Mysteries of the Yōkai 妖怪™

~ 妖怪の謎 ~



ANDREW SUDANGNOI • MATT TRUSSELL • RICHARD MARTIJA

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A Tabletop RPG inspired by Japanese Folklore

Mysteries of the Yōkai is a tabletop role playing game (RPG) set in an alternate version of Classical Japan where your epic tales are set to unfold. You will experience a mythic world, walk the line between man and yōkai, and create new legends of your own. In the land of Nippon, harmony is just as important as conflict. Only by joining together with your fellow adventurers can you solve the problems of a world struggling to reconcile the supernatural and mundane.

Core Rulebook

This book contains everything you need to play Mysteries of the Yōkai.

You can explore the Age of Spirits in the Setting Guide and read all about the yōkai and their strange abilities in the Bestiary. Then create your own personalized heroes from the wide variety of options in Character Creation. Watch your characters grow and learn new techniques as they adventure through the land of Nippon.

Make any type of conflict the focus of your story with the Tide and Morale system. Fierce battles, heated debates and puzzling mysteries await along with anything else you can imagine. Create, run, and play in engrossing campaigns filled with mysteries, exploration, danger, and excitement.

WARDING CIRCLE™



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Mysteries of the Yōkai by Andrew Sudangnoi, Matt Trussell and Richard Martija

To all who have supported me with kindness and love in my harrowing adventures. I know I have worried many as I stumbled through the process of making this dream a reality, but I hope they all know that this book is proof of how meaningful it was for me. With every small gesture and kind word, you all saved me when I was almost ready to give up.

~ Andrew

Thank you to my parents, who made sure I always had a roof over my head and food, and who always supported me following my dreams, even when they didn't always understand them.

Thank you also to my friends, and my peers in the industry, especially the students and instructors at DigiPen, who helped me become a better designer, as well as making sure I also did things outside of work and studying.

~ Matt

To everyone who knows they helped, thank you.
To everyone who thinks they didn't, you probably did.

~Richard

Published by Warding Circle
mysteriesoftheyokai.com



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Cover illustration by Marisa Erven
marisaerven.com

ISBN: 978-0-692-04808-5

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Prologue: An Ancient Age of Yōkai

From the Notes of Tominaga Asae,
Former Head Priestess of the Myaku Grand Shrine

Since time immemorial people have spoken of encountering strange apparitions in the night. They appeared in the lonely places, in the liminal spaces, distant from the bustle of civilization, and far from the sight of observers. Some people called them yōkai; and they introduced themselves as such when the first spiritual kingdoms sent their ambassadors. In the coastal provinces of the west they are sometimes called ayakashi. Others know them as obake or bakemono, a changing thing, whose spirit has transformed them into something new.

I knew them first as mononoke; that's the name I was taught in my studies at the Myaku Grand Shrine. They are apparitions, spirits, and creatures that wander in the shadows — many of them invisible to the unaided eye, and with natures and personalities as different as one person to the next. But it was the lost ones that most preoccupied my shrine's concerns. So lost and twisted in their ways, they turned wicked. Such mononoke presented the most danger to all innocents, spirit and mortal alike. To this day, they endanger the balance in our world. It is wicked mononoke such as this that I was trained to confront.

Not simply by bow or blade — though my fellow priests and I are not strangers to the heat of battle. Nor are we to drive them out by wielding the magics bestowed upon us by our powerful kami benefactors. I was taught to first investigate, to question, to ask. For the vast majority of the yōkai in the world are as nuanced as you or I. And even the most wicked are anchored to our world with troubles akin to our own, entrapped within burdens of passion, regret, longing, or sorrow.

Force without purpose will only aid the problem. One does not extinguish flame with fire and heat, it can only be quelled by equilibrium. Only through its complement of calming water can a raging flame be brought to harmony.

We are but one of the groups who recognize that we must not only help humans; our supernatural neighbors are also in need. Together we form the bridge between the worlds. We walk between them. It is our duty to ensure balance and protect the innocent.

臣永朝栄

- Tominaga Asae -

What is Mysteries of the Yōkai?

Japanese folklore is filled with mischievous spirits, heroic adventures, and insightful parables. Mysteries of the Yōkai is a tabletop role playing game (RPG) set in an alternate version of Classical Japan; one where epic tales are set to unfold with you as the focus. Your Characters will experience a mythic world, walk the line between human and yōkai, and create new legends of their own.

Players will create and take the role of original Characters; heroes with capabilities that set them apart from the average person of the time. Only together can your Characters solve the problems of a world struggling to reconcile the supernatural and mundane. One player, called the Game Master, organizes play and guides the other players through the unfolding story. The choices you make will shape Nippon's future.

Japan by Another Name

In the time period of the setting, Japan was known primarily as Nippon. You may notice that name appear in several places throughout the manual. When Nippon is used, it refers to the Japan of the setting instead of real-world Japan.

When discussing real-world Japan, its modern English name will be used.

What is a Role Playing Game?

A Role Playing Game (RPG) is a collective storytelling experience; a game where everyone controls Characters that are experiencing the world and story together. The Game Master (GM) builds adventures and Non-Player Characters (NPCs) for the other players to interact with through their Player Characters (PCs).

RPGs are played in sessions, usually lasting a few hours (an afternoon or evening of play). These sessions may be one-off adventures, or may link together to form campaigns that can last months or even years if everyone chooses to continue a story thread. In each session, the GM introduces the scene and sets up opportunities for the players to make decisions and describe their Characters' actions. When there is a conflict between PCs and NPCs, or a chance that an action could fail, dice are rolled to determine an outcome. More in-depth conflicts can be resolved using the Tide and Morale Conflict System (see the Conflict chapter on page 101 for the full rules). These systems empower each player to shape the story in their own way, making choices that matter to them and bringing their specific skills and abilities to the team.

There are many ways to play RPGs. You can read more tips and suggestions in the "Gaming Groups Guide" on page 339 and the "Game Master's Guide" on page 205, but the most important rule is to find and use what works for everyone in your play group. An RPG is, at its core, a game that is meant to be fun for everyone involved; feel free to work together to alter the rules presented here or make your own house rules.

What You Need to Play Mysteries of the Yōkai

- 3 or more players. One player will take the role of Game Master, the overall organizer and story teller, while the others control the main characters of the game.
- Pencils and paper for recording Character stats and tracking changes during the game.
- At least 3 standard six-sided dice, but it is easier if everyone has their own set of 3 dice. In this book, dice are shortened to "D6", with multiple dice having a number in front. For example, if you are instructed to roll "3D6", you would roll 3 dice and add them together.

Using the Book

This book is presented in a reading order meant to lead new readers through the rules by building on concepts sequentially. Experienced players may wish to find the sections that are most relevant to how they would like to begin. Every player has a different method behind building their Character. Players who want to start with a focus on their Character's Abilities can begin by reading the Character Chapter on page 7, while those who want to find their inspiration in the setting of ancient Japan can begin in the "Nippon's History: An Ancient Legacy" on page 125.

If you are interested in telling a certain story for your group, or you like the idea of creating your own setting and conflicts, you may want to take on the role of Game Master. For new GMs, reading the entire book will be helpful, but some sections will be more important in the beginning. GMs arbitrate the rules during play, so the Conflict and Character sections will often come up. Familiarizing yourself with the game setting in the "Setting Guide" on page 123 and "Bestiary" on page 243 will allow you to create more compelling and immersive scenarios. If you've never taken on the role of a GM in other games, "What is a Game Master?" on page 206 and "Building the Gaming Group" on page 340 have advice on the process of running the game, dealing with conflicts between players (as opposed to Player Characters), and general tips.

Using Dice

Mysteries of the Yōkai uses dice to resolve many Character actions taken by Players. Standard six-sided dice are used, and are abbreviated as 'D6'. There are 3 ways these dice are used:

D6 (sometimes with a Modifier, such as D6-1 or D6+2): Roll the die and add or subtract any indicated numbers from the value shown on the die to get a total.

Example: D6-1 The die shows '5', so the total of the roll is 4

3D6 (often with a Modifier): This means roll 3 dice and add them together. 3D6 is the most common roll in the game, and is usually Modified by many things. For example, an Attribute Check is used when a Character is trying to do something with an Attribute (see page 12). In this case, 3D6 is rolled and the Attribute Modifier is added to the total.

Example: A Skill Check is 3D6 + Skill Modifier + Attribute Modifier. Hideki has a Fighting Modifier of +3 and a Strength Modifier of +3. If he makes a Fighting Check, he rolls 3D6 and adds +6. If the dice came up '1', '3', and '5', the total would be 15.

D3 (sometimes with a Modifier): Sometimes the game calls for the roll of a D3. In this case, roll a D6 and halve the result, rounding up. Note that you apply any Modifiers AFTER determining the D3 result.

D6 Shows	D3 Result
1 or 2	1
3 or 4	2
5 or 6	3

Example: D3 + 2 The die shows '3', so the result is 4 ('2' from the D3 + the 2 Modifier).

❖ Chapter 2 ❖

Character

Other than the Game Master, each player in Mysteries of the Yōkai takes control of a Player Character (PC), the fictional person that represents that player in the game world. These Characters are the connection between reality and the world presented by the Game Master. They are the primary way players interact with the locations, stories, and challenges of the game. As a player, you will create the personality of your PC, choose Abilities, and then tell the Game Master (GM) how the Character acts and reacts during play.

Character Creation begins with a basic concept of who and what you want to play. After that, it may not be obvious where to go next in the building process. Some players may want to start from a story or lore standpoint, finding something in the game world that appeals to them. Others may want to start with an eye towards game options, building their Character using Skills and Techniques that sound like they would be fun during the coming adventures.

Players create their Characters by spending a resource called Potential to purchase Abilities such as Skills and Techniques.

Potential

Potential is the resource that players use to buy Abilities for their Characters. These Abilities define what the player can do during play.

The GM sets the amount of Potential that players begin the game with, based on how powerful the Characters will be in relation to the rest of the world. Usually players begin with 100 Potential, but some games may be based on more or less. Be sure to ask your GM before you build your Character.

Starting Potential: 100

Depending on what feels natural to you, you can build your Character using one of the following methods, or combine several options:

Build a Character From the Game Setting

If you are drawn into the setting of Mysteries of the Yōkai, you can build your Character using the provided lore, or expand the lore with your own ideas. The "Setting Guide" on page 123 is a good starting place for your ideas, whether you plan to adventure in the world provided or one of your own imagination. Once you have a strong concept for the Character's backstory and personality, you can use it as your guide when choosing Abilities in order to create a Character that embodies those defining concepts.

Katas are packages of Character Abilities that describe and support the kinds of Characters that might be found in the setting, see "Katas" on page 23 for more information.

Build a Character With Interesting Actions to Use in Play

If the things you can do during play are more important to you than your Character's backstory or personality, you may want to browse through the remainder of this chapter with an eye towards Skills and Techniques. Once you've found some Actions that sound fun, you can figure out what kind of Character might possess those Abilities and work backwards to establish your Character's concept. This approach ensures that you are able to perform the Actions you want as the story unfolds.

For more information about the kinds of actions you can use during play, see "Skills" on page 14, "Techniques" on page 35, and "Signature Attacks and Upgraded Defenses" on page 65.

Coordinate With the Other Players to Form a Strong Group of Cohesive Allies

If you're having trouble coming up with a direction for your Character you may want to ask the other players what kinds of Characters they're building, and create a Character whose personality or Abilities complement the group. Every Character has different strengths and weaknesses; if your Character is good at the things the others are bad at, the group will be stronger overall. When groups are designed together, everyone will have a chance for the spotlight when their particular specialization is the only thing that can save the day.

For more advice on starting by coordinating with your group, see "Building the Gaming Group" on page 340.

Play an Original Concept Not Based on Setting or Mechanics

If you want to recreate an existing character from elsewhere, or simply have a strong concept in mind already, the best way to proceed is to build that Character, then work backwards to make sure the Character fits within the setting and does not possess Abilities or levels of aptitude that are too strong or too weak for the campaign setting the group has created. In these cases, you can work with the other players to find an "alternate universe" version of the character, one that is still true to your concept and also a natural part of the game's world.

Potential and Player Characters

All PCs in a Campaign have the same number of Total Potential. All Characters begin with the base amount to spend, and additional Potential rewarding between games (see "Character Progression" on page 230) is always the same number for each player. If a Player joins a Campaign later, that PC should be assigned the same Total Potential as the existing Player Characters.

As noted in the "A Character's Total Potential" box, different PCs may end up assigning their Potential to Katas which will cause them to have differing amounts of Potential among their Abilities, but Total Potential always remains the same for all PCs.

A Character's Total Potential

Many rules in the game depend on knowing a Character's Total Potential Level. This value is a measure of the Character's power; the more Potential, the more Abilities, and the higher the Modifiers provided by those Abilities. GMs often use the Total Potential of PCs to gauge how powerful to make the enemies that the players will encounter.

The Total Potential Level of a Character is tracked by adding any Potential gained after sessions (see the section on "Potential Progression" on page 231) to the starting Potential given to a new Character (usually 100).

A source of bonus Potential is buying Katas (see Katas, later in this chapter). A Kata is a package deal of Abilities. By spending 8 Potential, the Character receives 10 Potential in specific Abilities. A player who takes several Katas for their Character will have more Potential than a Character who doesn't, but less choice in which Abilities the Character has.

It is very important to note that it is possible to have more Potential invested in a Character than that Character's Total Potential Level through taking Katas.



Abilities

During play, your Character will face many challenges and make important decisions. For simple Actions or quick story scenes, you can describe what your Character is doing to the GM and other players. When there is a chance of failure or when you are opposed by other Characters, you will need to use the game rules to resolve those Actions. In these cases, you use your Character's Abilities by following the rules provided. Abilities are purchased by spending Potential. Characters may be able to gain temporary Actions and other options during play (such as finding weapons or being blessed by Fate magic), but these gains are temporary and can be lost as easily as they are gained. Anything purchased with Potential is a permanent part of the Character; even if lost as part of the story, these Abilities return without having to be re-purchased.

Permanent Abilities

Anything purchased with Potential becomes a permanent part of a Character. Even if temporarily disabled during play, they will return to the Character without needing to be re-purchased.

Example

Hideki the Samurai has purchased a Signature Attack (see "Signature Attacks" on page 111) to represent his training with swords. He can use this Ability to inflict Tide Damage on enemies in order to help the party win Conflicts (see "Conflict" on page 101). If Hideki was captured and his weapons were taken away as part of the story, he would temporarily be unable to use that Ability, but as soon as he recovers his equipment he can use the Signature Attack again without needing to re-purchase it.

Abilities are split into the following categories:

- **Attributes** are possessed by all Characters (PCs, NPCs, yōkai, even some animals). They measure the qualities that define every sentient creature: Body, Mind, and Soul.
- **Skills** represent training in certain classes of Actions, such as fighting or using Ki. Skills are associated with a specific Attribute; Bonuses from both apply when using Skills.
- **Techniques** are broad categories of other Abilities that cover everything from magical blessings to the political tricks of the grand court.
- **Attacks and Defenses** are the most common Actions your Characters will take during Conflicts (see Conflict Chapter on page 101). You build Signature Attacks to represent things your Character does commonly; warriors often have a Signature Attack representing weapons or martial arts, while a Diplomat might have one that represents the ability to convince others to leave a fight willingly without needing to inflict physical harm on them. Defenses allow you to use your Skills to counter the Attacks of enemy Characters.

Katas

Katas are package deals of Abilities that represent the benefits of repeated, focused practice in a specific profession or field of study. You spend Potential to purchase a Kata, and then receive the Abilities listed inside the Kata as if you had purchased them all separately. More information on Katas can be found on page 23.

Professions

Professions are a special classification of things your Character can do. They work similar to Abilities, but are not purchased with Potential (they use Mastery Points, see "Mastery Points" on page 88 for full details). They are a group of Abilities that are central to the way you define your Character's "class" or "archetype". They also establish what your character is allowed to do in the story's narrative without needing explicit rules from the book. More information on Professions can be found on page 88.

Purchasing Abilities

To create a Character for use in Mysteries of the Yōkai, you will spend your Potential on Abilities that define what the Character can do and how well they can do it. Anything purchased with Potential is a permanent part of your Character, and in many cases the more potential you spend, the better or more powerful that Ability will be.

Most Abilities use a table that provides a Bonus based on the total Potential you have spent on that Ability. These Bonuses are not cumulative; use the highest entry that you qualify for. You must have spent at least as much as the listed Potential requirement to qualify for a Bonus.

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attr. Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

Example: Strength Purchases

Strength is an Attribute, an Ability that all Characters possess. Looking at the Attribute Modifier table, Strength provides a +4 Modifier if you have spent 18 or more Potential, and a +5 Modifier if you have spent 28 or more Potential. If you had spent 21 Potential on Strength, you would receive +4 to any dice rolls that use Strength. By spending another 7, the total would reach 28, changing your Bonus to +5.

For more on Attributes, see "Attributes" on page 12.

You may end up with Potential invested in an Ability that is more than enough for one Modifier, but not enough for the next. This often happens if you buy Katas (which provide a set amount of Potential to a listed set of Abilities) or when the GM awards Potential to specific Abilities after an adventure in which you used them (see "Character Progression" on page 230). In these cases, you continue to use the highest Modifier that you've fully reached, and can spend more Potential later to reach the next Modifier value.

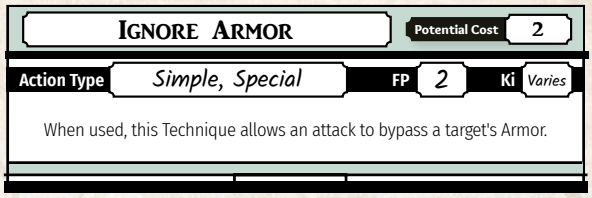
Example

Hikaru has purchased the Detective Kata 4 times, providing her with a total of 8 Potential into each of the 5 listed Abilities (Perception, Resolve, Athletics, Investigation and Manipulation). Since 8 Potential is more than the 4 required for a +2 Modifier, Hikaru gains a +2 whenever she uses the Perception or Resolve Attributes. If Hikaru purchases the Kata one more time, or spends a total of 2 more Potential in those Attributes, the Potential Spent for each would be 10, and she would receive a +3 when using them.

Single Purchase Abilities

When an Ability does not have a Ranked Potential Table, it provides a set Action or Modifier that your Character can use during play, such as a martial arts technique or the ability to create protective circles of magic. Once you have paid the cost listed for that Ability, you can use it by following the rules provided in the Ability's description. These Abilities may improve indirectly over time based on other Abilities; a technique that is performed using an Attribute will improve for free as the Attribute increases, there is no need to pay additional Potential for these kinds of Abilities.

Example: Ignore Armor — Single Purchase



Ignore Armor works with your other Attacks to bypass the Armor of your Target. Spend 2 Potential and add Ignore Armor to the list of Abilities on your Character Sheet (see page 381) to remind you that you can use it during the game.

You can find more one-time purchase Abilities in the ***Techniques*** section, later in this chapter.

Some Notes on Potential

- You can spend Potential when creating your Character, and later as the campaign advances (see "Character Progression" on page 230).
- Any time you're able to purchase new Abilities, you can also increase existing ones that use a Ranked Potential Table. Record all increases to each Ability on your Character Sheet.
- Any time you use an Ability with an effect based on total Potential spent, your game modifier is based on the total spent through the entire game campaign history. Reference the table for that Ability and record changes as you spend more Potential. Use the highest Bonus you qualify for; this will be the entry with the highest listed Potential that is no higher than the amount you've spent.

Attributes

All Characters possess nine basic Abilities known as Attributes, which are divided between the three domains of Body, Mind, and Soul. They can be used to compare the relative effectiveness of Characters, and are the most commonly applied Bonus when resolving Actions taken during a game. If your Character does not possess any other Abilities relevant to the task at hand, you can always use the corresponding Attribute.

All Characters Have Attributes

Attributes represent the core abilities of a Character. They indicate the ways that someone might approach and influence their world. Characters can purchase and possess many kinds of Abilities, but they all have the 9 Attributes by default.

Attributes are divided into the domains of Body, Mind, and Soul. Each of these domains contains three Attributes: the Prowess, Fortitude, and Finesse of that domain.

Prowess Attributes allow the Character to act upon the world, including taking aggressive actions and reshaping the environment or situation. Fortitude Attributes measure the ability to resist change and attacks against the Character, such as physical damage or social pressure. Finesse Attributes measure the precision, speed, and grace with which the Character performs their actions.

Attribute Domains

	Body	Mind	Soul
Prowess	Strength	Intelligence	Zeal
Fortitude	Endurance	Discipline	Resolve
Finesse	Agility	Perception	Insight

Body Attributes

Strength

Strength measures the ability to apply physical force. Lifting, striking, and pushing are examples of things that can be done using Strength. When you attempt to lift a heavy weight, your Strength Attribute increases your chance of success. Characters who invest in Strength often prefer to overpower obstacles rather than bypass them. The power of blows inflicted with the Fighting Skill increases, while those trained in Athletics can lift and carry heavier objects. Strength is a good investment for warriors, martial artists, or those who rely on their might to achieve goals.

Endurance

Endurance measures how long and how well you can maintain physical activities. It also measures how healthy the body is and helps to resist illness, poison, or the effects of too much *sake*. While Strength might be used for crossing smaller bodies of water, Endurance is needed for a Character to cross a lake or an ocean. Associating Endurance with Skills allows you to face challenges by outlasting them. The Survival Skill using Endurance helps you face grueling environments for days on end, while Athletics using Endurance gives you the stamina to complete a marathon or reach the summit of a mountain without collapsing. Endurance is a good Attribute to invest in for those who need to be active for long periods of time, from a rugged explorer to an elegant court dancer.

Agility

Agility measures the fine control the you have over your body, and the ability to execute precise movements. Investing in Agility allows a Character to perform complex activities, such as picking a lock or archery trick shots. Associating Agility with Skills increases the speed and precision with which they are performed. Attacks from the Fighting Skill are more about targeting weak spots than the sheer Strength applied. Those performing sleight of hand with Vice are less likely to be caught when their gestures are smooth and flawless. Agility is a good Attribute to invest in for Characters that live by precise actions when time is of the essence and mistakes have dire consequences, such as thieves or mechanical engineers.

Mind Attributes

Intelligence

Intelligence measures the ability to learn new things, apply logic, and refine thoughts. Investing in Intelligence speeds the process of acquiring new knowledge, or helps you convince others with a strong logical argument. When Skills are associated with Intelligence, the Character outwits foes and creates clever solutions to puzzles. Using the Investigation Skill with Intelligence is less about noticing clues, and more about understanding why those clues are important. Manipulation using Intelligence allows the Character to trick a foe through confusion, rather than charm or threats. Intelligence is of great use to Characters who must understand and act upon information quickly, such as tacticians or diplomats.

Discipline

Discipline measures the ability to resist distraction and maintain focus. Investing in Discipline allows you to persevere through the fortitude of your mind, rather than your physical endurance. Associating Skills with Discipline allows a Character to continue when they know they must, even if it is difficult or distasteful. Interaction that is based on Discipline is a matter of remaining calm and composed during negotiations, while Discipline-based Survival would allow the Character to resist the call of hunger and eat smaller portions of food each day. Discipline is important for Characters who never lose their cool or break under pressure, such as spies or military leaders.

Perception

Perception measures the ability to quickly and accurately observe a location or read a situation. Increasing your Character's Perception prevents them from missing subtle or hidden clues, or being overwhelmed by multiple stimuli. Associating Perception with Skills increases the ability to understand a situation and track all the variables without losing sight of the big picture. Investigation that uses Perception is more about finding what is hidden or lost, rather than drawing conclusions. Manipulation through Perception represents reading the reactions of a person and leading them to draw the conclusions you want. Perception is important to Characters who cannot afford to be tricked or led astray, such as merchants or law enforcement officers.

Soul Attributes

Zeal

Zeal measures that which guides a person and the strength of their beliefs. Investing in Zeal represents a strong heart and increases the Character's ability to influence the world around them using those beliefs. Associating Skills with Zeal allows the Character to perform them with conviction and drive. Ki Attunement and magic-based Skills that use Zeal often take on personal aspects of the Character in addition to gaining more potency. Interaction that uses Zeal convinces through the strength of the Character's cause and inspires others through devotion, rather than relying on cold logic or bribery. Zeal is useful for those who set out to change the world to fit their vision of how it should be, such as the greatest orators or visionary artists.

Resolve

Resolve measures a Character's ability to remain true to who they are and resist being broken. Increasing Resolve provides the determination to persevere, no matter the trials endured. Resolve denies diversion through a Character's inner strength and the will to maintain their beliefs, rather than Disciplined adherence to the path already set. Associating Resolve with Skills allows the Character to perform them with an eye for what they know to be right. A Character using Leadership associated with Resolve commands the respect of others through following their calling and leading by example. Vice is often not for the weak of heart; it can require actions that violate the law but satisfy morality, putting the Character at risk of harm for doing so. Resolve is important for anyone who must endure in a world that challenges their beliefs, such as a yōkai trapped in the world of mankind, or a peasant wishing to change the status quo.

Insight

Insight measures an ability to understand and act without coherent thought. It is the "gut feeling", the reliance on acting on what one feels, rather than what one thinks. Increasing Insight allows the Character to more fully connect with people and act quickly without overthinking problems. Associating Insight with Skills provides quickness and prowess to actions guided by the heart. Ki Attunement using Insight draws on the knowledge that the self, nature, and the universe are connected, increasing the potency of the mystical arts

that favor unity and balance. Interaction associated with Insight is based on empathy and mutual understanding of the common experiences that make up all life. Insight is important to those who must act quickly and remain true to their path, such as a traveling missionary, or the martial artist who judges whether a villain's soul is redeemable.

Buying Attributes

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attr. Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

All Attributes are Abilities that provide a Modifier based on the total Potential spent; spending more on them increases the Modifier for that Attribute.

Player Character Bonus

Player Characters are the heroes of the world. They rise above the challenges that normal people struggle with. To represent this, a PC always receives at least a +1 Attribute Modifier, regardless of how much Potential they have invested in that Attribute. If they have invested enough to receive a higher bonus, use that bonus instead.

> PCs always have at least a +1 Attribute Modifier to any Attribute Checks they make.

Attribute Checks

At any time during the game when there is a chance that a Character could fail when they attempt to act, that Character will make a Check. There are many kinds of Checks in the game, but all of them involve rolling 3D6, modifying the result by anything related to what is being done, and checking the total result. See the "Conflict in Mysteries of the Yōkai" on page 102 and "Checks" on page 207 for more information.

Attribute Checks are made when a Character lacks Skills or other Abilities relevant to the actions being taken, and must rely on their natural aptitude.

Example

A Scribe working late into the night could make either an Endurance or Discipline Check to continue working until the morning.

Skills

Skills are a category of Abilities that cover groups of activities that Characters can perform. Every Skill has an Associated Attribute (see below) and a Skill Modifier that is increased by spending Potential. When a Character needs to perform a Skill, they make a Skill Check (see "Checks" on page 102) by rolling 3D6 and adding their Skill Modifier, as well as the Attribute Modifier for the Associated Attribute, to generate a total.

Example

Hideki the Samurai has been ambushed far from his lands with no horse, and must travel on foot while dealing with continued attacks from his enemies. The GM asks Hideki's player to make an Athletics Skill Check to continue traveling and fighting without succumbing to exhaustion. Hideki has the Athletics Skill at +1, Associated with Endurance, which has a +3 Modifier. Hideki's player rolls 3D6, getting a '2', a '4' and a '5' on the dice. Hideki's Athletics Check is (2+4+5=11) + 1 + 3 = 15.

Associated Attributes

When you first spend Potential on a Skill, choose one of the three listed Attributes for that Skill: this is the Associated Attribute. The Attribute you choose should reflect how your Character performs that Skill. For example, the Interaction Skill is used for various social related activities; convincing others to see your point of view, gathering information, rallying followers to a cause, and so on. The choices for Interaction are Discipline (representing Characters who interact through controlled emotions and persevere in the face of antagonism), Insight (representing Characters who empathize with others), or Zeal (representing Characters who are interesting by virtue of the conviction they speak with).

You should choose the Attributes that make the most sense for your Character. Sometimes, a player may have a concept that requires an Attribute other than the three available. For example, an Ascetic Martial Artist may want to Associate their Fighting Skill with Insight to represent knowing how opponents are likely to react in battle. Players can take the ***Unconventional*** Technique on page 61 to allow them to choose

different Attributes. The cost for this Technique depends on how many times the player takes non-standard Attributes, but the first one is free (0 Potential), so every Player can choose to associate a single Skill with an unlisted Attribute. This is so Characters can be created with at least one Skill that works differently, setting the Character apart from other people in the world.

Each Skill has an Associated Attribute. When making Skill Checks, add the Modifier for that Skill as well as the Associated Attribute.

The ***Unconventional*** Technique (see page 61) can be used to pick different Associated Attributes than are usually available.

Buying Skills

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

All Skills are Abilities that provide a Modifier based on the total Potential spent; spending more on them increases the Modifier for that Skill. A Character counts as having a Skill as soon as they have at least a +1 Skill Modifier, so it takes 2 Potential to have access to a Skill during play. A Character attempting something that would be covered by a Skill they don't have is still allowed to make an Attribute Check using one of the 3 listed Associated Attributes for that Skill, but does not gain any Skill Modifier.

Example

A Character without the Survival Skill could still make a Discipline, Endurance, or Resolve Check when trying to find food or survive the elements while lost in the wilderness.

PC versus NPC Skills

Player Characters must have at least a +1 in a Skill in order to make a Skill Check. Because Skill Checks include the Associated Attribute Modifier, and because all Characters start with at least +1 in all Attribute Modifiers (see Attributes, above), all PCs will have a minimum of +2 to Skill Checks, while most beginning Characters will have between +3 and +6.

NPCs are not usually created using Potential in the same way as PCs (see Humans and Demi-Yōkai Chapter on page 270), but have pre-set values for their Abilities. Because of this, weak or unskilled NPCs may well have no Modifier.

Example

Even the simplest PC Peasant with Nature Affinity will make Checks to perform various farming activities with at least a +2. NPC farmers may not have any Modifier at all, and make their Checks with a straight 3D6 roll. Because the GM is only encouraged to have Characters make Checks when it would impact the story (see "Conflict Resolution in Mysteries of the Yōkai" in the Game Master's Guide on page 207), this doesn't usually matter. Both a PC and NPC will be able to tend a farm (which generally doesn't involve time-sensitive, dangerous, or dramatic activities) without needing a Check. However, when one is called for (for example, to diagnose and deal with a blight), the PC would have a much better chance of success.

Other Skills

The list of Skills included in the book are meant to cover most commonly occurring situations in the world of Mysteries of the Yōkai. If a player wants to take an Action, the GM should decide which Skill most closely fits the situation. There is a lot of overlap on Skills in order to let players approach problems in different ways. For example, which Skill to use to live off the land would depend on how the Character was trying to do it. Nature Affinity could be used to raise animals and crops, whereas Survival could be used to trap animals or survive off bad tasting (but non-poisonous) fruit. Similarly, many social situation could be resolved with Interaction (when trying to work together with another

Character) or Manipulation (when trying to get the best of the deal without worrying about the other Character benefiting as well).

In cases where no Skill applies, GMs should allow players to make an Attribute Check. The 9 Attributes cover anything that a Character can do, so choose the most appropriate one based on how the Character is attempting to solve the problem. For example, a Character on guard duty for many hours may make an Endurance Check if the Character is physically resisting sleep, or a Discipline Check if their steadfastness is of a mental nature.

GMs may want to create new Skills that are specific to the themes of their campaign. In these cases, a new Skill functions just like the Skills presented here. Create the Skill, give it a list of things the player can do with it, and choose 3 Associated Attributes.

Skill Specialization

Each Skill covers a group of similarly related things. They are designed so that a Character doesn't need to pay for multiple Skills in order to be competent at their job. Because of this, some players may find that a Skill covers things that don't make sense for their particular Character. For example, a wandering Martial Artist may take Survival to represent the Character's ability to find food, but if that particular Character was famous for getting lost, it would not make sense for them to have the navigation aspect of the Skill.

Players may choose to Specialize their Skills when they are first purchased. Define one narrow aspect of the Skill that the Character excels in; when making Skill Checks in that capacity, add a further +2 to the result of the Check. However, when making Skill Checks with that Skill in any other situation, the Character receives a -1 Modifier instead.

Example

> *The tanuki Jōnzu is a famed dice shark, challenging people to games of chance for sake and trinkets. Jōnzu's player takes the Vice Skill and specializes in games of chance. When Jōnzu makes Checks for games against other Characters, the roll is modified by Jōnzu's Vice Skill Modifier, the Associated Attribute's Modifier, and an additional +2. Whenever Jōnzu makes any other kind of Vice Checks, the roll would be modified by (+Vice Modifier + Associated Attribute -1).*

Note that skill specialization only applies to Skill Checks and Improvised Attacks. If another Ability (such as a Signature Attack or Technique) uses a Skill to make Checks, you make those Checks without Specialization — do not apply the +2 or the -1.

Example Uses

Each skill includes a list of example uses that are common in most games. This list is not exhaustive; it is only intended to give GMs and Players a good feel for what the Skill can do. GMs should choose the Skill they feel most represents what a Character needs to do when a Player wants to take an action that isn't included in the examples.

Example Uses are also a good reference for the kinds of things that a Character could choose for Skill Specialization.

Skills as Defenses

Skills can be upgraded to act as a Defense in Conflicts. See "Upgrading Skills to Defenses" on page 85 for rules on using Attack and Defend actions in Conflicts.

List of Skills

Athletics 18
Evaluate 18
Fighting 18
Interaction 18
Investigation 19
Ki Attunement 19
Leadership 19
Manipulation 20
Medicine 21
Nature Affinity 21
Survival 21
Vice 22

Athletics

Agility, Endurance, Strength

Athletics is a group of activities that combine the natural physical capabilities of a Character with training of some form. This includes martial arts, sports, or actions that require coordinating physical actions with knowledge, such as fishing.

Using Athletics

Running a Marathon race, which requires the Endurance to finish, and the experience of when to make the final push in relation to the other runners' positions.

Fishing combines the Agility to place the lure where the fisher wants it, the Strength to reel in the big catches, and the knowledge of when to ease off so the line doesn't break.

Characters may wish to use their Signature Attacks in non violent ways, such as trick-shot Archery or impressive displays of blade handling. In these cases, the experience gained from Combat is not always enough, and Athletics can be used to represent additional skill in more than just harming targets with Attacks.

Evaluate

Intelligence, Perception, Strength

Evaluate allows a Character to understand the qualities of whatever is being Evaluated. It can be used in different ways to gain different information. For example, Evaluate could be used on a person during a conversation in order to understand how that person feels about a topic, but if used in battle it give details about their fighting style. Evaluate as a general skill is a good choice for observant or investigative Characters, but many other Characters make use of one of its Specializations, even if they are normally clueless about all other things. For example, an absent minded scholar may to incredibly good at Evaluating the origin and era of an artifact by studying it up close.

Using Evaluate

Martial Artists often take Evaluate with a Specialization to understand the style of their opponents.

A savvy (or greedy) merchant may Evaluate everything from the total volume of a bowl of rice to the legitimacy of a metal coin.

A strategist can use Evaluate for many different aspects of a war campaign. It can be used on the enemy to learn their numbers and strength, as well as patterns and habits. It can be used on the area to choose the best location to initiate a battle. It can even be used on one's own troops to see if they are ready for another battle immediately following a previous one.

Fighting

Agility, Resolve, Strength

Conflict can take many forms, but those who make their living fighting are experts in anything that involves going against others when winning is the most important goal. That doesn't mean that honor needs to be lost, but Fighting represents situations beyond sparring, sports or friendly challenges. There are aspects to life and death combats where Fighting is a vital skill.

Using Fighting

Anyone involved in war benefits from Fighting; from the Samurai general deciding Strategy all the way down to the bloody infantry fighting in hand to hand combat.

Fighting can be taken in place of other Skills if the Character uses them in violent or confrontational ways. Wars of words can make political intrigues just as intense as barroom brawls, and some schools of martial arts require Fighting for everything from getting the Character's daily meal to proving the student understands philosophy.

Even a normally peaceful Character may want to take Fighting with a Specialization. A traveling Go player may not know which end of a sword to point at someone, but need a high Modifier to defeat random challengers (the main Go matches against masters that make up an entire story line are probably going to be resolved as a Conflict rather than a single Skill Check, but Fighting would still be used in each action the Character takes in a game).

Interaction

Discipline, Insight, Zeal

Interaction is used whenever a Character wants to connect with another in a way that is friendly or cooperative. Interaction opens channels of communication and makes it easier to understand and be understood. Interaction works in a way that is beneficial to both parties (see Manipulation for a Skill that acts similarly, but doesn't focus on the other Character being happy about it) and usually is best used between two individuals (see Leadership for coordinating groups), though in some cases the Character can treat a group acting similarly as a single

entity to Interact with (such as when giving a public speech, most listeners will respond in the same way and the GM can make a single Interaction Check for them all).

Using Interaction

A Character with high empathy can often learn just as much as a trained investigator by talking to suspects, especially if they make them feel it is safe to reveal information to them.

Two rival generals may use a game of Shōgi as a chance to discuss matters through the metaphors expressed by their game actions. For example, an aggressive play may be an indicator that the Character sees the future involving inevitable battle, and wait to see how the other player responds in order to judge their answer. These kinds of games are often the only way to communicate for some social classes, who would otherwise be prevented by honor or tradition from revealing their feelings to the enemy.

Nippon is country with many complex social rules, most of them unwritten and some barely even talked about. Interaction allows a Character to make their way without offending anyone unintentionally, cutting down on potential enemies and opening the doors for future allies.

Investigation

Insight, Intelligence, Perception

The classic detective is the most common form of Investigation, but there are many ways of learning hidden information. Investigation is used to study a set of information, clues or locations in order to draw conclusions from the facts known. As opposed to Interaction and Manipulation, Investigation doesn't necessarily require other Characters to be used on, and unlike Evaluate, Investigation lets a Character 'connect the dots', not just know the details of something. When a Character succeeds at an Investigation Check, the GM should provide details of the story and give the player hints on what the Character would understand from them.

Using Investigation

A grizzled detective uses Investigation at a crime scene to find clues that lead them to a potential suspect. They then use Investigation again to stake out a place the suspect frequents in order to observe them for further clues.

Scholars and Scientists often use Investigation to discover lost information or pioneer new breakthroughs in their fields.

A traveling chef can use Investigation (and a lot of taste testing) to create new recipes based on the dishes of other lands and cultures.

Ki Attunement

Insight, Endurance, Zeal

Ki fills the universe, and is a part of all things, from living creatures to ancient stones that have seen more history than all of Nippon's text books combined. A Character who knows how to work with Ki can achieve levels of success that go well beyond the limits of normal, everyday life. Ki Attunement is used whenever the Character interacts with the supernatural, or when they use their own natural abilities in ways beyond mortal limits.

Using Ki Attunement

A Character with a fire-based Signature Attack wants to use it out of Conflict to put out a house fire. The GM decides to allow the Character to make a Ki Attunement Check against Difficulty 18.

Powerful supernatural creatures or users of magic are often easy to detect and track due to their auras. A Character could attempt to hide their presence by making a Ki Attunement Check, opposed by the other Character's Ki Attunement or Perception.

Ki can be imbued in things created by a Character, anything from a simple home-cooked meal that warms the hearts of a family to the swan song masterpiece of an artist. When using the Craft rules from ***Professions*** *(see "Professions" on page 88), the GM may allow the Character to make a Ki Attunement Check to make the item more personal in some way that does not have a mechanical modifier on the game.*

Leadership

Insight, Resolve, Zeal

Leadership allows a Character to organize and guide others. This can be actual command-style leadership, or it could model anything from a quiet voice of experience among a group of new-bloods, to the political manipulations of a corrupt advisor who hides in the shadows and pulls the strings. Where Interaction and Manipulation focus on the bonds between individual sides, Leadership coordinates a group into acting with an individual drive, goal or voice.

Using Leadership

Leadership can be used in the same way as Interaction or Manipulation when dealing with a group of people. This is often a vital skill for Characters who

are lords or politicians and don't have time to interact with everyone individually.

A Character that has trained a group of animals to have higher than average intelligence may use Leadership in place of Nature Affinity. For example a kennel master could coordinate the hounds on a hunt for his lord, and a spy could coordinate multiple message-bearing birds across the country.

Leadership can be overt or subtle, depending on the personality and methods of the Character using it. An inspiring hero can lead from the front of the battle by example, but a kind elderly grandmother can lead an entire family line with her years of experience, wisdom, and possibly a stern look or two.

MANIPULATION

Discipline, Intelligence, Perception

Manipulation is the ability to get people or things to do what you want, regardless of how they feel about it. The most common ways to use this Skill involve Manipulating people, but it can also include things that fall into other categories that are done in a different way. For example, instead of using Athletics or Vice to pick a lock, the GM could allow a Character with Profession: Tinker to use Manipulation to do it instead. When used on people, successful Manipulation Checks tend to leave the target upset, but forced to do things beyond what they would do through more cooperative skills like Interaction or Leadership.

Using Manipulation

Manipulation is a key tool of less honest politicians, spies operating in territory that is not openly hostile, or the stereotypical criminal mastermind. These Characters tend to get what they want from others without needing to worry about paying a cost.

Manipulation is useable on things besides people. A scientist experimenting with habitats could use Manipulation instead of Nature Affinity to build a contained environment with very specific conditions and trials.

Manipulation is not always malicious, it simply works by getting the target to do something without them being happy about it. This is often a common technique of the instructor masters of Martial Arts who teach through riddles and challenges, rather than lectures.

Players Using Skills Against Each Other

Mysteries of the Yōkai is a cooperative game, and the rules of the Tide and Morale Conflict system group all of the players together on the same side. However, there may be times when PCs want to compete against each other. For in-depth Conflicts, the GM can split the PCs into two groups, counting one side as the "Enemy" side. However, most of these intra-party clashes usually come down to quick, friendly competitions or momentary attempts to "one-up" another PC.

Any Skill or Attribute can be used to make Opposed Checks against PCs, but only if all of the involved Players agree to the story explanation of what will happen as a result of the Checks. These kinds of Opposed Checks can never force a PC to act in a way that doesn't fit their personality, and should not be used in ways that might cause arguments between the Players involved (see "Issues During Play" on page 349 for a discussion on Player disagreements). This means that Manipulation can not be used on another PC to make them take forced actions, Vice cannot be used to steal items from another PC, etc. GMs and Players who want to build a Campaign around a more rivalry-based (or even flat out antagonistic) party may want to relax these rules, but make sure everyone understands the boundaries that apply before the Campaign begins.

Example

In a high-powered wuxia Campaign, Matt is playing Barrier-soul Shu Wei, a typical wandering champion of justice; strong of fist and morales, but perhaps a bit lacking in subtlety and guile. Christopher is playing Lamented-excellence Jun Ru, Shu's half-brother, who is known far and wide for his brilliance and planning, but not so for his reliability or honor.

In this Campaign, PCs are allowed to use Abilities against each other as long as they declare the intent of a successful Check and the GM feels it does not go against the personalities of the the Characters involved.

Christopher could have Jun make a Manipulation Check against Shu to appeal to his vanity, perhaps in a gambit to make Shu attempt a legendary task he is likely to fail, looking foolish in the process. Jun could also make an Interaction Check to get his sibling to forgive him after the ruse was revealed. He could not make a Check to force Shu to slaughter a village of innocents or ally with an evil demon, as these would not make sense for the kind of hero that Matt is playing Shu as.

Medicine

Discipline, Endurance, Intelligence

Medicine covers any science or healing tradition that affects living creatures. A Character with the Medicine Skill might be an actual surgeon, a shaman who uses natural cures, or even an Alchemist who creates special potions that only work on animals. Medicine can be used in place of other skills such as Evaluate or Investigation to gain information on living creatures, ailments, poisons, etc.

Using Medicine

Medicine is the most important Skill for those who directly heal (though many will claim that Interaction is also useful, unless the healer wants to be accused of having a bad bedside manner). Medicine is a good way for PCs to make Improvised Attacks during Conflicts (see "Improvised Attack" on page 120). Medicine should benefit from Situational Modifiers based on other actions the Character has taken, such as using medical supplies, researching new procedures, or even talking with a patient to heal their spirit as well as their illness.

Medicine can be used in place of Vice by more honorable Characters to work with poisons, drugs and similar substances.

Medicine is often better applied as preventative, rather than reactive methods. A Character with Medicine Associated with Endurance could help maintain the health of a group by leading them in daily exercise, and Medicine Associated with Discipline could represent a group's cook that studies every recipe they can find and works on perfecting the daily diets of the party to maximize the existing physical strengths of each person.

Nature Affinity

Agility, Strength, Zeal

The people of Nippon share their world with the complex systems of nature, even in the largest cities. Nature Affinity measures the ability of a Character to not only coexist with nature, but to make sure both sides flourish. It can be used to interact with non-sentient animals in a way similar to the Interaction Skill (though obviously most animals will be limited in what they can provide in terms of meaningful dialogue) and can also be used in most of the ways Survival can (with less negative impact on the area). Nature Affinity can even be used in large cities, for example to maintain a garden or preserve in the middle of an industrial quarter.

Using Nature Affinity

Nature Affinity is the standard Skill of any Character that works in harmony with animals or plants. It can be used to feed, care for and train animals, from the stablehand in charge of a lord's warsteed to the hermit whose only friends are a pair of aged turtles who are kept in perfect health despite their years.

Science-oriented Characters may have a high Modifier in Nature Affinity, despite a lack of practical "field experience".

Nature Affinity can be used in place of many of the aspects of Survival. This takes the Character using Nature Affinity more time and resources, but works in a way that benefits both the Character and the environment they are surviving in.

Survival

Discipline, Endurance, Resolve

Survival is the ability to not only stay alive, but to thrive, when conditions are less than optimal. The most common uses of Survival are to find food and water, to navigate, and to avoid the elements in nature. Survival can also be used to help an entire group, such as by knowing how best to ration, avoiding threats of sickness, or organizing labor based on the skills of each individual.

Using Survival

Besides finding food and shelter, the next most common use of Survival is navigating an environment. Sailors often Specialize their Survival on the ocean; they would struggle in a forest, but on the high sea they maintain their footing, never get lost, and know the warning signs of a coming storm.

Survival can be modeled by a Character that is always prepared. A traveling merchant with a well stocked cart may not be able to tell which plants are poisonous, but they have plenty of extra rations tucked away. A Character with a minor talent in magical arts may not be able to throw fireballs to defeat foes, but they can start the campfire and light the way when traveling at night.

Sometimes, the Character's body can even be the source of the Survival Skill. If one of the group's members just happens to be a cat-shaped vehicle, their friends can travel between cities in comfort, trusting their large friend to follow trails while keeping them warm and safe.

Vice

Agility, Perception, Resolve

Vice covers all manner of activities that are hard to learn because they are not considered "proper" (or even legal, in many cases) by society. Lying, cheating, and stealing make up the standard toolkit of those who specialize in Vice. This Skill can also be used in similar ways to other Skills when applied to different settings. For example, a Character could use Vice in place of Interaction or Investigation when "hitting the streets", or in place of Medicine to create common poisons or recreational drugs. Vice may also be used in slightly less dark practices, such as by a flamboyant gambler who entertains a crowd while taking their money, or a thief that robs an over-taxing lord and returns the money to the peasants.



Using Vice

Vice is a staple of anyone who operates outside of the law. In the case where the law itself is corrupt, many heroes often specialize in Vice. These Characters are able to easily switch between covert activities that keep them safe from the authorities to flashy displays of skill and talent that inspire others to rise up against corrupt oppression.

For most conmen street thieves and petty crooks, the adage is "be quick or be dead". This forces them to master one area and leaves little time to be the best at other things. Characters playing these kinds of Characters should choose one area of Vice to Specialize in. GMs should build adventures around the other activities of the Character providing them with Situational Modifiers in key story climaxes. The formula for the classic heist not only lets the Vice Character shine, it lets them assign tasks to the other Characters that show off their skills as well.

Vice can also be taken by those who oppose outlaws, even if the Character doesn't engage in those activities themselves. In this case, it is often a matter of being very good at knowing one's enemy, and helps mechanically when making Opposed Checks against a recurring nemesis on the other side of the law.

Katas

Katas are package deals that reward a Character for dedicated training in a well established field of study. When you purchase a Kata, you pay the required amount of Potential listed inside the Kata to your Character.

Katas benefit Characters who focus on specific paths of advancement. They allow you to end up with more than 100 Total Potential, but somewhat restrict where that Potential goes. If you choose not to use Katas, you will have more freedom to take additional Abilities, but your total overall Potential will be slightly lower than someone who takes mostly Katas. You can freely mix the purchase of Katas with spending Potential on specific Attributes, Skills, or other Abilities. Katas can be taken multiple times.

Katas

Katas cost 8 Potential and provide a total of 10 Potential to a specific set of Attributes and Skills.

Katas and Names/Themes

Each Kata is presented with a name, and a description of the Kata detailing the types of Character who might commonly take it. The name and lore are meant to provide more information on the game world and give players suggestions for things that might interest them. However, the actual game mechanics are not tied to the lore. A player can take a Kata and receive the listed Abilities without needing to be the kind of job or class listed. For example, a player could take the Investigator Kata to represent any Character that has studied others and solved mysteries, not just a professional Investigator. This could be a curious alchemist that traveled the world researching new mixtures, or the nosy old landlord that is always getting involved in the adventures of the PCs.

Katas: Forms of Practice

Katas are exercises practiced in Japanese Martial arts. Students move from one kata to the next, learning the different movements required to master their techniques. Katas may feel like they lack practical application, but when practiced until they become muscle memory, they can provide the very foundation to a school of martial arts.

In Mysteries of the Yōkai, Katas represent a Character's training and background, each represents a path and a set of skills that a Character has studied. Katas are named after professions and archetypes that are common in Japanese folklore but don't feel your character has to conform to these archetypes in order to take the Kata or that your Character must take Katas that match their archetype. These names are merely to give you an idea of what kind of skills a Kata contains and what types of Characters might want to take it. You can easily create a Ninja Character without purchasing the Ninja Kata and you should feel free to purchase the Ninja Kata because you like the Abilities it contains even if your Character isn't a Ninja.

List of Katas

Advocate 25
Agent 25
Alchemist 25
Ascetic 25
Broker 26
Charlatan 26
Combat Medic 26
Detective 26
Diplomat 27
Doctor 27
Emissary 27
Exorcist 28
Explorer 28
Forest Sage 28
Herbalist 28
Hunter 29
Investigator 29
Mercenary 29
Merchant 30
Ninja 30
Noble 30
Outsider 30
Peasant 31
Performer 31
Scholar 31
Shaman 31
Soldier 32
Stranger 32
Thief 32
Trickster Spirit 32
Vagrant 33
Wanderer 33
Warder 33
Warrior 34
Watchman 34
Worker 34

ADVOCATE

弁護士 (Bengoshi)

Advocates are lawyers who argue on behalf of their clients in court tribunals. They are masters of rhetoric and social combat, drawing relevant conclusions based on the clues and evidence given to them. Advocates represent the accusers and the accused in a tribunal, they were established and made available to the public by the new Emperor. Advocates never turn away from the truth, but their main focus is always fighting for the goals and well being of their clients.

ADVOCATE 弁護士 (Bengoshi)

Attributes	Potential
Intelligence	2
Perception	2
Skills	**Potential**
Evaluate	2
Fighting	2
Manipulation	2

AGENT

仕事人 (Shigotonin)

Serving as a field agent of the Bureau of Spiritual Affairs tends to lead one around the entire nation, from one strange situation to the next. An Agent quickly learns to deal with both the mundane and supernatural using the appropriate methods for the situation. The best agents approach problems with the delicacy of a diplomat, but are ready to fight like a warrior when the need arises. Even those who began their service with traditional views on the supernatural have learned there is more to the spirits of Nippon than anyone really knows.

AGENT 仕事人 (Shigotonin)

Attributes	Potential
Agility	2
Intelligence	2
Skills	**Potential**
Fighting	2
Investigation	2
Ki Attunement	2

ALCHEMIST

錬金術師 (Renkinjutsushi)

Alchemy is an ancient and mysterious art combining magic and science. Practitioners of alchemy are able to create strange and wondrous chemical compounds and build intricate devices. Using special custom-designed tools, an alchemist can accomplish all manner of astounding feats.

ALCHEMIST 錬金術師 (Renkinjutsushi)

Attributes	Potential
Insight	2
Resolve	2
Skills	**Potential**
Investigation	2
Medicine	2
Nature Affinity	2

ASCETIC

山伏 (Yamabushi)

An ascetic seeks perfection of both body and mind, in fact they consider these pursuits to be one and the same. The body is trained to focus the mind, and the mind directs the body with purity of purpose. While the ascetic can competently protect themselves or others, they do not seek battle for its own sake. A focused body, not restrained or distracted by base needs, acts as a lens to truly see the world and a tool to fully experience it. This allows the ascetic to discover the hidden secrets of the world, enlightening the mind and heightening mastery of the soul.

ASCETIC 山伏 (Yamabushi)

Attributes	Potential
Discipline	2
Resolve	2
Skills	**Potential**
Athletics	2
Ki Attunement	2
Survival	2

BROKER

情報屋 (Jōhōya)

Brokers are the skilled negotiators of the underground and masters of truth and rumor alike. There is no underestimating the power of knowledge and information, especially in a time of political intrigue, espionage, and secrets. When some leverage is needed, a broker can provide it, but only for a fee. Brokers use information and rumor as weapons to turn a bargain or situation to their favor. Their existence often balances other forms of manipulation; it is harder for those in the shadows to act when information is not monopolized by a few individuals.



CHARLATAN

詐欺師 (Sagishi)

While some Charlatans may aspire to nothing more than tricking peasants for a quick coin before fleeing town, the greatest Charlatans create ruses and trickery worthy of being called art. A Charlatan knows the human experience so well that they are able to manipulate how others expect the world to work, creating outcomes that are, in the end, truly about benefiting the Charlatan. They can take a mark for everything they have, all the while smiling and convincing them to give it willingly.



COMBAT MEDIC

衛生兵 (Eiseihei)

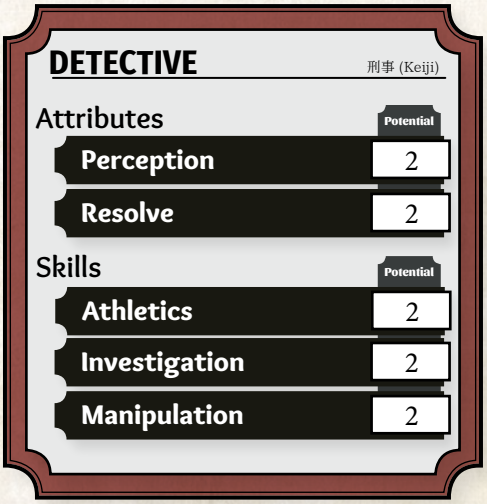
Combat Medics specialize in treating wounds on the front lines of battle, staving off death and providing aid and comfort to their comrades. There's no point to winning a battle if nobody's alive to enjoy it. While they may not have all the scholarly studies and expensive equipment of a nobleman surgeon, the Combat Medic makes up for it with their tenacity and their ability to stay focused even in the heat of battle.



DETECTIVE

刑事 (Keiji)

A Detective solves mysteries through interaction with the people and places involved in a mystery. They do this as much, or more, than applying logic and theory. Detectives prefer to talk with witnesses, question suspects, and overall figure out the angles and motives of those involved. And when all else fails, they often go with their 'gut feeling', trusting their instincts to lead them through the end. Because their approach is so focused on dealing with others, Detectives tend to become very skilled in knowing when others are lying, and can even direct a line of questioning to trick a criminal into confessing.



DIPLOMAT

申次衆 (Mōshitsugishū)

Diplomats fill a vital role of performing negotiations and bridging cultures, in the stead of those who are not subtle enough to be trusted to handle these things by themselves. A Diplomat will represent a cause or individual on their behalf, fighting to gain what is desired, in a way that does not make a blatant enemy of the other party. By applying the savvy of a veteran merchant with all the charm of a familiar confidant, a Diplomat can address awkward topics and tense situations by finding common ground that favors both parties (though always more so in favor of their side).

DIPLOMAT 申次衆 (Mōshitsugishū)

Attributes	Potential
Discipline	2
Resolve	2
Skills	**Potential**
Evaluate	2
Interaction	2
Leadership	2

DOCTOR

医師 (Ishi)

The path of a Doctor is one of continuing education and constant improvement. They spend hours studying both ancient medicines passed down through generations and new advancements and surgical techniques. A good Doctor views curing an ailment as solving a mystery of the body, gathering evidence through interviews and examination, then finding a solution through careful research.

DOCTOR 医師 (Ishi)

Attributes	Potential
Discipline	2
Intelligence	2
Skills	**Potential**
Evaluate	2
Investigation	2
Medicine	2

EMISSARY

使者 (Shisha)

Emissaries form connections with entities big and small and call upon their powers in times of need. In forging a contract or acting in the service of a kami, yōkai, spirits, or even demons, an Emissary is afforded the aid and power of their partners or patrons. Maintaining the connection to their benefactors has many complexities. Emissaries work to uphold their bargains and keep their associates appeased. Some act out of devotion as priests, working as extensions of their patron's will to further their agenda. When using the gifts bestowed upon them, they can sometimes take on the characteristics and personalities of their benefactors.

EMISSARY 使者 (Shisha)

Attributes	Potential
Insight	2
Zeal	2
Skills	**Potential**
Interaction	2
Ki Attunement	2
Leadership	2

EXORCIST

呪禁師 (Jugonshi)

While an Exorcist's job does involve the occasional flashy battle against an evil spirit, much of what they do involves investigation and research. By studying clues they discover how best to approach spirits and yōkai. Exorcists possess a wide repertoire of abilities ranging from powerful jugondō spells to simple counseling techniques. Choosing the right one to use is the most important part of a proper exorcism. Exorcists must ensure that they address an errant spirit in its totality, including the emotions and traumas that caused it to lash out in the first place. Failing to do so risks leaving negative energy to fester into a monster that is more dangerous than the one they drove out.

EXORCIST 呪禁師 (Jugonshi)

Attributes	Potential
Resolve	2
Zeal	2
Skills	**Potential**
Investigation	2
Ki Attunement	2
Nature Affinity	2

EXPLORER

探検家 (Tankenka)

Explorers are the first to jump into the unknown, setting out to discover what lies beyond the bounds of everyday life. They become experts at not only finding what lies beyond, but also surviving the challenges and dangers that come with it.

EXPLORER 探検家 (Tankenka)

Attributes	Potential
Endurance	2
Perception	2
Skills	**Potential**
Investigation	2
Nature Affinity	2
Survival	2

FOREST SAGE

仙人 (Sennin)

Forest Sages spend years meditating and studying under the tutelage of the trees, animals, and mountains. There is a great wisdom and power that can be found in nature that these hermits have learned to master, giving them access to magical abilities. Sages maintain a mutual and cooperative relationship with the land, drawing upon the power and guardians of the mountains, sea, forests, and fields to weave their spells.

FOREST SAGE 仙人 (Sennin)

Attributes	Potential
Insight	2
Resolve	2
Skills	**Potential**
Interaction	2
Ki Attunement	2
Nature Affinity	2

HERBALIST

薬師 (Yakushi)

Herbalists are pharmacists who find their cures among the forests and nature, they have intimate knowledge of the effects of plants and animals on the body. Herbalism allows them to know the right salve to apply, which teas to brew, and what combinations of ingredients can be used to heal illnesses and wounds. These healers often travel through remote areas, assisting those they can, while searching for new cures, ingredients, and methods for their medicines. A wandering Herbalist can be easily identified by the wooden chest they carry upon their backs, with drawers brimming with innumerable herbs and tools of their trade.

HERBALIST 薬師 (Yakushi)

Attributes	Potential
Insight	2
Intelligence	2
Skills	**Potential**
Investigation	2
Medicine	2
Nature Affinity	2

HUNTER

山狩り (Yamakari)

A seasoned Hunter is as comfortable in the deepest woods as they are in their own back yard. They respect all aspects of the forest, from the kami that protect it, to the plants they harvest from it, and even to the animals they hunt in it. This respect is vital to surviving and thriving in the wilds. Those who do not respect the dangers of the woods will surely find them to be their final resting place.

HUNTER	山狩り (Yamakari)
Attributes	**Potential**
Agility	2
Endurance	2
Skills	**Potential**
Athletics	2
Nature Affinity	2
Survival	2

INVESTIGATOR

探偵 (Tantei)

Investigators are drawn to the world of puzzles and mysteries, honing their skills to better find the secrets behind the clues laid before them. Those in power were once free from the consequences of criminal actions, but under Akitsu's reign, the reformed courts have the power to punish any whose misdeeds can be proven. Only private Investigators have the skills needed to cut through the bureaucracy and misdirection of the nobility and uncover the truth. People seek them out when they have questions that they cannot answer alone, and when their leaders can not or will not help them.

INVESTIGATOR	探偵 (Tantei)
Attributes	**Potential**
Intelligence	2
Perception	2
Skills	**Potential**
Evaluate	2
Interaction	2
Investigation	2

MERCENARY

用心棒 (Yōjinbō)

There are as many reasons to fight in the world as there are those who take up arms. For the Mercenary, that reason is usually a very simple: money. But the Mercenary is not simply a mindless brute, many carefully choose the causes they will provide their service for, living by a self-determined sense of duty. What they may lack in dedication or loyalty to grand causes, they make up for in skills honed to support who or whatever has paid for the pledge of a mercenary's blade. It's not often that someone can buy loyalty for the price of a coin, yet many Mercenaries would be willing to die in battle so long as their dues were paid. Their trade beckons them to wander to places embroiled in strife and turmoil following the demand for their services. A Mercenary's life is not only driven by conflict, it is also paid by it. Such familiarity with battle brings them to clash with foes the average palace guard or trained soldier could never imagine facing.

MERCENARY	用心棒 (Yōjinbō)
Attributes	**Potential**
Endurance	2
Strength	2
Skills	**Potential**
Athletics	2
Fighting	2
Vice	2

MERCHANT

行商人 (Gyōshōnin)

A Merchant is a combination of salesperson, supplier, social entertainer, and keen-eyed mathematician. While a farmer or blacksmith may craft their own wares, a Merchant, whether they be dealing in foodstuffs, ancient texts or even something as nebulous as 'information', must constantly travel in order to obtain new stock. They must also be able to use personal connections to find a buyer with both the desire and the funds to purchase their wares. Finally, they must be able to appeal to the desires of the buyer without offending them. A Merchant who can successfully juggle all of these skills will find themselves rich, well traveled, and admired by both their peers and customers.

MERCHANT 行商人 (Gyōshōnin)

Attributes	Potential
Perception	2
Zeal	2
Skills	**Potential**
Evaluate	2
Interaction	2
Manipulation	2

NINJA

忍 (Shinobi)

Ninjas are masters of espionage, infiltration, sabotage, and covert combat, performing their duties with agility and finesse. Each individual and clan specializes in their own array of specialized techniques and ki arts known collectively as ninjutsu. With the tense political situation of the country, covert operations have become crucial to those who wish to further their agendas without being discovered.

NINJA 忍 (Shinobi)

Attributes	Potential
Agility	2
Discipline	2
Skills	**Potential**
Ki Attunement	2
Manipulation	2
Survival	2

NOBLE

貴人 (Atebito)

Most Nobles are born into their life, with no need or chance to choose their path. While this provides many privileges, it also imposes restrictions on how a noble should act. Even those who rise to a higher station must learn the unspoken rules of the games nobility play. A noble is responsible both for the wellbeing of those under them and the commands of those above them. One who can navigate this social maze is able to enjoy the benefits of their station, rarely wanting for physical things, and commanding the respect (though not always admiration) of others. A Noble is a natural leader, they direct others with calm calculation and a personality that inspires loyalty.

NOBLE 貴人 (Atebito)

Attributes	Potential
Perception	2
Zeal	2
Skills	**Potential**
Interaction	2
Leadership	2
Manipulation	2

OUTSIDER

無法者 (Muhōsha)

Many warriors lack the grace of the ninja, the nobility of the samurai, or the formal training of the Soldier. If these fighters had given in to selfishness, they might be called Outsiders, but it's very possible for someone to be a simple brute, but still have a good heart. In fact, these heroes may be among the most dedicated to justice; disdaining the gray areas of abusable laws to mete out justice with their fists and weapons, protecting the innocent whether or not the system approves. This often requires both the ability and willingness to fight, steal, and recover from such endeavors without the comforts of inns, doctors, or the military's quartermasters.

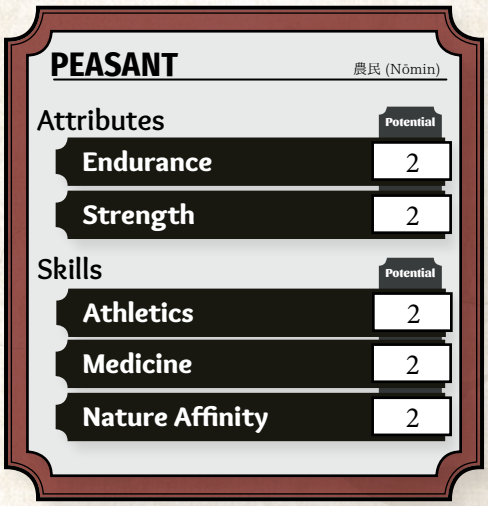
OUTSIDER 無法者 (Muhōsha)

Attributes	Potential
Agility	2
Endurance	2
Skills	**Potential**
Fighting	2
Survival	2
Vice	2

PEASANT

農民 (Nōmin)

Not all heroes come from martial arts schools, noble clans, or the training program of the Bureau. Those who grow up working the land have a deep connection with the animals, spirits and terrain of the world, and are used to working hard to achieve their goals with their own hands. Tending fields and raising animals builds up strength and stamina that are equally useful when traveling the country and fighting dangerous yōkai. Outside the major cities, self reliance is of the utmost importance. Most Peasants learn how to take care of matters of food and healing by an early age.



PERFORMER

大道芸人 (Daidōgeinin)

Able to dazzle an audience with a captivating experience, Performers use their talents in the service of entertainment. Most Performers travel between villages with caravans, showing off their acts and performing concerts to different people every week. The most successful are able set up shop in large cities where travelers will come to them instead.



SCHOLAR

学生 (Gakushō)

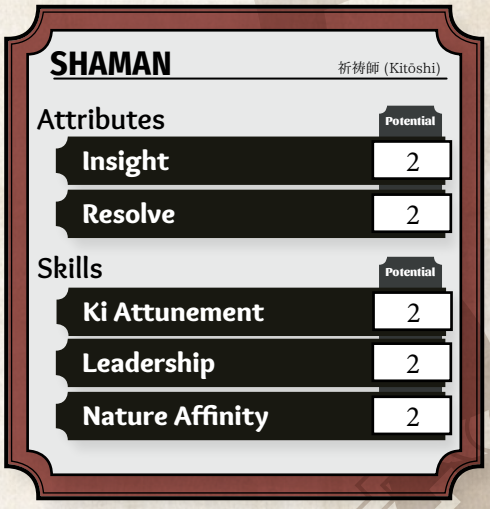
Though many spend their lives hidden away in libraries working with archaic scrolls, Scholars that travel the world can discover new secrets not yet recorded. In this Age of Spirits, Scholars are naturally beginning to study yōkai and the supernatural. They seek out the answers to the mysteries of the spiritual world, the secrets lost with the fall of Heian, and even the knowledge possessed only by yōkai Scholars in other realms.



SHAMAN

祈祷師 (Kitōshi)

Shaman work in tandem with the kami of nature, from the spirits of entire forests and mountains, to those as small as a stack of pebbles, seeking their wisdom and aid. They bond with guardian spirits by sharing their ki with them, working towards common goals to accomplish things that neither could achieve alone. Shaman bridge the world of humans and nature, as well as the realm of mortals and spirits. These connections allow them to provide answers to those bearing questions and allies in times of need.



SOLDIER

戦人 (Ikusabito)

Soldiers dedicate their lives to protecting their homeland, whether it be the village they grew up in or the entire nation. A soldier may not obtain the individual combat mastery of a noble samurai or a pupil of a great sensei, but by learning to fight beside their fellow soldiers they become a combat force greater than any single warrior. A Soldier can always rely on their unit to fight beside them and their army to feed, shelter, and arm them.

SOLDIER 戦人 (Ikusabito)

Attributes	Potential
Endurance	2
Strength	2
Skills	**Potential**
Fighting	2
Leadership	2
Medicine	2

STRANGER

稀人 (Marebito)

Some personalities are far too large to be tied down to any one place or time. Though some may be wary of the Stranger at first, their nigh-supernatural charm will have everyone calling them "friend" in no time. Perhaps there is something magical about the Stranger, maybe they're a noble in disguise, or even a shapeshifted kami. Though rumors may swirl in the Stranger's wake, no one can truly know where the Stranger comes from or what their destination might be. The only thing they know is that they hope the Stranger returns soon to share good food, strong drink, exciting wagers, and incredible stories.

