujutsu 3, Spears 4, War Fan 5
Kata: Striking as Water, Strength of the Lion
Advantages: Irreproachable, Leadership
Disadvantages: Driven (find Ikoma Katsuru’s killers)

DAIDOJI HONDO
SECOND CITY COMMANDER

When Daidoji Hondo first arrived in the Second City he was a young samurai just past his gempukku. Like many similar young men and women, his hopes for battles and glory were unfulfilled in a newly peaceful Rokugan, and he was sent to serve his clan where his talents might be useful: the Colonies. Of course, given his blunt edge when dealing with other samurai and his lack of refined behavior even for a Daidoji, perhaps his superiors were only too happy to see him leave.

Hondo’s lack of taste for the arts and entertainment made the transition to the Second City simpler than for many other samurai – he did not trouble himself over the crude and barbaric world he had entered, but simply reported in to his superior officer, trained, and waited to be deployed. He threw himself in each battle with total dedication, and soon become famous for being one of the toughest and most resilient bushi of his squadron. His fame attracted the attention of other clans, and in a bid to strengthen inter-clan cooperation the leader of the Crane embassy arranged for Hondo to receive additional training from the Shinjo family of the Unicorn. While mildly apprehensive at first, as he was a proud believer in the superiority of Daidoji tactics, Hondo soon found many fellow spirits in the Unicorn Clan, honest men with no time for the superfluous. He mastered several of their





techniques and developed a fluid defensive style which won him many more victories on the battlefield. When the time came to select a new commander for the Second City's forces, nobody could deny Hondo, whose skin and armor bore the marks of countless engagements.

While the Second City Guardsmen protect the Governor and important individuals of the Imperial District, the Second City Commander is tasked with marshalling the forces of all assembled clans into a cohesive army for the city's military defense. Having already been trained by two clans, Hondo found he was well prepared for the task and went out of his way to promote similar arrangements, supporting the advancement of skilled warriors regardless of clan. He had to learn to soften his rough tongue somewhat as he dealt with an increasingly large numbers of lords and politicians, but with his men Hondo remained the same gruff, blunt warrior he always had been.

Hondo would have been content serving his clan and city until death or retirement, but the ascension of the new Ivory Champion has cast a shadow over his mood. While he has tremendous respect for the Shinjo family, young Shinjo Tselu is clearly too inexperienced for the responsibilities which the Governor is heaping on his shoulders. Plus, his position seems to be dangerously vaguely defined (beyond being the new Governor's political toy) and is declared to out-rank Hondo whenever it suits the Governor's mood. Outmaneuvered by both politics and youth, Hondo is beginning to consider retirement; after all, his legacy is assured by the two children he has with his wife from the Shinjo. However, Akodo Tsudoken has convinced him to continue his duties for a little while more.

Daidoji Hondo is just past forty years of age, and his chin and general build make him look like a crude stone statue in the vague shape of a man. His very short hair

is dyed white and he is always clean-shaven, but the numerous scars over his body and face are intimidating to behold. He considers them a reminder of his and his men's duties, and those few who believe him somehow weakened are always disappointed when he dons his armor and grabs his weapons.

DAIDOJI HONDO, SECOND CITY COMMANDER

AIR: 3 EARTH: 4 FIRE: 4 WATER: 4 VOID: 3
REFLEXES: 4 STAMINA: 6

Honor: 6.2 Status: 5.6 Glory: 5.9

School/Rank: Daidoji Iron Warrior 2/Shinjo Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 6, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Hunting 4, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 4, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Spears (Yari) 6, Stealth 2

Kata: Striking as Earth, Breath of Wind Style, Strength of the Crane, Strength of the Unicorn

Advantages: Multiple Schools, Strength of the Earth

Disadvantages: Can't Lie, Obtuse

HIDA MAKI

CRAB CLAN BULLY

On occasion, soldiers of the Military District will report in the morning with a black eye or a couple of large bruises. More rarely, some will try to hide knife wounds, or will tell their friends they have misplaced their stipend and need a bit of help. A surprising number of these incidents are due to a samurai named Hida Maki.

Quite frankly put, Hida Maki is bored. The Second City might present dangers, but nowhere are they as great or glorious as standing on the Carpenter Wall, defending Rokugan against the hordes of the Shadowlands. And although he would never admit it, somewhere inside Maki feels ashamed for having left his comrades to die in their daily struggles while he enjoys a life of relative comfort in the Colonies, even if it wasn't his choice. This combination of boredom and shame led him one night to lash out at a warrior who had somehow offended him – how, exactly, he could not remember afterward. Despite his small stature (especially unusual for a Hida), Maki was a resourceful warrior with a mean streak, and utterly drubbed the other soldier. He was surprised to realize that out of shame his victim never reported the incident, and so he did it again and again, choosing a different person each time and making sure to mock them enough that they wouldn't tell anyone what happened. Just to see how far he can push it, Maki sometimes steals whatever money the other samurai carry on their person, using it to treat himself to the finest sake and food available in the Artisan District. A few Yasuki know of his habits but turn a blind eye on them, since he provides them with plenty of additional business. Most other Crab soldiers do not suspect him of being such a thug, and take up his defense on the rare occasions when it was necessary; this triggered a few brawls between entire units.

Nothing would mark this average sized, cheerful Crab warrior with long black hair as a violent bully to most people; to the contrary, his outward appearance seems quite against the stereotype of his clan. He has found this makes it quite easy to fool others or to find a way out of delicate situations, and when there is no choice but to fight – well, Maki is skilled with many weapons and knows how to punch where it hurts most. Maki doesn't really realize how far he's already gone, and still thinks of his bullying as little more than a game to pass the time. Although he is acting increasingly recklessly, he is not truly an evil-minded person – but unless something happens, he is likely to continue on his current destructive path.

HIDA MAKI, CRAB CLAN BULLY

AIR: 3	EARTH: 4	FIRE: 2	WATER: 3	VOID: 3
REFLEXES: 4	AGILITY: 3	STRENGTH: 4		
Honor: 2.4	Status: 1.5	Glory: 4.2		
		(Infamy: 1.2)		

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 2, Commerce 2, Defense 3, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 4, Iaijutsu 1, Intimidation (Bullying) 5, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Knives 2, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Sincerity 2, Stealth 2, Temptation 2

Advantages: Crafty, Crab Hands, Hands of Stone

Disadvantages: Brash, Small, Failure of Bushido (Compassion)

Location Guide

The Military district is packed almost to bursting with barracks of various sizes and shapes, but contains very few buildings of a non-martial nature, as all other needs of its inhabitants are filled by the other districts. Given the variety of samurai and units present here, the area is always very dynamic, if a bit confusing for newcomers.

The Ivory Legion Barracks

A novelty in a novel city, the Ivory Legion barracks was created when Otomo Suikuhime first awarded the position of Ivory Champion to Shinjo Tselu. Supposedly the Ivory Champion is a near-equivalent of the Emerald Champion, but without magistrates to serve him many still wonder what his role will really be. The Governor has allowed him to handpick soldiers to create an elite force called the Ivory Legion, which has slowly been growing. Many soldiers in the city resent what they see as a usurpation of regular military authority and have been reluctant to join the Legion. The exception is the Unicorn Clan, whose samurai of course appreciate the glory their clan has obtained through Tselu's victory; to date most members of the Legion are from the Shinjo, Moto, and Utaku families. Even more, the barracks housing the Legion used to belong to the Unicorn Clan and was ceded to the Champion when it became clear no other clan would willingly do so.

Apart from a hasty layer of white paint applied to its external walls, the place still has a definite Unicorn feel to it, including extensive stables and numerous gaijin decorations, some of which were taken from the surrounding ruins of the Ivory Kingdoms. The Legion has yet to make a name or a reputation for itself, and as such draws some disdain from the better-established groups in the Military District. However, none can deny the number of soldiers the barracks houses grows daily, and they are certainly some of the best-trained and best-equipped samurai of the city.





Hondo no Yari (Second City Commander's Stronghold)

In stark contrast to the Ivory Barracks, the Second City Commander's stronghold is the tallest and strongest building in the Military District, situated directly south of the Imperial District like a proud sentinel ready to defend its charge. The samurai of the city usually give it a nickname based on the current commander, and given Daidoji Hondo's predilection for spears the choice was easily made.

Contrary to most other buildings around, Hondo no Yari doesn't house many soldiers on a permanent basis, since most of the District garrison is under its orders. Rather, it is used for the officers of the city to gather and discuss assignments and strategies, meet with dignitaries, and review new units for further integration into the city's forces. The highest ranked officers usually inhabit the top floors of the six-story structure. Currently this includes Daidoji Hondo, the commander, and his two most trusted subordinates: Yoritomo Genji, a dashing swordsman who has yet to meet his equal on the battlefield, and Matsu Rie, a stern middle-aged samurai-ko who believes words should be saved for the rarest of situations. Each commander has always been given a lot of leeway in choosing personal staff, and under Hondo's command every clan has been represented in the hierarchy; he has even allowed a single advisor from the Spider Clan.

Hondo no Yari is designed to serve in case of attack as both a fortress to strike from and a rallying point for the District and indeed the city as a whole. Underground storage rooms have been built beneath the fortress, stockpiled with as much food and water as possible. The first floor of the castle is used as a stables and dispatch ground for the rest of the army, and can house several hundred soldiers if necessary (although not for extended periods of time). The higher stories all boast archery slits for defense and even a few siege engines on balconies; furthermore, the commanders have created a communication system using large colored fans to convey messages to the rest of the District. Also housed in the castle are vast quantities of weapons, almost as many as are housed in the Imperial District's repository "Blades." Some rumors place a number of nemuranai among these, although the commander has never confirmed this as fact.

While obviously no expense or effort have been spared to make the place formidable, the truth is Hondo no Yari suffers from being in the cramped quarters of the center of the city, and pales compared to the great military castles of the mainland. This is why Daidoji Hondo has begun focusing new efforts toward reinforcing the District's external wall, which he sees as the first line of defense in the event of a major assault, and designating several barracks as fallback points. Currently a debate is raging as to which ones should be used for this purpose – many officers want the honor, yet almost as many want to avoid relying on the Tarantula's Lair (*see below*).

The Tarantula's Lair (Spider Clan Barracks)

Standing diametrically opposite from the commander's castle is the District's second biggest building, and one of the city's oldest. The Spider were some of the first samurai to arrive in large numbers in the Colonies and needed a place of their own in the Second City, particularly due to the constant tension in their dealings with other clans. The result, named after the large spiders found in the jungles of the Colonies, is made of naturally black stone and wood, and the interior walls have been meticulously carved and painted. Sitting north of the high buildings in the Imperial District, it is often hidden in shadow through most of the day, a fact which suits its inhabitants perfectly well. Its many sculptures and engravings are less of a surprise once one considers a number of the Tainted Spider samurai brought to the Colonies were not actually warriors and lived here because they could not survive in the harsh jungles outside. They set out to make this a suitable home for themselves – although the depictions of crawling spiders and tributes to Daigotsu's power are not what most would consider suitable, and the Spider are careful to make sure their decorations are restricted to the interior of the structure.

A fair number of Spider samurai, bushi and otherwise, still call this place home, although the bulk of the clan has moved on to undertake the task of conquering the rest of the former Ivory Kingdoms. The current head of the Spider garrison here is a Tainted samurai-ko named Daigotsu Hijiko, a woman who seems to inspire fear even in her fellow Spider and is required by her superiors to cover her face with a mask at all times. Few relish the thought of being in the presence of the cold polished steel which covers all of her face but her gaze. Legends abound about what's behind the mask, whether it covers a past identity or the horrible symptoms of the Taint.

Few Spider samurai are present in other units than their own, and likewise it is quite rare (and usually considered a disgrace) for samurai of other clans to be assigned with the Spider. Several years ago, one of Hijiko's lieutenants named Sapporu issued a formal challenge to all other units in the Military District, calling on them to come and face the Spider Clan's prowess in formal duels or be considered cowards. Of course, the clans answered en masse, and Sapporu and his men lost many duels. However, they won enough to ensure the Spider Clan would be respected for its strength. Coming to the Lair to face one of its members in a duel has since become something of a tradition in the Second City, with many units considering it almost as a rite of passage for their newest recruits (whether victorious or not).

Still, not all visits to the Tarantula's Lair are of a violent nature. As off-putting as the place is to many samurai, it has held the honor of housing both the Empress' second son and the Spider Clan Champion on several occasions, and it has adequate quarters for such prestigious guests. Several rooms are also occupied on a permanent basis by members of the Dragon Clan, keeping a close eye on the clan designated as their ward. Such guests may become

targets for the temptation of Jigoku, but their presence means the Spider are also targets for the truth of the Tao; it is not uncommon to hear a spiritual debate happening in this building over the sound of arms and armor being readied for battle.

The Dojo

As a new generation of samurai began growing up inside the Second City, it soon became obvious that traveling back to the mainland for training and education would be impractical, dangerous, and unbearably expensive for most children. Many parents decided to train their sons and daughters on their own, using either the local barracks or their homes as training grounds, but the results of these practices were uneven – not to mention very time consuming. A samurai named Bayushi Oma came up with an innovative solution: all clans would pool resources towards the creation of a single unique dojo in the Military District, allowing the grounds to be used at any moment by anyone who required it. Since Oma was from the Scorpion Clan, many accused him of simply wanting to be able to observe the other clans' training methods and techniques. To counter such accusations, Oma offered to teach any samurai of the Great Clans in the techniques of the Bayushi Bushi School, a shocking offer but one which opened the way for the creation of the facility now called, simply, The Dojo.

This building, situated roughly in the southeastern part of the District, is the largest of its kind in the Colonies and larger than all but the greatest dojo in mainland Rokugan. It is separated in two dozen different rooms spread across two stories, and receives daily visits from hundreds of students, from young children to accomplished samurai returning for advanced training. The different rooms are equipped with a variety of practice weapons, and there is also an indoor archery range for the study of kyujutsu and a study and meditation room for those whose training includes spiritual elements. Outside, an attached stable and riding yard covers basic horsemanship lessons, although it is not uncommon to go outside the city for advanced riding practice. Since the clan sensei make use of different rooms at different times, a schedule is posted in front of the entrance every day. The constant shifting of training from one room to another can be somewhat confusing even to experienced visitors, and it is not uncommon for students to get lost on the way to their lessons. A tradition set by Bayushi Oma dictates that students entering a room by error must accept one challenge from the sensei teaching the class, who will usually set one of his students against the intruder. Of course a pupil foolish enough to enter the sensei's personal quarters is in for a harsh lesson. Children whisper stories of the pupil who surprised all when he did enter one of the sensei's rooms on purpose and defeated the teacher in a kenjutsu duel... or of the hapless fool who interrupted the Spider Clan Champion's training and was never heard of again. Of course, the names of the students change each time these stories are retold.

Space being on short supply, no student lives in the facility; they return home every day. Only the sensei of

the school remain there overnight, and even they have the most modest of quarters. Bayushi Oma still resides at The Dojo, where he administrates the places and continues to train students in the Bayushi style. A few pupils from other clans have graduated under his tutelage and gone on to become respected warriors; they always make sure to defend Oma and The Dojo's honor when it is called into question. Oma often smiles behind his mask, and some who remember his initial offer still wonder if he had a hidden intent or not.

The Stray Wolves Inn

Despite its relatively short history the Second City does have a population of ronin, the inevitable by-product of samurai society. Although some idealists wished for the Colonies to be a fresh start for all, the truth is samurai are human and flawed, so illegitimate births and failures of duty continue to bring forth samurai without a lord. Beyond that, several clans which were still recovering from the Destroyer War sought to bolster their numbers when first traveling to the Colonies and hired wave men to join their expeditions.

Commander Daidoji Hondo demands strict respect for discipline throughout his District, and ronin are no exception to this rule. To avoid undue attention, most wave-men in this part of the Second City gather in a small building called the Stray Wolves Inn. Managed by a middle-aged ronin named Osoku, it functions not only as a barracks but also as a normal inn and restaurant, allowing clan samurai to come and recruit wave men in a pleasant atmosphere. All contracts are managed by Osoku himself, who has a well-earned reputation for honesty and straightforwardness. The few men who broke contracts signed under his eye were quickly hunted down and punished by other Stray Wolves, since they didn't want their already meager reputation to be further endangered. The result is a solid group of skilled ronin available for hire, something which the Second City has made use of several times.

The Stray Wolves Inn is maintained by Osoku himself and by a couple of commoner hirelings; they keep the small building as clean as can be hoped for under the circumstances. A common punishment for sub-par performance on the battlefield is to work at the restaurant, and Osoku has proved that he can be as terrifying a chef as a leader. And the food is not half as bad as people say it is.

The Minor Clan Irregulars

A literally colorful building set in the west of the Military District, this structure would be easily overlooked if it wasn't surrounded by half a dozen colorful banners from almost every Minor Clan currently in existence. A few samurai of the Minor Clans have made the trip to the Colonies, albeit never in large numbers, and most of them are bushi. The Ox and Tortoise, both used to difficult journeys and to dealing with gaijin influences,





have sent the greatest number of representatives. Some of the most adventurous Monkey and Hare samurai have also undertaken the challenge, seeking to maintain justice even in faraway lands. Due to their lack of resources, few members of the Badger or Sparrow have come over, but some warriors consider the trip as a test of skill and wits, and therefore fit for a pilgrimage of sorts. Very few Oriole or Dragonfly are known to live in the Second City, but the Bat maintain a definite presence, although they often prefer to stay in the Temple District or with the Mantis delegation.

Most of these samurai find themselves with a great deal of freedom in how they choose to serve their clan, as there is almost never any superior in the Colonies from whom to receive orders, just the occasional letter from the mainland. Seeing an opportunity, Daidoji Hondo allocated a barracks to the Minor Clan Alliance, allowing any who wished to do so to join the military forces of the Second City. Although few in numbers, the Minor Clan samurai have shown a lot of enthusiasm for this task and provide the city's leaders with an eclectic yet disciplined supplemental force (which the local ronin sometimes consider unfair competition). The Irregulars, as they like to call themselves, do not have a clear leader – hardly surprising given the variety of allegiances they represent. However, on the battlefield they are led by Morito Tsuki, an Ox Clan samurai-ko who has recently begun worshipping the Lords of Death.

Kakita Omura's Duelling Grounds

Placing so many armed samurai of different clans in close proximity was bound to create incidents eventually. Samurai being creatures of tradition, most of these incidents resulted in iaijutsu duels, some of which were not always legally sanctioned. Most officers saw this as an unfortunate distraction (and occasional resource drain) that could not be avoided. However, a low-ranking Crane officer named Kakita Omura saw an opportunity. Despite being trained as a bushi, he had always possessed the glib tongue of a courtier, and he began subtly influencing his fellow soldiers to convince them to use a cleared dirt field in the Military District as the sole proper place for iaijutsu duels. The fact that Omura's unit was stationed just beside it was no coincidence, and soon Omura was offering to arbitrate duels, arrange schedules, and even petition shugenja to sanctify the area. Before anyone else had quite realized what was happening, Omura had become the person of note for all things related to iaijutsu, brokering duels between samurai every day, ensuring not only that things were legitimate and honorable but even creating friendly relationships with all the participants. Sometimes the duelists even walked away from the grounds with newfound appreciation for each other, all thanks to Omura.

The Training Grounds are now delineated with a circle of white paint on the ground, and banners mark its position in the northeast of the Military District. Duels are often arranged in advance, and spectators frequently gather around the circle to watch – on Kakita Omura's

notice of course. It may be noted that Omura himself has always been considered a mediocre practitioner of iaijutsu by his peers, and he never hides this fact from those who request his services.

The Ivory Daggers

The Ivory Daggers barracks is situated slightly off the District's main road, hidden behind other prominent barracks, and marked only by a simple symbol on the front door, with no banner or colors. It is occupied by a joint unit of Crab and Scorpion warriors, mostly from the Hiruma and Shosuro families, which specializes in long range scouting operations; the men and women of the Ivory Daggers often assist the Imperial Explorers in their expeditions to the ruins of the Ivory Kingdom. Such missions frequently present both highly unusual and highly dangerous situations, since the deep jungles and ruined cities of the Colonies are fraught with perils both mundane and supernatural. The unit acquired its name from the habit of carrying ivory daggers wherever they went, as they learned from the natives that ivory weapons could sometimes be of great effect against the creatures of the Colonies. Rumors abound on what grisly discoveries the unit has made over the years, but they only share their information with the District commander and the Explorers. Some suspect even Daidoji Hondo doesn't hear about everything they find.

Bound together by the exotic dangers they face, the Daggers have proved themselves to be fiercely defensive of their duty and their membership. Some say what they've seen has driven them somewhat mad, that this is why they react violently to any threat. Anyone who makes an enemy of a Dagger is making an enemy of the entire unit, and such unfortunates usually end up beaten to within an inch of their lives – if they do not simply turn up dead in the Second City's refuse carts. No attempt to link these events to the Daggers has been successful so far, but everyone knows the truth.

All members of the unit traditionally hide the lower part of their faces behind dark scarves of blue or red (depending on their clan of origin), so their identity is often a matter of doubt, enhancing their sinister reputation. The only names known are those of Hiruma Gankyo and Bayushi Yuki, the two leaders of the unit. Only once has someone been so unwise as to imply the possibility of a romance between the two, and that individual has never been heard from again. Thus, most samurai give a wide berth to the small, plain wood barracks with the twin daggers carved on its door.

The Mess

For those with a mind to exploit such things, the Colonies have many economic opportunities. A coalition of Crane, Mantis, Scorpion, and Unicorn samurai embraced this by creating a large restaurant for soldiers to relax and enjoy a meal better than the simple rations issued by the various clan armies. Although the prices of the Mess are a bit expensive, some officers prefer to pay more and avoid having to organize the constant supply of food to



their own barracks. The Mess has therefore become an extremely popular destination, and since it is located just next to Hondo no Yari it easily attracts attention and customers. In fact it is almost always full, as units take turns to attend when they are off-duty. It does require permission from the owners to enter the Mess, but this is almost always granted unless the potential customer is a known troublemaker. Samurai of the four initial clans (Crane, Mantis, Scorpion, and Unicorn) are more-or-less always allowed in unless truly exceptional circumstances prevail. However, there is currently a permanent ban on all samurai from the Crab Clan, since they nearly destroyed the establishment and injured several guests during a massive brawl a year ago. Needless to say, the Crab resent this greatly, especially since a few Spider samurai are allowed to visit the Mess (albeit in the company of Dragon minders).

The Mess is a large one-story building, and easily identified by the impressive amounts of noise that emerges from it at all hours – off-duty soldiers loudly boasting of their accomplishments and telling jokes and stories from one end of the massive main room to the other. A great number of heimin work here, and they quickly develop a knack for staying out of the way of the often boisterous samurai while delivering their hot meals and drinks. The Unicorn and Mantis owners make sure the Mess is kept well-supplied in spices and exotic food, while the Crane provide more traditional meals and the Scorpion supply the chefs. The sponsors from these four clans have raked in amazing profits from the operation, although of course such things are not something to boast about publicly.

More recently, the building has been expanded to include a barracks that houses a unit comprised of volunteers from the four sponsoring clans. This unit, called the White Hawks, does not have the best soldiers in the Second City but can certainly claim to have some of the best morale.

Clan Barracks and Units

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Military District is home to a variety of unit barracks housing soldiers from the various clans, including a significant number of volunteer units that recruit from multiple clans. Most of these units have adopted colorful names and symbols in order to improve morale and maintain a sense of identity in this distant land. The more prominent of these include:

Shiba's Flames, an all-Phoenix unit whose soldiers seek to master both the sword and the bow. They are housed in a bright red barracks, surrounded at night by lit braziers, and located on the east side of the District.

The **Crab Bone Crushers** are all berserkers and hand-to-hand fighters from the Crab Clan. They have a well-deserved reputation for undue violence, and live in a small barracks in the south of the District that looks more like a miniature fortress.

Tsukoden's Blades is the self-proclaimed name of clan soldiers who volunteer to supplement the Second City Guardsmen. An elite unit, they are drawn from all clans but have a majority of Lion samurai. Their barracks is a high-quality structure located right next to Hondo no Yari.

Bishamon's Followers are a group of shugenja who are also trained in the arts of battle. They include members from several clans but are dominated by recruits from the Tamori and Iuchi families, along with some Kitsus. Their barracks also doubles as the district's only temple, and is located to the north of the Imperial District.

The Thunder's Daughters is a recent project pooling Utaku Battle Maidens together with Matsu samurai-ko to fight as a single unit. This is a rather bold idea given the long history of conflict between Lion and Unicorn, and the barracks is often a quite tense place, but the respective leaders are confident this mixture will eventually result in spectacular victories. The Daughters' plain, unadorned barracks and attached stable is in the northwest corner of the District.

The Last Line is a group of samurai from the Lion and Crab Clans who dedicate themselves exclusively to defensive techniques for the purpose of protecting the city and reinforcing its walls. They are spread over a few small barracks, located close to the main external wall of the Military District.

Finally, the **Rajya ke Varisa** are a strange collection of Crab, Unicorn, and Mantis samurai who collect information on the Ivory Kingdoms' former fighting techniques and try to incorporate them into Rokugani ones. This is a controversial move even within the Colonies, and many traditionalists mock these samurai for their alien name and strange habits, but they have displayed a number of impressive feats of arms since their founding ten years ago. Their barracks is a strange building constructed in a style heavily influenced by Ivory Kingdoms architecture, and is located on the north side of the Military District.





- 1 Fukurokujin's Library
- 2 Nasuo's Lab
- 3 Imperial Library
- 4 Training Ground
- 5 Seppun Temple
- 6 Temple of the Seven Fortunes
- 7 Temple of the Rising Dragon

THE TEMPLE DISTRICT

While the Imperial and Military Districts are most important to the political organization of the Second City, almost all of the samurai citizens silently believe the Temple District represents a necessary “soul” to the city that the highly civilized but cramped confines of the Imperial District cannot match. When the construction of the Temple District was ordered, influential nobles of divergent interests all agreed on one thing – it should be an open and sprawling district, a reminder of the spiritual and scholarly comforts and refinements of the far-off Empire.

Since the District was initially chartered as an expansion to the Second City focused on learning and religious study, the clans of the Phoenix and Dragon took an early leadership role in how it was designed and built. While these two clans are often among the last to assert themselves in the realms of politics and commerce, in this field they stand far more prominent, and their contributions became quite valuable as construction progressed. Consequently, the temples and other buildings in this District tend to have a fairly traditional design aesthetic, and to closely resemble the structures found in the cold northern mountains of Rokugan.

During the time of the Temple District’s construction, there was a great deal of conflict and opportunism surrounding the potential residences that would also be built in the area. Many influential nobles wished to have even a small home in the District – due both to the developing overpopulation of the Imperial District and for more politically convenient purposes. In such a

foreign environment, samurai could easily be accused of becoming inured to the barbaric differences in the Colonies – sometimes half-politely referred to as being “fond of the Ivory.” Thus, politically savvy samurai sought to counteract such reputation by residing in the Temple District and thereby publicly showing their adherence to traditional ways. After all, it was much easier to constantly be seen in the temples and libraries of this District if such places were mere feet from one’s home. Having a residence in the Temple District thus became a status symbol among the traditionalists (and those who wished to be seen as traditionalists), giving birth to many a ruthless game of intrigue and influence. When there were simply no more homes to barter or vie for, the focus shifted to funding and sponsoring new shrines and temples... or even wresting such sponsorship from rival samurai. Thus the Temple District has become at once the center of the best and worst of the Empire’s heart – all the more fitting, in the eyes of the philosophically-minded.

Despite this early subtle conflict over buildings, influence, and money, the politics of the day ultimately had little effect on the growth of the Temple District into what it was meant to be. The Phoenix worked closely with the Unicorn Clan to arrange the shipment of many copies of important texts from their vast libraries in the Empire. With the financial assistance of the Crane, the Phoenix were able to almost single-handedly stock the libraries and temples of the Second City with a vast array of scholarly and holy texts.





The Dragon were in a unique position to aid the Phoenix in this endeavor, since they could call on the samurai of the Spider Clan to guard and escort any texts brought on the long journey from the Empire. Many Phoenix felt uncomfortable with this help at first, but they eventually agreed that if the Spider were going to exist at all, they might as well be put to good use. Kitsuki-trained scholars and eager Tamori shugenja helped seek out and understand the deeper mysteries of the magical and natural world around them, which the Phoenix scribes and shugenja assisted with as well. Though the Brotherhood of Shinsei sent representatives to the Second City to provide monks and teachers in these new temples, it was under the watchful eyes of Mirumoto swordsmen, Shiba guards, Togashi *ise zumi*, and Asako warrior-monks that those of the Brotherhood stayed safe. Many believe the strong collaboration between these two clans in this matter helped to erase the lingering resentment from the defection of the Agasha family and the subsequent war almost two generations ago, although whether this is true in the long term remains to be seen. For now, though, even the Tamori – still quick to show their resentment of the Phoenix – seem less willing to hang on to the old feud in this new place.

Due to the characters of its primary designers, the Temple District is marked by a great temple in the center, along with several large libraries that stand out boldly against the rest of the city. These structures are built to be sturdy, seemingly formidable enough to withstand anything the natural elements might throw at them – a wise precaution in a strange land with a very different climate from the Empire. Much like its most prominent buildings, the Temple District as a whole is built in an expansive manner, in contrast to the tight constraint of the Imperial District. Most buildings have a decent amount of space between them, and there are a great many open-air pavilions and shrines scattered about alongside the many private residences. This is due to both the wish of the designers to make the area feel open and serene as well as the possible need to add further buildings later on without expanding the city's border still further.

Rokugani of all stripes are welcome here, though the District population is dominated by the samurai who make their homes here and the monks and scholars who spend so much time here they could call the District home as well. Interestingly, this is the only part of the city where the Ivinda, the surviving *gaijin* of the Ivory Kingdoms, are treated with at least a modicum of real respect and interest





– the curious scholars and librarians who dominate this District are eager to converse with these men and women and learn whatever they can. However, this interest is not without controversy, since the more traditional residents believe that allowing such foreigners so close to the District's sacred temples and shrines is a possible offense against the Fortunes. Thus the citizens of the former Ivory Kingdoms must walk something of a social tightrope here.