STRANGER 稀人 (Marebito)

Attributes	Potential
Endurance	2
Zeal	2
Skills	**Potential**
Interaction	2
Survival	2
Vice	2

THIEF

回し者 (Mawashimono)

There are many reasons to take things from others, and not all Thieves are malicious villains. Often, valuable or dangerous items must be retrieved from those who took them in the first place, and a direct battle is not always the best way to do so. A Thief can bypass guards and traps that might slow down or completely stop the rest of their companions, combining dexterous training with an eye for detail as great as any investigator. Thieves also have connections with the more questionable elements of society, giving them clues and opportunities that others might never come upon.

THIEF 回し者 (Mawashimono)

Attributes	Potential
Agility	2
Perception	2
Skills	**Potential**
Evaluate	2
Manipulation	2
Vice	2

TRICKSTER SPIRIT

いたずらっ子妖怪 (Itazurakko Yōkai)

Not everyone with spiritual powers is dedicated to balance, knowledge, and discipline. Some just want to enrich their lives and the lives of others, perhaps by adding a little lighthearted fun. Tricksters feel it's their duty to make sure nobody takes themselves too seriously, whether they be spirit or human. That's not to say that Trickster Spirits never take anything seriously, some of the greatest heroes of legend were infamous tricksters. Sometimes the hero you really need is the one who lifts your heavy heart despite the weight of hardship and challenges you to remember who you really are.

TRICKSTER SPIRIT
悪戯っ子妖怪 (Itazurakko Yōkai)

Attributes	Potential
Insight	2
Zeal	2
Skills	**Potential**
Ki Attunement	2
Nature Affinity	2
Vice	2

VAGRANT

浪人 (Rōnin)

Even the mightiest of samurai clans may one day fall. War, famine, drought, or even strife among the leadership can tear a once-proud clan asunder. The survivors of such catastrophes are left homeless and jobless with no choice but to wander the land as Vagrants, seeking to peddle their skills and training to try and earn a living however they can. Many former samurai take on temporary bodyguard or security jobs, some may even leverage their training to become captains of mercenary groups. But in hard times, Vagrants cannot always find the kind of work they are suited for and must take jobs as cooks, handymen, couriers, or anything else they can find as their skills go to waste. Often jaded by the loss of the life they knew, Vagrant's have a unique willingness to work outside the bounds of society and the perspective to see solutions to problems that more respectable citizens may not.

VAGRANT	浪人 (Rōnin)	
Attributes		**Potential**
Strength		2
Zeal		2
Skills		**Potential**
Fighting		2
Medicine		2
Vice		2

WARDER

守護者 (Shugosha)

Even before the Age of Spirits, Nippon's leaders needed protection against supernatural threats. Despite being rarer, supernatural attacks were no less dangerous. The Warders were established as guards to protect the Emperor, his friends and family, and Imperial Court officials from the occult. Trained with military discipline, but well-versed in the magical arts, Warders are a force to be reckoned with. Although they are not strangers to offensive spells, they are masters of defensive magic. Warders are trained to counter a plethora of magical techniques and disrupt their opponent's ki. The Warder forces have been merged into the Bureau as a special section of the Department of Supernatural Defense, so that their skills may be used to serve all of Nippon. Most Bureau stations have a few trained Warders on hand in case their defensive skills are needed.

WARDER	守護者 (Shugosha)	
Attributes		**Potential**
Discipline		2
Zeal		2
Skills		**Potential**
Fighting		2
Ki Attunement		2
Leadership		2

WANDERER

俠客 (Kyōkaku)

The wandering hero is often the center of many a tale, moving from place to place, righting wrongs and saving ordinary folk from the villains who would harm them. As outsiders, they can bring hope to those who fear that what's right in front of them is all there is and nothing can truly change. Even though they are far from home, Wanderers have strict personal codes of honor. They value the freedom they have to wander, and the right others have to choose the same life.

WANDERER	俠客 (Kyōkaku)	
Attributes		**Potential**
Endurance		2
Strength		2
Skills		**Potential**
Athletics		2
Evaluate		2
Fighting		2

WARRIOR

武士 (Bushi)

From the noble samurai to the humble village militiaman, all who call themselves Warriors share the same dedication to mastering their combat skills. All Warriors have a reason to fight that drives them to improve. They fight to protect their homes, to defend the honor of their clans, or just because it's the only thing they've ever been any good at. To most people, fighting is an unpleasant necessity, to Soldiers or Mercenaries it's just a way to make a living, but to a Warrior fighting is a purpose in and of itself.

WARRIOR 武士 (Bushi)	
Attributes	**Potential**
Agility	2
Strength	2
Skills	**Potential**
Athletics	2
Fighting	2
Medicine	2

WATCHMAN

山守 (Yamamori)

Though most villagers are comfortable in the local forests, few would dare to venture into the true wilderness. Many dangers lurk in the wilds, powerful yōkai, cutthroat bandits, vicious beasts, and abandoned villages befallen to terrible curses or other disasters. In between the two worlds of humanity and wilderness dwell the Watchmen, solitary guardians who monitor the edges of civilization. A Watchman must be completely self-reliant as they are often hours away from anyone who could help them should they become injured or sick. It is not easy work, but someone must stand guard to warn the villages of impending disaster, be it a band of marauders, a furious storm, or an angry spirit. In their day to day work, the Watchman helps in smaller ways such as guiding lost travelers, capturing poachers, and chasing off bandits.

WATCHMAN 山守 (Yamamori)	
Attributes	**Potential**
Discipline	2
Intelligence	2
Skills	**Potential**
Medicine	2
Survival	2
Vice	2

WORKER

職人 (Shokunin)

As the great cities of Nippon continue to grow in size, they require more and more Workers to keep them running. Those from humble beginnings now flock to the cities to make their livings as builders, crafters, sailors, caravaneers, laborers, cooks, and more. Though city life may be different from what you'd find in a small village, the work to be found there is no less difficult and for some is even more rewarding.

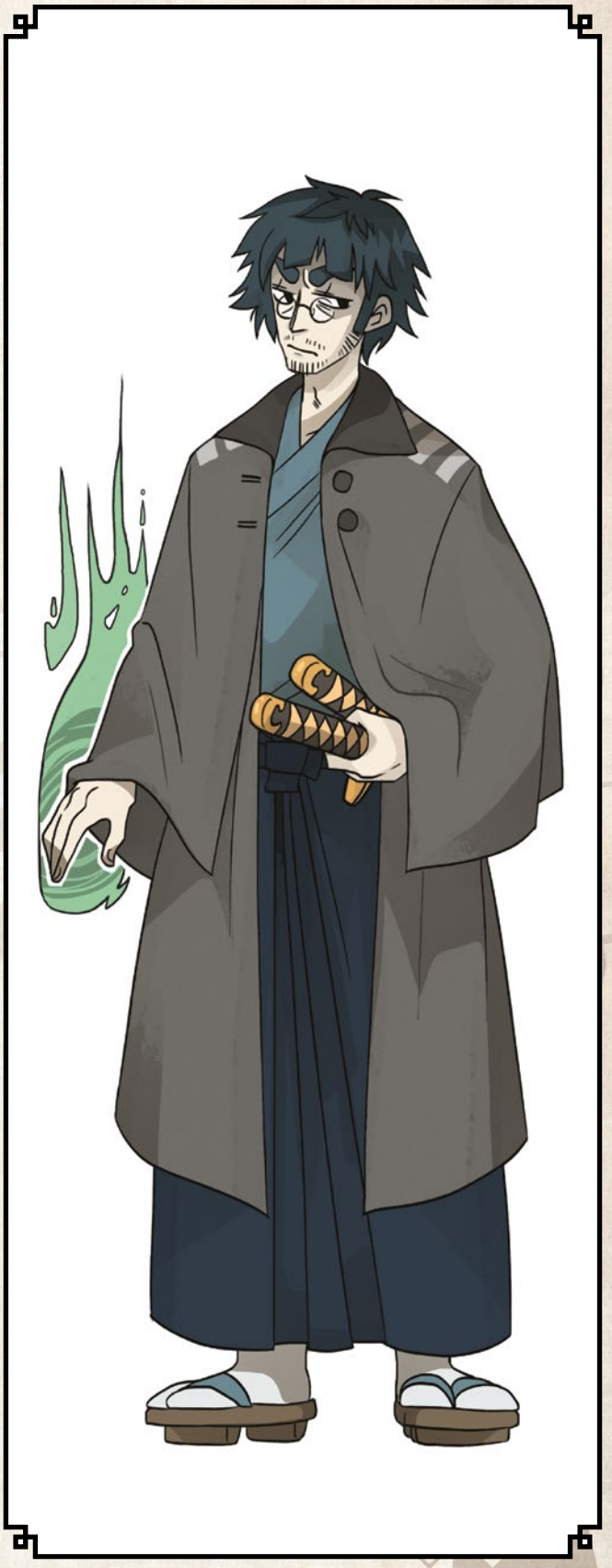
WORKER 職人 (Shokunin)	
Attributes	**Potential**
Discipline	2
Strength	2
Skills	**Potential**
Athletics	2
Evaluate	2
Interaction	2

Techniques

Techniques are a broad category of other Abilities that a player can purchase for their Character. Some Techniques are Abilities that provide Bonuses based on Potential spent, with their own individual cost and Modifier charts. Others are Single Purchase Abilities that provide a benefit at the listed Potential Cost.

Technique Names and Themes

Any Character can purchase any Technique. Each Technique has a name and some descriptive game world information. These are provided for the players to have an easy way to find Techniques in the list, and to give potential ideas on how they could be described when used by a Character. However, players are free to describe Techniques in any way that fits their concept, independent of the details listed below. For example, the Armor Technique could be an actual physical set of armor, the tough skin or plating of a yōkai, a Ki Forcefield, or even represent a fast yōkai that, even when hit by Attacks, takes less damage due to partially deflecting the blow.



List of Techniques

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Alternate Forms

Potential Spent	1	3	15
Potential for Alt. Form	10	20	60

This Ability may be purchased multiple times. Each time the Ability is taken, choose one of the form costs, and create a new Alternate Form Character using the listed Potential for the Alternate Form, in the same was as you would create a normal Character. Note: Alternate Form Characters built with this Technique may not purchase the Alternate Forms Technique.

During play, your character can change between any purchased forms; this requires a few seconds out of Conflict, and a Full Action that costs 1 Focus Point during Conflict. A Character can shift to any form (including their normal form) from any other form, they do not need to return to normal form from an alternate form first before changing to another alternate form.

Assume Form

Action Type	Full Action	FP	1	Ki	0

You may change between any one of your purchased Alternate Forms, normal form included.

No Abilities are shared between Characters; always use the stats for the current form being used by the Character. Characters maintain their current Focus Points and Ki Pool when they change Forms. If this results in a Character having less Morale Threshold than the damage currently inflicted against their side, the Character must immediately leave battle, unless it can Rally (or has already Rallied, in any form). Similarly, a Character will suffer penalties for having more Ki in their Pool than their Ki Limit in the new form, as usual.

Upgrades

FAST TRANSFORMATION — Potential Cost 1

Changing Forms outside of Conflicts is instantaneous, and in Conflicts counts as a Simple Action instead of a Full Action, but can only be used during the Character's Turn.

Theming Alternate Form

Shapeshifting: *Some shapeshifters are only able to take a single form (or at most, a small number). These forms tend to be very different than their normal bodies, unlike the simpler changes achieved with the* ***Modify Body Technique on page 51****. Characters who can turn into something completely different can use this Technique to build an Alternate Form with completely different Abilities. Examples include a human that can turn into an animal, a bakemono that can turn into a human, or a Martial Artist that uses Ki to change their body into a metal-skinned juggernaut.*

Stances: *Many styles of martial combat exist that allow the user to change their actions to adapt to a foe in the middle of battle. The Windstorm Style is a modification of the Gale school of blade-based martial arts that allow the student to change how they stand and how they hold their weapon in order to deliver different kinds of attacks to their opponent.*

Non-physical transformation: *This Technique could also model the alteration of something used in Conflicts besides the Character's body. A Shaman that fights by taking on the aspect of different kami could change their active patron to receive a different set of powers.*

Identity: *Characters may have powers only available when acting in a certain capacity. An agent of the Emperor or a lord may not be able to call upon their rights if they are in disguise as a peasant. In campaigns that heavily make use of badges and heraldry, Characters may have an Alternate Form that is only available at certain times.*

Armor

Potential Spent	1	5	12	20
Armor Value	1	2	3	4

Armor can be purchased for any or all of the three Damage Domains (Body, Mind, Soul). Each type can be increased up to a value of 4. The value of Armor for each domain is based on the total Potential spent, like an Attribute. For example, Armor 2/1/3 would cost (Body: 5, Mind: 2, Soul: 12 for a total of 19 Potential).

Theming Armor

Equipment and Clothing: *Any kind of equipment can be used to provide Armor bonuses. Samurai metal armor is a good source of Body Armor, a martial artist's hachimaki headband could provide the mental focus to act as Mind armor, and a blessed shrine charm could protect the holder from Soul damage.*

Natural Armor: *Some Characters are naturally more resilient to damage than normal. A turtle yōkai may have a hard shell providing Body armor, the training of a veteran investigator can act like Mind armor, and faithful characters often have Soul armor to represent their ability to resist attacks against their spirit.*

Mastered Ki Abilities: *Ki can be used to create and power all manner of abilities and spells. A character who has mastered their ability to make a personal forcefield may want to model it as Armor, rather than Protect, Deflect, or other activated Techniques.*

Equipment Bought by Potential

Armor that is themed as equipment or clothing can not permanently be taken away by the GM. Anything bought with Potential remains a permanent part of that character. Just like Abilities, Armor can be impeded or temporarily sealed away. While a Character may lose access to their equipment for various reasons, it will always find its way back to them. See "Taking Away Rewards" on page 235 in the GM Guide for more details.

Banes & Boons

Potential Cost	Varies

Banes and Boons are categories of Abilities that place persistent effects on Characters. Characters may purchase one or more options from either or both lists, and can choose which of their purchased ones to apply when using this Technique.

- ***Banes*** are harmful effects. A Bane remains on a Character until that Character succeeds on any opposed Check against the Character that placed the Bane on them.
- ***Boons*** are beneficial effects that help the Character they are placed on. How long they remain depends on how the specific Boon was purchased (see options, below)

Characters may have more than one Bane or Boon placed upon them at the same time. However, any Ability (Attribute, Skill, Armor, etc) can only be modified positively by a single Boon and negatively by a single Bane effect; always use the effect with the largest modifier. See the rules on "Stacking Ability Modifiers" on page 104 for more information on multiple Modifiers.

In Conflicts, placing a Bane or Boon on a Character is a Simple Action that can only be used on the Character's Turn, with costs that depend on the Bane or Boon (see tables on the next page). This Action has a Range of 1, so additional FP is required if the target is outside of the range (see "Range and Choosing Targets" on page 116).

- ***Banes*** remain on a Character until that Character succeeds at any opposed Check made against the Character that placed the Bane. Banes can also be removed by story means, or as the result of defining how a Conflict ends.
- ***Boons*** have a Maintain cost, and continue to benefit the Character they are placed on as long as the cost is paid.

Banes

Name	Penalty to Target	Potential Cost	FP Cost	Ki Cost
Debilitate	-1 to an Attribute[1]	2	2	3
Addle	-1 to a Skill[1]	1	1	2
Seal	Disable all of Target's Signature Attacks[2]	10	3	D6 per[2]
Degrade	Armor -1/-/1-/1[3]	3	2	3
Erode	Armor: -D3 (in one domain)[4]	6	2	3
Cripple	Target cannot change Zones	3	2	2
Dispirit	-1 Morale Threshold	10	5	2D6
Intimidate	+1 Rally value[5]	5	4	D6

[1] **Debilitate** and **Addle** only affect a specific Attribute or Skill, chosen when the Boon is first purchased. For example, **Debilitate**(Strength) or **Addle**(Nature Affinity). These Banes can be purchased more than once in order to choose additional Attributes and Skills.

[2] **Seal** automatically disables all Signature Attacks the target possesses. They cannot be used until the Bane is broken. The Ki cost is one D6 for each Signature Attack the target has.

[3] Armor cannot be reduced below 0

[4] Choose the Domain (Body, Mind, or Soul) of armor when purchasing the Bane for the first time. Each time the Bane is applied, roll a D3 to determine the value of the Erode on the target

[5] Increases the number of Morale Damage that must be inflicted on the opposing side for the target to be able to Rally.

Boons

Name	Benefit to Target	Potential Cost	FP Cost	Ki Cost	Ki Maintain
Fortify	+1 to an Attribute[1]	2	2	2	2
Proficiency	+1 to a Skill[1]	1	2	1	1
Hone	+ZEA modifier to one damage roll[2]	2	1	Equal to Modifier given	None
Fortune	Re-roll one Check[2]	1	1	1	None
Safeguard	Armor +1/+1/+1	2	1	2	2
Bolster	Armor: 3 in one Domain[3]	5	2	5	3
Entune	Release D6 Ki[4]	3	1	Equal to Ki Released +1[5]	None

[1] **Fortify** and **Proficiency** only affect a specific Attribute or Skill, chosen when the Boon is first purchased. For example, **Fortify**(Strength) or **Proficiency**(Nature Affinity). These Boons can be purchased more than once in order to choose additional Attributes and Skills.

[2] These Boons last until they are used once, and have no Maintain Cost. ZEA can be replaced with another Attribute for Hone by using the **Unconventional** Technique.

[3] Choose the Armor's domain at the time of purchasing this Boon. **Bolster** treats the Character's armor as 3 in that domain (unless it is already higher), and ignores any other modifiers. This Boon can be purchased more than once for different Armor domains.

[4] **Entune** removes D6 ki from the target's Ki Pool. **Entune** happens instantly and has no Maintain cost.

[5] Roll each time this Boon is given and remove that much Ki from the target's Ki Pool (to a minimum of 0). The Character using this Technique spends an amount of Ki equal to the amount removed, plus 1.

Theming Banes

Debilitate *(-1 to an Attribute)*

Nues are known for their powerful curses, especially physical impairments that weaken the strength of their victims (-STR).

Orochi venom is known for its varied negative affects on the body, one type can make it hard to think or process information(-INT).

Striking an enemy in the eye to partially blind them temporarily (-PER).

Addle *(-1 to a Skill)*

A humble but well worn ledger is discarded for a fancy replacement. It is filled with jealousy and becomes a tsukumogami, plaguing its former owner and making it hard to balance the lord's budget (-Evaluate).

A professional thief knows the methods of the police,and cleans up a crime scene so that their specific techniques are harder to apply (-Investigate).

Seal *(Disable Target's Signature Attacks)*

A witch curses a hunter in her forest, causing him to constantly drop his bow.

A kitsune uses illusions to make their opponents believe they have drawn their weapons, but they are actually holding leeks.

Degrade *or* ***Erode*** *(Armor Reduction)*

A beautiful person uses their charm to lower the guard of those involved in a social Conflict.

A studious investigator may not be much good in a brawl, but by studying their opponents methods, they can call out weaknesses for their allies to exploit.

Cripple *(Target cannot move)*

Some yūrei can exert a mystical force that pins people to the ground.

A prosecutor can introduce a steady stream of evidence in order to prevent a reluctant witness from changing the focus of a line of questioning.

Dispirit *(-1 Morale Threshold)*

The yōkai known as ichiyū are infamous for sapping the motivation of everyone around them.

When facing an enemy in a prolonged battle, an illusionist could create an image of approaching reinforcements to make their foe consider fleeing before becoming locked into an even more prolonged fight.

Some less honorable martial arts schools hold fixed tournaments where it is possible to convince a fighter to give up on a match in exchange for rewards or money.

Intimidate *(+1 Rally value)*

Some yōkai are so terrifying that even hardened veterans who have faced them are hesitant to return for more battle against them.

In contests of martial skill, being cleanly defeated can make an opponent unwilling to challenge their victory further, knowing they are likely to fail again.

Theming Boons

Fortify *(+1 to an Attribute)*

An herbalist uses a specially prepared medicinal root to stimulate vitality. (+END).

Training practice with a master before an important martial arts tournament (+AGI).

Proficiency *(+1 to a Skill)*

Many temples provide charms in exchange for offerings that give good luck in one area, such as studies (+Investigation).

A show of support by loyal retainers encourages a samurai to guide them into battle (+Leadership).

Hone *(+ZEA modifier to one damage roll)*

Divine blessings are often given to help heroes defeat threats to the land. A Miko can bless the blade of a samurai or the arrow of their own bow to drive off violent spirits.

The voice of an experienced leader can tell their allies when to attack at the right time.

In a conflict modeling a war, Hone can be used to represent ambushes or other strategies that count as individual actions.

Fortune *(Re-roll one Check)*

Diviners read the stars to ascertain the most auspicious rituals for the given moment.

An enterprising baker has become famous for the sweet baked treats he sells, each one having a cryptic message inside. Rumors say that these messages are coming true at an impressive rate.

Safeguard *(Armor +1/+1/+1)*

An experienced Exorcist that knows that bystanders may be in danger during their work prepares special wards to veil those who cannot protect themselves.

During the siege of a town, an elderly smith provides a set of armor that has sat untouched in his forge for years to someone who has volunteered to help.

Bolster *(Armor: 3 in one Domain)*

Shamans can bring peace to the troubled with a few whispered words (+3 Mind Armor).

A Bureau Agent specializes in creating ointments tailored to countering the spiritual attacks of each threat they face (+3 Soul Armor).

Entune *(Release D6 Ki)*

Acupuncture includes several small techniques that can be used on the spot for a small healing effect, including in the midst of battle.

A locket containing a memento of a lost lover or family member, gripped to the heart in a moment of darkness, can bring peace.

Bender of Fate

Potential Cost	2x

This Technique can be purchased multiple times.

Each purchase costs 2 Potential and allows the Technique to be used once per Conflict or Scene.

This Character is able to change the results of the dice when a Character acts. At the start of a Scene or Conflict, make one 3D6 roll for each roll substitution purchased by the Character and record the results.

Whenever a Character makes a Check, this Character may replace the results of the dice with one of their saved changes, at which point that change is lost. All Modifiers to the Check remain unchanged.

Example

A detective is making an Investigation Check, and has a +3 to Investigation and +2 to Intelligence, the associated Attribute. The dice roll is a 6, to which the detective would add +5, for an 11. If the detective had stored a change of 14, they could replace the result of 6, and have a total of (14 + 5 = 19)

The Character can use their roll replacement after being told by the GM whether a Check has succeeded or failed, but without knowing the exact number rolled by any NPCs.

Example

Kazu (played by Katie) has spent 6 Potential on this Technique, and so rolls 3 times at the start of a Conflict. In one battle, Kazu rolls a 7, an 11, and a 16. During the second Round, Kazu is attacked by a tengu. Katie rolls a 9 on her dice to Defend, and The GM tells Katie that the Tengu succeeds on the contested check. Katie could choose to replace the tengu's roll with a 7, and the 7 would not be able to be used again. The GM then tells Katie whether the attack still succeeds or not. If it does, Katie may want to choose to replace her own roll with the 11 or 16.

Theming Bender of Fate

Luck is an extremely important and common factor in daily life for the people of Nippon. A Character who performs the correct rituals or was born under a favorable sign may find that things naturally work out better for them than for most other people.

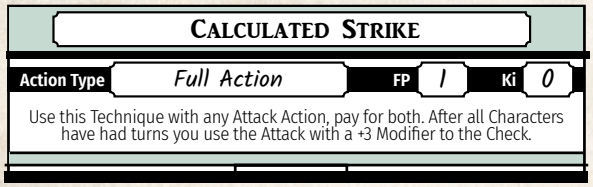
Masterminds often set up layers of contingency plans. An intelligent Character that often takes seemingly unrelated small actions during the story can use Bender of Fate to represent these plans working out.

Some Characters are masters of their particular field, and never seem to fail when the situation is important. By storing several good rolls for critical moments, the Player doesn't have to worry about being at the mercy of the dice to perform in a dramatic fashion.

Calculated Strike

Potential Cost 2

This Technique is used with any Attack Action, allowing the Character to take additional time in order to receive a Modifier to their Attack Check.



When you use this Action, choose an Attack Action. Pay any costs for that Action and perform any other necessary steps (choose a target, pay additional FP for Range, etc), but do not make the Attack Check. Once all remaining Characters in the Round have had a chance to act once (if a Character chooses to delay, they count as having had the chance to Act), the Character uses the chosen Attack Action.

Calculated Strike adds +3 to the Check made for the delayed Attack.

Theming Calculated Strike

Trained assassins and ninja know exactly where to strike their target for maximum effect.

A common tactic of Advocates is to intentionally enrage a suspect in order to trick them into revealing their deceit in a moment of passion. This often requires pursuing a seemingly unrelated line of questioning before bringing it back to the matter of guilt in the end.

Many poisons and diseases take a short time to fully materialize their effects, but are extremely hard to neutralize once symptoms take hold.

Create Obstacles

Potential Cost Varies

This Technique creates objects or minor NPCs. Outside of Conflicts, these obstacles can be used to change the environment, based on how they are defined. For example, Create Obstacles that is defined as creating and manipulating ice could be used to build ice terrain, put out a fire, or freeze a lock so that it could be easily broken. Create Obstacles that summoned forest animals could be used to help a Character explore an area, gather food, or chase away other animals.

In Conflicts, Create Obstacles creates NPC Characters that do not act, but still exist in zones. This can be used to protect other Characters by making it harder for opponents to reach further zones. Obstacles can be attacked like Characters. They always make a Defend Check with 3D6 plus whatever Defense Modifier is purchased for the Technique (see below). Obstacles can't be moved once created. Obstacles do not have FP or Ki, and are immune to any game rules that affect either. Attacking an Obstacle successfully destroys the obstacle, but does not inflict Tide Damage.

Creating one obstacle takes a few seconds outside of Conflicts. In a Conflict, it is a Full Action that costs 1 FP and a number of Ki determined by the modifier purchased (see below). An additional upgrade can be purchased to allow Obstacles to be created faster, or more at once.

Max Obstacles That Can Exist At Once

Potential Spent	1	3	6	10	15
Num. of Obstacles	1	2	3	4	5

Ki Cost per Obstacle

Choose one of the entries on the "Ki Cost per Obstacle" table. Each entry modifies the Ki cost to create and Maintain an Obstacle, as well as the overall Potential cost of the Technique. If the Potential Modifier is positive, it increases the overall cost of this Technique for *each* Obstacle that could be created. If it is a negative cost, it is only applied once, no matter how many maximum Obstacles can be created, and cannot reduce the Potential Cost of this Technique below 1.

Example

Feng-shui Master Awabi is able to create 2 Obstacles with a Ki cost of 4/2. The Potential cost for 2 Obstacles is 3, reduced by 1 because of the Ki Cost modifier of -1. Each Obstacle costs Awabi 4 Ki to create, and 2 Ki each round to maintain.

Ki Cost per Obstacle Table

Potential Modifier	-4	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	6	8	12	20
Summon Ki Cost	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0
Maintain Ki Cost	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	0

Defense Check Modifier

Potential	1	2	5	10	15
Defense Modifier	+2	+4	+7	+10	+12

Upgrades

INSTANT SUMMON — Potential Cost 2

This upgrade changes the Action used to create Obstacles from a Full to Simple Action, though it can still only be used during the Character's Turn. It may be used more than once per Round.

MASS SUMMON — Potential Cost 2

With this upgrade, a Character that can have more than one Obstacle at once can use a single action to create Obstacles up to their maximum.

MOBILE OBSTACLES — Potential Cost 1

This upgrade allows the Character to reposition their Obstacles. This is a Simple Action that costs 1 FP and can only be used on the Character's turn. The Character may move any Obstacles to any Zones as part of this Action.

Theming Create Obstacles

An elementalist may creates rock barriers that shield their allies from advancing troops, allowing them to use ranged attacks.

Many group based yōkai, especially tengu, are followed around by younger members who lack actual combat prowess, but can be a distraction to opponents in the midst of a battle.

Masters of political subterfuge often create multiple false threats to distract opponents while they pursue their true goals.

Deflect

Potential Cost	2

This Defend Action allows you to pay Ki to increase it's Check. For every 2 Ki you spend, the Check increases by 5. This replaces normal Defend Checks, and can be used against any Attack, regardless of the Attack's Attributes and Skills or your Defense upgrades.

You can use the following Action in Conflicts:

DEFLECT

Action Type	Simple, Defense	FP	1	Ki	Varies

Deflect allows user to channel Ki into their Defense Check.

DEFENSE CHECK: 3D6 + (5 for every 2 Ki spent)

Upgrades

ULTIMATE DEFENSE — Potential Cost 5

The Defense Check becomes: 3D6 + (4 for each Ki spent) instead.

Theming Deflect

Many different forms of ki-based forcefields exist, from an elementalist's flame cloak to an ascetic who has mastered the ability to ignore damage through force of will.

A traditional and impressive trick of the highest level of martial arts is the ability to deflect arrows with their hands.

Some yōkai, like the kamiatchi, can move faster than the human eye can process, making them nearly impossible to strike without inordinate luck.

Diligent Focus

Potential Spent	8	18	30
Focus Refresh	+1	+2	+3

This Technique increases your Focus Refresh stat, based on the total Potential spent.

Theming Diligent Focus

Experienced warriors become so in tune with the flow of battle that they can fight for hours without feeling the effects of fatigue until after the battle ends.

Fast Characters can often strike a foe while still having plenty of time to defend incoming attacks.

Careful observation in battle allows a Character to notice key details and be ready to act whenever the situations calls for them to step in.

Divine

Potential Cost 2

You can make a Check to gather information. The exact story method used depends on how you define this power (whether you actually use Divination, have a complex information network, have incredibly accurate intuitive 'gut feelings', etc), but the rules are the same when using this Technique.

Divine takes a significant amount of time. The exact time required will be based on the actions taken by the Character (see "Information Provided by Divine Check"), but no matter how the Divine is performed, it cannot be used in Conflicts without special permission by the GM (usually only when the Conflict models a long term engagement, like an overall investigation or a war).

Make a Divine Check by rolling 3D6 and adding any modifiers gained (see a list of examples in "Modifiers to the Divine Check"). The Difficulty Number for this Check is set by the GM, based on the kind of information the Character is seeking. For easy to obtain information, the number will be 8-12, difficult information requires a 13-16, and incredibly rare information, or the kind that requires the source being Divined to perform actions that could harm it, would require a 17 or higher.

If the Check succeeds, choose one of the options from the "Information Provided by Divine Check" list below. For every MoS, one additional information choice can be selected. You can also ask for the reverse of a listed option (instead of "Danger to the character", you could choose "Benefit to the Character". The GM provides you with information regarding the choices you make. The exact information will depend on how you define your Divine, but should always be far greater than the Character has access to on their own accord.

Information Provided by Divine Check

- Danger to the character, loved ones, or the subject of the Divination or their loved ones, (persons of interest)
- Danger to the entire world (or region of focus of the game)
- If taking the action asked about would result in failure, harm, etc
- If the action would fail, but would succeed if performed at another time, different circumstances, etc (this does not tell when or what would actually change the outcome)
- Information on a specific object or person that could solve a current problem, defeat a foe, etc
- Information on the local area that the contracted entity exists in
- Appraisal of an object, technique, crime scene clue, etc. This provides detailed information about the target, but doesn't draw any conclusions for the Character.
- Players can create additional questions that the GM agrees could be answered by whoever is being contacted.

Modifiers to the Divine Check

Before making the Check, Characters can take actions or gather items to increase their chance of success. The particular requirements depend on how the Technique was defined. For example, a Character that divines by communicating with local kami could learn about the personality of the kami, gather tribute for it, prepare a request that appeals to it's personality, and call it in a location that is pleasing to the kami. If the Technique is defined as a spy network of a ninja clan, previous information-gathering missions of the clan would count as modifiers. Some examples are listed below, but Players and GMs should include any additional modifiers that make sense in the story.

Divine Check Modifiers

- Contact a minor spirit, local Kami, etc: +1
- Objects (Divining Instruments, an object of importance to someone you want to track, etc): +2
- Following a proper ritual, bureaucratic practice, etc: +2
- Contact a powerful NPC from a previous adventure whom the Character succeeded to impress: a Kami, a noble who contracted you for a successful spy mission, etc: +3
- Character uses previously gained knowledge to ask a better question (can be role played, or used as a situational modifier for previous actions in the game): +3
- Summoned entity owes the character from a previous scene: +1 to +4
- Location performed at is beneficial (such as contacting a kami at its favorite location): +1 to +5

- Willing to pay a price or provide tribute: Varies with what is offered, anywhere from +1 for thoughtful gifts to +5 for rare treasures or powerful favors/performing missions
- The universe/fate wants the players to know the answer for the good of keeping the world from destruction, corruption, etc (or the GM has information they want the Players to receive): +8

GMs can apply any of the above as a negative modifier if the situation warrants it. For example, a penalty for reading a fire in heavy rain.

Theming Divine

Through spiritual divination, the Character can contact spirits and kami. Actions that please the Kami, follow established rituals, or lead to the PCs doing something the spirit would like give bonuses.

Veteran Bureau agents establish many and powerful contacts in the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs, and can call in favors to learn more about their current mission. Bonuses could come from helping other agents previously, proving the PCs worth to the Bureau, or bribing the less honorable members of other divisions.

Investigator can use Divine to call upon contacts, witnesses, and informants to provide clues for a current mystery, or information about where they should head to next for more details.

Elemental Manipulation

Potential Cost 4x

This Technique can be purchased multiple times; choose a different Element each time. The Character is able to manipulate the chosen Element within sight range. The element can be moved, shaped, held in place or destroyed.

This power allows the PC to perform any actions on the chosen element (within reason), but more in-depth changes, or acting on large quantities, takes more time and effort.

- At the simplest level, the Character can affect a volume of the element approximately the size of a human.
- Large areas of effect increase the time. An area the size of a well would require a few seconds, a building would require a few minutes, a forest would require a few hours, etc).
- Elements will naturally return to their previous state unless the Character continues to manipulate them. This requires the Character to Maintain 1 Ki , plus an additional Ki for each size increase as noted above (a well would require 2 Ki, a house 3 Ki, etc). Once the Maintain is canceled, the element will go back to the way it was in a few minutes.
- If the Character cannot see any or all of the particular element they want to manipulate, they must take the time to focus and sense it. Make an Evaluate Check with a difficulty set by the GM based on how far away or hidden the element is (for example, the GM may set a difficulty of 14 to find an oasis within 10 miles in a desert). Characters who often use their Elemental Manipulation may want to invest in increasing their Evaluate Skill, or choose to Specialize in their Element for it (see "Skill Specialization" on page 16).
- Treat any damaging use of this power as an Improvised Attack. The exact Skills used will depend on how the change is described by the player (magical changes use Ki Manipulation, physical changes use Athletics, mental attacks use Manipulation, etc).
- The Character can make a Defend Check against the chosen element using Ki Manipulation, even if it is not upgraded to a Defend Skill, or if the Attack does not include Ki Attunement as one of it's Skills. Note that Ki Attunement may be changed to a different Skill using the ***Unconventional*** Technique.

Available Elements

The following are the standard elements as defined by the people of Nippon in the Age of Spirits, as well as a list of kinds of materials that are often manipulated with this kind of power. GMs and Players should add additional elements based on specific campaigns.

- Fire and other energy such as lightning
- Air and other gases
- Earth and other natural solids
- Metals and other human-made or crafted Solids like processed wood
- Water and other non-organic liquids
- Non-sentient creatures and plants
- Sentient creatures and people
- Supernatural forces, spirits, and yōkai
- Ki, life energy

Theming Elemental Manipulation

A bakemono tree yōkai, or a strong kodama, can control other plants around them.

Some martial art styles move so fast they can manipulate the air around them with their punches and kicks.

Most local kami have at least some ability to control nature in their domain. The weakest will only be able to perform minor tasks like sheltering a traveler from the cold, while the most powerful can move large portions of terrain and lock weather patterns for months on end.

Fortune's Favor

Potential Cost 1x

This Technique can be purchased more than once. For each time the Technique is taken, the Character gains one Re-roll that can be used once per scene or Conflict on any Check made by the Character. If all three dice show '6' on the Re-roll, that use of Fortune's Favor does not use up one of the Character's Re-rolls for that scene or Conflict. A Check can only use Fortune's Favor once, and cannot be further re-rolled, even if you have remaining uses of this Technique.

Theming Fortune's Favor

A famous detective was known to be unbeatable if given enough time to prepare, having a counter to every power or trick an opponent possessed.

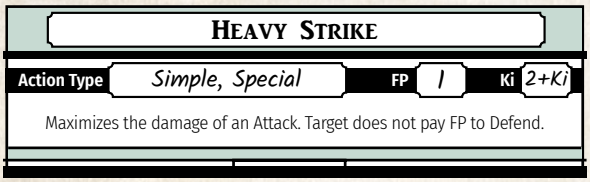
Characters that please the kami often find things work out extremely well for them.

Sometimes an otherwise plain and unassuming person will succeed at everything they set out to do, by virtue of luck more so than skill or hard work.

Heavy Strike

Potential Cost 3

You can use the following Action in Conflicts:



This Technique can be used to modify any Attack Action. Announce that you are using this Technique when you declare an Attack Action, after choosing a Target, but before doing anything else. It is used to maximize the damage of an Attack that does D3 as part of its Damage value. If the Attack includes more than one die, also choose how many will be modified. This Action costs 2 Ki per D3 that will be modified.

The Defender does not have to pay any FP required for Defend Actions used against this attack. Ki and other costs still apply.

If the Attack is successful, after rolling Damage, for each die modifier chosen and paid for, the Player may replace the results of one D3 die, counting it has having rolled the maximum possible (count as '3' Damage).

Upgrade

IMPROVED HEAVY STRIKE — **Potential Cost** 3

One D3 or D6 rolled (of the Player's choice if more than one die is rolled) for Damage for this attack count as having rolled the maximum possible for that die. Using this Technique on a D6 costs 5 Ki instead of 2.

Theming Heavy Strike

Most oni are larger than the foes they face, their attacks are clumsy, but devastatingly powerful

Confident (or overconfident) martial artists often announce their attacks, expecting that even a forewarned target cannot stand up to their strength.

Ki can enhance many abilities, but requires a few seconds to focus, as well as requiring gestures or incantations that warn their target of the danger.

Helpful Ally

Potential Cost 2

If this Character provides a bonus to an Assisted Check (ie: the Check succeeded, but this character was not the highest roll), that Check is boosted by a total of +3 instead of +1.

Theming Helpful Ally

A wizened old advisor that is too old to perform most actions, but guides others with their experience.

Sometimes a group of allies will include one member whose specialty is making the others better at what they do. These kinds of Characters usually don't steal the spotlight, but without their aid, the rest of the group would fail at their endeavors.

An obsessive collector carries around a wide collection of what most people would consider junk, but always seems to have the right bit or piece when their friends come up with a plan that needs a key component.

Hold the Line

Potential Cost 2

This technique can be used once per Conflict.

When the Tide Bar would be broken by damage inflicted by the enemy, reduce the damage so that the Tide Marker stops 1 point before breaking. Normally, this means stopping at 6, unless the Tide value for a Conflict has been modified in some way.

When triggered, the player must spend 3D6 Focus Points. If the character does not have enough FP currently, they cannot take any Action until the remaining FP are paid (any new FP the Character gains immediately go towards paying the remaining value). The Character may also pay for any remaining FP (after using all available FP) with Ki, at the cost of 3 Ki per FP. Using Ki must be declared immediately after the cost is rolled and all remaining FP are used, before any other Actions happen.

Example

Hideki has 7 FP remaining, and chooses to use Hold The Line to prevent the Tide Bar from breaking. Hideki's player rolls 3D6 and gets a total of 11. Hideki's remaining 7 FP are lost, leaving 4 more that must be paid before Hideki can act again. Hideki's player could choose to spend 12 Ki to resolve the remaining FP, but since this would exceed Hideki's Ki Limit, the Player decides to wait for the Focus Refresh at the start of the next Round instead.

Theming Hold the Line

Heroic leaders must often be willing to make a sacrifice in a fight in order to keep their side from collapsing.

One legend passed around martial arts schools tells of a cowardly fighter that distracts the enemy with a bright flash of light, right before the enemy can land a fatal blow.

An Advocate with an incomplete case gives a long and impassioned speech while their allies gather more evidence before closing arguments are required.

Ignore Armor

Potential Cost 2

You can use the following Action in Conflicts:

Ignore Armor

Action Type	Simple, Special	FP	2	Ki	Varies

When used, this Technique allows an Attack to bypass a target's Armor.

This Technique can be used when the Character takes any Attack Action. Whether or not the Attack Action succeeds, roll damage as normal for the attack (after determining success of the Check). The Ki cost for this Action is equal to the damage of the attack, before Armor is applied. (Only apply damage if the Attack Check succeeded).

If the Attack succeeds, the target does not get to reduce the damage by any Armor they have.

Theming Ignore Armor

One legendary sword only cuts organic tissues, passing through armor and weapons as if they didn't exist. It was last recorded in the possession of a wealthy arms dealer who never seemed to run out of new stock.

Ninja clans tailor special poisons to their targets that are almost impossible to resist, even with magical cures.

An oni large enough to wield an ancient tree trunk as a club can strike a human sized foe with so much power that a suit of armor ceases to provide protection, and may in fact damage the wearer as it shatters from the blow.

Illusions

Potential Cost	5

This Ability allows the character to make illusions that cause other Characters to believe something is different than it really is. Illusions are created by making a Ki Attunement Check using the rules below. In a Conflict, Illusions are used with the following Action:

Illusions

Action Type	Full, Special	FP	2	Ki	2

Describe the intended illusion, then make a Ki Attunement Check against the GM's Difficulty Number. Other Characters can make a Perception Check to see through Illusions.

The Player describes the intended illusion, and then makes an Ki Attunement Check against a Difficulty Number determined by the GM, based on the overall complexity of the illusion. Illusions that affect multiple senses are more difficult than single sense versions.

If the Character succeeds, anyone viewing the area will see (or otherwise sense) the illusion. If the Check fails, the illusion is still in place, but there are minor inconsistencies or errors, and other characters will have an easier time spotting the illusion, based on how much the Check failed by.

Once an illusion is in place, any other Character viewing the area gets an immediate Perception Check the first time they look at (or smell, or use whatever sense the illusion is affecting) the illusion. This is a contested Perception Check against the original result of the Check made by the Character who created the illusion (it can help to write down the result when an illusion is first created). This Check receives a special bonus if the original Check failed (+1 to the Check for every 1 point the original Check failed by).

If this Perception Check succeeds, the character sees through the illusion and realizes it is fake (some parts may remain, but it is obvious the character is being tricked). Otherwise, the character will act in all ways as if the illusion was real. Any subsequent actions that cause a character to doubt the illusion will allow another Perception Check, with bonuses based on the situation.

Example

A Kitsune is attempting to hide itself in an illusion that makes it invisible to the PCs. The kitsune also wishes to hide its smell and sounds. The GM determines this illusion has a Difficulty Number of 13. The kitsune has a +5 total Ki Attunement Modifier, and rolls a 7, for a total of 12. 12 will be the Difficulty Number for anyone attempting to see through the illusion, and Characters will receive a +1 to Checks because the Kitsune rolled 1 less than needed.

Hideki and Hikaru attempt to ignore the illusion. Hideki rolls a total of 10, and cannot see, smell or hear the Kitsune. Hikaru rolls a total of 19, and so can sense the Kitsune, even if the image is blurry and the sounds it makes are partially muffled.

Theming Illusions

Many yōkai are known for illusions, but kitsune famous for the mastery and craftsmanship of the visions they create.

A hallucinogenic drug that uses the ***Unconventional*** *Technique to require Endurance instead of Perception as resistance Check would provide a challenge to even the most observant or magically knowledgeable character.*

In a social or political conflict, lies and misdirection can be modeled using the Illusions power, forcing opponents to spend time dealing with threats that don't actually exist.

Ki Well

Potential Spent	1	2	3	5	7	9	12
Limit Increase	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This Technique increases the Character's Ki Limit, based on how much total Potential is invested.

Theming Ki Well

The wandering martial artist most often described in the tales told by farmers and workers tends to have an almost superhuman level of willpower, allowing them to perform ki-based miracles without tiring.

A common enchanted charm absorbs some of the dissonance caused by using too much ki at once. These charms are highly valued by sorcerers, despite their rather humble origins.

A small partner yōkai that shares a bond with the Character can assist with spiritual activities, spreading the effect of using ki across two souls.

Modify Body

Potential Cost Varies

This ability can be taken multiple times. Each time Modify Body is taken, select either an Attribute or Skill Focus and a Modifier value. Each Attribute or Skill Focus provides Modifiers, just like normal Attributes or Skills, and can be used to temporarily replace the Character's normal Modifiers.

Attribute Focus

Potential Spent	9	18	30	45	63
Replacement	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Skill Focus

Potential Spent	3	6	12	21	33	48
Replacement	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Outside of Conflicts, it requires a few seconds of concentration to make a single change, while in Conflicts it requires a Full Action and 2 FP. Choose one Attribute or Skill and one of your character's purchased Modify Body Focuses of the same kind (for example, if you choose Strength, choose an Attribute modifier) and replace your standard modifier with the Modify Body value. These modifiers last until the modifier is moved somewhere else; at that time the modified ability returns to its normal value. Each focus costs 1 Ki to Maintain as long as it is modifying an Attribute or Skill.

Modify Body

Action Type	*Full Action*	FP	2	Ki	0

You may temporarily replace one of your Attribute or Skill Modifiers with Modify Body Focuses of the same kind.

For skills, you must already possess the skill in order for a Skill Focus to change its Modifier. It can only be used to Defend if it was already upgraded to a Defense Skill.

Example

Koeda is a yōkai with the ability to shapeshift. Koeda's player purchases the following Modify Body Focuses: Attribute (+4), Skill (+3), and Skill (+2).

Koeda is the guardian of a large forest. A strange snowstorm has fallen in the area, and Koeda goes to investigate. He decides to alter his body to make the journey easier. First, he bulks himself up, placing the +4 Attribute Modifier in Endurance. Next, he takes on the form of a bear, in order to guard against the cold, using the +3 skill in Survival. Finally, he takes the head of a hawk, in order to accurately observe the land as he travels, placing the +2 Skill in Survival.

Theming Modify Body

Modify Body works for shapeshifters that can improvise on the spot. Where Alternate Form creates a set, well defined new Character, Modify Body allows the Character to change things on the spot in small ways. A Character that could grow wings or alter their hand to more effectively perform a task could make good use of this Technique without needing to purchase a complete other form.

A tinkerer Character could take several slots in Modify Body to represent constantly rebuilding their inventions to fit the needs at hand.

A shaman that forms contracts with kami, but can only call on one at a time, could take one Attribute Focus to represent the aspects of whichever one was active.

Movement Powers

Potential Cost Varies

There are 4 kinds of Movement Powers: **Ease**, **Element**, **Fast** and **Instant**. Some kinds can be taken multiple times, for a different environment each time. Each type lists the Potential Cost to take the Technique (for a single element).

Ease (Choose one Terrain)

When in the chosen kind of terrain, the Character does not have to pay additional FP to change zones when making a Move Action. Outside of conflicts, the Character can move in the chosen terrain three times faster than they normally would be able to walk or run. For example, a character with Flight would fly at the three times the running speed of a person.

- **Swimming**: Any body of water deep enough to require swimming (water reaches the character's waist or higher, and the area is large enough for the character to become prone in the water in order to propel themselves).
  [1 Potential]
- **Flight**: The area must have enough space for the character to rise above the ground by several feet. Cannot be used in most indoor areas, unless that area has a high ceiling. Requires enough space to move two full body lengths in a straight line.
  [2 Potential]
- **Leaping**: Character ignores obstacles and terrain when walking, running or climbing.
  [1 Potential]

Element (Choose one)

The character can move through an element without being slowed. They are immune to normal problems of that element (fire does not harm the character, they can breath in water or high altitudes, etc).

- Water and other liquids
  [2 Potential]
- Fire and other energy
  [3 Potential]
- Earth and other natural solids
  [5 Potential]
- Metal and other solids created by intelligent beings
  [4 Potential]

- Air, voids, and other places with no physical barriers to touch
  [1 Potential]
- Other Worlds (Supernatural world, Astral realm, etc)
  [2 Potential]

Fast Travel [4 Potential]

This character moves quickly. The character can use Fast Travel in any terrain, element or other type of areas they normally could. For example, by default Characters can fast travel by running or swimming (but Fast Travel would not provide the bonus of not needing to breathe underwater like taking Element: Water would), and a character with Ease (Flight) could Fast Travel in the air.

In Conflicts, the character has the same benefits of Ease (Any the character could normally move in). Note that this includes any Elemental Movement the character has purchased.

The Character is automatically moved to the top of Initiative Order after the GM determines the order based on remaining FP. If multiple Characters have Fast Travel, order them at the top of the list according to remaining FP, as usual.

Outside of Conflicts, the character can move up to ten times faster than a normal Character could in the same conditions.

Instant Travel

- **(Local)**: In non-conflicts, the character can move to any location they can see. In conflicts, the character gains all the benefits of Ease (All Terrain) and pays only a single additional FP to attack enemy characters outside of their range.
  [5 Potential]
- **(Unlimited)**: In non-conflicts, the character can move to any location they are aware of. The character also gains all the abilities listed for Instant Travel (Local).
  [10 Potential]
- **(The World Beyond, Crossover)**: Allows the Character to travel from their current location to any location that 'touches' it in The World Beyond. Because the positions of the realms flow and move like clouds around each other where you end up may change from time to time even when crossing over from the exact same place in the mortal world. However, there are certain special locations that will always be anchored to consistent places in The World Beyond. Note that all Characters who can move to another realm automatically know how to return to their original realm.
  [6 Potential]
- **(The World Beyond, Unlimited)**: The Character can move to any point they are aware of in the target realm. Note that all Characters who can move to another realm automatically know how to return to their original realm by default. This means the Character can move to anywhere in their own realm by transferring through another World first.
  [30 Potential]

Traversing the Realms

There are many locations to explore in the setting in Mysteries of the Yōkai. Nippon has found itself at the center of many colliding realms, you can read more about the realms on page 135.

In order for GMs to control story flow, some locations might need to be made unavailable to ***Instant Travel***. In this case, GMs should still allow the Characters to arrive somewhere close and allow them reach their goal through the story or role-play.

Upgrades

TRANSPORT — **Potential Cost** Varies

Any Movement Power may be upgraded to allow the Character to allow additional Characters to use the Technique, as long as both Characters stay within sight of each other. By paying 50% of the cost of the Technique, the Character may enable one additional person to use the Technique. Providing this Ability to other Characters does not prevent the Character from taking actions. The original Character must pay 1 Ki Maintain for each other Character while they are using the Movement Power.

Example for Transport Upgrade

*Spirit Broker Azumi purchases **Flight**, and defines it as having a flying Kotatsu Tsukumogami that carries her and her friends. Flight costs 2 Potential, so each additional Character increases the cost by 1 Potential. Azumi pays a total of 5 Potential (2 plus an additional 3 for 3 more Characters), and the Kotatsu allows Azumi and up to 3 other Character to use the rules for Flight.*

Theming Movement Powers

*A demi-yōkai born with wings would likely have **Ease** (Flight) to represent their ability to fly.*

*One little-known but impressive criminal was able to sneak into any house with a mirror by using his ki to enter any reflective surface and teleport to another one nearby (**Instant** (Local)).*

*A large number of yōkai, and all of the ones classified as spirits, can enter the spiritual world freely, or are naturally part of it and can enter the mortal world from there (**Instant** (The World Beyond, Crossover)).*

Overwhelming Force

Potential Cost	3

You can use the following Action in Conflicts:

Overwhelming Force

Action Type	FP	Ki
Simple, Special	0	2

When you use an Attack Action, pay for the costs of this Technique. If your Attack Check succeeds, Your MoS is increased to being +1 for each 2 points you succeed by, instead of +1 for every 3.

When you use an Attack Action, you can use this Technique to modify it. If you succeed at the Check for the Attack Action, your MoS is increased by +1 for each 2 points you succeed by, rather than each 3 points.

Theming Overwhelming Force

A historian can use seemingly unrelated facts to tie an entire investigation together by using what they know to make each clue more relevant to the big picture.

Ki often inspires and empowers creative Characters. A painter could use ki to create a more impressive work that outshines the other artists in their circle.

By being mounted, a samurai can overrun lesser foes, making each strike more effective than that of an infantryman.

Professional

Potential Spent	3	6	12	20	30	42
Add. Professions	1	2	3	4	5	6

This Technique allows the Character to have additional Professions (see "Professions" on page 88), based on how much total Potential is invested.

Profession Benefits for a Character will have the same Mastery Level, and increase at the same rate.

Example

A Character that begins the game with Profession: Merchant and Profession: Thief at the default Mastery of 4 would be Mastery Level 4 in both Professions. If the Character gained 2 more Mastery Levels and then added Profession: Metalsmith, all three Professions would be Mastery Level 6.

Protect

Potential Cost Varies

This Technique allows the Character to alter an area in order to protect or strengthen friendly Characters. One or more Bonuses can be purchased with Potential for this Ability; the player can choose to apply any or all that they have access to whenever Protect is used.

Out of Conflicts, it takes several minutes to prepare an area. Once the Protect has been set up, it continues to stay in place as long as the Character wants, but each bonus provided requires the Character to Maintain 1 Ki.

In Conflicts, the FP and Ki required will depend on which bonuses are chosen for that instance of Protect (each option lists it's various Conflict costs in the table). For Focus Points, roll and total the cost for all Bonuses chosen. If the Character does not have enough FP to use Protect, they must spend all of their available FP, then spend any additional FP they receive to pay the remaining cost. The Character can take no other actions of any kind until they have completed paying for Protect (if Attacked, they cannot take Defend Actions, and roll only 3D6 with no Modifiers). The Protect then activates at the start of the Character's next Turn after the cost has been paid in full. The Maintain cost for this Technique is 1 per bonus provided.

All activated bonuses of a Protect apply to any ally Characters in a Conflict, regardless of zone.

Options for Protect Bonuses

Bonus Provided	Potential Cost	FP Cost	Ki Cost
+1 to an Attribute	2	D3	2
+1 to a Skill	1	1	1
+1 to one domain of Armor	3	D3	3
+1 to any Defend Checks made	5	D6	5

The specific Attribute, Skill or type of Armor provided is chosen at the time the Protect is used in a game. Once the Character has paid the Potential cost to have a specific bonus, they can choose different Attributes/Skills/Armor each time, and can even provide bonuses to more than one of the same selection as long as the FP and Ki cost is paid for each choice.

Example

*Yukano has purchased the ability to provide bonuses to Attributes and Skills. In a Conflict, she creates a Protect that gives a +1 to Strength, +1 to Endurance, +1 to Athletics and +1 to Survival. This costs (2*D3 for Attributes and + 2*1 for Skills) FP; Yukano rolls and gets a total of 3 on the dice, so the Protect will require 5 FP. If Yukano has less than 5 FP remaining, she will have to continue to pay FP as she receives them and take no actions until the remaining cost is paid. The Protect also requires a total of 6 Ki for increasing two Attributes and two Skills.*

Theming Protect

Cautious (or paranoid) Characters can set up a series of traps in an area that hinder invaders, making it harder for them to succeed.

Many diviners form pacts with the kami they communicate with. Some of these pacts can be expanded to protect the Character's allies as well.

The best exorcists prepare an area before engaging in potential battles. Powerful jugondō spells can protect against the magics of hostile yōkai.

Rebound

Potential Spent	2	5	9
Rally	-1	-2	-3

This Technique lowers the Character's Rally Value based on total Potential invested, making it easier for the Character to return to a Conflict after being forced out.

Theming Rebound

Many yōkai, and even some legendary warriors and martial artists can heal much quicker than normal humans, allowing them to return to battle in a matter of minutes, instead of days.

Duty is a common, and powerful, theme among those who live in Nippon. Duty to a cause, lord or ideal often inspires even the weak to not give up in the face of defeat.

Meditation can be practiced by members of all social classes, from the poorest to the Emperor himself. A moment taken to clear the mind can be all that is needed to face a challenge that has broken one's spirit.

Recover

Potential Cost	2

Recover is used to perform Healing in Conflicts. Healing is a special kind of Damage that only works to remove any existing Damage against the Character's side (see "Healing" on page 110 for full rules on Healing). When this Technique is first purchased, choose a Skill to use for Recovery Checks. The Character can use the following Attack Action in Conflicts:

The Character can use the following Attack Action in Conflicts:

Recover

Action Type	Full, Attack	FP	1	Ki	0

Allows Characters to remove Tide Damage with Healing. See full rules.

The GM makes a Check for the opposing side using the total Fighting Skill that is the highest among all Characters on that side (3D6 + the highest total Modifier for Fighting Skill on the Opposing Side). The result of this Check is the Difficulty Number for the Recover Check.

The Character makes a Skill Check against the Difficulty Number using the Skill that was chosen for this Technique. For example, a traditional surgeon would use the Medicine Skill, while a magical healer would use Ki Attunement.

If the Check fails, nothing happens. If the Check succeeds, the rest of the Character's allies can attempt to assist in the healing. Each friendly Character can define how they are helping and make a Check using an appropriate Skill against the same Difficulty Number as above. For example, a warrior might distract enemies while a medic works, and an alchemist may provide additional salves to the medic. These actions do not cost additional FP or count as actions for the other Characters besides the one using Recover.

Recover does 1 point of Healing Damage if this Character's Check succeeds. In addition, it does +1 point of Healing for each friendly Character that succeeded on a Check, and -1 Healing for each Character that failed, minimum of 1. Margin of Success is applied after the modifiers for other Characters successes and failures.

Theming Recover

Healing on the battlefield is critical to save the lives of the wounded. Usually there is not time to fully restore a wounded Character, but by addressing immediate mortal wounds, the treated can often fight on, or at least be moved to a place where more thorough healing can be administered.

Many counter-arguments in a debate are meant to deflect a point by the opponent, rather than further the speaker's own points. In these cases, Recover can be used to represent someone who is very good at critiquing the arguments of others, rather than pressing their own advantage.

Pacifist Characters can use Recover to model their actions in a Conflict, allowing them to support the party without inflicting Damage on the Enemy side.

Stalwart

Potential Cost	3

At the start of each new Round of Conflicts or when using the ***Ready*** Universal Action (see page 120), if the number of opposing Characters is more than your Focus Refresh stat, instead of using your FR, you gain FP equal to one more than the number of opposing Characters. This Technique has no effect on the initial starting FP for a new Conflict.

Theming Stalwart

Those who often find themselves in the midst of sake-inspired tavern brawls tend to be used to being out-numbered and are good at turning the enemy's numbers into an advantage.

Public speakers must become comfortable facing large groups, focusing on using the number of people as a benefit to spreading their message, rather than becoming intimidated.

Stealth

Potential Cost	5

This Technique allows the Character to attempt to remain undetected by others.

Outside of Conflicts, the Character can make a special Vice Check. Record the result of the Check; any time any other Character attempts to interact with the Character in any way (see the Character, affect them with a Skill or Technique, etc), they must first make a Perception or Vice Check, against a Difficulty Number equal to the number rolled by the Character's original Stealth Vice Check. If the other Character does not Succeed on that Check, they cannot interact with this Character.

Stealth

Action Type	*Full Action*	FP	2	Ki	0

Roll a Vice Check to generate a Difficulty Number. If an opposing Character wants to target this Character with any Action they must first succeed at a Perception or Vice Check against that Difficulty Number.

In Conflicts, the Character may take a Full Action that costs 2 FP to become hidden. Roll a Vice Check as above to generate a Difficulty Number. An opposing Character that wants to target this Character with any Action must first succeed at a Perception or Vice Check against the Difficulty Number; if they fail they cannot target this Character that Turn.

Once a Character succeeds at the check against the Difficulty Number, they no longer have to make additional Checks unless the Character uses Stealth again (generating a new Difficulty Number). If any Character makes this Check, all of their allies receive a +3 to Checks made against the Stealth Difficulty Number.

The effect of Stealth ends whenever the Character using it makes an Attack Action (whether is succeeds or not), or when the Character successfully wins any Opposed Check they initiated against an opposing Character.

Note that Perception and/or Vice may be changed to a different Attribute/Skill using the ***Unconventional*** *Technique. In this case, the opposed Checks use the replacement Attribute/Skill as well.*

Theming Stealth

Timid people are often ignored in social conflicts, where the louder or more assertive become the focus.

Ninja are famous for their ability to blend into the surroundings through a combination of techniques, equipment and magic.

The Karikage is a powerful yōkai that can become invisible at will. An alchemist or skilled tailor could create a cloak from the hide of a karikage that let humans perform the same feat.

Tactics

Potential Cost 2x

This power can be used once per Conflict. It may be purchased multiple times; each time allows one use per Conflict.

Tactics

Action Type	FP	Ki
Simple, Special	0	0

Once per Conflict, at the start of a Round, you may make a use this Technique. Both sides in Conflict make an Assisted Leadership Check, if you succeed choose an effect from the list mentioned in the rules below.

At the start of a Round of a Conflict, the Character can choose to attempt to use Tactics. This is an Opposed Assisted Leadership Check (both sides make an Assisted Leadership Check). If the Character's side wins the Check, the Character may choose one of the following:

- Reorganize the Initiative Order following all normal restrictions (ie: no side can have more than half of it's Characters act before an opposing Character gets a Turn)
- All friendly Characters add +1 to any Checks they make this Round
- This Round, on the Character's Turn, they may reset the Tide Marker to '0'. This is a Full Action that costs 1 FP

Theming Tactics

A master bureaucrat can organize a team to accomplish any task before it's due date, even when the team is composed of loveable misfits who can't seem to accomplish even basic tasks on their own.

Samurai are trained as field commanders who can coordinate any group into a fighting force. By issuing commands, they can often turn a near-rout into a victory.

Characters who have forged friendships with kami may hear them whisper plans or strategies into their ear. These kinds of directions usually have the benefit of being organized by a set of eyes that can see the whole battle, beyond what one participant can.

Tamer

Potential Cost 5

You can make Improvised Attacks against any natural animal using Nature Affinity. These Attacks do +1 MoS Damage for every 2 points you roll higher than the target, instead of every 3. This ability will not work on sentient animals.

You can tame animals outside of Conflicts. You may have a number of tamed animals up to your Nature Affinity Modifier (not including Associated Attribute). It takes several weeks to tame one animal (GM sets exact time based on the type of animal and its individual attitude towards the Character). In order to tame an additional animal when you have reached your limit, you must release an existing one.

A tamed animal will follow basic commands of the Character, and will never harm the Character or their allies. A tamed animal can also be taught to perform specific tricks. An animal can learn one trick, plus an additional one for every point of INT Modifier it has (most normal animals have an INT modifier of +0, but GMs may increase this for particularly intelligent individuals). A trick can include any Skill or Technique the Character possesses. If the trick requires a Check of any kind, the animal has a total modifier equal to one half (round up) of the Modifier the Character would use if performing the action themself.

In Conflicts, the Character may have the animal perform it's trick. This is a Full Action that costs 1 FP in addition to all normal costs for using the action (these costs are still paid by the Character, even though the animal is acting). The animal ignores any additional FP costs to use an Action outside of it's range. If the animal fails any Opposed Check against an opposing Character, it cannot be used for the rest of the Conflict.

Example

Yamazaru has tamed a hawk with +1 INT Modifier, and taught it to use the Ignore Armor Technique and the Fighting Skill. Yamazaru has a total Modifier of +5 to Fighting, so the hawk uses a total Modifier of +3 when making Fighting Checks.

In a Conflict, Yamazaru has the hawk make an Improvised Attack against a target using the Fighting Skill. This costs Yamazaru 2 FP, 1 for a normal Improvised Attack, and 1 for having the hawk take the Action. If the hawk fails the Opposed Check, it would be unavailable for Yamazaru to use for the rest of the Conflict. If it succeeds, Yamazaru could choose to use the Ignore Armor Technique by paying the FP and Ki required himself.

Note that animals do not count as Characters in conflicts (they can not be targeted, do not exist in a zone, etc).

Theming Tamer

As the existence of spirits becomes more known, a common type has captured the fascination of many children. These simple animal spirits seem to possess mild human-like personalties, and make wonderful partners and playmates for children, who take them as pets and teach them to live amongst humans.

A mechanist who creates clockwork toys could use Technique to represent small devices, rather than animals. In this case, the GM would use the resources needed to build inventions, rather than animals, to determine what the PC could apply the rules of Tamer to.

Some schools of shamanism allow the Character to call upon their ancestors for help. These spirits vary in how much of their intelligence they maintain. While the most powerful will act as humans, some may be closer to animalistic wills with single goals. A Character could 'tame' a wild ancestor, calling on it to perform simple tasks similar to a trained animal.

Teamwork

Potential Cost	2x

This Technique can be purchased multiple times, and provides 1 point of Team Unity each time it is purchased.

If a side in a Conflict has as many or more points of Team Unity than the number of Characters on that side, their Tide Breakpoint is increased by +1.

If a side has at least 3 times as much Team Unity as the number of Characters, their Tide Breakpoint is increased by +2 instead.

Example

Hideki has 3 points of Teamwork and Hikaru has 2. They are traveling with two companions who do not have any points in Teamwork. Because the team's total Teamwork value is 5 and they have 4 members, they gain +1 to their Tide Breakpoint.

Later they are joined by another two Characters who also have no points in Teamwork. There are now 6 members in the party but because they still only have 5 points in Teamwork, they will not get any bonus to their Tide Breakpoint until one of the Characters purchases an additional point of Teamwork.

Theming Teamwork

Those who experience war together tend to form bonds that allow them to know what the others will do in a given situation without having to communicate. This leads to a unit being able to more effectively fight together before becoming demoralized.

Traveling performers often include tricks that require unquestioning trust from their partners, such as acrobats who perform a trick and then depend on another to catch them. These groups work so well together that they don't flinch in the face of danger.

Outcasts tend to form their own social bonds, often stronger than the societies they were driven from. Small groups who build their community through shared beliefs, rather than coincidence of birth or race, often endure hard times more easily.

Translator

Potential Cost	2

This Character is able to understand and communicate with any intelligent life form, and even forge a rough dialogue with things that have a soul, but a mind that is normally too alien for a human to understand. The extent of conversations will depend on the abilities of both parties. For example, a bakemono tree may be able to communicate what it knows about the inhabitants of the area, but will not understand concepts like the differences of facial features between two specific humans. These kinds of limits are both ways; particularly powerful or alien intelligences will struggle to communicate with humans, and what they say may be broken or incomplete.

This ability does not force others to talk to the Character, only makes it possible if they are willing.

Theming Translator

A large number of yōkai do not actually speak, but rather communicate mentally. These kinds of conversations are naturally translated in the mind of whoever is spoken to.

Most scholars have necessarily learned multiple languages in their studies, as no single language has monopoly on knowledge.

Some specialized fields have their own ways of communicating, that may not involve language at all. Two people who both seek perfection of the body can know all that needs to be said just by the way the other keeps their health.

Sometimes a simple fist bump is all that's needed to convey your intentions and any necessary nuance.

Unconventional

Potential Spent	0	1	3	5	7	10	13	16	30
Changes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Allows you to choose a number of different Associated Attribute for Skills or Techniques, based on total Potential invested.

You can modify one of the following which each Change you are allowed:

- Associate a Skill with any Attribute, not just the ones listed for that Skill
- Change an Attribute OR Skill used in any Check involved in a Technique (changing both requires two separate changes).

Examples

> *The **Hone** Boon usually applies a Tide Damage bonus modifier based on the user's Zeal Attribute. If a Character's Boon was described as spotting for an enemy's weak point, Zeal could be changed to Perception or Intelligence instead.*
>
> *The **Illusions** Technique usually requires a Perception Check to ignore the created changes. If a Character's Illusions were based on a drug or powder instead, Perception could be changed to Endurance.*

Theming Unconventional

A mad scientist could control animals by creating special foods and chemicals that alter their natural behaviors to be useful to his plans. The Character takes the Tamer technique and replaces Nature Affinity with Medicine.

Some Banes and Boons use ZEA Modifier as part of their effect, which could be changed to any Attribute. A leader that increases the fighting ability of their troops could take Boons based in INS to model encouraging their soldiers to fight harder.

A mastermind of a thieves' guild runs everything from behind the scenes, never dirtying their own hands. This Character takes Vice with the associated Attribute of Insight, to model knowing who to bribe, threaten or recruit, and how best to do it.

Unyielding

Potential Spent	10	20
Morale Threshold	1	2

This Technique increases the Character's Morale Threshold based on the total Potential invested.

Theming Unyielding

Ascetics seek purity of mind, body and spirit through meditation. As they close in on their goal, the dangers of the world become little more than trifles.