While violence is a problem in some parts of the Second City, incidents in the Temple District are almost completely unheard of. Many see this area as “neutral ground” for conflicts and feuds, due to both the profusion of holy sites and also the presence of so many monks and shugenja in this area. Elsewhere in the city a brawl over a misspoken word could be ignored or moderately punished as required, but in this area such an incident could easily harm one of the District's pious residents, in which case the offending samurai would have a great deal more to answer for.

Relations to Other Districts

Unlike the Second City's other Districts, the Temple District does not really do anything for its neighbors. It does not host important meetings (at least not officially), it does not supply labor or raw materials, nor does it host entertainments. It is also the only District that sits on the eastern side of the city, physically separating it from the others. Because of this separation from the bustling trade and constant political turmoil of the other Districts, it is sometimes called the Third City or Temple City.

The Imperial District

Many significant political and military figures from the Imperial District either visit the Temple District regularly or make their homes there. Almost everyone important either lives in one of these two Districts or spends a lot of time in one or the other. This concentrated power and influence often means that to the highest echelons of powerful samurai these two Districts are practically one and the same. Thus, despite the best attempts of the monks and administrators to make this a place solely of spiritual and scholarly concern, political wrangling does often leak into the Temple District. It is common for high-ranking individuals to hold important official meetings in the Imperial District... and then quietly follow up with less formal ones in the Temple District among its tranquil gardens and shrines. Needless to say, the monks, shugenja, and other samurai who use the District for its true religious and scholarly purposes have mixed feelings about this state of affairs. On the one hand, they appreciate that it often leads to cooler heads and wiser minds at important discussions. Brotherhood monks sometimes comment that

the District imparts something of an inescapable sense of unity; amidst the barely-settled foreign world of the Colonies, traditional temples and libraries serve as a stark reminder of what the Rokugani have in common, making it easier for them to set aside their differences. On the other hand, the intrusion of politics into the Second City cannot help but weaken its spiritual purity. All too commonly, political dispute disturbs the harmony of the district as rivals exchange quiet but nonetheless bitter words.

The Military District

The Military District is the only District to share a direct border with the Temple District, and this has led to a somewhat unusual relationship between the monks, shugenja, and scholars of the District and the soldiers who serve nearby. Bushi who cannot afford their own home elsewhere in the Second City are usually quartered in the Military District barracks, and those who hail from schools and clans that emphasize piety and study will often request to serve in barracks near the Temple District. This request is almost always granted, since doing so improves morale, but the city's administrators also recognize a secondary benefit: if the Temple District were ever attacked, it will be protected by warriors who most value what it has to offer.

Because the soldiers of the Empire are still uncovering the secrets of the former Ivory Kingdoms, returning scouts and patrols sometimes come back to the Second City with unknown afflictions, of mundane or even supernatural nature. Poisons, diseases, and even allergies must be identified and countered in addition to the occasional curses and even demonic possessions by malign or confused spirits. All of this means there is a considerable degree of traffic and mutual benefit between the Temple District and the Military District. And since the Military District controls the main entrance from the rest of the city to the Temple District, having a poor reputation in either part of the city may result in an inability to visit the Temple District at all.

The Artisan District

Among the artists and craftsmen of the Second City, there is a constant worry that haunts every action they take in their profession – much like the soldiers of the city, they face constant dangers from a local environment they have yet to fully understand. More than one lovely statue has been carved from local rock, more than one painting made with the dye of an exotic local flower, only to cause an unexpected outbreak of illness or even a curse from some native spirit. Thus, while most artists consider themselves as refined and pious persons who should visit the Temple District regularly, here they have an additional motivation, to seek the help of the scholars here in researching local products and the help of priests in dealing with unexpected problems.

The scholars of the Temple District – usually the Dragon and the Crane – have made a significant effort to catalogue the plants, animals, and other mundane objects of the Colonies, and these records are made available for all to



consult. More supernatural concerns, such as certain trees possibly being inhabited by trickster beings, are studied as well, but access to such knowledge is more limited and usually requires consultation with the Phoenix. After all, knowing how to enslave a foreign demon with a few herbs and weeds is not exactly the sort of information that needs to be common.

Of course, the Artisan and Temple Districts also maintain a close relationship for more practical reasons: the many carvings, decorations, and supplies needed by the temples and shrines in the area. Thus there is a modest but steady flow of commerce and traffic between these two parts of the city.

The Merchant District

When the Temple District was planned, the official reason for its placement on the eastern edge of the established city was due to the relative safety and defensibility of that position. What was not so commonly admitted is that several important samurai firmly asked to place it as far away from the coarse and vulgar Merchant District as possible. Samurai in general find commercial interactions offensive but necessary, but those who dedicate themselves to the kami, the Fortunes, and scholarly study are even less accepting of it. Many of the inhabitants of the Temple District view the Merchant District as a concentrated zone of sin and vice – if not as bad as Ryoko Owari in depravity, than at least its equal in brazen displays of things that should be below a samurai's station.

Of course, in reality a great many of the nobles who reside in the Temple District make regular visits to the Merchant District, driven by political or commercial necessity. Of course, they prefer not to be seen doing so whenever possible, lest their reputation as among the most pious of samurai be weakened.

The monks and shugenja of the Temple District do their best not to judge the commoners who work in the Merchant District, recognizing these folk are serving the greater Empire in their own way. However, they do make note of those samurai who make a habit of spending too much time in the Merchant District.

The Peasant District

The Brotherhood of Shinsei of course is closely associated with the lower castes, and many shugenja also have more tolerance and patience with peasants than the typical bushi or nobleman. Thus, visitors between these two Districts are common. Peasants are welcomed in the Temple District and are even allowed in several of the libraries maintained by the more open-minded clans, most notably the Unicorn and Dragon. Peasant visitors are usually supervised and assisted by Brotherhood monks (most peasants are illiterate, after all). To be sure, there are plenty of traditionalists in the Second City who frown on this mingling between the castes, but peasant visitors to the libraries are rare enough that these incidents can usually be overlooked. Whether this will remain true in the future, especially if such peasant visits become more common, remains to be seen.

Important Personages

The majority of the NPCs in the Second City are depicted in the second book of this boxed set, *Second City: The People*. However, a few of the more prominent specific residents of the Temple District are presented here to enhance the GM's understanding of the region.

ISAWA SHUNSUKO TROUBLED RESEARCHER

Ever since she was a child, Isawa Shunsuko's only wish was to see the strange and exotic Colonies so far from the Empire. She was born a talented shugenja and realized early in life that the Phoenix sent few of their priests to the new frontier, partly due to the dangers found there and partly due to simple unease about that strange and foreign place, but Shunsuko was determined to go and studied dutifully in hope of earning her superiors' approval. In her heart, she always knew she would see the vast open sea and the deep jungles of that exotic land, and she trusted in the Fortunes to deliver her there.

It is difficult to say whether her interest in cursed artifacts and their history was born from her fascination with the Colonies or as a separate interest, but after her gempukku she quickly distinguished herself in this field of study. For a time the Inquisitors monitored her carefully, as the Phoenix histories are rife with aspiring shugenja who were slowly and silently corrupted by such studies. After a couple of years, though, it was clear the joyful young woman's interest was purely benign, and she showed great talent for understanding not only the malign spirits in these items but also discovering how to quiet them. At the request of her sensei, Shunsuko spent a season among the Kuni, who believed her talents and interest could be



of mutual benefit to the two schools. It was in the Crab lands that another surprising facet of the young woman's personality emerged – her unflappable calm in the face of terrible supernatural threats. At first the Kuni believed her demeanor showed she did not have proper respect for the deadly forces she was dealing with. Over time, after she had dealt efficiently and quickly with several emergencies that tested the resolve of even seasoned witch hunters, they acknowledged she was simply perfectly suited to the task.

A year after Shunsuko returned to the Phoenix lands, her superiors announced she was being assigned to work with the shugenja in the Second City – the capital city of the Colonies. Her skill and knowledge would prove invaluable to the priests and scholars there who regularly had to face unknown supernatural phenomena. The jungles and ruins of the former Ivory Kingdoms seemed practically littered with cursed items, and she would be at the forefront of those working to study them and contain their damage. Shunsuko's heart soared at the news – just as she had imagined, her devotion and hard work had paid off.

She could never have been prepared for the life she found there, though.

For the first year, things were exactly as she had dreamed. She saw the beautiful jungles of the area, and was able to visit the coast once – but that was it. Her work completely consumed her time over the seasons, and it is now quite rare for her to be able to even leave the Temple District, let alone to explore and enjoy the new world she calls home. Her heart aches to explore the jungles and see the sea once more, and her only comfort comes from occasional visits to the Shinano River to pick up new shipments of artifacts from elsewhere in the Colonies.

More recently, Shunsuko has begun to suspect that the constant strain of dealing with one supernatural emergency after another has frayed her nerves and possibly even affected her mind. Outwardly she is still the same cheerful woman she always has been, if perhaps a bit quieter, but she finds it increasingly difficult to truly relax. It may be her lack of contact with her beloved water kami of the sea that has affected her, but she suspects it may be something else entirely. Nothing supernatural, she thinks, but instead a simple mundane paranoia has slowly begun to take hold of her – after three years of seeing harm come from simple objects day after day, it has become difficult for her to see anything but danger.

ISAWA SHUNSUKO, TROUBLED RESEARCHER

AIR: 2 EARTH: 4 FIRE: 2 WATER: 4 VOID: 3

AWARENESS: 3 WILLPOWER: 5 INTELLIGENCE: 4

Honor: 7.2

Status: 2.0

Glory: 4.3

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 3 (Water Affinity)

Skills: Calligraphy (Ciper) 5, Investigation 4, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms 4, Lore: Theology 4, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Medicine 3, Meditation 5, Spellcraft 7.

Spells: As an influential researcher for the Phoenix in the Colonies, Shunsuko has the authority to request nearly any spell that has to deal with her duties of cleansing, learning, defense, and protection.

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Compulsion (Visit large bodies of water)

TOGASHI OSAWA

AGED IDEALIST

Togashi Osawa has seen a great deal in his lifetime. The rise and death of a dynasty, the birth of another, and even the fall of the Sun and Moon themselves. He has seen his Empire assaulted from all sides and from within. He has seen noble men and women corrupted by dark forces or by their own desires, and he has seen seemingly irredeemable figures turn their lives back toward the righteous and honorable path. To Osawa, life has taught again and again the lesson he has always held dearest in his heart, the first lessons of Air: the world is not immutable, and change blows on the wind constantly, toppling those who cannot understand.

After surviving the War of Dark Fire and the invasion of the Destroyer army, Osawa believed he and the Empire had seen more than enough pain and strife, and hoped that his generation could pass down lessons of peace and





tranquility to its successors. After all, the next generation would grow up as witnesses to the destruction all these wars had brought. How could they ignore such a stark example? While he knew smaller conflicts would always be part of Rokugan's history, he was completely shattered by a declaration of war between the Scorpion and Phoenix – two clans who both had relatively close relations to his own Dragon Clan. The ensuing carnage – especially after the Crab entered the conflict – affected Osawa deeply. Though the conflict was mercifully somewhat brief, the fact that the Phoenix could be roused to war in such a manner made the aging monk realize the peace he wished for could not simply be bought through suffering. It had to be cultivated and maintained, like a flower. Those who had witnessed the horrors of war were like fertile land to the seed of peace, but that did not ensure its growth.

When the Empress declared the reviled Spider Clan the responsibility of the Dragon, Osawa made a personal resolution to cultivate the peace he knew his Empire so desperately needed. The Spider Clan represented a perfect opportunity – reduced to such thin numbers, even men and women such as they might be willing to listen to his message. As the arrangement between the Spider and Dragon began to develop, Osawa volunteered for any task that would put him shoulder to shoulder with the people he saw as his wayward brothers. The warriors of the Spider respected the old tattooed man's skill and strength, but for a time it seemed his words were falling on deaf ears. Year after year, though, Osawa wore away at their rejection of his concepts, much as the wind wears away the mountainside. Slowly, several of the Spider monks began to speak with him not out of politeness but from real interest. Power comes in many forms, he taught them, but the simple and brazen application of it is only the easiest and weakest form. Discipline, not wrath, he said. And they began to listen.

After the Second City's Temple District was established, the Dragon called for more monks to transfer to the area, both to improve the city's spiritual tone and to

help keep an eye on the Spider on the Colonies' frontier. Osawa volunteered readily, speaking not only for himself but for the students he had taken on as well. Without really trying, he had slowly transitioned from warrior to respected sensei – respected by those whom the Empire thought could not be taught true devotion.

Now, Togashi Osawa spends a great deal of his time in the Temple District's training grounds, moving between his students in the Spider, other members of the Spider who have not yet embraced his message, and his friends among the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. He does what he can to speak with the Phoenix about his students and charges, though many Phoenix reject his notions as hopeless. Others, however, have begun to listen, especially among the Asako henshin, who share training grounds with the Togashi. While none of the Phoenix have truly accepted the Spider, he has made great progress in fostering a better understanding.

TOGASHI OSAWA, AGED IDEALIST

AIR: 5 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 4 WATER: 3 VOID: 4

STRENGTH: 5

Honor: 6.7

Status: 3.0

Glory: 5.6

School/Rank: Togashi Ise Zumi 5

Skills: Athletics 7, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 5, Craft: Tattooing 3, Jiujutsu 8, Lore: History 5, Lore: Spider Clan 2, Meditation 7, Sincerity 3.

Tattoos: Bamboo, Crane, Hawk, Storm, Void, Wind

Advantages: Higher Purpose (teach peace)

Disadvantages: Idealistic

MAHATSU

RONIN PRODIGY

The man called Mahatsu spent forty years as a ronin, doing his best to avoid trouble with the various shugenja orders of the clans and to learn more about his spiritual gifts.

He never knew his mother or father, only that one spring he was given as an orphan to a temple of the Brotherhood in Unicorn lands. He was raised by them until he was fifteen years old. By that time, his curiosity about the wider Empire and its constant conflicts had gotten the better of his sense of debt to the monks, and he simply left. He didn't bother slipping away in the middle of the night or faking his own demise – Mahatsu was not any good at deception as a child, and he hasn't gotten any better since.

It didn't take long for the young ronin to realize the advantages he had left behind far outweighed what he had gained by claiming his independence.





However, what he lacked in deceit he more than made up for in stubborn self-reliance, so the idea of returning to the monastery never crossed his mind. He took his meager skills as a shugenja and did what he could to earn money to feed and shelter himself. Mahatsu learned the harsher lessons quickly, such as when he encountered a Scorpion bushi who required the skills of a shugenja and was willing to pay enough that he wouldn't have to worry about money for some time. It never occurred to him to ask why the samurai was being so generous for such a simple task; only later he would learn that the divination he had been paid to perform was effectively spying – and he had been paid in Crab coinage.

Mahatsu was taken into custody by a local magistrate and held in house arrest while “certain things” were investigated further. Realizing he was completely doomed, he prayed to the spirits of Air for deliverance, and found himself invisible to mortal eyes. Minutes later, the young man escaped unseen into the light of day.

For several years after that incident, Mahatsu's history read like a man cursed by the Fortunes. His trusting nature got the better of him several times, leading him to be enlisted by two bandit gangs, a maho-tsukai, and a member of the Kolat (which he is to this day unaware of). Only gradually did he become more wary of who he worked with. Other than this hard-won wisdom, the only benefit Mahatsu gained from these years was that he learned to adapt his magical talents in new and interesting ways. When he was 24, he finally caught the attention of a wandering Iuchi priest, who took him in as a student and assistant. Iuchi Taru never promised the ronin fealty, but he was a kind and honest employer who had no ulterior motives and was willing to give Mahatsu some of the training he lacked.

Many years later, Taru passed on. After being the Iuchi's companion and friend for twenty years, Mahatsu had earned some regard and welcome among the Unicorn. The Iuchi school often called upon him to assist their teachers in minor tasks, always remarking that the ronin had learned an adaptability that few shugenja possessed. However, Taru's death left Mahatsu in an awkward situation. He was too old to be taken on as a student or assistant of another shugenja, and he had performed no great service that might have earned him fealty.

Fortunately, the problem was solved when several senior Iuchi shugenja were assigned to travel to the Second City to study the myriad gaijin artifacts and strange magical practices of the few living citizens of the former Ivory Kingdoms. Mahatsu was offered a position in this expedition as a retainer, and the Iuchi vouched for his keen mind and affinity for a wide variety of magics. The ronin was thus able to take a position that would satisfy three of his desires: travel, security, and more knowledge.

Mahatsu's time in the Second City has been everything he imagined it might be and more. Much, much more.



He has surprised both himself and his employers with his natural understanding of several recovered items of magical power, as well as his ability to commune with and even command the native magical forces in the region. Remembering his past experiences of letting his trust get him into danger, Mahatsu has kept a terrible secret to himself – he is much more adept with these foreign powers than he lets on. What he shows the Iuchi and others is but a fraction of what he can do with the trinkets, spells, and spirits in the conquered lands.

Mahatsu is unsure why these arts come so much more naturally to him than to others, but every time he wraps his hands comfortably around foreign books and weapons, he wonders... who were his parents?

MAHATSU, RONIN PRODIGY

AIR: 4 EARTH: 5 FIRE: 4 WATER: 5 VOID: 4

Honor: 4.1 Status: 1.0 Glory: 3.1

Insight Rank: 6

Skills: Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 5, Defense 5, Games 3, Horsemanship 3, Lore: Theology 6, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms 4, Medicine 3, Meditation 7, Spellcraft 7, Staves 5.

Spells: Technically, Mahatsu owns very few spell scrolls of his own, but due to his connections among the Iuchi, he can get his hands on spells he needs with some time and effort. His spells vary based on the task he is performing, and due to his lowly status he is not allowed to keep any of the Iuchi family's property for long.

Advantages: Forbidden Knowledge (Gaijin Magic), Great Destiny, Multiple Schools

Disadvantages: Obligation (Iuchi family), Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

Location Guide

The Temple District's dominating feature is the large, multi-building temple to the Seven Fortunes that lies at its center. However, there are literally scores of smaller shrines and lesser temples scattered throughout the District, along with many libraries and hundreds of private residences. The more prominent locations are listed here:

Fukurokujin's Library

To many, the land of the former Ivory Kingdoms represents a frontier of learning and exploration never before known by the Empire. Foreign animals, exotic plants, new minerals, subtle magics, and supernatural entities of all kinds are to be found here. When the Empress decreed these lands would be conquered and taken for the Empire, the Spider, Mantis, and Unicorn quickly undertook the task of confronting these challenges, assessing their potential military dangers, and then overrunning or ignoring them.

The Phoenix Clan has undertaken its own more limited contribution to this effort. The Phoenix believe that with the Second City established and a modicum of civilization reaching the remote jungles, it is high time for the strange relics and powers of this foreign land to be studied, judged, and catalogued. The clan sent some of their finest Isawa researchers, Asako scribes, and Agasha alchemists

to establish a library that would specialize in the various mysteries of the Colonies. This library was built to be one of the larger structures in the District, and is located near the district center, close to the main temple complex.

Fukurokujin's Library was initially considered a holding of the Phoenix Clan, and early in its history this led to considerable tensions. The Phoenix swiftly claimed all that was brought to the library – new artifacts, unusual phenomena, specimens of flora and fauna. Whether intentionally or not, the Phoenix created something of a monopoly on information that would actually be valuable to all members of the Colonies.

The autonomy of the Phoenix Clan in this matter has become something of a lightning rod for many other similar political issues in the Colonies. How much authority did any one clan have in the Second City? Did the Phoenix have a right to keep all of this information to themselves in a city shared by all the different clans? The Governor at the time, Ikoma Karatsu, considered the matter carefully. He knew he would likely create a great enemy in the Phoenix if he ordered the shugenja to share their information, but if he did not he would leave many Rokugani ignorant of potentially life-saving information. Meanwhile, within the Phoenix Clan itself a debate raged in both in the Second City and back in the Empire on how to handle the issue. Eventually, the Governor's problem resolved itself when the Phoenix's desire for secrecy in such issues was defeated by their devotion to the Empire as a whole. The Elemental Masters decreed that the work being done in Fukurokujin's Library was for the benefit of all Rokugani attempting to settle the wild lands for the Empress, and Shiba Tsukimi, the Clan Champion, formally announced that the Library and its contents were to be made a gift to the Empress through her servant, the Governor.

Since that time, although the Library has remained largely in control of the Phoenix, all have been welcome to enter, conduct research, or add to the scrolls as needed – with proper authorization, of course. Since the Phoenix allow all but the most ridiculous requests without incident, the previous Governor was content to allow them to continue as they saw fit. Whether the new Governor continues to allow them such freedom or will bring them under tighter Imperial control remains to be seen.



Mirumoto Nasuo's Laboratory

Near the far eastern edge of the Temple District's outer border is a building that looks like it could either be a large but modest private holding or perhaps a somewhat bland temple. In truth, it is something of both, as it is the personal residence of Mirumoto Nasuo and the place where he conducts the bizarre and sometimes dangerous rituals of Tamori alchemical magic.

Nasuo himself is seen as an eccentric but likable individual by those who meet him, an impression which belies the repeated tragedies he has endured. Nasuo was born a Kuni, and fostered early in his life to the Tamori shugenja school as part of an ongoing exchange program between the two houses. The young man excelled in his studies, but when the Kaiu Wall was breached by Kali-ma's Destroyers, he returned to his clan of birth and served them in the Destroyer War, where he saw many of his family and friends slain. When peace finally came, he was asked to marry into the Dragon Clan to secure further alliances.

Nasuo was blessed with a strong son who eventually joined the Togashi order. Some time after his son came of age, however, Nasuo's wife was killed during an assassination attempt on him by a group of cultists loyal to the memory of Kali-ma. Having lost everything of meaning except his studies, he threw himself into his work, becoming one of the foremost masters of the Tamori alchemical art. Eventually he requested leave to retire to the Second City, where he might continue his work far from any reminders of his past losses.

Word spread quickly about the man's arrival in the city, and many Dragon shugenja and others interested in the Tamori arts came to speak with him or seek his services as a teacher. Nasuo has come to see his new students as the grandchildren he will never have, and they have renewed his passion for alchemy and for life itself, especially here among the exotic new ingredients to be found in the Colonies. His residence has become a sort of unofficial dojo and is constantly emitting explosive noises of varying degrees. At one point, Nasuo had to petition the Governor for the labor to have several peasants come lift his roof and put it back on the structure. Other residents of the District have learned to keep a safe distance from the laboratory, and several Crane nobles – whether out of awe for the man's thirst for knowledge, or simple self-preservation – have graciously donated the funds to put a garden with high thick walls around the building.

The aging Dragon makes his home open to all who come seeking knowledge, though he does not betray the secrets his clan would rather he keep. He will discuss the arts of magic and alchemy at length with any who wish to hear, but he does not prattle to those who do not seem interested. Since he is so welcoming, it is common to even see Phoenix visitors in his home despite his association with the prickly Tamori family.

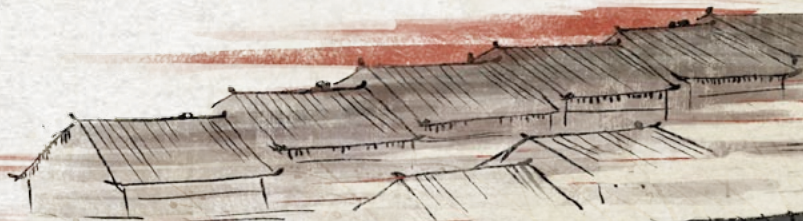
The Imperial Library of the Second City

A building second in size within the District only to the great Temple of the Seven Fortunes, the Imperial Library is the result of several years of cooperation between the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. The Library houses a vast array of scrolls on both spiritual and mundane topics. The selection would be considered fairly standard for any large library in the Empire, but in the remote Colonies this Library often has the only available copy of documents and knowledge that would be in every minor city in Rokugan.

Before the Second City Library was even established, the Dragon and Phoenix prepared a massive coordinated effort to stock it. Both clans created copies of hundreds of texts and scrolls to be moved to the Second City. Asako scribes worked alongside Kitsuki researchers to ensure the reproductions were accurate, and the Tamori even grudgingly accepted a command to assist the Isawa and Agasha in preparing scrolls of their less sensitive knowledge as well. The work took seven years to complete, and only a week after it was finished, word reached the Empire that a Temple District has been established in the Second City. The Phoenix, who had begun the work only on the word of several important figures within the Dragon, wondered if more than blind fate was at work.

The Library is technically an Imperial holding, administered by the Governor's functionaries, but the Kitsuki and Asako families handle most of the day-to-day management of the facility. Other families with a strong association with the arts of writing and research, such as the Ikoma and Shosuro, also tend to have an ongoing presence here, usually in the form of two or three historians or scribes.

While the scholars here have a constant duty of duplicating new works for addition to the shelves (especially those from the nearby Fukurokujin's Library deemed safe for public dissemination), their greatest duty is simply to keep the vast amount of knowledge here properly organized, as well as requesting new documents to fill out the holes in the Library's contents. This usually involves attempting to ascertain what documents would be most helpful and then sending requests back to the Empire. These requests are usually handled by the Dragon and Phoenix, who in turn attempt to get copies of the appropriate documents and ship them back to the Second City. Naturally, few samurai are willing to risk the original copies of their scrolls and histories by sending them to the Colonies, but a few originals have arrived from time to time.





Appointments to the Imperial Library hold a great deal of influence and prestige, since the building represents the only storehouse of reliable information in the Colonies. Being able to grant or deny access to such things is not an inconsiderable power, and while the Phoenix, Dragon, and Imperials do their best to avoid situations where such authority can be abused, they cannot entirely prevent such.

The Temple of the Rising Dragon

This temple, located in a secluded corner of the District, is the Second City's home for the monks of the Dragon Clan's Togashi tattooed order. Peppered with gardens and shrines, the sprawling temple serves the monks as a place for both training and quiet reflection. The small dojo is used by both the Togashi and the Mirumoto to practice their kata and fighting arts. A few of the Tamori attend the temple as well, supplying religious and scholarly support.

The serenity of the temple is essential to the Togashi's study and pursuit of enlightenment, but it has also become an asset to the clan; high-ranking courtiers from other factions often come here to ask the monks for advice in an atmosphere free of the Second City's bustle. Since few outsiders can be admitted to this temple without an appointment, this has made it a rare favor which the Dragon courtiers use when they have need of political support.

The Imperial Scrivener

The Imperial Library compiles the records of the known world for access in the Second City, and the scholars at Fukurokujin's Library explore the deep unknown dangers of the Colonies, but it is here at the Imperial Scrivener that new information is actually written down and reviewed by the watchful eye of the Otomo.

Very early in the settling of the former Ivory Kingdoms, when the Mantis returned from the first hazardous explorations that discovered the fate of that fallen nation, many among the Imperial families were concerned about certain bits of information they brought back. Powerful foreign gods that didn't seem to answer to the Heavens? Trickster spirits from beyond Rokugan's borders that shrugged off the power of a shugenja as if it were nothing but a light breeze? While there was little point in denying these things existed, it quickly became evident that without the proper context, this new knowledge could shake the people's faith in the Empress and the Heavens. The Otomo immediately decided they would take on the responsibility of properly filtering this information so the things that were deemed necessary (or harmless) for public consumption would be allowed to spread while more dangerous knowledge would be regulated tightly until it could be properly explained.

Few in the Second City are aware of the extent of the Otomo family's influence in the Imperial Scrivener's Office. They believe the Imperials are there as a natural

representation of the Throne and think nothing of it. The Phoenix and Dragon, due to their influence in the district, do know the whole situation and have distinctly mixed feelings about the arrangement. They understand the importance of what is being done here, but don't often see eye-to-eye with the Otomo on just what should be made public or not. Otomo Daishi, the senior Imperial Scrivener in the city, is careful to ensure the Phoenix and Dragon disagree with each other as much or more than they disagree with him. He realizes if several clans were to petition the Empress in complaint at his policies, it would not only erode his authority but also create a political struggle that would hold up the dissemination of any new information, no matter how harmless, about the new lands.

The Scrivener's office is located near the Imperial Library but somewhat out of sight for those who approach the District's center from the usual entrance points in the east and west. Daishi himself is often at the building, constantly burying himself in scrolls and texts he wishes to review personally. He is usually friendly to those who have legitimate business or concerns with him, but wastes no time concluding his talks with those he believes are currying favor or otherwise wasting his time.

The Training Grounds

Some time after the Temple District was established and mostly completed, an unforeseen consequence of the Dragon and Phoenix presence there began to show itself. Members of the Togashi and Asako monastic orders joined their kin in the Second City for various reasons but found they had few places to maintain their training. At first they attempted to make use of the various facilities in the Military District, but this met with only mixed success. The bushi of the area were welcoming enough and shared the space as best as they could, but the religious and philosophical aspects of the monks' training was a poor fit for the martial nature of the District's primary inhabitants. It didn't help matters that some of the monks made a point of trying to share their pacifistic views with their fellow Rokugani, a practice that soon wore on even the most patient bushi.

Eventually, Governor Ikoma Karatsu asked the monks to instead conduct their practice outside the Temple District's walls. While the monks themselves agreed quickly enough to this condition, the political representatives of the clans in question saw an insult. Beyond the implication that these men and women were somehow unwelcome in the city, the safety concerns were tremendous. The Asako and Togashi were able to defend themselves, of course, but to have to literally fight for a space to practice seemed absurd. Finally, an enterprising Mantis merchant came up with a solution. He agreed to donate his personal home, which occupied a sizable amount of space in the Temple District. Of course, this generous act meant the Mantis' neighbor, a Lion politician he happened to despise, was now living right next to a noisy and well-populated training ground. This earned the Mantis considerable favor among the Phoenix and Dragon – an unusual situation that was not lost on two clans who had a poor overall history with the Mantis.