Samurai are powerful individuals, but they are bound by the honor and responsibilities of their position. A samurai is expected to endure in the face of hardship, no matter how dangerous, and lacks the convenience to flee that others have.

Well-Equipped

Potential Spent	2	3	5	7
Craft Points	5	7	11	15

This Technique uses the Craft rules detailed in the "Professions" section page 90. Based on the total Potential invested in this Technique, the Character has more Craft Points to build Modifiers with each session.

This Technique can be taken more than once, and each time it is taken it can affect a different Profession. The Player can also choose to create a separate pool for Crafting with a different theme from their Professions.

Example

Yamazaru is a tough warrior. Savage, but kind, and especially fond of animals. Yamazaru has Profession: Barbarian. Yamazaru takes Well-Equipped to add a second set of Craft. For the first pool, he spends a Mastery Point on Profession: Barbarian in order to increase the gear available for his dangerous travels on the frontiers. This allows Yamazaru to build Modifiers for Attacks (weapons), Armor, survival (Survival Skill), and similar Abilities. Yamazaru then uses Well-Equipped to create a second pool defined as "Animal Friends". This would allow him to create Modifiers such as a partner wolf that Attacks when he does (bonus to damage), a crafty squirrel that tracks people or picks their pockets in cities (Vice Skill), a Skunk that distracts enemies from attacking Yamazaru (bonus to Defend Checks), etc.

Theming Well-Equipped

Characters who practice Professions that can make physical tools or objects often take this Technique, especially smiths, alchemists, or ninja.

This technique doesn't need to model actual physical equipment. An Emissary who draws upon the skills and the blessings of kami may have a large pool of benefits that can be created with the Craft rules.

Conflict Statistics

The following are Character stats that are used when the GM uses the Conflict rules (see the "Tide and Morale:
Extended Conflict Resolution" on page 105). Some of these start with a base value dependent on the Character's Total Potential Level, and others have a static base for all Characters. These stats can be increased by taking certain Techniques (see the list of Techniques in the previous section).

Focus Refresh

During a Conflict, Characters spend Focus Points to take Actions such as Attacking and Defending, moving around the battlefield, or using Techniques. The Focus Refresh stat determines how many Focus Points each Character gains at the start of a new Round of Conflict (see the "Focus Points — Acting During Conflicts Chapter" on page 107 for more on Focus Points and Rounds).

Focus Refresh is based on a Character's Total Potential Level. All Characters have a base Focus Refresh of 1, plus an additional 1 for every full 40 Potential. Because Characters usually begin a new Campaign with 100 Potential, they usually start with a Focus Refresh of 3, and will increase to a 4 as soon as they receive an additional 20 Potential (120 total) through the Campaign. Focus Refresh can also be increased by some Abilities, such as the Diligent Focus Technique.

> A Character's base Focus Refresh value is 1, plus an additional 1 per 40 Total Potential.

Morale Threshold

A Character's Morale Threshold value determines how much they can take before being forced out of combat. This not only measures a Character's physical health, but also their mental focus and inner strength to endure hardships. As a group of Characters takes Actions that shift the Tide of battle, they can inflict Morale Damage on the opposing side. When the Morale Damage accumulated by the Players' side reaches a Character's Morale Threshold, that Character is close to their limits. They no longer regain Focus Points, the resource used to take Actions in battle. Once the Morale Damage exceeds a Character's Threshold, they must leave the battle, and can take no further Actions unless they are able to Rally (see Rally Value, below).

Morale Threshold Starting Value

All Player Characters start with a Morale Threshold value of 3. This can be increased by taking certain Abilities, such as ***Unyielding***. NPCs will have a Morale Threshold determined by the type and importance of that Character. For example, minions may have a Threshold of 1, while the primary villain of an entire story may have a value of 5.

> All Player Characters begin with a Morale Threshold of 3.

Rally Value

If a Character is forced out of battle, they may still return if the situation that caused them to leave changes. Every PC has a Rally Value; if the Player Side can inflict as much Morale Damage to the enemy as that value, the Character can return to the Conflict (for more details, see "Rally" on page 115). NPCs may or may not have a Rally Value; most minions and those unimportant to the plot are considered to be permanently removed from a battle when their Morale Threshold is exceeded.

PCs begin with a Rally Value of 4. This can be improved by the ***Rebound***.

Note that, because Rally Value is a number that must be reached before a Character can return, a lower Rally Value is better (the lower the value, the sooner the Character returns). Bonuses to Rally Value will be a negative value, such as "Rally Value - 1".

> All Player Characters begin with a Rally Value of 4.

Ki Limit

Ki is a special kind of resource that Characters use to activate certain Abilities and make others more powerful. Ki itself is unlimited; a Player can spend as much as they want. However, the strain of using too much Ki can take a toll on the body, mind, and spirit. Every Character has a Ki Limit that represents how

much Ki they can use before suffering penalties (see the Conflict section for the full rules on Ki Limits, spending Ki, penalties, and Releasing Ki).

A Character's Ki Limit stat is based on their Total Potential Level, similar to Focus Refresh. For every 25 points of Total Potential Level, a Character's Ki Limit increases by 2. For example, a Character with 100 Total Potential Level would have a Ki Limit of 8, and a Character with 130 Total Potential Level would a Ki Limit of 10.

A Character's base Ki Limit value is 2 for every full 25 Total Potential Level.

Armor

Characters have a rating for Armor in each domain of Damage (Body, Mind, and Soul). This begins at 0/0/0, and is increased with the Armor Technique.

Player Characters begin with Armor - 0/0/0, an Armor rating of 0 in each domain of Damage.



Signature Attacks and Upgraded Defenses

Attack Actions are used to make Opposed Checks against opposing Characters in order to inflict Tide damage against their side. As explained in "Improvised Attacks" on page 110, any Character can make an Improvised Attack by describing an action that helps their side or harms the opponents in any way (subject to GM approval). Improvised Attacks do a base of 1 Tide Damage, which can be increased by the Attack's Margin of Success.

Signature Attacks allows Players to create more powerful Attacks for their Characters. These Attacks represent the abilities that the Character commonly uses in Conflicts. They allow a player to define what their Character is especially good at, and provide stronger actions in Conflicts that don't require GM arbitration.

Signature Attacks represent general categories of actions rather than specific maneuvers. A martial artist PC does not need to purchase different Signature Attacks for a punch, a snap kick and a leaping kick. Instead, the Player may simply purchase "Martial Arts Strike", then describe what the Character is actually doing with the Attack, based on what is happening in the story, each time it is used. Similarly, a sorcerer could purchase "Elemental Blast", and use it for a fireball one Round, a Lightning Bolt the next, and even a body decaying curse later.

Most Characters will only need one Signature Attack to represent how they regularly approach conflicts, but some players may wish to buy additional Signature Attacks that function very differently. As noted above, a Martial Artist does not need two different D3 Body Damage Attacks for "Punch" and "Kick", they simply need to take one Signature Attack and describe how it is being used each time. However, that martial artist may also want a separate Soul Damage Attack that includes Ki Poison to represent hitting specific points on the body to shut down the opponent's ki flow.

Using Signature Attacks

When used in Conflicts a Signature Attack is a Full, Attack Action. Each Attack has a cost in Focus Points and Ki that must be paid by the Character every time the Attack is used. Different Signature Attacks will have different costs depending on their strength and utility.

Unless something has happened in the story to prevent a Character from using their Signature Attack, they are always assumed to have anything needed to perform it, such as a weapon, spare kunai, magical reagents, bureaucratic paperwork, an actual pocketful of sunshine, etc. Signature Attacks never run out of ammunition or charges, so an archer will always have enough arrows (though Characters must still manage the FP and Ki costs of attacks, which can be used to represent running out of supplies, if the playgroup wishes).

Each Signature Attack includes a set of Attributes and Skills that determine which Defend Actions can be used against the Attack (see below). By default, this must be at least 2 Attributes and 3 Skills, but players can add more of either in order to reduce the cost in Potential to purchase the attack.

When you purchase a Signature Attack, choose one Attribute and one Skill from the Attack's list of defenses to use as Modifiers. When using the attack, your Attack Check will be 3D6 + the chosen Attribute Modifier + the chosen Skill Modifier.

How the target Defends against the Attack depends on what Defend Action they choose to take. Most Characters will use one of the two "Universal Actions" described on page 120.

Simple Defense, allows the Defender to make a Defend Check with any of their Defense Skills (see "Upgrading Skills to Defenses" on page 85) that are included in the list of Skills for the Signature Attack. For example, if an Attacker is using a Signature Attack that includes Fighting, any Character that has upgraded their Fighting Skill to a Defense Skill would be able to use Simple Defense to make a Check with 3D6 + their Total Modifier (Skill + Associated Attribute). Some Characters may have also have special Techniques, such as ***Deflect***, that work against any Attack.

If a Target does not have any of the listed Skills upgraded to a Defense Skill, they can still use Simple Defense, but must instead choose one of the listed Attributes for the Attack and roll 3D6 + their Modifier in that Attribute. For example, if a Signature Attack includes Intelligence and Zeal, the Defender would choose whichever of their Modifiers for those two Attributes is the highest, and add it to their 3D6 roll.

Defenders can also use the ***Last-Ditch Defense*** Action if they are out of Focus Points. This Defend Action costs no FP, but the Defender can only roll 3D6 without adding any Attribute or Skill Modifiers.

Effects of Signature Attacks

If the Character using the Signature Attack wins the Opposed Check (rolls equal to or higher than the Defender), they inflict the effects of the Attack on the Defender. These effects always include at least 1 Tide Damage, but they may also affect the Defender's Focus Points, Ki, or Zone. If the Defender wins the Opposed Check, they are unaffected by the Signature Attack in any way.

Damage

Damage uses the rules detailed in the Conflict chapter. Roll the indicated die or dice, and reduce that result by any Armor the target has of the appropriate Domain (Body, Mind, or Soul), to a minimum of 1, then increase the value by any Margin of Success. The final total is the Tide Damage inflicted on the opposing side.

Focus Drain

Focus Drain causes the target to lose Focus Points. Roll the die listed, and reduce that result by any Armor of the appropriate Domain (Body, Mind, or Soul), to a minimum of 1, then increase the value by 1 for every Margin of Success. The final total is the number of Focus Points removed from the target. Note that any remaining FP drained once the target reaches 0 FP have no effect.

Ki Poison

Ki Poison causes the target to add Ki Points to their Ki Pool (see "Exceeding Ki Limit" on page 118 for the effects on a Character who has more Ki in their pool than their Ki Limit). Roll the die listed, and reduce that result by any Armor of the appropriate Domain (Body, Mind, or Soul), to a minimum of 1, then increase the value by 1 for every Margin of Success. The final total is the number of Ki added to the target's Ki Pool.

Movement

Unlike the other effects, Movement is unaffected by Armor. If the Attack succeeds, the Attacker can move the Defender 1 Zone (for example, Aggressive to Balanced, or Balanced to either Aggressive or Cautious). If the Attack has a +1 or greater MoS, the Attacker can move the Defender to any Zone.

Buying Signature Attacks

A list of Premade Signature Attacks is included on page 68, covering common attacks often seen in the world of Mysteries of the Yōkai. You can buy one of these Abilities by spending the listed Potential cost, like normal, or you can alter some aspects of the Attack before buying it (see "Changes That Affect Cost" for what can be changed).

Alternatively, a full set of rules for building Signature Attacks from scratch is included after the list of Premade Signature Attacks (see "Signature Attacks - Toolkit Rules" on page 82). These rules involve several operations that may benefit from having a calculator nearby, but they provide the freedom to create attacks with any combination of values.

Signature Attacks - Premade

On page 68 there is a list of premade attacks that are commonly seen in the game world. Players can purchase any of these Attacks and use them as listed, or modify them by changing any of the things listed under "Changes That Can Be Made for Free" below. Anything listed under "Changes That Affect Cost" will require you to use the Toolkit Rules detailed on page 82.

Example

Mike, playing Maguma, wants to create a Signature Attack to represent his fighting style, which usually consists of picking up very heavy objects and throwing them at drunken patrons who cause problems at his izakaya (tavern). Mike, decides to purchase Elemental Blast, and change the Damage Domain to Body. This gives him a ranged Attack, but one that does damage with ballistic chairs, tables, and even other patrons, instead of fire or ice.

Changes That Can Be Made for Free

- Name and description of how the Attack is used
- Swap an Attribute for another
- Swap a Skill for another
- Change Damage Domain to be one of the others (Body, Mind or Soul)

Changes That Affect Cost

Note: These changes cannot be made to Premade Signature Attacks, as they will alter the cost. A new Signature Attack must be created with the Toolkit rules, later in this section.

- Additional Damage or Effects
- Range
- Focus Cost
- Ki Cost
- Additional allowed Defend Attributes or Skills

Signature Attacks: Additional Notes

Determining the Total Modifier to Use with Your Signature Attack

Note that all Signature Attacks have at least two Attributes and three Skills listed for Defense. When you first purchase a Signature Attack, choose one of each; these will be the Modifiers used when you make Attack Checks with the Signature Attack.

Example

Martial Arts Strike lists STR, AGI, Evaluate, Fighting and Survival. If you choose STR and Fighting when you purchase the Attack, you roll 3D6 + your STR and Fighting Modifiers whenever you use the Attack.

Descriptions and Re-theming Premade Signature Attacks

When you first take a Signature Attack, you define how the Character uses it in the story. This can be anything that fits how you see the Attack happening, and has no effect on the Conflict Rules. These descriptions can be general, such as "martial arts" or "baleful ki", and should leave room for the PC to use them in multiple flavorful ways during a game.

Area of Effect

There are no mechanical rules for attacking multiple targets, as inflicting damage multiple times with one Action would be too powerful. However, players are free to describe attacks with descriptions that include affecting an area or multiple Characters. In these cases, it is only one target that makes a Defend Check, but the abstracted result of Tide Damage includes the overall battle effect.

Theming Premade Signature Attacks

Each Signature Attack listed here includes two examples of ways you might want to change it to use for different kinds of Characters. The first example includes a simple change, usually just in how the Attack is named or described, while the second includes an in depth list of Attributes and Skills to change, as well as the explanation of its story description. These examples are intended only to help Players think of ways they may want to change Signature Attacks for their own Characters; they are not meant to be all inclusive.

List of Premade Signature Attacks

Admonish 70
Archery 70
Clumsy Flailing 71
Crushing Blow 71
Cursed Touch 72
Destroy Body 72
Destruction Wave 73
Elemental Blast 73
Fast Talk 74
Final Glory 74
Hallucination 75
Hidden Traps 75
Incapacitating Strike 76
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Misdirection 77
Rites 77
Rousing Performance 78
Sealing Tag 78
Shoulder Throw 79
Sleeping Poison 79
Tell Off 80
Wind Gust 80

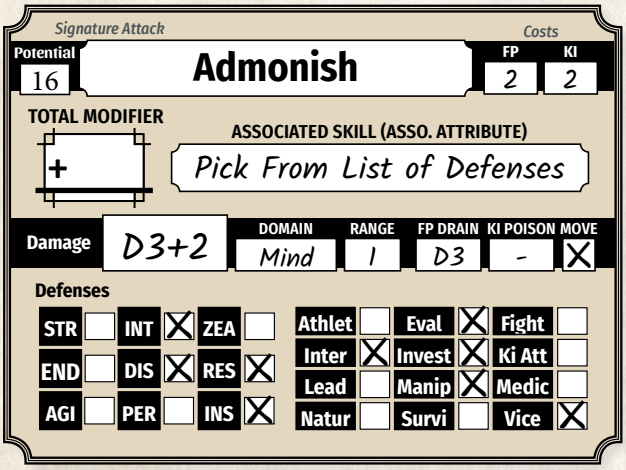
Quick Reference for Premade Signature Attacks

Attack Name	Potential Cost	Damage	Domain	Range	Focus Drain	Ki Poison	Move	Cost	Defenses
Admonish	16	D3+2	Mind	1	D3	-	Y	2 FP 2 Ki	INT, DIS, ZEA, RES, INS, Evaluate, Interaction, Investigation, Manipulation, Vice
Archery	3	D3	Body	2	-	-	-	1 FP	AGI, PER, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting
Clumsy Flailing	2	D3	Body	1	-	-	-	1 FP	AGI, PER, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting, Investigation, Survival
Crushing Blow	10	2D3	Body	1	-	-	-	4 FP 1 Ki	STR, END, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting
Cursed Touch	18	1	Soul	1	D6	D6	-	3 FP 4 Ki	AGI, ZEA, RES, Fighting, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinity
Destroy Body	23	D6+1	Body	1	-	D3	-	1 FP	STR, RES, Fighting, Medicine, Survival
Destruction Wave	9	D6+1	Body	3	-	-	-	6 FP 6 Ki	INT, ZEA, Athletics, Fighting, Ki Attunement
Elemental Blast	13	D6	Soul	3	-	-	-	1 FP 2 Ki	END, ZEA, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinty, Survival
Fast Talk	10	D3	Mind	2	D3	-	-	2 FP	INT, DIS, PER, INS, Interaction, Manipulation, Vice
Final Glory	10	D6+2	Soul	1	-	-	-	6 FP 4 Ki	ZEA, RES, Fighting, Ki Attunment, Survival
Hallucination	13	D3+1	Mind	3	-	D3	-	1 FP 1 Ki	INT, DIS, PER, ZEA, RES, INS, Evaluate, Investigation, Ki Attunement, Manipulation
Hidden Traps	15	D3	Body	4	D3	-	-	2 FP	INT, RES, Evaluate, Investigation, Manipulation
Incapacitating Strike	26	D6	Body	1	D6	-	-	2 FP	STR, AGI, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting
Martial Arts Strike	6	D3+1	Body	1	-	-	-	1 FP	STR, AGI, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting
Misdirection	18	2D3	Mind	2	-	-	Y	2 FP 3 Ki	INT, ZEA, Ki Attunement, Manipulation, Nature Affinity
Rites	2	D3	Soul	2	-	-	-	1 FP 3 Ki	DIS, ZEA, Interaction, Ki Attunement, Medicine
Rousing Performance	7	D3+1	Healing	3	-	-	-	2 FP 2 Ki	ZEA, RES, Interaction, Ki Attunement, Leadership
Sealing Tag	23	1	Soul	2	D6	-	-	1 FP	ZEA, INS, Ki Attunement, Manipulation, Nature Affinity
Shoulder Throw	6	D3	Body	1	-	-	Y	1 FP	STR, AGI, Athletics, Fighting, Manipulation
Sleeping Poison	27	1	Mind	2	D6	D3	-	1 FP	INT, DIS, Medicine, Survival, Vice
Tell Off	19	D3+1	Mind	1	D6	-	Y	2 FP 1 Ki	INT, DIS, RES, INS, Evaluate, Interaction, Leadership, Manipulation, Vice
Wind Gust	6	1	Body	3	-	-	Y	1 FP	INT, ZEA, Athletics, Ki Attunement, Survival

Admonish

[16 Potential]

Words can be as effective a weapon as swords or spells. While a well crafted dressing-down doesn't leave the outward scars of a flame spell, it can often break the spirit of a political opponent just as surely as defeating a foe on the battlefield. Even just saying the right thing in a critical moment can distract an enemy, causing them to question their motive long enough for you to act.



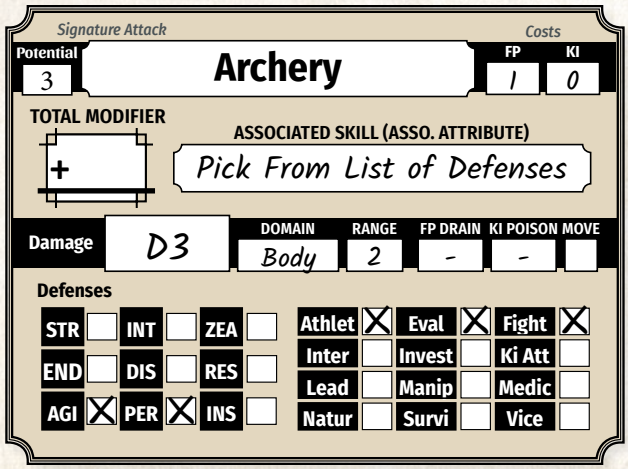
Other Theme Ideas

- **Performance**: Various forms of comedy are just as effective as the more intellectual arts. A jester or comedian Character may distract with riddles or jokes, while a singer could move their audience to tears.
- **Intimidate**: Physically dominant Characters may demoralize enemies by attacking inanimate objects, sparring their foes from the same fate as a snapped tree or smashed stone statue. Truly intimidating Characters may only need to crack their knuckles or flex their well toned muscles to send their foes into a panic. [***Change Defense Attributes to Strength, Endurance, Discipline, and Zeal. Choose some Defense Skills to change to Athletics, Fighting and Survival***]

Archery

[3 Potential]

Mastery of the bow comes in many forms in Nippon. Even a humble village peasant may be able to fell a deer before the creature even knows they are in the area, and many shrine guardians study the arts of archery as both a form of defense and meditative exercise. Even the most forward samurai will usually learn at least the basics of ranged combat, and entire groups of soldiers will learn to coordinate their attacks to stop infantry charges in their tracks.



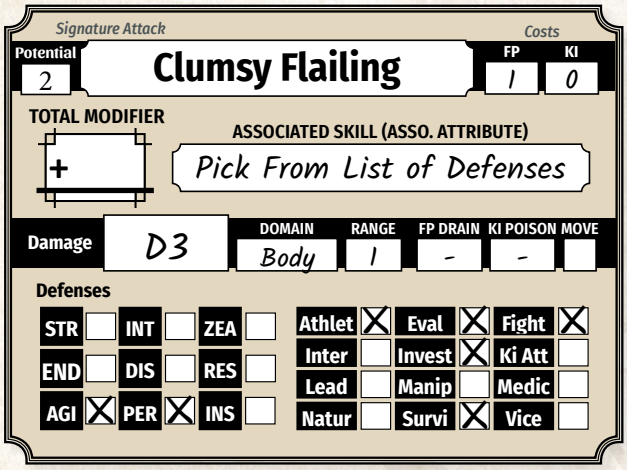
Other Theme Ideas

- Any physical ranged attack can be modeled with this Signature Attack. Ninja often use kunai and shuriken, and some of the stranger demi-yōkai are able to project quills or other parts of their bodies.
- **Observer**: In heated debates, whether in public squares or the hidden rooms of politics, it can be easy to become distracted with the loudest and most brash opponents. However, the best negotiators, advocates, and diplomats know there are times when they must engage the quiet opponent lurking in the background instead, lest they ignore a more dangerous foe. [***Change Defenses to Intelligence, Zeal, Evaluate, Manipulation, and Vice, with Mind Domain Damage***]

Clumsy Flailing

[2 Potential]

There are entire schools of martial arts dedicated to pretending to be drunk, old, or otherwise incapacitated, in order to surprise an opponent and take them off guard. Such formal training is not a requirement, however, as many career drunks have proven the ability (and need) to handle themselves if a fight breaks out, regardless of the level of their inebriation.



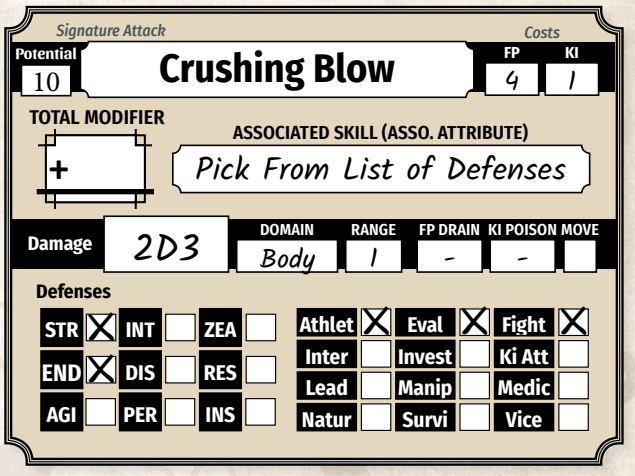
Other Theme Ideas

- The Character doesn't need to act clumsy, and this Signature Attack can represent any kind of ruse or trick. Many demi-yōkai have a form that appears odd to humans, but are much faster/stronger/etc than their bodies would seem to be.
- **"Did I lose? Or did you do just what I wanted you to?"**: Many masterminds intentionally sacrifice something that is of less value to them than their opponent in order to direct the opponent to take actions that eventually work out the way the Mastermind wants. These Characters often have contingencies for anything they can think of, and are good at making up new ones on the spot. [***Change Defenses to Intelligence, Insight, Change some Defense Skills to be Leadership, Manipulation, and Vice, use Mind Damage for the Domain***]

Crushing Blow

[10 Potential]

Some fighters choose to apply all of their strength into overwhelming strikes that shatter armor as easily as bones. These massive blows often tire the Attacker quickly, so Characters that take this Signature Attack should be careful not to exhaust their FP supply too quickly. However, the increased damage will often end Conflicts sooner, allowing the PC to rest before they are completely drained.



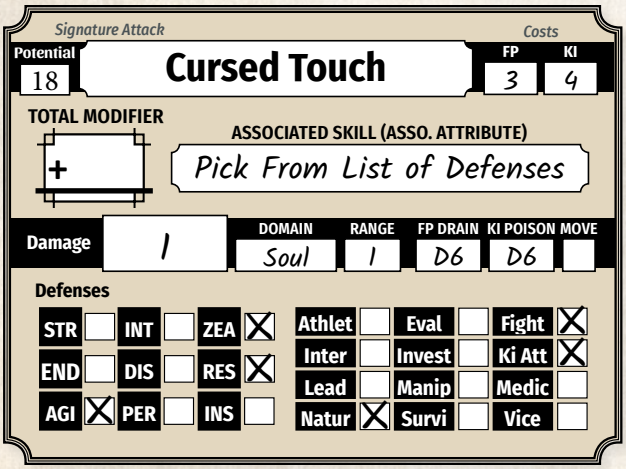
Other Theme Ideas

- If a technique requires increased time or energy, but not necessarily Strength, it can act as a Crushing Blow. For example, an Archer may need to take additional time to line up a shot aiming at a vital part of the target, raising the damage and FP cost over simply firing an arrow quickly at their torso.
- **Elaborate Rebuttal**: By taking more time and layering the facts that support one's argument, an ace Advocate can win a case with an elaborate flourish that forces even their opponent to grudgingly respect them. [***Change Defenses to Perception, Insight, Evaluate, Investigation and Interaction, with Mind Damage***]

Cursed Touch

[18 Potential]

A cursed touch can model the baleful hand of a yōkai from Yomi whose very existence harms the lands of mortals. It can also be the invoked magic meant to harm victims over time, long after the sorcerer leaves their presence. There are even natural occurrences that so resemble a curse that they can be indistinguishable, such as the diseases carried by vermin or the result of failing to contain one's Ki when it exceeds the body's natural limits.



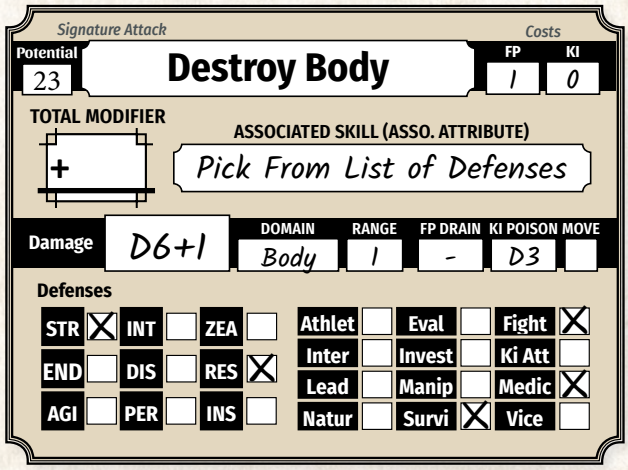
Other Theme Ideas

- A unique PC type may be a Character that is inflicted by a curse themself. This Character could pass on the curse to opponents they come in conflict with.
- **Ant Friends!**: This Character controls ants or other insects, commanding them to swarm the target. The massive number of small bites are painful enough by themselves, but the irritation (and possible poison from some insects) has the same overall effect of Ki Poison, making it harder for the target to take actions. [***Change Defenses to Agility, Resolve, Insight, Leadership, Nature Affinity and Survival, with Body Damage***]

Destroy Body

[23 Potential]

Unlike the pinpoint precision of Incapacitating Strike, this Signature Attack simply tries to destroy the body of the opponent. It is much less flashy, but no less intimidating. This directness may even find situations where it excels over the surgeon's touch; such as destroying bulky barriers. While a Incapacitating Strike user may fare just as well against a building as a Character using Destroy Body (by weakening support beams to bring the structure down), that Character would find themselves in for a long Conflict against a giant boulder with uniform mass. Meanwhile, this Character is likely to simply smash the rock, possibly even using their own head!



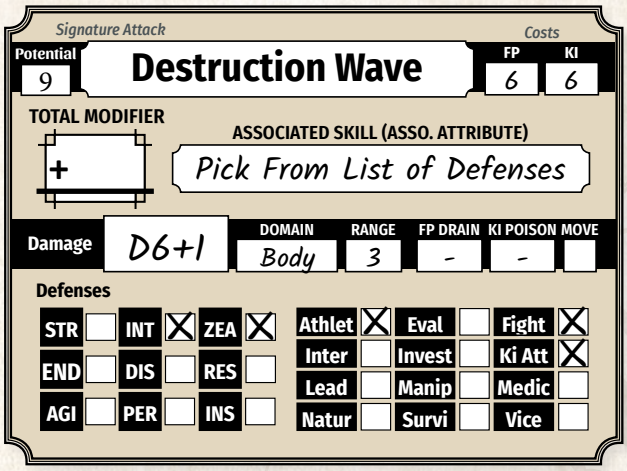
Other Theme Ideas

- **Temporary Possession**: Very weak forms of possession and hauntings are only able to, at most, take over the body of a victim for a few seconds. These kinds of minor possessions are usually blamed for momentary outbursts of uncharacteristic actions (whether true or not). Even if the invader can not fully dominate the victim, it is still a very draining and demoralizing experience, throwing the body and natural Ki of the target out of balance.
- **Scorched Earth**: In a campaign where the PC's actions model warfare, an Attack that not only harms the defenders of a country, but the land itself, can be modeled with this Attack. [***Change Defenses to Endurance, Resolve, Medicine, Nature Affinity and Survival, with whatever Damage Domain the GM is using to model the health of an area***]

Destruction Wave

[9 Potential]

Some forms of martial arts teach their students to combine meditation on the properties of energy with their fighting abilities, allowing them to use ki as a powerful ranged weapon. While any school suffices to provide an advantage in melee range, these fighters are often weaponless or carry hand weapons that put them at a disadvantage against archers, or even a ninja with a handful of kunai. This ability allows them to use their strikes at a distance, and it can often be saved as a trump card to be used against foes who do not expect such a technique.



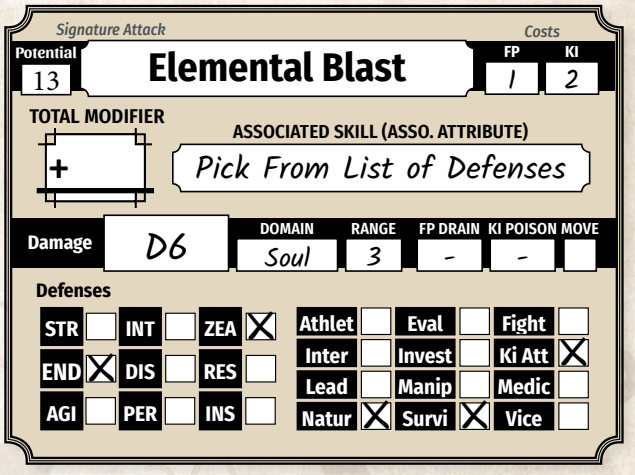
Other Theme Ideas

- **Teleport**: If a Character can transport themself to a distant foe in order to strike, they can model the ability using this Signature Attack. In this case, the Attacker would be returning to roughly the same spot after attacking, so Players who envision a teleporting Character performing other tricks with their power may also want to look into the various forms of the Movement Technique.
- **Powder Keg Trigger**: Characters who often use the environment for their attacks may want to take this Signature Attack. An alchemist could detonate flammable substances in an area, while a demi-yōkai with a sonic scream could just as easily strike by collapsing a section of the roof as they could with the scream itself. [***Change Zeal to Agility, and Ki Attunement to Evaluate***]

Elemental Blast

[13 Potential]

There are many ways to harness the power of the elements as a weapon. Those who study sorcery learn spells to manipulate and direct the raw essence of an element towards their target. Many yōkai and other supernatural beings are actually composed entirely or mostly of an element, for them throwing fire or spitting lightning is as natural as a human throwing a punch in a brawl or spitting out insults in a feud.



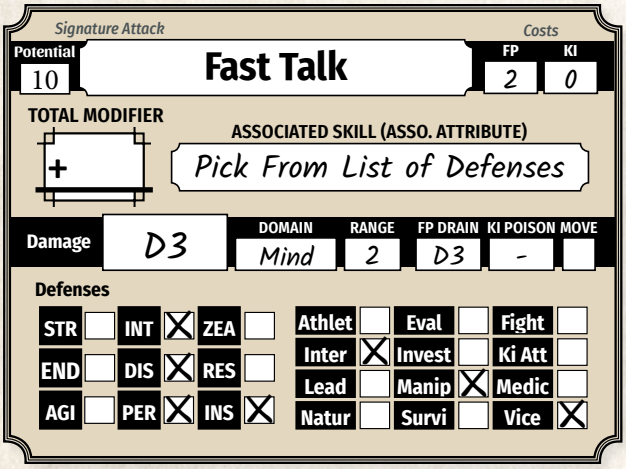
Other Theme Ideas

- Many offensive spells function exactly like an Elemental Blast, even if they don't actually contain an elemental component. Players can use this Signature Attack to represent things such as a more direct and brutal Bane, one that inflicts damage rather than degrade the degrade the capabilities of the target.
- Elemental Blast is a good template for any kind of very long ranged attack. Though most bows do not have the range that would equate to a Range of 3, a master of the bow, or a Character with Ki infused Arrows could easily take this Signature Attack to model their bow, with [***Change to Strength, Agility, Athletics, Fighting, and Survival with Body Damage***]. Similarly, a master strategist could take this to model their ability to affect any location on the battlefield (probably through scout relays, but a novel strategist may use yōkai who travel between worlds to return to the physical world quickly) using ***[Change Defenses to Intelligence, Perception, Fighting, Leadership, Manipulation***]

Fast Talk

[10 Potential]

A clever wordsmith can distract and mislead without really saying anything at all. This kind of attack allows a Character to maintain a safe distance from the forefront of a Conflict and avoid showing their hand too early



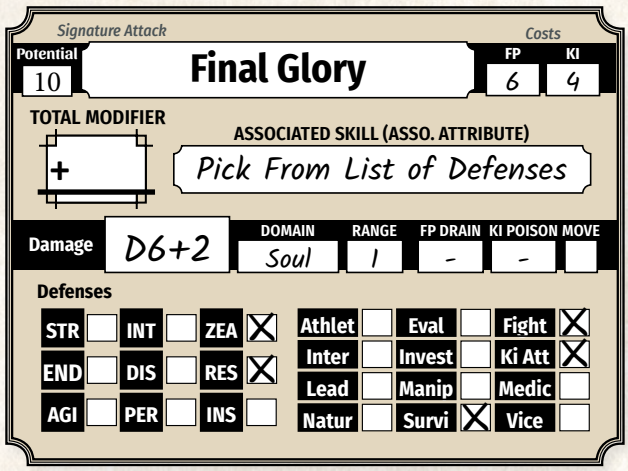
Other Theme Ideas

- **Ramble On**: Aged Characters often take great pride in telling stories that begin to test the patience of their younger friends (or foes). While those willing to spend the time to listen usually find great wisdom in the end, those with less discipline often give up and leave the Conflict rather than let the story continue.
- **Throwing Net**: By throwing a net, bola, or other device onto a target, this Character not only damages the target, but also makes it harder for them to continue fighting (represented by the FP Drain). This is a favored trick of ninja, as well as some Tengu clans, who are able to drop their nets from the sky, making them even more effective with precision delivery. [***Change Defenses to Agility, Perception, Athletics, Fighting, and Survival, with Body Damage***]

Final Glory

[10 Potential]

In times of desperation, a single attack of ultimate power is required to defeat the strongest of foes. This attack has a very high FP cost (6, and may cost even more to attack beyond its Range of 1), but the Damage it inflicts is able to bypass even the strongest armor.



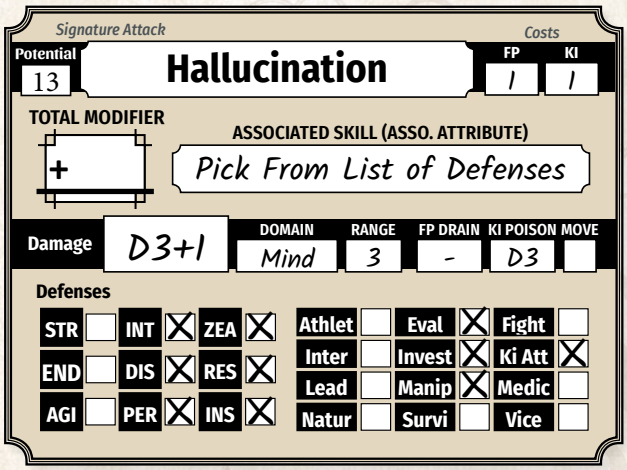
Other Theme Ideas

- **Thousand Strikes**: Instead of a single, massive attack, the Character strikes their opponent dozens, or even hundreds of times. The Kamaitachi move so fast they can even reach the thousand strikes the attack is named for before the target can force them away.
- **World Chaining Rite**: Ambitious Characters may attempt replicate the magical techniques behind the ritual Emperor Shōren used to chain realms together, though most likely on a smaller scale to avoid the same calamity. This Signature Attack links two worlds together, causing damage to both, as well as anyone caught in the chaos. [***Change Zeal to Endurance, Fighting to Athletics, and Survival to Nature Affinity***]

Hallucination

[13 Potential]

Attacks made on the mind of a target can force them to experience effects far more powerful than any that could be inflicted on them in the real world. After all, the mind is often its own worst enemy. Unlike Illusions, which alter the area (usually visually) and affect how everyone interacts with the area as a group, Hallucination directly attacks the mind of an individual. This usually causes them to be unable to interact with the world around them, as the messages from their brain do not get sent to their body. This is a classic ability of many yōkai, and anyone playing a spiritual demi-yōkai may wish to take this Signature Attack.



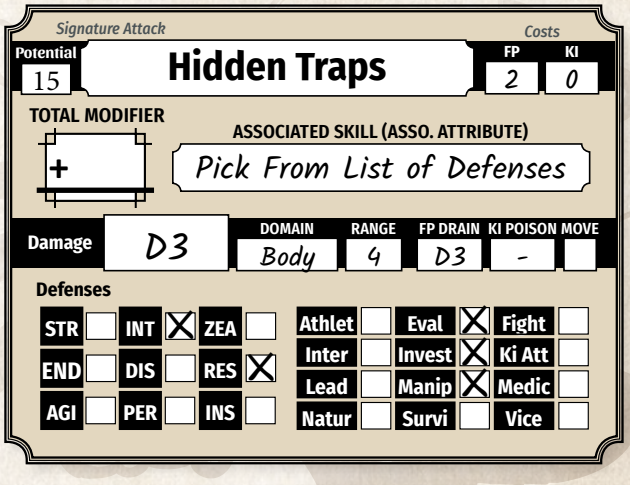
Other Theme Ideas

- **Killing Intent**: When someone has the will to fatally harm another it can project a powerful malice around them, filling their targets and those nearby with a sense of unease. If strong enough, the sheer emotional pressure can even paralyze them with dread or visions of their death, making it difficult to act skillfully. Certain individuals don't need the actual intent to kill to produce this effect. They are able to intimidate their targets with the mere threat of their capability to do so.
- **Firearms**: Though not readily available at this point in history, it is still possible that a powdered weapon may have found its way into the Character's possession. A firearm not only strikes a foe at an extreme range, the physical and mental effects of facing such weapons greatly unbalance most targets. [***Change Defenses to Agility, Discipline, Athletics, Fighting, and Medicine, with Body Damage***]

Hidden Traps

[15 Potential]

This Signature Attack relies on a Character having time to prepare an area, so it may not be suitable for those who travel constantly, never sure where and when the next challenge will appear. However, for anyone forearmed with "prep time", this Signature Attack allows clever Players to use almost anything in the environment as a weapon against their foes. Exploding barrels of oil rigged to ignite when a nearby piece of metal is struck to create a spark are just as likely as a pit full of spears hidden under a tatami mat in a lord's mansion. A famous cautionary tale among military instructors tells of a failed garrisoning of a Tanuki village; these small furry creatures rigged the entire forest with traps and deadly contraptions that easily sent the human invaders fleeing, regardless of their metal arms, heavy armor, and even machines.



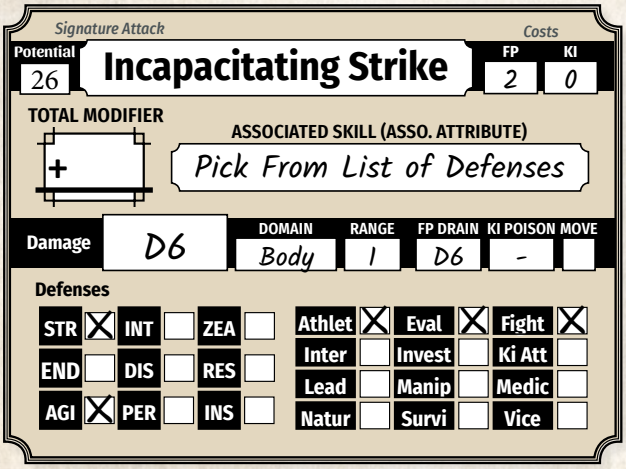
Other Theme Ideas

- **Trickster Spirit**: Some Characters use ki or sorcery to cause mischief. While this usually doesn't have the power to create the same level of mayhem as rigging a bridge to collapse, it also does not require the time needed for building and hiding traps.
- **Army of Minions**: Instead of the Character creating the traps themself, those with a horde of underlings often simply command a group of them to take some action in a Conflict. [***Change Defenses to Endurance, Perception, Athletics, Evaluation, and Leadership with whatever Damage Domain that seems appropriate for the flavor of minion***]

Incapacitating Strike

[26 Potential]

In most physical conflicts, a fighter is only interested in defeating the opponent as quickly as they can by any means. However, some Characters specialize in actions that incapacitate the opponent. Noble minded Characters may wish to minimize the suffering of their foe, and will quickly disable an arm or leg joint to prevent the target from further fighting. Malicious Characters may cripple in ways that cause continuing pain, knowing only the most desperate or stupid foes will refuse to flee to heal.



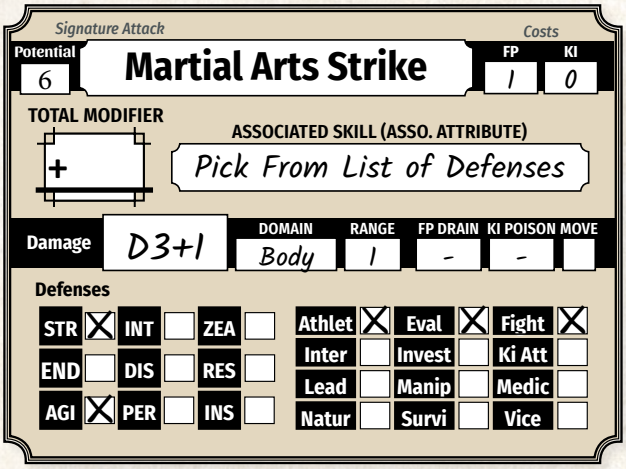
Other Theme Ideas

- Instead of using medical knowledge of the body's physical working, strikes to vital points can be used to disable the connection between ki and body.
- **Blackmail**: The art of threatening or bribing a target so they become too scared to act performs the same function in a social setting as Incapacitating Strike has in a physical fight. [***Change Defenses to Perception, Resolve, Investigation, Manipulation and Vice, with either Mind or Soul Damage***]

Martial Arts Strike

[6 Potential]

There are many styles of Martial Arts, and each style has its own collection of strikes, throws and counter-attacks. This Signature Attack represents a collection of different things the PC can do with their Martial Arts. Players should feel free to create, name and describe different physical actions for their Character when using this Signature Attack, but it needs only be purchased once; each time it is used in a Conflict it uses the stats listed, regardless of which description the player chooses.



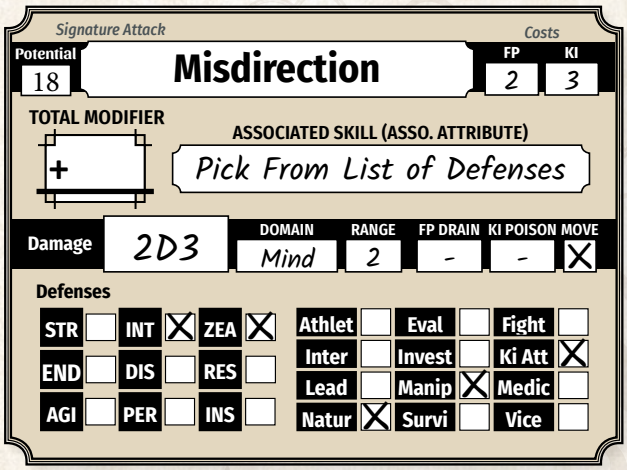
Other Theme Ideas

- **Dirty Fighting Expert**: This character knows how to lock joins, trip their opponent and throw sand in someone's eyes.
- **Experienced Communicator**: This Character is adept at convincing others to see their point of view. A friendly Character would choose Interaction as the Attribute used to make the Attack Check, while one who prefers to browbeat the opponent would choose Manipulation. [***Change Domain to Mind, Defense Attributes to Intelligence and Zeal, and Defense Skills to Interaction, Manipulation and Fighting***]

Misdirection

[18 Potential]

Misdirection is about knowing how to make the opponent do all the work to achieve whatever the Character wants. Some Characters use guile, trickery, and manipulation, while others actually provide rewards to the target that entice them more than something else this Character wants to direct them away from. Sometimes the misdirection itself is a misdirection, knowing the target will rail against it. This is a favorite trick of the masters of martial art schools, who send their students on an errand for one thing, while knowing the whole time the lesson to be learned is where the student will go in protest.



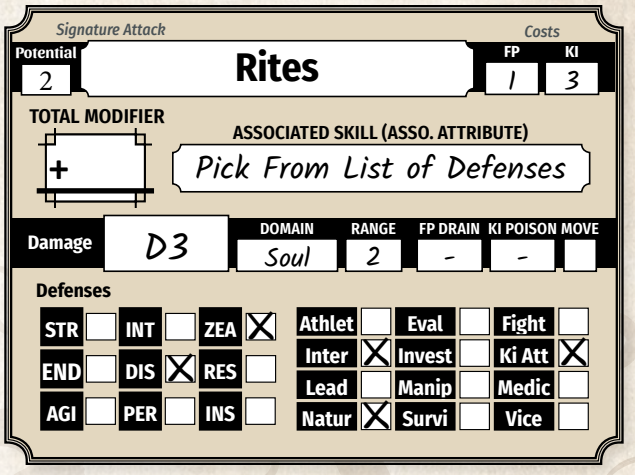
Other Theme Ideas

- **Degrade Terrain**: Elemental controlling abilities can be used for more than just direct damage. A wall of fire can force foes to move away from it, while a spray of water can collapse a river bank under a target's feet, sending them to be swept away by the current.
- **Goad**: By taunting an opponent, the PC can trick their foe into moving into the position they want them in. [***Use Manipulation as the Associated Skill, Change Intelligence to Discipline and Zeal to Resolve***]

Rites

[2 Potential]

Rites are formalized procedures that generate some effect, usually of the supernatural kind. There is an incredible power gained through tradition and respecting tradition, allowing even minor practitioners or the non-spiritually-attuned to sanctify an area or drive off minor spirits. The most famous rite was the one conducted by the previous Emperor, and the entire state of Nippon today is the result of the outcome of his Grand Rite Joining the Heavens and Earth.



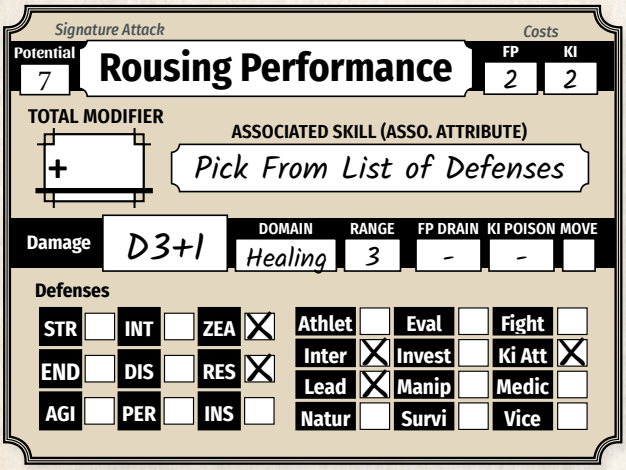
Other Theme Ideas

- **Magic Dart**: As a ranged, Ki-based Attack, Rites can be used to model more impromptu spells, or those that are faster to execute.
- **Zen Archery**: Many supernaturally attuned characters practice Archery as a form of controlling their own inner chaos. As a ranged attack that uses Ki, this Signature Attack makes a natural model for a Player who wants an Attack with more Range than Archery, at the cost of Ki each time it is used. [***Change Defenses to Agility, Discipline, Athletics, Fighting, and Ki Attunement, with Body Damage***]

Rousing Performance

[7 Potential]

Good performers know how to inspire and encourage a crowd or viewer by conveying their emotions. The greatest performers achieve this by also creating an empathic connection with their audience, sharing the experience and using the energy of everyone involved to create an even more powerful event. This kind of artistic connection can take many forms; song, dance, conversation, even a Conflict where the performer and targets are in opposition. This kind of mutual respect and agreed upon challenge forms the basis of the best rivalries, from the athletes who put their entire souls into a game, to the warring lords who both love the land and feel their own rule would serve the people the best.



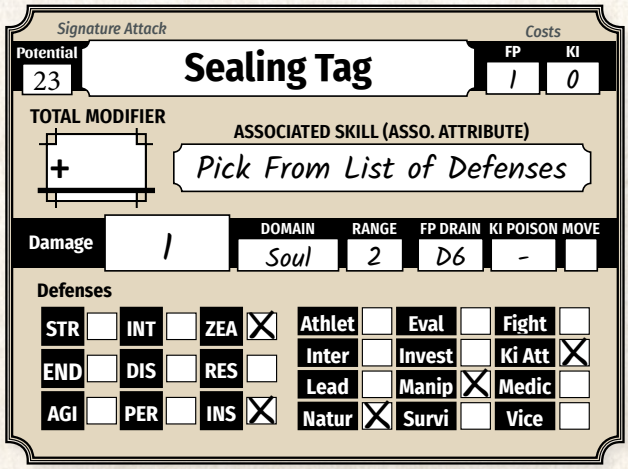
Other Theme Ideas

- **Oration**: Though there are benefits to involving an audience, sometimes a very specific experience would suffer from disruption. The best speeches are paced perfectly to evoke the intended emotions, requiring only the speaker's skillful delivery.
- **Alternate Ranged Magic**: Rousing Performance is a Ranged Attack that uses Ki, with slightly different stats than Elemental Blast (it does D3+1 instead of D6 damage, and costs less Potential because of its Ki Cost of 2). PCs who don't worry about exceeding their Ki Limit and looking to save some Potential can build a variety of ranged spells using Rousing Performance as a starting point.
[*Change Defenses to Endurance, Zeal, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinity, and Survival, with Soul Damage instead of Healing*]

Sealing Tag

[23 Potential]

Sealing Tags (also known as ***O-fuda***) are talismans that work similar to Rites in that they use the power of tradition and method to magnify spiritual energy. Tags are often slips of paper or cloth that contain a pre-cast spell, a source of luck, warding, or other common supernatural effects. Unlike Rites, these effects can be used at a later time, and can be given to others. Tags that seal away, purify, or protect the recipient from evil are the most famous kinds of tags, and are the ones most common folk associate with these minor magical items. But almost any effect the creator could perform with their own abilities can be imbued into a Tag. Particularly powerful enchantments that do more than damage a target are outside the scope of this Signature Attack, but players may wish to use the Crafting rules in Professions alongside this Attack to model a Character that fully specializes in creating magic charms.



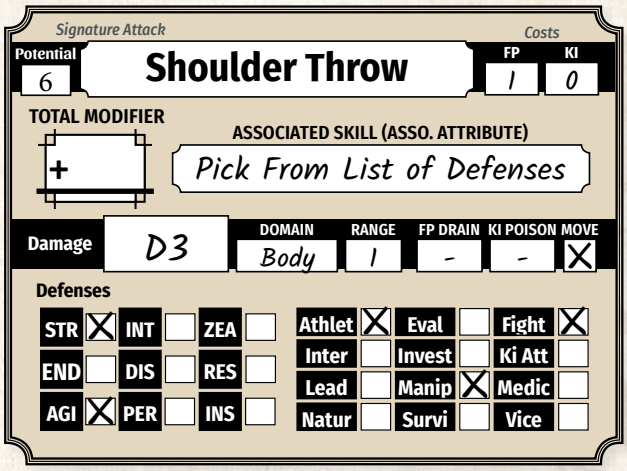
Other Theme Ideas

- **Disorienting Scent**: Many demi-yōkai possess a natural ability to tranquilize their foes with their scent, pollen, aura, or similar affect.
- **Arrow to the Knee**: Many archers are experts at using a single shot to disable a target before they can close to melee range. [*Change Defenses to Agility, Strength, Athletics, Fighting and Survival, with Body Damage*]

Shoulder Throw

[6 Potential]

The Shoulder Throw is only one of many martial throws that can be modeled with this Signature Attack. Many schools include at least some forms of this move, and there are even schools that predominantly use the power of the opponent's strikes as the source of strength for their own moves. While these throws lack the direct killing power of a nerve strike or maiming cut, they still cause pain to an opponent by slamming them into the ground or a nearby piece of terrain, and they make up for it with the tactical flexibility of changing the target's position in a Conflict



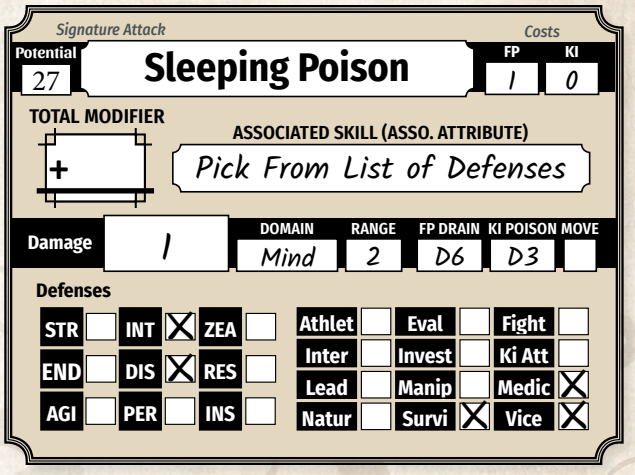
Other Theme Ideas

- **Hammer of Thunder**: An attack with a weapon or punch that strikes hard enough to stagger a target back can be built using this Attack.
- **Enough Rope...**: When facing headstrong or careless foes in a debate, a skilled conversationalist can steer in the direction of a potential trap for their foe, exciting the target to the point that they truly want to reveal a damaging piece of evidence. [***Change Defenses to Intelligence, Perception, Interaction, Manipulation, and Vice, with Mind Damage***]

Sleeping Poison

[27 Potential]

There are numerous ways to use foreign substances to inflict ailments on a target. Some are common, such as causing the target to fall into a deep sleep. Others are rare and carefully guarded formulas, such as the ability to make a victim confuse strangers for those they trust. Ninjas and Alchemists both master the combinations of poisons and powders that can be injected into a foe, while many yōkai perform very similar effects with magic or ki that affects the mind or body.



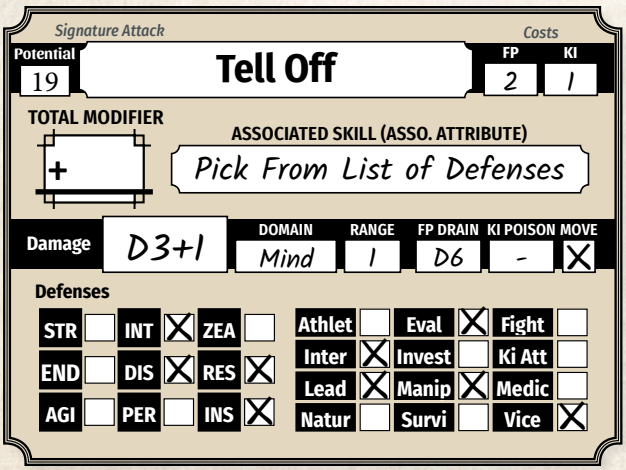
Other Theme Ideas

- **Knockout Strike**: There are certain points of the body that can be struck to quickly incapacitate a foe. Merciful Characters who often find themself facing opponents they don't want to seriously injure may want to take this Attack to model their ability to shut down a target by removing their FP and filling their Ki Pool.
- **No Good Options**: An advocate can direct a conversation so that when faced with a question, none of the ways the target could respond will come across in a positive light. [***Change Defenses to Discipline, Insight, Evaluate, Manipulation, and Vice***]

Tell Off

[19 Potential]

In many provinces in Nippon the concept of "face", or how one appears in society, can be very important at any level on the social ladder. Even many group oriented yōkai hold these beliefs, especially in the enigmatic kitsune clans. To be humiliated in front of others is a painful experience, and has a long lasting effect, lowering the target's future credibility. However, being able to insult a foe without coming across as base or uncivilized requires great skill, lest the user of Tell Off do more damage to themself than the target. This Signature Attack is very useful in campaigns with a lot of social Conflicts that draw on past encounters and shape future events through the actions of the PCs against their enemies.



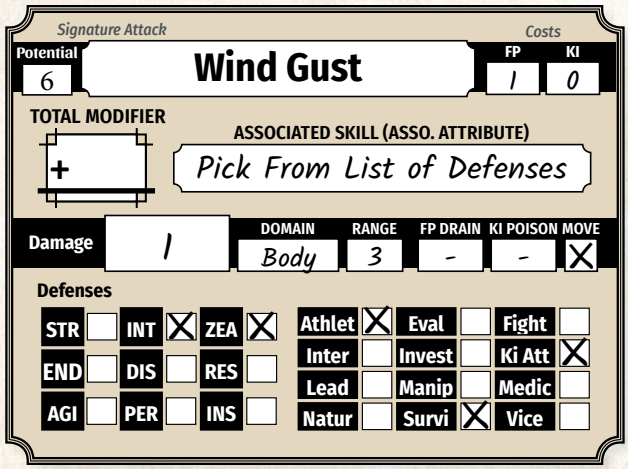
Other Theme Ideas

- **Illusionary Duplicates**: The Character surrounds the target with duplicates of themself, forcing the opponent to waste energy (FP) attempting to reveal which is the real Character.
- **Wrestling**: There are schools of martial arts that specialize in grappling and preventing the opponent from fighting back. Similar techniques are often studied by royal guards, who must contain potential threats to their lords, without doing lethal harm until the situation is fully understood. [***Change Defenses to Strength, Endurance, Discipline, Agility, Athletics, Fighting and Medicine, with Body Damage***]

Wind Gust

[6 Potential]

While there are many supernatural ways to push or pull a target, wind based sorcery is the one of the most common. These kinds of abilities rarely do much physical harm to the target, but they have the advantage of being able to be used at long range to move the target to a more advantageous position for the Character or their allies other Attack. It can also be used as a form of defense, pushing away foes that want to close to close quarters



Other Theme Ideas

- **Ragdoll Throw**: The PC actually lifts the opponent and tosses them with their great strength. Unlike a Martial Throw which uses the velocity of the victim, a Character using Ragdoll Throw simply lifts the opponent and hurls them with their own might.
- **Spirited Away**: Some members of The World Beyond are proficient at snatching members of the physical world, pulling them into their domain briefly before returning them. This experience can be quite harmful, or at least traumatic to the target. While it is often a challenging experience, that does not mean it is always to the detriment to people, just that prolonged exposure can change them at a fundamental level. Surviving being spirited away for long periods of time can leave people with greater spiritual attunement, giving them access to abilities beyond a normal human being, or a deeper understanding for the nature of people and the world. [***Change Intelligence to Resolve, Athletics to Manipulation, and Body Domain to Soul***]



Signature Attacks - Toolkit Rules

The rules provided here allow a Player to create a Signature Attack with any combination of values. Follow the "Steps to Create a Signature Attack" to find the total cost of the Signature Attack, which is paid with Potential like any other Ability in the game.

The name and description of how the Attack works in play are created by the Player for each Signature Attack created this way, in the same way as modifying a Premade Signature Attack.

Steps to Create a Signature Attack

- Choose the Damage for the Attack. Note the Base Cost. The Base Cost will be used to calculate the final Potential Cost of purchasing the Attack. It will be reduced in the final step after factoring in multipliers from other steps.
- If the Attack causes Ki Poison, FP Drain, or Moves the Target, add the listed cost for those effects to the Base Cost
- Choose the Domain of the Damage inflicted by the Attack (Body, Mind, or Soul), or make it a Healing Attack.
- Range modifies the Cost of the Attack with a multiplier. Multiply the Base Cost by the value listed in the Range Cost table for a new modified Cost.
- Repeat the same modification for the FP Cost, Ki Cost, and any additional Attributes or Skills you wish to include.
- Divide the final modified Cost by 5, and round up to the next whole number. This is the final cost in Potential needed to purchase the Signature Attack.

Damage Base Costs

Damage	1	D3	D3+1	D6	D3+2	2D3	D6+1	2D3+1	D6+2
Base Cost	0	10	30	50	75	75	100	130	160

FP Drain Base Costs

FP Drain	D3	D6
Base Cost	35	90

Ki Poison Base Costs

Ki Poison	D3	D6
Base Cost	15	65

Movement Base Costs

Move	No	Yes
Base Cost	0	20

Range Cost Multiplier

Range	Multiplier
1	1.0
2	1.25
3	1.5
4	1.75
5	2.25

FP Cost Multiplier

FP Cost	Multiplier
1	1.0
2	0.9
3	0.8
4	0.7
5	0.6
6	0.5
7	0.4

Ki Cost Multiplier

Ki	Multiplier
0	1.0
1	0.9
2	0.85
3	0.8
4	0.75
5	0.7
6	0.6

Defense Attributes Multiplier

Total Attributes	Multiplier
2 Attributes	1.0
3 Attributes	0.95
4 Attributes	0.9
5+ Attributes	0.85

Defense Skills Multiplier

Total Skills	Multiplier
3 Skills	1.0
4-5 Skills	0.9
6-7 Skills	0.8
8+ Skills	0.7

Building An Example Signature Attack Using the Toolkit Rules

To begin, decide on the basics of the Signature Attack, as well as how it will be used in play. This should be a general set of actions, rather than one very specific action. Try to create something that leaves options available to you during the game. For example, a collection of recipes and processes known by an Alchemist could be used to cure sick comrades, poison enemies, or disrupt a curse bestowed upon the Alchemist by the powdery dust of a giant moth yōkai in the dream realm of Mukai. In addition, the PC could make suggestions of other uses for the Attack in Conflicts that neither the GM or Player imagined at the start of the campaign, as long as they fit the basic premise. Perhaps the party is involved in an Extended Check representing chasing a mischievous badger yōkai known as a mujina and the Alchemist suggests spreading a gummy solution across a floor the mujina is likely to run across. In this case, the GM would allow the Player to use their Signature Attack with its normal rules (damage, range, etc), rather than requiring an Improvised Attack.

David is playing Konomi, the magic-using performer. He decides to create a Signature Attack that he defines as being sonic speed attacks made by manipulating Wind Magic executed by dance moves. He wants the Attack to be average damage, useable at a moderate distance, and stun the target.

He names it The Sonic Odori.

Choose the Effect of the Attack (Damage, Focus Drain, Ki Poison, Movement, or a combination). This gives you a base cost for the Attack. If the Attack has more than one of these choices, add the total cost for each together. Note that all Signature Attacks must do at least 1 Damage, but do not need to take Focus Point Drain, Ki Poison, or Movement.

David decides that the Sonic Odori will do D6 damage (base cost: 50) as well as inflict D3 Focus Point Drain to represent it's stun effect (an additional 35 cost). The base cost is 85.

Choose the Damage Domain (Body, Mind or Soul). Note that this does not affect the Cost, but all Attacks must have one, and only one, Damage Domain.

The Damage type could make sense as either Body (for the physical impact of the Wind) or Soul (representing both the magic involved, and the artistry of the dance itself). David decides the Sonic Odori will do Soul Damage.

If a Player wishes, they can choose to make the Damage of a Signature Attack Healing Damage, instead of one of the Domains. Healing is a special kind of Damage that only removes Damage already received. See the full Healing rules in the Conflict Chapter on page 110. Healing has the advantage of ignoring the Target's armor, but will not push the Tide Marker against the opposing side.

Next, choose the Range of the Attack. All Signature Attacks must have a minimum of 1 Range. If the Range is greater than one, multiply the cost of the Attack by the value listed in the Range table.

David wants the Signature Attack to be able to hit targets at a distance. He sees his Character as mostly fighting enemies up close (mostly from the Aggressive Zone), so he decides that a Range of 2 is enough. This will allow him to hit targets in the Enemy Aggressive and Balanced Zones without spending additional Focus Points. The modifier for Range: 2 is 1.25, so David multiplies 85 by 1.25 to get 106.25.

Repeat the same process as Range for the FP and Ki Cost of the Attack.

All Signature Attacks must cost at least 1 FP to use, and you may increase the FP cost to lower the overall modified cost to purchase the Attack. The FP Cost is paid every time the Character uses the Attack, so be aware that a high FP Cost will make a high damage Attack cost less Potential to purchase, but it may be hard to use multiple times in Conflicts without running out of FP.

All Signature Attacks default to a Ki Cost of 0 (which has a modifier of ×1 on the cost, or, in other words, does not change the purchase cost), but you can increase the Ki Cost in the same way as the FP Cost if you want an Attack that costs less Potential. Players that want to make a supernatural or spell-based Character may want to increase the Ki Cost to 1 or 2, especially if they are planning to increase their Ki Limit already. Some Characters may also want to create an additional Signature Attack that does very high damage at a very high Ki Cost. These "special" or "finisher" attacks will not be likely to be used every Round, but can give the PC an option when they need a quick spike of damage.

David feels that Konomi will constantly be performing her dances in conflicts, so he does not want to increase either the FP or Ki cost. This means he would multiply the current cost by 1.0, which results in no change.

All Signature Attacks have a list of Attributes and Skills that can be used to make Defend Checks against it. When you create the Attack, choose at least 2 Attributes and 3 Skills. Then choose one Attribute and Skill from that list that you will use to make your Attack Checks with.

Konomi has focused on Agility and Zeal, so either would make sense. Because David chose to define the Attack as Soul Damage, he chooses ZEA as the Attribute that he will use to make Checks with. He includes AGI as the second Attribute to represent the fact that it could be dodged by fast or skilled opponents.

Konomi performs her dances using Athletics, so David chooses that as the Skill that will be used in Attack Checks. Whenever Konomi uses the Sonic Odori, David rolls 3D6 and adds Konomi's ZEA and Athletics Modifiers in order to generate the total for the Check.

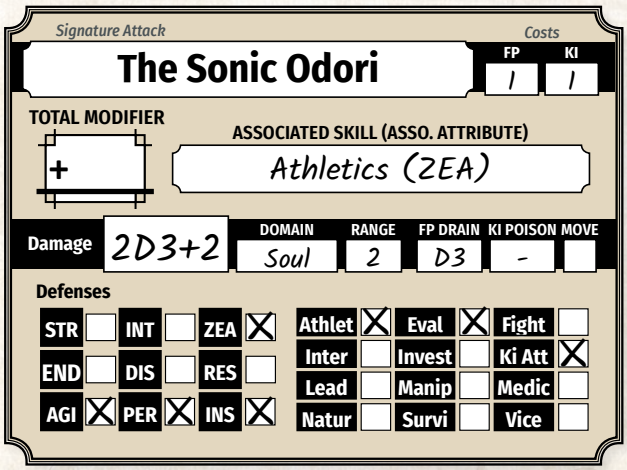
Because all Signature Attacks must include at least 3 Skills, David chooses to include Ki Attunement (because those with spiritual knowledge may be able to sense the attacks a split second before they hit) and Evaluate (to represent those who are able to understand the dance being able to predict which moves will come next).

(Optional) Choose additional Defense Attributes and Defense Skills to reduce the Potential Cost of the Attack. The more ways a target can Defend against the Attack, the less it costs.

David wishes to decrease the cost of the Attack, so he includes Perception and Insight as Attributes that may be used to Defend with. Checking the chart, David sees that a Signature Attack with 4 Attributes modifies its cost by 0.9. The cost becomes 106.25 times 0.9 which is 95.625.