Since that time, the Training Grounds have been the primary home of the two clan monastic orders in the Colonies, as well as an unofficial point of contact for warrior monks from the Brotherhood who arrive in the Second City.

On occasion, the monks of the Spider also visit this place, which always leads to tense, unpredictable, and often violent events. The Order of the Spider and its kindred group the Order of Venom have become something of a focal point of discussion and debate between the Togashi and Asako here, who often mix discussion and debate with their physical sparring. (Like the martial arts practice itself, this discussion is completely amicable but not without its more heated moments.) The two orders disagree about the Spider and their place in the Empire, with the Togashi seeing great potential while the Asako believe they are merely the Empress' war dogs and nothing more. To the Asako this is not an insult, merely an accurate description of their nature and proper place in the Celestial Order. Only time will tell which viewpoint is ultimately correct, but it is a riddle both sects enjoy trying to unravel.

The Seppun Temple

One of the most important factors addressed by the Temple District's construction was a strengthening of a more traditional Rokugani cultural presence in the city and the Colonies as a whole. To that end, a small order of Seppun shugenja were assigned the task of establishing a temple and dojo in the District to help bring the blessings of the Heavens and the Empress on her faraway subjects. The Seppun order here is small, numbering only a half-dozen or so at any given time. Currently they are led by an aging, warm-natured priestess named Seppun Taiyiko.

Officially, the priests here hold no official appointments or special authority in the city. However, they are generally seen as the highest spiritual authorities in the Second City, and they lead many of the city's public ceremonies and

festivals. Members of the temple are often called upon to settle disputes between clan shugenja, and the previous Governor relied greatly on Taiyiko's counsel before he was assassinated. The Temple is technically open to all visitors, but most samurai feel that only the most important circumstances are worth the attention of the Seppun. If the shugenja here were to receive a peasant visitor, they would not turn such a person away... but this has never happened yet.

What few are aware of is that the mission of the Seppun here is not merely one of goodwill and benevolence. The Empress in her wisdom realized that the various shugenja families of the Empire would send many representatives to the Colonies trained in the arts of combating supernatural threats and dark powers. However, with the Second City and much of the Colonies technically outside the control of any particular clan, matters of politics and authority would easily get in the way of actually defending the Empire's citizens from these dangers. Accordingly, the Seppun are here to provide a spiritual back-stop in the event that the clan shugenja in the Colonies fail to deal with any threat.

Every Seppun shugenja is of course well-versed in protective magic on a basic level. Seppun Taiyiko is not supremely proficient or powerful in this regard; she is certainly a potent shugenja due to her age and experience, but her true strength lies in understanding people's strengths and getting them to work together. This made her the perfect candidate for the Seppun's true purpose here. She is able to quickly, politely, and efficiently delegate matters to the clans based on each shugenja's skills, and has had great success in doing so without causing animosity between anyone.

Taiyiko is well advanced in age, and she feels her mortality in her bones. It won't be long before she must appoint a successor. She has yet to find one with her talents in leadership, but she remains hopeful.





1 Tsukiko's Blessings

2 Kairu's Armors and Helments

3 Forests' Bounty

4 Red Vine Sake House

5 Tavern of the North Wind

6 Fortunes and Fortunes

7 Stranger's Inn

8 Teas of Rokugan

THE MERCHANT DISTRICT

Those who leave the Military District to the west are greeted by a cacophony of noise, the chatter of hundreds of voices, along with a mixture of odors ranging from the pleasant to the disgusting and a discordant array of structures, with beautiful houses sitting next to crude huts and even tents. This is the Merchant District of the Second City, a place which is never quiet at any time of day or night throughout the year. Indeed, the lack of a harsh winter season in the Colonies encourages trade and commerce to continue year-round without interruption. As the residents say, there is always, always more business to be done.

The creation of the Second City was an unprecedented event in Rokugani history: in less than thirty years, a remote wilderness region was transformed into a major city and the capital for a region nearly as large as the Empire itself. The effort represented the largest transfer of resources in the memory of Rokugan, dwarfing even such legendary projects as the initial construction of the Kaiu Wall. The vast quantities of food, construction materials, animals, and even servants which had to be organized and moved strained the administrative skills of the Empire to the breaking point. Thus it is not surprising that the Empire's often-despised merchants were instrumental to the Second City's survival and function from the day of its founding, and their influence has only grown since. Of course, few samurai openly acknowledge this even in the Colonies, but the ongoing needs of the city combined with the samurai class' own growing taste for the exotic artifacts and curios of the defunct Ivory Kingdoms have

not only strengthened the merchants' position but also drawn them closer to the samurai caste. A great many Second City samurai are merchant patrons and some of them even live in the Merchant District; so long as they maintain their own dignity properly, their occupation does not draw nearly as much stigma as it would in mainland Rokugan. Thus while the Merchant District is predominantly inhabited by heimin, there are samurai living there.

Commercial districts in Rokugani cities are not known as models of organization, but the Second City's Merchant District brings this disorganization to a new level – in contrast to the careful planning of the city's more respectable Districts. While the district does have a low wall that delineates its outer edge, it did not benefit from any initial concerted planning. The richest merchants simply built their houses and cleared roads to connect themselves to key partners and resources elsewhere in the city, the routes criss-crossing almost at random. On top of this, a significant percentage of the local population is transient, traveling from Rokugan or from other settlements in the Colonies to sell their wares, buy supplies, and then move on – perhaps after spending some time enjoying the city's amusements and distractions. While many inns and stables have been built in the District to serve their needs, many visitors still chose to simply pitch tents, particularly the poorest merchants and laborers. The result is a chaotic ever-changing landscape which only the District natives can navigate without trouble.





Of course, the District still has plenty of recognizable features. It borders the formidable walls of the Military District to the east and straddles the main road which passes from the city's core to the Shinano River to the west, so these features serve as handy landmarks for navigating the Merchant District's twisting secondary streets. Moreover, the parts of the District closer to the Military District are usually kept clean and free of temporary settlers, so as to avoid offending the lords of the city. The buildings close to the walls are also pleasantly decorated to look inviting to samurai. In contrast to the densely-packed Imperial District, most buildings in the Merchant District are only single-story structures, both to avoid trying to look as important as noble residences and to keep the Military District wall's field of view clear over the whole city. Although some of the wealthier merchant residences in the Merchant District are quite large, they tend to sprawl horizontally rather than adding second or third floors. While they are still smaller than the Imperial District's fine dwellings, they are impressive for heimin abodes, and many samurai mistakenly believe they are the houses of minor lords.

Despite the absence of tall buildings, the Merchant District is very heavily populated, with many crowded tenements and close-packed neighborhoods. Still, the living conditions overall are good – the region's prosperity has brought a certain level of comfort to even the average peddler, and most houses are of decent quality. The streets are another matter: eternally crowded to bursting with visitors and workers. Only a few main roads are large enough for carts to pass easily, and even these are always extremely slow to traverse. Consequently, many caravans from outside the city will unpack in the outer parts of the District, where many merchants have large well-staffed warehouses and stables. Traffic within the District is almost all on foot, and the dense crowds are very off-putting to samurai, who

dislike being forced to touch others – especially heimin. The busier streets are lined with small restaurants and tea-houses, open onto the streets and with stools and benches for customers, and this gives the streets a vibrant and cheerful tone. Activity declines only moderately at night, and lanterns are usually kept lit at all hours, adding another layer of light and color to the District's life. Although geisha houses and other such entertainments are found only in the neighboring Artisan District, the Merchant District nonetheless acquires a more festive air at night.

The conditions for transient inhabitants are not as pleasant as for the permanent residents, but they are not so bad as might be expected. The tents and huts which fill all of the District's extra space are usually of reasonable quality and there are public bathhouses in several places to see to visitors' hygiene. A merchant in one of these temporary residences can enjoy a fairly comfortable life, albeit one not too regarding for space. No one really knows how much of the District population lives in these temporary facilities, although it is commonly speculated that as much as half the District at any given time is not from the city itself. Whether it is true or not, the place does feel like it is always changing, with new faces arriving and departing from day to day. The culture of the District is as cosmopolitan as it is possible to be in Rokugan, with traders from the lands of all the clans exchanging knowledge, merchandise, words, and much more.

Relations to Other Districts

Since it is located on the west side of the Second City, the Merchant District doesn't have direct physical contact with most of the rest of the city; its direct neighbors are the Military District to the east and the Artisan District to the southeast. However, given the amount of money and goods it handles, its influence can be felt throughout the city.

The Imperial District

While the official public view of the samurai in the Imperial District is that the Merchant District is a necessary burden the city most bear, most people on both sides of the walls realize this is a polite fiction. The Colonies thrive



on commerce, and the attitude towards merchant patronage is significantly more relaxed here than in Rokugan, with many prominent courtiers also being famously rich and influential merchant patrons. A few samurai even live in the Merchant District itself, something very rare in other places but slowly gaining acceptance here. Courtiers of course require clothing, gifts, perfumes and plenty of things traders are only too happy to provide, so contact between the Imperial and the Merchant districts is steady at all times.

The Merchant District is also a place of entertainment, with restaurants and shops offering both the traditional and the unknown. Of course, there is also a darker side to this, as some back-alley houses offer discrete opium dens, gambling houses, brothels, and similar things to dishonorable samurai.

The Military District

The Military District's attitude toward merchants is stricter than that found in the Imperial District, since soldiers have less use for wealth and commerce and the district commanders have a stronger sense of traditionalism. Still, as a part of the city the Merchant District receives its fair share of patrols and protection from the city's garrison, and despite the haphazard layout of the area the samurai have so far been able to keep violent crime to a minimum. Most merchants are thankful for this and do their best to maintain good relations with the city's soldiers, even offering their goods for discounts to the protectors of the city.

This is not to say the District is entirely crime free – instead, illegal activities have made themselves discrete. The most common crime here is smuggling, evading the tariffs and restrictions on rare or questionable goods. Thievery is sadly fairly common as well, albeit mostly on a small scale. Many merchants also engage in covert “wars” over markets and products, although they usually try to keep such conflicts out of the sight of samurai – nobody wants a troop of angry samurai soldiers rooting around in their commercial affairs.

The Temple District

Since the Temple District is located on the far side of the city and has only a limited demand for goods and services, it is frequently out of the minds of the merchants. Most merchants simply do not bother with trying to do business with the Temple District. However, all Rokugani are pious people, and for the superstitious merchants the lack of major temples in their own District is keenly felt. Thus with the assistance of the monks and shugenja of the Temple District they have arranged for the construction of many small shrines within their own district – most commonly dedicated to Daikoku, but including many other Fortunes as well. Most of these are quite small, amounting to little more than a statue of the Fortune and a place for offerings and incense. Monks from the Temple District visit daily, collecting the offerings and maintaining the shrines – just one more odd sight in the crowded streets of the Merchant

District. It is worth noting that the shrines are largely safe from the problem of theft – even in the Colonies, stealing from a shrine is considered a truly low act, and a thief caught in the act may well lose his life before the authorities even arrive.

The Artisan District

To a certain extent the Artisan District can be considered merely an extension of the Merchant District – and indeed, at the city's inception that is all it was. However, as craftsmen and artists congregated in the area between the merchants who bought their goods and the peasants who provided them with materials, they created a portion of the city which was quieter, cleaner, and better organized than the rest of the Merchant District, and eventually came to be recognized as their own District.

Some merchants still refuse to acknowledge the artisans are a separate part of the city, and in truth the relations between the two Districts are quite close with one group selling what the other creates. However, the samurai caste sees a clear difference between the two and most samurai are far more comfortable visiting the more refined and civilized Artisan District – indeed, some samurai artisans live there. As a result, wise merchants often use the Artisan District as a neutral ground to meet patrons and approach potential samurai customers.

The Peasant District

The Peasant District is fully separate from the merchants, which suits them perfectly well. Farmers and laborers rarely have much disposable income, after all, and the merchants prefer to maintain a certain physical separation between their own fine homes and the lowly dwellings of peasants. This is not to say the two groups don't interact – after all, they are very close in the Celestial Order, and merchants need to eat rice like everyone else. Peasants also make a useful additional workforce when needed, and the richer traders employ plenty of servants.





An odd side effect of the Second City's prosperity and its increasingly open attitude toward commerce is that the city's merchants have begun to see peasants as inferior people, uncouth and unworthy of their respect. Such an attitude is actually in direct opposition to the traditional Rokugani mindset, which sees farmers as superior since they produce food instead of just trading the works of others. Ironically, the peasants in the Second City actually enjoy better living conditions and are more open to the world than their counterparts elsewhere, but in the merchants' view the stigma remains. It remains to be seen whether this shifting attitude will cause serious problems; for now, it has not led to anything worse than a few snide remarks and occasional price-gouging.

Important Personages

The Merchant District is home to thousands of people and visited by more every day, so a comprehensive list of significant inhabitants could fill an entire book. Book Two of this set includes several merchant and commoner NPCs who can be placed here or in one of the other districts; the following section lists a few specific inhabitants of the Merchant District to inspire the GM.

KORU THE RICH POWERFUL MERCHANT

While most samurai have never heard of him, Koru – frequently called Koru the Rich by the lower classes – is one of the wealthiest men in the Colonies, if not Rokugan itself. His rise to power seems like a perfect tale of the Colonies, though lately he has encountered a few stumbling blocks.

Born the son of a carpenter who worked in Unicorn lands, Koru was only seven years old when he left for the Colonies. While his parents were frightened by the prospect of abandoning their home village for a long and dangerous journey, they followed their lord's orders faithfully and Koru came with them. The young boy was too young to appreciate the dangers, and he was fascinated by the landscapes he saw along the way and by the Second City itself. His parents found plenty of work in the construction of the city, and Koru quickly learned the tools of his trade. His curious and outgoing nature allowed him to make friends and acquaintances all across the city, and by the age of fifteen he was ready to start his own business with his parents' blessing.

Koru quickly capitalized on the opportunities offered by the transient population of the Second City to make a fortune, building large tenement houses he would rent on short terms or throwing together simple rental huts that would only last for a season or two. Even after paying his taxes to the city's lords he was always left with a generous income which he invested in additional business venture, eventually expanding into trade and commerce.

A combination of luck, good investments, and abundant personal connections made him the city's richest merchant before he reached twenty-five years of age. By then his parents were growing old, and Koru supported them until their deaths.

Koru enjoyed his life and his wealth, but he was not without rivals. The two most famous are Bogu the Fat and Kurujo the Old, both of whom have a more ruthless approach to business than he does. For Koru, commerce has always been a sort of game, and he has never borne his competitors any ill will. Thus he has been shocked by several recent incidents in which his business interests have come under attack by peasant thugs and even, in one case, a ronin who murdered one of his lower-ranking merchants. Koru has begun to hire ronin bodyguards of his own, and worries whether these attacks are caused by his rivals or are merely bad fortune. His business interests have begun to suffer from his nervous inattention, offering more opportunities for his rivals.

KORU THE RICH, POWERFUL MERCHANT

AIR: 1	EARTH: 2	FIRE: 2	WATER: 2	VOID: 1
AWARENESS: 4 WILLPOWER: 3 INTELLIGENCE: 4 PERCEPTION: 4				
Honor: 2.3		Status: 0.0		Glory: 1.6

Insight Rank: 2

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Commerce (Appraisal, Merchant) 6, Courtier 2, Craft: Carpentry 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 3, Games: Go 2, Investigation 2, Lore: Underworld 2, Sincerity 4, Temptation (Bribery) 5

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Luck (2 ranks), Wealthy (10 ranks)

Disadvantages: Sworn Enemies (several)

MIRUMOTO HIROME MERCHANT PATRON

Mirumoto Hirome is not a corrupt man, or really even a dishonorable man, but he has let himself slip too far from the samurai ideal. He is in many ways a symbol of both the good and the bad about the Second City, and it remains to be seen what his future path will be.

Hirome's parents were the custodians of a small but prosperous village in the Dragon lands, and he grew up wanting for nothing. He was sent to a bushi dojo out of respect for family tradition, but it was clear early on that he was not destined to become a glorious warrior. He barely passed his gempukku, demonstrating only the most minimal attainment in the Niten techniques, but quickly moved on to represent his family in court, a post for which he was far better suited. The conversations, arts, and games of court life were all to his liking, and he would have probably spent his life happily composing mediocre haiku and losing games of Go if not for the Empire's settlement of the Colonies. As a man of no great distinguishing accomplishment but a clear liking for the world of the courts, Hirome was a natural choice to send to the Ivory Court in that remote land.

Although at first he maintained the same life he had in Rokugan, Hirome found himself slowly drawn to the

Merchant District and its bustling world of change and wealth. On a whim, he took on patronage of a merchant who was selling small statues retrieved from the Kingdom's ruins. Before he knew it Hirome had dozens of koku on his hands. Thinking of this as little more than an amusing a new pastime, Hirome quickly grew into an important merchant patron, discovering a talent he never knew he had.

But one morning, looking in his mirror, Hirome saw a tired, red-eyed man who had just spent the previous night drinking and gambling. His belly was fat and his swords had not been polished in weeks. Hirome finds himself in a crisis of faith, turning to the Tao for the first time in years. He's baffled at how far he has strayed from the path of the samurai, yet he can't find anything really fundamentally wrong in his actions. He's considered shaving his head and joining a monastery, or joining the military in search of a pure and simple duty, but so far he hasn't done any of these, and meanwhile his merchants continue to earn him more koku.

MIRUMOTO HIROME, MERCHANT PATRON

AIR: 2	EARTH: 3	FIRE: 3	WATER: 2	VOID: 2
AWARENESS: 3		PERCEPTION: 5		
Honor: 3.3	Status: 2.0	Glory: 2.1		

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 1 (Insight Rank 2)

Skills: Artisan: Poetry 1, Commerce 5, Courtier 3, Defense 1, Etiquette (Conversation) 3, Games: Go 1, Games: Fortunes and Winds 3, Iaijutsu 1, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 1, Lore: Shugenja 1, Lore: Theology (Shintao) 1, Meditation 1, Sincerity 4, Tea Ceremony 3, Temptation 2

Advantages: Daikoku's Blessing, Wealthy (6 ranks)

Disadvantages: Doubt (Lore: Theology)

YASUKI HIMIKO

Yasuki Himiko is far from the image most have of a typical Crab samurai: she's small, very thin, and always wears beautiful kimono even in the thick heat of the Colonial summer. Yet she's managed to ingratiate herself to two of the classes of the Second City, bringing great benefits to her clan as a result.

Despite her small stature and soft voice, Himiko is a proud member of her clan. From the day of her gempukku she was equally at ease in court or in a marketplace, and dreamed of bringing new resources and respect to the Crab Clan. She deliberately cultivated a somewhat different image from the typical Yasuki wily trader, maintaining an impeccable appearance and acting with great politeness and respect toward other samurai. However, when in the presence of heimin merchants she would haggle as ruthlessly as any other member of her family, making sure to secure the best deals for the Crab.

Himiko actually requested to be sent to the Second City, since she saw great commercial opportunities there. Since she had not yet had time to develop a large mercantile network within the Empire, her superiors readily agreed. Himiko has not been disappointed in her choice; the Colonies are a major new market, full of opportunities. The samurai are very interested in both local curiosities and products from the mainland, while the merchant class is booming in activity and in numbers. Yet most samurai still didn't relish the prospect of dealing with heimin merchants, and Himiko was able to offer them an alternative: a discrete, proper samurai who would conduct their business herself, securing the best result possible for all parties while fully maintaining appearances. While she wasn't the first Yasuki to adopt this sort of role, her mix of charm, skill, and genuine interest in satisfying her contacts' demands made her very successful.





Himiko is now a permanent fixture of the Ivory Court, where she has many allies and very few enemies. She has gathered a great many political favors, along with abundant profits which she channels back to her clan. Despite her role as a go-between, many are still surprised to learn she actually lives in the Merchant District, in a small yet beautiful house attended by only a few servants and a single bodyguard. Himiko prefers it that way, staying close to the flow of money and transactions that she relies on for her success. She has many friends and allies among the commoner inhabitants of the Merchant District, who she is careful to treat as human beings rather than mere resources.

YASUKI HIMIKO

AIR: 4 EARTH: 2 FIRE: 3 WATER: 2 VOID: 3
 PERCEPTION: 3
 Honor: 3.1 Status: 1.0 Glory: 3.2

School/Rank: Yasuki Courtier 3

Skills: Artisan: Ikebana 1, Calligraphy 2, Commerce (Appraisal) 4, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Craft: Tailoring 2, Defense 1, Etiquette (Courtesy) 5, Intimidation (Control) 3, Investigation 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Tea Ceremony 2

Advantages: Allies (many), Benten's Blessing, Wealth

Disadvantages: Small

Location Guide

Many of the Merchant District's residences and structures are temporary in nature, and come and go with the seasons. However, this only makes the permanent and semi-permanent fixtures all the more important, and the more prominent ones are described here.

Tsukiko's Blessings

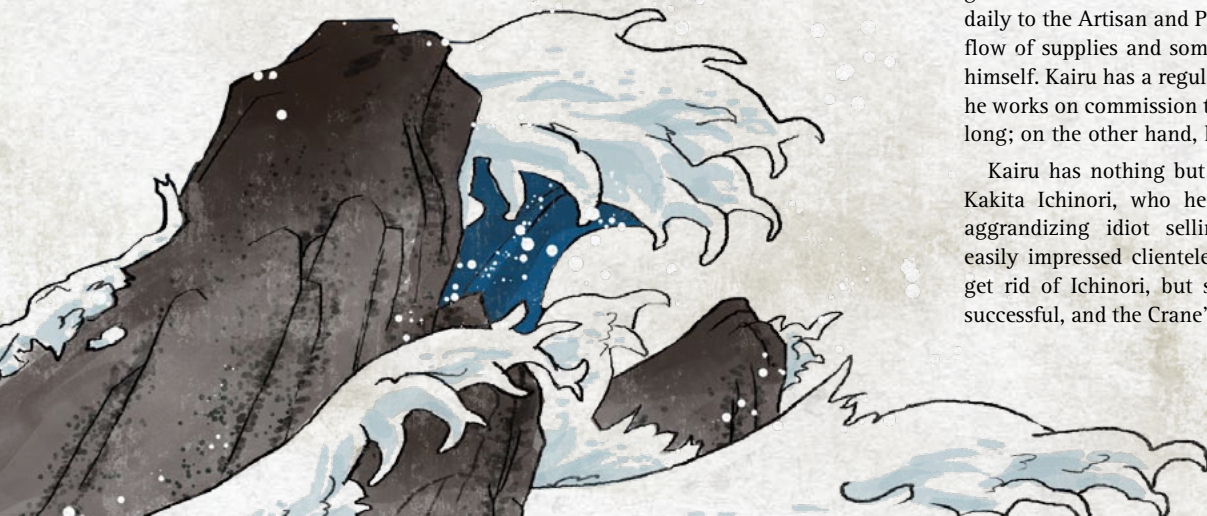
Located close to the Military District, this shop is known for the beautiful weapons it offers. Although many samurai prefer to commission specific pieces of work from the weaponsmiths of the Artisan District, some do not have the time to do so. This created a business opportunity for Kakita Ichinori of House Ashidaka, a duelist, smith, merchant patron, and an associate of the Daidoji Trading Council. He prides himself as an artist and sells each weapon in his shop as a specific piece of art, with a unique appearance and (according to him) personality. His prices are higher than elsewhere, yet he seems to always have the perfect spear, katana, or bow for the customer who just entered his shop, and his reputation is spotless. Ichinori himself is the perfect image of the Crane gentleman, pleasing his customers with poems and stories of his previous exploits, and engaging in charmingly innocent flirtation with any samurai-ko who crosses his doorstep. Supposedly he named his shop after a beautiful maiden he once met, although he never gives any details about her save that she was not from his clan.

Ichinori maintains what he considers to be a friendly rivalry with Yasuki Kairu, whose shop "Kairu Armors and Helmets" is located right next to his.

Kairu Armors and Helmets

A squat little building sitting just in front of the larger and better-apportioned Tsukiko's Blessings, Yasuki Kairu's shop offers armor and helmets in all sizes and styles. Kairu's mother was a Kaiu and imbued her son with an interest in armormaking. Once he came to the Second City, Kairu quickly built a successful business out of commissioning custom armors and offering repairs to the garrison soldiers. He maintains a tough schedule, traveling daily to the Artisan and Peasant District to ensure a steady flow of supplies and sometimes helping with the crafting himself. Kairu has a regular stream of customers, but since he works on commission the production times can be quite long; on the other hand, he keeps his prices reasonable.

Kairu has nothing but disdain for his Crane neighbor, Kakita Ichinori, who he considers to be a vapid self-aggrandizing idiot selling overpriced products to an easily impressed clientele. He has tried several tactics to get rid of Ichinori, but so far none of them have been successful, and the Crane's skill as a duelist prevents direct



confrontation. For now, the rivalry is focused on their products, and more than one samurai has tested Kairu armors against Tsukiko's Blessings weapons. Of course, weapons are generally regarded as far more glamorous than armors, and thus Tsukiko's Blessings products seem to remain more popular no matter what happens, further enraging Kairu.

The Forest's Bounty

Cut off from their homeland, many Rokugani physicians have found themselves at a loss on how to find the rare herbs and plants they rely on for medicines. While seeds can be brought along, the different soil and climate of the Colonies makes it hard to grow some of these plants, and the new environment has presented its own challenges such as strange diseases and poisons. These problems drew the attention of a resourceful samurai with an eye for commerce, Kitsune Dairuko. Born without the shugenja's gift, Dairuko was trained in the Yoritomo Courtier School but never forgot the forests of her childhood. She moved to the Colonies only a few years after her gempukku; using her clan's well-managed trade routes, she brings in regular shipments of fresh medicinal herbs, sometimes magically preserved to maintain their potency over the journey. Her shop and home is a small one-story building located right in the busy center of the Merchant District, and its well-stocked shelves of herbs and compounds give it a distinctive and peculiar odor. Her customers include both samurai and wealthy commoners, and the reputation of her selection also draws physicians and herbalists.

Sadly, Dairuko's expertise and selection have also attracted the wrong kind of attention: she has been approached by a number of agents asking her to supply them with certain herbs of a more dangerous nature. So far she has postponed answering the offers while she ponders the potential benefits of doing business with those she is sure are actually from the Clan of Secrets. The consequences of both cooperation and refusal could be dire, after all.

The Red Vine Sake House

This small sake house, located just off the main road through the Merchant District, is actually mis-named, for it does not serve sake. Instead it is known for serving every form of alcohol available in the Colonies other than sake. These include not only Rokugani drinks such as shochu and plum wine, but also many exotic gaijin drinks, both those native to the Ivory Kingdoms and those brewed in other lands such as Medinaat al-Salaam. The shop is managed by a commoner named Uso, sworn to a Unicorn merchant patron who arranges for shipments of foreign alcohols.

The Red Vine is popular among more adventurous souls, both commoner and samurai, and late at night it is not uncommon to see members of both castes sitting side-by-side in the common room while they enjoy the dubious pleasures of wine, date brandy, and other such strange beverages.

The Tavern of the North Wind

One of the first long-term structures to be built in the Merchant District, the Tavern takes its name from a wind usually mistrusted in Rokugan; it is the North Wind which brings cold and snow from the northern mountains. In the Colonies, however, the North Wind is a reminder of home and as such is viewed fondly. Moreover, the Second City has never received any snow, and after the heat of its summer season many samurai find themselves wishing for a refreshing Rokugani winter.

In keeping with its name, the Tavern specializes in high-quality sake that is served chilled, usually by keeping the bottles in water in an underground storage room until needed. It is a fairly large establishment, able to receive up to fifty customers at a time if necessary, and since it caters to a predominantly samurai clientele it is always kept clean and orderly. Two ronin stand guard at the door, and the servants politely invite samurai to leave their blades



ARTIFACTS OF THE COLONIES

One of the main attractions of the Merchant District are the shops selling artifacts of the former Ivory Kingdoms. These curiosities attract many samurai, especially among the younger generation who are less traditional in their attitudes. There is no single merchant who dominates this trade, since the flow of new goods is too irregular and from too many sources to maintain any kind of monopoly. Instead, small trickles of such goods show up intermittently in the District, usually in shops that specialize in them.

Items which are believed to be magical in nature, or which are closely related to the Ivory Kingdoms religion, are restricted by decree of the Governor. Such items must undergo careful inspections and purifications to ensure they are not dangerous. It is considered illegal to own a statue or other depiction of Kali-Ma.

Setting aside these restrictions, some of the more commonly seen artifacts include:

Jewelry.

Weapons such as chakram, tulwar, kukri, whip swords, and other such things.

Items made of ivory. (Ivory weapons are particularly prized by some of the military, such as the unit known as the Ivory Daggers.)

Books and scrolls. (These retain an exotic appeal even to the majority of Rokugani who cannot read the Ivindi language.)

Paintings, sculptures, and statues. (Those not restricted for being religious in nature.)

Clothing. (Almost never actually worn, except by some daring Unicorn.)



at the entrance to ensure a harmonious visit. Thanks to these policies combined with the clientele, the Tavern is rarely disturbed by violence of any kind. The presence of a small shrine to Tamon, the Fortune of the North Wind, only adds to the place's serene atmosphere.

The Tavern belongs to Kurujo the Old, a woman known as one of the more powerful heimin merchants of the Second City. Kurujo is a ruthless woman who maintains close tabs on all her contacts and has her dues collected by force if necessary. The Tavern of the North Wind is one of the pillars of her influence, but she has many other shops, all ruled with an iron hand. She never deals face-to-face with samurai, and in private she mocks their domineering attitudes and their ignorance of business practices. She considers her rival Kuro the Rich a lucky fool, while she sees Bogu the Fat as competent but disgusting. She would gladly see both gone but has no wish to endanger herself or her position to do so.