The final step is to divide the modified cost by 5 and round up to the next whole number. This provides the final Potential Cost that is paid for the Signature Attack.

David divides 96.625 by 5 for a result of 19.125, and rounds up to 20. The Sonic Odori costs 20 Potential and has the following stats:



Defenses

When a Character is Attacked, they choose a Defend Action to use to make an Opposed Check against the Attacker. Any Character may use one of the two Universal Actions listed on page 120, and some Characters may have their own Defend Actions, such as the ***Deflect*** Technique.

When a Character uses the ***Simple Defense*** Universal Action, they may use one of their Skills if it is included on the list of Skills for the Signature Attack being used, as long as they have upgraded that Skill to a Defense Skill.

Upgrading Skills to Defenses

Any Skill can be upgraded be a Defense Skill. This costs 2 Potential on top of what was invested in the Skill (these 2 Potential do not count towards the total when determining the Modifier for that Skill). If a Character has not upgraded a Skill to a Defense Skill, they cannot use it with the Simple Defense Action, even it is listed on the Signature Attack.

Example

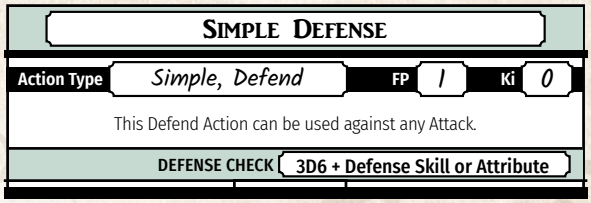
Hikaru has one Skill upgraded to a Defense Skill: Evaluate. She can use the Simple Defense Action against any Signature Attack that includes Evaluate. If an Attack listed Evaluate, Fighting and Survival, she would not be able to use the other two Skills, even if she had Modifiers in them, because they have not been upgraded.

Note that the Defender uses the Attribute that they have associated with the Skill, not the Attribute that the Attacker has associated, even if that Attribute is not one of the Defense Attributes of the Attack.

Example

Hideki uses Gale-Style Blade Arts as one of his Signature Attack which includes STR, AGI, Fighting, Survival, and Vice as possible Defenses. Yamazaru chooses to Defend with Survival. His Survival Skill is associated with Endurance, so he rolls 3D6 + End Modifier + Survival Modifier.

If the Defender has any additional Defend Actions (such as a Technique) with a Defend Check that uses a Skill on the Attack's list, they can use that Defend Action against the Attack, even if their actual Skill has not been upgraded to a Defense Skill. In this case they are using the other Action, not the above Skill Defense.



Defending with Attributes

If the target does not have any of the Defense Skills listed for the Attack, they can still use the ***Simple Defense*** Universal Action, but will not add any Skill Modifier to their Check. Instead that Character chooses one of the Attributes listed as Defenses for the Attack and Rolls 3D6 + their Modifier for the chosen Attribute.

Example

Yamazaru's Wild Arts Attack is defined with STR, AGI, Athletics, Fighting, and Nature Affinity. If a target does not have Athletics, Fighting, or Nature Affinity upgraded, they can choose to Defend with either STR or AGI.

Creating New Abilities

GMs and Players may want to build Characters that have specific Abilities not included in the game. Here are some tips for changing existing Abilities and creating new ones.

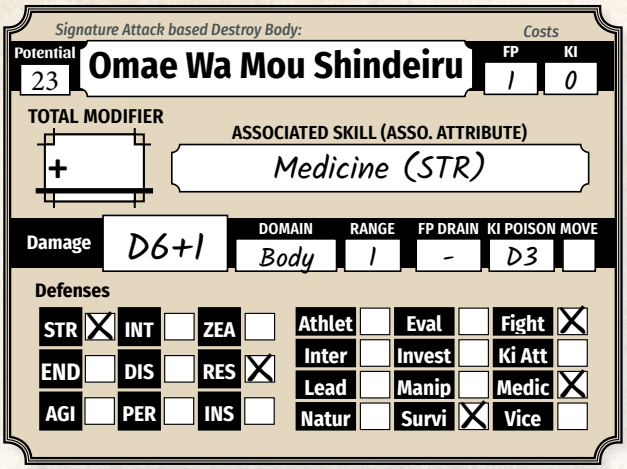
Re-theming Existing Abilities

The easiest way to create new Abilities is to use the rules for an existing Ability and change how the Character using it is described during play. If the Ability you want to model does not do anything mechanically different, any way of explaining the use of the Ability is fine. For example, one character may have Ki Well representing their own inner strength, while another could have a magical necklace that provides them strength to draw from. Even changing the idea behind the Ability is okay, as long as the mechanics are kept. For example, the ***Stealth*** Technique works by preventing the Character from being targeted. The examples for changing the theme of ***Stealth*** in the Techniques section all involve different ways to remain unseen. But a Character could use the rules for Stealth to represent a demi-yōkai that can step between worlds. In this case, the Character cannot be targeted because they are no longer in The World Here, not because they cannot be seen.

It is not acceptable to change the rules of how an Ability works. For example, a Player could not take the ***Ki Well*** Technique, which is cheaper than the ***Unyielding*** Technique, and then say that it increases Morale Threshold, instead of Ki Limit.

Example:
Re-theming "Destroy Body" to be Omae Wa Mou Shindeiru ("You Are Already Dead")

David is playing a powerful martial artist who knows how to strike secret vital points on the human body to elicit specific effects. He has already taken a Signature Attack that does Healing Damage to represent positive Ki manipulation, but wants to build an attack where his character strikes the opponent, then, after a delay, the opponent's body explodes. He could take the "Destroy Body" Signature Attack, rename it Omae Wa Mou Shindeiru, and describe how it works in play. Sometimes he may have his Character hit pressure points that cripple or paralyze a foe, and he may even declare to the opponent the finality of their own mortality before the target's body explodes (using the rules for resolving Winning a Conflict, see "Resolving Conflicts — After the Battle" on page 214).



Using Multiple Abilities Under a Single Theme

Some Players may want to model elaborate capabilities by combining multiple Abilities with the same theme.

For example, a Player that wants to train and command animal-like yōkai to battle for them could theme several of their Abilities around this idea. They could take a ranged Signature Attack to represent a Fire yōkai's flame breath, or a fast flying yōkai attacking the target from the sky. Next, they could take the ***Protect*** Technique, and theme it as being surrounded by the massive body of a rock-snake yōkai. The Player could take the ***Movement - Flight*** Technique to model riding on a flying yōkai to the nearest town, or have their Modifier in the Medicine skill represent the healing touch of their yōkai allies. It does not matter if the same yōkai is used in different Abilities, since the yōkai just provide the story flavor without restricting the rules for the Abilities.

Creating New Skills

Most activities can be covered by one of the existing Skills. GMs should feel free to rule that a Skill covers a relevant activity, even if it is not listed in the examples given in the Skill section.

Entirely new skills should only be created if the campaign focuses around them. In these cases, having a separate Skill allows different Characters to have varying

levels of Ability, which creates separation between experts and common folk, a distinction that helps flesh out the campaign world during the story.

Example

In most campaigns, the various aspects of Imperial Court Hearings can be covered with either the Interaction or Manipulation Skills. However, if Courtly Intrigue is the focus of a Campaign, the GM may want to create a skill for Etiquette, which allows the PCs to use their other Skills in Court settings without (overtly) offending anyone. The Character may still need to use Investigation to gather evidence to support their proposals, make Manipulation Checks to argue with detractors, and make Perception Checks to notice the 'tell' when that corrupt noble lies, but the result of their Etiquette Checks will prevent them from making lifelong enemies, or simply being thrown out of the court for rudeness before they can finish their argument.

Creating New Katas

GMs can create new Katas that represent common archetypes that exist in their campaign world. A martial arts themed Campaign may want to have a special Kata for the Character's school, so that all students have access to a discount on the core Abilities valued by that school.

Players should not be allowed to create Katas, as this would basically allow them to take any Attributes and Skills they want at a discount.

Creating Abilities With New Rules

If no existing Abilities allow a Character to perform something desired, the GM could create an entirely new Ability. A complete set of rules for doing this is outside the scope of the book, but you can use existing Abilities as a starting point. To find the Potential cost of an Ability, look at existing ones that have similar effects. If a new Ability combines two or more existing Abilities, it will need to be more expensive than the sum of the two to represent the fact that it allows a Character to do multiple things at once.

Example: Creating Unique Attack Rules for Omae Wa Mou Shindeiru ("You Are Already Dead")

In the example under the "Re-theming Existing Abilities" section, David decides he would like the Attack to have a different mechanical effect during play, rather than just re-theming an existing Attack. He tells the GM that he would like for the Attack to inflict any Tide Damage it would cause after everyone has acted in the Round.

The GM decides this functions similar to a normal attack, along with the ***Tactics*** Technique, which modifies initiative order. While this use of the Signature Attack provides less overall options than the three listed in Tactics, it can be used in the same Action as an Attack, and allows the PCs to guarantee that Damage will happen at the end of a Round, right before the End of Round Tide Break, which is quite powerful. The GM feels this should be a little more expensive than buying the ***Tactics*** Technique. Tactics costs 2 Potential per use in a Conflict. Since this Signature Attack can be reused every Round if David wants, the GM feels that this should be at least as expensive as being able to use Tactics three times, which is an average number of Rounds the GM expects for most Conflicts. The GM allows David to build the Signature Attack using the following rules added to whatever parameters (Damage, Range, etc) David builds it with.

You Are Already Dead: Rules

If this Attack Succeeds, the Player can choose to delay the Damage until the end of the Round. Calculate the damage normally (reduce by armor, increase by MoS, etc) at the time of the Attack, but do not move the Tide Marker until the Round is about to end (all Characters have acted, no one wishes to Push, etc), then apply this damage right before the end of turn Break.

Potential Cost: Increase the cost of this Signature Attack by 7 Potential

Signature Attack Based on Destroy Body: — *Costs*

Potential	Omae Wa Mou Shindeiru	FP	KI
30		1	0

TOTAL MODIFIER: +

ASSOCIATED SKILL (ASSO. ATTRIBUTE): Medicine (STR)

Damage	DOMAIN	RANGE	FP DRAIN	KI POISON	MOVE
D6+1	Body	1	-	D3	

If this Attack Succeeds, the Player can choose to delay the Damage until the end of the Round. Do not move the Tide Marker until the the Round is about to end, then apply this damage right before the end of turn Break.

Defenses

STR	X	INT		ZEA		Athlet		Eval		Fight	X
END		DIS		RES	X	Inter		Invest		Ki Att	
AGI		PER		INS		Lead		Manip		Medic	X
						Natur		Survi	X	Vice	

Professions

Professions are a toolbox of options that Players can use to define the things that their Characters specialize in. Professions do not cost Potential, and are tracked by the Mastery Level of the Profession, which determines how many options the Player can choose to take from the lists below.

Mastery Level

Mastery Level measures how long a Character has been practicing their trade. The GM sets the Mastery Level at the start of a new campaign to model how experienced and competent the PCs are. All PCs begin with the same Mastery Level, and advance at the same rate. Mastery Level increases as the party adventures and gains experience in aspects of their own Professions.

Starting Mastery Level

For campaigns modeled around the default PC power level, it is recommended that GMs begin PCs at Mastery Level 4. This gives them enough choice of benefits to customize their Characters, even if there is some overlap between Professions. For example, in a group where there is both a soldier and a samurai, both of these Characters could take benefits related to physical combat, but each would function differently depending on which benefits were chosen.

> Players begin with 4 Mastery Points. GMs can adjust this to simulate different styles of campaign.

Increasing Mastery Level

See the "Profession Progression" on page 233 for more information on when a GM may want to reward PCs with increased Mastery Level. In general, any time the party accomplishes a major goal or the party members all grow as individuals, Mastery Level is increased by 1.

Using Professions in Play

Professions are a way for Players to declare what their Characters are best at, and keep them from failing at these activities when they realistically should never do so. Professions and their Benefits are "story permission" for important moments in the game where a Character would succeed for sure in a movie, book, manga, etc.

The basic rules of Mysteries of the Yōkai encourage GMs to avoid slowing down play with Checks and other rules-based resolution in trivial cases. For example, no Character should ever have to make a Strength Check to move a chair across a room. Professions are a step up from these rules, allowing certain Characters to bypass mechanical resolution related to their individual strengths.

Example

Most mundane humans cannot sense the supernatural, even though it could be all around them in their daily life. PCs, being higher caliber than most NPCs, should generally be given a chance to make Checks to find and interact with the supernatural. However, a mystic sage or an ascetic martial artist may be defined with particularly strong ties to the supernatural. In these cases, the Player can use Profession benefits to allow them to always be aware of the supernatural without needing to make a Check.

Mastery Points

A Character has a total of 1 Mastery Point for each level of Mastery. These are spent on Benefits. Beginning Characters spend all of their Starting Mastery Level Points before the game begins. Additional Mastery Points are spent as they are gained during play.

Profession Benefits

For each Mastery Level a Character has, the layer allocates one Mastery Point into a Benefit listed below. GMs can decide if Players are allowed to change their allocation of Mastery Points during a campaign. In general, this would require a dedicated focus on a Character's profession in play. After enough time is spent "re-training", they could change one or more Mastery Point choices.

Ranked Benefits

Some Benefits are listed as "ranked". In these cases, spending more than one Mastery Point will provide additional benefits.

Multiple Professions

The ***Professional*** Technique allows Players to purchase additional Professions for their Character. Each Profession has the same Mastery Level, and Mastery Points are not spread between Professions; each has its own pool to spend.

Example

David is playing a merchant, Keiko, who has ended up embroiled in many political scandals in the last few years. Keiko is Mastery Level 5, with her original Profession defined as Merchant. David adds a new Profession, "Political Manipulator", which is also Mastery Level 5, and has 5 Mastery Points to spend on the new Profession.

What is Allowed as a Profession?

The exact constraints of a Profession are left to the Players and GMs to discuss among themselves. A few rough guidelines are listed here to get playgroups thinking, but you should feel free to change them to fit the genre and intended power level of your Campaign.

A Profession should be one distinctly defined occupation or specialty.

GMs should carefully scrutinize very vague or general Professions such as "Wanderer" or "Hero". In these cases, the GM and Player should to talk about what the Player would like to be able to do with their Profession and try to find a more specific version of the Profession that fits the Player's concept without being overly broad.

For example: instead of "Wanderer", the Player could tell the GM they want to play a traveling Ronin that helps out others whenever they are in distress. "Ronin Champion of the People" would be a much clearer Profession, allow the Player to use their Benefits whenever they are helping others, or surviving alone on the road. Unlike the general "Wanderer", this Profession wouldn't apply to things like finding the underground elements of a new city, hunting and foraging (the Character was a Ronin, so grew up with the provisions of their Lord's domain before losing their status), or the charismatic aspects of a wandering salesman or charlatan.

Professions do not necessarily guarantee success in Conflicts.

Because Conflicts model situations where even professionals could falter, the principle that a Profession guarantees a basic level of success are relaxed.

The Conflict rules are used when the GM wants to track something where success and failure should come down to more than a couple dice rolls. Because of this, even heroes of legend can find themselves in situations where they must use everything they have to succeed. In these cases, Players will still need to use their Skills and Techniques as normal, but the GM should take Professions into consideration when describing outcomes of Actions and the overall Conflict.

For example, even if a Character makes a terrible roll on an Attack Check, they will not stab themselves with their own weapon or forget the Emperor's name in a Court Hearing. Professionals may not achieve their goals when they fail, but they will fail with dignity and uphold their reputations as shining examples of their trade.

Kasei:
Master Artist of Brush and Flame

Kasei is a local artist who specializes in the medium of charcoal and ashen drawings. Those who buy her pictures often do so because they invoke deep feelings in the viewer. Kasei's secret, and the source of her artistic handle, named for the Fire Star, comes from her particular method of gathering her pigments. Kasei travels to a location she finds fascinating, spending time there to not only gather materials, but to experience the location until it feels comfortable to her. From there, she burns the materials she has gathered with her ki-enhanced flame magic. The combination of the native ingredients and her own artistic ki creates ash and charcoal that actually do contain an essence of the location. From there, her skills with brush, pen and hand allow her to recreate the location from memory as clearly as if she had still been seeing it while drawing. The final result is a unique scroll or canvas that makes the viewer feel nostalgia for the location if they have been there, or the original sense of wonder if they have not.

List of Profession Benefits

Contacts (Ranked) 90
Craft (Ranked) 90
Good Reputation 92
Knowledge (Ranked) 92
Professional Quality (Ranked) 93
Tools of the Trade 93

Profession Benefits

Contacts (Ranked)

The Contacts Benefit allows the Player to introduce a friendly NPC into the story during the course of the game. The Player chooses the general benefit that a Contact will provide, and the GM generates the details with respect to the needs of the story at the time. Particularly powerful or resourceful NPCs may not be immediately available, or may require some kind of service or favor in return for what the PC asks of them.

Examples

A diplomat Character may use a Contact to gain an audience with a hostile enemy general or lord. In this case, the GM could define the Contact as someone higher up in the enemy's command structure, who would later call upon the Character to provide an audience with the Character's own superiors.

A PC Bureau Agent requests access to a powerful warding talisman from the Bureau. The Player asks the GM if it would be acceptable to have a Contact that is a fellow Agent in the Relics department, who would sneak the talisman out for the PC to use and then return. The GM allows this definition of the Contact, but says that the Contact, needing to be careful to not be caught and lose their position, will take several days to provide the Talisman, and the PC must return it within 2 days.

A party of generally down-and-out traveling Wuxia heroes spend their days going from town to town, saving the helpless and defeating the corrupt. One of the Players decides to create a traveling ramen salesman that follows the party around, providing them with food whenever they run out of money, even in the middle of nowhere.

Benefits Provided by Contacts

For each rank of Contacts, the PC may call upon one Contact per session.

Craft (Ranked)

Craft allows the Character to create goods or services that provide bonus Modifiers. For every Rank of Craft, the Character has a pool of points to spend on creating things that are related to their Profession. The exact details of what is created are up to the Player, but should fit both the Profession and the Modifiers provided. For example, a metalsmith could create a weapon that provides +1 to Attack Checks, or a shrine maiden could protect a Character with a charm that provides them with a +1 to Defend Checks.

Craft Points

For every rank of Craft, the Player has 3 Craft Points to use during a session. Using the Craft Point Table, the Player can build specific objects or otherwise define what their Character does to create the Modifiers.

Things created in this way last for the duration of the session, and the Craft Points cannot be spent again until the next session. A GM may allow a Player to break down, "recycle", or otherwise remove a created Modifier to regain the Craft Points and re-use them, but Craft Points can never be reallocated as long as they are providing a Modifier.

Any crafted Modifier can be given to and used by other Characters. Only one Character can benefit from that Modifier at the same time (except in the case of the 6-cost Modifier, which affects a related group, such as all members of a city watch, or all animals on one ranch).

Note that Modifiers from Crafted items do not stack with other Crafted items (even those created by other Characters) that provide the same Benefit. A Character will only ever be able to gain +1 to their Skill Modifier, no matter how many high quality tools they have, or inspiring lunches they eat.

Crafting Items That Provide No Modifiers

Any Character with at least one Mastery Point spent on Craft can create goods or services that provide no game Modifiers. Using the Benefit in this way requires the raw resources needed for whatever is being crafted, along with time. This use of Craft can allow the Character to make a better living than the basic rules define (see "Wealth and Items — Tangible Rewards" on page 233 for more on money and items). This can also be used to craft temporary solutions to problems; however, these items will not remain after the current session. For example, a metalsmith PC could outfit a town of peasants with arms and armor to defend themselves from an attack, but these would stop being effective after the story ended; the town could not then be used to provide the party with volunteer soldiers in the future.

Crafted Items use the same rules for Modifiers as Abilities (see "Stacking Ability Modifiers" on page 104). This means that a Character can only ever gain a maximum of +1 to any Ability from Crafted Items, even if they have multiple items, or items created by different Characters.

If an example below lists more than one bonus, choose which one is provided. Adding another bonus requires spending that many Craft Points again.

Craft Point Cost	Benefits and Examples
1	+1 to a specific Skill Check (including Signature Attacks and Defend Checks), defined at the time of creation. *A set of farm tools that provides +1 on Nature Affinity Checks.*
2	+1 to all Checks using one specific Attribute, chosen at the time of creation. *A nutritious meal that provides a Character who eats it with +1 to all Endurance Checks.* +1 to all Skill Checks that are in any way related to the Crafting Character's Profession. *A detailed set of notes created by an Investigator that provides the user with +1 to Investigation, +1 to Medicine when related to tasks that are grouped under the modern term of forensics, and +1 to Evaluate Checks made to examine a potential murder weapon.*
3	+1 to any Damage when used for Improvised Attacks. The Type of the Damage is based on the item or definition of the Modifier. *A walking staff created from a limb of a supernatural tree, broken off by a lightning strike. Does +1 Soul Damage.*
4	+1 to any Skill Checks (including Defend Checks) or Attacks made with Signature Attacks. *An arrangement of good fortune created by a master of Feng Shui that provides anyone working within the building with a +1 to all Skill Checks.* +1 to any Damage for one of the Character's Signature Attacks (chosen when created). *Crafting a quality weapon used with a Signature Attack that uses weapons or Martial Arts.*
6	+1 to a specific Skill, determined at the time of creation, that can be used by a group of related individuals. *High quality armor created for the entire PC party that provides +1 to Fighting Checks.*
8	+1 to all Attribute Checks. Note that this only applies to Attribute Checks, not any other Check that uses a Character's Attribute Modifier in that Check *A rare alchemical salve that enhances the body, mind, and soul of the user.*
12	Choose any number of Attributes or Skills. The item crafted provides a +1 to all of those Abilities. While a Character is using this item, they must pay a Ki Maintain cost equal to half of the number of Abilities (rounded up) chosen when the item was created. *Example: Sazae creates a set of clothing with hidden pockets and built in weapons. Sazae's Player chooses Agility, Strength, Fighting, Survival and Vice when the item is created. A Character who wears the clothing adds +1 to those Abilities, but must pay a Ki Maintain cost of 3 (the Character counts as having 3 Ki in their Ki Pool at all times).*

Good Reputation

Having the Good Reputation Benefit means this PC will always be recognized by other Characters in their profession. Initially, they will receive a favorable response, though any interaction with these NPCs will alter their perception of the PC as usual. This does not mean that NPCs will do what the Character wants, but they will at least strongly consider any requests. Hostile or rival NPCs will show the PC respect, though they will still oppose them.

Examples

This is a common benefit for PCs playing Bureau Agents. Having a good reputation makes the life of an agent much easier, and prevents them from wasting time having to establish their credentials before getting down to business. Whether the PC is defined as a straight-laced by-the-book agent who toes the line, or a maverick who breaks rules at a whim, if the character has a Good Reputation, everyone will know that they get things done, and will do what they can to help out, or at least get out of the Character's way.

A traveling master chef would always be able to make use of a local inn or community kitchen, as the NPCs that work there would be so happy to have a famous celebrity known to have cooked there. They provide free ingredients to the PC, but will probably want at least some of the produced food, and the PCs may need to dine with the normal evening's patrons.

A PC blademaster and their party come across an NPC mercenary who prides himself on being a master of the axe in combat. The party is defeated, and the mercenary decides to take the party's supplies as a trophy. However, he allows the blademaster to keep their weapon as a sign of respect.

Knowledge (Ranked)

Knowledge represents the things that any professional would be aware of without needing to make a Check to remember it. A samurai with Knowledge would know how to run an estate, be aware of any of their lord's laws that might affect their choices, and be able to lead their vassals. A hunter with Knowledge would know how to track animals without needing the Survival or Nature Affinity Skills, know how to prepare food, and be aware of the effects of seasonal changes in their natural environments.

All Benefits are cumulative, so a Character continues to have all the previous abilities when increasing the number of ranks invested in Knowledge

Ranks	Benefits and Examples
1	The Character is able to perform all activities related to their Profession in common situations without needing to make Checks. *A baker could combine ingredients and produce a nice meal.* *A demi-yōkai hiding in human culture would know common social dos and don'ts.* *A soldier would be able to maintain their equipment, recognize officers, and be aware of the rules and restrictions that bound them.*
2	The Character knows particularly obscure facts related to important aspects of their Profession. *A metalsmith would instantly recognize a master quality weapon from another smith.* *A sage specializing in yōkai would know all the major kami of an area, even if they had not been there before.*
3	The Character is aware of almost any information related to their Profession, even carefully guarded trade secrets or "forbidden" lore. The Character may also be particularly skilled in creating new and untested methods of solving problems by using seemingly unrelated professional knowledge. *The Emperor's advisor is aware of events happening within the court, even ones that the Emperor himself may not be fully aware of.* *An ancient master of magical knowledge may understand how dark magic and blights work, even if the Character does not use them personally.* *An investigator with a set of unrelated clues could create an unorthodox method of linking the clues together to prove a theory.*

Professional Quality (Ranked)

The results of a Professional tend to outweigh even a lucky amateur. There are two benefits provided by Professional Quality, which depend on how many Mastery Points have been spent. If the Character is performing some activity that the GM deems doesn't need a Check (see the main rules for Professions at the beginning of the "Professions" section), they are considered to have a Margin of Success, instead of simply succeeding. If the Character still needs to make a Check, the Player can roll the dice and choose to replace the roll value with the listed value, as if they had rolled that number on the dice instead. This value is further modified as normal, such as with Attributes, Skills, Situational and other Modifiers.

Ranks	Margin of Success	Dice Roll Replacement
1	0	11
2	1	12
3	1	13
4	2	13
5	2	14
6	2	14
7	3	15

Tools of the Trade

The Character is always assumed to have any common items required to perform their Profession. In this case, "common" means anything that does not provide a Modifier to Checks, Damage, or other game mechanics. These items cannot be sold, traded, or given away to other Characters. In the case of large or immobile objects, the Character may not be able to take them on adventures, but will always have a place they can return to where they can use them.

Example

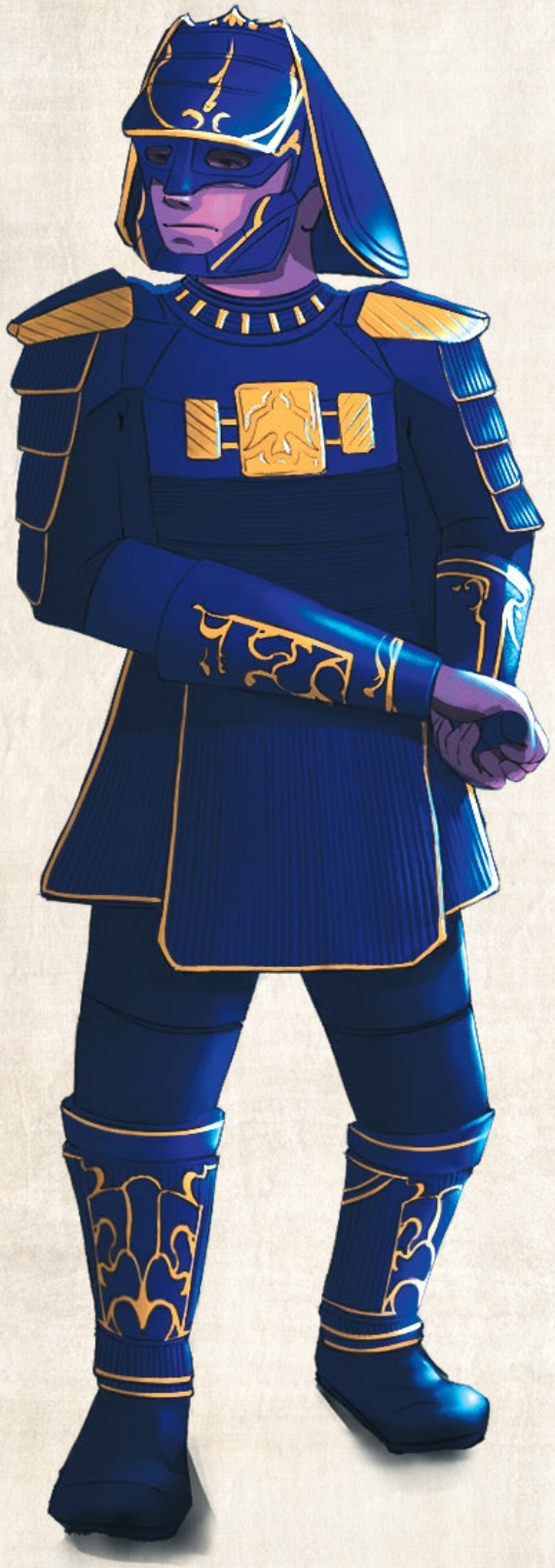
A Character with a Profession of metalsmith will always have tools to make minor repairs, even when away from home. They would always have access to a forge and spare metal, but may be required to return to a town or similar location before making use of these.

Basic Tools vs Tools of Trade

Characters are always assumed to have the basic items or resources necessary to perform Skills and other Abilities the Character possesses. Tools of the Trade increases the quality and range of these resources to include anything covered by the Character's Profession. For example, a detective checking a crime scene with the Investigation Skill finds a mysterious powder on a victim. The Character would be able to take the powder away from the scene in a sealed tube for later study (as part of the Skill). If that Character had a Profession that applied (such as Technical Detective or Investigative Alchemist) with the Tools of the Trade Benefit, they would also have access to a laboratory and chemicals that would allow them to create an antidote or counter-agent, recreate the substance, or perform experiments on it.

Character Creation Example:

Building Hideki



Richard is building Hideki, a samurai Character. Richard has a basic idea for the Character; Hideki was born into a famous family, but wants to make a name for himself independent of his clan. After looking through the Abilities sections, Richard also knows he wants to have a good mix of Conflict based options and Skills.

Since Hideki should be good at physical combat, Richard looks through the Katas for some that boost Strength, Endurance and Agility, keeping an eye out for ones that also offer interesting Skills.

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attr. Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

The Soldier Kata provides STR and END, as well as the Fighting, Leadership and Medicine Skills. While Medicine doesn't exactly fit Hideki's upbringing, it makes sense to Richard that someone who travels a lot would know how to take care of minor wounds, so he purchases the Soldier Kata three times for 24 Potential (8 each). This provides Hideki a total of 30 points of Potential: 6 points in each. Looking at the Attribute Chart, this means that Hideki will gain a +2 Modifier to STR and END Checks during play.

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

Looking at the Skill Chart, 6 Potential provides a +2 Modifier to a Skill (reached for having 5 or more), but 10 Potential is required for a +3. Since the Katas taken so far have raised Fighting to 6 already, Richard looks for another Kata that increases Fighting, which he plans to use regularly. The Wanderer Kata provides STR, END, Athletics, Evaluate, and Fighting.

All of these make sense for Hideki, but Richard feels that Evaluate might be a little more studious than he feels Hideki is. In this case, he chooses to Specialize his Evaluate to be focused on Military Tactics. Whenever Hideki makes an Evaluate Check for something related to Military Tactics (such as fighting other soldiers, scouting an enemy position or making sure his fellow Bureau Agents have enough supplies when they set out) he will receive a +2 to the Check, but in other cases

(such as helping another Character investigate a crime scene or trying to analyze a particular Martial Arts School's style), he will have to modify the Check by -1.

SOLDIER 兵士 (Heishi)

Attributes	Potential
Endurance	2
Strength	2
Skills	**Potential**
Fighting	2
Leadership	2
Medicine	2

WANDERER 侠客 (Kyōkaku)

Attributes	Potential
Endurance	2
Strength	2
Skills	**Potential**
Athletics	2
Evaluate	2
Fighting	2

Richard takes the Wanderer Kata twice for another 16 Potential. He has spent 40 of his 100 Potential, and has gained the following total investments: 10 in STR and END, 10 in Fighting, 6 in Leadership and Medicine, and 4 in Evaluate and Athletics. Skills provide a +2 Modifier when 5 Potential has been invested, and +3 when 10 has been invested. Hideki will have a +3 when making STR and END Checks. Richard chooses to associate STR with Fighting Athletics, and Evaluate. His Fighting Modifier is +3, so he will receive +6 Total Modifier whenever he makes Fighting Checks (+3 for Fighting and +3 for STR). Athletics and Evaluate are only +2, so will provides a Total Modifier of +5 to each of them (+2 for Skill and +3 for STR). Medicine can be Associated with Endurance, so Hideki will have a +5 for Medicine Checks as well.

Techniques

Richard wants to make sure Hideki has several useful combat Abilities next, since he has already spent 40 Potential. He likes the mechanics for ***Overwhelming Force***, because it increases his damage when he succeeds at Checks, which he feels represents the superior training of a samurai.

Leadership can only be associated with Insight, Resolve or Zeal, but each Character can use the ***Unconventional*** Technique to change how Abilities are used. Looking at the rules for ***Unconventional*** (see page 61), Richard notes that the first time this is purchased for any Character, it costs 0 Potential, and then costs more for further changes. Richard chooses to Associate Strength with Leadership, providing a Total Modifier of +5 (+2 Leadership and +3 Strength).

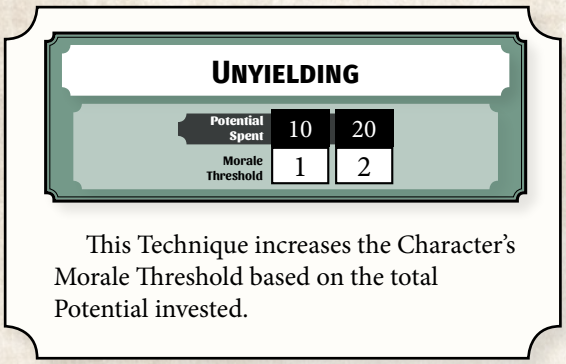
OVERWHELMING FORCE — Potential Cost 3

Action Type *Simple, Special* — FP 0 — Ki 2

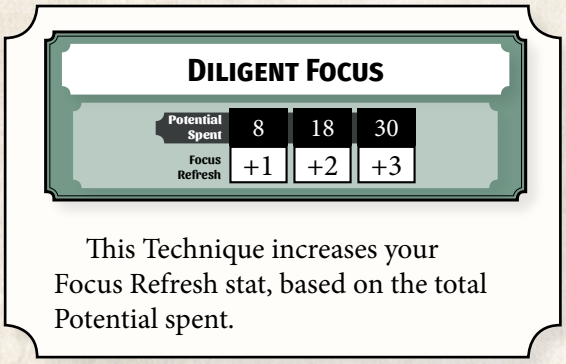
When you use an Attack Action, pay for the costs of this Technique, if your Attack Check succeeds, Your MoS is increased to being +1 for each 2 points you succeed by, instead of +1 for every 3.

Techniques give example names and lore explanations, but Players should define how exactly each Character uses them. Richard defines his ***Overwhelming Force*** as "Tempest Blade Style", and tells the GM that this is Hideki's personal take on the traditional style of his Clan, and represents not only training, but the sheer force of the strength Hideki brings to bare with his blade. ***Overwhelming Force*** costs 3 Potential.

Continuing to take combat Abilities, Richard next purchases ***Unyielding*** and ***Diligent Focus***, investing enough Potential in each to gain a +1 benefit. For ***Unyielding***, this costs 10 Potential to raise Hideki's Morale Threshold by 1 to a total of 4, making it very hard to force Hideki out of Conflicts. It costs 8 Potential to raise ***Diligent Focus*** by 1, increasing Focus Refresh to 4. Hideki will begin normal Conflicts with 12 Focus Points (three times his FR stat) and will gain 4 Focus Points each Round, giving Richard plenty to spend on both Attacks and Defend actions. Richard doesn't want to define these as specific named Techniques, but instead tells the GM they represent Hideki's dedication and drive, as well as his goal to prove himself in battle.



This Technique increases the Character's Morale Threshold based on the total Potential invested.



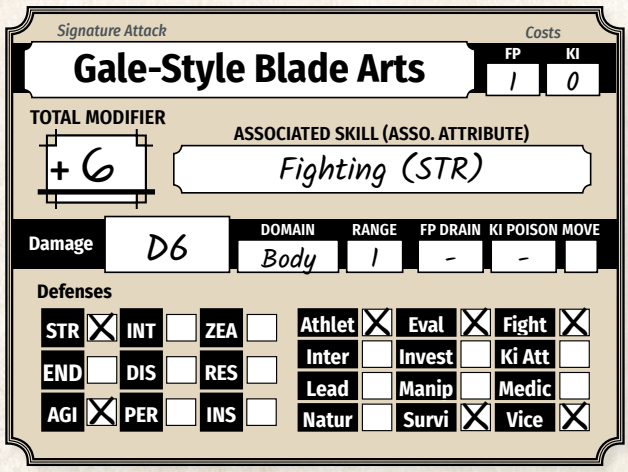
This Technique increases your Focus Refresh stat, based on the total Potential spent.

Armor is important for Hideki, both because it is a mainstay of samurai iconography and because Richard wants to be able to engage in Conflicts as a regular part of the campaign. ***Armor*** is purchased by choosing a value for each Domain (Body, Mind, and Soul) and adding the total costs together. Richard decides that a +3 in Body makes the most sense for the heavy metal armor Hideki had custom made by his clan's Blacksmith, but he doesn't want to completely ignore the other two domains. Talking with the GM, he asks if he can define a story in Hideki's past before the campaign begins where he saved a group of kodama from a karikage. The grateful little yōkai created a special charm from the wood of the most ancient tree in their forest, which provides Hideki with mental and spiritual protection. The GM feels this is a good idea; not only does it justify the Armor stats, it creates a plot point that can be brought up again later in the story of the PCs ever re-visit that forest. Richard purchases a total Armor value of 3/1/1, which costs (12 + 2 + 2) 16 Potential.

Signature Attack

Richard wants Hideki's Signature Attack to be high damage, but mostly straightforward. It will not inflict Focus Point drain or Ki Poison, nor will it move the target around the battlefield. He chooses D6 as the damage value for the attack, and leaves the Range at 1 because he wants it to represent Hideki's melee abilities. Richard names the Attack "Gale-Style Blade Arts", and tells the GM that this represents the traditional form of his clan's style. Since the ***Overwhelming Force*** has been themed to be Hideki's own personal take on his family's sword arts, his normal Signature Attack represents his lifetime of training in their traditional style, even if it is less suited to his strengths.

Each Signature Attack requires a Player to choose at least 2 Attributes and 3 Skills that can be used to Defend against it. One each of the Attributes and Skills will be used to make Checks with the Attack. Richard chooses Strength and Fighting for the Check, whenever Hideki uses Gale-Style Blade Arts, Richard will roll 3D6 and add +6 to the roll (+3 for Strength and +3 for Fighting). He chooses the second Attribute to be AGI, since he feels particularly quick or nimble Character could avoid Hideki's blade. For the same reason, he chooses Athletics as the second Skill, and Evaluate for the third (representing those who can read his movements and adapt accordingly). In order to reduce the cost of the Signature Attack a little, Richard chooses to add two more Skills to the list of Defenses. The first is Survival; he feels that opponents who have learned to endure the ravages of nature could theoretically better endure the multiple cuts he envisions Gale-Style inflicting. Finally, he chooses Vice, and explains to the GM that Hideki is a noble Character at heart; he is unlikely to fight dirty, and this can be taken advantage of by less honorable Characters. The total cost for this Signature Attack is 9 Potential (see the rules for building "Signature Attacks and Upgraded Defenses" on page 65).



Defenses

Hideki is an experienced combatant, so it makes sense that he has learned to defend himself. Richard upgrades both Athletics and Fighting into Defense Skills, which costs 4 Potential.

Final Touches

So far, Richard has spent 90 Potential of his initial 100. With his remaining 10, Richard wants to diversify Hideki a little, feeling that he is too shallow as just a combat specialist. Since Hideki is supposed to be a samurai, Richard spends 5 Potential on Interaction and an additional 1 on ***Unconventional*** to associate it with Strength. Hideki has learned how to work with his vassals and visiting nobles, but his methods tend to be more straightforward (some might say brutish, though not to his face), and even when he is polite, it comes across that Hideki is firmly grounded in the physical world, represented by the Associated Attribute. When Hideki makes Interaction Checks, he adds +5 (+2 for Skill, +3 for STR). This brings the total to 96.

Finally, Richard purchases the ***Fortune's Favor*** Technique once for 2 Potential. This will allow him to make two rerolls per scene or Conflict. This leaves Richard with 2 remaining Potential saved when the campaign begins, which can be used when he has earned more to purchase or increase more Abilities.

Profession

Because Richard has focused Hideki's creation on how he wants to play him in the game, he ended up spending very little Potential on the non-combat aspects of a samurai, such as running an estate, interacting with other clans and powerful members of the royal court, or the kinds of impact a traveling noble has on others. Richard defines Hideki's Profession as "Wandering Noble Samurai" and takes the following Benefits:

Contacts (1 Rank)

Richard has already created a little backstory that Hideki wants to set himself apart from his family, but doesn't really have the full details on why. Working with the GM, they create Hideki's father, the head of the Kazato Clan. Ikeda, the father, is a powerful influence in the royal court, and together Richard and the GM come up with the story that Ikeda was the one who got Hideki assigned to a high level position in the Bureau. This means Ikeda has ties to the Bureau and the court, as well as running his own estate. These are pretty strong benefits, so the GM tells Richard that he may not be able to both constantly and reliably call on his father.

Richard initially considers having an estranged relationship between Hideki and Ikeda, but decides he wants something less over-done, and determines that Ikeda is actually involved in several things Hideki is unaware of, keeping his son in the dark. The GM likes this idea, and runs it by the other Players.

Everyone in the group decides it would be interesting to have Hideki's father appear in stories as an enigmatic benefactor, but one who may be concealing something vital from everyone (the Bureau, the Emperor, and the PCs). This opens up new adventure ideas while giving Hideki a Contact that has access to a lot of important information… but may not always be willing to share all of it.

Good Reputation

Samurai are afforded a lot of respect, and Hideki has earned even further accolades in his travels, becoming well known for helping those in need and fighting with honor. While this may occasionally add complications for Hideki, such as being sought out for help or arbitration, in most cases this means that NPCs will have a favorable attitude towards him initially.

Knowledge (1 Rank)

Richard takes 1 rank of Knowledge to represent all of the various skills required to be part of, and eventually run, a samurai's holdings. This means that Hideki will always know what is required to take actions such as ordering his followers to perform tasks, recognizing visiting dignitaries, or preparing his land to repel invading bandits. Whenever Hideki is involved in his clan's affairs, the GM provides any common game knowledge to Richard.

For example, Hideki has returned from a Bureau investigation and finds that his father is hosting a festival of artisans and performers to celebrate an important tradition in their clan. The GM gives Richard the details of the festival, including what is expected of Hideki and his guests (the other PCs), the names and abilities of the more well known guests (who may become important in the story) and tells Richard that Hideki is expected to give a presentation one day during the festival.

Richard can give as much detail on the content of the speech as he wants, but the Knowledge Perk means that Hideki will know what is expected to be said, and there is no need for Richard to worry that Hideki could make a mistake or say the wrong thing accidentally.

Professional Quality (1 Rank)

To augment Knowledge, Richard takes Professional Quality when handling his clan's affairs. Knowledge provides him with the appropriate game lore information, but there may still be Checks that have to be made. For example, Hideki would know how to build defenses against a bandit attack on one of his towns, but he would still have to organize and command his people to perform the necessary actions. One rank in Professional Quality means any Checks Hideki makes count as having rolled an 11; this is plenty to perform most mundane tasks. In the case of defending a town, it would guarantee that his peasants didn't make mistakes or hurt themselves while building fortifications or setting up a field hospital for use during the battle.

Character: Hideki Kazato Player: Richard

Mysteries of the Yōkai
~ 妖怪の謎 ~

ATTRIBUTES

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attribute Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

BODY	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Strength	+3	10
Endurance	+3	10
Agility	+1	0

MIND	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Intelligence	+1	0
Discipline	+1	0
Perception	+1	0

SOUL	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Zeal	+1	0
Resolve	+1	0
Insight	+1	0

CONFLICT STATS

4	Focus Refresh	Morale Threshold	4
8	Ki Limit	Rally	5

ARMOR

BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	1	1

SKILLS

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

Total Modifier	Defense	Skill	Associated Attribute	Potential	Modifier
+4	✓	Athletics	(Str + 3)	4	+1
+4		Evaluate	(Str + 3)	4	+1
+6	✓	Fighting	(Str + 3)	10	+3
+5		Interaction	(Str + 3)	5	+2
+0		Investigation	(+)	0	+0
+0		Ki Attunement	(+)	0	+0
+5		Leadership	(Str + 3)	6	+2
+0		Manipulation	(+)	0	+0
+5		Medicine	(End + 3)	6	+2
+0		Nature Affinity	(+)	0	+0
+0		Survival	(+)	0	+0
+0		Vice	(+)	0	+0

SIGNATURE ATTACK

Signature Attack: Gale-Style Blade Arts Costs: FP 1, KI 0

TOTAL MODIFIER: +6

ASSOCIATED SKILL (ASSO. ATTRIBUTE): Fighting (STR)

Damage	Domain	Range	FP Drain	KI Poison	Move
D6	Body	1	-	-	-

Defenses

STR ✓	INT	ZEA	Athlet ✓	Eval ✓	Fight ✓
END	DIS	RES	Inter	Invest	Ki Att
AGI ✓	PER	INS	Lead	Manip	Medic
			Natur	Survi ✓	Vice ✓

TECHNIQUES

Name: Diligent Focus **Potential:** 8

+1 Focus Refresh

Check: Conflict Stat Increase **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: Overwhelming Force **Potential:** 3

When you use an Attack Action, pay for the costs of this Technique, if your Attack Check succeeds, your MoS is increased by +1 for each 2 points you succeed by.

Check: Used with Attack **FP:** 0 **Ki:** 2

Name: Unyielding **Potential:** 10

+1 Morale Threshold

Check: Conflict Stat Increase **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: Fortune's Favor (x2) **Potential:** 2

You can re-roll the dice of a Check you make.

Hideki *can use this ability twice per Scene or Conflict.*

Check: Re-roll one Check **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

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PROFESSION

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DESCRIPTION: Wayward Samurai

RANKS	PROFESSION BENEFIT	NOTES
1	Contacts	NUMBER OF CONTACTS 1
0	Craft	
1	Good Reputation	
1	Knowledge	
1	Professional Quality	ROLL REPLACEMENT II
0	Tools of the Trade	



The youngest of five brothers and sisters, Hideki has spent much of his life living in the shadows of his older siblings. Trying to stand out amongst the talented, influential, and affluent Kazato clan has been a challenge, one that he has often fallen short in. Even his sister, only slightly older, is renowned as a warrior and already accomplished as a military commander. Despite their closeness as siblings, Hideki has been chasing after her successes ever since becoming of age, unaware of the small amount of envy he feels for her talents.

Growing up surrounded by excellence he has fostered a constant desire to test his skills and become stronger-often leaping headlong into challenges without any consideration that it might be too much for him. He has great difficulty in turning down requests for help no matter how small or large. In spite of his family's best efforts to dissuade him, he often finds himself in trouble when he takes on a task he has no business doing, whether because it is too time consuming or difficult.

As the youngest son of a noble family, Hideki had much expectation placed on him to climb the social ladder. This is a fate he has escaped by declaring that he would travel the land to forge his own name and return as a hero. Though he will never admit it, he is not completely helpless when it comes to navigating the etiquettes of high society, and sometimes even misses the comforts of home and family. The next thing on his mind, however, is how he can prove himself. Not as the noble's son or as the warrior's brother, but a man that stands as a hero in his own right.

KATAS

Katas are Package Deals. By spending 8 Potential, you gain a total of 10 Potential, 2 points in each of the listed Attributes and Skills.

Times Taken	Name	Attribute 1, Attribute 2, Skill 1, Skill 2, Skill 3
3	SOLDIER	End, Str, Fighting, Leadership, Medicine
2	WANDERER	End, Str, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting

ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Name: Unconventional Potential:

Associate Leadership with STR

Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:

Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:

Check: FP: Ki:

CONFLICTS

Checks: Checks are made to take Actions. Roll 3 six sided dice ('3D6') and add any appropriate Modifiers. For example, an Attribute Check is 3D6 + that Attribute's Modifier. If you roll higher than a Difficulty Number set by the GM, or the Check rolled by an Opposing Character, you win the Check.

Attacks and Defenses: Attack Checks are made against Defense Checks in order to inflict Tide Damage against opposing Characters. If the Attack Check succeeds, roll damage for the Attack and move the Tide Marker on the Conflict Tracker that many spaces towards the opposing Side.

Morale Damage: By default, if the Tide Marker moves past the '7' space, the Tide Bar breaks. Reset the Tide Marker to 0, and inflict 1 point of Morale Damage on the side it was pushed against. Morale Damage forces Characters out of Conflicts.

POTENTIAL TRACKING

TOTAL POTENTIAL (STARTING + EARNED): 100 STARTING: 100 EARNED: 0 KATA BONUS: 10

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❖ Chapter 3 ❖

Conflict

Conflict in Mysteries of the Yōkai

This chapter describes the different mechanics available to GMs and players whenever there is conflict in the story. This can be as simple as a Character attempting to pick a lock, or as complex as a political debate that takes an entire game session. Depending on the needs of the gaming group, several options are available.

Ways to Resolve Conflicts

- **Story Resolution**: Use current state of the story to determine the outcome.
- **Checks**: Roll dice against a Difficulty Number.
- **Conflict Tracker**: Tide and Morale — Players and NPCs take multiple Actions to defeat the opposing side.

Story Resolution

Checks and the Conflict Tracker (see on page 105) are useful tools when the success of an Action is in doubt, but in many cases the GM should simply describe what happens when players take Actions. This is a good choice when there is little to no chance of failure, or when failing the Action would hamper the story and the gaming session without providing anything beneficial.

A Character with a +3 Strength Modifier wants to push a broken-down cart out of the way so the party can pass. This is a normal cart, and there are no extenuating circumstances for this plot point (such as bandits hiding in the cart, or the cart actually being a tanuki in disguise), so the GM should let the player succeed without slowing down play. Describing the Character moving the cart, or allowing the player to describe their own Character's Actions, would likely keep the game more interesting than making a Strength Check.

The players are investigating the scene of a kidnapping. The GM needs to reveal several pieces of information in order for the players to understand the major pieces of the story's plot. If the players were required to make Checks, they could fail — which could lead to the Characters not finding the clues they were supposed to find, and the players becoming disconnected from the main plot as they search for a different story they believe is the intended path.

Whenever players come up with creative or exciting things to do, GMs should consider letting them succeed without rolling Checks. This keeps the players moving in the story, and prevents the frustration that comes with using their Characters in immersive ways only to have a bad roll of the dice prevent what would have been a rewarding moment.

Checks

Checks are the standard way of resolving Actions attempted by a Character when there is a chance of failure. The most basic Check simply uses an Attribute; this is done for anything that requires the Character's raw untrained ability. In many cases, a Character can attempt an Action with a Skill Check. If the Character has an appropriate Skill for the situation, they can apply it to the task and receive a higher chance than with an Attribute alone. Some special Abilities in the game also have their own Checks. For example, an Illusion would require a Check to be made to see if the Characters witnessing the Illusion believe it, or find some flaw that gives them reason to question it. Finally, the Tide and Morale system described on page 105 uses a series of opposed Checks (usually Attack and Defend Actions) between the players and their enemies.

The Basic Mechanics of Making a Check

Whenever a Character is required to make a Check, the Player or GM (for NPCs) rolls 3D6 (three six-sided dice), adds the values rolled together, and applies any other Modifiers to that number (such as Skill and Attribute Bonus Modifiers, or penalties for sub-par situations). This final total is compared to a number to determine success. When two or more Characters are making Checks against each other, the highest roll wins. When the Character is making a Check against something that doesn't directly oppose them (such as trying to catch a falling object, or puzzle out a key piece of lore), the GM sets a Difficulty Number; the Check succeeds if it is equal to or higher than that number.

Example of Unopposed Checks

A Character has been traveling for two days, and their food supply has run out. They are in a hurry to reach their destination, still two more days away. They have just come across signs of animals they could hunt for food, and the GM asks the player what they wish to do.

If the player chooses to have the Character hunt, the GM would ask for a Survival Check (3D6 + Survival Skill + the Attribute Associated with Survival). The GM feels that the hunting would be fairly easy since the area has several animals and none are particularly threatening or crafty, so they set the Difficulty Number at 12. If the Check result is 12 or higher, the Character will obtain the food they need to complete their journey.

If the player chooses to have the Character press on, the GM could call for a Discipline Check for the Character to resist the desire to stop. The GM decides that this is not yet a desperate situation, so they set the Difficulty Number to 13. If the Discipline Attribute Check (3D6 + Total Discipline Modifier) is 13 or higher, the Character will be able to continue on their journey.

Example of an Opposed Check using the same Skill

Two Characters are attempting to lift the most weight to show their strength. The GM has each Character make a Strength Check; whichever Character generated a higher Check result would lift the most weight. The GM could use the values of each Check to determine how much each Character lifted. For example, if the two Checks resulted in an 11 and a 13, both Characters lifted amounts that were generally within human bounds, though still impressive to the onlookers. If the two totals were 15 and 19, the Characters put on an amazing show, with the Character who rolled 15 likely to have lifted the village's largest ox, and the Character who rolled a 19 lifting the ox and the cart it was attached to.

Example of an Opposed Check using different Skills

Two Characters are trying to convince the Emperor to take different courses of action. The first Character argues that the Emperor should increase the country's defense budget, while the second is arguing to spend the money on more roads. The GM tells the players that either Character can make an Interaction Skill Check, or they can describe their Character's appeals and choose a different Skill if the GM feels it is appropriate. The first Character's player decides to use their knowledge of the current threats to the country, as well as the state of the existing defense forces, and asks to make the Check using the Leadership Skill, which includes aspects of tactics and organizing others. The second player has a good Modifier to Interaction, and chooses to approach the discussion by appealing to the Emperor's desire to see more trade between towns.

The first player has the Leadership Skill with a +3 Modifier, and the Associated Attribute (see the Skills chapter) is Zeal, with a +2 Modifier.

The second player has the Interaction Skill with a +4 Modifier, and the Associated Attribute is Insight, with a +2 Modifier.

If there were no other Modifiers to the situation (see below), each player would roll 3D6 and add their appropriate Attribute and Skill Modifiers, with the highest total winning the Check. In this case, because the decision is such an important one, it's unlikely the Emperor would simply implement one policy right away, but the winning Character would have the full consideration of the Emperor when he weighed his options.

Situational Modifiers

There are times it will not just be the Skills and Attributes of Characters that determine success. Factors out of the Characters' control, such as the weather, the condition of equipment used, and even unknown or unseen opponents, can modify a Check.

Situational Modifiers for Unopposed Checks

In most cases, the Difficulty Number required for an unopposed Check already covers the situational Modifiers. GMs should increase or decrease the Difficulty based on the specific situation of each Check. For example, teaching an animal a trick with the Nature Affinity Skill usually has a difficulty of around 15. Teaching a dog to heel (a more loyal and submissive animal) might only require a 13, while attempting to teach a frog to light a candle could be a 20 or higher Difficulty (lacking both the understanding of how tools work or hands meant for using them).

Situational Modifiers for Opposed Checks

When Characters are making opposed Checks, numerous factors can be brought into play. Some, like Environmental Modifiers, should be automatically applied by the GM. Others may be invoked by either of the Characters, and players are encouraged to suggest situational Modifiers and request the GM approve them.

Environmental Modifiers

This kind of Modifier includes anything that isn't a direct result of Player (or NPC) actions and choices. This includes the actual environment, such as the weather or a confined space, as well as the condition of any equipment being used, the health or injuries of either Character, and anything unknown to the Characters, such as a third party interfering.

In most cases, Environmental Modifiers will provide either a total plus or minus of 1 or 2. There's no need to calculate every variable involved in a situation and apply different numbers, then add and subtract each one. It's usually appropriate to simply apply a 1 for a minor hindrance or advantage, and a 2 for a major one.

Example

A monk is sparring with a tengu atop a mountain. The tengu is able to fly, wields a spear that out-ranges the monk's fists, and its clothing keeps the tengu warm. Overall, the GM applies a +1 to the tengu's roll due to having better overall equipment.

Modifiers Invoked by Players

While Environmental Modifiers should usually be calculated quickly and kept simple, players tend to set up many things during a story that can be used later to assist them. GMs are encouraged to reward creativity and interaction with the story and game world by allowing players to call out things in the current scene that they think would give a Bonus. This shouldn't lead to players trying to get Modifiers on every single roll, but any time the players come up with a good plan or a creative solution, the GM should give them an appropriate Modifier. This encourages more interesting games than just applying a Skill to a problem. However, the GM should never set up adventures with values that require the players to have these Modifiers in order to succeed. It's perfectly fine for most Actions to be standard Checks, with these Modifiers being occasional rewards, rather than slowing down play and making every Action require extended descriptions.

Stacking Ability Modifiers

There are many temporary Modifiers that can affect Characters. Modifiers from any game mechanic (such as a Technique) with the same name do not stack, even if they come from different sources. Only use the highest positive, or lowest negative, Modifier.

Different sources that affect the same Ability are combined.

If a source Modifies multiple Abilities that are used in the same Check (such as a Skill, and an Attribute that is Associated with that Skill), apply both Modifiers to the Check.

When there are both positive and negative Modifiers to the same Ability from sources with the same name: first add the highest positive, then subtract the lowest negative, ignore any lesser modifiers.

Example

*The Technique '**Banes and Boons**' has many options for Modifying Character stats. **Safeguard** provides Armor: 1/1/1, while **Bolster** provides Armor: 3 in one Domain. A Character that received **Safeguard** and **Bolster** (Body) would have Armor - 3/1/1, not 4/1/1, because these Modifiers come from the same Technique.*

Example

*The '**Proficiency**' Boon adds +1 to a Skill. One of the options for the Technique '**Protect**' also provides +1 to a Skill. If both of these Modifiers affected the same Skill and were given to the same Character, that Character would receive +2 to that Skill's Checks, because they come from different Abilities.*

Example

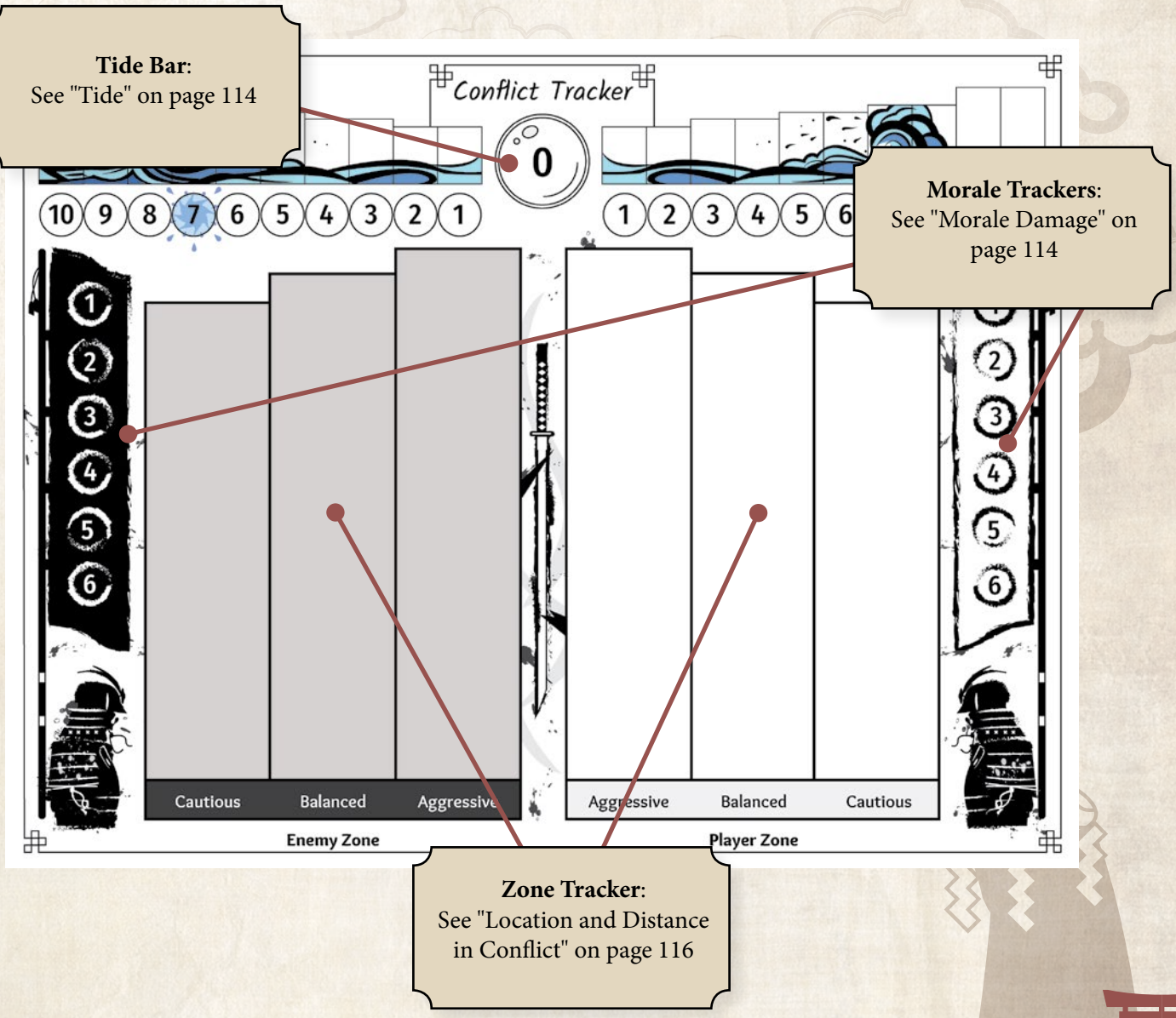
*If both Yukano and Feng Shui Master Awabi placed **Proficiency** (Fighting) on Hideki, he would only receive a +1 Modifier.*

Example

*Sazae is creating a set of ninja clothing using the **Crafting** Benefit from her Profession. She creates items that provide a +1 Modifier to Agility and Vice. Since Sazae's Vice is Associated with Agility, she receives +2 to Vice Checks. If her master Chiyome uses her own **Crafting** to create tools that provide +1 to Agility for all of her clan, Sazae would still only have a +2, because each of the two +1 Agility Modifiers come from **Crafting**. However, if Chiyome provided Sazae with a +1 Agility Modifier from the **Fortify** Boon, it would combine with Sazae's **Crafting** Bonus, providing an Agility Modifier of +2 and Vice Modifier of +3.*

Tide and Morale: Extended Conflict Resolution

For situations where a single Check would not resolve a Conflict, the GM should use the Conflict Tracker. Characters take Actions that are resolved using Checks and inflict Tide Damage; this models the ebb and flow of a Conflict. When enough Tide Damage has been inflicted against one side, the Tide Bar breaks and Morale Damage is inflicted to that side. Morale Damage is more serious than Tide Damage; when a side has taken enough Morale Damage, Characters on that side are forced to leave combat. Once all opponents have been forced out of combat, the remaining side wins.



Using Tide and Morale - Basics

The purpose of the Conflict Tracker is to provide an in-depth way for the gaming group to track progress. You can use it for physical battlefields, the tense negotiations of a royal court, or even a foot race between Characters. You can use the Conflict Tracker any time you need to resolve a situation that requires more than one Check.

Extended Checks

There will be times when a GM may want to use the Tide system alone. When two sides are opposed in a challenge that is more important than a single Opposed Check, but doesn't need a full combat to be resolved, the GM can use the rules for Tide Damage to model the Actions each side takes, ending the Conflict whenever one sides breaks the Tide Bar.

Example

Chases are common occurrences in many games. A GM generally does not want to use a single Check roll to determine whether one side catches the other. By using the Conflict Tracker and allowing the Characters on both sides to inflict Tide Damage based on Actions that affect the chase, the gaming group can model a chase where the side that best succeeds at the Actions they attempt will be victorious. The side being chased may simply make Endurance or Athletics Checks to run, or they could make Survival rolls to hide their scent, use an Illusion to become invisible, or use a Ki Blast to destroy a bridge after crossing it, thus slowing down the pursuers. The chasing side could also make Endurance, Athletics, or Survival Checks, but might want to use powers such as flight to scout the terrain around them, communicate with local animals to gather information, or set traps in case the quarry doubles back.

Setting the Kind of Conflict and Determining Allowed Actions

The Conflict resolution rules for Mysteries of the Yōkai are designed to be equally usable no matter the source of the Conflict. Combat on the battlefield, investigations, exorcisms, court intrigues, even a ramen eating contest; all can be resolved using Tide and Morale.

When the GM chooses to start a Conflict, they announce to the players that the game is shifting from Story resolution to Conflict resolution. The Conflict Tracker is set up, and the game becomes measured in Rounds. During a Round, each Character will have a Turn, during which they can use Actions to support their side or harm the opposing side. Characters use Actions to inflict Tide Damage, which pushes the Tide Bar tracker back and forth. Whenever you inflict Tide Damage on an opponent, the Tide of battle is pushed against that Character's side. At the start of a Conflict, the GM should spend a few seconds discussing with the Players what general kinds of Actions are acceptable in this Conflict. Most of the time with will be fairly obvious based on the story. For example, if the PCs are attempting to escape from a flooding room as part of an Extended Check, it is unlikely they could use Interaction based Abilities.

It's important to note that Mysteries of the Yōkai uses a lot of abstraction in combat. The biggest effect of this is that Characters do not track individual health points or how much damage they have taken.

Sides: Players vs Enemies

There are two sides in Conflicts: the Player Side, which includes all of the Player Characters and any of their allies; and the Enemy Side, which includes anyone trying to oppose or harm the Player Side.

Sometimes, a Conflict may break out with three or more sides. In the Game Master's Guide the section "Three or More Sided Battles" on page 216 has rules for these advanced Conflicts, but in most cases there will only be the players and their enemies.

Time in Combat: Rounds

Time is tracked more carefully in Conflicts than in Story play, but is still an abstraction representing short bursts of action. A full Round usually covers a few seconds to a few minutes, but the nature of the Conflict will determine the exact time frame. In a normal battle, each Round might be close to 30 seconds, as each Character attacks, dodges, and moves around. But in a Conflict modeling an invasion of a country, each Round could measure weeks or months.

Round

Every Conflict using the Tracker takes place using Rounds. Each Character may take one Turn per Round, in an order determined by Initiative (see page 111). Characters can react to Actions taken against them, but usually only with quick, simple Actions; anything that requires planning or concentration can only be done during a Character's Turn in the Round.

Focus Points — Acting During Conflicts

Mysteries of the Yōkai uses a resource called Focus Points (FP) to measure how much a Character can do. Characters are limited by both time and their own endurance and ability. Since each Round usually represents only a few seconds, a Character can only do so much in the allotted time. Beyond that, Characters can only push themselves so far before the body, mind, and soul are too tired to continue. These factors are abstracted into Focus Points, which are used to take Actions.

Focus Refresh

Each Character has a stat called Focus Refresh. This begins at 3 for starting Characters, but can be increased by some Abilities, such as the Diligent Focus Technique. Focus Refresh represents how active the Character is and how long they can sustain the demands of a Conflict. The higher the stat, the more Focus Points the Character will receive each Round to act with.

> All Player Characters start with a Focus Refresh of 3

At the beginning of a new Conflict, unless there are specific reasons (such as being surprised or exhausted), each Character receives a number of Focus Points equal to 3 times their Focus Refresh stat.

At the start of each new Round after the first, each Character receives a number of Focus Points equal to their Focus Refresh Stat.

Focus Points are not carried over between Conflicts

> By Default, Characters begin a Conflict with Focus Points equal to 3x their Focus Refresh Stat.
>
> Characters receive a number of FP equal to their Focus Refresh Stat at the start of each new Round of a Conflict.

Maximum Focus Points

Characters can never have more Focus Points than four times their Focus Refresh Stat at any time. If more FP would be gained, they are lost.

> A Character may never have more FP than four times their Focus Refresh.

Every Action has a Focus Point cost associated with it. If no cost is listed in the rules, that Action costs 1 Focus Point to take. When you take Actions during a Round, pay the required Focus Points from your remaining pool; you can continue to take Actions (limited by when those Actions are appropriate, see below) as long as you can pay the Focus Point cost.

Focus Points also affect the order in which Characters act after the first Round of a Conflict; see the Initiative rules on page 111.

Action Types

There are many Actions a Character can take during their Turn. Some are listed in the Techniques section of the book, and can be used by a Character once they are purchased with Potential. Others, like the Universal Actions listed later in this section, can be used by anyone without needing to buy them first, but they still must follow any other rules for that Action. The biggest restriction on an Action is when it can be used.

- **Full**: An Action with the type Full can only be used during that Character's Turn. A Character can only take one Full Action during each Turn.
- **Simple**: A Character can use as many Simple Actions per Round as they want, but unless otherwise stated by the rules, the same Action cannot be used more than once until the next Round begins. Some Simple Actions can be used when it is not the Character's Turn; most often, these are Defend Actions.
- **Attack**: An Attack Action is used to inflict Tide Damage against an opponent. When you make an Attack, choose a Character to be the target of that Attack. Specific Attacks will describe the rules for resolving the Attack, but in most cases this is an Opposed Check between the Attacker and the target. Be sure to read the Improvised Attacks rules on page 110 — Characters can always make an Attack if it would be appropriate in the current Conflict, even if they haven't purchased a defined Attack using Potential (See "Signature Attacks - Toolkit Rules" on page 82 for rules on how to create your own Attacks).

- **Defend**: When a Character is the target of an Attack Action, they must use a Defend Action. If the Character has no appropriate defense, they can always use the ***Simple Defense*** or the ***Last-Ditch Defense*** Universal Actions, described on page 120. Defend actions can be used as many times per Round as the Character can afford.
- **Special**: Special Actions have rules that ignore or change the standard rules of combat. For example, the ***Intercept*** Universal Action allows a Character to make an attempt to become the target of an Attack that is targeting a different Character; normally you cannot act when it is not your Turn and you are not being targeted by an Attack.

At the end of this chapter, on page 120, is a list of additional Actions available to all Characters in a Conflict.

Tide Damage

An Attack Action inflicts Tide Damage if the Check used to take that Action succeeds. The specific base Damage for each Attack is listed in its stats. Some Attacks do a set amount of Damage, such as an Improvised Attack, which does 1 Damage. Others might do a variable amount, such as D6, D3, D3+1, etc; roll the listed die or dice and add any listed Modifiers to determine the Damage.

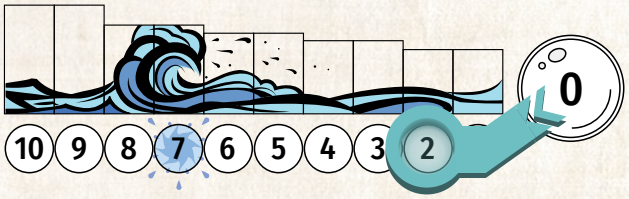
Example: Rolling Damage

An Attack is listed as having Damage: D3+1. The player using the Attack rolls a D6, which shows a 4. Since this is a D3 roll (see the box "Using Dice" on page 6 in the Introduction Chapter), this would be a 2, modified by +1, for a total Damage of 3.

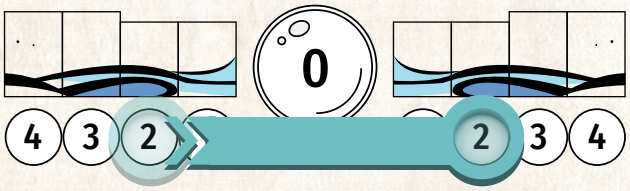
In the case where an Attack Check is a tie, the Check is considered to be successful. In other words, ties in Conflicts always reward the Attacker with success.

Attack/Defend Ties

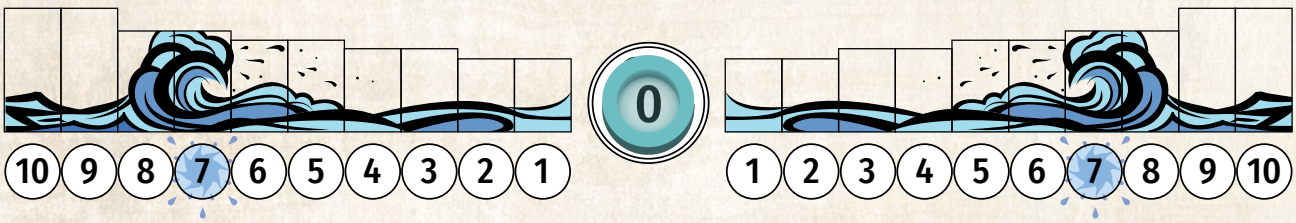
If the total of an Attack Check is the same as the total for the opposing Defend Check, the Attacker wins the Check and the Attack Succeeds.



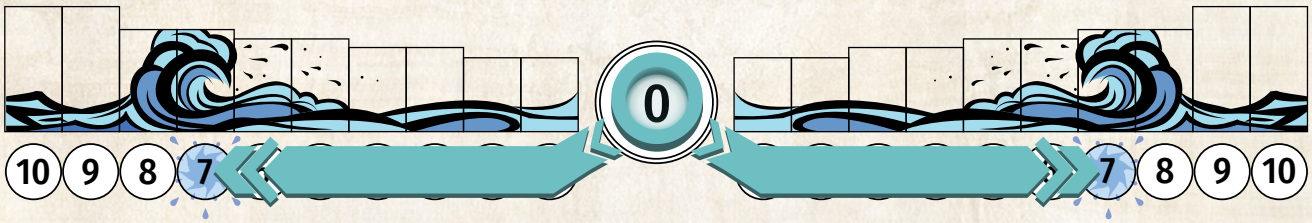
A Player Attack that does D3+1 Damage succeeds against an enemy. The final result of the damage is a '2', so the Tide Marker is pushed 2 spaces against the Enemy side.



After the above example, the enemy takes their turn and succeeds on an attack that inflicts a total of 4 damage. This pushes the Tide Marker 4 spaces towards the Player side, moving it through the 0 and to second position against the Players and their allies.



The middle of the Conflict Tracker shows the Tide Bar. At the center, there is a space marked '0'. This is the neutral point of the bar. At the beginning of combat, and at the end of each Round, the Tide Bar is reset to 0. Place a marker on the value of the Tide Bar, and move it left or right as each side takes damage.



When an Attack succeeds, move the marker along the Tide Bar against the opposing side a number of spaces equal to the Damage you inflicted.

Damage Type

Every Attack has a Damage Type, which is either Body, Mind, or Soul. When an Attack doesn't specifically list the Damage Type, use the domain of the Attribute that was used to make the Check for that Action. For example, a roll made with Strength would inflict Body Damage, while a roll made with Insight would inflict Soul Damage.

Damaging Different Domains

All Attacks have a Damage Type that specifies the Domain it affects: Body, Mind or Soul. If a specific Attack doesn't list its damage type, it is based on the Attribute used to make the Attack Check.

- **Body Damage Attacks** deal direct physical harm to the target. Weapon strikes, snare traps, and magic with physical effects would fall into this category.
- **Mind Damage Attacks** harm the target's mind, mental state, or argument in a social encounter. Intimidation, counter arguments, presenting clues, or even psychic Attacks deal Mind Damage.
- **Soul Damage Attacks** attempt to damage the target's spirit and very being. Yōkai and magic users often have attacks that deal soul damage. Many spirits can only affect the Soul Domain.
- **Healing** is a special kind of Damage that works to undo Damage already inflicted against the side of the Character using the Healing Attack.

Armor

Characters can have Armor in one or more of the three Damage Types. Usually this comes from either the Armor Technique, or simple equipment, but may also be provided by situations in the story, such as taking cover in a Conflict.

When a Character takes Damage, reduce the Damage rolled by the appropriate armor. If the Character would take 4 Body Damage and has Armor — Body: 2, they would take 2 Damage.

Types of Armor

There is a corresponding Armor for each of the domains: Body, Mind, and Soul, that reduces the type of Damage by the listed amount.

Armor is not only provided by actual armor, Characters can use all kinds of objects to represent their abilities to shrug off damage. A lawyer may use their badge as Mind Armor to represent the ideals they swore to uphold. Shrines often give out talismans; particularly powerful ones may offer some degree of Soul Armor. A Character may have magical tattoos to fortify their body against attacks.

Minimum Damage

No matter how much armor a Character has. Damage from any successful attacks will still deal at least 1 damage.

This represents the fact that successful attacks still cause fatigue and distraction to their targets despite the intended damage being mitigated.

No matter how much armor a Character has. **Damage from any successful attacks will still deal at least 1 damage.**

Margin of Success for Attacks

Whenever a Character succeeds at a Check, the results are increased by the Margin of Success (for every full 3 points by which the roll exceeded the necessary number, the MoS is +1). This can be used by Game Masters to represent the degrees of success for Checks. In the case of Attacks, this increases the Damage inflicted. This Damage is applied after Armor is deducted; this represents the fact that a very skilled Character can succeed even against heavily protected targets by relying on skill or trickery.

Margin of Success Effects

Each Margin of Success adds +1 Damage to an Attack. MoS Damage is applied after reductions for Armor.

Example of a Successful Attack

Hideki is facing an armor clad oni bandit. The oni is not particularly skilled, but its metal armor will make it more difficult for Hideki to defeat, providing Armor - Body: 3.

Hideki uses his Signature Attack, which does D6 Body Damage. He rolls a total of 17 on his Attack Check, and the oni rolls a total of 11 on its Defend Check. Hideki has succeeded, with a Margin of Success of +2 for exceeding the oni's check by +6.

Hideki rolls Damage for his attack, getting a '3' on the die, for a total of 3 Body Damage. The oni's Armor reduces the Damage by 3, but Armor cannot reduce Damage below 1. The Damage is then increased by the MoS of +2, for a total of 3 Tide Damage. The Tide Marker is moved 3 spaces against the Enemy side.

Healing

Healing is a special kind of Damage. When an attack with the Healing Domain is used, roll any dice needed to calculate the Damage as normal. However, do not reduce the Damage by any Armor of the Target. Increase the Damage by, MoS, if any.

Healing can only move the Tide Marker if it is already pushed against the side of the Character making the Healing Attack. Healing will not move the Tide Marker beyond the '0' space into the opposing side's side. In other words, Healing will only remove any Damage already taken by the side of the healer. Any remaining Damage after the Tide Marker reaches '0' is ignored.

Example

Yukano succeeds with a Healing Attack that does D6 Damage against an Enemy NPC. Yukano rolls a '4', and has a MoS of +1 from her Check. The Attack inflicts 5 Healing Damage. However, since the Tide Marker is currently on the '2' space of the Player side, the Attack only removes the 2 Damage, leaving the Tide Marker at '0'.

Improvised Attacks

In any Conflict, a Character can always attempt to use an Improvised Attack. This is done when the Character doesn't want to use, or does not have, an appropriate Attack. For example, a rowdy bear yōkai may be very good at fisticuffs, but probably has very little to do when the party engages in a social intrigue. That said, if the Character's player comes up with a creative way to use Skills, the GM should allow them to make an Improvised Attack. In the case of the bear yōkai, it might be able to temporarily bluff it's way through a checkpoint at night by wearing a heavy cloak and pretending to be a very hairy human.

The Check used for an Improvised Attack uses a Skill the Character has. The Skill chosen depends on how the Player describes the action to the GM, and is subject to the GM's approval. If the GM does not feel any of the Character's Skills is appropriate, the Character can always use an Attribute Check.

An Improvised Attack always does 1 Damage. The Attribute and Skill (if any) used by the Attacker sets the available Defense Attributes and Skills that the Defender can choose from (see "Defenses" on page 85). The Damage Type is always based on the Attribute used to make the Attack Check (Body, Mind, or Soul, as appropriate). Because every successful Attack always does a minimum of 1 Damage, regardless of Armor, this generally means Armor doesn't factor into Improvised Attacks, unless some external Modifier affects the Damage.

Improvised Attacks still do additional Damage (applied after Armor) for Margin of Success.

Improvised Attacks use a Skill or Attribute Check, and do a base damage of 1, but are increased by MoS as normal.

Signature Attacks

The most common kind of Attack that a Character will make are their Signature Attacks (see "Signature Attacks and Upgraded Defenses" on page 65). These Attacks are purchased with Potential, allowing the player to define the Damage, Damage Type, Range, and other Modifiers, to create an Attack that fits the Character's concept. A samurai might build a short-ranged Body Attack to model their skill with weapons, while a kitsune might build a Ki-based Attack using Insight to model the effects their illusions and shapeshifting have on opponents.

In most cases, any Attack purchased with Potential should be allowed by the GM in a Conflict, regardless of how the particular Conflict is defined. A warrior can still use their Body Attack in a peace talk, but instead of actually attacking with a weapon, they could sway the listeners by describing the horrors of war through experience obtained in battle. A Character with an Interaction-themed Attack could still make appeals to opponents, even in the middle of a drunken brawl (they might even receive a situational Modifier if they can "speak drunk").

GMs should remember that Signature Attacks were purchased with Potential, and are a big part of what makes a Character interesting to their player. Use the same metric for deciding if an Attack is valid as you would for a Skill or Ability outside of combat. If the theme of the Attack is absolutely inappropriate, you can restrict the player to making an Improvised Attack, but if the player can reasonably describe how they are using their Ability, it should be allowed.

Skills as Attacks

Skills are the most common basis for Improvised Attacks. Remember that if a Character has a Skill Specialization (see "Skill Specialization" on page 16), it would apply to that Improvised Attack as well. For example, if a Character has taken a Specialization in Leadership that applies to tactics and battlefield leadership, they would receive a +2 to their Attack Check when making an Improvised Attack to coordinate their allies (and this +2 might result in a better MoS).

Initiative — Setting Up Conflicts

During a Round, each Character acts in a specific order; this is called Initiative. Before each Round, the GM writes down each Character's name in order of Initiative, and then resolves each Character's Turn, asking players for their Actions or describing what NPCs are doing.

When a combat begins, the Initiative Order is determined by the events of the story leading up to the Conflict. The GM sets the order based on the attitudes, readiness, locations, and awareness of the players and NPCs.

Starting with the second Round, the Initiative Order is set by each Character's remaining Focus Points (see example below) at the end of the previous Round. The Character with the highest remaining Focus Point total acts first, followed by the next highest, and so on. When two Characters on the same side are tied for Initiative, they can decide, at the time of acting, who goes first. When a player and NPC are tied, the order is determined by the Initiative Adjustment Step, described below. If that rule doesn't affect the order, then players act before NPCs.

Initiative Order

In a Conflict, two Players, Hideki (8 FP) and Hikaru (2 FP), are facing four tengu warriors wearing different colored armors: Red Tengu (9 FP), Blue Tengu (7 FP), Green Tengu (5 FP), and Yellow Tengu (0 FP). The characters would act in the following Initiative Order:

Red Tengu (9 FP)
Hideki (8 FP)
Blue Tengu (7 FP)
Green Tengu (5 FP)
Hikaru (2 FP)
Yellow Tengu (0 FP)

Initiative Adjustment Step

Due to the way the Tide Bar works in a Conflict, if one side has most of its Characters act, followed by a similar clumping of the other side, the battle will swing wildly back and forth. Since time is an abstraction in combat (Characters aren't waiting politely for their Turn, everyone is actually acting together in real time, but this is reduced to a simulation using Turns for gameplay purposes), GMs need to make sure the Initiative Order more accurately models what is actually

happening. Mechanically, this is done by making sure no side has more than half of their Characters act before the other side has at least one Character act.

In the "Initiative Order" example, if Yellow Tengu had 4 FP, it would act before Hikaru. However, this would mean 3 of the tengu would act in a row, which is more than half the total number of Characters on their side. In this case, the GM adjusts the order so that Hikaru acts after 2 of the tengu, instead of after all 3.

Delaying a Turn

When your Turn happens, it may not be the best time to act. You may want to wait to see how an opponent acts, or coordinate with a teammate to do more Damage back-to-back in order to break the Tide Bar. In these kinds of situations, you can choose to Delay.

A Character that Delays can take no Actions. Instead, they may choose to take their Turn before any other Character remaining in Initiative Order. You must announce your intent to act before that Character starts their Turn; once they have announced any Actions it is too late, and you must wait until that Character's Turn ends before choosing whether you will act before the next Character.

Delaying cannot normally be used to allow one side to have more than half their total Characters act at once. If multiple Characters are waiting to use their Delayed Turns, no more than half of the side's total remaining Characters can take those Turns before at least one opposing Character is given the chance to take a Turn. However, if that opposing Character also chooses to Delay, each remaining Delayed Turn has the option to be activated. When there are multiple Characters waiting to use a Delayed Turn, they are given the chance to activate in the original order of Initiative.

The four tengu receive a reinforcement, White Tengu. They have entered a round with the following Initiative Order:

Red Tengu
Blue Tengu
Hideki
Green Tengu
Yellow Tengu
Hikaru
White Tengu

Red Tengu and Blue Delay their actions. Before Hideki acts, either is allowed to choose to act, but neither choose to do so. Hideki resolves his Turn. Green Tengu is next, and resolves his Action. Yellow Tengu would be next, but Blue Tengu decides to take it's delayed Turn now. Because Green Tengu and Blue Tengu have acted, Hikaru is allowed to act before Yellow Tengu or Red Tengu, to prevent one side from having more than half it's characters act. However, if Hikaru also Delays, then Red Tengu, Yellow Tengu and White Tengu could all act before Hikaru, because both sides chose to Delay.

Passing a Turn

A Character may always choose to Pass during their Turn; this means they can take no Actions. This may be a good choice when the Character has few or no remaining Focus Points, or when they are the only remaining Character and the Tide Bar is already pressed against the enemy (since the Bar breaks automatically at the end of the Round; see "End of Round" on page 113). Characters who have Delayed and decide not to act can Pass in order to end the Round.

The Full Round

A Round is considered over when all Characters have either taken their Turn or Passed. If there are Characters remaining who have Delayed, they may act or Pass in order to end the Round.

Once all Characters have taken their turn or Passed, they will have the ability to continue the Conflict without allowing either side to catch their breath, this is called a Push. Otherwise, the Round ends.

Push Rules

At the end of the Round, if the Tide Marker is positioned against one side (not on the '0' space), that side is given the chance to Push. If any Character on that side decides to Push, the Round continues, giving each Character (on both sides) one additional Turn. If no Characters on the side that has the Tide Bar positioned against them want to Push, the other side is given the choice to Push. If neither side Pushes, the Round ends.

The side that chooses to Push suffers a penalty of -1 to any Checks they make during the Push. This represents the effort required to attempt to steer the battle in the way they want.

Characters do not receive a Focus Refresh during the Push as they would for a new Round. The Push is considered to be part of the same Round; it simply gives each Character a second Turn.

The Costs of Pushing

All Characters on the side that Pushed receive a -1 to all Checks they make during the Push.

End of Round

A Round ends when either all Characters have acted or passed and none chose to Push, or when all Characters acted or passed during the Push.

Once the Round ends, the Tide Bar will break if it is not on '0', and Characters will be able to release Ki. The GM then records the FP total of each Character for the next Round's Initiative, and begins a new Round.

End of Round Tide Break

At the end of a Round, the Tide Bar must be at '0'. If it remains pushed against either side at the end of the Round (the tracker is at '1' or higher on either side), the Bar automatically Breaks (see Morale Damage on page 114), inflicting a point of Morale Damage in the same way it would during the Round, and resets to '0'.

The Tide Bar automatically breaks at the end of the Round if it is not on '0'.

It's useful for players to keep this End of Round break in mind as the Round nears its end, or when considering whether to Push. The Bar will automatically break and reset, inflicting Morale Damage so that no Tide Damage will carry over to the new Round.

End of Round - Record Initiative

At the end of the Round, the GM records the remaining Focus Points of every Player Character and NPC. This determines the order of Initiative for the next Round. See the previous rules for what to do when there are ties, or more than half the Characters on one side are acting before an opposing Character.

End of Round - Ki Release

Next, every Character automatically Releases 1D6 points of Ki (see the section on Ki, later in this chapter) if they have not exceeded their Maximum Ki. If a Character has more Ki in their Pool than their Maximum Ki, they instead Release 1 point of Ki.

Begin a New Round

After a Round ends and all of the above steps happen, the Conflict continues with a new Round. Each Character receives FP equal to their Focus Refresh (up to their maximum Focus). Note that Initiative order has already been set before this Refresh. All Characters take their turns according to the new Initiative Order, and a Push can be entered, before ending the Round. This repeats until the Conflict ends (see "End of Conflict" on page 115, for conditions to end Conflicts).

End of Round Checklist

- **Tide Bar Break**: If the Tide Bar is pushed against a side, it breaks and deals one Morale Damage to that side.
- **Initiative**: The Game Master determines the Initiative Order of the next Round by checking every Character's current number of Focus Points.
- **Ki Release Step**: If they have Ki in their Ki Pool, participants roll a D6 and remove Ki equal to the resulting value (or remove 1 Ki if they have exceeded their Ki Limit).
- **Start of the next Round**
- **Focus Refresh**: Participants gain Focus Points equal to their Focus Refresh.

Tide

Tide represents the current state of opposition in a Conflict, and is affected by every Action taken by Characters. When Characters assist their allies or harm their opponents, it pushes the Tide against the opposing side. Similarly, when enemies attack the PCs or rally each other, the tide of battle is pushed against the Player Side.

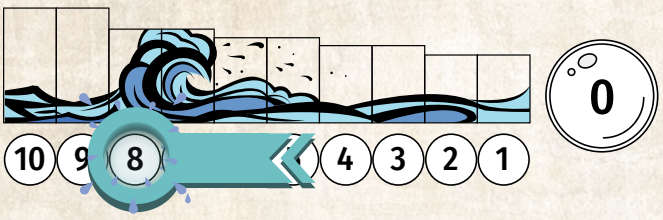
Tide Breaks

When the marker has been pushed a certain distance, the Tide Bar breaks. The GM determines the exact value required for a break based on the circumstances, but for most battles it will be 7. When one side has more or less to fight for than they usually would, the GM can adjust the break point to a different value for that encounter. See "Modifying Tide Breakpoints and Morale Thresholds in Full Conflicts" on page 212 for more information. The Teamwork Technique on page 60 can also be used to modify the Tide Breakpoint.

Note that all Damage for an Attack is done before checking for the Break. This means that no Damage will carry over from an Attack that Breaks the bar.

> The Tide Bar breaks when it reaches a specific value, usually 7. If the Tide moves onto or past this point, the bar automatically breaks and Morale Damage is dealt to the side it was pushed against.

When the Tide Bar breaks, inflict 1 point of Morale Damage on the side the Bar was pushed against (Player or Enemy), then reset the marker to 0. Use markers to represent Morale Damage on the Morale bars on the sides of the Conflict Tracker.





By moving past the break point of 7, the Tide Bar has broken, inflicting 1 point of damage against the Enemy Side. Place a Marker on the '1' space of the Enemy Morale bar. If the Enemy side receives another point of Morale Damage, move the marker to the '2' space, and so on.

Morale Damage

Morale Damage measures the overall progress that one side has achieved towards defeating the other side. Each side in a Conflict has a Morale Tracker. The Tracker begins at 0, and increases each time a point of Morale Damage is inflicted on that side. Unlike Tide, Morale does not go back and forth, and it never goes down during the course of a battle.

Every Character has a limit in battle, representing the maximum physical damage, mental strain, or spiritual weariness they can take. A Character's limit is called their Morale Threshold. All Player Characters begin with a Morale Threshold of 3, but this can be increased by some Abilities. Each NPC's Threshold will be decided by the GM; weaker enemies or those with less vested interest in a battle will usually have lower Thresholds, while the fanatical and desperate may have very high Thresholds.

> Player Characters begin with a Morale Threshold of 3.

Morale Threshold Effects

As the Morale Damage increases against a side, Characters on that side get closer to being unable to battle. When the Morale Damage is equal to a Character's Threshold, that Character is at their limits. They are still in the battle, but have little left to give. Characters in this situation do not receive Focus Points at the start of Rounds.

If the Morale Damage ever goes above a Character's Threshold, that Character is immediately forced out of the battle. This does not necessarily mean the Character is killed, defeated, unconscious, or similar (see "Conflict Resolution - Story Effects" on page 119), it simply means they are unable to continue in the current situation.

Taking Morale Damage

When the Morale Damage for a side equals to a Character in that side's Morale Threshold, they no longer gain Focus during the Focus Refresh step at the start of a new Round. They can still use the ***Ready*** Universal Action (see page 120) as their first Action in a new round but they will no longer gain Focus automatically.

When the Morale Damage exceeds a Character's Threshold, they are forced to leave the conflict.

Rally

Being forced out of a combat is not necessarily the end for a Character. If the Character's allies remain in the battle, they can change the situation, allowing the Character an opening or inspiring a return to the fray.

Every Character has a stat called Rally Value. At the start of a new Round, if the opposing side's Morale Damage is equal to or higher than the Character's Rally Value, the Character can return to combat. Inflicting Damage on the opposing side inspires those who have left battle, and also represents a change in battle that can allow an opening for return.

Once a Character has Rallied, they cannot be forced out of battle again, regardless of Morale Damage. Note that a Character who Rallies still counts as being beyond their Morale Threshold for determining the end of the battle (see "End of Conflict").

Rally is handled similarly for NPCs, but in most encounters they will not Rally. See the "Game Master's Guide" on page 205 and the "Bestiary" on page 243 for more information on Rally for NPCs and building encounters.

Player Characters begin with a Rally Value of 4. This can be reduced (allowing a Rally at a lower number) by some Abilities.

Player Characters begin with a Rally Value of 4.

End of Conflict

A Side loses a Conflict when either:

- It has no remaining Characters in the Conflict.

OR

- It has taken total Morale Damage higher than the highest Morale Threshold of all of it's Characters remaining in the Conflict.

Note that you check for these conditions after any Action a Character takes, not just at the end of a Round.

Example

Tengu Red (Morale Threshold:2, Rally:5), Tengu Blue (Morale Threshold:2, Rally: 3), and Tengu: Black(Morale Threshold:3, Rally: 3) are facing a group of foes. Each Side has inflicted 3 Morale Damage to the other Side.

Tengu Red has been forced out of the Conflict, and has not yet Rallied. Tengu Blue has also been forced out, but has Rallied and returned. Tengu Black has not yet been forced out.

If the other Side inflicts 1 more Morale Damage on the Tengu, Tengu Black will be forced out. Because only Tengu Blue remains, and it's Morale Threshold is less than the total Morale Damage the Tengu have taken, they lose the Conflict.

GMs can read more about resolving the story effects after a battle in "Conflict Resolution - Story Effects" on page 119 and "Resolving Conflicts — After the Battle" on page 214.

Location and Distance in Conflict

Mysteries of the Yōkai doesn't track the exact locations of Characters in combat. Conflicts use the Zone Tracker to show the relative distance and investment of Characters in an engagement. Characters in the Aggressive Zone are considered to be closer to the enemy and/or more actively involved with the battle. The Zone Tracker is divided into a Player Side and Enemy Side. Characters will always be in one of the three zones (Aggressive, Balanced, or Cautious) and will always be on their own side of the Tracker. This doesn't mean that in reality the Characters aren't moving around the field, including engaging farther away enemies; the Tracker abstracts exact positions and instead focuses on each Character's overall plan.

Range and Choosing Targets

Every Attack Action in the game has a Range value. When a value isn't specifically listed (such as when using an Improvised Attack), that Attack has a Range of 1.

Because combat is an abstraction, Range is not an exact check to see if a Character is close to a target. The Range of an Attack measures its general effectiveness, but doesn't restrict where the Character is allowed to Attack. After all, because Characters stay in their own side's Zones, that would make it impossible for a Range 1 weapon to attack opponents in the Cautious Zone. Characters can still Attack outside of their Range, but it will cost more Focus Points. This represents the effort required by the Character to push past opposing defenders and reach the target.

When making an Attack, it costs additional FP to target a Character outside the Attack's Range. Completely ignore any Zones within the Attack's Range, and any Characters in those Zones. The Attack costs 1 additional FP for each remaining Zone, and for each opposing Character (other than the target) within those Zones.

Changing Zones

Characters can change which zone they are in by taking the Move Action (see page 122), which costs 1 FP.

Making Attacks at Range

Attacks cost 1 additional FP for each Zone beyond their Range, and an additional 1 FP for every other Character in each of those zones

Zones

Aggressive

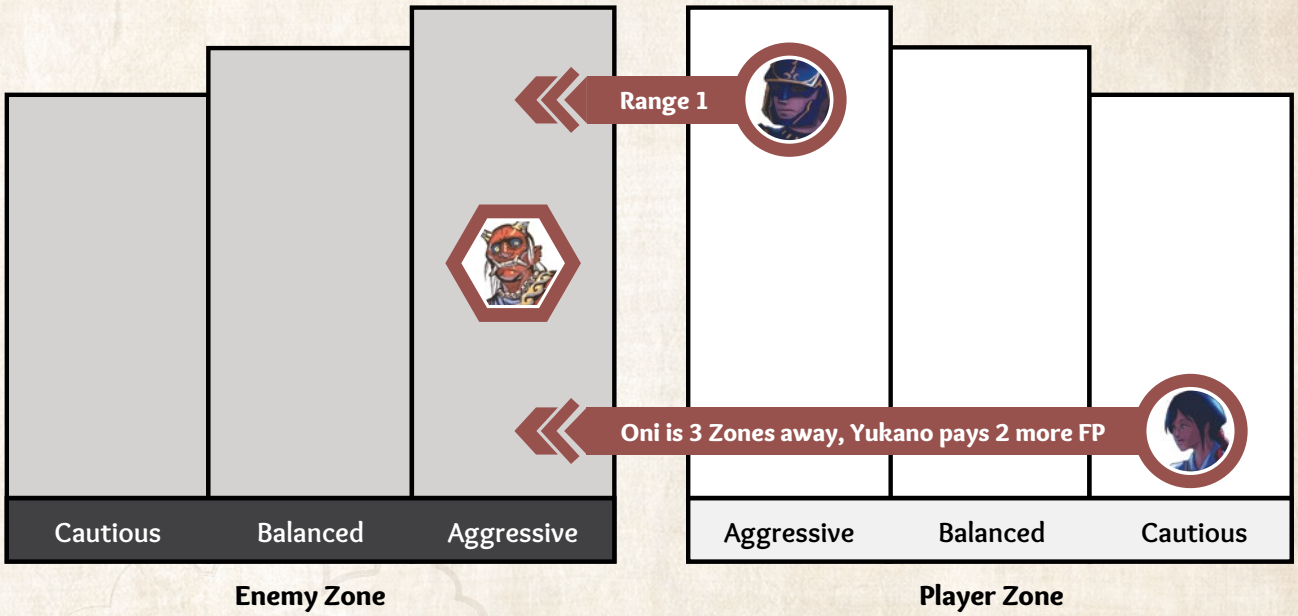
The Aggressive Zone is for Characters who are directly engaging enemies. In a melee battle, this may mean being on the front lines, while in a heated debate it means the Character is taking the floor and is the center of attention. Because distance affects the Focus Point cost to Attack, being in the Aggressive Zone generally makes it cheaper for the Character to Attack, and cheaper for enemies to Attack the Character.

Balanced

The Balanced Zone is the middle ground between the directness of Aggressive and the defensive or removed nature of Cautious. Characters in the Balanced Zone usually use Attacks with an increased Range value so that they can attack opponents in the enemy Aggressive or Balanced Zone while still benefiting from the protection of their allies in the player Aggressive Zone.

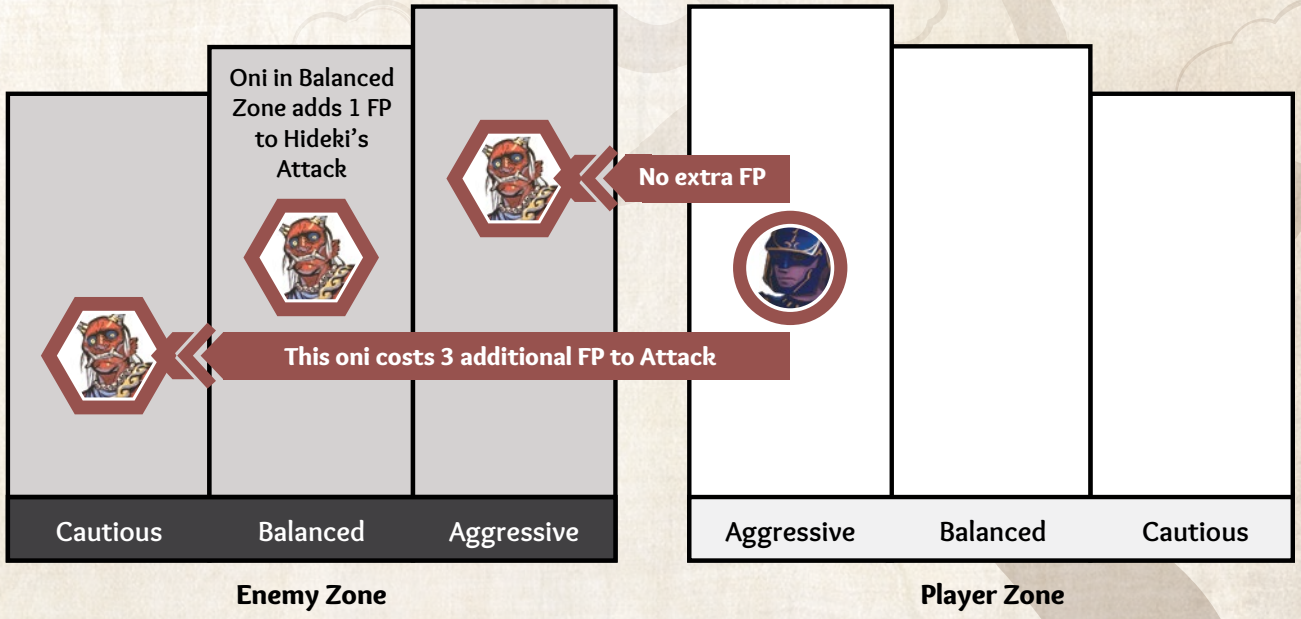
Cautious

The Cautious Zone is for Characters looking for protection or trying to avoid the brunt of the Conflict. Being in the Cautious Zone usually makes it more expensive for an enemy to attack the Character without the longest-ranged Attacks, but similarly reduces the number of times the Character will be able to make Attacks. The Cautious Zone is good for Characters who bide their time and wait for the perfect opportunity.



Hideki is attacking the oni. Both are in the Aggressive Zone, so Hideki does not need to pay any additional FP for his Range:1 attack.

Yukano is in the Cautious Zone. If she uses an Attack with Range:1, she would need to pay an additional 2 FP (1 for the Player Aggressive Zone, and one for the Enemy Aggressive Zone)



Hideki wants to attack the oni in the Cautious Zone with his Range: 1 attack. Having Range: 1 allows him to ignore the Enemy Aggressive Zone and the oni inside it. But he must then pay an additional FP for the Enemy Balanced Zone, another for the oni in that Zone, and one more for reaching the Enemy Cautious Zone, totaling 3 additional FP.

Using Ki in Conflict

Ki is a broad term that covers energy that makes up all of the world. Ki can be found in nature itself, in the focused training of martial artists, in the magic of geomancy, even in the careful brush strokes of a master calligrapher.

Ki is a resource used to pay for some kinds of Actions and Abilities. Unlike Focus Points, which are generated at the start of Rounds and then spent, Ki can be used as much as a player wants. However, wielding excessive Ki has a price: using too much of it at once can cause an unhealthy imbalance in the Character. When this happens, the Character suffers penalties to all of their Actions until they can recover from the strain.

Ki Pool

Whenever a Character takes an Action with a Ki Cost of 1 or more, the Character adds that amount of Ki to their Ki Pool. Ki Pools usually begin empty at the start of combat (unless the Character is using a Maintain power, see "Ki Abilities — Maintain" on page 119). A Character is unaffected by the Ki in their Pool unless the total exceeds their Ki Limit.

Ki Limit

Every Character has a Ki Limit, based on their Total Potential Level; for every full 25 Potential, the Character's Ki Limit increases by 2. This means that starting Characters (that began with 100 Potential) have a Ki Limit of 8. Some Abilities can also increase a Character's Ki Limit.

Ki Powers

By Default, Character Ki Pools start at 0 with no Ki. Abilities that have a Ki Cost add that amount of Ki to a Character's Ki Pool when used.

If a Character exceeds their Ki Limit, they begin to suffer penalties; -1 to all Checks for each Ki beyond their Limit.

A Character's Ki Limit is based on their Total Potential Level. It increases by 2 for every full 25 Potential the Character has.

Ki is released at the end of a Round, or by using the ***Ki Balance*** Universal Action during the Character's Turn.

Exceeding Ki Limit

As long as a Character's Ki Pool does not exceed their Ki Limit stat, there is no effect. When the Character has more Ki in their Pool than their Limit, but less than twice their Limit, they suffer a -1 Modifier to any Checks they make for each point above their limit. If a Character ever has more than twice their Ki Limit in their Pool, they are immediately forced out of Combat as soon as that Action resolves, regardless of Morale Threshold. This represents the strain on the Character causing them to fall unconscious or otherwise be unable to act. This Character is usually not allowed to Rally, but the GM may allow them to return later in the battle if enough time has passed for them to recover.

Example

Yukano, an experienced shrine maiden, is a Character built with 100 initial Potential, and has earned 26 additional Potential in the campaign so far. Yukano's Total Potential Level is 126, so her Ki Limit is 10.

During a particularly difficult encounter, Yukano has spent enough Ki to have 12 total in her Ki Pool. She will suffer a -2 Modifier to any Checks she makes until she can release enough Ki to have 10 or less remaining.

Releasing Ki

A Character's Ki will naturally return to a healthy state in time, but resting or taking a moment to relax and clear one's head can speed up the process.

Ki Pools automatically empty at the end of combat (except for Maintain Powers, see "Ki Abilities — Maintain").

During the End of Round process, any Character with less Ki in their Pool than their Limit automatically Releases 1D6 points of Ki. Each player rolls a die and removes that much Ki from their Character's Pool. Characters that are above their Ki Limit are so strained that the process is not as easy, and remove only a single point of Ki from their Pool.

> Characters with Ki in their Ki Pool remove D6 at the end of a Round, or 1 Ki if they are over their Ki Limit.

Characters can also take the ***Ki Balance*** Universal Action found on page 120.

Ki Abilities — Maintain

Some Abilities with a Ki Cost have the "Maintain" option in their description. This option allows a player to continue using the Ability without having to restart it with another Action or more Focus Points.

Each Maintain Ability has a Maintain Cost. Usually this will be listed with the Ability itself, but when it isn't, the Maintain Cost will be the same as the Ki Cost required to activate the Ability. For example, if a player uses an Improvised Attack that the GM feels would require 3 Ki to perform, the Maintain Cost of that Ability would be 3.

Maintain Costs are paid by constantly having that much Ki in the Character's Pool. This Ki cannot be Released in any way as long as the Ability is being maintained. In essence, that many point of Ki are "locked" into the Pool.

A player can choose to stop maintaining an Ability at any time outside of Conflict. During a Conflict, ending a Maintain Ability can only be done during the Character's Turn, but is not an Action and does not interfere with anything else the Character does.

Conflict Resolution - Story Effects

When Characters are forced out of combat, either because of Morale Damage or because their side has lost the Conflict, the exact condition of the Character is not set by the rules. Morale Damage is an abstraction of a side's ability to continue fighting; sometimes this means Characters have left due to wounds or literally low morale, but often the story effects of the combat will lead to other outcomes. A debate, while certainly stressful and even world-shaping, rarely ends in actual fatalities, and a ramen eating contest may result in sore stomachs, but probably not with one Character fleeing in terror.

In general, the winning side gets to determine the outcome of the battle for both sides. This is subject to the GM's approval; the players aren't allowed to create outcomes that are completely outside the scope of what the actual battle was about. For example, in a political negotiation, the players could force the NPCs to agree to a treaty, even one with unfavorable outcomes for the vanquished NPCs, but couldn't declare that the NPCs suddenly signed over control of their land or "died of embarrassment". That said, as long as the outcome makes sense, it should be allowed. Players should be aware that this means NPCs who defeat them have the same decision to make.

More information on arbitrating combat resolution can be found in a subsection of the Game Master's Guide titled "Resolving Conflicts — After the Battle" on page 214.

Players and GMs should be keep in mind that in campaigns using the default lore and setting of Mysteries of the Yōkai, Player Character death is a rare outcome, and the heroes rarely finish off their foes. Players are perfectly in their rights to announce that defeated NPCs simply fade into the background and never return to bother the party; they don't need to worry about stalking around the battlefield to finish off wounded stragglers. Similarly, only enemies with absolute darkness in their hearts will kill off Player Characters; usually the outcome of a lost combat will set the players back and make their future actions against the opponent more difficult, but not end in any deaths.

Universal Actions

The following Actions are available to all Characters, and do not need to be purchased with Potential.

Improvised Attack

Improvised Attack					
Action Type	Full, Attack	FP	1	Ki	0
See the Improvised Attack rules section.					
Attack Check	3D6 + Total Skill Modifier				

Simple Defense

A Character may use the Simple Defense Action against any Attack against them that includes one of their Defense Skills (see "Signature Attacks and Upgraded Defenses" on page 65) on that Attack's list of valid Defenses. The Defend Check is made with 3D6 + the Defender's Total Modifier for that Skill (Skill + Associated Attribute).

If the Defender has not upgraded any of the allowed Skills to a Defense Skill, they may only choose one of the Attributes listed for that Attack, and make their Defend Check with 3D6 + their Modifier for the Chosen Attribute.

Simple Defense					
Action Type	Simple, Defend	FP	1	Ki	0
This Defend Action can be used against any Attack.					
Defense Check	3D6 + Defense Skill or Attribute				

Last-Ditch Defense

If a Character is targeted by an Attack and does not have any FP remaining (or does not wish to spend them), they may use this Defend Action instead. The Defend Check costs no FP, but the Defender rolls only 3D6 with no Modifiers for Skill or Attribute (the Defender may still apply any special Modifiers, such as from Situation Modifiers or Techniques such as Protect).

Last-Ditch Defense					
Action Type	Simple, Defend	FP	0	Ki	0
This Defend Action costs no FP.					
Defense Check	3D6				

Ready

The Character immediately gains Focus Points equal to their Focus Refresh (up to the Character's Maximum Focus Points, any additional FP are lost).

This is a Full Action, but does not cost any FP to use.

Ready can only be used during the Character's turn, it cannot be used if the Character Delayed, and cannot be used during a Push.

Ready					
Action Type	Full, Special	FP	0	Ki	0
Gain Focus Points equal to your Focus Refresh Stat.					

Ki Balance

Roll a D3 and remove that many points of Ki from the Character's Ki Pool.

Ki Balance can only be used during the Character's turn, and cannot be used during a Push.

Ki Balance					
Action Type	Full, Special	FP	1	Ki	0
Remove D3 Ki from your Ki Pool.					

Intercept

This Defend Action can only be taken when another Character on the same Side is chosen as a target by an Attack Action.

Choose a number. This Action costs FP equal to half that number, rounded up. The Attacker must choose to either:

- Attack the original Target with a negative Modifier to their Attack Check equal to the chosen number

- OR -

- Attack your Character with a Bonus to their Attack Check Equal to the chosen number. Your Character then Defends as normal as if they were the Target.

If more than one Character want to Intercept the same Attack, each Character chooses the number they want to apply. The Character with the highest chosen number Intercepts the Attack, the other Characters do not take this Action.

INTERCEPT

Action Type	FP	Ki
Defend Special	Varies	0

Choose a modifier to apply to the Attacker's Check. The Attacker then chooses either to attack the original target with a minus to their Check equal to the modifier you chose, OR to attack you with a bonus to their Check equal to the modifier you chose.

Example of Intercept

*Hikaru is attempting to translate a scroll in the Grasping Library. Suddenly, a vengeful spirit emerges from the scroll and tries to attack her. Hideki chooses to **Intercept** the Attack. Hideki's player chooses the number 4, and pays 2 FP. The spirit must choose to either Attack Hikaru with -4 Modifier, or Attack Hideki with a +4 Modifier.*

Cover

This Defend Action can only be taken when a Character on the same Side is chosen as a target by an Attack Action. Choose one Defense Skill this Character has that can be used against the Attack being used against the target (as defined by the list of Defenses for that Attack).

When the Target makes their Defense Check, it becomes an Assisted Check that includes the original Target and all Characters using Cover on that Attack.

A Character using Cover must pay 2 FP in addition to any other costs for the Defend Action they use.

COVER

Action Type	FP	Ki
Defend, Special	2	0

Make an Assisted Defense Check when another Character on your side makes a Defense Check.

Example

*Yukano is being attacked by an Oni with an Attack that includes STR, AGI, Fighting, Ki Manipulation and Survival. Yukano chooses to Defend with Ki Manipulation. Hideki decides to **Cover** by using his Fighting Skill. Hikaru does not have Fighting, Ki Manipulation or Survival as Defense Skills, but decides to Cover using AGI.*

The three Characters make an Assisted Check. Yukano rolls 3D6 + her Total Modifier for (Ki Manipulation + the Associated Attribute). Hideki rolls 3D6 + his Total Modifier for (Fighting + the Associated Attribute), and pays an additional 2 FP. Hikaru rolls 3D6 + her AGI Modifier, and also pays an additional 2 FP. Yukano's Defend Check will use the highest total among the three Characters, and if any of the other two Character's total would succeed at the Defend Check, the total is increased by +1.

Counter-Attack

Instead of using another Defend Action, your Character can use any Signature Attack that makes its Checks using a Skill that is included in the Defense Skills of the Attack Targeting you. You pay all the costs for using the Signature Attack as normal (including additional FP if the Enemy Attacking you is farther than your Signature Attack's Range), plus an additional 1 FP.

If you lose the Check, the Attack's Margin of Success increases the Damage you receive for every 2 points the Attack succeeded by, instead of every 3.

If you win the Check, you inflict Damage equal to your Margin of Success to the Attacker in addition to receiving no Damage. The Domain of this Damage is the same as your Signature Attack. Note that this Damage is reduced by any appropriate armor, and does not use the Damage stat of the Signature Attack.

COUNTER-ATTACK					
Action Type	Defend, Special	FP	Varies	Ki	Varies
If you succeed at the Defend action, you inflict damage equal to the MoS of the Check (this is not MoS damage, it is standard damage and affected by Armor). If you fail, double the MoS damage dealt to you.					

Example

A yūrei is attacking Hikaru using it's Torment Signature Attack (ZEA, RES, DIS, Interaction, Ki Manipulation, Survival). The yūrei is in the enemy Balanced Zone, and Hikaru is in the Player Cautious Zone. Hikaru decides to ***Counter-Attack*** *using her Signature Attack, which uses Interaction to make its Attack Check. Because the Range of Hikaru's Attack is only 2, she must pay additional FP (1 for Enemy Aggressive Zone, plus additional FP for each Enemy Character in that zone).*

The yūrei rolls a total of 16 for it's Attack Check.

If Hikaru rolls a total of 12 for her Signature Attack, the yūrei succeeds, and gains a +2 MoS (+1 for each 2 points the Attack succeeded by).

If Hikaru rolls a 19 for her Check, she successfully Defends against the yūrei's Attack, and the Counter-Attack does 1 Damage to the yūrei (the MoS for succeeding by 3 points).

Move

A Character can use the Move Action to change Zones during a Conflict. This Action can only be used during the Character's Turn.

MOVE					
Action Type	Simple	FP	1	Ki	0
The Character changes to any other zone (on that Character's Side).					

❖ Chapter 4 ❖

Setting Guide

Using the Setting Guide

The Setting Guide provides the foundation for a world that can support all kinds of interesting stories for campaigns. Nippon is filled with conflicts, mysteries, characters and plotlines for you and your group to explore. The setting was designed alongside the systems in Mysteries of the Yōkai. When used together, they can provide a great starting point for players who wish to explore an ancient Japan filled with spirits, mysteries, and people in need.

The Setting Guide focuses particularly on Japanese lore, but the systems and settings of Mysteries of the Yōkai are designed to accommodate themes from all kinds of folklore across Asia. Many of the folktales of East Asia involve interactions between humanity and the supernatural. While these spirits, fiends, and monsters were frequently viewed with apprehension, there ran a deep undercurrent in Asian culture about respecting them, and the wild untamed nature they represented. In folk tales, there are many ways to approach the supernatural; be it outwitting a spirit, performing an ancient rite, or fighting in a contest of blades. The mechanics in Mysteries of the Yōkai were designed to model such variety in theme and mood using one ruleset.

The Setting Guide and its places, characters, and groups; can and should be adapted to fit the needs of your campaign. Every role-playing group has its own needs and ideas, so we've left some portions of the world of Mysteries of the Yōkai intentionally open ended to give Players and Game Masters space to expand on it.

Even when using the provided setting as-is, the Game Master will need to apply some degree of world building and campaign planning. Please refer to the "Game Master's Guide" on page 205 for advice on how to put the inspiration here into practice. The sections on "World Building" on page 218 and "Campaigns" on page 220 in particular will be useful for GMs.

Interpreting Japanese Lore

While Mysteries of the Yōkai draws heavy inspiration from Japanese folklore, the details of the world provided in the base setting are meant to encourage engaging stories for RPG experiences in particular. Many of the characters, mythological figures, and concepts from ancient Japan have been interpreted to promote more character-focused experiences and a dramatic setting.

If players are interested in running campaigns that follow a more traditional set of themes and character archetypes, the ruleset and mechanics can easily support these kinds of stories too. The Tide and Morale system in particular is well-suited to model things like the legend of Susano-o using sake to subdue the serpent Orochi, or the legendary adventures of Momotarō.

A Land of Many Names

Throughout history, Japan has been referred to by many names. Some of Japan's legendary scriptures describe the islands using several classical names such as: Ōyashima, the Great Eight Islands; Akitsushima, the Island of Dragonflies; or Mizuho, referring to the lush rice fields of the country. Ancient Chinese historical records labeled the islands of Japan as Wa or Yamato, referring to the people there. By the 7th century AD, Japan changed its name to use the kanji for "Sun" and "Origin", which at the time was read as Nippon. Today the same kanji are still used to describe Japan, only most Japanese now read them as Nihon (although a significant number still use Nippon). As Mysteries of the Yōkai is set some time after the Heian period, most people call the country "Nippon", though it is likely that a sizeable minority of people also use the classical names in reference to the resurgence of spiritual activity.

Nippon's History: An Ancient Legacy

At the end of the legendary era, the connection between humanity and the supernatural drifted apart, unreachable save for the abilities of a gifted few. While the Era of Spirits has brought us closer to the Spirit Realms, we have yet to see any of the magnificence that the legends speak of in our most ancient of records. Who knows what these exciting times will bring? The only other time power flourished in our world to this degree was at end of the Age of Kami. All the more reason for us to become familiar with our mythology and our history. Perhaps the events of our day will pass into legends of their own for our future generations.

~ Misaki Toshonosuke, Head Archivist of the Miwa Central Library

A Divergent Time

There are major differences between the setting of Mysteries of the Yōkai and real world history. The greatest changes happen during the Heian period. Most events before that time are identical to Japan's historical and mythological record. It is during the Heian period that the timeline in the Setting Guide begins to make its greatest deviations from real-world history. While most details in the setting are appropriate for the time period, the divergent timeline allows for occasional anachronistic elements. In this way, Game Masters and players are free to refer to as much or as little of historical Japan as they wish. Any detail mentioned within the setting can be changed or replaced as they see fit.

The divergent timeline is meant to give players and GMs the freedom to define things for themselves. It can be used to justify all kinds of situations for your campaigns that would not be possible otherwise. Players might want to meet the master swordsmith Masamune, GMs may want to start the Sengoku period early, or maybe a Character has glasses that are considered anachronistic. Do not be afraid to prioritize what is fun, interesting, or entertaining over concerns about inaccuracies. When planning the campaign, make sure to discuss preferences about historical accuracy with the group so that everyone is on the same page.

From the Writings of Emperor Shōren:
The Creation of the Universe

In the beginning, the universe was a shadowy, sinking, and formless chaos. Within the chaos, the first kami, Ame no Minaka-nushi, was born. The universe became musubi, the principle of existence, which ordered creation into a bright, still, and heavenly sea; but that too had no shape. As soon as the first kami came into existence, Ame no Minaka-nushi disappeared, splitting in two. One part became a male kami, Takami-musubi, and the other became a female kami, Kami-musubi. Upon splitting, the universe separated into two as well, with the heavenly Ama floating upwards, and the earthly Tsuchi sinking downwards. Just as soon as the two new kami arrived, they went their separate ways.

In the new heavenly Ama, several generations of kami were born. Each arose as pairs who married and then gave birth to a new generation, which ended in a final pair known as Izanami, the Lady who Beckons, and Izanagi, the Lord who Beckons.

It was not until Izanagi and Izanami pushed their jeweled spear into the ocean of earthly musubi, that the universe as it is today was formed. Together they stirred the oceans with great force, mixing Ama and Tsuchi — heaven and earth. The ocean began to froth and bubble, taking on a life of its own. Where they pushed and disturbed the waters, yang energy formed, and in the shadow of its wake, yin energy followed. Creation began to swirl with motion, perpetuated by the cycle of yin and yang. The energy of their influence upon the world is known as ki.

The seas curdled and stiffened, giving rise to new realms and planes. When Izanagi and Izanami finally drew their spear from the swirling universe, what dripped from its tip formed the landmasses and islands of a newly-created earth.

Timeline

The exact events which led the world to be as it is today are unknown. For much of history, the only records of the legendary times were passed orally from generation to generation. It is only within the last few centuries that the ancient myths were gathered into a written record.

~ Misaki Toshonosuke, Head Archivist of the Miwa Central Library

Keep in mind that time spans are written with respects to the Age of Spirits and the present day of the setting within Mysteries of the Yōkai.

The Age of Kami

神々の時代 (Kamigami no jidai)

The Age of Kami is the earliest known era in Nippon's history. It began with the birth of Izanami and Izanagi's first children. Creation had yet to settle, and the world was said to shift and change similar to the way the Spirit Realms do now. The legends speak of it as a fantastical time when powerful kami roamed the lands.

Other than legendary tales, many remnants of the Age of Kami have been lost to history — but of those that remain, the Imperial Regalia have particular impact upon the history of Nippon.

These artifacts of great power have long histories, but many details were lost as they passed from bearer to bearer. The Regalia are important in particular for their ties to the royal family and have been passed down through the ages from kami to kami and then eventually from emperor to emperor. They are reminders of the emperor's divine descent from Amaterasu. It is the passing of the Regalia to the first emperor, Jinmu, that begins the Age of Man.

The Age of Man — About 2000 years ago

人皇の時代 (Ninnō no jidai)

The Age of Man began when the Imperial Regalia were passed down to Ninigi's great-grandson, Emperor Jinmu. Since Jinmu established the royal lineage, it has remained unbroken. All of Nippon's emperors can trace their ancestry to Jinmu and thus to Amaterasu herself.

In the Age of Man, the mortal and spiritual realms began to drift apart. It is during this time that humanity's influence and power rose. Communities gathered and built cities, which grew into small states that eventually formed the nation of Nippon. Centuries saw the rise and fall of leaders and movements great and small. Despite the changing nation, the emperor's lineage remained a constant unbroken chain throughout history. The Jōmon, Yayoi, Kofun, Asuka, and Nara periods arise during this time.

But it is the Heian period that most influences the present day setting. No other time could boast the prosperity of the Heian period. All of Nippon's advancements had led to a golden age of culture.

Heian Period: Prosperity and Peace — About 400 Years Ago

平安時代 (Heian jidai)

Heian was a prosperous time of overflowing wealth and opulence. There was unprecedented peace within the nation. Heian's cultural contributions would become representative of Nippon's identity and would remain influential for generations.

But the Heian period was also a time of great inequality. Wasteful indulgence and corruption ran rampant among the nobility, which in turn led to unrest among the people. Tensions rose between Yoshitaka and Benida, two brothers who competed for the Imperial throne. The conflict that grew between them would bring about the end of the Heian period.

End of a Golden Age — About 200 Years Ago

Turmoil in the Capital

The reigning Emperor Yoshitaka was becoming unpopular, a consequence of being the face of a corrupt nobility. Tensions rose so high that his father implored him to abdicate in favor of his brother, Benida, who was still beloved by the people. Emperor Yoshitaka eventually gave in to the pressure and relinquished his power.

Upon ascending the throne, Emperor Benida banished him to a far away province, claiming that it was for his protection. After several years it became obvious to Yoshitaka that this was not the case, when he attempted to visit the Heian capital and was barred from entry. Following his banishment, Benida spread rumors through the capital that Yoshitaka had cursed the nation and was working to bring about its downfall. Though Yoshitaka had no such desires at the time, people began to treat him with revulsion anyway. After realizing he was no longer welcome in his home, Yoshitaka decided to give up his political ambitions and become a Buddhist monk.

After several years under Emperor Benida's rule it became clear that Yoshitaka was not the cause of the corruptions within the Imperial Court. Discontent among the people soared to new heights. A group of prominent generals and nobles proposed the idea of reinstating Yoshitaka to the throne, using his name to legitimize their movement's goals of regime change. Unwittingly, Yoshitaka had become the face of a rebellion against the reigning Emperor.

The uprising ended in bloodbath, crushed by Benida's forces. Yoshitaka was blamed for the rebellion, but as an ordained monk he avoided execution and was instead imprisoned. He spent much of this time transcribing sutras and studying scripture. His work was seminal for scholars of Buddhism, contributing previously untranslated documents to the clergy. Upon sending copies for the libraries in the capital, they were deemed cursed and his work ordered burned throughout the country; their ashes were sent back to Yoshitaka. Humiliated, with his contributions no longer accepted, Yoshitaka grew bitter at the pettiness of his brother and the court nobles.

Eventually he fell ill, and as his health spiraled downwards, his bitterness transformed into a desire for vengeance. The once-fallacious rumors about him became a self-fulfilling prophecy as he vowed with his dying breath to never truly rest so long as the nation built by his royal blood thrived. In his malice, he cursed the nation and the blood of his brother and transformed into a spirit of unrivaled horror.

For months following his death, storms ravaged the capital and the clouds above the city shaped themselves into an enormous ghostly form. People considered this the curse of Yoshitaka, and pleaded for his brother to placate his spirit. Eventually the famed onmyōji sorcerer Abe no Seimei performed a powerful rite for the angry ghost, seemingly pacifying it for good. Abe no Seimei's string of later successes from this point would lead him to become a very influential figure in history. His school of sorcery would define onmyō techniques through the generations.

Many years after Yoshitaka death, an illness befell the nobility of the Heian court. It grew to an epidemic that spread to all the surrounding provinces. Eventually, Emperor Benida and much of his family relations succumbed to the plague. Fearing the return of Yoshitaka's curse, the people pleaded Abe no Seimei to save them. But before he could begin to search for a cure, Abe no Seimei was forced to deal with a more immediate threat.

Barely a week passed after the death of Emperor Benida when battalions of phantasmal troops were sighted closing in on Heian-kyō, headed by a powerful sorceress. She commanded the ghostly army and several gashadokuro — giant armored skeletons. With Abe no Seimei preoccupied by the supernatural defense of the nation, the task of handling the plague fell to his disciples. Most of them focused on trying to repel Yoshitaka, but one: Chiroru, looked instead to treating the disease itself. Through exhaustive research, Chiroru discovered the legends of a Snake Maiden rumored to have mythical healing powers. The young sorcerer sought out the reclusive Snake Maiden and pleaded her to help. Together they worked to discover a cure for the plague and repel Yoshitaka from the capital, cementing both their places in history.

While Snake Maiden would once again fade from history books, the Chiroru would marry one of Abe no Seimei's children, and together establish the Asagami clan, one of the first and most influential magical families. The Asagami clan founded some of the first formal academies for magical studies, as well as what would eventually become the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. It is for this reason that the Asagami and the Bureau's emblem are both five-petaled bellflowers.

Shirazumi Hiyu: The Legendary Snake Maiden of Onbako

Lady Hiyu the Snake Maiden is said to have been born from the union of a human mother and an evil yōkai. Her mother gave birth to an egg which would after several months hatch into a seemingly normal human child.

The Snake Maiden is a figure who has lived in Nippon for centuries. While she has helped many, she is hesitant to reveal her true identity to those she saves. What few heroic tales of her deeds exist have become legendary. Twice Lady Hiyu has saved Nippon, and it is said that she will reappear once again when dire times return to the land.

The Snake Maiden is best known for her miraculous ability to heal. Her aid has been central in soothing the wounds of people, spirits, and even the land itself. Lady Hiyu's supernatural origins blessed her with many gifts. In her snake form she wields powerful magic as well as a mystical venom capable of healing almost any bodily wound and counteracting most poisons. Using her extensive knowledge of medicine and herbalism, she can even cure ailments that prove resistant to her powers. With enough time and resources, she can develop cures for even the most obscure and harmful of afflictions.

To see Lady Hiyu's snake form is rare as tales of monstrous snakes like Yamata no Orochi have left most people frightened of snake yōkai. The Snake Maiden usually presents herself as nothing more than a humble wanderer and avoids attracting too much attention. Though she lacks many of her powers in this form, Lady Hiyu is still a master of the katana, more than a match for even the most skillful of human warriors. She wanders the countryside, lending her blade to those who need it, but rarely drawing attention to herself. It is said that between Lady Hiyu's sword and medical knowledge, she has saved over one thousand lives.

Many years have passed since she was last seen, but many have not forgotten her and still believe that she will return should another calamity befall Nippon.



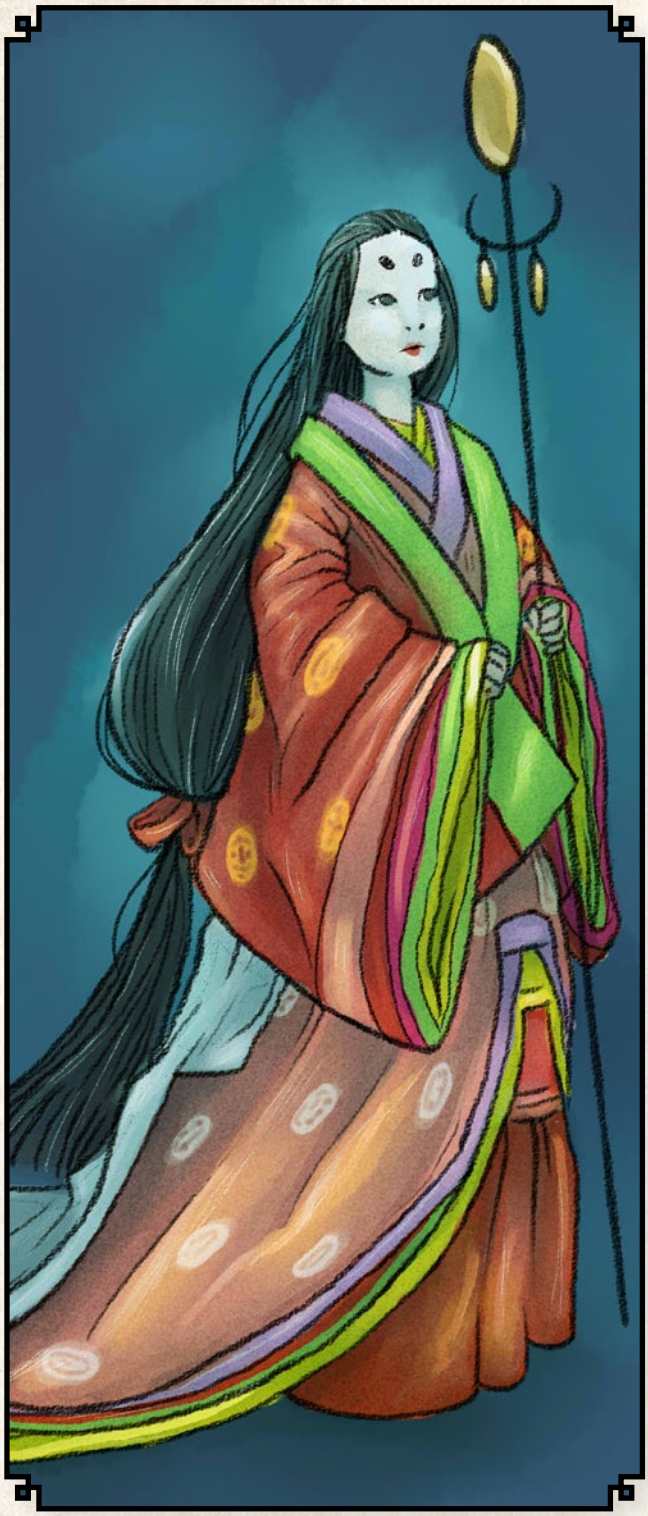
Emperor Shōren and the Rise of the Magical Class — 40 Years Ago

Many generations would pass, but the specter of Yoshitaka's curses and attack would make an indelible mark on the people of Nippon. Anxieties about the power of the supernatural would trouble citizens of all walks of life. The frightening visage of Yoshitaka upon the clouds above the capital would be the subject of horror stories for generations. Fearful people sought out those who could protect them from supernatural threats. Patronage to major shrines increased and there was intense demand in supernatural education at magical academies. Almost overnight, the people who possessed this sought-after supernatural knowledge became a new societal elite known as the Magical Class.

Emperor Shōren's enthronement was a great comfort to the people; his prodigiousness in the mystical arts were renowned. His contributions to arcane knowledge gained him a new appellation as "The Alchemical Emperor". People placed their trust in his ability to keep them safe from the supernatural threats that could impact Nippon.

Emperor Shōren would continue to contribute to Nippon's magical defense throughout his reign, providing financial support to shrine magic and the sorcery of the academies. He personally worked with both institutions to research new techniques that would protect even the poorest of Nippon's citizens. After the Emperor established a new palace in the province of Seigahara, his focus began to shift. He became more manic and obsessed over bringing about a new Age of Kami, and his renovations to the city of Aisei perplexed even the most senior of magicians and geomancers. Emperor Shōren would eventually move the capital to Aisei, renaming it to Miwa. He felt Miwa was better suited to protect the nation and its government.

There are many questions about what motivated the Emperor through his relentless work, but those closest to him professed that even as his work grew more crazed he still had the people's interests at heart. A new Age of Kami would give the Sacred a great influence upon the world. It could bring great magical power to the people of Nippon, giving them and their guardians the ability to better protect themselves. Some would speculate that it was the influence of calamitous kami Yoshitaka that twisted Emperor Shōren's desires, refocusing them around the pursuit of power. History would not view the Alchemical Emperor's actions favorably, and the consequences of his work would shake the very nation.



Emperor Shōren's Grand Rite Joining the Heavens and Earth

Emperor Shōren concluded that he needed to close the chasm between the heavens and the Earth to bring about a new Age of Kami. He worked to apply all his knowledge and research into a ritual that would achieve this monumental goal. The Alchemical Emperor's work would culminate in the creation of two new Imperial Regalia, the Sky Bridging Bow and the Earth Moving Monk's Spade, powerful artifacts that would help him achieve his ambitions.

Save for the Divine Mirror of Wisdom, which remained at the Ise Grand Shrine, all of the Imperial Regalia were used to perform the Grand Rite. Each provided a crucial function to his ritual. Using the Sky Piercing Bow, and the Earth Moving Monk's Spade, Emperor Shōren attempted to chain the heavens and tether them to the Earth. Yet after seven tries, none of them took a solid hold. Upon firing the Bow at the summit of Mount Hado, the chain pierced the Celestial Plains and the Spade anchored it deep within the mountain. The very heavens were pulled towards the Earth, bringing all of The World Beyond closer in the process.

With only one anchored chain, the ritual grew unstable and exploded in a storm of mystical energies. All of the Imperial Regalia, including the Mirror, were scattered to places unknown. The chains that failed to take hold tumbled from the skies and left destruction in their wake. A sizeable portion of the Heian capital was destroyed in the Grand Rite, ripping open a hole to the corrupted realm of Yomi.

Emperor Shōren's Grand Rite would succeed in bringing the Celestial Plains closer to Nippon, but it would not be enough, and there would be many unintended consequences. Not only had the heavens been bound to the Earth, but all of The World Beyond had come with it. Ki flowed stronger and more abundantly, spirits became more powerful, and magical forces soared to new heights. Places once on the borders of the mortal world crossed the boundaries, bringing the resident spirits and yōkai with them. The world had become both more wondrous and perilous at the same time. While this would excite adventurous people everywhere, it would be the common folk who bore the brunt of the new dangers. Damage caused by the Grand Rite would weigh heavily on Emperor Shōren's shoulders; he felt there was nothing he could do could to atone for the destruction he caused.

A Crisis Befalls the Emperor's Lineage — 20 Years Ago

The event known as the Grand Rite single-handedly ended an era and brought about a new one: the Age of Spirits. Nippon had been shaken by a great upheaval and Emperor Shōren would become the subject of near universal condemnation for his reckless actions. Soon after, he abdicated the throne and left the capital in search of a way to fix his mistakes.

Shortly after Emperor Shōren's disappearance, the doors to the palace sealed shut and anyone within the grounds was ejected. It would remain closed until a new emperor ascended the throne. But without the Imperial Regalia, no successor would have the legitimacy to open the gates.

While they were denigrated by association with Emperor Shōren, his only daughter Tomoki and her husband Isamu remained to lead the country in its time of need. She worked instead as an interim regent empress while her husband would travel the country giving aid to those harmed by the Grand Rite. But public trust in Nippon's leaders had eroded, and their efforts could not stave off the building unrest. It was at this time that Shōgun Utetsu would step in as a stabilizing influence to maintain a strict sense of order during chaotic times.