Fortunes and Fortunes

Many visitors raise an eyebrow when they see the name of this small gambling establishment, located deep within the Merchant District and usually surrounded by the tents of peddlers. The owner, a portly jovial man named Gorubei, will gladly explain that the man who painted the calligraphy on the front of the shop was old and tired; he didn't pay much attention when he wrote what was supposed to be "Fortunes and Winds," the name of the most popular gambling game in Rokugan. None were more surprised at the result than Gorubei himself, but he didn't want to have the painter do the work again and thought it might be a good omen, so he kept the name.

Fortunes and Fortunes has become a popular gambling house, attended mostly by common people along with the occasional slumming samurai (usually wearing a mask or a hat to protect their identity). The house is small and usually crowded, the air smelling of tobacco and unwashed bodies. Nonetheless it has a reputation as a place where fortunes can be made in a single instant, and this keeps customers returning night after night. Tales are shared of the servant who won a wager against his own lord, of the fisherman who gambled the single zenì he made that day and left with ten boats in his possession.

The favored game of the house is of course Fortune and Winds, but a variant called Fortunes and Fortunes after the business itself has been steadily gaining popularity. The place is also famous for odd flukes, as attendants occasionally beat seemingly impossible odds or

accidents break a lucky streak. It is said that once during a heavy storm a beam from the ceiling fell right on a dice game which was about to render a farmer homeless; his fellow players gave up the game and even gave him money to rent a place for the night. One local shugenja has theorized the place might be blessed by the so-called Reverse Fortune, perhaps because the divine being was amused by the name of the establishment.

Teas of Rokugan

This quiet and unassuming teahouse has gathered a distinct following in the past few years. It exclusively serves teas imported from the mainland, hence its name. The business is not especially large, but it does have several private rooms off the main common room that can be used for traditional tea ceremonies. The porcelain is of superior quality and finely decorated, much of it generations old and brought from the Empire with delicate care. The customers are exclusively samurai, and usually respect the place enough to leave their conflicts at the door.

The shop is run by an elderly heimin lady named Hitsu, a woman as traditional as can be found. She was dismayed at being sent to the Colonies twenty years ago, for her family had spent generations in the business of tea, serving samurai with dedication and propriety. Her family was so traditional that their establishments never served tea grown in Unicorn or Mantis lands, a custom maintained by Hitsu today.

Teas of Rokugan tends to attract the business of traditionalist samurai, especially those who are discontented with their current position in the Colonies. For an hour or two they can enjoy pretending they are back home, gazing at beautiful paintings of Rokugani landscapes displayed where windows would usually be found. Needless to say, Unicorn, Mantis, and Spider samurai rarely frequent the establishment.

Takotako Fried Squid

Those who have lived in the Second City more than a few months usually look forward to the arrival of the monsoon for two reasons. First, it means the baking summer heat is finally coming to an end. Second, it means Takotako Fried Squid is returning to the city. The small restaurant is rebuilt every year for the length of the monsoon season. It is little more than a simple counter with stools in the street for customers to sit on, yet while it lasts it is always full. The family who owns the shop keeps it running through day and night, only taking small breaks to rest and eat for themselves.

Obtaining fresh squid is quite difficult enough in the Second City, so the popularity of this seasonal restaurant is not all that surprising. Moreover, the cooks employ a unique combination of spices which makes their squid all but addictive. Even samurai will stop by for a bite, enjoying the quick service and simple excellence of the food. Needless to say, the family have encountered a lot of pressure to reveal their spice mixture and how they manage to get enough fresh squid to last through the monsoon, but



TEMPORARY BUSINESSES

Takatako Fried Squid is just one example of the sort of temporary businesses that constantly pop up in the Merchant District. People from all across the Colonies and from Rokugan itself come to the Second City to sell their products, so the nature of the District is changing all the time and there is always a new store to be found. A few places recur often enough they have come to be remembered by name:

The Skull's Canteen: This tent, adorned by a grim looking elephant skull, accompanies larger expeditions of the Spider Clan Conquerors into the field, then comes back to the Second City when they return to report to their superiors. Rumors assert that this place serves raw meat and other such disgusting dishes, but such fanciful tales have never been confirmed. Still, while the restaurant's doors are open to all, few other than the Spider ever attend.

Jewels of the Kingdoms: This small tent is very much sought after, since it belongs to a merchant who specializes in retrieving jewels from the ruins of the Ivory Kingdoms and selling them to the highest bidder. It is sponsored by the Yasuki family, who provide it with extensive security.

Scrolls and Prayers: A single old heimin runs this little shop, whose contents fit in a single cart. He sells high-quality paper, making him a favorite of many shugenja in the Second City. He also sells cheaper paper and simple religious texts to the common people.

Southern Silks: This recently created business is experimenting with silkworms in the Colonies, producing a lighter yet very soft silk which has become popular with some courtiers. It still only comes in limited amounts, and the choice of designs is not always the best.

Anku: A small dark-skinned merchant with a large straw hat sometimes appears in the District. His accent and appearance seem to indicate possible gaijin origins, but he speaks fluent Rokugani. He offers only one ware at a time, usually a strange artifact of the Kingdoms. He quickly disappears after the deal, and some of the more superstitious merchants believe he is a spirit of some kind.

so far they have not revealed their secrets. It is commonly believed they spend the rest of the year searching out their spices and ingredients, but nobody is really sure. Although their success has drawn some jealousy, nobody has yet to resort to violence over something as trivial as fried squid.

The Princess' Dream

For those who haven't found real success of the Colonies, or have been overcome with nostalgia for their homelands, the Princess' Dream offers a solution, albeit not an ideal one. Sheltered under a very large tent, it changes location frequently, not because it ever leaves the Second City but rather to escape the attention of the authorities. The Dream is an opium den, filled nightly with pale-faced addicts lying on tatami mats with their smoldering pipes at their sides.

In truth, the Dream is a place of misery. Its staff are brutes who extract as much money as they can from their "customers" without regard for the consequences. Its continued existence is a thorn in the side of the local magistrates, but the corrupt merchants running it are well-versed in the Merchant District's ebb and flow, and always manage to hide when magistrates seek them out.

For those who pay attention to such things, it comes as no surprise that the Dream is owned by Bogu the Fat, an extremely wealthy and thoroughly amoral merchant. A very obese man, Bogu only moves when carried on a palanquin by eight men, and is generally content remaining in his large house, attended by beautiful serving girls and treating himself to the finest food and drink available. While he is quite easy to find, Bogu has several level of intermediaries shielding him from association with his more questionable activities. He also hires the finest ronin bodyguards, paying them extremely well to ensure their loyalty. It is likely that he also enjoys protection from a few members of the Ivory Court, either through blackmail or ongoing dealings. Bogu's only aim is to live a life of great pleasure; he hates his chief rivals, Koru the Rich and Kurujo the Old, who he sees as obstacles to gaining more wealth and control within the Second City.

The Stranger's Inn

Arrival in the Second City can be very confusing for samurai newly come from the mainland, as they have to deal not only with one of the largest urban areas known to man but also differences in climate and culture. Such newcomers are often directed toward the Stranger's Inn. The Inn is located on the outskirts of the District, easily found by those entering the city from the river and major road to the west. In itself it is not really impressive, with only about a dozen rooms and a modest stable, although the service is of acceptable quality. What makes it interesting are the two simple rules of its owner. First, the maximum period to stay is one week. Second, no one who has stayed in the Inn before is ever allowed to stay again, although they are welcomed to visit. These rules ensure the Inn is always filled with new faces drawn from the latest arrivals in the Second City. It provides them a place to stay among others of similar nature while they grow acclimated to their new home.

The Inn is under the patronage of Shinjo Xiang, a former warrior of the Unicorn Clan who settled down in the Second City to raise her two children after her husband died protecting caravans on the Ki-Rin's Path. She conceived of the Inn as a place for newcomers, and under her management the place has achieved considerable success. The actual work of managing the Inn is carried out by commoners, but Xiang visits the place regularly to make sure it is running properly. She is not retired and still carries her swords, delivering an angry glare at anyone who threatens the peace of her establishment. She also enjoys long rides around and across the city, often taking friends and guests on sightseeing trips to introduce them to the landscape and traditions of the city she has come to call home.





- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Bayushi's Smile | 6 Temple to Sadahako |
| 2 Jizo's Mercy | 7 Kaiu Himora's Smithy |
| 3 Words on the Winds | 8 Shiba Donoka's Sculpture Gallery |
| 4 Governor's Garden | 9 House of the Sparrow's Song |
| 5 Flowers of the Colonies | 10 House of the Black Lily |

THE ARTISAN DISTRICT

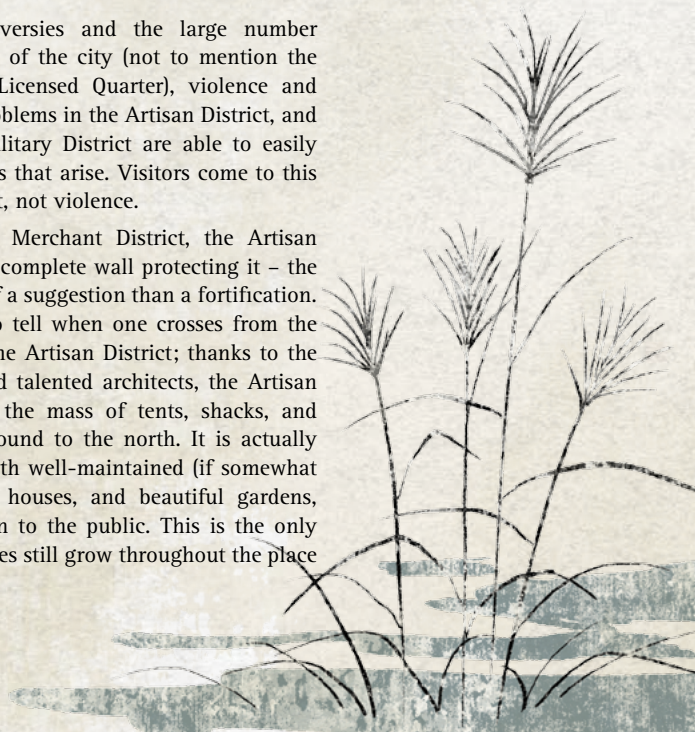
When the samurai of the Second City need a reminder of what they fight for, when the courtiers of the Governor's Palace want something other than backstabbing politics, when the merchants of the city's vast markets feel like buying something beautiful rather than just useful – they all go to the Artisan District. Unlike most of the rest of the Second City, the Artisan District was not part of the city's original plans. Each of the other Districts served a basic and important function: government, military protection, prayer, labor, and resources. But within the very first year, the samurai of the city began trying to bring the art and culture of Rokugan into the city as well. They arranged for actors, blacksmiths, geisha, and other such skilled commoners to be shipped to the Colonies, and almost by default these new residents congregated in the relatively open space between the Peasant and Merchant Districts. Thus was born the Artisan District, a place of beauty and excitement, loved by samurai and heimin alike. When newcomers arrive in the Second City, a visit to the Artisan District is always high on their itinerary, and often it is the pleasures of this District which convince them to stay.

While several parts of the city have residents of different social status living together, the Artisan District perhaps has the most balanced population of samurai and commoners. Of course, social lines remain clear-cut: samurai are swordsmiths, kabuki or noh actors, poets, painters; those of the lower classes are common blacksmiths, seamstresses, dancers, street performers, and of course geisha. But their residences are not in separate neighborhoods, and it is not uncommon to find a samurai

painter living next door to a heimin weaver. A few of the richer courtiers and merchants also live here, serving as patrons to the most promising young artists, and this often produces intense competition to find the best new talents. Coupled with the new Governor's oft-stated preference for new and exiting things, this has made the District a hub of artistic innovation and new styles and forms of art are pioneered here almost daily. These innovations of course tend to chafe the city's more traditionalist residents, but the younger generation enjoy having their perceptions challenged.

Despite these controversies and the large number of visitors from the rest of the city (not to mention the presence of the city's Licensed Quarter), violence and crime are only minor problems in the Artisan District, and the patrols from the Military District are able to easily suppress the few troubles that arise. Visitors come to this district for entertainment, not violence.

Like the neighboring Merchant District, the Artisan District does not have a complete wall protecting it – the outer stockade is more of a suggestion than a fortification. Nonetheless it is easy to tell when one crosses from the Merchant District into the Artisan District; thanks to the work of many eager and talented architects, the Artisan District is nothing like the mass of tents, shacks, and temporary habitations found to the north. It is actually fairly well organized, with well-maintained (if somewhat random) roads, elegant houses, and beautiful gardens, many of which are open to the public. This is the only part of the city where trees still grow throughout the place



and are not considered a waste of space. In fact, some gardeners carefully maintain the trees along the major roads, since they provide not only enjoyable shade but also a form of art in themselves through their beautiful leaves, fruits, and flowers. A walk through the Artisan District can be a very pleasant way to pass the time.

One thing the artisans do share with their merchant neighbors is constant nighttime activities. Indeed, the warm climate of the Colonies makes evening entertainment even more popular than in the Empire. Much as in the Merchant District, lanterns are hung throughout the streets, and artists have used this as another opportunity to embellish the district. Beautiful variations of colors are found throughout the area, and lanterns are hung from trees, houses, and poles, giving the entire place a magical and enchanting tone that puts visitors in the appropriate mood for entertainment. Lantern colors are used to distinguish different parts of the District, with the Licensed Quarter denoted with red lanterns while the theaters are lit with yellow or gold. A common greeting in the Artisan District at night is, "Welcome to the lights of Yume-do," and many artists fancy themselves as purveyors of dreams; several lantern makers in the district have become

highly successful and specialize in different shapes, colors, and calligraphy styles. Of course, the lanterns also present risks, and at least three groups of firefighters from the Peasant District are always kept on alert. Thus far, no major fire outbreak has occurred.

Of course, the buildings themselves are often works of art, rivaling the noble residences of the Imperial District for beauty. They are generally only one or two stories high, however, since more would overshadow the roads and gardens too much. The largest building in the District is Bayushi's Smile, a much-admired Kabuki theater, which can hold several plays at the same time. While the District is not subdivided by social caste, there is delineation by vocation, with different types of art and entertainment grouped together. As already noted, the geisha houses of the Licensed Quarter are all on the same street. Similarly, the smiths – whose work can produce prodigious amounts of noise, smoke, and heat – are all together on the outer part of the District, near the edge of the city. Closer to the center of the District are those craftsmen whose work is less disrupting for others, such as painters, sculptors, and calligraphists. There are also several designated areas where artisans residing outside the District can come to display their pieces.



Relations to Other Districts

As the center of entertainment and beauty for the whole Second City, the Artisan District is regarded with admiration by most city inhabitants. However, this prominence has also attracted the attention of individuals with dubious interests, and the District has begun to find itself the focus for many subtle struggles of power.

The Imperial District

The wealthy and powerful samurai of the Imperial District are the primary customers and patrons of the Artisan District. It is they, more than any others, who have the education, resources, and time to purchase art, attend plays, and otherwise enjoy the Artisan District's resources. Moreover, the cramped conditions in the center of the city make the gardens of the Artisan District very attractive for walks and casual conversations. At times, some parts of the Artisan District almost seem to act as an extension of the Ivory Court, as courtiers and nobles carry on their discussions while strolling to visit their favorite theater, spend an evening in the Licensed Quarter, or commissioning a work of art. Sadly, this means political rivalries can sometimes spill into the District as well, especially through patronage of rival artisans.

The clan with the heaviest investment in the Artisan District is of course the Crane, but the other clans have certainly not let them establish total control, and a few artisans manage to remain independent of any samurai's sponsorship. Some of the more traditionalist courtiers resent the District's unconventional and innovative works, and a few artisans have even hit back at this through their artwork, delivering thinly veiled criticism of their detractors by way of plays and paintings. This can heighten social tensions but also provides extra entertainment to their audiences.

The Military District

The soldiers of the Military District are among the primary customers for the Artisan District's smiths, and often come here to commission specific pieces of equipment. The Licensed Quarter is also a major draw for soldiers in this district, but those seeking simpler entertainment – such as an evening of drinking – are directed toward the Merchant District instead, where they might find businesses more suited to their tastes.

The soldiers of the Military District are also responsible for protecting and upholding the peace here, patrolling the Artisan District regularly to keep the peace, although they try to avoid disrupting the harmony of the area. A few of the more inventive local magistrates are fond of visiting the District in plain clothing, ready to pull out a jitte and disarm any troublemakers they come across. Nevertheless,



many establishments – particularly geisha houses – employ a few ronin bodyguards for those occasions when a patrol is not readily available.

The Temple District

The Temple District is the only part of the city which is not directly connected to the Artisan District, and that may be for the best. The lights and music of the artisans contrast sharply with the quiet serenity of the temples, to say the least. Some artisans are very pious, of course, and offer plays and artwork honoring the Fortunes and the Kami. Others, however, tend to lose themselves in their glamorous world and have little patience for monks lecturing them on the benefits of the Tao, much less for spending hours in quiet contemplation and prayers.

A few minor shrines are located within the Artisan District, dedicated mainly to Benten (the Fortune of Romantic Love), Ko-no-hama (the Fortune of Flowers), and even to Sadahako (Fortune of Geisha and Artists). Indeed, the temple to Sadahako is said to be larger than any of those within mainland Rokugan. Monks from the Temple District visit periodically to maintain these facilities, usually during the morning when the Artisan District is at its quietest.

The Merchant District

It is hard for the residents of the Artisan District to forget they are essentially an outgrowth of the Merchant District, especially since no real wall separates one from the other. Many merchants have tried to retain some influence and control in the District, but unsurprisingly many artisans prefer the more prestigious and effective patronage of samurai, so the Artisan District's independence from the merchants is assured. Still, the richer merchants visit the District almost as often as samurai, particularly since doing so allows them to feel they share the cultural levels of the Empire's ruling caste. They also have agreements with many of the District's craftsmen to distribute and sell their products, ensuring the two portions of the city are economically connected. A few types of establishments



can be found in both Districts, such as tea houses and inns, and it is often a matter of preference as to which side one patronizes: the Merchant District offers simpler distractions but always asks for hard coin in payment, while the artisans are more refined in their behavior but also more exclusive.

The Peasant District

The Peasant District is a direct neighbor of the Artisan District, and indeed is part of the reason for its existence: craftsmen and performers wanted to live and work closer to their supplies of labor and raw materials. The two Districts have quite a good relationship, and the peasants who work in the Artisan District are often far better compensated than they could ever expect to be in the mainland Empire. Heimin and hinin entertainers such as actors, musicians, dancers, and storytellers are welcomed in the Artisan District (although they must live in the Peasant District) and are treated with a surprising respect despite their low station; it is not uncommon for a samurai in the Artisan District to stop and laugh at a simple puppeteer's show or to watch a troupe of commoner acrobats. In the Artisan District, what matters most is beauty and quality, regardless of origin.

Important Personages

While some of the inhabitants of the Artisan District can be found in *Book Two: The People*, the following section describes a few of the more prominent "lights of Yume-do" not found elsewhere.

SOJIHIME

STAR-CROSSED GEISHA

The isolated world in which geisha live is often called the "flower and willow world," a secretive and exclusive place open only to the most highly cultured individuals. The geisha known as Sojihime is both the queen and the prisoner of this world, and she sometimes wonders if the Fortunes ever pay attention to her... or if she is such a lowly soul that they do not even bother to hear her prayers.

The daughter of a geisha from a long line of geisha, Sojihime was born in the Colonies, and only knows of Rokugan through the stories she has heard from others. She has never even left the Second City. She received a traditional geisha education, and soon it was obvious she was quite talented, especially in the realm of dancing. She passed from one geisha house to another as her contract rose to higher and higher values, until she finally arrived at the House of the Sparrow's Song, the most prestigious geisha house of the entire Second City. At first Sojihime delighted in her life: she loved the beautiful clothes, the intricate conversations, and most of all the dancing. Most samurai found her highly attractive and she became adept at playing them against each other, using their feelings for her as a way to secure their custom and to receive the most beautiful presents.

But eventually Sojihime encountered the trap which waits for all too many geisha: she began to feel genuine attraction toward two of her samurai patrons, trapping herself with her own emotions. Her heart is now tugged between two very different men. One, Jiro, is an educated and delicate man whose smiles and gifts delight her. The other, Heiji, is a gruff yet handsome warrior, traumatized by the violence he has seen, yet retaining a truly compassionate heart. She cannot bring herself to let one or the other go, and for the moment she is trying to maintain separate romantic relationships with each of them. She doesn't even know their clan allegiances or if they have given her their real names, since the House of the Sparrow's Song allows its guests to remain anonymous. Worst of all, a third man who calls himself Kurote has begun maneuvering to buy Sojihime's contract for himself, and he seems to be making progress. Kurote is everything Sojihime despises among samurai: ugly, rude, and callous. She wants nothing to do with him, yet neither of her lovers seems willing to challenge his efforts to buy her contract. Unable to see a solution to her troubles, Sojihime spends more and more time at the Temple to Sadahako, desperately praying for help.



SOJIHIME, STAR-CROSSED GEISHA

AIR: 3	EARTH: 1	FIRE: 2	WATER: 1	VOID: 1
AWARENESS: 4		AGILITY: 3	PERCEPTION: 3	
Honor: N/A		Status: -1.0	Glory: 5.6	

School/Rank: Commoner (Insight Rank 2)

Skills: Acting 3, Artisan: Poetry 5, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Gossip) 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Investigation 2, Lore: Theology (Fortunism) 2, Perform: Biwa 5, Perform: Dance 8, Perform: Storytelling 4, Perform: Song 4, Sincerity 5, Tea Ceremony 2, Temptation (Seduction) 4

Advantages: Bente's Blessing, Great Potential (Perform: Dance)

Disadvantages: True Love (Jiro, Heiji)

BAYUSHI KURAKU THEATER ENTHUSIAST

Bayushi Kuraku was not a particularly notable student of the Bayushi Courtier School. Although he had an annoying tendency to take part in every school plot and every conversation, he was also a very good liar, which usually allowed him to survive any trouble he got into. He was sent to the Colonies as part of the main Scorpion delegation, but due to his low station and dubious repute he was overshadowed by more talented samurai and was left mostly to his own devices. Kuraku did not object, and spent his time indulging in minor intrigues while enjoying the city's entertainments, especially in the Artisan District. He was passionate about Kabuki – he has several cousins in the Shosuro Acting School – and attended plays every chance he got. This eventually led to his discovering a purpose for himself when he encountered a Crane courtier who constantly denigrated Kabuki in favor of Noh theater. Kuraku forcefully rebuked the Crane's argument and began scheming to have him driven from the courts.

Since that time Kuraku has become an active and even prominent member of the Ivory Court, as well as one of the most faithful patrons of the Bayushi's Smile Theater – so much so that some mistake him for the theater's owner. His relentless campaign against his Crane rival has stepped up the rivalry between the two forms of theater to a new level, and he has resorted to many under-handed methods to win points for his side. Kuraku is not above poisoning a Noh actor to prevent him from performing, or lying to make others believe a play was canceled, although he has stayed clear of any direct physical action – after all, his superiors might frown on a war triggered over theater. The Crane is his primary opponent, but anyone who advocates Noh over Kabuki will earn his wrath. Of course, all this controversy has rebounded to the benefit of the actors in the Artisan District, since their performances now attract even larger audiences.

Kuraku is a small, slightly plump man who always wear a large red kabuki mask wherever he goes. He is a genuine lover of Kabuki, and observers can often glimpse tears of joy beneath his mask at the end of the best performances. Anyone who appreciates Kabuki over Noh will find a friend in him.

BAYUSHI KURAKU, THEATER ENTHUSIAST

AIR: 2	EARTH: 2	FIRE: 3	WATER: 2	VOID: 3
AWARENESS: 3		PERCEPTION: 3		
Honor: 2.1		Status: 1.0	Glory: 4.8	

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 2

Skills: Acting 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Gossip) 4, Craft: Poison 2, Etiquette 3, Intimidation (Control) 3, Investigation 4, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Theater (Kabuki) 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Temptation 2

Advantages: Higher Purpose (promote Kabuki)

Disadvantages: Contrary

DAIGOTSU MEIKUKO SINISTER STORYTELLER

Those samurai who are jaded by more conventional entertainments, those who seek a truly unusual thrill, may be directed toward a woman named Daigotsu Meikuko. Her story is not known for certain, although most assume she arrived in the Colonies with the original contingent of Spider samurai, and may have served with the Conquerors for a time. She greets her guests – she never accepts more than three at a time – in her small house in the Artisan District, the interior of which is decorated with beautiful yet disturbing sculptures of spiders and less-pleasant things. Her performances are never the same; while they are usually centered around storytelling, they can also feature poetry and music. She always seems to know more about her audience than she ought to, and the stories she tells have a tendency to take a personal twist. Some guests have been known to suddenly rush out in the grip of terror, or to remain shaken and trembling for days afterward, but a few are enraptured by the mix of beauty and horror she delivers. And for those who think of taking action against her, Meikuko is quick to remind them the Spider are now a recognized clan... and the katana at her side is not just for show.





Meikuko is a thin woman with sickly pale skin and white hair; her dark eyes sometimes seem to show a malevolent blue tint in low light. She is fond of using her disturbing appearance to supplement her performances. In truth, she is indeed deeply Tainted, but she avoids any questions about this and as far as the authorities know she has never committed any crime. Meikuko's true purposes are known only to her – perhaps she seeks to seduce samurai into giving in to the Taint, perhaps she seeks to make the Taint appear harmless and familiar to those in the Colonies, or perhaps she simply her terrifying performances. Regardless, if the Artisan District is the entrance to the world of Dreams, then Meikuko is the mother of nightmares.

DAIGOTSU MEIKUKO, MOTHER OF NIGHTMARES

AIR: 4 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 3 WATER: 3 VOID: 2

WILLPOWER: 4

Honor: 0.3 Status: 1.0 Glory: 4.2

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 4.0

School/Rank: Daigotsu Bushi 3 (Insight Rank 4)

Skills: Acting 3, Artisan: Sculpture 3, Artisan: Poetry 3, Athletics 2, Battle 1, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Defense 2, Etiquette (Conversation) 3, Hunting 1, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 5, Investigation 2, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 1, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Perform: Song 3, Perform: Storytelling 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Temptation 2

Advantages: Sensation

Disadvantages: Cursed by the Realm (Tengoku)

Mutations: Albinism, Demonic Eyes, Jigoku's Blood

Shadowlands Powers: Calligraphy of Thought, Disrupt the Chi, Mind of Darkness

Location Guide

In truth, almost every building in the Artisan District is worthy of interest, so this section should only be considered as brushing the surface of what can be found there. Even the roads are works of art; a visit to the District is never boring.

Bayushi's Smile Theater

Situated close to the Imperial District and visible from its tallest buildings, the Bayushi's Smile Theater is the city's prime location for Kabuki plays. The sprawling building is three stories tall, the only structure in the Artisan District to rise so high, and it can host up to six plays at the same time, with generous room for the audiences. Its exterior is decorated in the black and red of the Scorpion, but with large windows and doors to make it look less foreboding. At night it blazes with the light of hundreds of golden lanterns; it is said no two lanterns share the same calligraphy symbol, and supposedly a code can be learned from studying them. The interior is even more lavish, with corridors full of lacquered furniture and beautiful paintings adorning the walls. The interior rooms are designed to be easily modified, and a large team of servants work tirelessly under the actors' direction to create all manner of scenes and special effects.

A large troupe of actors, all trained in the Shosuro School, live in the Theater itself. Their plays are a mix of classics and new favorites, with only a slight preference showed toward the Scorpion Clan's own playwrights. Other troupes are allowed to perform here if agreed with the Theater's director, and even the Crane have made use

of the facilities – the only rule being of course that any play must be Kabuki. A few special performances are occasionally presented on specific days, such as the various religious festivals, and these are designed to challenge the audience's perceptions and showcase the actors' skills. For example, an intricate play once made use of all six different stages throughout a single evening, while on another occasion an actor concealed himself in the audience until his part came up. The



Second City's samurai are generally fond of these novelties and surprises.

Despite what many have come to believe, Bayushi Kuraku does not manage or run the theater – this role is actually held by Shosuro Gojitsu, a self-effacing man and a sensei of the Shosuro Acting School. He rarely meets with anyone but his pupils, and runs the theater through a number of intermediaries. He has also made sure his actors include a select group trained in the Shosuro School's more secret practices of spying and assassination, and Bayushi's Smile Theater has won the Scorpion Clan more than one piece of vital information over the years. Gojitsu himself enjoys roaming the theater's grounds as a servant, keeping an eye on both his subordinates and his guests. The fact that he named the theater after Bayushi and not Shosuro is in his mind a proof of his loyalty, as well as another way of turning attention away from him and his family.

Jizo's Mercy Theater

Located just two streets away from the Bayushi's Smile Theater, Jizo's Mercy is noticeably smaller, but still attracts large audiences for its Noh plays. Most smaller theaters in the city cater to both forms of art, but this one is exclusively dedicated to Noh, partly due to artistic dedication and partly in reaction against the popularity of Bayushi's Smile. As befits the subtle and evocative style of Noh plays, Jizo's Mercy is a simple and almost ascetic theater, with white adornments intended to remind the spectator of the certainty of death. While the theater is primarily sponsored by the Crane Clan, it also receives generous donations from the Unicorn Clan's Moto family, whose members are notable fans of the somber Noh plays.

The main director of Jizo's Mercy is an aging actor named Kakita Onetsu, a stern and focused man who takes his art very seriously. He does not have any particular distaste for Kabuki, but simply finds Noh to be his forte. He has produced several notable new plays and also takes part in the acting on occasion. There is pressure on him from his Crane Clan sponsors to attract more spectators, but sees such shallow competition as beneath the beauty of Noh.

Recently, a rumor has arisen that Jizo's Mercy is haunted, and indeed several small incidents have impaired productions. Onetsu believes this is nonsense and suspects the accidents are probably due to Bayushi Karaku or his agents trying to sabotage the theater. However, a few actors have reported seeing things Karaku couldn't possibly have caused, and Onetsu is started to wonder if a third party might be involved. Ironically, the rumors of the haunting have actually attracted a few more customers, but Onetsu wishes they would focus on the actual plays rather than looking for false ghosts.