Emboldened by newfound power granted from the Grand Rite, the spirit of Yoshitaka attacked Prince Consort Isamu and his caravan while they traveled to the aid of a distant town. None survived the attack, and the village was razed to the ground in a brazen display of power. Fearing for her family's safety, Regent Empress Tomoki beseeched a close and trustworthy ally in The World Beyond, the Osmanthus Emperor. She pleaded to the Emperor on the Other Side to protect her seven year old son, Akitsu. In utmost secrecy, the young prince was smuggled out of the city and a kitsune fox spirit named Yojirō took his place.

Osmanthus, The Tree of Sweet Perfume

The Osmanthus Emperor and his Dominion are named for the fragrant flower of the osmanthus tree, which is called mokusei in Japanese. It is also sometimes known as “sweet olive” or “tea olive” in the west.

The tree bears yellow, white, or orange waxy flowers with a smell often compared to that of sweet honey, ripe peaches or dried apricots. They bloom at the end of summer, signaling the beginning of Autumn with their perfume-like fragrance. Ancient medical texts praise osmanthus for its medicinal qualities, but the flowers have many other uses. Their fragrance is used in perfumes, incense, and creams. They may also be added to foods, lending a sweet scent to teas and desserts. They grow throughout Japan and China to even as far south as Thailand.

More information on the Osmanthus Emperor himself may be found under "The Osmanthus Dominion" on page 145.

Not a week after Akitsu’s departure, the Empress and Yojirō came under the attack of assassins. Together they were able to overcome all of them save one, who stabbed Empress Tomoki with a poisoned blade and escaped. Yojirō, still disguised as the prince, was caught holding the dagger by the imperial guard. A palace sorcerer, fearing the prince had been replaced by an assassin, dispelled the fox’s disguise and Yojirō was forced to flee to the Osmanthus Dominion. In the aftermath, the entire kitsune community was blamed for the death of the Empress and fears of impostor yōkai in the Imperial Court began to surge. Relations between the Kitsune Clans and humans has since become icy and accusatory.

The true culprits behind the assassination of the Regent Empress is still a great mystery. While kitsune were blamed for the attack, many individuals stood to benefit from her death. Yoshitaka is widely considered the culprit, but nobles of rival imperial lineages and even the Shōgun herself had enough motive to order the Empress' assassination.

As the nobility bickered over who would lead the country next, Yoshitaka and his army attacked the capital. Without a sitting emperor, Miwa’s defenses were greatly weakened. Shōgun Utetsu’s military was ill-prepared to face the supernatural and was utterly outclassed by Yoshitaka’s might. She requested the aid of a young prodigy of the Tominaga Priest Clan, Tominaga Asae.

Together they strategized a trap for Yoshitaka. Their gambit proved successful, and Priestess Asae attempted to seal Yoshitaka for good. Though he was ultimately able to escape, Yoshitaka was greatly weakened by her efforts. Their success at defending the capital gave them great fame and popularity among the people. The Imperial Court accepted Shōgun Utetsu’s request to use her military coalition to bring order back to the country. Priestess Asae was appointed Head Priestess of the Myaku Grand Shrine, an esteemed title.

As the Shōgun worked to help Nippon recover from the Grand Rite, she was hindered by the nobility’s attempts to use her in their political games. She saw the Imperial Court as bureaucratic, petty, and utterly unable to be the stabilizing force Nippon deserved. She began to consolidate her own power so that she might one day be able to overthrow the Imperial Court. Though her true motivations were clandestine, Shōgun Utetsu made it a priority to find out what happened to Prince Akitsu, and bring the kitsune that impersonated him to justice for his alleged murder of the Empress. The Shōgun’s rhetoric afterwards would stoke the xenophobic fears of Nippon’s citizens, fueling distrust between yōkai and humans. Supporters flocked to her cause, inspired by her promises to bring order to the supernatural forces that worked to change the nation.

Akitsu would spend his formative years among spirits, yōkai, and kami in The World Beyond. He was raised under the watchful eye of the Osmanthus Emperor, who cared for the prince as his own son. It was tradition that the Osmanthus Emperor’s children were raised among commoners. Likewise, Akitsu was left in the care the Kawara household, a family of oni refugees. Akitsu and the family’s eldest child, Ōrun, were both educated at the Osmanthus Dominion’s finest royal academies. Both Ōrun and the kitsune Yojirō became Akitsu’s closest friends during his time in The World Beyond.

While Akitsu studied in the Osmanthus Dominion, nearly ten years of Shōgun authority would pass before he would make his return carrying one of the Sacred Treasures, the *Yasakani no Magatama*. Though she led with an iron fist, Shōgun Utetsu would prove popular among the warrior class, especially the samurai. The Imperial Court would continue to undermine the authority of her rule, but she persisted in gathering the might needed to overthrow them. When Akitsu

returned with a legitimate claim to the throne, Shōgun Utetsu's plans were dealt a great blow. Using surrogates, she attempted to cast doubt that he really was Prince Akitsu. But every test, every spell, and the Osmanthus Emperor himself would affirm the prince's identity and his right to become the next emperor.

As Akitsu approached the palace gates he presented the *Yasakani no Magatama*, and the doors opened as final proof of his legitimacy. The young Emperor's enthronement ceremony was performed soon afterwards. Inspired by the traditions and laws of the Osmanthus Dominion, Akitsu insisted that his enthronement be made open to the public.

It is upon Akitsu's ascension to the throne that the world presented as the base setting of Mysteries of the Yōkai begins, opening a new chapter for Nippon.

The Age of Spirits: An Era of Change

せいれいの時代 (Seirei no jidai)

Not two years have passed since Emperor Akitsu's enthronement. It is a time of upheaval. The islands of Nippon are changing, but the path these lands will take is not yet known. Though a new monarch sits upon the Chrysanthemum Throne, the people remain uneasy about their leaders. The corruption and decadence of Heian are not forgotten. Much of that indulgence remains despite the great shifts that have changed the nation. The populace worries that this new emperor will only perpetuate the attitudes of the Imperial Court and his predecessors.

Those who have met Akitsu in person, however, are beginning to feel a growing sense of hope. News of his deeds have yet to spread amongst the people, but the impact of his presence will no doubt resound through all of Nippon. The Emperor walks among his people and acts against traditions the nation has upheld for centuries. With the world still recovering from the consequences of his grandfather's actions, there are many who would benefit from the young Emperor's downfall. The Shōgun and nobles still amass power to take rule into their own hands and leave their emperor a mere figurehead.

While many factions of his government are prepared to vie for power, Emperor Akitsu is winning the people over with the promise of advancement and stability. This has changed the status quo. Those who were ready for a war of ideals now fear the loss of their gained momentum. Many are disappointed at losing the chance to wrest control for themselves. Their power depends on a weak emperor and shaky faith in leadership. But tensions remain high, for if the young Emperor makes a great enough mistake, it will become an opportunity to undermine his authority. Many eyes watch their leaders to see who will be the victor once the first strike is dealt.

Not all changes are brought on by the actions of mortals. The influx of supernatural activity has brought about much change as well. More than ever the people need protection from forces they do not understand, many of which they cannot even see. While a large number of yōkai are not inherently malicious, nearly all of them have the potential to be dangerous. The nation needs protection against vengeful apparitions that would seek to harm its people. Rumors speak of spirits forming alliances with mortal factions, or even coercing, controlling, and replacing human leaders. Creatures lurk in the capital, but who knows of their intentions?

Change has come to the spirit realms too. The cultures of spirits and humans have begun to intermingle. With the bridges between the worlds open, the heavens have begun to taint with the impurity and chaos present in mortal world. Likewise, places of demonic influence are swayed by the solidarity and empathy of mortal lives. Humans are straying into the spirit realms, and spirits are immigrating to Nippon. Items from the human world have become popular with spirits and the blending of mortal and spiritual cultures has opened up both worlds to innovation.

Augmented by the gifts of spirits and kami, master artisans have improved technology and brought forth advancements in farming, smithing and production. But not all cultural contact has been positive; much conflict has risen from culture clashes and territorial disputes. These quarrels are escalated by the Emperor's decree that places with great spiritual connection should be gifted to the spirits. Many of these lands are already claimed by people, and Akitsu's declaration has become a major point of contention.

The Imperial Regalia

Three divine artifacts were bestowed by the August Kami Amaterasu to her grandson Ninigi to remind him of his ancestry. Also known as the Sacred Treasures, the Regalia were passed down until they reached Ninigi's great-grandson, Jinmu, upon his ascent to the throne. Also known as the Three Sacred Treasures, they remain an integral part of the accession rites for a new emperor. Their presence is an important symbol of the legitimacy of rule. Aside from a chosen few no one besides the emperor can see them or hold them. They are enshrined separately in locations that are not known to the public.

The three original Imperial Regalia include:

- The Sword that Gathers the Clouds of Heaven (*Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi*)
- The Eight-Span Divine Mirror of Wisdom (*Yata no Kagami*)
- The Sacred Jewels of Benevolence (*Yasakani no Magatama*)

Each Regalia represents a cardinal virtue: the mirror symbolizes wisdom, the jewels benevolence, and the sword valor. Of the three the Mirror is considered most important. Before the Age of Spirits it was held within the Ise Grand Shrine where it is considered to hold the essence of Amaterasu herself and connect her presence to the world.

The Reign of Emperor Shōren came with the forging of two new Regalia:

- The Sky Bridging Bow
- The Earth Moving Monk's Spade

Though these lack the divine origins of their forebears, they are powerful artifacts in their own right.

All the Sacred Treasures, including the new Regalia, were lost in Emperor Shōren's Grand Rite Joining Heavens and Earth. Their loss was considered a grave omen for the nation as a whole. They are critical to Nippon's rite of succession for a new Emperor. Without even one of them, Nippon's throne had remained empty for over ten years.

When Emperor Shōren's grandson Akitsu returned to Nippon, he had the *Yasakani no Magatama* in hand, allowing him to ascend the throne. Recovering the other Regalia remains a high priority for the young Emperor. But a troubled nation requires his full attention. Emperor Akitsu must be discrete about his efforts to find the Sacred Treasures; if they were to fall into the wrong hands they could endanger all of Nippon.

Using the Regalia in your Campaigns: The Quest to Find the Sacred Treasures

If you are looking for ideas for a new campaign, consider using the search for the Imperial Regalia as a primary goal. Recovering the Sacred Treasures is an objective that can span many sessions. Since the Regalia are a collection of artifacts, they can be used to lead players to all kinds of diverse locations, conflicts, and opposition. The search for the Imperial Regalia might serve as a good background premise for players to explore the stories of their Characters.

Recovering the Regalia is an utmost priority for Emperor Akitsu. But it is a task he would not likely entrust to just anyone. Develop ways for the party to get the Emperor's attention and win his confidence. Missions from the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs provide a convenient avenue for them to do this.

The exact properties of each Regalia is left open for interpretation in the base setting, so GMs can tailor them to the needs of their stories and scenarios. While the Sacred Treasures are important to the enthronement of a new emperor, anyone who holds them does not necessarily have a legitimate claim to the throne.

Locations: A New World to Explore

To even the most seasoned explorers, Nippon has become a new frontier. The landscapes have grown, shifted, and changed, connecting to places and powers unfathomable to me. It is like the world has completely transformed. What was once familiar has become a world of discoveries to explore.

There are places that were once just beyond the borders of our material world, inaccessible to all but a few. It seems that they lie within Nippon now, as a part of our nation, with their people as a part of our citizenry. Many more yōkai nations and kingdoms lie beyond our borders in the spirit realms. Our world is now intimately connected with theirs and many others, each a potential gift and all not without their potential dangers.

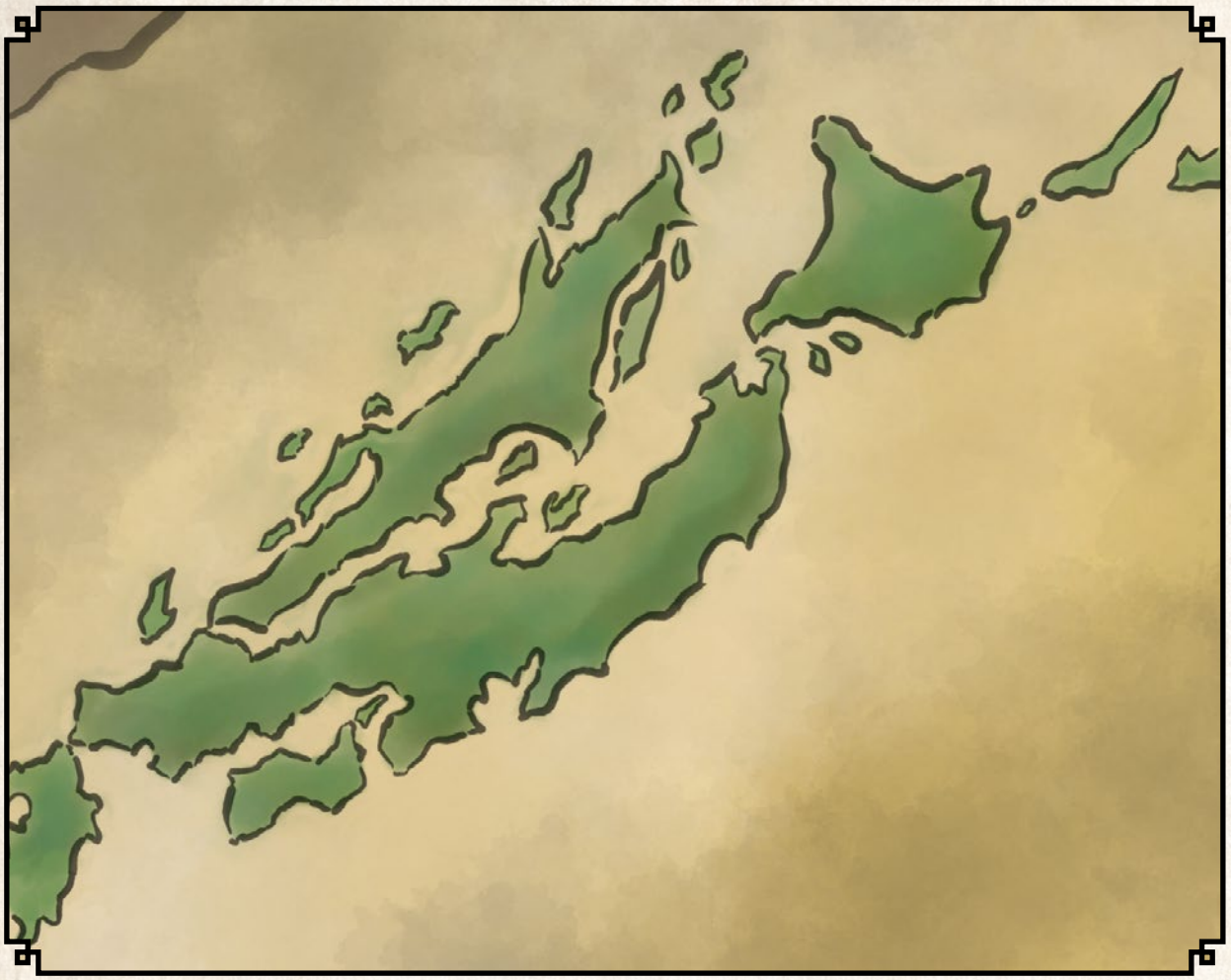
~ Misaki Toshonosuke, Head Archivist of the Miwa Central Library

Locations provide the stage for characters to explore in their sessions. Having well-developed locations can ensure that campaigns are consistent and adaptable. Player Characters can end up going in any direction, so it can be beneficial for Game Masters to know where locations are in relation to each other. Developed locations give players a flavorful ambiance for their adventures and can facilitate greater immersion. Some places can even end up with as much character as an important NPC.

Before the Age of Spirits, people described the relation of Nippon to the rest of the spiritual world in terms of here or there. The world of mortals — where Nippon and most humans can be found — is known as *Konoyo*, which can be translated as The World Here. Anything outside of it, where spirits, kami, or supernatural events originated, was described by contrast as *Anoyo*, which literally translates to The World Over There but can be interpreted as "The World Beyond". While numerous realms and kingdoms are now known to exist in The World Beyond, many people still refer to them using the dichotomy of *Konoyo* and *Anoyo* because it is only through the World Beyond that they are connected to the mortal plane.

Places of Power

Even if ordinary people have difficulty perceiving spirits, almost everyone can see spirits in places that are saturated with spiritual energy or close to the spirit realm. These places of power are attractive to all manner of spirits and yōkai, which makes them havens of spiritual activity. With the spirit realms closer to the world of mortals, these places of great spiritual connection have expanded, and a few continue to grow. New places of power are being discovered as well. Some places of power are beginning to encroach upon the borders of human settlements, blurring the line between mortal life and the spirit realm, and causing clashes as these vastly different worlds collide.



Nippon during the Age of Spirits

Konoyo: The Earthly Realm of Mortals

Most of Mysteries of the Yōkai takes place in the mortal world and focuses on the concerns of the people who live there. In the span of a decade, Nippon has changed much from the influence of The World Beyond. Connection to the spirit realms not only brought new phenomena and environments, but they changed the very face and structure of the land itself.

Geography

Aside from the inclusion of several new landmasses, the geography of Nippon shares much in common with real-world Japan. Many landmarks and locations are still present, save for a couple that have been impacted by the events of the setting. Exact changes to geography have, for the most part, been left open for players and Game Masters to define for themselves.

Within the islands of Nippon are many provinces, each with its own geographic features, history, and cultural institutions. They are autonomous and ruled by a landlord or local clan. This degree of autonomy leads to provinces with a diverse array of ruling styles, prosperity, and dispositions. Neighboring territories could be vastly different in terms of their treatment of yōkai. Most provinces had representatives within the Imperial Court, but this was not always the case. Often the coalitions of local power proved more practical than dealing with the bureaucracy of the government. Inter-provincial conflict is commonplace and for the most part the Imperial government does not interfere.

Provinces are ordered and organized into large regions based on their locations. These regions were known as the Hachidō, or Eight Circuits. Each Circuit

was defined by a major roadway that ran through each internal province's capital city. The roadways are all connected with clear paths leading to Nippon's capital. For example, the Tōkaidō, or Eastern Sea Circuit, was vital in the previous era for connecting the Heian Capital to the eastern coastline.

Certain locations around the nation have been venerated since ancient times as places of power. Throughout the Age of Man, the significance of these places waned, only tended by pilgrims — many of whom only did so out of adherence to tradition. As the Age of Spirits dawned, it became apparent that many had true spiritual significance. Places of power are gathering points for ki and other magical energies, making them irresistible to all kinds of spirits and creatures. They are also known to influence the environment around them; when the power within is significant, they can alter their surroundings in drastic ways.

Hazama: The Wings of Nippon

羽間島（はざまとう）

Hazama is a major difference between the geography of Nippon and real-world Japan. It is a landmass whose size nearly rivals that of Honshū, Japan's largest island. Much of the content in the Setting Guide is focused around and within the islands of Hazama. The notable locations detailed in this section likewise are nearly all found on the island.

Hazama is home to Nippon's current capital, which was moved from Yamashiro to the province of Seigahara. The island is also home to several new provinces, but most of these are left up to the Game Master and players to define for their Characters and scenarios. When starting a new campaign, it is a good idea for Game Masters to define their important locations, drawing from this book, their own ideas, as well as Character backstories to populate the world. "World Building" on page 218 in the Game Master's Guide has more details about what GMs can do to plan their settings and geography.

While it does not exist in real-world Japan, in the context of the setting Hazama has existed since Nippon's formation, created as one of the Eight Great Islands. It replaces the real-world Oki Islands, which form part of Hazama in an area known to Nippon as Oki Province.

Hokkaidō and the Nation of Yezo

It is relevant to note that the island of Hokkaidō, along with a sizeable fifth of the main island, was not yet a part of the nation but another country known as Yezo. Yezo was ruled by the Ainu people, often referred to as the "Emishi" in that time period. As Nippon began to expand its borders into Yezo during the Heian period, relations between Yezo and Nippon are strained. As Shōgun Utetsu continues to push for aggressive skirmishes into Ainu territory, tensions between the Ainu and the people of Nippon are at an all time high. Border towns between Nippon and Yezo are conflicted, as they used to have amicable relationships and freely traded with each other.

Yezo is not a major focus of the base setting, but the situation there is full of story opportunities. It is important enough to influence the underlying political climate of Nippon.

Notable Locations in Nippon

Seigahara: Dragonfly Plains

蜻ヶ原の州（せいがはらのしゅう）

The province of Seigahara was named for its dazzling array of dragonflies, long revered as messengers from the spirits. The insect thrives alongside rice crops, and the lush plantations that litter the province's countryside provide them with an ideal environment. Seigahara is nestled between mountains, and its valleys are well known for their natural beauty. It is in these fertile plains that the previous Emperor Shōren decided to move his throne. It may have been the ideal spiritual properties of the location that first interested him, but it was Seigahara's beautiful vistas that won him over.

The Ritual Bells of Miwa

The capital city is known for its bells, but a particular set of them give Miwa its name. They are enormous versions of the ancient and mysterious ritual bells known as dōtaku. The dōtaku are enclosed in towers that dwarf all other structures in the capital. The one hundred and eight towers are arranged in four large circles that surround different sections of the city. The three largest circles overlap each other equally, each enclosing the palace grounds at the city's center. Next to the palace are three districts where each pair of circles overlaps, and further out are three larger districts, each within only one of the circles, and named for them.

Each set of dōtaku is cast of a different material: the first is cast of bronze, the second of silver, and the third of gold. The final set exist atop the palace walls, forged of an unknown iridescent material. Their materials give each bell a unique and melodious sound. All the bells are adorned with ornate carvings of religious, magical, and alchemical designs.

The dōtaku ring at regular intervals throughout the day, following internal alchemical and celestial calculations as well as the sun's location in the sky. Citizens of Miwa use the bells for precise timekeeping unfamiliar to most outside of the busy city. The gold bells ring in the morning, the silver ones in the afternoon, and the bronze in the evening. The set surrounding the palace was originally thought to be silent — until the Age of Spirits, when yōkai and attuned individuals discovered their soft tones at night. Unlike other bells, the dōtaku atop Miwa's walls ring without needing anyone to strike them. How they do this is unknown to residents. Those who have seen the inside of the towers mention intricate mechanisms within. In the face of a great calamity it is said that the bells are capable of protecting the capital and the nation, but how they do so is a secret known only to members of the royal family.

Miwa-kyō: The Three Ringed Capital

三輪京（みわきょう）

Miwa, Nippon's capital and largest city, is located at the estuary of the mighty and glimmering Kihoku River. Before it was renamed Miwa, the city of Aisei thrived from its proximity to Seigahara's bountiful resources. Since Emperor Shōren chose it as the site of his new palace over thirty years ago, the city has almost doubled in size.

When he remodeled the city's central districts, the previous Emperor built his palace and its surrounding areas according to strict alchemical and magical standards. For this reason, no other city in Nippon boasts the magical protections that surround Miwa. The city's design speaks of Shōren's priorities when he remodeled it. Many locations and parks throughout the city seem to have no purposes beyond their geomantic, celestial, or alchemical properties. While aesthetically beautiful, these sites can light up with an alarming degree of arcane activity. Though they can be startling, no major harm to citizens has ever been recorded.

Miwa's walls are peppered with countless bells of all shapes and sizes, arranged in a manner that would seem random to most people. Few know the exact purposes these bells serve, but they are said to be from locations all throughout the nation. For the most part the bells remain silent, and only stories and rumors exist for the few times they have rung. The greatest collection of these bells are centered in the Hall of Bells within the palace complex. The bells in the Hall ring in response to their pairs scattered all over Nippon.

Nearly all of Nippon's government is centered in Miwa's Administrative Quarter, a walled district near the front gates to the Imperial Palace. One of Emperor Akitsu's first decrees upon ascending the throne was to order that the gates to the Administrative Quarter remain open for citizens to interact with their officials and air their grievances. The district's courthouses give citizens a level playing-field in order to better hold people and institutions accountable for their crimes.

There is something for everyone in the busy streets of Miwa. People from all walks of life make their homes within the city's walls. But alongside its pristine inner districts, Miwa is also home to forgotten slums and shadowy boroughs; places where criminal enterprise can flourish. With Nippon in a state of uncertainty, those seeking power will inevitably find themselves drawn

to the capital, where they can attempt to influence the seat of Nippon's power, it's ministries, and the Imperial Court.

A city as large and powerful as Miwa attracts all kinds of dangers, especially those of the supernatural kind. Special officers of the newly formed Bureau Department of Supernatural Defense (known as Warders to the locals), have been key to ensuring the safety of citizens and officials from these dangerous elements in the Age of Spirits. While their services used to be reserved exclusively for the nobility, the elite, and the Imperial family; the establishment of the Bureau as an institution for the public has allowed Warders to provide their expertise to all kinds of organizations. Their integration with the Kebiishi Police Commissioners has allowed them to expand their reach throughout Nippon. Regional police headquarters, such as those in the capital, often retain a Warder as a consultant for situations involving particularly dangerous yōkai, spirits, human sorcerers, and even kami who have been corrupted by Taint or have fallen to their ara-mitama form, which expresses their wild, violent, or untamed side of their nature.

Previously, the only reliable form of law enforcement came from the Samurai allied with the Shōgun. But the combined efforts of Bureau Agents, Warders, and Kebiishi police have been able to build trust with citizens in their ability to assist and protect them. While indirect, this change has dealt the greatest blow to the Shōgun's political power by putting the people's trust back into the nation's institutions.

Akitsu had decreed that both humans and spirits alike were welcome in Miwa, and while integration has been slow and communities remain divided, most residents of the city are accepting of their yōkai neighbors — even if most of the nobility in the Imperial Court are not.

During his reign, Emperor Shōren was seen as crazed for his meticulous restructuring of the city, but after his Grand Rite the marvels of his capital impress all who enter its gates. In the entirety of the world there is no other city like Miwa.

The Drunken Bear

There are numerous places for one to find a drink in the capital. Fancy light beverages can be had in quiet ambiance in the rich quarters, while in the poor sections the sake comes with a free watering-down and fistfight. Among all the choices for those seeking a drink, The Drunken Bear tends to stand out regardless of one's social standing or ability to pay.

Even before stepping into the bar, visitors are greeted by the mounted taxidermied bear head over the door. The bear is notable for having an eye-patch, and even more notable for the fact that the eye-patch tends to change which eye it covers, based on the season or the owner's whim.

The owner himself, a man by the name of Maguma, is an impressively large specimen, and many whisper that the name of the bar comes from the fact that Maguma, is, himself, a bear yōkai who shapeshifts into human form. Maguma will tell you the name comes from the fact that he wrestled and killed a bear at age three. From night to night, if asked (and depending on how drunk he is), Maguma will either confirm or deny that the bear outside the bar is the same one he wrestled.

The Drunken Bear is populated by all manner of visitors due to its incredible selection of rare brews. Maguma is always eager to buy samples of new drinks, and then put the ones he enjoys on sale in his establishment. Due to the speed these become available, and the quantities he provides to his patrons, some believe Maguma is possibly one of the most skilled brewmasters in Nippon, able to accurately duplicate anything from a taste. Others theorize that he uses alchemy or supernatural tricks to create the brews. Those who have found themselves kicked out of the establishment for various reasons tend to spread rumors that Maguma simply places his own house blend in a fancy bottle and calls it something else. The fact that The Drunken Bear has a standing rule that each patron may only order the same drink once in their life is, according to Maguma, not because of this, but because he insists that people taste what the rest of the world has to offer. Like almost everything related to The Drunken Bear, it's likely no one will ever know the truth.

Mount Hado: The Gate to the Heavens

羽戸山（はどさん）

Before the Age of Spirits, Mount Hado was a humble peak with little indication that it was any different beyond the numerous empty shrines and *torii* gates that littered its boundaries designating it as a sacred place. After the Grand Rite, several mountains grew to soaring new heights. But it was Hado that rose highest, and it is now one of the tallest peaks in Nippon. A great spectral chain erupts out of the peak from deep within the mountain, connecting the earth to the heavens. Emperor Shōren used several chains like these to tether the heavens to the earth. Only the one at Mount Hado remains.

Lush and pristine plant life flourishes all around the mountain base. Upon connecting the place to the Celestial Plains, nature grew wild and rampant. Mount Hado's forests are dense and difficult to navigate, but pathways to mountain shrines remain clear. The territory surrounding the mountain is well guarded by kami who stand vigilant against trespassers seeking to enter the Celestial Plains. The sacred realm of the kami is harmed by its proximity to the mortal world, and damaged by spiritual pollution from Yomi, the realm of decay in The World Beyond. Many kami have weakened as a result of this erosion of the Celestial Plains and are more dependent on worshipers and veneration than ever.

Reaching Greater Heights

Some Players may be eager to explore Mount Hado right away, but they should be wary as the challenges and stories that could occur there might not be best suited for the beginning of Campaigns. Kami are tied to the events of the world by their nature and thus will be reshaped as the Players adventure through the world and leave their marks on it. Even the balance of power between kami will be affected by the way Players interact with the setting. Players may wish to progress further through the Campaign and become established in the story and setting the Game Master has built before meeting these kami.

It is also worth considering that the kami on Mount Hado are very powerful and thus face powerful threats. Players would do well to wait until the party is strong enough to face these challenges. Conversely, when playing a Campaign with a higher than normal power level, then it might be logical for the Players to begin exploring Mount Hado immediately as these powerful Characters should be able to stand side by side with the kami there.

The Myaku Grand Shrine

脈神宮（みゃくじんぐう）

Myaku Grand Shrine is a mighty complex to the east of the capital, at the edge of the forests that surround the base of Mount Hado. The Grand Shrine holds the *Yasakani no Magatama*, the only Imperial Regalia to be recovered after the Grand Rite.

The inner sanctums of Shinto temples house *yorishiro*, sacred artifacts that house the presence of a kami. Shinto priests perform rituals in order to call and invite a kami into the shrine. Once a kami has occupied a *yorishiro*, even if they are no longer actively present, the sacred object still holds a connection to them. The inner sanctum is often not open to the public, who must beseech the kami from afar.

Myaku Grand Shrine's inner sanctum is carefully maintained and well guarded, as it not only houses the *yorishiro* of a great kami, it also keeps one of the imperial regalia. Like many larger shrines, the Grand Shrine holds the *yorishiro* of several kami alongside the central one. The complex is well known for its unique architecture built almost entirely of the tallest hinoki trees, each blessed and given rites. The trees grow prominently through the grounds, perfuming the entirety of the Grand Shrine with their characteristic scent. The largest hinoki in Nippon grows within the shrine complex and is said to house a powerful tree kami.

The Grand Shrine has been a powerful political force in the Imperial Court. Myaku's leadership has often been the focus of rivalry. The Head Priest of the shrine recently underwent a regime change, and the capable and beloved Tominaga Asae has stepped down in favor of Miyahara Kousuke, who is more willing to listen to the whims of noble families.

Shrine Pilgrimages

Grand Shrines are the most powerful and prominent shrines in Nippon. Every year thousands of travelers make pilgrimages to see the Myaku Grand Shrine. It is common for people to visit prominent shrines at the beginning of a new year to receive the blessings for the coming year. For years of particular importance they attempt longer journeys to visit a Grand Shrine to pay their respects to the great kami enshrined within.

When one pilgrim obtained receipts for scriptures they donated to various shrines, they realized that when collected together, the papers gave a record of the pilgrimage itself. Soon it became trendy for people to bring scrolls and folded books to shrines, where they could receive a *shuin* stamp or written calligraphy as proof of their visit.

The pilgrimage scrolls became so popular that books with pre-inscribed pages were created to direct people along paths to common shrines, encouraging shared journeys. Each Circuit Region in Nippon has its own set of pilgrimage scrolls. Completing one for a Circuit Region is considered a momentous achievement, especially for the Circuits that include a Grand Shrine.

No one has been able to complete a Pilgrimage Scroll for all Eight Circuits, but many dream of doing so.

Enbashi: The City that Spans the Divide

縁橋（えんばし）

For much of Nippon's history, Enbashi was an enigma. Despite its well-lit streets and developed districts, the city has always had a reputation for eeriness and an affiliation with the supernatural. The surrounding province of Kunnebetsu has close ties to the Imperial family, though it has managed to remain outside of the influence of Imperial Court politics. Throughout history, it has managed to repel multiple incursions by enterprising clans and court nobles seeking to gain more territory. How it does this was often described as witchcraft or the work of curses and spirits.

Enbashi is unlike other cities as most of its establishments remain closed during the day and open

only at nightfall. Two hundred years ago the earliest records speak of the poorest of villages of no notable value, which then grew into a busy and affluent city in the span of a few years. Most people conclude that only supernatural forces could have caused this rapid change, but for a long time this was patently denied by city residents.

When Enbashi was still a rural village, on the night of a full moon, a vision would appear of another land across the river — but those who went there would find nothing but the fragrance of incense and osmanthus. Only by crossing through the river at a particular place did the villagers find a brand new world known as the Osmanthus Dominion. They were welcomed by the local spirits and given a feast and parade in honor of their visit. The Dominion is ruled by a wise figure known as the Osmanthus Emperor, who offered his protection to the poor village of Enbashi. While grateful for his aid, the residents of Enbashi know him as the Ano-tennō, or the "Emperor on the Other Side" because they consider themselves citizens of Nippon first and foremost. In the following years, the Osmanthus Emperor sent diplomats and envoys to the Imperial family. When Akitsu's parents needed to hide him from the curse of Yoshitaka, they left him in the capable hands of the Osmanthus Emperor who cared for him as if he were a son.

Enbashi is built on only one side of the Nigiri river, and the opposite bank remains as untouched wilds and is considered sacred ground. The city's most iconic structure is the enormous Garden Bridge, which is regarded as an architectural marvel. The bridge is pure white and covered in climbing vines and fragrant osmanthus in perpetual bloom. Yet the Garden Bridge only spans half of the Nigiri river.

The third hour past midnight is known as the hour of the Ox. It is seen with apprehension by most people in Nippon as it is when the boundaries between worlds are at their weakest. But the residents of Enbashi rejoice, for this is when the gate to the Osmanthus Dominion opens at full strength. The Garden Bridge connects to its pair in the Dominion and residents can freely travel between worlds, regardless of their spiritual power. Many of Enbashi's citizens make their livings catering to their spirit visitors. From this close relationship, Enbashi has cutting-edge technology and goods that can be found nowhere else in Nippon. It greatly benefits from the Osmanthus Emperor's protection and well-developed trade with nations in The World Beyond, though it also inherits some of his enemies as well.

Heian City: the Ruins of a Capital

平安京の廃墟（へいあん京のはいきょ）

The Heian capital was once the heart of Nippon. The great Eight Circuits all met up in the provinces surrounding Heian, giving the city unprecedented access to the bounties of Nippon. The great technological and cultural advancements that occurred within its walls have changed the nation for generations to come.

The city was built according to the principles of geomancy, but this was not enough for Emperor Shōren when he rose to the throne. His interest in the arcane led him to search for a better place to conduct his research. He eventually constructed a palace in Seigahara near the city of Aisei. After six years of magical-focused renovations, Aisei was renamed to Miwa and the Emperor declared that his newly remade city was to be the capital of Nippon. Shōren felt that he could only protect Nippon if its seat of power was well protected.

When Emperor Shōren conducted his Grand Rite Joining the Heavens and Earth, Heian fell deeper into tragedy as one of his anchors fell upon the city, destroying a significant portion of it. The Rite caused a great rupture within the inner district, creating a breach which leads directly to the deathly realm of Yomi. Since then, kami and yōkai have made many unsuccessful attempts to completely seal the rift. It still continues to leak tainted ki into the mortal plane. While nothing else seems to be able to escape it for now, the seals will not last for long. The spiritual environment has become so poisonous in the inner city that few dare to enter it. So long as they keep themselves free of excess taint and avoid the inner city, yōkai are able to survive in Heian.

Anoyo: The Phantasmal Realms of the Spirits

The World Beyond is unfathomable and shifting. Despite its name, there are an untold number of worlds and realms within and connected to it. Much of The World Beyond lacks the stability of the mortal realm, shifting with the thoughts and feelings of the spirits and beings near them. Those with great spiritual power are able to manipulate and shift the environment around them. Some are so powerful that entire new and stable worlds can form around them as reflections of their thoughts, life, or spirit. Sometimes all it takes to form a new world within The World Beyond is the collective thoughts and feelings of a group of people or spirits around one attuned person. They can be as small as a single room, or as large as an entire new world. The more stable a world is, the more difficult it is to manipulate.

Locations are not the only things that can be formed from the fabric of The World Beyond. Strong feelings, emotions, and collective thoughts can easily birth new spirits. Most of these are mere figments, which are fleeting and will fade away. On occasion, spirits form with the ability to sustain their own consciousness and ki. While this can also happen in the mortal world, it more readily occurs in The World Beyond. For the most part, the spirits created this way are harmless, but the essence of the idea, feeling, or spirit that formed it defines its nature. A dangerous idea can birth a dangerous spirit. Some kami have even originated from this process.

Ukihashi: The Drifting Bridges

浮き橋（うきはし）

The most important features of The World Beyond are known are the Ukihashi or Drifting Bridges. They connect all the separate places that exist within The World Beyond. The Ukihashi have physical structures and architecture resembling real-world bridges. They have the capability to shift and extend across The World Beyond to distant destinations. Using the Bridges can turn a trip that would take months into one that might take a few days or even a few hours.

Despite their seemingly solid structures, most Drifting Bridges twist and bend with the fabric of The World Beyond, branching and connecting to new networks and pathways within. It can be notoriously difficult to navigate the Ukihashi, as the same path does not always connect the same places. This is why many travelers rely on Bridges that are fixed, connecting two worlds together no matter how separate they may become. On occasion a Bridge may be bound by powerful magic, allowing even mundane travelers to push the Bridge to destinations in a more reliable manner so long as they have the correct spell or key.

Gateways to Drifting Bridges can appear just about anywhere or as just about any object, but the most common shape they take resemble the red torii gates at the entrances to shrines and sacred locations. Entrances to kami domains are always preceded by similar structures, and likewise, the torii of many shrines connect to parallel locations in the Eternal Realm of Kami, bridging them to the mortal plane. A kami's influence through this connection makes a shrine's grounds into a special kind of place of power. Those with special connection to that kami or have its blessing can pass almost freely into that kami's domain. Even normal humans can reach the kami's presence by dreaming or meditating on the shrine grounds, likewise the gate can be opened by a sorcerer with the right spell.

Access to the Bridge in the mortal world does not always appear as a solid object; it can even be invisible until a hapless wanderer stumbles through the portal. But once they take their first steps on the actual Drifting Bridge, the gateway always appears as a structure resembling a torii gate of a material and design dependent on its linked locations.

For much of the rise of human civilization, the gateways to the Drifting Bridges remained closed save for a few at venerated shrines or places of great spiritual power. The distance between the mortal world and The

World Beyond drifted further apart, making traversing the Bridges longer and more dangerous. Not all travel between worlds requires an Ukihashi, however. If locations in separate realms become close enough, travel between them can happen almost seamlessly. Though they will not remain connected for long unless they are anchored by magic. The Ukihashi are not the only means to travel between worlds, but they are the most accessible.

Ame no Ukihashi: The Bridge to the Celestial Plains

The most important of the Drifting Bridges is the Ame no Ukihashi, which connected the mortal world with the Celestial Plains, Takamagahara, where the heavenly kami reside. The Drifting Bridge is one of the first in existence. It was the pedestal upon which Izanagi and Izanami used their jeweled spear to set the universe in motion.

Technically the Heavenly Bridge can be summoned by a sorcerer or a powerful priest, but its gate remains firmly shut on both sides. Even if someone were to pry the gate open, they would have to somehow open the other side as well.

Yūkai: The Hazy Realm

幽界（ゆうかい）

Of all the realms in The World Beyond, the Yūkai, or Hazy Realm, is the closest to the mortal world. It borders the mortal world like a shadow cast onto The World Beyond, reflecting places, thoughts, and even the people as hazy imitations. The two realms are closely tied together, making it easy to pass from one to the other without using a Drifting Bridge. Many people have turned the wrong corner only to end up lost in the twisting passages of the place. Those lost in the Yūkai can find that much of it looks familiar, but in truth the realm has no solid form. What they see is simply an echo of the mortal world on the other side of the boundary, or the Hazy Realm reacting to their own thoughts and memories.

The Yūkai is a chilling place and a thick fog lingers through most of the realm, obscuring both sounds and vision. Places in Nippon that are connected to the Hazy Realm are noticeably colder than the surrounding areas. Gateways to the Yūkai can create odd phenomena involving chilly fog billowing from a closed doorway or underneath a tree.

Save for a few pockets, much of the Yūkai is empty and devoid of intentional residents; the shifting and quiet loneliness would drive most mad. What denizens can be found are often there against their will, though there are those who benefit from the convenient hiding places that the Yūkai provides. Lost spirits often end up trapped in the Yūkai, clinging to their identity and personal traumas. The Yūkai provides them with comforting but pale figments of the things they cared about in life. Many hauntings happen from places in the Yūkai that are connected to places in the mortal world. Vengeful ghosts in particular make their homes in the Yūkai where there are figments to indulge in and little light to chase them away. They wait until nightfall in the mortal world to go hunting for ki.

Despite the oppressive atmosphere throughout the Yūkai, small stable pockets of clear sky exist within its depths. Entire communities, towns, and even kingdoms have formed within the safety they provide. Those who know where to look can find gateways to these places, which are havens for yōkai communities.

The Osmanthus Dominion

木犀の地（もくせいのち）

The Dominion of the Osmanthus Emperor lies within a special area of the Yūkai that is particularly close to the mortal world. His kingdom is filled with the sweet perfume of the osmanthus flowers with which he and his domain are associated. Though it is bordered by the billowing clouds of the Yūkai, the skies above the Osmanthus Dominion are clear and bright. The Dominion has a climate similar to Nippon's, with a notable difference: when it is night in the mortal world, it is daytime in the Dominion. Frequent travelers between the worlds can end up being nocturnal for this reason. A major city in Nippon known as Enbashi has a direct connection to the Osmanthus Dominion. It caters to the spirits visiting from The World Beyond. Enbashi becomes a lot more active after nightfall, when traversal between the worlds is easier for spirits.

Residents of the Dominion come from all over The World Beyond. Many are refugees of conflicts within the spirit world seeking the relative safety the Osmanthus Emperor provides. Though he is a kind and wise spirit, the Emperor on the Other Side has many secrets. Many believe that he established the Dominion to protect (or possibly imprison) something of great importance or danger that lies within the kingdom. Though he has never mentioned what he safeguards, it is clear that forces within The World Beyond seek to claim it for themselves.

Exploring the Osmanthus Dominion

The Osmanthus Dominion is considered the safest place for mortals in The World Beyond. The sprawling capital at the heart of the Dominion is a great place for Characters to begin a Campaign that focused around the spirit worlds. While the influence and magic of the Osmanthus Emperor protects the Dominion from attack, there are wilds beyond its borders filled with dangers just waiting to break in and plunder its treasures. It takes great power to keep the Dominion a stable place in The World Beyond, and such power is coveted by several factions who would like nothing better than to see the Osmanthus Emperor fall. The Emperor has many enemies, but most of the citizens of his lands have no idea why.

The Osmanthus Emperor himself is an enigmatic figure. Though he generally resembles a human, he is many times larger and has leaves and flowers for hair. He is rarely seen in public, and even more rarely addresses his citizens. Whatever magics he wields to protect the Dominion are a drain on his stamina and he often appears unwell or exhausted. Though Akitsu has very fond memories and pleasant associations with him, it isn't clear if what Akitsu saw was the true side of the Osmanthus Emperor. Game Masters are encouraged to define the Osmanthus Emperor for themselves. Though he is seen as a kind and wise figure in the present day, he might not have been so in his distant past. Perhaps he might have done something he wishes to atone for.

While life in the Dominion is peaceful for the most part, the land is not without its troubles. The land is protected by powerful spirits created by the Osmanthus Emperor himself. They are able to fight off many of the overt and aggressive attacks from invading forces. Instead, enemies use insurgents and agents, to destabilize it from within. As a nation within The World Beyond, the Dominion must ensure that emotions of fear, anger, or malice do not become too powerful within its borders. Such emotions have power and weight in the spirit world and can breed untold dangers. Insurgents can use these emotions against the Dominion. They manipulate to bring out the fear, trauma, and distrust. Many of them also use dark magics to keep their activities secret, wielding Taint offensively to corrupt or even replace other citizens.

Aside those who followed the Osmanthus Emperor to these lands centuries ago, there are no native citizens of the Dominion. It's relative safety and openness in The World Beyond cause it to be a haven for spirits and yōkai of all kinds. In particular, it is home to a large number of refugee communities, with new arrivals almost every day. Though they may trust the Osmanthus Emperor, distrust between groups is still common.

Despite a long peaceful history within the Dominion, the oni communities are still considered with fear. Many of the other refugee groups only became refugees because of the actions of oni tyrants, their feelings and fears towards oni are difficult to overcome. These inter-communal conflicts have worsened under the manipulation of forces outside the Dominion.

When the Grand Rite was completed, some of Dominion Lands became connected or drawn into Nippon. The Osmanthus Emperor graciously gifted these lands to the people of Nippon. This move that was quite unpopular among the wealthy of his country, who may have lost some valuable or potentially dangerous resources.

Mukai: The Dream Realm

夢界（むかい）

The Mukai, or Dream Realm, is the mysterious realm of dreams and visions. Within the Dream Realm, the thoughts and whims of dreamers can greatly influence the environment around them. Each dream can become an elaborate world unto itself, though these are often as fleeting and temporary as the dreams that created them. While not every dream takes place within the Mukai, all dreams can bring people close to its borders.

Some scholars argue that the Mukai is not its own distinct realm at all, but a special part of the Yūkai. While the two realms have their differences, they share many similarities. Like the Hazy Realm, most of the Mukai is covered in mist. In the Dream Realms this mist takes the form of fluffy clouds of all colors. Clouds in close proximity to a dream change colors depending on whether the dream is pleasant or a nightmare.

The Dream Realms are filled with all manner of strange and wondrous creatures. These dream denizens are special yōkai that are adapted to the environment of the Mukai. Though some are born from dreams themselves, most have their own life cycles and means of propagation. On occasion a dreamscape within the Mukai can become stable and persistent. Without a direct connection to a dreamer, these places gain a life of their own. These stable dreams are the perfect environments for dream yōkai.

For the most part, the denizens are content with their existence in the Mukai. Those that aspire to influence the mortal world are often of a more sinister nature. These so-called Muma, or Dream Demons, are dangerous beings who wish take the wonders of the mortal realm for themselves. They seek the dreams of attuned individuals as a gate into the waking world, manipulating dreamers with crafted nightmares and visions to forward their agenda. Through the careful construction of dreams, Dream Demons incite their victims to form new yōkai agents in the waking world, open mystical gateways, or open themselves to possession.

Even though most mortals can access the Dream Realm when they are asleep, true travel between the two planes is quite difficult. Despite the Mukai's proximity to the mortal world, bridges between the two are rare and accessible to only a few. It is for this reason that Dream Demons must often act through agents or the possession of attuned individuals.

Tokoyo: The Eternal Realm of Kami

常世（とこよ）

Kami are believed to reside in the distant place known as Tokoyo, or the Eternal Realm. Much of the Eternal Realm remains a mystery; few people know of its internal structure and workings. The Tokoyo is one of the largest realms in The World Beyond. It is so large that it contains realms that hold worlds of their own.

The known parts of the Tokoyo are divided roughly into three: the watery oceans known as Umi, the soaring heavens known as Ama, and the mountainous peaks known as Tsuchi. Borders between the Eternal Realm and other locations in The World Beyond are fuzzy. Locations in the spirit world that border the Tokoyo tend to exhibit the qualities of the places within it. *Ryūjin*, the guardian kami of the oceans, resides in Ryūgū-jō, a place that borders Umi in the Eternal Realm. Sōjōbō's Roost on Mount Kurama is said to be close to the peaks of Tsuchi, but is unique in that it also has a physical location in the mortal world.

The Celestial Plains

高天ヶ原（たかまがはら）

Takamagahara, or the Celestial Plains, lies in Ama, the most heavenly domain within Tokoyo. Only kami that are well-venerated can take residence on the Celestial Plains. Takamagahara is the home to the Imperial Family's most honored of kami, Amaterasu, Celestial Kami of the Sun, who basks the realm in her heavenly light. Most earthly kami have not seen the Celestial Plains, and live in entirely different parts of the Tokoyo that are closer or parallel to the mortal world.

The Celestial Plains is mentioned in several important myths and legends. The purpose of Emperor Shōren's Grand Rite to Join the Heavens and Earth was to bring the Celestial Plains closer to Nippon. He wished to begin about a new Age of Kami, but the ritual did not work as planned, and instead had catastrophic consequences. While he succeeded in bringing the Celestial Plains closer to Nippon it was not enough to achieve his goals, and the Age of Spirits began instead.

Yomi:
The Corrupted Realm

黄泉（よみ）

Yomi is the tomb of the universe, where the ideals of taint and rot are embodied. It is a dark and cavernous place of nightmarish creature that embody death, destruction, and decay. The taint of Yomi is a powerful influence upon the mortal world. Influence of that corruption is said to be what causes mortals to age, wither, and die. While Shōren's Grand Rite was able to move the Tokoyo and the Celestial Plains closer to The World Here, it moved Yomi closer as well. The close proximity of Tokoyo to both Yomi and the mortal world has caused great harm to kami.

No one knows who rules Yomi, but powerful influences lie within it. It is likely that the Corrupted Realm has kami of its own. A notable resident is the kami Izanami, who upon giving birth to the fire kami Kagutsuchi died and descended to Yomi.

From the Writings of Emperor Shōren:

Izanagi and Izanami's Descent to Yomi

Upon setting the universe into motion, the kami Izanami and Izanagi together birthed new lands and kami to populate the heavens and earth. Izanami gave birth to multiple kami of earth, metal, water, wood, and fire, but upon conceiving the fire kami Kagutsuchi, she succumbed to fatal burns. Izanami was the first kami to receive funeral rites, and she passed into the realm of Yomi.

Stricken with grief at the loss of his wife, Izanagi made the journey to Yomi to bring her back. Deep within the cavernous tomb at the entrance to the inner palace, he was greeted by Izanami. He implored her to return with him. But he had come too late; Izanami had just consumed the food of Yomi and could no longer leave. After a moment of thought, Izanami asked her husband to wait while she talked to the kami lords of Yomi. She made him promise not to look upon her until she was done.

Izanagi agreed, and waited with patience. But she was gone for a long time. He could no longer wait, and made a torch to find his wife. When he found her, the light showed the truth of her appearance. Izanami was rotting, covered in death and decay. Izanagi took a step back in shock. He had broken his promise to Izanami. Enraged, she sent the shikome, the hags of Yomi, after him.

Relentless, the shikome chased after Izanagi, growing more and more in number. He used his abilities to delay their attacks until he could reach the outside world. Just as Izanami herself arrived to grasp his robe, Izanagi pushed a boulder to cover the opening to Yomi. His wife threatened to curse all his beloved creations to die if he were to trap her there. He responded that he would ensure more would be born if she did so. Izanagi then sealed the entrance shut, separating it from the land of the living. Thus began birth and death.

Upon going to the river to cleanse himself of the taint of Yomi, the pollution that sullied him formed into two powerful kami of disorder and evil. To defend the world from those great evils, Izanagi's ritual purification gave birth to more kami to protect creation from their malison. Most notable of these were the sacred trinity of celestial kami: Amaterasu, kami of the sun, who was born as he cleansed his left eye, and her brother Tsukuyomi, kami of the moon, who came into being as he washed his right. Finally, Susano-o kami of the tempestuous seas was born as Izanagi cleaned his nose.

The Powers that Be

The social hierarchy of old has been disrupted. Every day the world changes. People once bound to the circumstances of their birth are now able to seize their destinies for themselves. As this Age of Spirits dawned, the balance of power was thrown askew. A young emperor with idealistic ambitions has divided his government. Growing numbers of people with mystical abilities can no longer be easily suppressed if they ever choose to rise against the established systems of power. Influxes of yōkai populations and factions have led to spirits having a greater influence on the decisions that affect all of the islands. Every voice and every hand has a new chance to shift the destiny of the nation, which is why every one of them matters in the coming times.

The balance of power has shifted away from the nobility — its traditional holder. The corruption of the last era eroded the people's trust in the ruling elite. Their abuses of power can no longer be tolerated in silence. When distrustful of their leaders, people will readily turn to those who would speak for them instead. For many ambitious individuals this is an opportune time to vie for greater influence. Not all leaders wish to do so for their own gain, however. There are always those who would turn their ambitions towards the improvement of all.

So many have a stake in the future of the islands, and they have gained the power to back their ambitions. While the elites resist recognizing these new groups, nations, and factions, they can not be ignored. It is an exciting time in history, not without its dangers. Not all factions have the people of Nippon's best interests in mind.

~ Misaki Toshonosuke, Head Archivist of the Miwa Central Library

This section is meant to give players and Game Masters a wealth of information regarding the setting and the people who have a stake in it. It is a good approach to develop a scenario with a focus on the factions within it: those who have power, ambition, and a stake in the events unfolding in your story.

Not every faction will be antagonistic; having allies that the players can turn to and rely on will help give your setting depth and give the Game Master a way

Names in Historical Japan

Addressing people in Japan can seem complex if you are coming from a western perspective. A notable difference is the order in which names are presented: Japanese write their names with their family names first and their given names second. All of the names in Mysteries of the Yōkai follow this convention. The Shōgun Utetsu Rinsei has the surname Utetsu and the given name Rinsei for her demeanor that is like cold iron.

People are most likely to address strangers and acquaintances by their surnames. In Japan, a person must often give someone permission to use a closer or more casual salutation, such as their given name. This includes the use of honorifics which are primarily suffixes or occasionally prefixes attached to names in order to address another person.

Until the Edo Era most people used the honorific -dono to address acquaintances they considered of equal standing. There are a vast array of honorifics that Japanese use to denote social status and even relation to each other. But whether or not you use them depends on the preference of your group; make sure to take some time to discuss it. In a court setting how someone addresses another may very well be important enough to highlight their honorific use, but for many settings you can assume the Characters are using the proper honorifics without making the players learn them all.

It is fairly important to note that surnames are also a more recent development in Japanese history. Aside from those who come from significant clans, until the Meiji Era most people either had no last name to speak of, or they used their home or place of birth instead.

Akane from the Awa province might go by Awa no Akane (Akane of Awa).

Michinaga of the illustrious and infamous Fujiwara clan went by Fujiwara no Michinaga (Michinaga of the Fujiwara clan).

By default, Mysteries of the Yōkai breaks some of this convention, presenting Characters with surnames who may not have had them historically. How you choose to name Characters is up to you and your play group.

to expand their story and world. The groups listed in this section are large, with nuances and internal conflicts, meaning many of them have more than one Character representing the face of the organization. It is a good idea to build factions this way and let your players choose which representatives they most identify with. After finding out which ones they like, you can emphasize the antagonistic or heroic qualities in their own and other organizations to suit your stories.

Representatives

When developing conflicts and factions for a setting, it's good to focus on Characters over specific details like exact locations, or every member in the hierarchy. It can be tempting for a Game Master to develop factions in too much detail, but doing so can make planned content so specific that it could be easily missed if the Players make choices that the GM may not have planned for at all (this is often the case). Instead it is good to focus on the motivations of a group, the people within it, and the impact it has on others. These are flexible things that can progress and be moved to where the players go.

Certain characters can be chosen as symbolic "representatives" of the themes, concerns, and consequences of an organization. These "faces" of an organization humanize its impact on the world and ensure details made have weight on people who are able to voice that impact. Focusing on these characters allows a faction to adapt to Player choices, even if those choices don't directly involve the group. When NPCs have clear motivations, it takes less work to figure out their responses to changing situations.

Leaders are a good choice to use as a representative, but many larger or powerful organizations often don't offer easy access to their highest leaders. It is unlikely that Players will interact directly with these leaders until later in the Campaign. It is good to pick representatives that are more likely to be out in the field, where Players are more likely to encounter them. When players look at what people within the organization and think about how their behavior compares to the organization's stated goals, it can give a more interesting view of the leader or the organization as a whole. After all, you can tell a lot about a leader by looking at their subordinates.

Representatives don't necessarily have to be people who are a part of an organization. They could be the citizens that are harmed by the organization's actions, or those who support it despite its questionable methods. Look for how organizations impact the world and use Characters to represent that. When you think of your factions as people (both those within it and those impacted by it), you can more easily adapt to player decisions when they take unexpected turns. The Players' impressions of a faction's failings come from those impacted, even if those people are unaware of the true motivations behind the actions; hearing about a crime syndicate from someone affiliated with the government creates a different impression than one you would get from the citizens who are under its protection.

This focus on people also helps a group become more nuanced. Many of the Powers that Be listed in the Setting Guide have smaller factions within them, and have representatives for this internal source of conflict. Even in an organization with the most noble of intentions, there might be people committing unapproved acts. The larger the group, the more likely it is that its decisions may unintentionally harm others. Showing a different perspective could change how the party responds, or even who the party supports.

More about planning factions and flexible "set pieces" can be found in the Game Master's Guide section called "Setting the Stage" on page 218.

Major Factions

These are the major groups in Nippon. They have a large stake in the future of the islands. They have influence throughout the lands and it is likely that players will run into their representatives at one point or another.

Emperor Akitsu

秋津天皇（あきつてんのう）

Enthroned at the young age of 17, the Emperor of Nippon is the focus of much attention. Many are vying for power over Nippon, and Emperor Akitsu sits in center of the coming storm. As the legitimate ruler of the land, he has the greatest influence on the direction the nation will take, even if that direction is not one he has chosen.

Akitsu is honorable, generous, and assertive; he works hard for the improvement of his nation and its citizens. Traditionally, the Emperor may only be seen or spoken to by those in his closest inner circle. Yet, Akitsu often leaves the palace to follow his ideals of heroism and gallantry, tending to the needs of his people personally and directly. By tradition, the Emperor may only be addressed by his title as a sign of respect, with a personal name known to no one save a few. Akitsu gives his personal name freely to his citizens and supporters. He walks among the people to demonstrate that the Emperor's power can be used in service of his citizens and not just his ministers and nobles. In doing so, Akitsu hopes to build a prosperous future alongside the people of Nippon.

To traditionalists, this is tantamount to sacrilege. Akitsu's disregard for their customs and history threatens the foundations of their society. Furthermore, his policies endanger the social status of their clans, many of which have been in power for centuries. These clans see Akitsu as a wildcard, whose actions cannot be anticipated or controlled. To them, such uncertainty is far more frightening than any yōkai.

Having lived with the spiritual gifts provided by both his title and his heritage, Akitsu was raised admiring spirits, seeing them as respected fellow citizens. This esteem is not shared by the general populace. Even the most loyal of Akitsu's supporters question his policies towards the supernatural.

In light of increasing conflicts with the supernatural, it has been revealed that a number of yōkai agents have succeeded in infiltrating the Imperial Court. This has made people more uncomfortable with the yōkai they are now meeting, wondering if the ones Akitsu chooses to surround himself with have ulterior motives as well. The two that serve as advisors within his council are the subject of especially heated controversy.

No one is sure if young Akitsu's ideals are right for his land and those who live within it. To his supporters, he symbolizes hope for a better future. To his detractors, he represents the end of their way of life. No matter how noble the Emperor is, his youth and naïveté pose real concerns even for his allies. The belief is that pure intentions untempered with experience and wisdom can lead to disaster.

How to Address an Emperor

Even in the real world today, the Japanese do not refer to the current emperor by his given name. The honorific used for the Japanese emperor in particular is -tennō, which means heavenly sovereign. In ancient times, the emperor was often referred to as the Sumeramikoto, the imperial lord. Alternatively Tennō Heika (his Imperial Majesty) and Kinjō Heika, which refers specifically to the current reigning emperor, are all used instead of his given name.

Since Emperor Akitsu uses his given name freely, people would address him as Akitsu-tennō, which would mean the equivalent of his title in English. Traditionalists and royalists would definitely avoid using his given name and continue to use the other titles stated above to refer to the current Emperor.

Traditionally, emperors remain unnamed until their death, when they are posthumously given one depending on the nature of their reign. Following tradition, the previous emperor, Akitsu's grandfather, was given a name after he went missing, and is now referred to as Shōren-tennō. If he were discovered to be alive, people would refer to him as the Previous Emperor, as it is taboo to use a posthumous name to address an emperor before their death.



Representative: Ōrun, Akitsu's Childhood Friend

Though he was born in the human world, Akitsu has lived nearly half his life in The World Beyond under the protection of the Osmanthus Emperor. Akitsu's parents entrusted the Emperor on the Other Side to protect him from the schemes of the calamitous kami Yoshitaka. Akitsu spent his formative time among the citizens of the Osmanthus Dominion, which lies close to the border between Nippon and The World Beyond.

During Akitsu's stay he was left in the care of the Kawara household, a family of oni refugees, where he was educated alongside their eldest son, Ōrun, at the royal academies of the Osmanthus court. While their relationship started out as quarrelsome, they soon became steadfast friends.

Ōrun is Akitsu's bodyguard. It's helpful to have an oni guard, despite Ōrun not being particularly strong or big for an oni; in actuality, he is quite bookish. But compared to humans and most yōkai, having an oni's natural and prodigious strength gives him quite an advantage.

Representative: Akitsu's Two Advisors

As a young leader, Emperor Akitsu has a whole council of advisors who help him with the overwhelming task of rebuilding the government. Most of these advisors would not be cause for worry, but there are also two yōkai on his council. People are concerned with Akitsu's potential conflict of interests. They fear that he does not value his citizens enough, or worse, that he has been compromised by yōkai who aim to take control of the country.

His supernatural advisors counsel him on the concerns of the yōkai citizens and the spiritual defense of the nation. Akitsu is in danger on many fronts, but the threat of Yoshitaka is of particular concern; it's likely that his supernatural advisors are needed to help the Emperor navigate supernatural *and* mortal politics. Especially given the malicious kami's tendency to stoke fear among the yōkai about humanity, and use manipulation to deepen the divides and tensions already plaguing Nippon.

These two Characters are left open for the Game Master to develop. They and any other members of his council could be used to interact with the party as representatives of Akitsu. There is a chance that there might be someone nefarious among his council, or there may simply be some motivational complexities. The two yōkai advisors can be any kind of yōkai and represent any important faction or issue in your scenarios. Potential ideas are listed below:

- Akitsu's teacher from The World Beyond.
- A yōkai that is considered scary or untrustworthy by humans, like an oni, a kitsune, or a kind of tengu.
- Simply another friend, even Ōrun, or someone very contentious like Yojirō, the kitsune fox spirit who impersonated him.
- One of the advisors may indeed be compromised by malevolent forces.
- Someone who is threatened by traditionalists and steps down. The players become involved with the yōkai after it leaves the court and may decide to take the former advisor into their party, or help them regain their seat.
- Someone who takes a dramatic action that gives the traditionalists a valid argument that yōkai cannot be trusted. The players become involved in the investigation of the action. Perhaps the yōkai was coerced, controlled, or replaced with an impostor. Perhaps the yōkai was always planning to work against humans, and has worked for many years to gain the Emperor's trust, always intending to betray it to create conflict between the two worlds.

Emperor Akitsu's advisors are a good way to give your Players an early connection to the leading factions in Nippon. Through their interactions with the advisors, Players will be able to gain some insight into what you might have planned for Akitsu in their Campaign. The advisors also provide a convenient way to bring the Player Characters into the greater story of the world. It is likely at least one of Akitsu's advisors (human or otherwise) will be well involved with the status of the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs and its influence on human-yōkai relations, so it might be a good idea to introduce one of the advisors through the Players' interactions with the Bureau.

Nobles of the Imperial Court

The Imperial Court is the main governing body of the nation aside from the Emperor. With the political tensions dividing the capital, no one knows who will end up with control of Nippon and its government. Nippon's ruling elite is mostly concerned with maintaining their disproportionate political power. It is the one cause for which even the most bitter rivals within the nobility are willing to cooperate. The political game is still at its fiercest; only a few can rule the nation, but no one can know exactly who that will be. The support of even a minor noble, clan, or feudal lord could lead one faction to victory or another to failure.

Imperial Court and the Occult

It is taboo for members of nobility to associate with yōkai and to deal with magic. Exceptions are made for sacred rituals, and Shinto-based magic. But the wide breadth of such power leaves the rules ambiguous and arbitrary; even if a member solicits the help of a dark sorcerer or sly yōkai, they can pretend they used more acceptable types of power. Aside from the sacred rites of Shinto, the supernatural is heavily frowned upon by all, even if some of that disapproval comes from nobles who are willing to use dark magics themselves. Despite this, the occult has had a presence within the Imperial Court for centuries. By hiring powerful sorcerers, the nobility use forbidden magic to further their agendas. Such illegal power is capable of nearly untraceable crime. Certain uses of even taboo magic are essentially state-sanctioned thanks to corruption and loopholes.

As a consequence of dabbling in the forbidden, yōkai have infiltrated the Imperial Court. While illegal, the Imperial Court has secretly let them into their politics in exchange for occult services. There are rumors of yōkai that have compromised the leadership of established clans through manipulation, insurgency, and contracts based on dirty bargains. Under new policies, Akitsu has given the government agency known as "the Bureau" jurisdiction over these cases in hopes of bringing the perpetrators to justice with more rigorous enforcement of the law. While the Bureau is cracking down on illegal magic and supernatural infiltrations within the Imperial Court, overall the laws against magic have become more lenient. Despite this increased leniency, many nobles work behind the scenes to subvert or take control of the Bureau because they fear the ongoing investigations into occult crimes in the past.

The Shōgun, Utetsu Rinsei

宇鉄 凛生将軍（うてつ りんせい将軍）

Charged with the duties of national unification, the Tai-Shōgun, often shortened to Shōgun, is given military power to bring the regional clans under control for the sake of Nippon's national unity. The title and military power of the Shōgun are meant to be temporary. Classically the Shōgun is just one of the branches of military power under the Imperial Court. The Shōgun is meant to retain power until their duty is complete, at which time they are to relinquish their title and disband their military forces.

In the confusion that led to Emperor Akitsu's eventual ascension to the throne, the Imperial Court appointed Utetsu Rinsei to the title of Tai-Shōgun. She maintained her military force for the sake of keeping order in the nation. Now that Nippon has a new emperor these duties are no longer required, but Utetsu is hesitant to relinquish power. She disagrees with many of the Emperor's policies, believing they will cause the nation to fall into disarray. After working so hard to unify Nippon, she does not wish to watch her nation fracture further by returning to the rule of incompetent nobles.

She maintains a strictly loyal façade now that Akitsu has been crowned as emperor. She has even managed to imprison her political adversaries under the justification of crimes against the Emperor. To all outside appearances, Shōgun Utetsu is preparing to disband her military coalition of clans and relinquish the title of Tai-Shōgun. Yet, whispers among the nobles and feudal lords claim she is doing the opposite. Instead of dissolving military power, Utetsu is gathering allies in secret. With the popularity of and confidence in the Imperial Court at an all-time low, the Shōgun seeks to maintain order and stability in the face of petty squabbling from the nobles. This is the best time for her to seize control of the nation. The unpopular actions of previous emperors further serve to justify Shōgun Utetsu's activities against the current one. Those who support the Shōgun believe the country would be better if the emperor were simply a figurehead and the people were ruled by the military — though they would never speak such sentiments in public, as to do so is still considered treason.

The Shōgun will have a difficult time justifying her coup. Contrary to her plans, the Emperor is growing in popularity. Akitsu's meager actions are beginning to leave positive impressions on the people he has helped. If the young Emperor were to regain the favor of rule,

then the Shōgun's political power would wane. Much to Utetsu's frustration, Akitsu's insistence upon revealing himself to the public gives him an inadvertent shield from political danger. His openness leaves her unable to confine him to the palace and speak for him. The young emperor's transparency, along with a small but growing number of supporters, makes him a power that can no longer be taken down quietly.

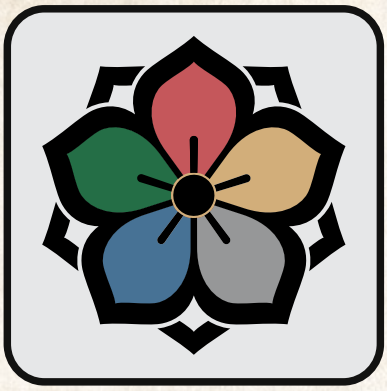
Utetsu supports the unbounded progress of Nippon. She is relentless in the pursuit of new techniques and technologies in all branches of study. She believes that strong military might and technology will lead to a more prosperous nation and benefit its citizens as a whole.

Utetsu-Shōgun and the Supernatural

Contrary to popular belief, the Shōgun has no particular aversion to yōkai or the occult, it is merely a convenient narrative for her faction to exploit for supporters. However, she does believe in the supremacy of Nippon. Any dealings with the spirit world would have to be for the success of the nation first and foremost. In fact, her policies have already led to campaigns of expansion, secretly conquering lands in The World Beyond without the Emperor's knowledge or consent.

Utetsu's unrelenting push for progress has also benefited the research division of the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. The Shōgun has frequently lent both financial and political support to the Bureau's head of research, Kakudatsu Shōki. In return, Shōki has given Utetsu access to his most cutting-edge technological and magical advancements in order to give her the upper hand in the event of a conflict with yōkai or even with her own people. This arrangement works out well for Shōki as it allows him to continue his ethically questionable experimentation in defiance of new department guidelines.

The Bureau of Supernatural Affairs



Referred to by most as simply "the Bureau", the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs is a massive organization with two distinctly different sides. To most citizens of Nippon, the Bureau is a peacekeeping organization filled with noble agents and allied to wandering heroes, dealing with threats most cannot understand, let alone defend against. The hidden side of the Bureau is made up of fractured remnants of the old organization established before the current Emperor's reign; multiple divisions clash with each other for power and push their own agendas at the cost of all others.

Originally established in the Heian period, the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs has grown into a reliable public institution under Akitsu's regime. Its efforts and leadership have been invaluable in transitioning Nippon into the new Age of Spirits. Public approval for the institution is on the rise. After a series of high-profile successes, the public now feel hopeful when calling upon the Bureau to protect them from the increasing number of dangerous encounters with the supernatural. This has allowed the organization to become a vital element in human-yōkai relations.

Reformation of the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs was Emperor Akitsu's first priority upon ascending the throne. The old Bureau was a secretive organization that served only the court nobles. Akitsu wished for the new Bureau to serve a greater purpose: protecting the nation from the increasing dangers of supernatural power and the humans and yōkai who would abuse them. Akitsu added several new departments to further this goal, most notably the Department of Spiritual Outreach and the Department of Supernatural Incident. For a growing number of citizens, the Bureau is considered Akitsu's first success.

The new Bureau is a massive organization with wide-reaching influence over the issues relevant to Nippon in the coming times. But the Bureau is not a homogeneous institute; its rapid growth has also led to fragmentation within. Many of the old divisions remain, giving the Bureau all manner of responsibilities related to the supernatural, from dealing with violent crime to occult research. It was originally created to provide nobles with supernatural advice, but its services grew to include mystical espionage and political sabotage. In the previous era, the Bureau had widely-felt influence on the Imperial Court, and was in turn a victim of Court power struggles. These divisions cling to old loyalties, and follow traditions forged in a time when the Bureau was controlled by a small number of elite magical clans. Remnants of the old Bureau leadership survive within these many departments, vying for more power in order to further their individual agendas.

Most of the machinations of the hidden departments remain out of the public eye. Akitsu's newly appointed Director Okunobu has managed to clamp down on many of the overtly dubious elements within the departments. Her leadership has brought a clear chain of command to the Bureau. This means that even the most self serving of agents or departments are still held accountable to the Emperor and the citizens of Nippon. Each must work to benefit the nation in some way. While most divisions are proud to serve the country, others resent Okunobu for her increased oversight. Some fear that the old leadership has simply gone further into the depths of secrecy to hide its actions.

The Bureau and Freelance Agents

The rising number of supernatural incidents is almost overwhelming for the new Bureau. There are not enough trained agents to manage the wide new scope of responsibilities. While the best agents should be reserved for particularly dire situations, the excessive number of missions have forced the Bureau to dispatch every agent they can. It is not uncommon to see senior officers and top agents working on simple missions. This has paid off on occasion because it meant that a skilled agent was present when the situation escalated. It was not a sustainable strategy to do this for every mission, so the Bureau has since opened its cases to the public. They offer freelance contracts to skilled individuals and groups, calling on them to assist Bureau agents on missions. Reliable groups and individuals can get called or recommended for specific missions that may fit their qualifications.

Most freelancers accept Bureau assignments because they recognize the need to help people, yōkai and human alike, although some are more interested in the payments for completing missions. When disparate individuals are assigned to the same case, they often bond as a group and begin taking on assignments together.

Being open to the public works well in the Bureau's favor, but there are caveats to hiring adventurers. Being spread so thin has also meant that the Bureau cannot provide much oversight to agents in the field, let alone those it hires. In general this is no cause for concern, but some have taken advantage of the situation, acting for their own benefit in ways that may harm others. Once caught, swift action is taken against them and they are no longer allowed to take jobs without a Bureau agent present.

Working with the Bureau has provided great opportunity for those who might have a difficult time getting normal employment. In particular, those touched by the supernatural, spiritually-attuned individuals, yōkai, and demi-yōkai benefit greatly from this program. Bureau missions give them the opportunity to help bridge the gap between spirit and mortal societies in ways that they are uniquely suited for. People are more willing to trust individuals who bear the Bureau's insignia.

Players as Bureau Agents or Freelance Adventurers

Coming together to solve a Bureau case is a good way to start a new campaign. Missions provide a convenient source of adventures for players. Bureau cases can be isolated self-contained scenarios, or they can be easily integrated into existing plotlines and events. While there are a limited number of official Agents, the need to travel about Nippon means that player groups are often not very far from a Bureau Agent if they want to see one.

Agents themselves have their own personalities and agendas. Some may work against the Player Characters, but in the end their actions are accountable to the Bureau.

Representative: Director Okunobu Nari

Most people expected the Emperor and his yōkai advisors to recommend someone firmly connected with the supernatural to lead the newly reformed Bureau, such as a yōkai or sorcerer. To everyone's surprise Okunobu Nari was selected to be Director of the Bureau. Director Okunobu is a regular mortal woman whose first experiences with the supernatural, like most humans, happened only after the Age of Spirits began. But she is well equipped to handle the difficult task of transitioning Nippon into a new era alongside their new yōkai neighbors.

Nari has a unique position of being well-liked among both the yōkai and human communities. She was a respected judge even before becoming a government official. She has always advocated for the equal and fair treatment of Nippon's citizens under the law. When yōkai first appeared in her province, she worked to provide them amnesty and begin trade with their communities even before Emperor Akitsu declared that yōkai could be citizens too.

Those who know her personally are shocked when they see her working as Director. She is almost like a different person. Nari is normally a kind, thoughtful, and polite individual, but as Director she understands the importance of the Bureau's work and the people who depend on her. Director Okunobu has had to forgo some of her politeness in order to make executive decisions. Few people are as knowledgeable about the Bureau's inner workings as she is. Sometimes she has to make decisions without everyone being on board.

The Director has had to make compromises that she isn't proud of, but she believes that even a small step forward matters. Director Okunobu understands that her actions have consequences and works to mitigate them. She is but one person, and changing an organization like the Bureau is a massive task. Though her efforts are considered a success, there is much more work to be done. Anti-yōkai sentiment still runs rampant, and many department heads have questionable intentions. Her work has ensured these elements can no longer freely do as they please, but who knows what they do outside the influence of her watchful eye?

Her job can be overwhelming, but the Director knows that at least she is responsible to the office, the Emperor, and the people of Nippon. She realizes that she cannot improve everything at once, but she will do whatever she can to address that which can be fixed now. Director Okunobu works hard to build the Bureau into an institution that both yōkai and humans can trust.

Representative: Research Head Kakudatsu Shōki

Few people are more studied about the supernatural than the Bureau Head of Supernatural Research, Kakudatsu Shōki. While it is immensely dangerous to push the boundaries of spiritual science, the Research Department under Shōki's leadership has proven undeterrable. Most knowledge of magic derives from long-maintained traditions and oral hearsay. Reverence for these rituals has shaped the magic of this era. Such sentimentality is beneath the Head of Research, who prioritizes progress above all else.

He is a controversial figure to those who are aware of his position in the secretive Bureau, but is tolerated because of his sheer brilliance, as well as fears from the elite about the rising power of yōkai in Nippon. In the past, his department has led to the government-sanctioned capture of hundreds of yōkai for research.

There are few people that Shōki respects, but Akitsu's grandfather, Emperor Shōren, is one of them. Much of his work was inspired by the previous emperor's dedication to alchemy and bringing back the Age of Kami, even if Emperor Shōren failed at completing the latter.

Representative: Chief Inspector Nakajima Tatsuma

A weary, no-nonsense fox spirit who works with the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs as a captain of supernatural law enforcement, Tatsuma was originally ranked as the Commissioner General of the Ministry of Justice. After ten years of dedicated service, Tatsuma was demoted to captain. He had risen through the ranks using a human form. When he revealed himself as a transformed yōkai, his honesty was met with resentment. Tatsuma's confession damaged the reputation of the Ministry of Justice. In the ensuing controversy, the Ministry responded with a harsh demotion in rank. He soon requested a transfer to the Bureau, hoping his experience and abilities would be of service to the newly remade agency.

Raised by loving human parents, Tatsuma grew up aspiring to protect innocents as a law enforcer. Attitudes towards the supernatural at the time forced him to learn how to take a more convincing human form in order to achieve this. Tatsuma descends from a clan of powerful shape-shifting foxes, yet his talents with shape-shifting are actually quite poor for one of his kind. Tatsuma's semi-human form is the only one he is able to use for extended periods of time. He relates so much with humanity that this identity has become part of him. For the captain, changing to this form is effortless despite him being unable to shift to much else. It is so rooted in his identity that even if knocked unconscious while in this form, he will maintain it by default.

Tatsuma's appearance still draws attention, despite looking mostly human. On some days, the captain's hair is the fiery amber color of his fur instead of the black hair of his fellow citizens. His two fox tails cast themselves upon his shadow regardless of form. When necessary, Tatsuma can force himself to look completely human, right down to every last detail save his shadow. It is quite taxing on him, requiring constant effort and dividing his attention. He cannot maintain it for more than a day without good rest.

The captain has faced discrimination from both sides of his upbringing. As an officer he has seen the worst of his blood kin and his adoptive human society, but his parents have shown him the best that humanity has to offer. These hardships have motivated him to work wholeheartedly towards spirit-human relations and law enforcement. He is earnest in his views, if not a little overzealous. He believes that if humans and spirits want to live together, everyone must learn to follow the law.



Chief Inspector Nakajima habitually carries special incense on his person to reveal spirits and illusions that may be nearby. He often holds one in his mouth, so that it can be carried regardless of whether he is in his human or fox form.

Clans and the Feudal Lords

The nobility, governors, and feudal lords make up most of the power that rules over the lands of Nippon. While the Imperial Court holds sway over the capital and its policies, clans and their leaders rule over the bulk of the nation's citizens. Clans range from small and unknown to large and powerful. The most prominent clans are related by blood to the Emperor's family.

There are clans that function much like large businesses, while others are akin to a kingdom within the territory of Nippon. Many of these clans are massive, with a great number of people under their leadership.

Clans are frequently masters of a certain trade. They pass down techniques and skills through their family traditions, drawing great pride from the masteries of their craft. There are clans that specialize in just about any kind of profession, from blacksmithing to divination. Schools of swords and martial techniques are built around and named for the clans that developed them. One does not need to be a blood member of a clan to serve them, learn from them, or affiliate with them. Indeed, one could begin as a student and eventually marry into the clan, becoming a full member with all the benefits and disadvantages that carries. Clans also tend to employ laborers to assist with the more menial tasks associated with their businesses, which makes them the greatest source of employment in the nation.

Clan leaders can affiliate themselves with the Imperial Court. Doing so allows them to exert influence on the institutions that govern the country as a whole, though it comes at the cost of involvement in the court's political games. While all clans purport to serve the Emperor, they each have their own agenda and are largely concerned with their own betterment.

Priests of the Myaku Grand Shrine

The Myaku Grand Shrine is the largest and most powerful shrine in all of Nippon. It houses one of the Imperial Regalia, the *Yasakani no Magatama*, also known as the Jewel of Benevolence — a large jade bead carved in the shape of a *tomoe*, which resembles a comma. The Regalia are divine artifacts of great power. They are testaments to the lineage of the Emperor and are integral to the enthronement of a new one. All the regalia, including the Magatama, were lost in the previous Emperor's Grand Rite to unify the heavens and earth.

When Emperor Akitsu returned to the mortal world, he was carrying the Magatama, which was integral to proving his claim to the throne. The jewel has since been returned to the Grand Shrine, where it is closely guarded. It is the only one of the lost Regalia to be found, and its presence has allowed the Myaku Grand Shrine to rise in prominence and influence.

While the Grand Shrine has no official relationship with the Imperial Court, it holds considerable sway over politics. Priest clans have gained unprecedented power through their connections to the shrines; the clergy have close ties to the Ministry of the Center and the Imperial Family itself. For generations, a member of the Tominaga family served as the head of the Grand Shrine, cementing their influence over the Imperial Court. But this is no longer the case. Using sabotage, the Miyahara clan was able to instate one of their own as Head Priest. Despite being a center of political in-fighting, the shrine remains a powerful force of good in Nippon and a stabilizing influence on public fears of the supernatural.

Leadership

Since its construction, the Myaku Grand Shrine has been overseen by a member of the emperor's family, classically an unwed female relative. Akitsu's grandfather did away with this practice when he chose his nephew as Overseer. Upon the enthronement of a new emperor, the Overseer Priest resigns and a new one is selected from the emperor's family. Once chosen, the candidate goes on pilgrimage, stopping at holy places in order to purify themselves.

As an advisor to the Overseer, the shrine elects its own High Priest or Priestess; someone who is more familiar and involved with the functions of the shrine and its members. Currently there is no Overseer due to Akitsu's lack of immediate family. Until he selects someone, the Shrine's High Priest has taken on the responsibilities of both stations.

The Bestowed Power of Priests

The Grand Shrine oversees the training of hundreds of new priests and priestesses all over the nation and is host to some of the highest schools of sacred magic. Priests under the tutelage of Myaku's shrine masters are considered privy to especially rare and powerful

techniques, and its libraries are renowned for their collections of books detailing the nature of spirits and ghosts. Many of the first exorcists under the employment of the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs were trained in the outer halls of the Myaku Shrine. Some priests have especially notable power granted to them directly from kami. Such bestowed power has caveats, though; those priests become agents of that kami, seats for their essence, and thus limited by its will and domain of power.

Representative: Tominaga Asae, former Head Priestess

Ask most people in the Myaku Grand Shrine who their leader is and they will sound conflicted. To those under her, Tominaga Asae was beloved and trusted. Her competence and spiritual power was famed throughout the land. Before Akitsu was found and crowned as emperor, Asae was instrumental in repelling the calamitous kami Yoshitaka in his last siege upon the capital. In her victory, she managed to seal away some of his power.

She has many loyal followers among the priests, who admire her kindness and compassion. She is an uncompromising idealist, which is both a fault and a strength to her cause, making her unwilling to play in any political games. As a leader in such an influential position, this proved unfavorable to many nobles. So it comes as no surprise that they worked to oust her. She has an impulsive streak, often saying things she might regret later. At times she does not realize the importance of her station, and her recklessness has led her and even some of her followers into risky situations. While she is loyal to her family, she will not hesitate to protest or act against them when she feels they are wrong.

One such event, orchestrated by the rival Miyahara clan, tricked her adopted sister, Yukano, into a dangerous confrontation with an onryō. Asae was able to rescue her sister, but at the cost of her left arm, and a significant amount of her spiritual power. These events led to her eventual resignation as the High Priest.

Representative: Miyahara Kousuke, Current High Priest

Before becoming High Priest, Kousuke was a particularly gifted miko. He maintains a respectable command of spiritual power in his own right. Both his natural ability and the power bestowed by the station of High Priest mean he is most definitely qualified to lead the Grand Shrine. But most people are aware of his lack of confidence and authority. He bows easily to pressure from the other priest clans, some of whom are invested in disrupting the Tominaga clan's political power.

While Asae has given him her blessings, a lot of people are uncomfortable with the circumstances of his appointment as Head Priest.

Kousuke is renowned for his almost otherworldly beauty. His allure transcends the boundaries of sexuality and gender, even yōkai and kami are not immune. He receives daily deliveries of poetry, flowers, and gifts from all who seek to woo him.

He is kind, soft-spoken, and gentle. But under his administration, the Myaku Grand Shrine has begun to change. By his order, several controversial decrees have been enacted — but this is clearly the work of Kousuke's elders rather than his own intentions.

Kotodama: The Spirit in a Name

Many of the spells taught by the priests of Myaku are focused on a style of magic called Invocation. Such magic is distinct in that it relies on the power of words themselves through the study of kotodama. Words are power, even in the real world, but the ancient Japanese believed that words have their own soul. Names are powerful things and the mere mention of a name can unlock its power and bring its influence into play, even if that name belongs to a mortal. Invocation as practiced by the Myaku shrine is focused on receiving the blessings of patron kami.

Symbols representing a kami gain the qualities of that kami. In a way, objects become symbolic manifestations of what is written upon them. As such, simply speaking or writing a kami's name can invoke their will, providing a seat for their presence and a channel for their power. In essence, the word becomes a small version of the kami itself.

A powerful lucky charm might only be a slip of paper with a kami's name written upon it and a wish written on the back. The power of writing and the spirit within words are important to the magic of the kami that the Myaku Grand Shrine venerates. Many of the spells cast by kami and those who invoke their presence are presented as forms of *waka,* or Nipponese poetry.

The Warrior Monks of Tōdai-ji

In the Nara Period four centuries ago, Buddhism gained great prominence within society. Now a powerful political force in its own right, Buddhist leadership has a palpable impact upon the culture, society, and governing of Nippon. The integration of Buddhism into society was generally smooth and peaceable. Tōdai-ji was at the center of this transition in the beginning, with administration over all the nascent temples of Nippon. Legends say that the venerable monk Gyōki traveled to the Ise Grand Shrine and reconciled Buddhism and Shinto; he was then appointed the first Dai-Sōjō at Tōdai temple, and became head of all monks in Nippon.

While disparate, the Buddhist schools have lived in relative harmony with each other — that is, until temples began to militarize in the previous Heian Era. Rising political clout led to rivalries and conflicts, especially over the succession of leadership at influential temples. Corruption in the capital, and the rising power of samurai, led temples to arm themselves to check these rising powers. As tensions rose, temples militarized to the point of having their own standing armies of military monks known as *sōhei*. While they are considered honorary monks of their temple, *sōhei* are not officially ordained, and thus not recognized by other temples.

Sōhei are dedicated to their sect of Buddhism and its spread. They were established to police corruption and settle dispute between powerful temples. In the years after Emperor Shōren's Grand Rite, the ensuing power vacuum led to rampant corruption in the government by the new samurai class. With the samurai amassing frightening power under the Shōgun, the temples sought to protect themselves against the intimidation tactics of rising factions. Though history has proven that the protector can easily become the oppressor. The religious zealotry of the sōhei grows into a fearsome concern of its own.

By far the largest organization of sōhei in Nippon are the Warrior Monks of Tōdai-ji. The Grand Temple of Tōdai may no longer be the administrative center of all Buddhist affairs, but its influence is still far-reaching.

The Tengu Mountain Lords

The yōkai known as tengu are a group of related species of birdlike people. While humans know them all as "tengu" there are many different kinds, organized into tribes roughly according to species. Despite differences in form, color, shape, and size, all tengu fall into three major categories: ko-tengu, or lesser tengu; tengu; and dai-tengu, also known as greater tengu. The most common form of tengu are lesser tengu, which have much lower intelligence than an average human, while normal tengu are about equal to humanity. By contrast, greater tengu are known for their vast knowledge and wisdom.

While the tengu tribes are varied and diverse, they all share a deep respect for the honor of battle and victory in competition. This has led to a perception of tengu as aggressive and warmongering, and for the greater part of history this was true. While there are many yōkai with superior strength and physical prowess, tengu are remarkable due to their disciplined military, superior technique, and organized tactics.

Each tribe centers around a greater tengu who serves as their lord, with the most prominent leaders claiming a sacred mountain as their roost. Each tribe is distinct in outward appearance and natural capability. Some are masters of weaponry, some master their bodies instead, some are powerful mystics, and others are masters of strategy; if there's facet of war, there's a tengu tribe that excels at it. Tengu are some of the greatest warriors in existence, and humans lucky enough to become students under a Tengu Lord have become legendary for their prowess on the battlefield, be they tacticians, archers, blademasters, or spellcasters.

It is said that there are eighteen tribes of tengu, but not all tribes have the power to lay claim over a sacred mountain, and only a few have the desire to claim an earthly mountain roost anyway. As tengu are intelligent and sentient beings, they are not averse to reason and diplomacy, but they do have a predisposition to honorable combat and war. Often it will take a good brawl to win them over; even if their opponents lose, tengu can still respect them for their fighting style and zeal.

Tengu Abilities

Tengu are renowned for their skill on the battlefield. They are the martial masters of the spiritual world, and unparalleled fighters. The means of fighting and the weapons used depend on the individual tengu, but

each tribe holds a wealth of knowledge and tradition surrounding a chosen art of war. For example, the Kite Tribe are masters at daggers, close-quarters combat, and throwing weapons, while the Hawk Tribe pride themselves on ranged combat.

The tengu blend ki arts and magic seamlessly into their martial art styles, making their techniques flashy and fantastical. Each tribe has wealth of unique hidden techniques, which are powerful and carefully kept secrets. Inter-tribe conflicts are quite common as each feels the need to prove the superiority of their art over the other tribes.

Tengu and Humanity

While it is usually the denizens of the spirit realms that are fascinated with human culture, this is largely because mortals were simply unaware of the existence of other realms and their inhabitants. There are some notable exceptions, however. Humans have always sought out tengu culture, hoping to learn from their knowledge of war and power. The story of a famous commander who studied under the great Crow Tengu leader Sōjōbō, once viewed with disgust and trepidation in the Imperial Court, now sees his glory increase with every daring new tale. With the rising status and fame of swordsmen and samurai, humans now flock to ask tengu for help in improving their martial skills.

But making such requests of a tengu is a risky maneuver. Most tengu are not friendly to humans, and might take offense at a mortal asking to learn techniques that are a matter of tribal pride. For the most part tengu keep out of mortal affairs, only visiting during times of combat to witness human techniques.

Historical Inspirations: The Tengu of Japan

The Setting Guide draws conclusions about the motivations behind tengu and their natures, in the name of nuance and drama. Many yōkai listed in this book are treated similarly. In this case though, the stark differences in tengu lore between their origins in China and their stories in Japan have led us to define them with more nuance than other depictions. Even within Japan, the stories are varied between honoring and fearing tengu. They are harbingers of war, frightening in discipline and resolve, and teachers to some of Japan's most feared swordsmen and leaders, most notably Minamoto no Yoshitsune. The Setting Guide attempts to resolve the differences under one umbrella and present them as different kinds of tengu. That way players and Game Masters can choose their own story representations.

Tengu don't traditionally have as much variety in form as depicted here. Most commonly they are a cross between a kite bird and a person. The only alternatives are the crow tengu, and the red-skinned long-nosed tengu. The latter depiction comes from a more modern history where the tengu's beak turned into a long nose. Of note, the word tengu can also be used to call someone a braggart.

The Kitsune Clans

Kitsune (also known as bake-gitsune or yōko) are yōkai related to the mundane foxes of our world who, by one means or another, have become spirits known as bakemono or henge-yōkai. Like their animal relatives, the kitsune are intelligent, cunning, and a playful penchant for mischief. Even before the present-day Age of Spirits, kitsune have always interacted with humans, more so than even their bakemono brethren. Like other bakemono shapeshifters, most kitsune have origins as mortal animals. Whether by age or spiritual power, normal foxes grow to inhabit the places in-between this realm and The World Beyond, and become kitsune.

Kitsune foxes are proud creatures who would be quite happy living fox lives had they not discovered human luxury. The world of privileged human society is filled with lavish pleasures that captivate kitsune. Though they would never openly admit it, humanity itself fascinates them. Humans are intelligent like kitsune, but they live their lives so differently. Kitsune are more willing to live in the moment, worry less about what others think, and indulge themselves with little regard for consequences. But human dissatisfaction leads them to innovate and change the world around them, and humans have a sense of honor and duty. This fascination with humanity is something that kitsune do not quite understand themselves, but it has compelled them to shed their disguise and interact with humanity time and time again. The rest of the time, kitsune keep to themselves, concealing their true nature as kitsune. This unspoken respect has allowed them to live alongside mortal society for centuries with little incident, save for the tales of particularly mischievous kitsune.

Kitsune Abilities

Most kitsune are versed in at least some form of illusion magic. Their perception and intelligence mean that human disguises come more naturally to them than other yōkai. But their proud nature leads them to often choose forms that are almost otherworldly in their attractiveness and glamor. Their ability to charm, manipulate, and portray a character are so great they would go unnoticed were they not so easily distracted. Kitsune can get so wrapped up in their human character that they forget to maintain all parts of their disguise, causing a stray tail, an odd shadow, or other tells that may be noticed by more perceptive people. Their tail is the most difficult part for them to hide, easily appearing if they become drunk or even laugh too hard.

While kitsune are capable of changing shape, they are not as masterful as their tanuki rivals, and usually require illusion magic to aid their shapeshifting. However, a kitsune's ability at human mimicry is still better than a tanuki's, and they are also capable of transforming into a wider variety of human disguises. Kitsune are almost unparalleled in their ability to weave intricate illusions, but only disciplined kitsune can maintain them for extended periods of time.

Kitsune have an affinity with fire, and many of them are able to produce ghostly foxfire. The color and shape of the flame is unique to the fox spirit that cast it, and can be used to identify them. Foxfire is not always like normal fire, and is not always hot. It is an extension of their ki and related to their magical abilities.

As kitsune age or gain spiritual power, their tails can begin to split and markings begin to manifest on their spiritual forms in the color of their fox flame. A rough way to tell a kitsune's power is to look at how many tails they have, though this is not always reliable. Foxes can use illusions and other techniques to hide them. In the spirit worlds, kitsune cannot hide their true forms without great effort and special techniques. In those places, every kitsune save for the most skilled illusionists appear with the appropriate amount of tails, and the markings across their body.

For more information on how to build kitsune and use them in Conflict, see "Kitsune" on page 268.

Agenda

The majority of kitsune are rather indifferent to either the causes of destruction or order that some of their brethren find compelling; they would rather not think of anything beyond their own personal inclinations. These unaligned kitsune are known as nogitsune, or field foxes. They are capricious in nature, following their more selfish impulses and doing as they like. They love the lavish life enjoyed by affluent humans, so they spend their time bewitching them or pretending to be nobility. Several kitsune clans have infiltrated the Imperial Court, both by joining existing human clans and by creating entire clans of kitsune pretending to be human. These clans each have their own agendas, which aren't necessarily related to their fox-natures.

The unpredictability of even nogitsune does not mean that they lack conviction. If they pledge loyalty, make vows, or become indebted most will uphold these commitments even if doing so might become inconvenient or dangerous. Kitsune go through great

lengths to repay any debts. While their notion of fairness is different, when they come to understand human concepts like money, they can feel compelled to right debts of such nature as well — though most of them never come to completely understand and value money in the way that humans do.

Kitsune don't have a particular loyalty to their kind, and can be found in all sorts of groups and organizations, human, yōkai, or otherwise. They do have loyalty to their leaders, regardless of species, and are willing to go to great lengths to aid those they respect. But because they are so impulsive, they can get into trouble unless carefully watched.

While they have nuanced and varied motivations for their actions, most kitsune cannot resist teaching an arrogant or foolish individual a lesson in humility. Though the situation often worsens for both the kitsune and their target alike, it is not unheard of for a kitsune to be given a harsh lesson on their own hubris instead.

Foxes that Serve Greater Causes

For the minority of fox spirits that do find themselves serving greater causes of either harmony or chaos, they do so with surprising consistency and determination (though most will still give into the occasional temptation of mischief). Aligned foxes are often much more powerful than nogitsune, as they are more coordinated, and can draw upon the greater sources of power their allegiances afford. Kistune that serve the ideals of harmony are known as Zenko, and those that serve chaos and destruction, are known as Akko.

Zenko often pledge themselves to the service of a kami, working as emissaries to enact their will upon the yōkai and spirits that live in the wild untamed territories. The Zenko that most often come into contact with humans are the servants of Inari, the goddess of rice, harvest, and fertility, an important figure for the agrarian society of Nippon. It is Inari's foxes who are the reason that many shrines are protected by stone fox statues.

On the other side of the spectrum, Akko are kitsune best known for penchant for chaos and their abilities to possess people. Even the weakest Akko are capable of possession, though the effects of their occupancy usually only manifests as curses, impulses, or afflictions. However, the most powerful of Akko are indeed able to completely override the agency of the people they possess, at least temporarily. This power still has its limits though, Akko have difficulty possessing anyone who is highly disciplined or has the resolve to maintain their sense of self. While Akko are generally malicious, their preoccupations lie mostly with subverting the success of Zenko and kami, ensuring that good fox spirits do not gain great sway over nogitsune. The harm of humans is not specifically on their agenda, but often mortal possession is a great way to serve their desires to disrupt harmony.

Aligned foxes are not necessarily locked in their ways, they are free to renounce their causes and become nogitsune once again. There have are even some aligned kitsune who have completely flipped sides and joined their former enemies. The most famous of these is Osusuki, one of Inari's most faithful messengers used to be part of the Akko kitsune.



The Tanuki Clans

Like their kitsune rivals, tanuki are yōkai with close ties to the human world. As bakemono, tanuki (also known as bake-danuki or bake-tanuki in Japanese), are the supernatural version to a common Japanese animal known as a "raccoon dog". Tanuki are considered the unparalleled masters of shapeshifting, able to change their size, shape, and even their mass. The most powerful of them can shapeshift into just about anything, from food stalls, inns including the clerks within them, or even an entire carriage procession. Although the average tanuki can best most kitsune at shapeshifting, they are not necessarily superior at trickery or disguise. Kitsune are more perceptive and better skilled at manipulation, which makes them more likely to remain undetected while transformed, even if their transformations are not as detailed or complex as a tanuki's.

Shapeshifting animals have always had a close relationship with the mortal realm; nearly all have interactions with humanity, and tanuki are no different. Tanuki are an affable and rugged people, albeit with a penchant for mischief and trickery, even towards their own kind. This doesn't mean that they are all necessarily tricksters, but the vast majority of tales about them involve their trickery one way or another.



Tanuki are not a particularly populous society, preferring to live in close-knit families or small wandering communities. As a result, it is rare to find tanuki gathering in villages; most tanuki would rather keep to themselves, only coming together in times of occasion or need. There isn't a strict hierarchy surrounding their social structure. While tanuki men are stereotyped as lecherous, tanuki pair for life, and even when adulterous they remain excellent parents to their families and take good care of their spouses in spite of it. Tanuki do not have the same stigmas regarding their interpersonal relationships.

Aside from a couple of organized clans, traditional tanuki society has consisted of loosely connected families in shared territory. Changing times have led to a bit more polarization between human and tanuki societies. When humans discovered just how many tanuki lived among them, the relationship between the two them strained. But when compared to the chaos and danger of certain societies within the spirit realms, many tanuki and humans realized they were more similar than they were different. Recently, some tanuki have even begun to follow human political behavior, attempting to unify their clans and territories, and even looking to conquer lands for themselves. But this has threatened the once friendly relationships between tanuki and humans.

Of all the yōkai, it is the tanuki that have most established and open relationships with human, despite the deviousness and trickery that plague a sizeable group of the tanuki community. While there are a great number of interactions between humans and disguised yōkai, human forms are not required or enforced for tanuki in many provinces.

Tanuki Abilities

Tanuki shapeshifting abilities are very powerful, giving them the ability to drastically change all of their physical characteristics; Size, color, shape, smell, and even weight. If not for their short attention spans and overall capriciousness, tanuki disguises would be nearly perfect. Any flaws in their disguises tend to come from lack of attention to detail, rather than from want of ability. Their shapeshifting also has many applications beyond disguise such as turning to stone to avoid danger or making themselves lighter to survive perilous drops, though they are rarely sharp enough to think of such innovative uses in the heat of the moment.

While yōkai tanuki may look nearly identical to the common non-spiritual raccoon-dogs found all across

Nippon their bodies are very different, even when not shapeshifting. Their supernatural powers have granted them remarkably tough hide that even a spear would struggle to penetrate. They are also incredibly strong, able to lift objects many times their size with relative ease.

For more information on how to build tanuki and use them in Conflict, see "Tanuki" on page 269.

Agenda

Tanuki and human societies have existed side by side for centuries, though it is only recently that the tanuki have begun to live openly among humans rather than relying on disguises. While humans do not inherently fear tanuki like they would other yōkai, the people and governments of most provinces are still uncomfortable with the existence of supernatural creatures in their communities. This has pushed many tanuki to the edge of mortal society, taking up jobs and tasks that are forbidden or unsuited for humans. Because they were not considered citizens of Nippon until Emperor Akitsu's decree, they were not beholden to the nation's laws. This allowed them to establish many underground businesses without fear of reprisal. Tanuki living in human cities often take on transgressive roles: they provide gambling during times of its illegality, brew sake in provinces where it's outlawed, take from the rich to give to the poor, or even protect those that society leaves by the wayside (often while disguised of course, some of history's greatest heroes were tanuki in disguise). A great many organized crime families have connections to tanuki clans in some way, whether they are aware of it or not.

While illegal businesses and crime are stereotypically associated with tanuki, most tanuki establishments actually provide benign or beneficial services. In many provinces yōkai and non-humans doctors are forbidden from treating humans, but tanuki-run medical clinics are available for anyone who is desperate when all mortal solutions have been exhausted. Many of these clinics host a assortment of yōkai physicians with a wide range of medical expertise. Tanuki merchants sometimes smuggle illegal wares from the spirit world, both benign and otherwise. Likewise, tanuki amusement arcades are also considered illegal because of gambling, yet most of these establishments lack any form of betting and instead focus on entertainment, offering games and prizes that cannot be found in the mortal world. Tanuki theaters have a long and storied history going back centuries even before the true natures of their owners were revealed. The contributions these have made to Nippon's art and culture are indelible. Though there is a great demand for tanuki services, most provinces have been hesitant to legalize them. This has only served to stifle the potential of tanuki-human relations, and limit their ability to contribute to each other. Tanuki still have much to offer, but history is proof that their culture and innovations will likely find their way to the people of Nippon no matter what.

Representative: Danzaburō-danuki

Danzaburō is considered one of the three most famous tanuki of Nippon. That is not to say that he is not also a controversial figure. Though he is a thorn in the side of the authorities, who have invested a great amount of resources toward his capture, Danzaburō has fans both human and yōkai alike. He is well known for his fidelity to Nippon and its people, whether human or yōkai. Those under him have been known to steal from the rich to give to the poor. Danzaburō himself is quite fond of teaching pompous officials and noblemen lessons in humility. His clan is known to steal from ordinary people too, but if Danzaburō finds out, he will attempt to eventually replace what was stolen.

Of all the tanuki, Danzaburō's clan is the one that most resembles human society. They have claimed the isle of Sado for themselves. Danzaburo's communities is one of the few that has a standing army, merchants, representatives, and participates in active trade. Unfortunately he's a bit too much of a rapscallion to gain official recognition from the Imperial Government.

A Time Traveling Tanuki

No one knows from whence Tanuki Steve came, nor from where he got his strange name. It is said that Tanuki Steve has traveled far and wide, but after a quarrel with a time-bending yōkai, he was catapulted into the far reaches of time. It is unknown whether his tales of the future are true, whether or not this city of San Furan Shisu-kyō exists. But Tanuki Steve did not return empty handed from wherever he went. He claims that two laughing wise men gave him tinted glasses, called him their brother, and bestowed upon him the honorable name "Steve". Tanuki Steve's name is an oddity, but the tales of his adventure are entertaining, even if they are unbelievable.



Specific Groups & Clans

All the groups listed in “Powers that Be” could easily have several internal factions within them with varying degrees of antagonism or helpfulness. This section describes specific groups and their agendas. While the previous section described the general atmosphere of groups and people within the setting, the intent is for the Game Master to extrapolate and create groups, allies, and conflicts of their own. The following is about specific representatives and the groups that Players might encounter during one of their sessions.

This is a good section to look at if you need some inspiration to populate your setting with conflict, backgrounds, and stories. The first two entries, "Sōjōbō and the Crow Tribe Tengu" and "Emperor Yoshitaka and the Tribe of Hidōbō" were written by specifically drawing inspiration from the Setting Guide, they provide an example how it can be used to develop new "Powers that Be" that fit within the established world.

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Sōjōbō and the Crow Tribe Tengu

僧正坊と烏天狗の部族（*Sōjōbō to Karasu Tengu no Buzoku*）

"There is honor in peace. So long as the wicked exist, the strong will always have purpose."

Though there are many Tengu Mountain Lords, one stands above the rest in terms of power and influence. The Lord of the Crow Tribe and keeper of the sacred Mount Kurama, Sōjōbō, is by far the most powerful of all tengu. Legends state that his strength is greater than a thousand of his kin. While they do not all agree with Sōjōbō's policies towards mortals, the tengu tribes respect the power and wisdom of Sōjōbō. Such deference has allowed him to keep the peace despite the deep-seated internal conflicts within the tengu tribes.

The Crow Tribe

While most tengu clans focus on a single art of war, Sōjōbō's tribe is a master of many. Crow Tengu excel most at the arts of swordsmanship, smithing, and military tactics. While Sōjōbō's people might be considered less physically strong than most of their tengu brethren, they can hold their ground with cooperation, teamwork, and strategy. His people are not plagued with notions of individual glory, and are satisfied with the victory of their squads and their tribe. Their calculating professionalism means that they cannot be easily provoked and do not treat battle with joy or reverence, a trait that makes other tengu uncomfortable.

Appearance

As their name implies, the Crow Tengu look somewhere between humans and crows. While tengu are on average taller than humans, the Crow Tengu are somewhat smaller in size and mass to their hefty tengu brethren. What they lack in size, they make up for in swift reflexes and keen precision.

Sōjōbō cuts an imposing figure despite his age and weathered looks. Like other greater tengu, he appears somewhere between a giant brawny man and a bird of prey. A long crimson beak pokes out from his bushy beard of graying feathers, its surface littered with ornate carvings as though hewn from lacquered wood by a master maskmaker.

Like other powerful spirits, Sōjōbō's exact form shifts and changes with those who witness him. And like any legend, the image of him can changes from story to story. In the presence of humans, he is known to take the form of a large old man with a ruddy complexion and a conspicuous beak-like nose. He is associated with the mountain ascetics known as yamabushi and wears similar robes, often in tatters. Sōjōbō's adornments are meager, and he is often

mistaken for a beggar. The only proofs of his standing are his spiritual presence and a seven-feathered fan he keeps on his person.

Sōjōbō in Tengu Society and Relationship with Humanity

Even with all of his famed strength, Sōjōbō is not powerful enough to dominate the tengu tribes. If several of the Mountain Lords were to cooperate or seek outside help, they would be able to challenge Sōjōbō's leadership. So far a stalemate has kept tengu conflicts from impacting other territories.

Sōjōbō's focus on diplomacy, his openness to mortals, and his interest in their affairs, all spark controversy among tengu, many of whom see humans as weak and unfit to learn their secrets. Those outside his tribe consider his fixation almost traitorous. Even his own kin have grown uncomfortable with his preoccupation with human ideals.

Sōjōbō is widely regarded as a protector of Buddhism. As a sage hermit himself, he has a deep respect for any kind of wisdom, having met many wise people throughout his life. He regards the teachings with fascination. He has invited monks to his roost, and has on several occasions even disguised himself as a human to sneak into sermons.

Sōjōbō's Roost

Sōjōbō's roost sits at the peak of Mount Kurama, a location holy to humans and spirits alike. When the Grand Rite was performed, many of the mountains of Nippon, already places close to the spirit world, became seamless bridges between this world and The World Beyond. Sacred mountains like Kurama grew to new heights upon merging with their counterparts on the other side.

The Crow Hermit's Role in The Setting

Mount Kurama lies near the former capital in Heian. From his roost there, Sōjōbō concerns himself over the fate of the fallen city, now shrouded in the billowing pollution of Yomi, the dark land of corruption and decay. With the threat of tengu war, rising tengu and human aggression, and the influence of the calamitous kami Yoshitaka on the tengu tribes, Sōjōbō and his tribe must prepare for the many catastrophes looming on the horizon.

The Crow Tribe and the Crane Tribe

Often overlooked as practitioners of the military arts, medics and doctors keep their forces alive and their causes in the fight. To most societies the art of medicine is precious and protected. Of the tengu tribes, it is the Crane Tribe who safeguard the secrets of medicine and battlefield healing.

The Crane Tribe are masters of medicine, healing, and longevity. Despite not being masters of combat, the other tengu tribes prize the Crane Tribe's abilities to restore those injured in war. Historically, the Crane Tengu have been conquered and captured by other tengu tribes. To prevent this, the Crane Tribe has a close alliance with the Crow Tribe. Sōjōbō keeps the Crane Tribe safe with his alliance, allowing them to live and develop their craft as they please. Without his protection they would easily be taken over by another tribe and used to justify another tengu war.

The Crane are currently lead by Asoba, who is a particularly gifted healer. She has rediscovered a lost set of arts once held by the Crane. These hidden techniques detail ancient Crane martial arts that use biological principles and healing magic to make precise and crippling attacks. These techniques were powerful enough to be banned by the ancient tengu tribes, and were erased from historical records. Asoba is not sure if the bans were motivated by safety concerns; they could have easily been motivated by fear and the need to suppress the Crane Tribe.

Asoba is married to a human doctor, whom she met while studying a new wave of spirit plagues. Both are currently focused on a set of human villages they have quarantined due to an infestation of minuscule and primitive yōkai that have accumulated in dangerous numbers, in an attempt to prevent them from spreading into neighboring settlements.

Representative: Kuran

An ordained tengu monk, Kuran is a favorite of Sōjōbō, who raised him as an adoptive son. However, it is likely that Sōjōbō wants to learn more about Buddhism through Kuran. Despite practicing Buddhism, Kuran has doubts about whether the tengu should be interacting with mortal society. He believes that neither the tengu or humanity are ready for this contact, and rushing into it may lead to dangerous confrontations. Although Kuran is not proud of his actions, he has even sabotaged some of Sōjōbō's steps to increase relations with the Emperor. While Kuran's own residence in the human world started out conflicted and controversial, his persistence allowed him to win the hesitant temple leadership over, and he became the first tengu ordained as a Buddhist monk. While he has convinced his own temple, Kuran has a lot of work to do to gain acceptance as a whole.

Representative: Chiaki

Chiaki is a Crane Tengu fighter. She was not that skilled with magic or healing, but found a great passion for swordfighting. She dreams of one day forging her own legendary sword; unfortunately, her skills at smithing are nowhere near her sword-fighting talents — she is only at the level of an apprentice. She would not be allowed to master the sword were it not for Asoba and Sōjōbō's alliance, which allows her to train under the Crow Tengu swordmasters.



Emperor Yoshitaka and the Tribe of Hidōbō

惟高天皇と非道坊の部族（*Yoshitaka-tennō to Hidōbō no Buzoku*）

"By this last breath I utter my oath... I will rise. Again and again. So long as this land shaped by my blood thrives, I will bring ruin..." — Emperor Yoshitaka

The Great Tengu Hidōbō represents one of the greatest threats to Nippon and the Imperial Family. Hidōbō is not one figure but two: the young tengu noble Hayaki and the malevolent kami Yoshitaka. Hayaki made a profane pact with Yoshitaka to gain the power needed to lead the tengu and get his revenge. Together, Hayaki and Yoshitaka became a new being, a greater tengu who named himself Hidōbō. In surrendering his name, Hayaki also gave up his will, giving Yoshitaka control of his body and mind.

Under the influence of Sōjōbō, there has been years of peace among the battle-loving tengu. But when an oni clan attacked the Buzzard Tribe, the young tengu Hayaki took up arms. The defense ended in failure and the Buzzard Tribe lost their mountain home, taking significant casualties. Hayaki resented Sōjōbō for the peacetime that made the tengu weak, and the mortal ideals that inspired him. When Hayaki found out the attack on his home would not have happened if the humans hadn't chased out the oni in the first place, he was enraged. He tried to take vengeance upon Sōjōbō, but his revenge ended in failure and Sōjōbō spared him out of pity for his lost tribe. Beaten and battered, Hayaki cursed his weakness, opening himself to any power who would give him his revenge. It was at this moment Yoshitaka found the young tengu.

Yoshitaka is a kami born of vengeance. He was once an emperor of Nippon. Caught in a war of succession, his reign was brief before he was forced into abdication and exiled. In this time he became a monk and transcribed scriptures, but these were rejected by the nobility in the Imperial Court for fear he had cursed them. He eventually perished from disease after years of humiliation and failure. Upon his death he vowed vengeance upon the Nippon and the imperial lineage. Such curses have consequences; his spirit birthed an onryō, a vengeful ghost, of unrivaled horror. Yoshitaka's imperial bloodline gave his spirit great power, and he grew further into a kami of calamity.

Yoshitaka threatens the Emperor and the imperial family. He brought about the fall of the Heian capital, and attempted to take the new capital Miwa, but was thwarted by then Head Priestess Tominaga Asae. She attempted to seal him away in the process, but only managed to weaken him.

Defeated and weakened, Yoshitaka was no longer able to attain his revenge alone. He would need to

gather more power, and he found both power and means in a young tengu and his disenfranchised tribe. Yoshitaka obliged Hayaki with the strength the tengu so desired. Branding his name upon Hayaki's body, Yoshitaka imbued the tengu with a sizable portion of his being, transforming him into a greater tengu. This new being would call himself Hidōbō.

It is Yoshitaka who controls Hidōbō, but it is unknown how much of Hayaki remains. Yoshitaka can draw upon Hayaki's memories to manipulate the tengu tribes, but he is beholden to the conditions of the original pact they made, and must first follow those conditions before exacting his full vengeance. He has contented himself with trying to achieve both goals at the same time.

What is undeniable is that Hidōbō is strong. He is able to rival Sōjōbō, and his message resonates with other tengu. He knows exactly what to say to sway their support and polarize the tribes.

It is Yoshitaka's influence among the tengu lords that has broken the stalemate and caused tensions to rise — it seems that war is on the horizon for them. Yoshitaka takes particular umbrage with Sōjōbō's closeness to the Nipponese Imperial Family, his sworn enemy. If he is victorious over Sōjōbō and the other tengu, it will be Nippon that he conquers next, if he chooses not to raze it to the ground.

Hidōbō's roost is a mountain in Hazama that, while once rich with life, has succumbed to blight.

Using Yoshitaka in your Scenarios

Yoshitaka is one of the closest things in this setting to a major villain. He has unambiguous motivations of malice, especially towards the royal family. He has a vested interest in ending their dynasty and finds it a personal insult for Nippon to continue to thrive under the Emperor's lineage.

It might be good to still give some nuance to his followers though. Understanding their reasons for serving Yoshitaka can help create more avenues for players to use their Skills when resolving Conflicts. If one serves because Yoshitaka protects them, then the players might gain a new (perhaps hesitant) ally by protecting them too.



Court of the Red Spider Lily

彼岸花の朝廷（*Higanbana no Chōtei*）

"Power in death's embrace"

A fast-rising power of the supernatural world, the Court of the Red Spider Lily is quickly becoming a major concern for the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs.

The Court of the Red Spider Lily is a group of spirits led by a vile creature known only as "The Red Princess" and her court of onryō noblewomen. Unlike most onryō, who are fixated on their individual obsessions, members of the Spider Lily Court work together towards shared goals with a cold calculating intelligence that makes them frightening opponents.

Agenda

The Red Spider Lily Court has only a single known goal: the conversion of ghosts (known as yūrei) into onryō.

Onryō, also known as s, are powerful ghosts known for their insatiable hunger for spiritual energy and their single-minded drive for vengeance. Consumed with their obsessions, onryō eventually lose their sanity, their conscious mind, and with it their ability to resist their urges. This is both their greatest strength and greatest weakness, as such instinctive single-mindedness may be used against them by a skilled exorcist. The upper echelons of the Court of the Red Spider Lily do not possess this weakness as they have gained the ability to refocus their rage, making them far less likely to fall for such simple tricks.

Base of Operations

No one knows exactly where the Red Princess herself lives, but the activity of her court seems to be focused around certain points of power. It is likely that her castle is in the Yūkai, a dimly lit realm of ghosts and spirits. On dark nights, witnesses claim to see a castle enshrouded in mist near places of defilement and death, such as graveyards or ancient battlefields.

Activities

The Red Princess herself isn't often seen beyond her haunting lands. She seems to prefer to work through agents and her court members, only directly engaging individuals who have personally drawn her ire. Despite this, her influence is widespread, with each yūrei indoctrinated into her court furthering her reach.

Representative: Akahime, The Red Princess

Leader of the Court of the Red Spider Lily, Akahime — literally, "the Red Princess" — does not seek a quick death for her targets. Instead, she is a master of psychological warfare, preferring to drive her targets mad. While she is known to kill for even the merest of slights, she prefers her targets' deaths to be the results of their own weaknesses.

There's a method to her madness though, for a death filled with such twistedness and sorrow is likely to create a ghost primed to become a new onryō. Her victims are not often aware of her influence until it's too late and their hunger for more corrupted ki becomes too strong. She presents a friendly face to all newly dead, claiming to act in their best interests while furthering her sinister agenda. The Red Princess is nothing if not pragmatic.

It is not known what led the Red Princess to her path of malice; such reasonings have been lost to the embodiment of bitterness she has become. Yet unlike her fellow onryō, who linger on the borders of consciousness and pure instinct, the Red Princess retains a frightening degree of intelligence, forethought, and patience. Her influence grants her followers this same sense of will that they would not normally possess.



Elementalists

精霊使いの団体（Seireitsukai no Dantai）

"The elements of nature have a will and a purpose — all serve a greater harmony"

Elementals are a special class of spirit. Akin to minor kami, they embody the principles of a particular element and are able to imbue objects and areas with their properties. Their influence can form environments and phenomena in places where they would otherwise be impossible.

Elementals are most often categorized according to the Chinese elements of Wu Xing, also known as the Five Phases: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Some elemental spirits are not easily classified under any single phase, as the energies they exhibit may not be easily categorized into strict types. Elementals that embody the lightning of a storm can be classified as fire, metal, or even wood.

Most wild elementals are born as formless collections of energy with little discernible will. Environmental factors can shape them into a more powerful defined form over the course of decades. Elementalists forge pacts with these spirits to perform their brand of magic. Their bond shifts the form of the elemental spirit to reflect its partner.

Elementalists are then able to use their partners to imbue objects with their properties. The elemental within changes its form to reflect its nature. When used this way, they become potent magical weapons and miraculous artifacts. When an elementalist imbues themselves with their elemental, they gain the ability to wield its power directly, but their soul comes under the influence of that spirit's wild nature. When they combine their powers they can become greater than the sum of their parts. Unless the elementalist is strong willed, their personality may undergo permanent change. This is not a one-way relationship, and the elemental also begins to take on the qualities of the person it is bound to.

Elementalists are less of an organized school of magic and more of a community united by their ties to these special kinds of spirits. They have all kinds of reasons for forging their pacts. How an elemental's power is wielded depends on the individual.

Agenda

Elementals can embody certain emotions based on their element. Their natures can manifest as motivations and personality traits. All elements have positive and negative qualities; a fire elementalist maybe be gifted with the enthusiasm, exuberance, and creativity of a hearth, or the aggression, impulsiveness, and anger of a forest fire. In order to prevent disaster, magma elementalists might take

on the power of volcanoes and dedicate themselves to a life of pacifism to prevent their elemental from erupting.

Elemental spirits offer their partners a new perspective, allowing them to better see the systems that pervade the universe. Most elementalists are dedicated to protecting the harmony of nature and maintaining the balance of elemental energies, even if their actions can seem enigmatic, confusing, or even antagonistic. They understand that all energies have a creative and destructive side: the calm serenity of water can also lead to the torrential flood or the roiling turbulence of the sea. Fire elementalists in particular best understand the importance of destruction in the regeneration of nature, leading them to take on potentially antagonistic roles that they feel are absolutely necessary.

Base of Operations

Elementalists do not occupy any specific territory, as elemental spirits can be found anywhere ki gathers in abundance. Their techniques may be used without formal education. When a person forges a pact with an elemental, and binds it to an object or within themselves, they become an elementalist. As such there are many groups and factions of elementalists with their own specific agendas.

One magic academy is dedicated to studying the potential of spirit magic. Though not all elementalists have a formal education for their techniques, those who graduate from this school are the most organized. They have paved the way for their brand of magic being seen as an important and legitimate form of sorcery.

Activities

While the elementalists do not have a singular mission to uphold, their experience with elementals makes them well equipped to handle similar spirits. At their most powerful, wild elemental spirits can cause phenomena known as elemental storms around them, endangering people and yōkai. When enraged, these spirits can revert to their destructive forms, resulting in a supernatural disaster. Elementalists are most needed to pacify elementals that have run amok, because they can use their own spirits to pacify them. How they do this is largely dependent on their personal motivations.

Elementalist magic makes them well suited for Bureau missions. Elementals are effective against other spirits, but as imbued objects they are also able to aid their partner against physical threats.

Representative: Ichiyama Hatsuyoshi

The bounty hunter Hatsuyoshi specializes in subduing large, hostile, and dangerous monsters. He thrives at the center of intense and thrilling combat. Though he would never admit it, battle is the only place he can feel alive. Hatsuyoshi wishes to be free of violence and carnage, but it is all he has ever known, so he directs his abilities towards helping people in need. Hatsuyoshi carries a deep-seated need to atone for his past crimes. He feels as monstrous as the creatures he defeats, and though he dreams of having a family he does not believe he is fit to have one.

Hatsuyoshi is a quiet man, who despite his formidable strength and size has a good affinity with children. Once an orphan himself, Hatsuyoshi is driven to help families and children live in safe healthy environments so that they can avoid the desperate situation that pushed him into a life of violence and crime.

As a homeless youth, Hatsuyoshi was taken in by what would eventually become the infamous Buretsu clan. The lord had taken a liking to the boy, and had him trained in the arts of combat and espionage. Hatsuyoshi would grow up as the Buretsu clan's hand in the shadows, performing their most illegal and heinous jobs while they maintained a respectable image. They exploited his gratitude to form him into a loyal and unquestioning pawn. One day Hatsuyoshi was ordered to kill a man who could not pay his debts, along with his wife and child, and he realized how monstrous he had become. Hatsuyoshi could no

longer excuse himself for blindly following orders. For his betrayal, the Buretsu clan sentenced him to death and hunted him relentlessly.

Hatsuyoshi suffered grievous injuries trying to survive the team of assassins sent to kill him. As one stood over him to deal the finishing blow, a bolt of lightning struck the assailant down. Grateful for this turn of events, Hatsuyoshi thanked the storm, and pledged that if he survived, he would atone for his crimes and try to use his life to help those in need. The elemental within the storm heard his oath and the lightning formed into a pair of fulminous wolves: Raiu, and her brother Raiya.

By imbuing the elementals into his blades, Hatsuyoshi was able to defeat his pursuers. Raiu and Raiya bestowed him with powerful abilities of lightning and metal. When he throws one of his blades, Hatsuyoshi is able to travel upon a bolt of lightning to reach it nearly instantaneously. So long as he holds one of his blades, he can travel to its twin no matter the distance. This has given him a nickname: the Flickering Fang.



The Enlightened Disciples

覚者の記録団（Kakusha no Kirokudan）

"Seek to better yourself before you better the world"

Centered in the village of Satori, the Enlightened Disciples are an ancient order shrouded in mystery. It is unknown how long their organization has existed, but the Disciples have been increasingly active in recent history. While they are considered citizens of Nippon, ancient laws provide them a degree of autonomy. Senior Disciples even have special permission to enter locations that are forbidden to the ordinary citizens of Nippon. Their status has not stopped frustrated warlords and leaders from imprisoning them and trying to force an answer about their ultimate goals. But these questions ultimately prove futile; the inscrutability of the Disciples is well known, as is their enduring patience.

They are known for their unsettling demeanors, ivory hair, and their distinctive eyes, which stain white as they perform their Witnessing techniques, which only serves to increase the discomfort most people feel about their presence. While Witnessing, they wear robes that conceal their face, further separating themselves from the people and the world around them.

The Disciples seem both present and distant at the same time. Their gazes are unfocused, yet pierce through a person's being. They are silent observers of worldly events, who attempt to refrain from intervening, despite it sometimes being necessary.

Agenda

The Enlightened Disciples have but one known agenda: to safeguard against the destruction of history. They record as much information as they can, and take measures to preserve it for the future. Part of this preservation is ensuring the group's continued existence; for that reason, they gladly offer training to any who wish to join their order and learn their techniques.

What they record is beyond normal human senses. As their eyes turn white from their Witnessing Techniques, they are able to see the world in a foreign sense of totality, a new reality. Disciples eventually lose the ability to see the world as they once did, and their eyes stay white for the rest of their lives. Before this happens they must train to stay present in this world, where their abilities and knowledge can benefit those who live here. Otherwise they could lose themselves without any grounding in their new perspective.

The Witnessed experiences are recorded into scrolls by the Witnesser or another disciple trained as a scribe. While the language they use is unreadable to anyone else, it is able to encode much more information than mundane writing. They record all the sensory and thought experiences of the

history they have witnessed: sights, sounds, and other sensory information are all inscribed into these transcripts. Senior Disciples are able to record the spiritual environment, strong emotions, and in certain individuals, even the basic surface thoughts of those around them.

The Satori are able to parse their scriptures, and in doing so, experience the recordings in totality. Elder Disciples are even capable of projecting the visions contained within such scrolls onto a reflective surface, most commonly a pool of water. But only the most skilled of Disciples are capable of parsing these recordings in their entirety. Even then, the sheer amount of information can make finding answers from the recordings difficult.

Base of Operations

While visitors are allowed to enter the village, enchantments protect its true location from being recorded or tracked. This prevents it from being easily invaded or assaulted, even if discovered by individuals. Without the help of a Disciple, locating the village can be quite difficult for non-residents. While it has a true location within the borders of Nippon, it is theorized that a connection with the shifting landscape of The World Beyond periodically moves its location in the real world.

The Satori Grand Library is said to be a magnificent structure, holding tomes and scrolls in countless numbers. But most are written in the inscrutable script of the Disciples. While this language is unreadable to anyone else, it is able to encode much more information than mundane writing. They record all the sensory and thought experiences of the history they have witnessed.

Satori is self-sustaining and is not reliant on trade for their necessities. The disciples are content with simple nutritious foods and supplies that they can grow themselves. There is not much of interest there for Nippon's citizens, save for philosophers and scholars. Even if its location were known, few would choose to seek it out.

Activity

Satori Disciples ensure that they are present during important points in history. The number of them gathered at one place could imply the potential impact of an event on the future to come. Many believe that the Satori Disciple Elders have some mysterious knowledge of the future and time itself.

Satori scholars spend much of their time at the Grand Library, searching through the encoded records and writing about findings in the common language.

Disciples open up small libraries of their recordings in important cities, where their services can be used by the populace. They can also perform personal recordings for wealthy individuals looking to preserve something for posterity. During important court trials, Disciples are often called upon to record the proceedings with more detail than a normal scribe.

It is easiest for the Witnessing Disciple to parse their own recordings. It is much more difficult to access if the original Witness passes away.

Representative: Shichiro

Shichiro is the leader of The Enlightened Disciples of Satori. To the undisciplined spirit, Shichiro does not have any outward features that would indicate his status is higher than the other Elder Disciples, but to the spiritually sensitive his eminence is obvious. For those who know him personally, his towering height makes him unmistakable even when wearing the obscuring garb of the Disciples while Witnessing. The old stories talk of Shichiro's sparkling dark eyes and his long black hair, but in time, as with all Elder Satori, both of these have become white. Over the years Shichiro has grown an ivory beard that cascades out of his robes, stretching past his knees. In recent times it is rarer for Shichiro to Witness outside the village, something he laments. His legs do not work as they used to, which he humorously blames

Clan Entry: The Enlightened Disciples

on all the sitting he does now. It is said that Shichiro is many thousands of years old, and he is the only remaining human to Witness the Age of Kami.

Shichiro is well known for his quiet nature; he is one to listen more than speak. But when he does speak, his voice is distinct in its soft pleasant tones, made gravelly by age. It is a voice that many love to listen to, but he does not often speak to the public, especially in recent times. Despite having lived for ages, he is finally nearing the end of his days. When he finds successors capable of parsing his recordings, he will pass his knowledge on to the generations to come, and move on to the next life.

He and several elder disciples were present at Akitsu's coronation, and many consider this to be a portent of Akitsu's rise as emperor. Whether it is a good or ill portent depends on the person asked.



Heroes of the Sea

海の勇者団（Umi no Yūshadan）

"Only you have the strength to push yourself beyond your own limitations"

The Heroes of the Sea are no ordinary group of ragtag misfits, do-gooders, and self-styled heroes. They are practiced in a special kind of shamanic magic which allows them to manifest the spirits of heroes past as partners, and gain those partners' abilities and manipulate their forms. Together the two fight through thick and thin, achieving great feats that they would be incapable of alone.

The group is led by their charismatic leader, Akakawashima Kouru, who also serves as a mentor to the other members. When Kouru lost his family in a village massacre, he vowed to work to prevent the same from ever happening again. His troubled past leaves him unable to resist rescuing troubled youths and wayward warriors and adding them to his surrogate family. Almost everyone in the Heroes of the Sea has experienced significant loss of one kind or another. They are a rough family, prone to raucous conflict and wild behavior. It is a friendly chaos, though; their loyalty is such that they would fight to protect their family no matter the cost, even when they disagree.

Agenda

Kouru is known for his hands-off nature, so it really wouldn't be his style to make a concrete agenda for the Heroes as a whole. So long as his members are acting in the name of justice, protecting those in need, and learning from their heroic partners, Kouru feels little need to provide direction to the group. But the Heroes of the Sea are not particularly wealthy, so its funds go straight into the basic necessities of its cause. There is always the need to fulfill requests and do odd-jobs to feed and shelter its members. A number of issues are particularly personal to Kouru, however. He is compelled to save those who, like him, have experienced significant loss.

The Heroes of the Sea have been a welcome shelter to spiritually attuned individuals. They are trained to control their attunement and ki, allowing them to return home with their powers under control, freed from the dangerous spiritual activity that used to gather around them.

Though he would not want to drag his members into it, Kouru is still concerned with the mystery of his town's massacre. He is compelled to bring its culprit to justice. Kouru and his adopted family fight

to ensure innocent people are not without protection in their dire moments, so that no town has to endure the same kind of tragedy as Kouru's home.

Base of Operations

With the aid of his first members, Kouru built the hall for the Heroes of the Sea from the ground up, near the mouth of the Hisui river on the northern coast of Hazama. It's a sizable building but the influx of members is starting to stretch its limits. The base extends to the ocean, where there are docks, a port, and a good number of boats.

After the destruction caused by the massacre, the Heroes made it their first mission to rebuild the village. The hall itself is located near the place where Kouru lost his wife and son.

Activity

With ships blessed by the nearby ocean kami as well as their special brand of water magic, the Heroes of the Sea are able to sail much faster than ordinary sailors, especially during storms and other unfavorable weather. They can reach most ports bordering the Northern Sea in less than a week, giving them a huge range throughout Nippon. The Heroes are not always the first choice when people request help. They can be a bit heavy-handed and rambunctious, leading to problems with collateral damage. But they are dependable and skilled at handling superhuman threats and they have no qualms about taking even the most desperate and dangerous of jobs for relatively little payment.

Representative: Akakawashima Kouru

Upon returning from a fishing trip, Kouru found the water turned ever more crimson as he approached the shore. The fisherman could not find a single survivor in the town, including his wife and son. They had all been murdered, and their blood stained the nearby waters. Numbed by shock, Kouru did not rest until he recovered each villager and gave them proper rites.

Grief did not strike him until he went to the river to wash off his loved ones' blood. Kouru was at a loss for what to do. The river kami approached to console him. She had felt their deaths, but her domain was too far away for her to save the villagers. Kouru vowed to never let something like this happen again, and to see the perpetrators brought to justice.

The river kami did not know who had committed this atrocity, but she bestowed a gift to Kouru. She taught him an ancient way of spirit mastery and shamanism. He learned a secret technique to call heroes of the past to lend him their aid and knowledge, forging a bond with them as partners. With her help he purified the nearby waters of death and defilement, gaining him the favor of the ocean kami, who blessed his boat and taught him the secrets of the ocean and its magic.

Kouru then set out to follow his vow, saving people and gaining followers until they became a ragtag clan of misfit heroes. While he has preoccupied himself with training them and protecting innocents, he never forgets the vow he made to honor his family and bring justice to their murderers.

Kouru is partnered with the spirit of a famed swordsman, Bouton. Together they perform a sword style completely unique to them, incorporating elements of spirit manipulation and water magic. What Bouton gives Kouru in offense, his other partner Kirima offers in defense. Kirima is an armored dog, larger than any man. Through spirit manipulation, Kirima forms into battle armor for Kouru. He wields the blade known as Akuran, taken from the belly of the corrupted sea serpent he slew to purify the ocean waters. It augments his magic, and a full swing of the blade erupts in the visage of the serpent formed of water. Using water magic he can create mirages of the blade that attack in a confusing and indefensible flurry.

He is a man deeply tanned from years out on the seas, and well-muscled from his daily training. As the mentor of the Heroes of the Sea, Kouru is also the unquestioned strongest member of the group.



Inari's Tail

お稲荷様の尻尾（O-Inari-sama no Shippo）

"All grows from the Earth"

Followers of the School of Inari's Tail consider themselves students of the Great Kami Inari. The goddess Inari has many mantles and many faces. Her primary domains are harvest, rice, and fertility. These days she is seen as feminine, but she has been known to take on masculine forms in the past. The followers of Inari's Tail devote their lives to the study and protection of Inari's lands. A core tradition among the followers of Inari's Tail is to partner with a fox, whom they care for and train. These fox companions are their partners in battle and assist in their duties. They are said to be connected with Inari herself, serving as her messengers to the mortal world.

While they do serve a Great Kami as followers of her principles, Inari's Tail are less like clergy and more like forest rangers with a clear philosophy. Most of the followers revere kitsune, but many of their foxes have not yet undergone their spiritual awakening. Those who do partner with a kitsune often only find out when their partner entrusts them with their true identity. The fox techniques they learn are ones that, by and large, any initiate can study.

Agenda

Inari's Tail's main agenda is to watch for threats against the land and the balance of nature. Inari's domains are not exclusive to nature; she is also a goddess of the land, fertility, agriculture, and industry. Members of Inari's Tail are known go out and help villages with failing farms.

Every full member of Inari's Tail is partnered with a fox believed to be a servant of Inari. Before the taming ceremony can begin, members must study the nature of foxes and train for the moment they meet their future partners. The fox techniques of Inari's Tail are almost a martial art. Anyone can become a trainee, but to become a full member a trainee must demonstrate full competence with fox-handling. Once chosen by their fox partner, the initiate must clear various tests and trials to become a full member.

In the event that their partner dies, followers of Inari's Tail will try to begin the process anew. If a member should pass away before their fox partner, the partner often remains at the school to help new trainees. While rare, on occasion a senior follower will take on more than one partner, working together in harmony as a trained squad.

Clan Entry: Inari's Tail

Base of Operations

Schools following the teachings of Inari's Tail are most often located near woodlands where ample fox populations are present. The main school itself is near the thick forests by the mountains of the northern island of Hazama. Followers use these schools as places to regroup, plan, and rest. Some can even be as small as an extra room in a follower's home.

Activity

Members take on Bureau contracts in line with their agenda, often ones protecting farming towns that are otherwise defenseless against supernatural threats. Every fully fledged follower finds situations where they thrive and takes jobs relevant to their strengths.

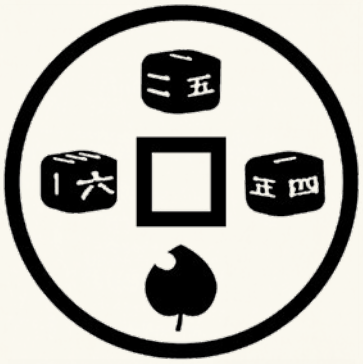
While rare, in missions where the odds of danger are particularly high, the School will call upon all available members to assist each other.

Representative: Okitsuka Mika

沖塚 美香

Mika is a wise old woman who founded the Inari's Tail. She has continued to lead the group for years, listening to the needs of the land and its people and sending emissaries to help with their problems. Generous and understanding, it is said that she was gifted the power to speak to animals after letting a wild fox eat from her rice bowl for three days.

She is protected by her loyal white fox Shiratsuki (白月), who is almost as large as a human.



Joushima Tanuki Family

定島たぬき組（Jōshima Tanuki-gumi）

"Their loss is our gain"

While most tanuki are content with keeping to themselves, there have always been others who seek out contact with humanity. Tanuki make shrewd peddlers and merchants, providing services that are legally gray. Tanuki are not bound by the rules of human society, which has led to lots of them dealing in illegal activities and contraband. Longtime owners of prominent gambling dens, the Joushima Family has existed for generations. The loss of the Emperor and the loss of trust in the government has led to the rampant proliferation of organized crime. The Family is now one of the most powerful groups in the region.