Words on the Winds

Although it is technically a tavern, Words on the Winds fits perfectly in the Artisan District. It is a small two-story building with several open balconies, rather modest in appearance although the sake and tea served are always of good quality. What makes the place attractive is that

it has become an informal meeting place for poets of all kinds, who gather to exchange ideas, compete with each other, and listen to masters of the art. It is particularly popular among young samurai who wish to experiment with various forms of poetry. The game of sadane is also common practice, particularly at night, and here sadane criticism is only delivered in haiku form, doubly testing the practitioners. The biting nature of the criticisms has occasionally led to brawls, as the poets tend to drink a great deal of sake during their visits, but such fights are usually quickly broken up.

A particular form of new poetry which has developed here is a type of political satire called rakushu. The current Governor seems to find it particularly funny, and as such has allowed the new form to prosper despite the shocked reactions of traditionalists who hear it.

Poems can be "published" anonymously here, by writing them down and pinning them to the walls of the inn, a particularly common practice for beginners or timid poets. The poems are taken down by the staff each week, but popular ones will often remain for much longer than that, bringing fame to authors who reveal themselves – or who take credit for another's work, which has happened more than once in the past.

Recently the Inn has seen a surge of attention due to the arrival of Doji Wakatsu, a Crane poet and Master Artisan who is rumored to be able to conjure images via the simple perfection of his poems. Sadly, he has not uttered a single verse since his arrival, and seems content to drink tea, listening to other artists without commenting, and otherwise holding aloof from the scene. Many have come to believe he is about to retire and is searching for a successor, or perhaps for the inspiration to compose one last perfect poem. Wakatsu chooses not to speak on the matter, leaving speculations running.

The Governor's Garden

So called because it was a favorite of the previous Governor, the late Ikoma Karatsu, the Governor's Garden is one of the largest gardens in the Artisan District and is located alongside one of the District's major streets, making it easily accessible. The garden is traditional in style, featuring familiar plants and designs, and includes the conventional small koi ponds as well. However, it does boast a few exotic plants and trees from the Colonies, adding a mild amount of color and exoticism without disrupting the overall traditional effect. There are also more trees and thus more shade than would be usual in Rokugan, so as to keep the garden pleasant during the blazing Colonial summer.

A notable aspect of the garden is that it is completely open to both samurai and heimin, and while the most typical sight there will be courtiers strolling through the gravel paths, monks and well-dressed commoners are also seen regularly. The place also has several private corners which can be used for discrete political conversations or romantic encounters, particularly at night.





Sadly, the current Governor seems not to like the Garden, for reasons unknown. While she hasn't directly spoken against it, it has nonetheless lost some of its prestige and attendance by the courtiers of the Imperial District has slowly declined. On the other hand, a few soldiers have begun to take a liking to the place, and some have started using it as a training site or even as a dueling ground, much to the horror of the gardeners.

Recently, the gardeners realizes some of the native fruit trees in the garden are the main food source for a local species of very large bats, the likes of which have never been seen in Rokugan. The gardeners have tried to get rid of the animals, but the few members of the Bat Clan have spoken out strongly against their actions, warning of dire spiritual consequences if the bats are driven out of the Second City.

Flowers of the Colonies

This small unadorned shop does not look very impressive from the outside, but is a favorite of many of the city's ikebana practitioners. The interior greets visitors with peasant smells and beautiful sights, for all the flowers inside the shop are placed in harmonious ways, allowing customers to select their merchandise while still enjoying its beauty. While the place is technically a merchant's shop, its dedication to art makes it a good fit here in the Artisan District, and the prices requested are actually fairly low. In contrast to many of the other locations in the District, this shop is not a politically contentious place, or indeed politically engaged in any way at all. It is solely a place of art, where samurai come to buy flowers and nothing else.

The owner of the shop is a heimin named Hatsu, an aging woman who still has the strength to run the place by herself. She used to be in the service of the Crane Clan, but they allowed her to live independently as a reward for her long years of service. This move surprised many, since the Crane are not prone to letting go of such an asset, but since her shop opened ikebana has become a very popular art in the Second City, which might be what the Crane were trying to achieve. Hatsu has never married, saying she always had too much work to do so. She maintains a small shrine to Ko-no-hama, the Fortune of Flowers, next to her shop, and sometimes speaks of retiring to devote her life fully to the Fortune. Of course, she has no one to inherit the shop, and all agree its closing would be a terrible loss.

The Temple to Sadahako

A pious shugenja might be pleasantly surprised to see this large temple in such an otherwise worldly district, all the more given it is well decorated and perfectly maintained, receiving visitors every day. However, he would doubtless frown when he heard which Fortune is venerated here: Sadahako, the Fortune of Geisha and Arts. Commonly believed to be a geisha elevated to Fortune status by a Hantei Emperor who fell in love with her, Sadahako had Arts added to her portfolio to make her slightly less scandalous, but the fact remains that she is a

Fortune dedicated to a class of hinin. The Artisan District has heartily embraced this controversial Fortune as its patron, and shows considerable devotion to her despite her reputation.

The building itself is a work of art – hardly surprising in this part of the city. Large paintings adorn its walls and even the furniture is elaborately sculpted. Geisha musicians are hired to play music throughout the day and sometimes at night too, and fresh flowers are placed every morning in all corners of every room. In the evening, lanterns of varying colors and shapes are hung around the Temple, painted with blessings which are themselves beautiful examples of calligraphy. Once a year, during the Festival of Sadahako, all the temple's works of art are gathered and burned, symbolizing the fleeting nature of both life and art, only to be quickly replaced thereafter. The Festival, barely noticed in most places, is something of a favorite within the District and many residents believe Sadahako has blessed the Second City. The celebration is as spectacular as many major festivals in Rokugan, complete with parades, street entertainment, and fireworks. Of course, a few unpleasant incidents usually take place as well, since drinking and carousing inevitably accompany any such public celebration. However, these are usually fairly minor.

The temple is administered by an aged nun named Shinoe, a woman who was once a geisha herself in her youth; she is assisted by monks who visit daily from the Temple District. Shihoe is a pious follower of Sadahako, loves the temple, and has helped it to reach the level of popularity it enjoys today. She knows the life of an aging geisha can be difficult, and in recent years she has been trying to promote the temple as an honorable place for her fellow geisha to retire and spend the last days of their lives, especially since it at least provides an echo of the beauty which is such a vital part of the willow world. However, she is also very strict on insisting that anyone who comes to the temple must join the Brotherhood in truth, shave their head, and live without the slightest personal luxury. Needless to say, such a transition is difficult at best for a geisha, and she has found few adherents so far.

Setto's Little Puppet Theater

The streets of the Artisan District are known to occasionally echo with the laughter of both children and adults; when this happens, it is usually because of Setto's Little Puppet Theater, an entertainer who sets up on the streets wherever he can find a crowd. Setto has a real talent for comedy, along with the experience of generations of puppeteers before him, and he has acquired quite the loyal audience for his little performances. The Second City's more relaxed attitude towards commoner entertainers has also allowed him to attract some favorable samurai attention. His plays are light-hearted comedies which usually include some kind of simple moral lesson, with names such as "Hito the Drunken Monk" or "The Farmer who had too much rice." Setto is a devout adherent of the Tao and always try to spin Shinsei's wisdom into his plays, something which draws approval from those monks who

have watched his shows. The common people love him and always come in large numbers to his performances.

Recently the Governor herself has hinted that Setto's talent should be recognized, occasionally going so far as to suggest that perhaps he might be permitted to swear fealty to a samurai vassal family. Such rumors terrify Setto, who is at peace with his lowly social status and has no idea how he could possibly live as a samurai. Moreover, he has a wife and two children, and worries what might become of them if the Governor decided he should be a samurai. Setto has begun thinking of packing up and relocating his Puppet Theater to some other holding, but with the fame he's gathered here this would be a very difficult prospect.

Kaiu Himora's Smithy

The smithies of the Artisan District are a sharp contrast with the beautiful gardens and glamorous theaters of the rest of the district. Squat unadorned buildings, workrooms emitting smoke and noise from early in the morning to late at night, they are all places of hard work for samurai and commoners alike. Still, the inhabitants make sure to keep the streets clean and offer a warm welcome to visitors, patrons, and customers who wish to commission the creation of a new masterpiece or simply to admire the process of creation itself.

Kaiu Himora stands aside from these cheerful artisans, and so does his house – he refuses to allow anyone else to set up their workshop nearby, and has been known to bring his hammer to those who thought of defying him. His smithy always seems to be the first one to be active and the last one to go quiet, and the peasants from the neighboring district always seem to bring him more steel and carry away more byproducts than at any other place. Himora doesn't have any servants, and his workplace and house have become very dirty and even begun falling into disrepair in recent years, but no one dares ask him to change this. However, those who know about weapons and armors always come to him before they visit any other smith in the District.

Kaiu Himora once was a warrior of the Crab Clan, trained in the Hida School and serving on the Wall alongside his fellow Crab. His career was cut short when an oni bit his right leg off just over the knee. Unable to fight and too young to retire, Himora was sent back to his family and re-trained as a smith – the ever-practical Crab were not about to waste a young man who could still serve them in some way. Himora hated the idea, and spent his training drinking heavily and quarreling with his fellow students and even his sensei. Recognizing he was a potential loose cannon, the clan shipped him to the Colonies as soon as his training was complete. There, it was hoped, he would avoid getting into too much trouble.

In the Second City, Himora found himself with literally nothing to do but work at the smithing he despised. Besides, throwing himself into his work helped to distract him from the continuous pain of his lost leg. Despite his lack of proper motivation, Himora has actually grown into an excellent smith, and experts in the craft say his



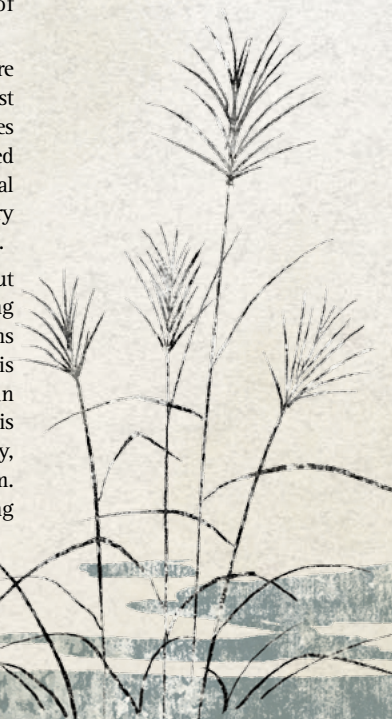
weapons and armors reflect his violent and tormented nature, making them good fits for aggressive warriors on the battlefield. He is very difficult to negotiate with, since he is often drunk and usually insulting. One of the only men able to get along with him on a regular basis is Yasuki Kairu (described in *Chapter Four: The Merchant District*), who regularly obtains armors from him.

Shiba Donoka's Sculpture Gallery

A large one-story building located near the middle of the Artisan District, Donoka's Gallery offers young sculptors the opportunity to showcase their talent in hopes of being noticed by potential patrons. The gallery is simple, little more than several large rooms where the most recent pieces are put on display – usually with an accompanying note identifying the artisan. A few critics have raised their voices against the Gallery, saying it debases art into commerce, but most understand that it is the best way to quickly review a variety of artists – and of course there is no actual exchanging of money.

A few rooms in the Gallery are set apart to display more impressive works on a semi-permanent basis. The most famous of these is the Kami Room, which holds only statues of the sons and daughters of the Sun and Moon. It is rumored Donoka also has an Ivory Room which contains several impressive sculptures salvaged from the ruins of the Ivory Kingdom, but if so, he only shows it by personal invitation.

Shiba Donoka is himself a sculptor of some skill, but discovered years ago that he had more interest in collecting statues than creating them. Several courtiers and artisans owe him favors, but Donoka seldom calls them in; he is genuinely interested in promoting new artists rather than gathering fame or influence for himself. In fact, none of his own sculptures have ever been showcased in the Gallery, although it is said he has some of them in a storage room. Donoka always deflects queries about his own work, saying his sculptures are too mediocre to be shown in public.





The House of the Sparrow's Song

This geisha house is generally considered the best in the Second City (although the House of the Black Lily is preferred by some), and lies right in the heart of the Artisan District's Licensed Quarter. It is actually relatively small for a geisha house, being a single-story structure half-hidden behind a garden; at night, lanterns of a pale blue color adorn its front door, simple reminders of the house's Crane patronage. The House of the Sparrow's Song is one of the most exclusive geisha houses in the city, and entrance is on an invitation-only basis. Such invitations are highly sought, and many favors are discretely exchanged at court to acquire them – all to the great benefit of the Crane Clan.

The House only ever has twelve geisha present at a time (aside from apprentices), and its skill requirements are nothing short of exceptional. Geisha who aren't successful here will still be much in demand at other local houses, for the prestige of Sparrow's Song training is widely recognized. Those who do serve in the Sparrow's Song are all incredibly beautiful and highly skilled in many arts. Sojihime is known as one of the greatest dancers in the world, and many samurai would pay dearly for an appointment with her. Other famous attendants include Akihiko, whose skill with the biwa is so great several pieces have been composed specifically for her, and the lovely Hetsuhime, who is famous for having one blue eye and one green, an extraordinarily rare combination in Rokugan. The okaasan (madam) who runs the place is named Shigetsuko, and at thirty she is much younger than the average for her position; there are rumors that she retired from active work early because of an unexpected

child, though no one knows for sure. Although violence has never marred the halls of the Sparrow's Song, Shigetsuko still keeps two ronin bodyguards to make sure this remains true; even these ronin are well-mannered and clean, lest they mar the house's spotless reputation. Some rumors claim they are former members of the Kakita family, although others question whether a former Crane would wish to work at a Crane-sponsored establishment.

The House of the Black Lily

The principle rival to the House of Sparrow's Song for the position of the most popular geisha house in the Licensed Quarter, the House of the Black Lily is a much larger building, two stories high with large balconies and windows, keeping it cool during the hot Colonial summers. The balconies are also sometimes used by the resident geisha for open-air performances of dance and music. House tradition dictates each customer must bring a flower to the geisha he is visiting, so the Black Lily is usually full of pleasant fragrances. Black Lily geisha are particularly famous for their unique music, which is traditional in form but has not been tied to any known composer. Some believe identifying the composer will lead to some kind of reward, such as free access to the House or special visits with the best of the ladies.

It should come as no surprise that this shrewdly-run business is controlled by a member of the Scorpion Clan, namely a woman named Shosuro Chiriko. It is unusual for a samurai to directly manage any business, let alone a geisha house, and Chiriko encourages an air of mystery about herself. Even other Scorpion do not seem to know much about her. Chiriko wears a full-face Kabuki-style porcelain mask when she is in public, and always speaks in a soft and pleasant voice. Her presence in the House of the Black Lily is self-effacing, and many customers do not even realize she owns it. A scandalous rumor claims Chiriko occasionally dons the attire of a geisha to perform herself or even to entertain romantic affairs with samurai, and given that nobody has ever seen her face such fanciful speculation will doubtless continue – though no one knows where the rumors came from in the first place. Regardless, the Black Lily prospers and a steady flow of koku (and of gossip and information) passes from the house to the Scorpion Clan.







- 1 The Mouth
- 2 Spider Champion's Residence
- 3 Shinjo Stables
- 4 Jigoku's Eye
- 5 Vendetta's Strike Dojo
- 6 Eta Village
- 7 Headman's Estate

THE PEASANT DISTRICT

All Rokugani cities have sections where peasants and eta live, cordoned off from the rest of the city where samurai dwell. These places are often crude or run-down parts of the town that most samurai would never lower themselves to visit. Of course, they are usually not outright pits of filth, since daimyo are expected to house and protect their peasants in the name of the Empress and all samurai despise dirt. However, rare is the samurai lord who goes out of his way to make sure his peasants have pleasant and clean accommodations.

In the Second City, the most obvious indication peasants are treated differently than in the Empire is the clean and well-organized area known as the Peasant District. While this is not an official name in the same manner as other Districts, the name is used for this part of the city everywhere except in official recorded documents. There the region is referred to somewhat vaguely as the “Southern District,” and is acknowledged as the part of the city dedicated to receiving raw materials such as stone and lumber.

One of the main reasons for the Peasant District’s unique situation is that it became evident very early on in the colonization of the Ivory Kingdoms that peasant labor was at an extreme premium. While peasants who could survive the trip to the Colonies and adapt to the new environment weren’t entirely rare, they certainly weren’t as common as samurai would have liked. Early accidents, encounters with unknown beasts and spirits, contact with foreign disease, and many other

such factors led to steady attrition among the peasants shipped to the Colonies. Eventually, it became clear that not only were samurai themselves going to have to help with construction and labor now and then, but also that the peasants themselves would need to be managed and protected much more carefully than in Rokugan itself.

When work on the Second City began in earnest, dozens of bushi were assigned to keep a rotating watch over the peasants while they worked and rested. This close association brought both familiarity and a renewed sense of duties and obligations between samurai and peasants. Later, it also impacted the Peasant District’s construction. Due to the military minds of those overseeing the construction, the area relegated to the peasants on the southern side of the city walls was somewhat better organized than those found in the Empire, where construction is usually haphazard and unsupervised.

Because of the unusual samurai presence in the area, merchants began purchasing the rights to build tea and noodle houses in the area, and eventually some of them even established an inn-like business that was used by the samurai guards as a barracks. This mingling between noble and peasant castes also meant the samurai were more vigilant in ensuring the area was cleaned regularly and that structures were kept in good repair. It only took one peasant death due to a hut collapsing to outrage the bushi who had spent months protecting such people from wild animals and native cultists.



After the city proper was completed, more housing continued to be built in the Southern District as additional peasants trickled into the Colonies (not to mention a few surviving Ivinda natives who chose to live among them), and there were even some efforts at constructing a wall around the area, although it has so far never amounted to more than a modest stockade. In a surprising turn, a few samurai elected to have their own living quarters raised in the new Southern District as well. This was usually written off as a convenience for those who spent a great deal of their duty time with the peasants, as well as a way to alleviate space concerns in the increasingly populated Military District. Still, it was another step toward better relations between the castes.

This increased familiarity has raised some concerns from time to time; for one thing, both samurai and peasant have overstepped the bounds of propriety more than once. Such men and women are quickly reprimanded, but usually not as harshly as they would be in Rokugan; many authorities realize that such incidents are a natural consequence of the unusual situation in the Colonies. Eventually, the problem was alleviated by a formal decree that samurai who made their homes in the Southern District could only do so within a relatively short distance from the Military District, re-establishing at least a partial barrier between the two castes.

The only exception to this rule has been the members of the Spider Clan. The decision of Governor Ikoma Karatsu to place the majority of Spider Clan holdings in the Southern District – including the residence of their Clan Champion – was widely seen as a thinly veiled insult to the Spider, but the small clan agreed to the decree without any outward sign of irritation. In point of fact, the Spider Clan has often posed as self-appointed protectors of the lower castes, and the more idealistic in their ranks seem to genuinely believe this, so from their viewpoint placing most of their holdings in the Southern District was perfectly suitable. Besides, it put their activities out of sight of the majority of samurai in the city, not a bad thing at all given their difficult relations with the rest of the Empire.

Besides the vast number of peasant residences that comprise most of the buildings in the District, the other easily notable feature of the area is the large processing center known as the Mouth that dominates its southern half. The Peasant District was originally imagined as both an area for peasants to live but also a place to deal with raw construction materials, so a great set of walls was erected with no roof and several large entrances from any direction. Effectively, it is a large open area warehouse, housing massive amounts of raw material for the city's ongoing construction efforts. The Mouth is a place where peasants chop and tear at rough stone or felled trees until they are in a shape suitable for the needs of the city. At the moment, the Mouth is primarily used for stockpiling supplies against future needs, since the city is currently not undergoing a major construction effort. Samurai visit the Mouth regularly, since enterprising courtiers and merchant patrons often find ways to manipulate – legally or otherwise – the stockpiles to support their personal endeavors.

Since the Mouth is such a vital part of the colonization effort, the area is patrolled regularly, making it possibly the safest section of the city outside of the Imperial District. Many believe this is also owed to the strong Spider presence – whether the clan's overall dark demeanor or the constantly roaming well-armed sohei contribute more to this is a matter of some debate.

The ultimate irony of the Peasant District is that it is a place where a peasant revolt would be nearly unthinkable – the peasants are simply too afraid of what lies outside the city walls – but nonetheless they must be treated with care and delicacy since they simply cannot be replaced quickly or cheaply.

Relations to Other Districts

The Peasant District sits in the center of a large contradiction within the Second City. It is possibly the most important part of the city due to its contributions to the colonization effort, but few would ever be caught saying so out loud. It is largely free of crime and dirt, but is seen as a disreputable place where most samurai are discouraged from spending time. The peasants themselves are allowed a significantly larger amount of freedom here than they might have in the Empire, but rarely exercise it for fear of having it taken away. This has led to some interesting associations between this section of the city and the others.

The Imperial District

Since the proper samurai's reaction to peasants is to either ignore them or politely ignore them, the members of the Imperial District have no official ties to the Peasant District. That being said, only a fool would turn a blind eye



to the works within the Mouth, and every leader in the city is fully aware of how important the safety of the peasant class is here. From this tension springs a unique mental game of ensuring the peasants are managed effectively and even carefully, without appearing to be interested or concerned with them.

Several members of the Imperial bureaucracy here are assigned the task of overseeing and tallying the production from the Mouth. The previous Governor was smart enough to make sure such functionaries were the type of samurai who would show at least some empathy towards the lower classes. The new Governor has not yet indicated whether she will continue this practice, however.

As for the peasants themselves, in point of fact many of them work as servants among the nobles of the Imperial District; they are quite accustomed to the behaviors, needs, and habits of samurai. They understand very well that their position in the Second City is both unusually good and unusually precarious, and they have been known to turn on one of their own who causes trouble or attempts to improperly exploit their situation.

The Military District

Those warriors who come to the Second City from Rokugan are often perplexed by the unusually accommodating attitudes their fellow samurai have for the lower caste here. Occasionally, this results in a particularly high-minded bushi coming into the Peasant District, often fresh from the Empire, and attempting to make a few examples so the peasants will remember their proper place. While the peasants have no particular legal recourse in this case, they have become very adept at dropping subtle hints to the more seasoned veterans of the city about what has happened. The Crab, Unicorn, and Spider are especially unforgiving of one of their kin doing such a thing, and in the end it is often the transgressor who becomes the true example. Depending on the offense, the bushi in question may be strongly reprimanded by his superiors, humiliated in front of his peers, or even severely beaten in a sparring match that “accidentally” goes too far.

Beyond this relationship, the peasants who are directly responsible for stonework and metalwork tend to be deemed more important by the Military District than the others. Harming such an important worker, or allowing harm to come to one, has led to shameful demotions, re-assignment to obscure duties, and other such penalties.

The Temple District

When the Temple District was established, it was made known to the lower castes that they would be welcome among the temples and shrines there. The goal of the Temple District was to help Rokugani so far from home retain a spiritual connection to the Heavens and their mother Empire, and the peasantry was no exception to this.

Despite this open invitation, the peasants rarely enter the Temple District outside of major events such as religious festivals. Though their overall standard of living is much higher here than in the main Empire, the notion of



“free time” is still practically unknown to them. Something always needs to be built, repaired, or reinforced, the farms and rice fields need constant tending, and the work at the Mouth never ends. When the peasants manage to get some time to themselves, they’re usually too exhausted to even consider walking all the way to the Temple District, regardless of its relatively close location.

Several peasants with unusually friendly (even for the Second City) relationships with samurai have humbly suggested that small shrines and temples be allowed in the Peasant District. The monks and shugenja of the Temple District find this notion disturbing for several reasons, and have instead attempted to make their section of the city more accessible to the lower castes.

The Artisan District

The Artisan District emerged as something of a natural evolution of the space between the peasants and the merchants. Many skilled artisans and laborers among the peasantry were not directly responsible for selling the crafts they worked on, but the merchants they worked for realized the benefit of having their workshops in closer proximity. Consequently, there are a fair number of commoner craftsmen who live in the Artisan District – usually either skilled workers or their apprentices. (The merchants, of course, prefer to live in their own district.) Transition from the Peasant District to the Artisan District is seen as one of the few methods of social advancement for a peasant in the Second City.

Much like the rest of the peasantry, the commoner artisans who live here have an unusually large amount of clout due to the nature of the city. Because of this, canny nobles rightly fear a collaboration between these two Districts might cause a significant threat to the overall power of the samurai caste. Thus, peasant members of the Artisan District are often quietly but firmly separated from their previous peers through housing assignments and scheduling.

The entertainers of the Artisan District are another matter entirely. Although they are always of peasant extraction, once they become actors or geisha their connections to the



Peasant District are immediately severed and they become part of a separate sub-community, one as isolated from the rest of the city as the eta.

Important Personages

The Merchant District

Commoner merchants of many stripes are not uncommon anywhere in the Empire, but in the Colonies the samurai caste has considerably more involvement in matters of trade and sales. Because the jungles of the former Ivory Kingdoms represent such a major source of new resources and a booming market for imported goods that would be common in the Empire, samurai see many more opportunities for enriching their clans and tend to supervise their peasant merchants much more closely than they would in Rokugan. On the other hand, commoner merchants tend to get considerably wealthier in the Colonies than they could back on the mainland. Those commoner merchants who live in the Second City generally do so within the Merchant District itself, holding apart from the laborers, farmers, and craftsmen who live in the Southern District. On the other hand, the constant mercantile activity in the Merchant District does create a perpetual demand for physical labor, and a significant minority of peasants work there during the day, usually as the hired help of one or another merchant – moving goods from one District to another or loading them to and from convoys from Rokugan.

The second book in this box set – Second City: The People – contains a modest array of commoner NPCs who the GM may use to populate the Peasant District. However, this section offers a few more specific inhabitants.

TOMO

PEASANT HEADMAN OF THE MOUTH

Like many men in his position, Tomo has known his entire life that while his primary duty is service to the samurai caste, his primary concern will always be survival. Unlike others, though, his concern for survival doesn't stop with himself. Early in his childhood, Tomo saw how his fellow peasants would fall upon each other for a small scrap of approval or reward from a samurai, and it disgusted him. Could they not see how they were being exploited? Could they not see that in such actions they weren't even peasants, but dogs – except dogs knew how to work together in a pack? From this, the young boy learned that without leadership, peasants were less than nothing.

Tomo and his family were relatively fortunate in the sense that they were workers for an offshoot of the





Yoritomo family – a noble house with a reputation for lenience and fondness toward the lower castes. Tomo's father and oldest brother died fighting in service to the Mantis during the Destroyer invasion of the Tsuruchi lands. They were proud to fight and die for their masters, since the Yoritomo nobles they served had always been fair and just with them. From this, Tomo learned that the Celestial Order could work properly if both sides displayed loyalty in turn.

The young man was sent to work with the Mantis shipwrights early in his adulthood, and he attempted to cling to these two childhood lessons as best as he could. He made efforts to create solidarity and bonds of friendship among his peers, and he encouraged them to show the Mantis they were more than simple mindless farmers and laborers. Higher regard could be earned, he told them, and a worthwhile master would reward worthwhile servants.

Tomo's philosophy earned him several quiet enemies, not the least of which were merchants who often attempted to use the peasants for their own ends. These merchants would intentionally encourage shoddy workmanship or the use of inferior materials so that they could sell the samurai additional materials for repairs or new ships. The merchants, in turn, would reward the saboteurs with a pittance of money compared to what they were profiting. No one had truly caught on to their scheme yet, and Tomo posed a threat to that – he was canny enough to perceive what was afoot, and his lessons of loyalty began to discourage the other peasants from continuing to be used.

A week before Tomo would have the chance to speak in private with his samurai master, the merchants struck. They convinced their Mantis samurai patrons to send Tomo and several of his fellows to the Colonies. After all, their work ethic was beyond question and they were loyal to a fault. Such men would be priceless in taming the savage lands. The Mantis agreed, and the merchants even managed to earn a bonus payment for such clever thinking. Three days later, Tomo found himself on a ship bound for the former Ivory Kingdoms. From this, he learned a harsh third lesson – loyalty and duty are sometimes overcome by greed and wickedness.

At least, Tomo, thought, he would not have to worry the ship he was currently on would fall apart.

Tomo was soon assigned to the work in the Mouth, the large center for collecting and refining raw materials secured from the surrounding jungles. It was only a year before Tomo was a favorite of both peasant and samurai alike, and shortly thereafter he was made the headman of the Mouth. Due to his perceived trustworthiness, few questioned the strange death of his predecessor. No one knows that Tomo led the man to his death. In Tomo's view he was a despicable man who did not value his underlings, allowed the work of the Mouth to be manipulated by the clans for his private gain, and had no respect for the great work they were doing.

Tomo is now past forty, old for a peasant. He has come a long way from the idealistic young man he once was, and he sometimes allows bribes, personal arrangements, and other such covert exchanges to happen under his watch so long as he believes the greater good is served. He is still fiercely loyal to his fellow peasants and to his duty, but he

also knows he cannot afford to be naïve about what must be done to protect both.

TOMO, PEASANT HEADMAN

AIR: 3	EARTH: 3	FIRE: 3	WATER: 3	VOID: 2
AWARENESS: 4 WILLPOWER: 4 INTELLIGENCE: 4				
Honor: 4.7		Status: 0.0	Glory: 3.5	
School/Rank: None				
Skills: Athletics 2, Craft: Carpentry 5, Craft: Shipbuilding 6, Commerce 4, Etiquette 3, Intimidation 2, Jiu-jutsu 3, Knives 4, Lore: Bushido 5, Lore: Mantis Clan 3, Medicine 4, Sailing 2				
Advantages: Hero of the People, Higher Purpose				
Disadvantages: Social Disadvantage (heimin)				

SHINJO EUN-SAHNG

Many in the Second City believe Shinjo Eun-Sahng may have been the very first samurai to be commissioned as one of the Imperial Explorers. He is advancing in years, has a great deal of scars, and knows the dangers and pathways of the Colonies as if he had spent a hundred years there. He has learned to read and speak Ivindi, the lost language of the Kingdoms, can recognize the region where a native was born by looking at him or speaking with him, and is often called upon by the scholars in the Imperial and Temple districts for his opinion on native matters.

Eun-Sahng is a consummate survivor, scout, tracker, and warrior. Years of service to the Empire have forced him to watch many times as his brothers in arms, often seasoned bushi just like him, had their lives snuffed out by dangers unknown to them beforehand. They were careful and made no mistakes, they simply could not have known what was about to happen to them. Jungle predators, unseen sicknesses, cursed ruins, and the like caught them in ways they could not have prepared for and sent them to their ancestors. For a warrior such as he, these deaths felt pointless and cheap. Eun-Sahng knows life is not fair, but he feels a certain frustration that such experienced men and women could be swept aside without any chance of survival. He knows that for all of his training and experience, it could have just as easily have been his death in any of those incidents. He constantly mourns all of those he has lost, and feels no accomplishment or pride when people note he is one of the longest-lived of the Imperial Explorers in the history of the Colonies. He simply feels like a man who has managed to win a game of chance every day for the past three decades.

Many seek out Eun-Sahng's advice and guidance on matters pertaining to the jungles and natives of the Ivory Kingdoms, and he is often called on to personally escort elite members of the nobility when they travel to or from the Second City. He has even been ordered to guide the Spider Clan Champion on several occasions, a duty he thoroughly despises. That so many have died so that he might live and keep such a man as Daigotsu Kanpeki alive offends him deeply, but nonetheless he performs his duty without hesitation. Duty is, in some ways, the only thing he has left.



Like any dutiful samurai, the grizzled Shinjo never speaks an ill word of the Colonies, the wisdom of the Empress, or the price paid for the resources of the fallen Ivory Kingdoms. However, deep within his heart, he is completely sure that coming to these lands was a horrible mistake. There is nothing but death and sorrow here – if not the immediate sort, then the kind that slowly rots and destroys life and joy. He knows these thoughts are blasphemous since they contradict the will of the Child of Heaven, and he does his best not to show them. He lives quietly in a small house on the northern edge of the Peasant District, avoiding contact with other samurai except when his duty requires. And since those who seek him out only wish to speak to Eun-Sahng the famed Explorer, rather than conversing with him on a personal level, hiding his true thoughts has been fairly easy... so far.

SHINJO EUN-SAHNG

AIR: 3	EARTH: 4	FIRE: 3	WATER: 4	VOID: 3
REFLEXES: 5	AGILITY: 5	PERCEPTION: 5		
Honor: 6.7	Status: 3.4	Glory: 5.7		

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 3/Imperial Explorer

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Horsemanship 7, Hunting (Survival) 6, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 7, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: Ivory Kingdoms 6, Spears 4, Stealth 5

Advantages: Wary, Way of the Land (Second City and surrounding Colonial Area)

YAMAZAKI SPIDER MONK

The new generation of the Spider Clan, now a reluctantly recognized part of the Empire, is in many ways embodied in the zealous young monk named Yamazaki. He believes fervently in the superiority of the Empire, the truth of the Celestial Order, the righteousness of the Child of Heaven, and the destiny of the Spider Clan as conquerors in the Empress' name. He practices his martial arts as a form of devotion to Rokugan and to the Kami, and believes the words of his masters are the will of the universe made manifest.

Yamazaki's parents were both members of the same Order he serves, and he was born in the Second City within a year of its original founding. He has never visited Rokugan, and only knows of it through stories and pictures of a far-off blessed land that he and his kin fight and die to bring glory to. While this is relatively common for the Daigotsu family, especially among the children of Tainted members who are forbidden among the Empire, few monks of the Order of the Spider or the Order of Venom have children, so Yamazaki is very much an oddity within an oddity.

To say he is a friendly man is not entirely correct, but he is far more conversational and curious than most warriors of his clan. Those outside the Spider are at best polite and distant to him, but more often he is disregarded coldly or rudely. As a Spider who never personally knew the conflict between his clan and the Empire, he finds it difficult to swallow his pride and accept these insults. Thus far he has done so without exception, however, since he understands that though the Empress has declared the Spider her personal wrath, few are willing to show as complete obedience as he does.

Yamazaki has been told on occasion that his curiosity and outgoing nature will get him in trouble one day, and his masters have warned him several times to avoid unofficial contact with the other clans whenever possible. However, since these are suggestions and not orders, he disregards them and spends time near any others who will tolerate his company. He is fascinated by visitors from Rokugan and often requests to be in their personal honor guard (if they are Spider) or to represent the Spider Clan when they are in public audience. As a result, Yamazaki has earned at least a modicum of recognition and grudging acceptance from some of the other clans.

If the young monk has any failing, it is that he believes too strongly and vocally that the peasants represent an all-too-often unappreciated facet of the Empire. They are inferior in many ways, but they devote their work to the Empire, and for that they deserve the protection of the Celestial Order. Failing that, they receive the protection of Yamazaki himself, who is a skilled combatant like most of his Order. More than once he has flown into a barely-controlled frenzy against anything or anyone who harms the peasants of the Second City. His zealousness is noted, and even praised in some regards, but it is a crack in his otherwise perfect restraint and control.

YAMAZAKI

AIR: 3	EARTH: 3	FIRE: 3	WATER: 2	VOID: 3
		AGILITY: 4	STRENGTH: 4	
Honor: 3.2	Status: 1.0	Glory: 2.4		

School/Rank: Order of the Spider Monk 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Jiu-jutsu 5, Lore: Theology 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Meditation 4, Polearms 2, Stealth 4

Advantages: Crab Hands, Dark Paragon: Determination

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation



Location Guide

Although the Peasant District contains fewer unique locations than the other districts of the Second City, there are still several interesting holdings found within its boundaries. The following section describes these.

The Spider Champion's "Stronghold"

The home of Daigotsu Kanpeki, lord of the Spider Clan, is a large but plain-looking samurai estate located near the center of the Peasant District. Most peasants avoid it completely, as dark rumors about the imposing Spider Clan Champion are generally taken very seriously by the lower castes. Its central location means staying clear of it can be quite a task, but most peasants are willing to endure the trouble in order to stay well away from the estate. Low stone walls mark the borders of Kanpeki's home, and a simple garden arrangement surrounds the house itself. This decoration is well tended but like the building lacks much in the way of flourish.

While this residence is not technically the stronghold of the Spider Champion, it is referred to as such by most in the Second City. Kanpeki is often in the Second City on business of one kind or another, but few of the peasantry know for sure when he is or is not present. Servants keep the home ready for their master to arrive at any given time – his comings and goings are unpredictable – and guards from both the Dragon and Spider Clans walk the grounds in light but regular patrols.

When Kanpeki is not in attendance the house is fairly quiet; the new Susumu family usually handles the political issues of the Spider Clan, and their members have limited access to the estate in their Champion's absence. However, even when he is present there is only modest traffic going in or out of the residence. Few outside of the Spider Clan itself have direct business with the Spider Champion, aside from the occasional official gathering in the Imperial District. He has been known to have guests here from time to time, but they are rarely allowed inside the home itself, instead being lodged in a guest-house behind the main structure. While this might be an insult in other situations, most of Kanpeki's guests are perfectly comfortable keeping their distance from his private life and meeting with him only in the open light of day. Indeed, many guests of the

Spider don't bother to avoid insulting their hosts and refuse to stay in the estate's accommodations at all, offering some flimsy excuse to avoid doing so.

Those that who have been inside Kanpeki's residence say the rumors of candles burning with black fire or tapestries painted in blood are nothing but pure fantasy. Much like its exterior, the building is well constructed, well kept, and very plain. If Kanpeki keeps a shrine to his father and patron Fortune, Daigotsu, he does so in his personal chambers where others do not venture.

The Shinjo Stables

One of the largest buildings in the Peasant District is the series of stables, barracks, and military offices maintained by the Unicorn Clan. This complex is built directly up against the northern wall of the District, bordering the Military District and flanking the gate between the two. The whole structure looks like a large gate-house with the main gates into the Military District piercing the middle. The Unicorn Clan, one of those clans traditionally closer to the peasant class than the others, makes its base of power in the Second City here. This means many Unicorn caravans (which account for nearly all the overland traffic with the distant Empire) travel through the Peasant District. This brings a great deal of traffic to peasant-run businesses such as sake houses and noodle shops, which would probably be enough to earn the adoration of the lower caste. In addition to that, however, the Unicorn patrol the Peasant District regularly. This mostly done as formation exercises and drills, but the end result is the same as if a small Unicorn army was guarding the area. Between these two factors and the pervasive presence of the Unicorn in the Colonies, the clan usually finds its samurai a welcome sight to all peasants.





The Mouth

If there is a beating heart of the Peasant District, it is the Mouth. Since the Southern District was originally the area where resources for building and trade were brought to the Second City, a central location where such things could be dropped off, tallied, worked, and secured was an obvious necessity. When the area south of the city was made a formal District, the city planners realized it would be wise to partition off the area with a series of walls. First, this helped maintain the security of the materials. Second, it made a clear marker of where the processing center's boundaries were, preventing other buildings from being erected too close later on. Lastly, since the District at the time had samurai living in many areas, it was a benefit to have the noise and sights of the ongoing work sealed behind sturdy walls.

The activity in the Stables themselves is non-stop, as scouts depart and arrive at nearly all hours, caravans check in or are inspected before they leave, and Unicorn bushi train and even live in the area. However, there is little actual presence of commoners in the stables themselves; only a handful of peasants, trained specifically by the Unicorn, are allowed to actually assist the samurai in tending their precious horses.

Much of the construction on this building is new. When the Southern District was first constructed, the Unicorn Clan petitioned to use this location as a permanent place to stable their mounts, a request which was approved. However, the Governor's attendants (who were largely Lion at the time, as was the Governor himself) made it difficult for the Unicorn to receive further funding or get approval to expand the structure. While many believed this was due to the history of antagonism between the two clans, the Governor's functionaries insisted it was simply that materials and space were at a premium and better used elsewhere. With the transition of power to a new Governor and, more importantly, the rise of a Unicorn to the new position of Ivory Champion, this has changed drastically. While the Unicorn have always had a strong military presence in the Colonies, they are now accumulating great political prestige as well. Thus the Stables have added several smaller offshoot structures, including guest chambers used to host formal visits from other clans. Indeed, it is probably fair to say that today the Stables are more important to Unicorn political efforts in the Second City than their actual embassy in the Imperial District.

While the Mouth is not physically in the center of the District, all of the area's streets and paths are built with easy access to it in mind. It rests near the southern edge of the District's walls, and there is a large well-fortified gate that gives access directly from the outer lands to the Mouth. The gate to the Mouth was constructed by the Kaiu for both durability and swiftness of movement – more than once a wild animal (or something less natural) attempted to gain entry into the city by waiting until a caravan passed through. The gate has a series of weights and wheels that allows the valves to be slowly moved open or closed, but also to be quickly slammed shut – though this causes a great deal of noise and can potentially damage the mechanism.

This area is always kept well-lit, even at night, and work goes on here for as much as twenty hours a day. This unusually harsh work schedule – even by peasant standards – is due to the importance of the Mouth to the ongoing colonization effort in the former Ivory Kingdoms. Because the Second City represents the most fortified settlement outside of the Empire, it is the only place that raw materials can be safely and reliably worked into more useful forms – trees cut into lumber, stone chiseled into useful blocks, and so forth. While some of the other smaller settlements may be able to work small loads of stone or wood for their needs, the vast majority of all buildings and improvements in the Colonies are built with materials that have passed through the Mouth.

Not every bit of material here goes directly to the expansion of the Empire, though. Naturally, influential samurai are able to purchase or otherwise lay claim to some of these shipments. Canny merchants early on set up a system whereby they would hire their own miners and lumberjacks, then pay a tax to the Second City governor

to have the materials processed through the Mouth's workers before being sent back to the Empire or on to other settlements for a hefty profit. Due to the staggering amount of material that comes through this facility, there are also plenty of opportunities to misdirect a small shipment or even cause one to completely vanish with few people noticing. In short, the operation of the Mouth is potentially rife with financial corruption and fraud. Those who engage in such behavior are extremely discreet and rarely bold enough to undertake large scale plans, since interfering with such a vital part of the Second City's operations would lead to severe consequences if anyone was caught.

Historically, the Mouth's overall operations have been overseen by the Crab, since the Kaiu family is often in charge of the various building and planning efforts throughout the Colonies. This in turn led to the Yasuki family stepping in when the Kaiu were too busy to deal with record-keeping and other such mercantile activities. More recently, the Yasuki overseers – who were never officially appointed by any Imperial authority – have been supplemented by the new Governor with a few Ide merchant patrons. The official reason for this was that the Unicorn already controlled the land route to the Empire – not to mention their strong presence in the District. However, some believe this is a political attempt to drive a wedge between the Crab and Unicorn Clans for unknown reasons.

“Jigoku’s Eye”

On the far southwest corner of the Peasant District rests a somewhat intimidating sight – a walled-in series of converted forges used specifically for the disposal of unneeded materials from the Mouth and other areas in the city. Things like wood shavings, limbs from felled trees, and other such detritus are all sent to Jigoku's Eye to be incinerated. The only things not burned here are corpses and wastes, which fall under the purview of the eta elsewhere in the District.

The Eye itself is something of a unique marvel of Kaiu ingenuity coupled with the practicality required by the situation. Based on the concept of a forge fire, the large stone structure has several “forges” connected together in a circle with their backs open, creating a large furnace. The heat of each independent forge can be shunted off, allowing several of the individual fire pits to be cleaned out and then quickly re-ignited with new materials and the heat from the adjoining forges.

Beyond the unusual design of the disposal fires, the Eye is notable in that it is always attended, and the blaze it houses has not gone out since it was originally constructed fifteen years ago. This is something of a point of pride for the peasants who help maintain it, and a superstition has arisen among the lower classes that the day Jigoku's Eye closes is the day total darkness will descend on the Colonies.

The amount of heat and energy given off by the furnace represents something of a frustration to the Kaiu who have

built it, as well as others who understand engineering on a basic level. Surely, many think, it could be harnessed in some way other than mere destruction. Several years after the Eye was finished, several Kaiu came up with an idea to enclose it and use a series of metal tubes and vents to provide on-demand heat to other Districts. Of course, the costs and logistics of the plan quickly proved absurd and the idea was dropped. Every few years, though, someone (usually a Crab) believes they have solved the problem and tries to begin the work anew. Every such attempt has proven fruitless, but that hardly stops the District and city from buzzing with the rumors of what such a thing could mean.

Naturally, less scrupulous individuals also understand that the Eye represents a different kind of resource – disposal of evidence. Murders are rare in the Second City, largely because the constant external threat causes the Rokugani to be much less apt to turn on each other; also, it is simply difficult to get rid of a body (or other evidence of a crime) when leaving the city walls is unsafe. The fires of Jigoku's Eye can solve this problem, though it is not easy to get past the ever-present workers and guards.

Venom's Strike Dojo

A community for the monks of the Order of Venom occupies the southeastern corner of the Peasant District, as far away from the eyes of the rest of the city as possible. The martial sohei of the clan chose this location not to avoid the scrutiny of others but simply to be left alone to practice their arts. Although the dojo is officially run by the Order of Venom, monks from both Spider Orders train here. They are hardly a welcoming community, but the Spider monks know as the largely un-Tainted face of their clan they would be foolish to turn away visitors or overtly discourage those who speak with them. However, they believe most outsiders simply wish to mock or sneer at them, so they try to make it difficult for casual onlookers to find them.

Part of the training in the dojo is to patrol the streets of the Peasant District at all times, and there are usually at least a dozen Spider sohei walking the streets of the District during the day. At first, the masters of the school contacted the Unicorn to work side-by-side with them in the defense of the District, but the Unicorn's memory of their manipulation at the Spider's hands was still fresh and they flatly refused. Since it was not illegal for the monks to wander where they wished in the area, they simply began to patrol on their own. At first, this caused considerable problems between the Spider at the dojo and the Unicorn in their stables to the north. However, over the years it has gradually led to a prickly but functional working relationship – if not an amicable one.

The monks trained in this dojo believe their first duty is to protect the workers and servants of the Second City, as it is their labor that actually brings the physical Empire to the borders the rest of the Spider expand through conquest. Some of the monks have even gone so far as to invite peasants to join them in their practices so



they can learn to defend themselves. Few peasants have taken the invitation, however, and fewer still are up to the standards the Spider monks place on them. Those who engage in the training and follow it through, though, are forever changed. They often profess to their family and friends how the other clans see the Spider wrongly and how the Spider Clan is possibly the last true defender of the common man.

Eta Village

Along the eastern wall of the Peasant District a community for eta has slowly evolved. While this is relatively unremarkable in any large city, since hinin are always required to undertake unclean tasks, in the Second City it is unusual in several ways. Few eta were transported to the Colonies when the expansion began and fewer still survived the rigors of the early settlement; to this day, it is rare for any eta to come along with the caravans and ships that transport peasants and goods to the Colonies. The reason for this is mainly that samurai do not really consider eta when making their plans. Even the most compassionate samurai tend to believe the eta are simply there, born from previous generations of eta. For that matter, high-born samurai can't really tell the visual

difference between an eta and a peasant, so they tend to assume eta are few in number.

As the Second City was established and expanded from a small settlement into a major city, the peasants realized they had a problem they could not accurately convey to their samurai masters. It was beneath even the peasants to do such work as to handle the dead, manage chamber pots, and other such disgusting and spiritually polluting tasks. With no ability to demand more eta be brought to the Colonies, however, the peasants decided on a course of action that has significantly shaped the behavior of the lower castes in the District: they would punish any of their own number who misbehaved by declaring them eta to the samurai.

Since the peasant caste here is treated better than peasants elsewhere, many of the lower-born believe they have a responsibility not to exploit or disrupt their situation. It is, after all, the best they have ever attained within the constraints of the Celestial Order. So when several peasants conspired together to effectively hold the work of Jigoku's Maw hostage for improved housing and treatment, others took drastic action: they went to the samurai and told them more eta had been sent from the Empire. Then they went to the would-be extortionists and told them the samurai were to meet with them about their



concerns. The conspiring peasants agreed happily, only to have the samurai inspect them like cattle, ignore their words, and assign them to work at the worst tasks possible. No samurai bothered to check where these new eta came from, and of course they didn't believe any stories about how they were actually peasants. The word of an eta is meaningless, beneath even contempt. To complete the lie, several construction workers hastily erected an array of additional shacks in the small eta section of the District, and the would-be rebels were banished to live there. They had no recourse, since raising a hand to the peasants now meant their death, and their newly assumed status meant they couldn't even look at or speak to a samurai in the limited way they had before.

After that, it was a simple matter to make the practice routine. The peasants realized the same thing the samurai did – workers were in short supply in the Colonies – so it was simply more efficient to have worthless or untrustworthy peasants “reassigned” rather than wait for them to commit a crime or otherwise get themselves killed.

The eta section of the District is a small community unto itself, and the rest of the residents avoid it. They know the majority of these “eta” were once their peers, and while they may have lost their status for good reasons, the peasants are still uneasy in their presence. To the samurai, the fact that the eta are ignored and shunned by everyone else is perfectly normal – after all, eta are to peasants as peasants are to samurai.

Besides its low-quality residences, the main structures in the eta district are several small stone crematoriums where bodies are burned in accordance with Imperial law. Samurai bodies are of course cremated in proper funeral pyres, but the myriad commoners who die every year must be dealt with more efficiently. Also, because hunting is much more popular in the Colonies than in the Empire, the crematoriums regularly dispose of unused animal parts.

Headman's Estate

Because the work of the peasants in the Southern District is such an important part of Rokugan's expansion in the Colonies, the headman here has a great deal of influence. The samurai caste recognizes it is easy to command obedience through respect or fear, but maintaining an efficient workforce requires more than that. To this end, the leader of the peasants here has to be a man who can ensure that efficiency and deal with samurai requirements without causing any problems. Different nobles have different demands on the peasants, but all must all be coordinated, so samurai often meet with the headman and various labor leaders at his home. An Otomo or Miya will sometimes be present to ensure the interests of the Imperial Throne are properly maintained.

This practice has led to the Second City's chief peasant having a rather nicer home than other peasants or even some of the less wealthy samurai. After all, samurai didn't wish to constantly have a commoner (headman or not) visiting their home, but they also tire of delivering their orders to a paltry peasant hut. Of course, this is no true estate – there are no gardens surrounding the home, no artwork on display or any other such sign of samurai life. It is merely a modestly-sized well-built house near the center of the District. The tradeoff for such opulence (by peasant standards) is of course that the home is constantly being used to give new work orders to the lower caste through their senior ranks. While most peasants have no real privacy, few are reminded of this so often as the ones who make their home here.

The current headman is a lanky, cautious, middle-aged man by the name of Mino. He is quite comfortable with his position, including both its benefits and its drawbacks. He is a skilled negotiator and leader who easily moves between the two worlds of samurai and commoner; he knows how to not appear too bold to the samurai or too out of touch with his fellow peasants. In truth, he has little emotional regard for either, having long ago reduced his view of the world to matters of production, coordination, and efficiency. He handles all personal and business matters through this perspective, and applies enough sincerity and false humor to maintain the veneer of a man who truly cares.





A NEW WORLD

Miya Kyunoru put the brush down and rubbed his eyes vigorously. At some point while he had been working, the sun had slipped beneath the horizon and the moon was now high above. He glanced over at the desk and was surprised to see how far the candle had burned down. Once again he had worked far too late into the evening, and when morning came he would deeply regret it.

Still, it was difficult to feel too much of the Third Sin. Kyunoru had trained in the Empire as an Imperial cartographer and had spent years poring over an endless series of maps that all covered the same familiar areas. He had become painfully acquainted with even the most minute variances in different depictions of the Spine of the World Mountains. Rokugan had existed for more than a thousand years and been mapped countless times. Discrepancies still existed, of course, but there was no excitement in the task of comparing and verifying such minor details. There was no spirit of exploration, no sense of adventure. When he had been assigned to travel to the Colonies and assist in the mapping of these vast new lands, Kyunoru's heart had soared beyond belief.

"Father?"

Kyunoru looked up to see his young daughter standing in her yukata, wiping at her eyes. "Sakura," he chided. "Why are you out of bed?"

"Why are you not in bed?" she replied, her tone innocent as only a child's could be. "It is the middle of the night."

"I know, little one," he said, walking to her and kissing the top of her head. "I was distracted and stayed up too late."

"Mother will be very cross with you."

Kyunoru grimaced at the thought. "Yes, well, these things happen. I was working. New scout reports came in."

The weariness was gone from her eyes at once, replaced by an all too familiar sparkle. "Can I see?" she asked eagerly.

Kyunoru chuckled. He could refuse her nothing. It was one more thing his wife would have to scold him for tomorrow. "Very well," he said, "but only very quickly!" He scooped her up and sat her at his desk, carefully unrolling the maps. "The Mantis scouts sent a copy of their most recent updates." He stabbed the middle of the scroll with a finger. "Do you know what this is?"

"Koshin Keep!" she said at once. "Named for the Fortune of Roads!"

The cartographer chuckled again. "That is what we call irony, my little flower. As it turns out, the Mantis discovered the ruins of another temple near their keep. You can see now that they have indicated the presence of such ruins here, here, and here." He punctuated each word with the stab of a finger.

"What about here?" Sakura asked, pointing at an obvious gap in the pattern of markers. She was such an intelligent child.

"Well, we shall have to see the next time the Mantis submit new maps," he said, smiling as she yawned. "Now I think it is time for all little explorers to be back in bed. Tomorrow is a busy day, you know. We have two mapping teams due back with reports."

Sakura gasped. "Can I be there when you go over the maps!"

"We will see, little one. Now, off to bed with you. With us both, I think!"



Twenty five years ago, the Divine Empress of Rokugan issued an unprecedented edict, commanding some of her vassals to travel to the Ivory Kingdoms and claim that land and its bounties in the name of the Emerald Empire. For more than two decades, the samurai of Rokugan have struggled to combat the hostile environment and dangerous creatures of the former Ivory Kingdoms, seeking to carve out new wealth and new homes in the name of their Empress, the Child of the Heavens.

A Dead Kingdom

A generation ago, the Ivory Kingdoms was a vast and thriving land, larger than Rokugan and far more involved with the world beyond its borders. Like the Emerald Empire, the Ivory Kingdoms had a rich and storied history, with waxing and waning conflicts over the course of its history. Many supernatural threats and internal wars had plagued it, but the forces of order had always prevailed, and the land itself remained vibrant and rich in resources.

At the time of their fall, the Ivory Kingdoms were ruled with unquestioned authority by a single monarch called the Maharaja, the highest-ranking member of the kshatriya warrior caste, which was in turn the most powerful noble caste of the people in those lands. Beneath the Maharaja were a number of lords, men blessed with the opportunity to serve the Maharaja directly, who were known as Raja. Each Raja was the head of a House which bore his name. The Raja were the highest servants of the Maharaja, and each had in their service hundreds or even thousands of noble kshatriya warriors, as well as brahmin scholars and priests, mystical gurus, and even wealthy merchants who were considered members of the nobility in their society.

Aside from the obvious domains of geography and climate, the principle differences between the civilizations of the Ivory Kingdoms and the Emerald Empire were philosophical in nature. They manifested in two significant ways. First, the xenophobia that so distinguishes the samurai caste of Rokugan (and indeed all the castes in Rokugan) was almost completely absent from the Ivinda, the people of the Ivory Kingdoms. They had no fear or presumption concerning outsiders, traded freely with many other cultures, and indeed enjoyed meeting people different from themselves. Unfortunately, geographic barriers – the desert and the ocean – limited how much interaction they could really have with outsiders, and the kingdom's most significant diplomatic contacts with other cultures were through trade with Medinaat-al-Salaam, the so-called Jewel of the Desert, a city-state far to the north in the depths of the Burning Sands.

The second primary different between the Empire and the Kingdoms was the deep-seated mistrust the noble caste of the Ivory Kingdoms had toward sorcery of all forms. In Rokugan, shugenja are revered and respected for their

ability to speak with the kami. The kshatriya, however, considered all forms of sorcery suspect, although they had a rich and varied cosmology associated with their religious beliefs. The brahmin priests of the Kingdoms taught about the gods and led the rest of the people in worship, but they firmly eschewed magic and limited their religious rituals to prayers and blessings, asking for the protection of their gods rather than invoking power for themselves. Today, some Rokugani suspect this blind mistrust of sorcery left the Raja and his people ill-prepared to defend against the blasphemous rituals of the Cult of Ruhmal, the sinister organization that created the Destroyer Horde and ultimately killed nine in ten of the Ivinda people.

The Ivory Kingdoms died in a rapid internal struggle with the Cult of Ruhmal several years before the onset of the Destroyer War. By the time that conflict ended and the Rokugani could begin to explore the former Kingdoms, the plants and animals of that nation had enjoyed almost a decade to reclaim what the kshatriya had spent generations building. Far worse, there were terrible secrets and dangers the noble warriors of the Kingdoms had imprisoned or driven away that now began to come back to haunt the graves of their enemies, leaving a region that, while it was incredibly rich in natural resources, was incredibly dangerous as well.

Travel Routes to the Empire

Travel to the Colonies from the Emerald Empire is not a simple matter regardless of the circumstances. The most direct overland route is blocked by a double barrier, the blight of the Shadowlands at Rokugan's southwestern border and the demon-infested jungles that border the Colonies to the east. Sadly, despite the cosmological changes in Rokugan's universe after the Destroyer War, travel through the deep Shadowlands remains excruciatingly dangerous at best and completely suicidal at worst. By necessity, this means any overland route from the Empire to the Colonies is a significantly longer roundabout approach.

Unfortunately, a route by sea is not much better. The waters around the Shadowlands have long been corrupted by that dark realm's influence, and they are called the Sea of Shadows for very good reason. Even if it were not for the multitude of unearthly creatures that call that region home, the water, the weather, the wind, and even time itself seem to conspire against those who attempt to sail through the accursed Sea. Many such ships are destroyed outright; many more simply disappear. Even those who survive are often left Tainted, maddened, or otherwise malignantly changed by the experience. So once again, in order to ensure consistent safety and success a roundabout path must be taken, sailing far out from the coast.

The overland route to the Colonies is the one more frequently used. It was first forged at the end of the Destroyer War, when the forces of the Unicorn Clan escorted a large number of Spider and Dragon to the northeastern reaches of the former Ivory Kingdoms. As a result, it was in the northern reaches of the new Colonies that their capital, the Second City, was eventually constructed, and the distance of the city from the southern coastline ensures the overland route is the most frequently used to transport goods to and from the Colonies. Over time this route has become popularly known as the Ki-Rin's Path. It originates in the western Unicorn provinces; several villages and towns there have roads that converge on the stronghold of Bugaisha at the oft-forgotten Khol Wall, a joint endeavor by the Unicorn and Crab that was intended to serve as a defensive fortification along the Empire's western border, but which now functions mainly as a symbolic boundary between the Unicorn lands and those beyond. From Bugaisha, overland caravans to the Colonies go through the pass known as Sorrow's Path and then descend into the vast empty plains called the Western Wastes.

The trip through the Western Wastes takes a minimum of three to four weeks, depending on the season and the weather. In the early days, when the Ki-Rin's Path was still being blazed, there were many problems with hostile wildlife, but after twenty years of Unicorn patrols those dangers are largely passed. Most of the truly dangerous creatures have been killed off, driven from the area, or have learned to avoid the large and well-defended caravans altogether. In modern times the only significant threat to the safety of those who travel the Ki-Rin's Path is the recent appearance of bandit gangs preying on the route. These assailants are of unknown origin and appear to be a mixture of different gaijin nationalities and races. The impetus behind the attacks, and the identity of those who would lead such strange rabble, remain a mystery.

The formal termination of the Ki-Rin's Path is at the northernmost border of what was once the Ivory Kingdoms, where the Unicorn have constructed a fortification called Journey's End Keep. The Keep is surrounded by a small city that thrives on the burgeoning trade between the Colonies, the Empire, and the gaijin peoples who live to the north in the Burning Sands. From Journey's End Keep the road continues south, where it eventually reaches the Second City, then briefly west to the major river near the city which the Rokugani have named the Shinano. From there the route continues south

again, often paralleling the Shinano River, through a secondary settlement called Twin Forks City and then along the western fork of the Shinano until it reaches the coastline at the Colonies' largest port, Kalani's Landing. While this southern portion of the Ki-Rin's Path is not formally part of the same route, everyone refers to the road by the same name.

The sea route to the Colonies has no formal name, but is well known to the cadre of Mantis Clan navigators who first plotted it and who continue to revise it as needed. Initially the route was considered extremely dangerous, due the great distances the Mantis vessels were forced to sail from the coastline in order to avoid the Sea of Shadows. However, after the clan discovered the fleet of larger, sturdier ships they call the Fourth Storm, the trip has become much easier and is used frequently. The time it takes to depart the southern ports of Rokugan and reach the major port of Kalani's Landing is roughly the same as the land route to reach the Second City, but since the Mantis dominate Kalani's Landing and have ample ships to make the trip, they vastly prefer it to the land route. Needless to say, they make a healthy profit off of shipping materials for other clans as well, and when bulk items like foodstuffs must be moved between Empire and Colonies the sea route is the only realistic option.



Welcome to the Colonies

The easternmost region of the former Ivory Kingdoms is the area generally referred to as the Colonies in formal correspondence, although in some circles it is also referred to as New Rokugan. This latter term is not favored among members of the Imperial bureaucracy, however, so it typically only sees use among the youth of the area, and then only in informal settings. Regardless of what it is called, however, this is the region that has been completely and successfully transformed from the overgrown jungle that confronted the first settlers into a reasonable facsimile of Rokugan itself. The rampant plant growth has been cut back and in some cases even replaced with plants either important from Rokugan or selected from the native life due to their resemblance to those found in the Empire. Hard-working farmers have transformed vast regions into farmland, terracing hills and constructing irrigation canals to ensure rice can be grown wherever possible, and adapting to the farming of acceptable native crops where rice cannot grow.

This region of the Colonies is the only one completely open to settling by the various clan representatives who have interests in the region. As a result, the landscape is dotted with various small holdings, villages, and outposts that owe allegiance to different clans depending on the circumstances of their founding. The land is not divided into provinces in the fashion traditionally used in the Empire, but this is only because settlements are so few and far between compared to the Rokugani norm. This makes the collection of taxes more complicated, but the Imperial

bureaucracy is happy to contribute to this extremely important effort.

One of the most prominent features of this region is its eastern border with the teeming jungle that has always defined the outer edge of the Ivory Kingdoms. This jungle adjoins the border of the Shadowlands somewhere far to the east, and the samurai of the Colonies consider it a suitable buffer between them and that dark realm. Early in the settlement of the Colonies there were several incursions into this dense, twisted, corrupted jungle region, but the samurai quickly discovered the wildlife in the region is vastly more dangerous than elsewhere; it is in many ways comparable to the Shadowlands in that regard. For whatever reason, however, the entities that dwell in the deep jungle are generally insular and inclined to keep to themselves, turning violent only when their territory is challenged. This is a stark departure from the denizens of the Shadowlands, of course, and the difference took some time to be understood by the newcomers. Eventually, however, the first Imperial Governor established a series of watchtowers along the border to ensure there are no incursions to threaten the Colonies.

The most significant holding in this region is of course the Second City itself. The seat of the Iweko Dynasty in the Colonies, the Second City is the only settlement in the entire region that can truly be called a city; there are others that use the name, but as an ambitious goal rather than a statement of fact. The Second City is the political, military, and economic capital of the Colonies, and virtually everything that takes place within the former Ivory Kingdoms either has its origin in or is quickly reported to someone within the city.

A few days north of the Second City, at the northern edge of the former Kingdoms, lies Journey's End City, which in truth is little more than a village built around a keep. This Unicorn Clan holding was constructed on the site where the samurai of Rokugan first arrived within the borders of the

Ivory Kingdoms, and is technically the terminal point of the Ki-Rin's Path that connects the two lands. Although only a fraction of the size of the Second City, Journey's End City is a vital point in the route that connects the capital with the distant Emerald Empire, as well as a hub for trade with the other cultures of the Burning Sands.

Well south of the Second City lies the second-largest settlement in this region, the Crane stronghold known as Twin Forks City. It is more accurately a town, but its size is closer to a city than most other settlements. Twin Forks is constructed at the fork of the Shinano River, which the people of the Second City use to carry passengers and cargo to the southern coastline. The western fork of the Shinano, the larger Dai-Shinano, continues south to the Mantis-dominated port called Kalani's



Landing, while the eastern fork (the Ni-Shinano) goes to a secondary Crane port called the Aerie. The existence of Twin Forks City and the Aerie has created a significant amount of strife between the Mantis and the Crane Clans, and some have expressed concern these two clans may be the first to go to war with one another within the Colonies.

The Ivory Coast

The Colonies have a long coastline on their southern border, allowing for a brisk naval trade that connects the land with the distant ports of Rokugan. The Ivory Coast is considered to be the smallest region in the Colonies, smaller by far than even the Empty Plains in the northwest, and consists only of the coastline proper and the low mountain range – more of a rugged hill-country – that separates it from the rest of the Colonies to the north. Despite this, it is one of the most heavily settled regions thanks to the various ports and their expansion into the lands between them.

By far the largest and busiest port along the coast is Kalani's Landing, a Mantis-dominated holding that is one of the largest settlements in all of the Colonies (after the Second City itself). It is also the oldest settlement, with its roots in the expedition the Mantis launched to the Ivory Kingdoms more than twenty-five years previously. It is named for Moshi Kalani, the commander of that expedition, who is said to have ordered the construction of the first true stronghold on this site. The vast majority of all cargo that leaves the Colonies bound for the Empire passes through Kalani's Landing, although a small portion does go through the neighboring port, the Aerie.

The Aerie is a port located to the east of Kalani's Landing, at the mouth of the eastern Ni-Shinano fork of the Shinano River. The Aerie is the only port city not controlled or dominated by the Mantis Clan, and was created the Crane after they called in a multitude of political favors to be given the right to do so. As one might imagine, the Mantis are greatly displeased at the Aerie's very existence, and seek to undermine its profitability at every turn. The Aerie's name comes from the high-quality falconry masters who reside there, and the area around the port is rife with small game, ensuring many nobles travel to the city to undertake teaching in the art of falconry, to engage in the art, or to purchase the paraphernalia of the sport. Another notable feature of the port is a small island off the coast, Miryoku no Shima, which is home to a small but very comfortable estate created by the Crane for the Dragon Clan. This was done in order to heal a few lingering wounds and resentments that were held over from the so-called War of Silk & Steel a generation ago, when the two clans found themselves at odds for some time.

The easternmost coastal holding in the Colonies is little more than a watchtower and surrounding buildings. It is alleged to be the location where the Mantis first sighted land after their long initial sea journey to reach the Ivory Kingdoms twenty-five years ago. This watchtower is



called Aramasu's Vigilance, after Yoritomo Aramasu, the Mantis Champion who aided the Ivory Kingdoms against the Cult of Ruhmal decades before. The purpose of the tower is to monitor the passage of any dangerous creatures from the Sea of Shadows into the waters along the coast, and of course to keep an eye out for any foreign naval threats. The former is a rare but occasional occurrence, while the latter has never happened so far.

The Empty Plains

The region that Imperial cartographers refer to as the Empty Plains is a rather large flatland essentially devoid of any major landmarks or important contents. The area is in the northwestern region of the former Kingdoms and is roughly rectangular in shape. It borders the Unknown Lands and the Frontier to the south, while its westernmost edge touches on the domesticated area referred to as the Colonies or New Rokugan.

The Empty Plains are largely featureless, with a mixture of expansive flatlands and intermittent low hills that obstruct long-range visibility. The predominant vegetation is grass, but there are many places that are almost entirely devoid of plant life, resembling scrubland or desert. This is a result of the weather in the region, which includes frequent storms both from the north and west. The storms from the north are dust storms, less common but more damaging, and originate from the vast empty scrubland Unicorn explorers refer to as the Western Wastes. The much more frequent storms from the west tend to be very intense thunderstorms, and while the rain they bring allows some life to survive in this environment, the rain and winds have such intensity they virtually destroy any larger plants or trees. This is to say nothing of the extensive lightning that accompanies these storms; some sections of the plains have outcroppings of glass, presumed to have been created by this same lightning.



There has been relatively little exploration of this region of the Colonies. Even during the height of the Ivory Kingdoms civilization there appears to have been very little in the way of development here, and the ruins here are few and quite far between. A few of the ruins are believed to actually predate the Ivory Kingdoms civilization, and may represent some prior empire or even a nonhuman culture of some sort, like the Naga ruins found in remote regions of the Emerald Empire. Unsurprisingly, the Empty Plains have experienced virtually no development since the arrival of the Rokugani. The Spider Clan, however, has seen fit to establish a few meager holdings within the region. Given the clan's secretive and isolationist nature, the region is a good fit.

The Frontier

The large central region of the Colonies is generally referred to as the Frontier. This region is not domesticated at all, but it has been more or less explored. This is not to say there are not regions that are poorly mapped or which contain undiscovered secrets, but the basic lay of the land has been assessed – predominantly by the Spider and Mantis Clans, as well as through the efforts of the Imperial Explorers. While it is true maps exist of this region and are reasonably accurate, it cannot be said this area is safe; far from it. The Frontier is filled with hostile wildlife and there have been numerous encounters with unidentified human forces that may represent feral remnants of the

Ivory Kingdoms or perhaps even the Cult of Ruhmal. There may even be forces from other nations hoping to capitalize on the death of the Kingdoms in the same manner Rokugan has.

As might be expected, there are very few settlements established in the Frontier region. One exception is the minor Mantis fortification known as Koshin Keep. The keep is named after the Rokugani Fortune of Roads, which the Tsuruchi commander who created the keep apparently thought was amusingly ironic. The keep is barely deserving of being called such, but it is at least a permanent structure carved from the wilderness, and allows Mantis scouts to rest and resupply in between their excursions. Another less well-known fortification inside the region is the Spider stronghold they refer to as the Keep of the Dead. This particular stronghold was constructed from a partially collapsed native structure the Spider forces discovered in the region. The original building appeared to be a mausoleum of some sort, although the corpses were mysteriously absent.

Other than these two holdings, there are no known major settlements or fortifications within the Frontier region. There are, however, a fair number of smaller outposts, often little more than a tower with an attached building. Many of these small structures were created by the Imperial Explorers and are intended for the use of any samurai who finds himself in need of shelter. The supplies within are restocked as often as possible, but many times the towers stand empty for weeks or even months. Still, shelter from





the elements and the wildlife can be enough to save one's life in a pinch.

Within the Frontier the clans have encountered a few indications that other outside forces are interested in the fate of the Ivory Kingdoms. Although nothing conclusive has as yet been discovered, there have been some interesting clues: artifacts clearly not of native Ivinda construction, too new to have predated the Kingdoms' death, have been found on at least three different occasions and appear to come from at least two different cultures. The true nature of these visitors remains unknown, since even the Unicorn have proven unable to identify them, but the Imperial Explorers are actively searching for any further remnants that might tell them more.

The Unknown Lands

At the western edge of the Frontier is a mountain range known by a number of different names. The Rokugani most commonly refer to it as the Ivory Mountains, although they also use the terms the Boundary or simply the Edge. The native Ivinda called these mountains the Vindhya. This mountain range marks the edge of the lands successfully explored by the forces of Rokugan. The Mantis and Spider have made a few limited incursions into the region most call the Unknown Lands, but they have only rudimentary maps of very small portions of the area; the vast majority is a complete mystery. It is regarded as one of the most dangerous areas in the known world, on par with the Shadowlands.

Although very little can be said conclusively about the Unknown Lands, it is believed this is where the worst portions of the fighting between the Cult of Ruhmal and the forces of the Maharaja took place. The foul sorceries of the cult may have contributed to the especially feral landscape in the region, because the limited experiences of the clans in this area seems to indicate there is a disproportionately large amount of hostile and supernatural wildlife (often both at the same time). Certainly some of the greatest and most terrible creatures the Rokugani have encountered dwell in this region. The Red Hunger, a serpent of truly epic proportions that swallows elephants like rice balls, is known to lair in the Unknown Lands, and it is far from the only such danger there.

The only known Rokugani holding in the entire Unknown Lands is another coastal settlement built by the Mantis Clan. Suitengu's Torch is the westernmost holding in the entire Colonies, and serves as both a beacon and a watchtower against the possibility of gaijin naval assault from the unknown lands to the west. Suitengu's Tower is a small holding with only a few dozen samurai posted there at any given time; it also boasts a handful of ships from the Fourth Storm that patrol the seas along the coastline. From here the Mantis have built a narrow, dangerous road north to the

ruins of the Maharaja's Ivory Palace and the vast devastated city surrounding it.

The ruins of the Ivory Palace are the most notable landmark in this entire region, and for good reason. The city that once stood there was as large as any found in Rokugan, and probably a good bit larger; it is difficult to tell due to the nature of the devastation visited on the area. Out of hundreds or perhaps thousands of structures not a single one remains intact. The palace itself has been all but ground to powder, with limitless treasures and secrets lost in its demise. The Mantis have conducted numerous expeditions into the area to try to recover something of value, but as of yet nothing significant has been found, only bits and pieces of artifacts and incomplete, partially-destroyed texts.

In addition to the known landmarks within the region, there are a number of rumored locations that would be of tremendous interest to the samurai of the Great Clans if they could be found. The first and most often spoken of is the alleged Great Temple of Ruhmal, the seat of power for the Cult of the Destroyer. Although no one would presume to claim artifacts from such a blasphemous location, there is not a single samurai in the Colonies who would not wish to claim the privilege of burning the temple to the ground if it could be located. Although there are very few samurai still active who served during the Destroyer War, the memories of the war are still very vibrant in the current generation.

Less often mentioned than the Great Temple of Ruhmal, but still of tremendous interest, is the rumor of a last surviving major settlement of Ivinda natives. There are known to be some survivors, of course; they are encountered periodically throughout the Colonies, and more than a few of them have wound up living and working alongside the Rokugani. On at least one occasion, a survivor has spoken to Mantis samurai of the so-called Last Village, which many believe to be a major hidden settlement. The survivor could not or would not provide additional information and subsequently disappeared, but the tale is well remembered and rumors of it have spread to all of the clans.



Life in a Strange Land

The Seasons and the Colonies

Doji Yamati frowned and mopped the sweat from his forehead as he stared at the intricately carved door in front of him. The door depicted Lady Doji bowing to the first Hantei on Seppun Hill, a smiling Lady Doji who looked substantially cooler than Yamati felt. The Crane grumbled to himself silently and rapped on the door again, louder this time. A few minutes later, a bleary eyed dark-skinned servant opened the door and inquired as to his business.

For a moment Yamati openly frowned at the man, who looked to have just awakened from sleep. A servant, asleep at midday? How lazy were these colonists? Then he schooled his face – not easy with a drop of sweat trickling into his eye – and said, “I am Doji Yamati, here to meet with Daidoji Kojira on behalf of my father, Doji Takashi.”

The servant looked the Crane up and down for a moment and said, “Recently arrived from the Empire, -sama?” Before the startled Crane could respond, the man bowed deeply. “I shall inform Daidoji-sama at once, Doji-sama.” He disappeared into the shadowed confines of the house, closing the door behind him.

Yamati stood in the blazing heat for almost twenty minutes before the door opened again to reveal a young woman in a kimono cut in a manner he could only describe as scandalous. Not to mention that there seemed to be only one layer of fabric! She bowed deeply and said apologetically. “Doji-sama, I am Daidoji Akia. My father will see you soon, please come in. I apologize for leaving you outside for so long. Fortunately the summer’s been mild so far... but you did come at midday.”

“What does it being midday have to do with discourtesy?” the courtier growled.

The young Crane woman looked confused for a moment, then bowed again. “Ah, you did not know? Here in the Second City we often rest during the hottest part of the day in the summer season. Very little business is handled during this time of day, I’m afraid. Most of us sleep so we might be refreshed for the rest of the day and the evening.” She smiled a dazzling smile, set off by her tanned skin, and gestured inside. “Please Doji-sama, come in.”

Yamati shook his head as he stepped into the stifling interior of the house. They sleep during the middle of the day? This is a mild summer? He had known that the Colonies would take some getting used to, but it seemed he had not truly realized what that would mean.

What does it mean to be Rokugani? This is a question that has troubled the Empire for the entirety of its existence. But with the creation of the Second City and the Colonies the question gains new importance. A generation of samurai and peasants have now been born and lived to adulthood in the Colonies without ever setting foot in the original Empire of Rokugan. What defines these colonists as Rokugani? And how has their new home changed them?

In a medieval society like Rokugan the seasons play a much more important role in their lives than they do in the modern world. In the Empire there is a strict understanding of what activities occur during each of the four seasons of the year. The spring is a time for planting and preparing for war; it is when new students are admitted to dojo, a time for introspection, for marriage, and for the appreciation of the rebirth of the world after the long winter. It is the season of cherry blossoms and birdsong. Summer is the season of war, when armies mobilize, crops grow, and the heat of the day slows the common people’s wits. In the fall, wars wind down, the leaves turn and fall, the harvests come in, taxes are collected, and the Empire prepares for the winter. Finally there is winter, the season of the courts. Every major stronghold in Rokugan holds a Winter Court which lasts the entire season, and in these courts the important issues of the Empire are discussed, peace is brokered, enmity turns to war, and art and culture are advanced. During the winter, while snow closes the roads, the peasants spend their time mending what was broken over the course of a long hard year, crafting new tools and clothing, and subsisting on the food they have stored away. For them it is time for family, for renewing the bonds of kinship that hold them together.

When the first settlers traveled to the former Ivory Kingdoms across the empty wastes from Unicorn lands, they expected the weather might be somewhat different from that of Rokugan, but none of them had spent a significant amount of time outside the Empire and they did not realize just how different the climate of the Colonies would be. They arrived during the season that would be the middle of Autumn in Rokugan and fully expected to face a tough winter in the near future; thus they spent the majority of their time building a camp to withstand the harsh winds and heavy snowfall they were accustomed to. However, those snows never came, neither that year nor any year after, and the settlers were able to spend their time building the village and fortress that would become Journey’s End Keep.

For the first few years the colonists were settling in to the former Ivory Kingdoms, they attempted to hold a traditional Winter Court at the same time as they would in Rokugan. However, eventually they realized this was actually a poor choice, since the Colonies’ weather during the “winter” is actually some of the best for planting, warfare, and exploration. With the permission of the Empress, the timing of “Winter Courts” in the Colonies was changed, rescheduling them for the season when the weather made significant work (and war) nearly impossible: the summer.



SECRETS OF THE COLONIES

GMs who have read our description of the Colonies will notice many potential adventure seeds and plot-hooks, such as the legends of a lost Temple to Ruhmal or the rumors of other gaijin operating within the Ivory Kingdoms. The “official” L5R storyline will eventually explore many of these plotlines, but GMs should not feel bound to wait for such events before launching their own adventures. Far from it! In fact, we have deliberately included all these references in order to provide inspiration for GMs who want to create their own epics within the Colonies.



Seasons in the Colonies

The seasons in the colonies are very different from those in Rokugan proper, so much so that some of them might not be recognized as seasons by traditional Rokugani. The few Ivinda who have become a part of the Colonies' society describe six separate seasons, but the Rokugani settlers tend to consider there are four seasons, a number that is comfortable and hearkens back to the more familiar patterns of the mainland Empire.

The Colonial year begins with the official start of the winter season, in contrast to Rokugan where it begins in spring. The first season is indeed called “winter,” but a visitor from mainland Rokugan would not recognize it as such. It is the coolest part of the year, to be sure; temperatures sometimes drop as low as 50 degrees Fahrenheit, though they more commonly average in the mid-60's. Snow occasionally falls in the highest elevations, such as atop the mountains in the western part of the Colonies, but more commonly the weather remains mild with occasional light rainfall. Winter functions as the latter half of the growing season, as well as the season of harvest and the time when Rokugani wage most of their wars for the year. In function it is not unlike a mixture of summer and autumn in the Empire. In terms of the modern western calendar, the winter season lasts from January until mid-March, when summer begins.

Transplants from colder portions of Rokugan are very surprised when in the middle of March, a time they consider the start of spring and one of the mildest parts of the year, the temperature begins to skyrocket almost overnight. From average temperatures of 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature rapidly climbs into the 80s and 90s until the beginning of April, when it settles around 95 degrees – with occasional climbs as high as 120 degrees. Indeed, the temperatures during summer in the Colonies are higher than anywhere in Rokugan itself short of the Festering Pits. It is during this season that the Colonies hold their “winter courts,” though

they have begun to call them “Summer Court” in order to differentiate them from the more traditional courts of Rokugan proper. During this season, the peasants behave much as they do in the Rokugani winter: they spend time repairing what is broken, crafting what they must, and enjoying the company of their families. The samurai spend their time in court, planning for the rest of the year, and trying not to smother in the baking heat. Summer lasts from mid-March until mid-June.

Usually, around the middle of June the weather cools slightly, dropping into the low 90s, and the rains begin. Thus starts the Monsoon season. Usually Monsoon means torrential rain and thunderstorms, often for days at a time without letup. During this time, the fields recover from the relentless heat of the summer and the wildlife awakens. Functionally, this is akin to a Rokugani spring, as the land becomes fertile and crops can be sown. However, there are times when the rains are delayed or even fail to come at all. These seasons of drought can spell disaster for the farmers who keep the Colonies fed. When a drought comes, it falls to Rokugan proper to help feed the colonists by shipping them as much food as they can spare. Thankfully, droughts are relatively rare; in most years, the Monsoon rains make the land fertile enough that the colonists can actually send rice and other crops back to Rokugan. During Monsoon season, samurai leave the courts to travel back to their homes, preparing their armies for war and their peasants for planting. The Monsoon season lasts from the middle of June until the end of September.

After the Monsoon season is the post-Monsoon season. This is when the majority of activity occurs in the Colonies, and is functionally roughly akin to late spring and summer in Rokugan. This is the season of growing and war, when the majority of exploration of the new lands occurs, along with the majority of clearing lands and building new settlements to expand the Colonies. This is also a season of travel, as many higher-ranking samurai leave the Colonies to travel to Rokugan and perhaps even attend one of the traditional Winter Courts there. Post-Monsoon lasts from the end of September until the end of December.





Summer Court

Winter Court has been a staple of the cultural life of the people of Rokugan for centuries and they carried its traditions with them to their new home in the Colonies. For the first few years, Winter Court in the Colonies was a very traditional affair that helped the new transplants to remember they were, indeed, citizens of Rokugan and had not been abandoned by their distant Empire. Winter Court was held during the same time period as the Winter Courts in Rokugan proper. Because of the beautiful weather in the Colonies during that part of the year, much of the court activity took place outside, in gardens created for the purpose or in large fields populated with cities of tents. The attendees wore traditional Rokugani kimono and, aside from the weather and the location, it was very difficult to tell these early courts were not actually in Rokugan proper.

There was, however, a large problem with these Winter Courts: the time in which they took place was prime growing season for crops as well as the best weather for exploration and war. Those samurai who were required to attend the colonial Winter Courts were taken away from their other tasks precisely when they would have been the most productive.

During the post-Monsoon season of the fourth year after the founding of the Second City, a daimyo of the Unicorn named Ide Toshio traveled back to Rokugan proper and attended the Empress' Imperial Winter Court. While there, he sought audience with the Empress and asked her permission to hold his Winter Court in the summer instead of the winter. He explained the weather in the former Ivory Kingdoms was completely different from that of the Empire; he and his vassals spent the majority

of the summer in idleness because there was nothing they could do in the heat of the day. He argued that moving the court season in the Colonies to the summer would allow the samurai to utilize that time in service to the Empire rather than having a quarter of the year wasted in idleness. He also mentioned this would allow some of the important personages in the Colonies to attend the courts of Rokugan and the courts of the Colonies in the same year. The Empress agreed with Ide Toshio and decreed henceforth the court season in the Colonies would be during their summer. Toshio returned to the Colonies and the following year the first Summer Court took place in the Second City.

Initially the Summer Courts were marginally successful at best. It is said at least eight samurai died during the first three years of Summer Court because they chose to wear kimono that, while the pinnacle of Rokugani fashion, were not at all suited to the high temperatures of the Colonies. During those years Summer Court remained generally similar to a Rokugani Winter Court, though much of it took place in the mornings and late afternoons, and usually in places where it might be possible to catch some wind to ease the heat.

When Ikoma Karatsu was appointed as the first Imperial Governor of the Colonies, he took it upon himself to reform the Summer Courts. He began by decreeing in his court activities would take place in the morning, followed by a break of several hours during the hottest part of the day, during which samurai would be free to do whatever they wished. Official activities would resume in the evening and carry on until an hour or two after midnight. Most samurai took advantage of the afternoon break to take naps or, in some cases, spent their time in baths filled with cool water. The more enterprising samurai spent the time planning for the events later in the day as well. The Governor also slightly relaxed the standards of fashion for the Summer Courts, allowing samurai to wear lighter summer-weight kimono rather than the heavy multi-layered formal winter kimono that had been the standard. This was certainly an unusual step for a traditionalist Lion Governor to take, but Karatsu was practical enough to recognize samurai could not properly serve their lords while fainting or even dying from the heat.

In the short time she has been in office, the new Governor Otomo Suikihime has already further relaxed the standards of fashion, some say to scandalous levels. She has also stated the activities in her Summer Court will begin when the sun sets and end soon after it rises. This, she says, will alleviate the remaining problems caused by the heat. If the Governor's Summer Court is successful, it is likely the rest of the Colonies will follow her lead.

Architecture

Initially, the settlers' architecture was not greatly affected by their transplanting to the Colonies. Most of the early Rokugani settlements in the Colonies were built to the specifications used in southern Crane lands and the Mantis Isles. They are distinctly Rokugani, but are fairly well suited to the climate of the former Ivory Kingdoms.





Later structures and settlements have made some modifications to accommodate some of the extremes of weather in the new land. Rokugan does not have anything that resembles the Monsoon season and considerations have been made for the months-long torrential rains. The roofs in newer buildings tend to be sloped at a greater pitch than those of standard Rokugani houses and also tend to hang out further from the walls, making it easier for people to stand outside without getting wet. Some even have a primitive rain gutter system adapted from Ivory Kingdoms architecture.

In fertile places where the Monsoon rains flood the lands, the peasants noticed some of the abandoned and destroyed Ivory Kingdoms villages were built on stilts to keep them above the floodwaters. Soon the peasants began to build their own huts on stilts, some as tall as six feet. Their samurai masters replicated the feat and it is not unusual to find villages near rivers where the entire settlement, including the samurai residences, are built on such stilts. This is not an option for castles, of course, but castles built on floodplains have adapted by constructing larger and higher stone foundations, elevating the residential portions of the castles higher above the waters.

In those locations where settlers and explorers have found relatively intact Ivory Kingdoms villages and cities, they have often marveled at the alien beauty of their foreign architecture, especially the great stone temples. The Ivinda built their temples from large blocks of stone, covered with intricate carvings and crafted in shapes the Rokugani had never seen before. By contrast, the layout of Ivinda residential homes was simply confusing. In many places it seemed space was at a premium, yet the houses would comprise a large assortment of very small rooms built around a much larger central room. The Rokugani later learned from surviving natives that the numerous rooms were because large numbers of people lived in each home: parents, their children, and their children's children all in the same house, gathering in the central chamber for meals and other activities. The Rokugani were also surprised to find there was no place inside the homes to cook; instead, food was prepared in a small courtyard with a simple well and an earthen oven and stove.

Rokugani peasants and even some samurai families adapted this aspect of architecture into their new homes, especially since cooking outside helped keep their houses cool during the heat of the day. They also built their homes near small groups of trees or planted trees nearby, since the shade helped to keep life bearable in the heat of summer.

Another concession to the weather of the Ivory Kingdoms is a lack of paper walls on the exterior of buildings. The Rokugani quickly learned it was very difficult to maintain paper walls during the Monsoon season. In fact, many samurai homes in damp areas eschew paper walls entirely, replacing them with intricately carved wooden walls. These walls are often what might be considered cleverly concealed latticework, allowing air to flow through them while still providing a measure of privacy. This new approach to interior walls has even begun to make its way into castles and palaces, since the samurai nobility have no desire to suffocate in their homes.

In a related matter, the monks and priests who advise samurai on the spiritual orientation of their homes have noticed the spiritual energy of a house in the Ivory Kingdoms flows differently from that of a Rokugani home. As it turns out, the most auspicious flow of chi energy in a house within the Colonies is often the one which allows the easiest air flow through the home, a fact which some Rokugani scholars find quite intriguing.

Clothing and Propriety

Rokugani culture is deeply rooted in traditionalism. Change is not something Rokugani take well or accept willingly. Consequently, the Colonies have presented a considerable challenge to the Rokugani who founded them. The greatest of these challenges has been the climate and weather, both so different from anything found in Rokugan proper. The weather creates many problems, not least of which is that traditional Rokugani kimono are often impractical and in some cases even death-traps. Rokugani tradition often dictates the more layers a kimono has, the more elegant and prestigious the wearer. This tradition became impractical in the Colonies, and soon enterprising designers and seamstresses began to craft silk kimono that were made of a single layer, sometimes two, with faux layers stitched into them. Anyone looking at one of these new garments would see what appeared to be a formal kimono composed of many different layers, but this was a mere illusion – the extra layers only existed in the places where they could be seen. These kimono were a step up from traditional designs but were still quite warm; they remain the preferred choice of the more traditionalist samurai in the Colonies today.

It was, surprisingly, the shugenja of the Moshi family of the Mantis Clan who became the experts in practical but formal kimono in the Colonies. For centuries, the sun priestesses of the Moshi had worn kimono somewhat out of step with the rest of Rokugani fashion. Their sleeves and hems were long and flowing and the kimono billowed out when the wind hit them. They worked well when using the Air kami to fly, a frequent part of the Moshi worship of the Sun, but were much less practical for court settings. The Moshi adapted the sewing techniques they used to make their kimono to more common uses, like allowing the cooler winds that flowed through the homes and courts in summer to flow through the kimono as well, while still maintaining propriety.

As the generation of samurai born in the Colonies reached adulthood, they began to experiment with fashion and even with what was considered proper. They commissioned thinner and thinner kimono, some so sheer it was said the faintest light behind the wearer would reveal their bodily form. The older Rokugani were scandalized by these new designs and banned them from the courts. However, this did not keep the younger generation from wearing these new garments at home, and a movement developed to see who could skirt the bounds of propriety the closest without breaking the (unwritten) rules. Younger samurai often met in each other's homes or other private places to compare their new outfits.

The more radical of the younger samurai have even begun to experiment with Ivinda styling. The kshatriya and brahmin nobles of the Ivory Kingdoms wore silk clothing like the Rokugani did, but they cut them strangely. The women and sometimes the men wore strange wrap-around shirts and robes called sari that frequently left their midriffs exposed. The paintings and other depictions of these strange suits of clothing, as well as the occasional examples among the survivors, intrigued the younger generation of samurai. Many of them began to commission clothing that was a combination of Rokugani kimono and Ivory Kingdoms sari, often with a bare or nearly bare midriff. These garments were of course far too scandalous for court settlements, but they could be overlooked when worn at home. In fact, some of the Imperial Explorers began to wear more practical versions of these hybrid kimono on their missions into the jungle.

Ivory Kingdoms silks were also often crafted in ways the Rokugani had never seen before, such as with heavy use of brocades and strange embroidered patterns. In the two decades since the founding of the Colonies, Rokugani craftspeople have deconstructed many of these methods and they have begun to work their way into the fashions of the Colonies and even, in some cases, the old Empire.

Under the rule of the new Imperial Governor, the daring fashions of the younger samurai are beginning to

gain acceptance in the courts, and with them come new perceptions of what is considered within the bounds of propriety. While Rokugani have occasionally pushed the edges of traditional propriety in the past, it was generally only the most influential of samurai who could afford to flout convention. A Scorpion Clan Champion's wife might be allowed to show slightly more skin than is proper, but a respectable female ji-samurai would cover everything but the head, neck, and hands; anything else would be considered scandalous. In the modern Colonies, however, it is becoming common for women in court to show their ankles or even their lower legs, much to the shock of samurai who are newly arrived from Rokugan. The light and flowing new kimono likewise often reveal the arms of those wearing them, something previously confined to the more unconventional women among the Unicorn. Moreover, the tendency of the lighter garments to show the form of those wearing them is considered pleasantly stimulating rather than shameful in the courts of the Second City. Doubtless Governor Otomo Suikihime's support for new ideas will only further push these developments; she has been seen more than once to favor those who are on the cutting edge of colonial fashion, and there is talk she has had a few midriff-baring kimono commissioned for herself, or may even be considering allowing them into her court.



Food and Crops

Rice has been the staple food for Rokugani since the Dawn of the Empire. Fortunately, rice grows well in the Colonies, but soybeans – the primary source, after seafood, of protein in the Rokugani diet – do not grow nearly so well in the new environment. While the coastal areas of the Colonies have an abundance of seafood, the Second City itself is too far away from the coast to get fresh seafood reliably, and there are significant other portions of the Colonies even further away from the sea.

Thus the colonists discovered very quickly they would need new sources of protein in their diets. Chicken, a source of white meat accepted in Rokugan but often considered fitting only for the poor, became much more widely eaten in the Colonies. Many recipes which called for tofu or fish were revised to allow for chicken, and many new recipes were created to capitalize on the properties of the bird's flesh. Where in Rokugan a traveler will often pass soybean fields near large towns, in the Colonies one is more likely to encounter a farmer who raises vast flocks of chickens and carries dozens of eggs into town every day. In mountainous and jungle regions where raising chickens can be a problem, some Rokugani colonists quietly raise lamb or goats instead, using them as they would soybeans, seafood, or chicken. Many of these dishes are quite delicious and are accepted as a necessity in these areas, slowly eroding the traditional Rokugani taboo against red meat; they have even begun to abandon the use of euphemisms such as “mountain tuna” to describe such food.

Many of the colonists have also begun to adopt some of the native food customs, such as eating lentils to replace soybeans and seafood. Lentils are hearty and can survive seasons where rice will not thrive, and they will also grow in places where rice will not. Lentil dishes have now made their way into the diet of samurai in the Second City and the other strongholds in the Colonies, and peasants outside of the cities have been eating lentils for years.

Fruits grow much more readily in the tropical environment of the Colonies, and include many varieties not found in Rokugan or even on the Mantis Isles. In particular, mango – a favorite among the Ivinda natives – has gained considerable popularity among samurai and peasants alike.

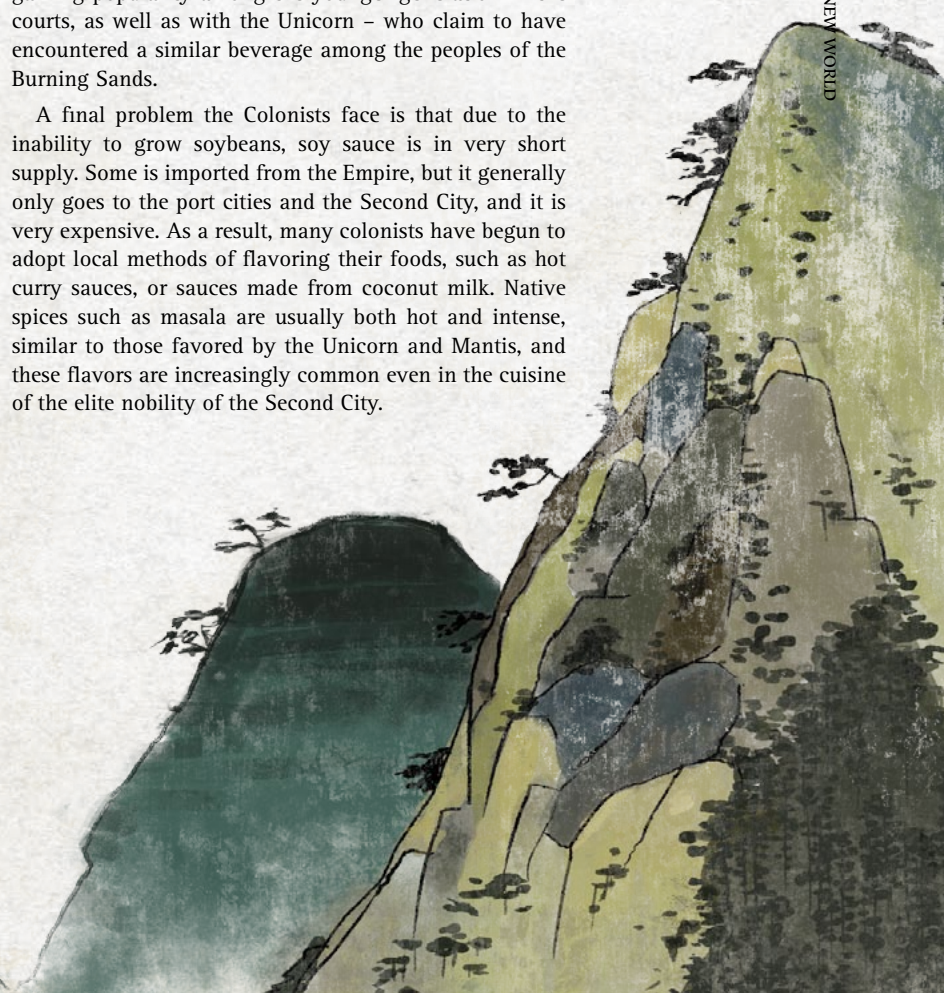
While Rokugani-style tea will grow in the Colonies it often exhibits different flavors than when grown in Rokugan proper. Moreover, there are many varieties of tea which are local to the Colonies, some of which have now become highly prized in the old Empire – especially since not all of them will grow there.

Since arriving in the Colonies, the Rokugani have encountered a fair number of surviving Ivinda natives, and many of the younger samurai have begun to embrace some of the culinary habits of these locals. The most interesting is the habit of eschewing tea in favor of a dark, bitter brew called kave, made from the beans of a local plant. Kave is both stronger-flavored and more stimulative



than tea, making it popular among those who must travel long distances or go light on sleep – Imperial Explorers, for instance, and Spider patrols. Traditionalist Rokugani reject the brew, finding it to be repulsively bitter, but it is gaining popularity among the younger generation in the courts, as well as with the Unicorn – who claim to have encountered a similar beverage among the peoples of the Burning Sands.

A final problem the Colonists face is that due to the inability to grow soybeans, soy sauce is in very short supply. Some is imported from the Empire, but it generally only goes to the port cities and the Second City, and it is very expensive. As a result, many colonists have begun to adopt local methods of flavoring their foods, such as hot curry sauces, or sauces made from coconut milk. Native spices such as masala are usually both hot and intense, similar to those favored by the Unicorn and Mantis, and these flavors are increasingly common even in the cuisine of the elite nobility of the Second City.





MONKEYS

While there have always been monkeys in Rokugan (usually small ones brought to the mainland from the Mantis Isles), they are fairly rare. A few are found as pets of noble children or in the menageries of influential daimyo or rich merchants, but most Rokugani have never seen a monkey.

With the colonization of the Ivory Kingdoms, monkeys have become more common in mainland Rokugan. Many influential and wealthy samurai now have monkeys in their homes as pets. A few cities have created special gardens to display exotic Ivory Kingdoms animals, including monkeys, and some acting troupes and commoner entertainers now use trained monkeys to amuse people with tricks. Inevitably, in the more temperate parts of the Empire a few escaped monkeys have survived and begun to populate the forests. So far, these monkeys are in small enough numbers that they are no more than a minor nuisance, but with time they may become a more serious problem.



The Meaning of a Gift

In Rokugan proper, the science of gift-giving has been finely honed. The traditions of a thousand years tell a samurai exactly what gift he should present to whom to make a specific type of impression upon them, to send a specific message, or to deliver or avert an insult. However, in the Colonies the established protocols for gifts have been turned on their ear. Rokugani gift-giving has always tended to focus on presenting impractical but highly symbolic gifts so one does not insult the recipient by suggesting his lord cannot provide the practical materials needed for life. Things like weapons, tools, and non-luxury food are unacceptable unless they have some sort of symbolic or artistic value exclusive of their practical use.

In the Colonies, however, gift-giving becomes more difficult. No longer can a courtier be certain what would be a luxury item for a specific samurai. The traditional perceptions of what each individual clan has in abundance no longer apply. Each samurai and daimyo's wealth is determined by the resources they themselves have at their disposal in the lands they have settled. One samurai may have unfettered access to the finest tea fields in the Colonies but no access at all to the oceanfront and seafood, while another samurai of the same clan may have settlements along the sea and access to one of the largest oyster beds in the Colonies, with all the pearls that come with it.

Thus, colonial courtiers need to be even more conversant with not only the personalities and preferences of those

who are attending court but also with each samurai and daimyo's holdings and what they produce. As such, the nearly-taboo subject of commerce, so scorned in the Empire, has become somewhat of a survival skill for the courtiers of the Colonies. The best courtiers there can tell you, down to the bushel, how much rice a particular daimyo's lands produced this year as well as whether or not they have planted a crop of lentils. As a result, the best courtiers in the Colonies also tend to be the most wealthy, since they can leverage their intimate knowledge of the finances and resources of other samurai into sound business practices of their own.

To be sure, many of the colonial courtiers still maintain an outward façade of being uninterested in such a lowly topic as commerce. However, they are much more active behind the scenes than in the Empire, and are heavily involved in both trade within the Colonies and trade back to Rokugan. This gives them a significant advantage against those of a more traditionalist bent; skilled veterans of Rokugan's courts have thus sometimes found themselves thwarted in the Summer Court by young diplomats just a year past their gempukku.

Ultimately, gift-giving in the Colonies is often based more on scarcity than on artistry or symbolism. Soy sauce and other Rokugani seasonings are in high demand, as indeed are other products made from soybeans, even tofu. Traditional Rokugani art and literature is always valuable, especially pillow books – the more recent, the better. In recent years, some Rokugani have turned the tales they have heard about the Colonies and the Imperial Explorers into fanciful tales of romantic adventure, full of excitement and honorable heroics; called “two-zeni books” in the Empire because they are so common, these little tales are considered valuable in the Colonies themselves due to their rarity. (Oddly, the Colonists seem to enjoy the books even more due to their notorious inaccuracy.)

Changing Roles

Most Rokugani samurai don't really understand the concept of “work” as a commoner would use the term. Certainly they understand one must practice to become skilled at swordsmanship or painting or writing haiku (or even at manipulating the courts), but they do not understand work in the way peasants do. The fruits of a samurai's labors rarely affect his own ability to eat or to survive a bad winter. His lord will see to it he eats no matter what happens, it is merely a matter of how much and how well. Even during times of Empire-sweeping tragedy, the samurai eat. But in the Colonies, this is not always the case.

Neither the samurai of Rokugan nor the peasants they brought with them understood how to explore and settle new lands – with the partial exception of the Unicorn, no Rokugani had done such a thing since the Dawn of the Empire more than a thousand years before. The colonists who traveled out into the wilds of the former Ivory Kingdoms were thus largely unprepared for what would be required of them.



Many samurai and peasants died in their first summer in the Colonies and in the Monsoon season that followed, but those who survived learned valuable lessons. The most important of these was that in the wilds of the Colonies samurai and peasants could not act as two separate groups. They would have to work together to survive. In the years that followed, some samurai became of necessity masters of skills not normally associated with their caste. Samurai took a direct hand in things like building and designing the structures of the Second City. Others learned all they could about farming and crops so they might better choose the locations of new settlements and perhaps discover new food sources. In fact, one of the Spider samurai who settled some land in the very first year, Daigotsu Chuze, became one of the premiere experts on colonial crops and the best way to grow them. It is said any farm that hires him to consult with them sees at least a one-quarter increase in productivity the following year. And there are other acknowledged samurai experts in traditionally peasant fields, such as thatching and tiling roofs, or locating wells to supply water to a village or city.

When the samurai in the old Empire speak disparagingly about those in the Colonies, as they often do, they sometimes accuse them of following the "Way of the Sparrow," comparing them to the samurai of the Sparrow Clan who were known for centuries to work alongside their peasants. The accusation is unfair – the vast majority of samurai in the Colonies still live like normal samurai – but many of the younger generation in the Colonies nonetheless take the label as a badge of honor. They understand they must do what is required for the survival of themselves, their peasants, and the Empire in the strange new world of the former Ivory Kingdoms – even if that occasionally means "grubbing in the dirt" like a peasant. In some of the smaller courts of the Colonies, radical young samurai have taken to painting the ends of their fingernails with dark colors in tribute to those samurai who have dirt under their nails.

This modest blurring of the lines between samurai and peasant has worked in the other direction as well. Some members of the Imperial Explorers, as well as many of the samurai who set out to settle untamed lands, travel with groups of peasants who are skilled with spears and axes, able to fight as well as to farm or build. Some of these peasants even become trusted advisors for their samurai lords. Similarly, there are a few commoner artists in the Colonies who have gained respect from samurai, such as the peasant poet Ichin whose work is said to rival that of the greatest poets the Empire has ever produced.

Unsurprisingly, the one caste whose status has not been much changed by colonization is the hinin, especially the eta. Even in the Colonies there are jobs neither samurai nor peasants will

ever do. Indeed, these tasks are often beyond the resources of the limited number of eta sent from the Empire, resulting in strange incidents such as the peasants of the Second City forcing the undesirables in their own ranks down into hinin status.

The Ivinda

The Rokugani have a very narrow worldview: one is either a part of the Celestial Order or outside of it. This view does not really allow for gaijin to be considered strictly human. What does one call a creature who acts and appears human, yet according to one's religious beliefs has no soul? This is a question that has always plagued the Empire, but has become far more acute for the Rokugani settlers in the former Ivory Kingdoms. Almost from the first they have been encountering small numbers of natives, some of whom were actually instrumental to the colonists' survival in the early years.

The Unicorn Clan has for centuries used a simple and elegant solution to this problem by adopting gaijin into the clan, thereby granting them a place in the Celestial Order. This process has occasionally been copied by other clans, notably the Mantis when they permitted the kshatriya Rama Singh to swear allegiance to the Yoritomo family. But what is to be done with gaijin who will not join a clan, or who are mere peasants or laborers? To merely slaughter these people seems to go against the Tenet of Compassion, especially since many of them are now reliable members of the workforce. They literally have no place in life and no set of rules that dictates how they must act and how others must treat them.

In many of the settlements, the samurai avoid the problem by simply treating the Ivinda as they would Rokugani peasants, effectively granting them the status of heimin. It is understood such people are not truly





ELEPHANTS

The Ivinda of the Ivory Kingdoms venerated the elephant for its strength and ferocity in battle, so much so that they placed an elephant's visage on one of their gods. Specially-skilled men and women called mahouts trained elephants to serve as beasts of burden and even as war-beasts. The ivory of elephant tusks was regarded as a sacred substance and indeed the very kingdom was named for it. It is thus unsurprising that many of the demonic Destroyers wore monstrous forms that resembled twisted forms of these great beasts. Because of this, when the Rokugani arrived in the former Ivory Kingdoms they viewed the native elephants as dangerous beasts and initially went out of their way to slaughter the creatures.

Fortunately, one of the first Rokugani to encounter elephants was Utaku Zhang, a Unicorn stablemaster who discovered a small group of elephant cows wandering outside a destroyed Ivory Kingdoms village. The elephants had harnesses on them, suggesting they were domesticated, and appeared to be hungry. Zhang applied the skills he had developed while training and raising horses to trying to handle the elephants, and after some effort he succeeded in getting them to obey him. This gave him a team of beasts of burden able to handle far bigger loads than any horse. Since that time, elephants have become essential – albeit still rare – beasts of burden in the settlements. A number of the younger Utaku males have taken up Zhang's trade, augmenting his basic discoveries by studying Ivory Kingdoms artwork which depicts the training and use of elephants. Wealthy samurai from other clans have taken a more pragmatic approach, seeking out the handfuls of mahouts who still survive among the Ivinda population and hiring them to share their knowledge of how to train the beasts.

It is common these days to see one or two elephants in every village, though they are still quite rare in larger towns and cities – after all, they require quite a bit of space and a lot of food, and they can be extremely dangerous if they are angered or spooked. The Rokugani do not venerate the elephant as the people of the Ivory Kingdoms did, but they understand the usefulness of the creatures and the value of the ivory that can be harvested after their deaths.

Because of the enormous role Sacred Ivory played in the defeat of the Destroyers, the Empress has decreed it to be a pure substance, not unlike jade or crystal, even though it comes from a living creature. This means Ivory, of all the products that come from dead animals, is the only one that need not be purified by eta after it is removed from the corpse.



heimin, but it is most convenient to simply treat them as such. The tiny handfuls of surviving kshatriya warriors have sometimes been offered chances to swear fealty in the manner of Rama Singh; those who refuse are usually treated as outlaws, subject to the depredations of the Spider Conquerors.

The question of what is to be done with the native Ivinda, especially those who still live outside the bounds of the Colonies' settled zone, remains unresolved. Some Rokugani, especially those of a more traditionalist bent, advocate the extermination of any Ivinda who will not swear fealty and accept the Empire's rule. On the other hand, some monks and priests claim natives born within Rokugani settlements exhibit the same spiritual qualities as proper Rokugani, and thus advocate for all of the surviving population to be brought into the Celestial Order.

Music, Art, and Recreation

Culture is defined partially by the environment in which one lives. While the culture of the colonists is still uniquely Rokugani, it includes several elements which make it subtly different from that of the mainland Empire. It is these small changes and additions to the art and music created by the colonists that make them both fascinating and disturbing to the residents of the mainland Empire.

When the colonists first ventured into the empty villages and cities of the Ivory Kingdoms they discovered an enormous amount of art, much of it depicting creatures they associated with the monstrous Destroyers. The creatures, however, were depicted with veneration, respect, and devotion. It wasn't until the colonists began to encounter and communicate with the surviving Ivinda that they began to understand and truly appreciate the artwork of the Ivory Kingdoms.

Carving and Sculpture

Among the most prominent sources of this art were the great stone temples of the Ivory Kingdoms. The vast majority of these had been destroyed by Kali-Ma's forces, but some of the more secluded ones were intact. The walls of these temples were covered with intricately carved depictions of the Ivory Kingdoms' gods, heroes, and legends. The Rokugani colonists marveled at the detail achieved in these carvings, a form of art largely unknown in Rokugan. They later discovered beautiful floor mosaics, both painted and tiled, which depicted similar scenes. All of this was very different from Rokugani sculpture, which is highly stylized and limited in topic, or Rokugani painting, which tends to focus on scenes from nature or images of daily life.



Recreation and Entertainment

Within a few years, artists in the Colonies began to create Rokugani art that drew on the native work for inspiration. Painters, sculptors, and even origami artists began to craft works depicting the deeds of the Kami and Fortunes or idealized versions of famous tales of heroism and honor from Rokugani history – all topics previously confined to poetry and theater. The Rokugani also began to copy the methods and styles used to create the intricate stone carvings, both in stone and in wood.

The most common and popular results of this artistic assimilation are carved wooden shoji screens. Rather than painting rice paper and suspending it in a frame of wood, the artists create intricately carved wooden lacework panels. Sometimes this is supplemented with a single layer of rice paper or thin fabric so that light can pass through the wooden lacework while maintaining privacy. More recently, some of the more skilled stone-carvers in the Colonies have been brought back to the old Empire to enhance the holy places of Rokugan proper with their work.

Music

Among the many relics lying in the wreckage of the Ivory Kingdoms' civilization were their musical instruments. None of the early Rokugani settlers had any concept of what Ivinda music sounded like, but they found their musical instruments and studied them. While these instruments were crafted differently and had different tonal structures, they were not truly all that different from Rokugani instruments. Thus, Rokugani musicians began to experiment with the new instruments. Over the decades they have created new music that blends the tones and instruments of the Ivory Kingdoms with those of the Empire.

The early musicians gained a leg up in their understanding of the music of the Ivory Kingdoms when they discovered a few Ivinda survivors who could actually play the instruments in the way they had been intended to be played. In fact, some of these native musicians were talented enough they were adopted into various clans so they might teach samurai musicians to play.

These strange musical hybrids have been met with mixed reviews in the mainland Empire. Some more progressive samurai enjoy them immensely, but the traditionalist majority see them as a step toward destroying proper Rokugani music, and hence as something to be reviled and rejected.

Many samurai enjoy the art of falconry. Not only does it require considerable skill in raising and training the birds, but there is a distinct thrill to watching one's favorite raptor take down its prey. Unfortunately, birds of prey do not travel well by sea or in a caravan through trackless wastelands. It was many years before the Crane were able to establish a new school of falconry at the stronghold they called the Aerie. In the meantime, samurai who sought the thrill of the hunt had to find some other way to entertain themselves.

The solution came in the first few years of settlement. Peasants who lived on the outskirts of the Second City began to disappear at night, leaving no sign of their fate save a few bloodstains. Samurai were tasked with discovering what happened to the people. They soon learned a tiger had been snatching and devouring the innocent farmers. The samurai organized a hunt and tracked the tiger through the wilds, finding it a formidable prey that killed two of their number before the rest of them brought it down. They returned to their lord with the tiger's pelt as proof they had completed the deed.

The lord had the tiger's pelt ritually cleansed and kept it on display, both as a symbol of a samurai's responsibility to protect his peasants and as a memorial to those who were slain by the beast. Since then, many similar events have occurred all across the Colonies, and a decade ago some samurai began to organize recreational hunts for tigers who were not actively ravaging settlements.

Typically, in a tiger hunt a group of samurai hunters will assemble together and seek out reports of tiger sightings from local folk and Imperial Explorers. They travel to the appropriate location, often in an elaborate caravan that includes servants and peasant trackers.



Eventually they locate the tiger, chase it down, and kill it; the samurai who lands the killing blow gets to keep the tiger's pelt after it has been purified. In recent years, this has become popular enough that a few thrill-seeking nobles from the mainland Empire have begun traveling to the Colonies for the specific purpose of hunting tigers, and having a tiger pelt in one's home has become a status-symbol in certain circles in Rokugan.

Colonists and Traditional Samurai

The samurai who live in the Colonies are still samurai, they are taught the same things in their schools; they serve the Empress and the Empire; they fight with katana and wakizashi, with bow and spear, and with words in the courts; they are sworn to their clans and work to further their goals. But colonial samurai, especially those who were born and raised in the Colonies, all too often find themselves strangers in the mainland Empire.

Those who live in the Colonies tend to be tanned, since it is difficult for them to keep out of the sun enough to maintain the pale skin tones favored in Rokugan. Their skin is also often more weathered than that of samurai who live in the old Empire. Their kimono are of unconventional design, or a few seasons out of date. And these are only the superficial visual differences.

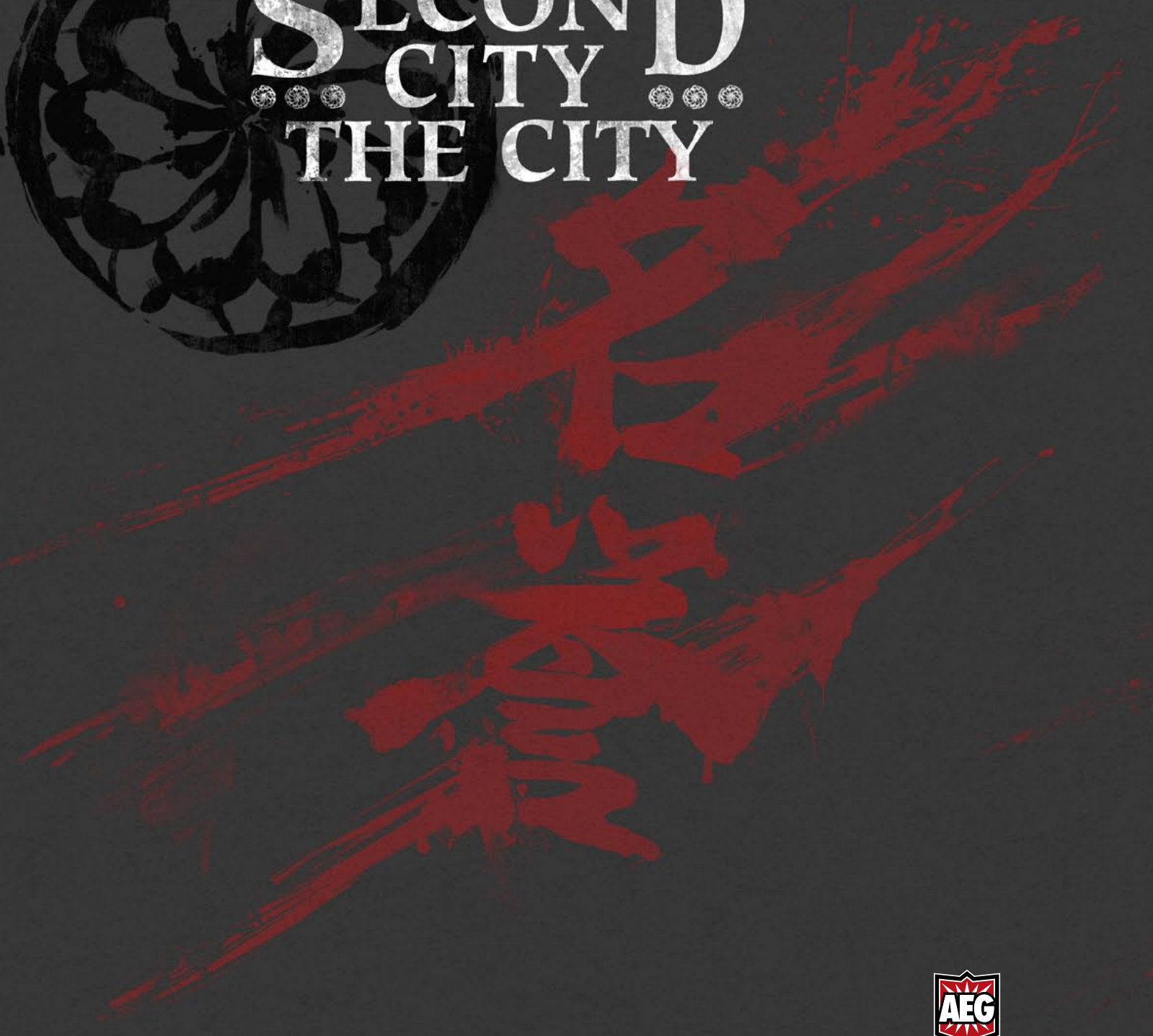
Because so many colonial samurai must work alongside the peasants, they often consider Empire samurai to be lazy or callous. They think the Empire is sheltered and soft, inhabited by decadent nobles who seldom face real danger. For their part, the samurai of the Empire tend to consider colonials to be backwards bumpkins who don't truly understand the Celestial Order. For now, the divide is still narrow enough to be easily bridged by shared baseline cultural assumptions – both groups are still samurai, both serve the Empire, even if they do so in subtly different ways.

Whether this will remain true in future generations, however, remains to be seen.





SECOND ... CITY ... THE CITY



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