But the Joushima Family is not like most crime organizations. While they deal in things that are illegal, they understand entertainment, and in the end that is what they provide: fun involving gambling. Still, despite their power and wealth, they always make sure to devote time and effort to swindling travelers and passersby.

The Joushima family is notable as one of the first organizations to allow for any species to join its ranks. Widespread in its reach, nobody knows how big it truly is. Many members in its branches do not even realize they work for the Joushima Family, let alone that they are taking orders from tanuki. Through shrewd use of shapeshifting and front organizations, the true nature and locations of the family are difficult to track.

Agenda

The Joushima run a network of gambling dens where individuals of sometimes questionable morals gather to drink, relax, and play dice or card games. Some popular games include chō-han, hanafuda, and even shōgi in areas with more educated patrons. Some of these dens are targeted at a human clientele and will only allow disguised yōkai to enter. Others allow all comers openly, though humans tend to be less comfortable in these and thus are rarely seen there.

To cover gambling debts, the Joushima began offering loans to give their customers a chance to get the money together before the family was forced to take more drastic steps. Eventually they began offering loans for other purposes, but under the same questionable terms.

The Joushima find it convenient to be well-liked by the communities in which they operate. A village that hates the family will be more likely to cooperate with law enforcement who might want to shut down their operations, whereas a village that reveres them

will actively help them hide any wrongdoing. Because of this the Joushima will often assist the community by bringing in extra food during lean harvests, or helping with repairs after a storm. Their goal is to be more respected than feared.

Base of Operations

The leaders of the Joushima Family reside in a sprawling manor located in the Bingo province of the San'yō Region The house is registered under a fake name and is a closely guarded secret. The townspeople and even the servants who work in the manor are unaware that the house is actually owned by the Joushima.

Representative: Boss Kurodzume

Serving as head parent of the Joushima clan is Kurodzume-Oyabun. She is the third generation head of the clan, and acts as a surrogate parent; those who join the family are "adopted" and become brothers and sisters. Kurodzume is married to a human man, and together they lead the family. She is tough-as-nails, mysterious, and very powerful. Despite this, she always has time for some mischief.

She speaks in a distinctive dialect of the San'yō Region. In particular, this dialect has become associated with organized crime.



Odimen Oni Territories

越知面の縄張り（Odimen Oni no Nawabari）

"Our lives given for the Grand Horn are lives given for our people"

Oni are yōkai well known for their ruthless and malicious nature. While some powerful oni have bands of demon underlings and followers, their temperament does not lend itself well to cooperation with others of their kind. It isn't unheard of for oni to form into small bands and family units, but most oni-led groups tend to be chaotic and do not last for long. It is rare to see them form into larger groups and communities, yet they do exist. Several even have relative peace and stability — not all oni share their brethren's fondness for carnage.

The horde of the Odimen territories is a veritable army of oni over three thousand strong that has managed to work together as a community for centuries. They are warmongering and aggressive, yet their actions are more careful and calculated than the anarchy of their kin. The Odimen oni maintain a well-defended territory in The World Beyond that has so far managed to resist the attacks that have befallen most oni cities, despite many of their soldiers being smaller and relatively human-sized compared to their gigantic cousins. They achieve this by having a rigid caste system with utmost loyalty to their masked chief known as the Grand Horn, whose horns are far larger and more distinctive than other oni. Normally oni have difficulty following strict orders and the chain of command, but their leader imposes an undoubtedly mystic sway over his people.

Odimen's oni warriors are notable for wearing carved masks of wood and stone known as fierce masks. Blessed by the chief, the masks are an extension of his power, able to make their wearers stronger, or in extreme cases transform their bodies entirely. Any who wear a fierce mask will be accepted as family, regardless of species and origin. Whoever wears a mask becomes connected to the soul of the Odimen tribe, gaining great power — but they lose their will, and eventually become oni themselves.

Agenda

Those who serve under the Grand Horn are subservient to the mask's will. Unless they have strong willpower, or are zealously dedicated to a cause, they will not be able to directly disobey an order. Even an oni who is ardently opposed to the Grand Horn will have difficulty doing them intentional harm except through a ritual test of strength.

Upon the death of a chief, their strength and will is formed into a Grand Horn mask. Any Odimen resident who wears it becomes the new Grand

Horn. They become stronger, taller, and their horns grow large and more numerous. The Grand Horn is then connected to all fierce masks blessed by their predecessor, and they are able to bless new ones of their own.

Base of Operations

The Odimen Territories once lay beyond the borders of the mortal realm. But after the Grand Rite, a significant portion of the area now sits within Nippon. This has caused significant trouble to nearby villages who suffer territorial disputes and pillaging from bands of Odimen oni.

Activity

At first they stole valuables, and foodstuffs, but after a while the bandits began to deliberately search for magical artifacts and mechanical machinery. Most recently, shipments of war artillery and gunpowder have been stolen by roving oni. Locals fear that the Odimen are preparing to aggressively expand their territory.

Representative: Grand Horn O-Masaya

Imposing and brawny, with a hide of lacquered ebony, the current Grand Horn O-Masaya has only worn the mask of his office for the last two years. Prior to his leadership, O-Masaya was an oni engineer and inventor, greatly interested in the developments of mortal technology and magic. He invested much of his time in researching and studying weaponry, forging techniques, alchemy, and architectural construction. His contributions have led to a more developed city in Odimen, and advancements in weaponry over invading aggressors.

O-Masaya's predecessor was a war criminal even by oni standards, stricken with the burning desire to unite all oni under one tribe and enlighten them to the ways of Odimen. He razed oni villages and started a great war to unify oni under the domination of his iron first, causing great harm to people within and without the Odimen Territories. He was defeated in a test of strength and his mask was given to O-Masaya in hopes that he would use it to benefit his brethren.

The new Grand Horn began to improve the foundation of Odimen's communities, but it did not stay this way for long. Over time, O-Masaya became aggressive and prideful. It seems that his predecessor's will proved too powerful for him to control and the chief became twisted by the mask he wore. His curiosity of mortal technology became an obsession, and he desires to use it to dominate the oni. There is a chance O-Masaya will reassert control over his mask, but it may require outside intervention.



Running Foxes

狐の耳商団連（*Kitsune no Mimi Shōdanren*）

"What you need is what we have"

Mystical artifacts, appraisals, or simple knickknacks — the Running Foxes offer it all, provided you can pay their price. But the group does not only deal in physical goods. If you know where to look and what to ask, the Running Foxes also deal in rumors, hearsay, news from afar, and just about any other sort of information. They do not stay in one place for long, but they are not completely elusive. Learn to spot the signs or follow the rumors, and a determined seeker can easily find them.

Not all of their services and products cost money; sometimes they will demand a favor, or ask for a payment of information. A favor for a favor, or many favors to purchase one. If you cannot pay, then they are unlikely to be interested. But it is important to note that unlike similar groups, the Running Foxes rarely resort to things like blackmail, even if the rest of their methods might be shady.

A suspicious organization like this is not often tolerated by the authorities, but the Running Foxes have survived multiple attempts to disband them. Information is powerful, and many groups have tried to seize it by force. The tacit professionalism of the Running Foxes means that they do not give that information freely, so it is generally safe in their hands. They know just enough dirt, and can call in just enough favors, to keep their people and the information they know safe. They have enough strength to remain neutral towards all factions mortal or supernatural. When cornered, they will put up a good fight and disperse, regrouping later at an affiliated hot spring or tavern.

Agenda

The Running Foxes are organized and formidable for a group that sits in the gray areas of the law. Unlike those who would use the power they garner from favors and information to coerce others into doing their bidding, the Running Foxes pride themselves as merchants of great principle. Trust in their name is important to their business.

Base of Operations

The true base of the Running Foxes is unknown; perhaps there is not one at all. But if they did have one, it would likely be as elusive as they are, moving from place to place as the need arises and known only to the highest members of the order.

The Running Foxes have a presence in most major towns, and even in rural villages an affiliated merchant will not be far from reach.

Clan Entry: Running Foxes

Activity

Many merchants are a part of their network, identified by an inconspicuous sign or a sigil. While common folk know the Running Foxes as merchants and peddlers of fine goods, with the right password a customer can access the clan's main commodity: information.

Though it is common for higher ranking members to be shapeshifters, able to change their outward appearance at will to keep a low profile, not all members are shapeshifting yōkai. Their ranks include merchants of many different species.

The organization has no real centralized leadership. Instead, the Running Foxes are directed by an inner council of trustees. Rarely do these members meet all at once. Most only know the full identities of a few others in the council, and they don masks and disguises even in the presence of each other.

Representative: Wakachi

If there is one member of the inner council closest to a true leader, it is Wakachi. It is unknown what her gender truly is, but Wakachi often appears as a woman. Wakachi is friendly, brazen, and loud in a way that is at odds with the nature of the organization. But do not mistake her easygoing nature for carelessness. She is notoriously difficult to read, hard to outwit, and is likely to get a manipulator to spill their secrets before she even hints at one of hers, disarming them with her genuine exuberance and friendliness.

She loves alcohol in all forms, and respects anyone who can hold their liquor. She will take up any drinking challenge with gusto. But Wakachi is not all fun and games, she's a capable organizer and a strong leader when the situation calls for it.

While she is known for being generally forgiving, do not attempt to double-cross her or attempt to sidestep agreements on technicalities. Once angry, she does not let up — sometimes to the point of irrationality. Deception is common in her business, leading her hotheadedness to get her underlings in trouble even with her fellow Running Fox members. More than a couple of her fellow council members have drawn her ire, and Wakachi refuses to cooperate with them without ensuring they remember why.



Tomodzuri Samurai Clan

友釣り藩（Tomodzuri-han）

"The sea brings fortune" (Umi wa kōun o motarashimasu)

The Tomodzuri Clan was founded when a petty samurai by the name of Ito was tasked with managing a small, poor, fishing village. Ito was content to simply be in charge of something, living with the reward of that (as well as fishing casually whenever nothing called for his attention), so the village did not grow in prosperity. Besides fishing, the village was known for its pearl divers, called "ama". Ito eventually fell in love with and married the most beautiful of them. In spite of her elevated status as the samurai's lady, his wife was still required to collect pearls due to the village's poverty. The shame of this forced her to work only when others could not see her. One night she did not return. Ito went to search the water for her, despite not being a good diver. He had learned to be concerned with more than just himself, and nearly lost his life trying to find her. As he was drowning, he caught a glimpse of his wife, and though he was content to die beside her, he found himself quite alive the next morning in their home. Following that night the years passed in peace and safety for the couple, and they parented many children and grandchildren. Descendants of the couple were always good at swimming, but occasionally some would be born with skin between their digits or rough skin that would almost look like scales if not masked with makeup. In time, the village became rich from the skill of their fishing and pearl-collecting, and gained a measure of independence when the original lord's lands were thrown into chaos during a war. Since that time, the people of the village pay taxes to whoever claims high enough authority through the Emperor's distribution of land, but mostly avoid interaction with the world. On the rare occasions that the village has been the target of invasion, the attackers found their ships sunk and their soldiers, attempting to navigate the surrounding mountains, lost and unable to arrive in the village.

Agenda

Most villagers simply want to maintain a peaceful village through their skill in living off the water. Though rare, some decide to leave and explore the world. These travelers always possess great skills when in the water, whether it be fishing or fighting on a ship. Those who take jobs in larger cities send their earnings back home to boost the village's prosperity even further, but must be careful to hide their unusual abilities lest they draw too many questions that may lead outsiders to the Tomodzuri.

Clan Entry: Tomodzuri Samurai Clan

Base of Operations

The Tomodzuri Samurai Clan's estate lies on a secluded strip of coast on the Seto Inland Sea on the island of Honshū. From its meager beginnings, the village has grown more prosperous under the leadership of Ito and his wife, and their descendants.

Activity

The village keeps to itself, and mostly concerns itself with trade in its wares and keeping the village safe from outsiders.

Representative: Princess Kingyo

Great-granddaughter of Ito and his wife, Princess Kingyo is absolutely determined to travel and see the world someday. This is a source of continuing conflict with her parents who are adamant on keeping their youngest daughter within their ancestral domain. Kingyo-hime loves the water: swimming, diving, and especially caring for goldfish. This makes leaving the safe waters of her isolated home a daunting idea. Yet it is curiosity that tugs adamantly at her heart. Despite being an otherwise obedient daughter, she is resolute on leaving home to explore the world.

Like the rest of her brothers and sisters, Princess Kingyo has a strong affinity with the water. She has been known to hold sway not only over the creatures that live within it, but over the water itself. She is a gifted swimmer who can hold her breath for inhuman amounts of time.

The Princess is well known in her village for her uncanny beauty, with long flowing hair and milky-white skin. The only hint that she might be more than human are the pearlescent white scales that adorn her pale visage, which she makes sure to keep covered at all times. She is most often seen in the traditional kimono of her family, featuring water patterns and other sea motifs, often with an orange sash, as it is her favorite color.

Ways of the World

These changing times bring new discoveries that need to be documented, researched, and studied. This has created a sudden demand for capable scholars to catalog these findings. Our world has always had its mysteries, but this era of change yields many new secrets waiting to be discovered.

The world has become almost a new frontier. Places once familiar shift and change under the fluctuating spiritual climates. Magical phenomena grow more frequent and more dangerous, causing apprehension among the populace. Once decried as superstition, traditions criticized as irrational have become indispensable for supernatural encounters.

The spirits and creatures known as yōkai have always been present throughout Nippon, but with the increase of spiritual energy they grow in strength and numbers. More and more are sighted every day and their influence on mortal affairs rises with their power. Understanding this new influence upon our world is going to be crucial to our society as it moves forward. Some fear this change, and their fears are not unjustified. But our world could just as much benefit from our not-so-new neighbors; who are we if we cannot extend our hospitality?

~ Misaki Toshonosuke, Head Archivist of the Miwa Central Library

The Ways of the World documents the principles that drive the world in Mysteries of the Yōkai. Nippon is different from the real world in many ways, so this section details the fundamental assumptions and principles that affect how the setting works. Understanding them can help build characters, set pieces, and places that work consistently with the rest of the lore.

The Setting Guidebook started from the ideas in this section, drawing inspiration from the way Japanese myths and legends depicted their world and its origins. Nippon in Mysteries of the Yōkai works the way someone at the time might have believed, according to the stories.

Interconnection

Beneath what can be seen and experienced in the physical world is a connection that underlies all things. No two are the same; the world itself is a web of interrelated systems that give rise to all phenomena. All things, even pebbles and mountains, have a degree of life. They are born, live, decay, and eventually die to be reborn as something new. With the death of a mountain comes the birth of new stones, each tied to the peak that formed them. The principle that imbues creation with this ability to exist and change is known as *musubi*. It is the pattern of *musubi* that weaves a tapestry for the ever-changing universe. All the creation within it is, in the end, inseparable, no matter how disparate things appear to be on the surface.

While *musubi* gave rise to the fabric of existence, the universe at its creation was largely formless until the first generations of kami. After the pair of Great Kami known as Izanagi and Izanami appeared, they pushed a jeweled spear into a sea of *musubi* and started the movement of yin and yang. By connecting the heavens with the earth and stirring them together, the Great Kami together created the first ki — the mysterious energy that perpetuates the cycle of yin and yang — which in turn gave the world its form.

Duality

The interplay of yin and yang is present in every process in the universe. Yin is the opposite of yang. It is yielding, and represents the dark and heavy, and things that are cold, wet, and still. Yang is yin's contrast. It is forceful, representing the bright and buoyant, and things that are hot, dry, and nimble. Yin and yang are as opposite as can be, but one cannot exist without the other for long. Within the brightest yang and the darkest yin its opposite can be born. All things are a mixture of the two, and all processes can eventually be boiled down in terms of a relation between yin and yang.

In the idea of yin and yang is an important principle regarding the structure of the universe. For all their differences, they are both integral parts of the same system. Without one, the other could not exist. It is in their balance that harmony is maintained amidst chaos.

Searching for yin and yang in the world can seem difficult; pure yin and yang are rarely seen, and unstable when isolated. Instead, the world is made up of elementary combinations of yin and yang.

Humanity and Nature

All life is inextricably connected to the universe around it, tied to nature by the bonds of spirit and ki. When humanity built its first walls to protect itself from the harsh wilds, they also shielded themselves from the good that came from it. In many ways that separation brought great power and knowledge to humanity, but it was not without cost. Over time people lost the ability to feel their connection to the universe and sense the energy that flows through it. As the world of the kami drifted farther away, humanity has forgotten the supernatural world. Everything is still there, but harder to reach.

Humanity has continued to progress, building upon the knowledge of their ancestors. But just as they are shielded from the harm of nature, their spiritual connections to each other drifted apart as well. Soon they needed to protect themselves from each other. No matter how separated a person might feel, they are always connected to the universe.

Many traditions in Nippon are founded on the understanding that nature is sacred and that humanity is a part of it. People celebrate the first blooms of spring, and travel to witness the beauty of the first frost. Ascetics and pilgrims wander the woods in search of enlightenment and revelation from the mountains, waters, and forests. Priests solicit knowledge from the kami, who also draw power from nature, and have insight into the connections that underlie it all. Yet they are relatively few; while they seek peace in nature, they separate themselves from civilization and the people who may love them.

Civilization provides progress, comfort, and even knowledge and records of spiritual principles. But discontent can never be completely eased by material gain and power. This is a conflict that began when the first walls between humanity and nature were built. Yet, neither can be considered the right path for everyone as a whole.



Ki: The Principle of Spirit

Ki is essence of action that flows around and shapes the creation and transformation of the universe. Life, defined by its ability to transform itself and the world around it, is intrinsically tied with ki. So it is said that the spirit itself is potentially made of ki.

While all ki eventually boils down to principles of yin and yang, it is rare to see pure yin or yang ki; most energy is instead a complex combination of the two. For much of history only a few people who were attuned to spiritual energies were able to see and manipulate it. Through their ability to freely form the ki in the universe, these sorcerers and magicians wielded great power by shaping *musubi*. But ki is a part of life and it exists everywhere. Even the most mundane of people can feel its presence with intense focus. They can be taught to shape and mold the ki within them because life already does so instinctively.

Those who know how to manipulate ki gain access to powers that transcend the capabilities of normal humans. Great artists, warriors, and geniuses of all talents have likely learned how to harness ki to some degree. There are three central sources of ki that people can draw upon: their inner ki, the ki outside them, and the ki of other beings.

Internal Ki

Energy that is formed within an individual is known as internal ki. It can be directly used to enhance a person's abilities or even be extended outside the body. More commonly it is used to channel the power needed to use magic or give force to martial arts. Internal ki is the simplest ki to influence, but the most difficult to master. Even if most of one's power is channeled from an external source, one's personal ki is still used to shape that power into the desired effect.

Bestowed Ki

Ki that is given by, requested, or taken from another being is called bestowed ki. This kind of energy is often used to augment one's internal ki, similarly to the way weapons and armor augment one's body. Because supernatural beings manipulate ki in a different way than humans do, a person who has gained access to a spirit's power will find themselves able to accomplish feats others could never dream of.

The Cost of Manipulating Ki

The use of ki is a natural process shared by all life, but like all activity, can be exhausting when performed to excess. In much the same way that a scholar studying for long hours or a warrior fighting through an entire battle will be drained from the experience, the prolonged application of ki in focused ways takes its toll on the user. When an individual's ki is forced out of harmony and natural balance, it leads to reduced health of body, mind, and soul. Ki eventually returns to a balanced state on its own, but those who regularly manipulate it tend to learn techniques to more quickly and efficiently stabilize themselves to avoid long term damage.

Kijutsu: The Foundation of Action

Also known as "the art of ki", kijutsu provides the foundation for all magic and martial arts. While those with magical affinities are rare, anyone can learn ki techniques with proper dedication and discipline. Ki can be harnessed through the mastery of mind, body, or soul. For centuries the world's master artisans and warriors have tapped into an instinctual ability to use ki even if they didn't understanding the hidden nature of ki itself.

Kijutsu is applied to everyday abilities to improve their effectiveness. By developing insight, people can gain a more intuitive understanding of how to invoke ki. This allows them to focus on specific techniques rather than the fundamentals of ki manipulation itself. While it can be taught, capable kijutsu practitioners are uncommon; those who lack the insight or affinity for it have a difficult time developing the skill in particular. Some must study for years to gain the same instincts through discipline and experience.

Adept warriors are capable of extending their inner ki beyond themselves. They are able to punch and slice without physically contacting their targets. It is this use of ki that allowed the famed martial master Giyakui to cripple his opponents through their armor using only palm strikes.

Martial artists use ki to stand their ground and respond to opponents. Swordmasters gain bursts of speed and power when channeling their ki. Kijutsu is also used outside of combat. Master calligraphists use ki to perform instinctual movements when making their swift brush strokes. Adept sorcerers must use kijutsu to change the property and nature of ki to work

their spells. Because of this, a refined and practiced understanding of kijutsu is integral to learning magic of any kind, even when spells are cast intuitively.

Magic

By nature, the exact forces that drive magic are mysterious. Though all schools of magic utilize at least some kind of ki and kijutsu, exactly how it is used and which forces it interacts with vary greatly. Many scholars accept one model of magic, only to find that it completely contradicts that of another school. A discussion of magic often begins by finding a common viewpoint from which to launch a discourse. This is what defines the nature of a school of magic.

There are many schools of magic, ranging from established and methodical institutions to wild and instinctual sects. While most see magic as the manipulation of external phenomena, there are also schools that utilize internal magic to manipulate the ki within the body and enhance martial techniques.

While magic is actually an everyday occurrence, those skilled enough to manipulate it intentionally are scarce. The mundane kinds of magic are subtle and not easy to perceive because they predominantly affect the spiritual domain instead of the physical. Often, the discernible effects in the mortal world are so minimal that they are seldom recognized as magic at all and instead attributed to coincidence or fortune. The ability to perform visible acts of sorcery is a rare talent, usually requiring innate qualities that are not fully understood. While the superstitions and humble rituals of mortal folk create quite powerful coll effects, this is not what most people associate with the concept of magic. In non-scholarly settings, magic refers more to when sorcerers wield such powers with visible and tangible effects.

Magic is learned in many ways. Some learn their arts through diligent study, some practice with their intuition and innate feelings, while others are mentored by yōkai, kami, or any being capable of bestowing gifts of great power upon students they find worthy. Most practitioners follow at least one form of tradition as a starting point. They use the knowledge of those who came before them to learn established methods of sorcery. No one knows the limitations of magic; those who attempt to test its boundaries rarely survive their own experiments.

Taint:
The Principle of Corruption

Many forces act upon spirits that can transform them from one thing to another: the influence of kami, the proximity to powerful ki or the spiritual realms, the accumulation of positive karma or merit, or the influence of powerful dreams and ideas. Most of these forces are benign or neutral in nature, causing a spirit to grow more abstract in its form as it ages and gains power, slowly becoming more like a kami until they are almost indistinguishable from one. The most powerful and influential set of these forces, however, work to transform a spirit for the worse. Such corruptive forces are known collectively as Taints.

The main reason why kami are not more present in mortal affairs is the risk of encountering Taints while visiting the mortal realm. Being exposed to too much Taint could change the very nature of a kami's being. Without taking the proper care to cleanse spiritual pollution, Taints can build up on spirits and begin to change them, rapidly accumulating almost exponentially if the cause is not addressed quickly enough. All beings in the mortal realm naturally collect Taint over time, similar to how ki accumulates in objects as they age. It is likely that Taint must infect ki itself in order to spread. If left unchecked, Taint will infect the very environment around it and spread from one being to another until it corrupts everything.

Certain actions can hasten the influence of Taints, and draw more to the individual:

- Acting on powerful negative emotions like rage, malice, spite, murderous intent, or occasionally misery
- Coming into contact with death, disease, bloodshed, disaster, or even misfortune
- Performing magic or spells whose effects leave the soul more open to corruption

Humans and other mortal creatures are impacted by Taints too, but they take more time for the effects to become noticeable. At first, Taint's influence brings misfortune as it begins to nullify the effects of general kami-related protection over humanity. This can inadvertently lead Tainted individuals towards situations that will attract more negative energies. As the Taint grows stronger, the human may start transforming as well, becoming more yōkai-like, and slowly eroding the very essence of their being.

At its extreme Taint can transform humans into demon-like yōkai, oni, onryō, or other types of Grudges (see "Yūrei - Ghosts and Spirits" on page 334 and "Oni" on page 302). Yōkai will succumb and be transformed similarly, but the influence of Taint is stronger and such transformations happen more rapidly if not managed. Those transformed in this way come to embody Taint itself, feeding off of it, and working as agents to help it spread further. Classically it was the job of exorcists and priests to work against such powerful forces.

Kegare

Kegare is the most important kind of Taint; it deals with the nature of death and decay. It is this form of Taint that most impacts kami, and they have strong instinctual aversions to it as a result.

The corrupted realm of Yomi is the strongest source of kegare, but it is by no means the only source. Kegare arises on its own from impure things, blood, rot, death, and even other forms of Taint. Yomi's Taint is forever present upon the mortal realm so long as death exists. All mortals die and decay and so Yomi has never been too far from The World Here, even before Shōren's Grand Rite pulled the worlds closer.

Powerful kami can withstand kegare, and some can even banish it, but to do so leaves them vulnerable until they have time to recover. This process can be helped by proper rituals and veneration from followers, but it is by no means completely safe. If a kami is weakened or compromised, they can succumb to a greater corruption and Taint may spread and grow within them, sometimes even without their knowledge.

Managing Taint

Despite being a collection of forces, Taints can all be managed using similar processes. These rites of purification are built into Nippon's culture and festivals to maintain the protection of kami and to dispel the effects and spread of Taint. Collectively these rites of purification are known as harae. Harae often requires that the kegare be washed or transferred to another object to be later burned or purified by a kami, salt or *sake*. The most common forms of harae are misogi, a form of ablution or purification by water, and the waving of paper wands by priests to transfer kegare to them, where they may be burned or cleansed later.

An important method for managing Taint came with the establishment of Buddhism in the Nara period. By wielding positive karma and accruing merit, Buddhist monks were able to dispel Taints in an alternative manner. Monks would perform sermons and rituals to walk through the afflicted being's suffering and bring them to a place of forgiveness. This led to the establishment of a common exorcism practice where mikos and monks would work in tandem to dispel Taints: mikos to manifest it into a form and monks to encourage the manifestation to heal through atonement.

Some form of purification is needed for people to gain access to a kami's presence. Otherwise kami are quite reticent to interact with those who have not at least cleansed themselves in a symbolic or temporary manner.



Denizens of the World

It is clear that the lands of Nippon do not belong to humans alone. People share this world not only with animals but also the spirits, fantastical creatures, and powerful beings.

The Mysterious Yōkai

We know them by many names, but most commonly they are described as yōkai.

When asked about yōkai a curious inquirer is likely to get several answers.

For much of history, little was known about yōkai due to a lack of qualified researchers with spiritual awareness. Much new information is being discovered thanks to the rising numbers of people with attuned senses. Scholars hope that studying and documenting yōkai will help inform people about how to live in relative harmony with them. By far the most dangerous thing about encounters with the supernatural is the lack of knowledge. What may be an acceptable way of dealing with one yōkai could prove a grave insult to another. Likewise, one's weaknesses are another's strengths.

The number of yōkai in the world is immense and unknowable. In an attempt to organize the chaos, researchers classify the beings into several broad categories, but nearly all disagree what the categories should be.

Bakemono – The Changing Ones

Bakemono, also known as *obake*, are not a specific yōkai but rather a broad category of creatures who often have origins in the mortal world. Bakemono most commonly refers to living beings and spirits that have been transformed from their normal way of existence into a yōkai. When enough spiritual power is gathered in one place it is able to erupt into a new life. If the energy is focused into one object or person, it transforms them into a yōkai or gives them yōkai-like traits. Occasionally the process can happen in reverse and the energy takes on the shape of something familiar in the mortal world, yōkai created in this way are also considered bakemono for their change in form. Similarly, the offspring of bakemono are likely to be bakemono in turn, removing some of their connection to the mortal world.

Playing As Yōkai

When playing as a yōkai, you get the chance to define human and yōkai relations for yourself. Your Character's supernatural heritage can help them better understand the concerns of both spirits and mortals. You never know how others, even other yōkai, might react to you. To play a yōkai is to risk unwanted attention from others. Many yōkai who live among humans feel they must have some ability to disguise themselves, whether through illusion, shapeshifting, or even simple deception.

Yōkai have many temperaments; your Character's personality is informed by both their species and their background. Yōkai often have quirks and fixations. For example, some are compelled to tell the truth, while others might be pathological liars. Your yōkai may be compelled to bow when another person bows to them. They may have a weakness for good sake. Aside from a couple of quirks, the personalities of most yōkai aren't too different from their human counterparts.

When making a yōkai Character, it's a good idea to check with the other players in your group to make sure your concept fits in with the party dynamic.

Because oni, tsukumogami, and even some yūrei can be born from similar processes they are sometimes considered by scholars to be bakemono as well. There are far too many varieties of bakemono to be organized under recognizable names, so a large number of them remain uncataloged. A common convention for naming bakemono is to add "*bake*" (pronounced "bah-kay") as a prefix or suffix to what mortal thing it originally was. For example, the bakemono of a tanuki are referred to as *bake-tanuki* or *bake-danuki*. Shapeshifting animals like the *bake-tanuki* are a particularly important and well-studied category of bakemono (see "Bakemono Animals - Shapeshifters" on page 263 for more information).

Because of their mortal origins, bakemono are the most common kind of yōkai humans interact with. GMs can use the rules here to represent many kinds

of bakemono, or add the listed Skills and Techniques to the Attributes of other entries (usually one of the Animals or Humans entries) to create a new kind of creature for the PCs to encounter. Along with kami, the bakemono origin is the easiest way for GM and Players to create their own kinds of yōkai for their campaign and backstories.



Yōkai and Human Interactions

In the Age of Spirits, yōkai sightings have become commonplace. But the sudden nature of their arrival has left the relations between spirits and humans tense and uncertain. Urban areas have much higher populations of yōkai, leading to daily interactions with mortals, regardless of their prejudices. Especially in the capital, people of all species have learned to live and work together. Villages in rural areas often lack the protections of large cities; many of their interactions with yōkai have been from dangerous wild spirits. This has led to an understandable degree of apprehension towards supernatural strangers. Despite this, almost every village has at least one or two yōkai families within or near them. How they are treated depends on the village, but the hardships and dangers of rural life can forge new friends out of strangers.

Yōkai are similarly learning to trust mortals. Humans have begun to wander into their lands and settlements. Many yōkai have understandable fears of the dangers and corruption that humans can bring. Others subscribe to the arrogant belief that mortals are simply inferior. Yōkai have benefited greatly from their relationships with humans — trade and cultural exchange has brought prosperity — but they also come with new dangers.

A Misguided Mujina

Shinchiro Noyu is a traveling mujina, a species of bakemono yōkai that are related badgers. Shinchiro spent most of his youth with his own kind on the edges of human lands, where he was told that humans were dangerous and should be avoided. As he grew old enough to travel on his own, Shinchiro began to meet with the humans of a nearby village who came to his clan's land to fish. Expecting trouble, he and his fellows prepared to scare the humans away with tricks, and if that failed to work, to fight. They were surprised when the humans approached them, asking for permission to fish on their lands, and offering to pay a percentage of their catches in tribute.

Discovering that his clan's notions may not be correct, Shinchiro set out on a journey to learn more about the world. He is constantly surprised when his "common knowledge" is proven wrong, especially when he finds that those notions are odd, or even offensive, to those he meets. Shinchiro was always taught that his people were the best at everything, so he can come across a little haughty or offensive without meaning to, but those who look past his rash words will find him to be kind and genuinely interested in learning more.

Shinchiro can be a good NPC to have travel with the player characters for a while. He can be a mixed bag of information; he can provide information on rare yōkai, but the PCs must be aware that not everything he says is going to be true. GMs can give the players a way to trust these hints by delivering information that is likely to be true in a more scholastic way, while having Shinchiro wildly elaborate or throw in accidental traces of prejudice on things that are unlikely to be true. For example, he could tell the players that kitsune are shapeshifters and tricksters, and that it is possible to intimidate all kitsune by wearing fur coats which makes them feel envious that other races have much nicer colors of pelts.

Kami: The Connection of the Universe

There are a countless number of kami in the world. It is said that more are being born every moment. Kami come in many shapes and forms, but they are united by their deep connection to the nature of creation itself. Their powers are linked to growth and change, and by extension, life itself.

Kami are intimately connected with creation and share a source in the divine tapestry, yet despite these grand origins the eminence of such divinity varies to a great degree. They can be as humble in power as any other common spirit, or as mighty as a deity. Kami are manifestations of a particular quality. They are so tied to their quality that they can sometimes be considered synonymous with it and are capable of wielding all the powers it affords.

Using their connection to the *musubi* that shapes creation, they are able to gain knowledge far above mortal understanding of the universe, especially knowledge that relates to their domain. For example, a fire kami can use their connection to see through the hearths of homes. Some can even glean the prospective future from the woven strands of *musubi* that lie beneath the universe. These deep ties to their domain are the foundation of a kami's influence upon the world and fundamental to their existence. It is through this weaving of *musubi* that shrines are connected to kami and imbued with their power; allowing people's prayers can reach the kami no matter how far away they may be.

Kami do not possess any single disposition that can be ascribed to all of them. Their personalities and inclinations are tied to the nature of what they embody. It is said that kami have four main spiritual natures, known as *mitama*. For example, a kami of flames may represent fire's destructive qualities as a wild, unchecked, and violent *ara-mitama* or its nature as the protector of a warm hearth as a peaceful protective *nigi-mitama*. But this doesn't means that a kami's morality, personality, or actions are solely dictated by the nature of the principle they are manifestations of. Their personalities are as varied as any individual.

Despite a kami's individual inclinations, they cannot directly act against the nature that defines them. A kami of brutal war may not be able to take explicit actions to incite peace, despite their desires to do so. They may be forced to work through others, often mortals who are not bound by the limitations of a rigid spiritual nature. A kami as an individual is different from their duty and ability to act.

The lines between kami and other denizens of the spirit realms are not clear. Some scholars subscribe to a model that all life, even humans, have a degree of the sacred power that kami are made of. This is perhaps why almost anything in this world can become a spirit. Likewise, just about any spirit can ascend to the ranks of kami when the proper venerations and rites are observed.

As kami grow, they can take on more qualities. Sometimes this causes one kami to merge with another, potentially gaining a new form or name and new domains for their power.

Though not immortal, a kami continues to exist as long as people believe in it. To remain as individuals and retain their memories, it helps for a kami to be remembered and revered. As a result, many are inescapably tied to the people who venerate them. Forgotten kami can become formless and revert to pure ki and *musubi* once more. Famous kami who are widely known and worshiped may even be reborn should they perish, though they would likely possess little to no memory of their previous life.

Only people who have been thoroughly purified can approach a kami without the risk of tainting it. A powerful kami will not necessarily be harmed by the spiritual pollution, but they often have an aversion to it that they at least must overcome. Some kami may intentionally Taint themselves so that they may act against the confines of their manifested principle. This is incredibly dangerous, and deeply taboo among kami as unchecked corruption can eventually transform them into unrivaled supernatural disasters.

More information about building kami and using them in Conflicts can be found on page 283.

Creating Kami

There are a countless number of kami in Nippon representing rivers, mountains, villages, and just about anything you can think of. GMs should feel free to make up their own kami to use in games. They are a very flexible type of Character, and can help players who gain their favor or punish those who offend them.

Humanity and the Supernatural

The Common People

In the new era of mystical activity, the life of the everyday person has been greatly affected by the changes in their spiritual environment, but few of them are actually aware of the causes. Yōkai have flourished and become bolder thanks to the influx of energy. While the most malicious or power-hungry yōkai would prefer to consume the energy of spiritually attuned people, the ki of everyday people is often much easier to obtain.

Spiritual incidents are frequently blamed on illnesses or accidents, rather than the actions of vicious yōkai. But still, there are people able to recognize the signs of yōkai activity despite being unable to directly perceive the apparitions. This creates an atmosphere of paranoia and superstition among ordinary citizens that can become a spiritual force in its own right. Such feelings can actually form new yōkai that fulfill the fears and strong sentiments of those who are affected. There are many creatures that thrive in the spiritual environment created by these emotions. Without the intervention of skilled exorcists, these conditions can only lead to worsening paranormal incidents.

The everyday person fears the unknown, but many of them have an exceptional fear of dangerous spirits. Only a few of these ordinary folk have actually seen one, and almost all who live to tell the tale do so with distress. As spiritual activity becomes common, this attitude has hindered the acceptance of spirits as a part of life.

Momoge-san:
The Confounded Fuzzy-Headed Toymaker

The local children know him only as Momoge-san, or "Mr. Fuzz Head" for his soft fuzzy hair, akin to the down of a fresh picked peach. No one knows his real name, but Momoge-san never corrects them.

Mr. Fuzz Head is an artisan of immense skill. In particular, he is a master toymaker — his woodworking skills are the best known in the nearest five provinces, and his dolls are in high demand with the nobility.

Momoge-san is also known for his irascible nature, characterized by his persistent grumbling and muttering. Most people would not assume that a toymaker would be so ill-tempered! But the toymaker's sternness seems to be an act. Momoge-san ensures that he works for the local children first, frequently working for the poorest families, no matter how much coin a wealthy customer may offer. His generosity towards children is not something he wants people to know; he is not one who likes attention for his acts of charity.

But it isn't just children who are drawn to his work; Momoge-san suffers the playful pranks of the local yōkai too. While he cannot see them under normal circumstances, they try to get him to lighten up, crack a smile, and perhaps stop working so hard. They take his tools, bring him gifts of snails and onions, and try to complete his work for him, often to humorous effect. They do not quite understand the satisfaction that Momoge-san gets from his work, or all the complicated rules of the mortal world. More often than not they only succeed in frustrating the old toymaker, who promptly blames the local children. Yet on occasion, Momoge-san will crack a smile all the same.

Magic and its Interaction with the Everyday People

Save for a few extreme exceptions, all life has ki. This energy native to living beings allows even ordinary people to perform small acts of magic, often without being aware of the magical nature of their actions. While not impressive on a small scale, when done correctly and with enough people, these little acts can cascade into much larger effects. It is this interaction of ki and small feats of magic that gives everyday people some general and instinctual protection from the supernatural.

The average person doesn't have much ki compared to a yōkai, but there is strength in numbers. This means that a town's border is not only a physical boundary, but also a spiritual one that offers native mystical protection. The most resilient spiritual defenses usually require people's coordination or the use of a focus. These can be as mundane as a festival, a ritual, or even a prayer. With the right conditions, especially with the involvement of the spiritually attuned, a town can gain ki of its own. This allows the town to naturally grow into a place worthy of seating an established kami. This ki can even manifest into a brand new guardian kami, so long as the people remain and the conditions hold. While this protection serves townspeople well, travelers are still vulnerable to attacks while on the roads between settlements.

These native mystical protections, in combination with the defense provided by guardian spirits, cause most wild yōkai to avoid human settlements in much the same manner as wild animals. This, however, does not affect all yōkai equally. Similar to the existence of animals that thrive alongside people, there are many yōkai that make their homes with and around mortal abodes. These spirits may even be harmful or malicious to the humans they live near, although most of them are only minor nuisances.

Those Who Are Aware of the Spirits

In the Age of Spirits, those who are aware of the dangers posed by spirits have become a necessity. In earlier times, only large populous cities needed to protect their districts from dangerous spirits and supernatural forces. For small and remote villages, simple shrines and small rites were once enough to keep their lives more or less free of the spiritual dangers that lurked in the wilds nearby. Knowledge of the spirits was not a requirement for such people, and many of them could live their lives without ever coming into direct contact with yōkai.

This is no longer the case. Paranormal incidents have been steadily multiplying. Those fortunate enough to be aware of spirits often have no choice but to band together to help each other. Many have also taken it upon themselves to seek out others who are threatened by the supernatural but lack the awareness to address it.

The mortal and spirit realms are colliding, and it isn't only humans that are in need of aid. Mortals have always unwittingly caused problems for spirits, but in times past, the impacts of these accidents were much smaller. Now distressed spirits are clashing more frequently with those who have dealt unintended harm. Many of the spiritually aware have taken it upon themselves to aid the spirits in these confrontations as well.

Exorcists have become a valuable commodity, and many of the spiritually aware have begun to learn basic exorcism techniques in order to protect themselves against spiritual dangers. However, their lack of experience can worsen a situation against a spirit that might actually be justified in its distress. Experienced exorcists and spirit handlers are still the best solution towards a clash between humans and spirits.

There are many approaches to dealing with yōkai. Be it by exorcism, hard investigation, combat, diplomacy, or even training others to protect themselves. Each of the spiritually aware have their own methods of managing the strange apparitions they encounter. Groups have begun to form around those who are skilled with handling yōkai-related incidents. These parties have begun to wander Nippon offering their services to people or spirits in need. While some perform these services for money or in pursuit of fame, others have more personal motivations.

The Spiritually Attuned

Throughout the ages, there have been those born with special abilities beyond other mortals. Most common of these abilities is a great attunement with the spirits and the spiritual world. With the realms of the spirits closer to the mortal world than ever, there has been an influx of these people with mystical power. Collectively, they are known as the spiritually attuned.

While anyone can become aware of spirits with experience, artifacts, or training, many of those who

are spiritually receptive are born with a natural affinity with the spirit world. These traits are desirable for the practice of almost all schools of magic and even many everyday skills. Many of the world's most masterful people have a degree of spiritual capability, learned or inherent — though most are oblivious to the magical nature of their abilities, unknowingly tapping into the spiritual domain to gain mystical advantages. A master artist might do this to seek inspiration, or a great athlete might find a second wind past their point of exhaustion.

Unfortunately, for many of those with mystical power, the spiritual world lurks just beyond the edge of their perception. Without training, these souls are highly vulnerable to spiritual dangers, especially any that they themselves accidentally create. Most would struggle to defend themselves against beings they cannot perceive or sense. This makes those with spiritual ability enticing to the power-hungry. They are easy targets for greedy humans and yōkai alike, who would try to take that strength for themselves.

Most people fear the unknown and associate the spiritually connected with the potential mayhem they can bring. Often, these magical individuals end up ostracized from their homes and loved ones. Such treatment only serves to worsen the dangers of their mystical abilities, leaving them open to corruption from negative emotions or predatory yōkai. Locating these individuals and providing them with supportive environments is incredibly important to the growth and mastery of their powers. With training, they can learn to at least prevent their capabilities from causing mayhem.

In the past these powerful individuals often remained scattered and disconnected, occasionally forming groups centered around certain schools of thought or forms of magic. With the mortal and spiritual realms now closer to each other, more people are becoming attuned to mystical energies while gaining only a passive awareness of spiritual activity. For groups seeking to protect them, the task of finding these spiritual individuals has become monumental.

While most attuned individuals are born with their affinity, this is not the case for all of them. In rare occasions, simple exposure to powerful ki is enough to raise a person's spiritual attunement. The influence of otherworldly beings like yōkai or kami can have similar effects. Those who have been spirited away by kami can disappear for days, months, or even years, only to return with newfound spiritual abilities. Depending on the nature of their encounters with the supernatural, their attunement can be a blessing or a curse. For most, it is a little of both.

Interactions Between Spiritual Powers and Yōkai

Those with greater spiritual influence attract creatures that thrive and feed off their residual energy. Increasing numbers of spiritually attuned people cause the surrounding yōkai populations to grow alongside them. To people who lack mystical power, those with high spiritual capacity present a potential danger: their presence increases the chance of dangerous yōkai encounters.

Paranormal abilities do not simply attract danger, they also create it. Because of their mystical abilities, spiritually attuned individuals have greater impacts on the spiritual world. They unintentionally manifest spirits using strong feelings such as rage or despair.

The yōkai raised from such negative emotions, often referred to as Grudges, are extremely dangerous as they specifically prey on mortals. These spirits cause much destruction and death, growing stronger through the energy they consume from their victims. Those with spiritual capability are especially desirable victims for Grudges. Their energy can greatly increase the power of these malicious spirits if consumed.

When attuned individuals gather in large enough numbers the spiritual climate can become unstable. As most places lack proper magical infrastructure, the most powerful of these people are forced to roam for the safety of their loved ones and innocent bystanders. This is why many of the attuned become exorcists. Exorcism not only allows them to handle the yōkai that would prey on them, but also allows them to manage the consequences of their spiritual power.

Demi-Yōkai: Those with Spiritual and Mortal Lineage

In just about every village you'll find an individual who swears up and down that they have a grandparent who was secretly a yōkai. While most of these are merely tall tales and idle gossip, it is not completely unheard of for a spirit to produce offspring with a human. The children who are the results of these unlikely unions are known as demi-yōkai, han-yōkai, or hanyō. To the

naked eye, most demi-yōkai are indistinguishable from other humans. Occasionally they will possess physical traits reminiscent of their progenitors, such as a demi-kappa having a particularly flat head, but these traits are generally subtle and overall unremarkable. Because yōkai are fundamentally spiritual beings, their legacy is much more apparent on the spiritual side. The ki of a demi-yōkai often feels quite different than human ki to those who can sense it; in fact it feels far more similar to the ki of their yōkai ancestor. As a result, yōkai of the same species as the demi-yōkai will often be drawn to them and even inclined to assist them in times of need.

In some circumstances, a demi-yōkai will develop some or even all of the supernatural abilities and physical traits of their ancestor. This often comes as a massive shock, as most demi-yōkai are completely unaware of their heritage. Those who manifest these powers often conceal them from friends and family out of fear or shame.

This phenomenon has become more common since the Age of Spirits began, but is still rare or well-hidden enough that people still frequently react with fear or anger when they see someone use demi-yōkai powers. Often they will assume the demi-yōkai is a shapeshifter who has infiltrated their town for sinister purposes, or that they are being possessed by an evil spirit. This combined with the stress of discovering their yōkai ancestry leads many demi-yōkai to isolate themselves from other humans. Sometimes they are accepted by yōkai communities, but they generally have trouble being fully accepted there, as the yōkai can still smell their human scent and feel the human part of their ki. More often than not, these demi-yōkai eventually become hermits or solitary wanderers, though some have banded together to form small communities.

A demi-yōkai's supernatural powers, disconnection from human society, and ties to yōkai can make them excellent exorcists. They are uniquely qualified to understand both the human and yōkai world, even if they don't fully fit into either. Those who are discovered by experienced exorcists and taken in as apprentices are often much better off than they would be otherwise. Other exorcists are more familiar with yōkai and less likely to harm or shun a demi-yōkai, and can provide them with companionship they would be unlikely to find anywhere else.

The Bane Roost

To those who travel in the shroud of night, the sight of the red Torii gateway to a shrine or temple is a welcome relief from the dangerous yōkai that become more active at night. Those who have attracted the unwanted attention of a jami, an okuri inu, or even a yamauba can find safety in even a small unoccupied shrine in the woods, provided they pay their respects and gratitude to the local guardians. Most yōkai do not wish to draw the ire of local kami and venerated spirits, many of them fear the consequences of trespassing into sacred territory.

The red torii gates seen in shrines everywhere serve as a boundary between the mundane and the sacred, delineating the domain of a kami's sanctuary. It is an unmistakable form, even when weathered, old, or broken down. But there are enterprising forces out there, ones who might prey on a weary traveler's haste to find safety at nightfall.

To the untrained eye, the Bane Roost can look a lot like a normal torii, especially in the low light of dusk or darkness of nightfall. Mistakenly passing under one could be a grave mistake, there is a chance that the traveler could be possessed by the spirit of a crow-like yōkai who traps the victim's soul into the form of a crow. Once possessed, the Bane Roost uses its victim's body to commit acts of evil, using the negative ki generated to build another bane roost. Only an experienced exorcist can remove the malevolent spirit from a victim, but the exorcism requires trapped victim's spirit to be found.

While the Bane Roost is most common in the wilds, people have begun to encounter them at edges of large cities, where someone may wander into unfamiliar city block. Fortunately, possession by the spirit of a Bane Roost is reversible, but only if its is caught soon enough. Most are discovered too late when the damage to the subject's life, health, and spirit has been irreparably harmed.

❖ Chapter 5 ❖

Game Master's Guide

What is a Game Master?

In Mysteries of the Yōkai, one player takes on the role of Game Master (GM), the player who has the most responsibility for creating and managing the game world and story. Games of Mysteries of the Yōkai will need a GM to oversee every play session. It is important to decide who is going to run the campaign before starting. Game Mastering can be very rewarding, but it often requires a lot of work and preparation in-between sessions. GMs are also active participants during sessions with the other players, presenting story situations and interpreting actions through the rules. Although Game Masters are separate from the others in the play group, it is important to remember that they are players too. They should be having fun at the table just like everyone else.

Game Masters are a bridge between the players, the rules behind their actions, and the setting everyone plays in. They use world-building to create stories and settings for the players to adventure in. When players make their decisions and act during the game, the Game Master determines how these actions might be modeled using Mysteries of the Yōkai's systems and mechanics. The Game Master should be generally familiar with the rules and systems, as they will be using them to model the events and situations in their stories for the players. The section on "Learning the System" focuses on the GM's role in using the rules. The Tide and Morale Conflict system can be used in many ways, allowing the creation of encounters that feel vastly different from each other. There are many rules and mechanics that the Game Master should be aware of when running a Tide and Morale encounter; the "Tide and Morale: Extended Conflict Resolution" on page 105 details information that will help prepare you to run the systems.

Mysteries of the Yōkai includes a Setting Guide as an inspirational aid for Game Masters. But even when drawing heavily from the Setting Guide, most GMs will tailor their campaign plans to the needs and ideas of each member of their play group. The "World Building" on page 218 gives advice on how to start the process of building your own setting.

Much of a Game Master's role involves running the sessions themselves. "Campaigns" on page 220 has information about the responsibilities that may be required of you during your sessions.

Learning the Systems

A Game Master has to be comfortable enough with the rules to run the game and assist the players with rules resolution. They usually have the final say on how rules are applied and can make exceptions or modifications as the situation demands. This often means that they are asked questions regarding specific rules during play, and may need to look up the details.

Mysteries of the Yōkai has rules and systems designed to handle many different kinds of scenarios, but this flexibility can make it tough to know the best ways to use the rules. How you choose to apply them depends on the situation and your personal style. Game Masters interested in using the Tide and Morale system to resolve some of the scenarios, encounters, and Conflicts that arise in play can look to "Tide and Morale: Extended Conflict Resolution" on page 105 for details.

Throughout a session, players are going to be making Checks to determine the outcomes of their Actions. Knowing when to ask for a player to make a Check or not can help keep the story moving in interesting ways. "The Basic Mechanics of Making a Check" on page 102 details the kinds of situations you might encounter during play.

Many factors determine how challenging an Action is to perform; "Determining Difficulty of Checks" on page 207 details our suggestions. Previous player Actions often have benefits and consequences that weigh on the Check; "Check Modifiers" on page 209 details how and when they might be used.

During a session, the story so far can affect the outcome of a player's Actions. The environment, time, and the status of Characters can all affect the Check. The "Situational Modifiers" on page 209 section has information about how these kinds of situations may impact the Checks in play and during Conflict.

Conflict Resolution in Mysteries of the Yōkai

Mysteries of the Yōkai uses two unique mechanics for resolving Conflicts. The Tide Bar tracks temporary damage inflicted upon the opposing side through Actions, and the Morale Bars track when the Tide Damage has become important enough to potentially force combatants to leave the Conflict. Unlike many games, individuals do not keep track of their own health or "hit points". Instead, the Player Characters are grouped on one side, while all of the Characters opposing them are grouped into the "Enemy" side. This creates a gaming experience where Characters work together to achieve the overall goal of defeating the opposing side.

There are many cases when players will announce actions they want to take, and it is the GM's job to decide the outcomes of those actions and how they will affect the ongoing story. Sometimes, the game may be best served by simply allowing the player to decide the outcome, instead of slowing the game down by using the more advanced rules for Tide and Morale, or risking an interesting story point being disrupted due to a bad dice roll. See "Conflict in Mysteries of the Yōkai" on page 102 for the different ways to resolve player actions; in particular, the difference between Story Resolution, using Checks, and using the Tide and Morale systems.

Story Resolution

Story Resolution should be used whenever the players want to perform some simple action, or one that doesn't affect the future story plans the GM has set up for the session. Don't feel obligated to use dice, even when there is a chance the players could fail. First, judge whether the failure of the action would add anything meaningful to the story. While it's not realistic for players to feel they will always pick every lock or lift every boulder without fail, it's not worth the hassle of having them make Checks, fail a Check, then repeat the action until they succeed. You can simply allow players to tell you they want to pick a lock, and every few times they try, mention that the Character struggled with the lock for a few minutes, but eventually opened it. This keeps the story flowing without interrupting play to roll dice, check the Character's Modifiers, and compare it to a pre-set number.

Checks

Checks are used when there could be some benefit to the story if a Character fails at a task (though players may not agree that a failure is "beneficial" in the heat of the moment). As mentioned above, if the Characters always succeed at everything they do, the world feels less realistic and the story becomes more about who can talk the most about their Character, rather than a shared experience of the PCs in the world. Checks represent the times someone can fail, usually when attempting something far beyond their skill level or under time constraints. Checks are a good choice for things like an artist trying to create a masterpiece that far exceeds the production quality of everyday work, or trying to pick a lock that happens to also be a yōkai that tries to bite your fingers as you work.

Determining Difficulty of Checks

Whenever a player is called on to make a Check, it will be either Opposed, in which case two (or more) Characters will make Checks and the highest roll wins, or it will be against a Difficulty Number set by the Game Master. The following chart lists a set of Difficulty Numbers along with a rough description of how hard such an action is along with some examples. You will need to improvise during play. Try to choose a number that is close to an appropriate example, but keep in mind the chance of the player succeeding. Even when actions are extremely difficult in terms of realism and story, impossible or nearly-impossible dice rolls are not fun for players, so always leave some chance for success.

Difficulty Number	Description of Difficulty	Examples
12	Able to be completed about half the time by an untrained person (without the benefit of Skill Modifiers).	*An NPC peasant (with no Modifier) wants to control the direction of a spooked ox while plowing a field.* *Hitting a bullseye at a short distance in clear weather.*
13-14	Average challenge for an apprentice or someone with no Skills but gifted natural abilities.	*Noticing the wounds of a crime victim were caused by bladed weapons, using an Investigation Check.* *Use the Medicine skill to nurse a flu patient back to health with nothing but soup, water and rest.*
15-16	Average difficulty for most starting Characters to have about a one-in-two chance of success.	*Convincing a local town elder to tell the PCs about any embarrassing secrets of the town that might help find a murder that is targeting the town's inhabitants.* *Ignite a distant pile of hay with a flaming arrow in a strong breeze.*
17-18	Challenging to most new Characters, almost impossible for the average untrained Character, but a specialist will have about a one-in-two chance.	*Fashion a working wagon wheel replacement with only bamboo stalks and rope.* *Make an Endurance Check to outdrink a bear demi-yōkai in a sake drinking contest.*
19-23	Desperate or heroic long-shots that approach cinematic levels of believability. Normal humans cannot hope to achieve these results, and even experienced PCs will struggle sometimes. Luck is often more of a factor than skill.	*Escaping being eaten by a giant frog yōkai by striking the frog in the exact right spot to cause it to spit the character out as a gag reflex.* *Against a skilled duelist, land a series of strikes that cut the leather bindings of the target's armor, causing it to fall apart, without cutting the wearer.*
24+	Requires the Character to have a total Modifier of +6 or better, and even then will rarely be successful. The highest level of challenges will usually require planning by the party to gain Situational Modifiers as well as their Character-specific Modifiers. Some players may wish to resolve these kinds of impossible challenges with Story Resolution instead of letting their fate be decided by dice. In these cases, when the players have created enough Modifiers that they might actually have a chance with the die roll, you can bypass it with Story Resolution.	*Defeating the guardian kami of a lake in a swimming contest.* *Convincing the department heads of the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs to turn over all Bureau records to the PCs in order to prevent the end of the world (each different threat the PCs prove is impending would provide an additional Situational Modifier).* *With no spiritual training, will one's spirit free of the body in order to confront a spirit possessing a victim and force it to leave their body.*

Check Modifiers

When a Character (PC or NPC) makes a Check, they will apply various Modifiers to the number rolled on the dice. The most common Modifier is the Character's relevant Attribute Modifier, as one of the 9 Attributes will always govern an action (physical actions use one of the Body Attributes, for example). If the Character has a relevant Skill, its Modifier is also added.

Improvising Skills and Associated Attributes

There may be situations where a Character is performing an action that would use a specific Attribute, but the Skill they are using is associated with a different Attribute (this often happens when a player has re-defined a Skill using the "Unconventional" on page 61 Technique). For example, to bear a heavy weight over a long period of time would generally require Endurance, and use the Athletics Skill. If a Character had associated Intelligence with Athletics, to represent a Character who overcomes sports challenges by out-thinking an opponent, the Intelligence Modifier would not be appropriate for carrying the weight, no matter how much the player tried to find intelligent ways to pace themselves during the ordeal. In this case, the Character must make the Skill Check with the Attribute that makes sense. Our smart sportsmaster would make this Check using 3D6 + Endurance + Athletics.

Situational Modifiers

Though they are not a default like Attribute Modifiers, Characters can often gain a Situational Modifier. Any time there is something about a situation that makes it easier for the Character, they should receive at least a +1. Similarly, any hindrances to a Check should impose at least a -1. A ±1 covers most common situations, but a ±2 can be used for strong Modifiers or situations where many small Modifiers are affecting the same thing. For example, a Check to hit a target could gain a -2 for the Character being tired, having a hurt hand, standing on a wounded leg, and having had pepper thrown in their eyes. Each of these things should not apply a separate -1, but the severity of all of them combined is strong enough to warrant a -2.

When there are both positive and negative Situational Modifiers, you can either apply them all, or find the difference, whichever is easiest to process for you. For example, if you had a +1 from a well-made weapon, a -2 for having an illness, and a +2 from a blessing boon applied by a friendly Character, your overall Modifier is +1, regardless of how you apply the numbers. Remember that similar effects do not stack (for example, a really good sword and a really good axe do not give you multiple bonuses), see "Situational Modifiers" on page 103.

Players should be encouraged to take actions in the story that give them Situational Modifiers. When players plan ahead and alter the encounter or the environment, they should be allowed to call back to those changes in play. These Modifiers should only be good for one or two uses, as the enemy Characters will eventually adapt to them. This also prevents a mechanical situation where the players simply stack everything in their favor. For example, if the players lure an enemy with unsure footing onto a boat during a battle, give that enemy a -2 Modifier for the first Round, then a -1 Modifier for the second and third Rounds, and remove the Modifier for any remaining Rounds. This rewards the players for their actions, but removes the Modifier over time as the enemy Character adapts.

Some special equipment and items may also provide Modifiers. See the notes on "Special Items" on page 236 for more information.

Assisted Checks

When Characters work together, they tend to be able to achieve greater results than working separately. However, having unskilled helpers, or too many helpers, can actually lead to more mistakes and a worse overall Check. The rules for Assisted Checks allow Characters to help each other by taking the best Check result from among them, and then adding +1 if anyone else succeeds. This means that having more players will be beneficial in that there are more chances to roll high, but the best Check will still tend to come from a Character with a higher overall Modifier. Because having more chances to roll high is already a big advantage, the system does not allow more than +1 to be added to the Check, no matter how many helpers succeed. This is to prevent smaller groups feeling like they need to add more players just to have a higher Bonus.

When allowing Assisted Checks, you should only include Characters that can actually perform the Action being taken. A doctor Character making a Check for a hospital's overall treatment of wounded soldiers could benefit from Characters assisting in checking on the wounded, replacing bandages, and similar duties. However, if the doctor were performing a careful surgery, they could not simply have people with no medical training assist the Check in the hopes that one of them might get lucky and roll a result of 18 on their dice.

Extended Checks

In situations where the GM wants to track part of a story where Characters are opposing each other, but doesn't need the full rules for Tide and Morale, they can use the Extended Checks rule. Because this rule uses the Tide Bar, it is explained with more detail in "Extended Checks — One Bar Tide Battles" on page 212.

Tide and Morale: Using the Conflict Tracker

The Conflict Tracker is used when the GM wants to resolve a situation in more detail than just using a Check. Conflicts resolved with these rules allow the players much more flexibility. In the case of a Check, the player will always be asked to roll using the appropriate Modifiers, but when performing Actions in a Conflict, almost anything can be used to inflict Tide Damage. For example, when facing a group of bandits, one player may attack with their sword, another could bribe the bandits to switch sides, and a third may threaten them with the wrath of the local law enforcement. All three options use different Abilities and Techniques, and allow the player to address the overall Conflict in ways that are both fun for them, as well as logical for their Character to engage in.

Actions in Conflicts — What is Acceptable?

Almost any type of Conflict can be resolved with the Tide and Morale mechanics, but the specifics of each Conflict will determine what Characters can and cannot do. An exorcism being modeled as a Conflict may let one player investigate to find information on the source of the trouble, while another uses magic to drive it away. Both of these would be valid Actions for a Character to take, even though one is resolved by spending time talking to townsfolk and making an Investigation Check against a Difficulty Number, while the other is resolved as an Attack Action made against the spirit's Defend Action. However, in a Conflict that models a debate or social dialogue, drawing one's weapon would not be considered a valid Action. A player could still do so if they wanted, but such action would end the Conflict and begin a new one where the set of acceptable Actions was that of a traditional physical combat.

When the GM switches to using the Tide and Morale system instead of Story resolution or Checks, they should clearly let the players know the details of the Conflict. Tell the players what you are thinking and expecting, but also get a feel for what the players expect. If the GM has devised an emotional scene where the players are expected to use Interaction Checks to convince a misguided rogue to change their ways, but the players plan to simply subdue the rogue and take them into custody, there's no sense in even

starting the first kind of Conflict. Sometimes everyone will be on the same page, and this is a matter of just getting confirmation, but taking a minute or two to discuss where the game is going can save a lot of time and prevent frustrations from going into a scene with everyone expecting something different.

With the overall theme of a Conflict in place, the GM should be willing to let players take whatever Actions they want for their Characters, as long as those Actions are possible (even if unlikely). Mysteries of the Yōkai's overall theme is about the heroes cooperating to achieve impressive and heroic feats, and players are encouraged to use their Characters' Abilities in ways that are interesting and make the story more memorable. If a player tries to abuse this, you can give them penalties for tasks they are unlikely to accomplish, but only completely disallow Actions if they would destroy the overall story or take the fun out of the game for others.

Tide Damage — Where it Comes From and How Much is Inflicted

The Tide system is set up to allow any Action that helps the Character's side or hampers the opposing side to inflict damage. Tide Damage represents anything that works towards a goal. Once the GM and players are clear on the kind of battle that is being waged, they are better able to choose what Actions Characters will take, but there will always be improvisation and questions that arise.

Improvised Attacks

Any Ability that does not specify its Tide Damage (and fits the requirement that it either helps allies or hurts opponents) does 1 point of Tide Damage as a base. This counts as having a printed damage value of "1". This means that these Actions always do at least 1 Damage (because the minimum damage is always 1, even after Armor is applied), but can do more due to Margin of Success (which is applied after Armor). This results in even non-standard Actions being able to swing a battle if performed by very skilled (or lucky) individuals.

Example

The PCs are fighting a rather large oni inside a small cave. Koeda the Mountain Healer is a Character with a high Nature Affinity Skill. His player declares that Koeda sees a large cluster of mushrooms next to the oni and slashes them with his weapon in order to poison the oni with the spores. The GM decides this is a valid Improvised Attack, and has the player make an Attack Action using Nature Affinity versus the oni's Endurance (to resist the poison). The Character wins the Attack Check with a 17 to the oni's 11, giving a Margin of Success of +2. The Attack does 1 Damage to the oni, which can't be reduced by Armor below 1. The MoS then increases the Damage to 3.

Weapons and Equipment

Mundane weapons and equipment are largely ignored mechanically in Mysteries of the Yōkai. The Character may use them as part of Improvised or Signature Attacks, but they are a descriptor, the same as if the Character were attacking with magic or summoning an allied yōkai sidekick to make the attack. Players may buy and sell items freely in the course of a story, but standard equipment provides no Modifiers to dice rolls.

Special Equipment

Some items are of particularly high quality, or may even be imbued with magic, ki, or supernatural blessings. These items can provide a Bonus to Checks and/or Tide Damage.

Modifier	Examples of what might provide Modifier
+1 to Check	*High quality tools* (+1 to Skills), *Mastercraft weapons* (+1 to Attack Actions), *Blessed protective talisman* (+1 to Defend Actions)
+1 Tide Damage	*Magic or living weapons* (+1 Tide Damage when making physical Attacks), *Writ of Bureau authority* (+1 Tide Damage when making Attacks in a Conflict where the Character demands the target surrender), *Support of a local Kami* (+1 Tide Damage when making an opposed mental battle to drive off a yōkai that is corrupting the soil of a village)
+1 to both the Check and its Tide Damage	*Sentient, living weapons* (guide the Character's arm when attacking, and are better at inflicting damage), *A collection of evidence gathered throughout the session* (used to make an assertion of guilt in a court battle, makes it easier to prove a point (+1 to the Check) and influences the favor of the judge (+1 to the Tide Damage if the Check succeeds in convincing the judge to listen) when making the accusation)

Equipment that provides a Bonus should be given out as a reward to players during play. This is in addition to Potential awarded at the end of sessions (see "Character Progression" on page 230). Unlike Abilities purchased with Potential, these items can be lost or traded away in the course of an adventure, so they provide a different kind of progression for Characters. Players may want to seek out good quality equipment on their own, so GMs should be ready to determine how to find such things in

their games, both when designing locations, and when players make requests on the spot in the middle of a session.

Healing

Healing is a special kind of Tide Damage (see "Healing" on page 110) that never moves the Tide Marker into the opposing side of the Bar. This means it is useless if the Marker is at 0, or already in the opposing side. Healing Abilities can only be used to restore the target to good working order, not to attack the enemy, so it makes sense that they cannot be used to damage opposing morale.

GMs can always choose to say that an Improvised Attack will only Heal if they feel that the effect described by the player would only help the players, instead of directly damaging the enemy's Morale.

Pre-made Healing Abilities in the book are balanced so that they are easier to succeed at than standard Attacks, because of the damage limitations. GMs who define an Improvised Attack as Healing may wish to make the Check easier, either by having it be against a Difficulty Number instead of an Opposed Check, or modifying one or more of the Character's Check rolls.

Example

Konomi is a famous performer who travels the country, inspiring others to achieve their potential. If she were to encourage a group of tired, hungry soldiers with a performance, they may regain the will to fight, which would push the Tide Marker back towards the Enemy side.

Extended Checks — One Bar Tide Battles

There are many times when a GM may want to have Characters oppose each other in a way that is too important to come down to a single die roll, but shouldn't take the same time as a full Conflict. In these cases, the GM can set up an Extended Check using the Tide Bar; the Check is won whenever either side breaks the Bar. In essence, these are Conflicts where the first side to inflict Morale Damage wins the Conflict.

In Extended Checks, time tends to be less regulated, and the GM may even wish to forgo using Rounds completely.

Example

The party needs a magical talisman in the possession of a feudal lord who is rumored to be temperamental and greedy. The roguish Kenji wants to sneak into his castle and steal the talisman while Hikaru thinks they should request an official audience and try to bargain for it. After a short discussion, neither is willing to budge. The debate becomes heated and an extended conflict begins. Kenji may be able to sway her with Manipulation or Vice while Hikaru might use Investigation to see through his fast talk or Leadership to convince the party to do the right thing.

GMs may also wish to use different lengths for the Tide Bar for Extended Checks. If one side is at a disadvantage, they may have a much lower Breakpoint than they would for a normal Conflict, while highly motivated Characters, or those with an advantage, may have a higher Breakpoint to represent these conditions.

Example

Ōrun is a special advisor to the Emperor, specializing in first contact with new species of yōkai. Ōrun is worried that a new clan of okuri ōkami may be taking advantage of the desperation of human hunters in distant villages to sell them game at an exorbitant cost. However, Emperor Akitsu tends to assume the best in others until there is definite evidence to the contrary. Ōrun will eventually have to back down because the Emperor holds the final say, so Ōrun's Tide Breakpoint would be lower than Akitsu's, perhaps 4 or 5.

Modifying Tide Breakpoints and Morale Thresholds in Full Conflicts

The GM can also set Tide Breakpoints differently in full Conflicts, based on the situation. This is especially useful for cowardly NPCs, who may take Morale Damage more easily than standard Characters, and therefore have a shorter Tide Bar than others of their particular race/class/profession/type. Note that entries in the Bestiary section on page 243 give the standard values for a kind of NPC; if that NPC is described as being cowardly or brave to begin with, this will be reflected in their stats, you don't need to further modify them. It is only when you're using something differently than usual that you may want to change these values.

Note that you can also modify an NPC's Morale Threshold, but this has a much larger effect. Tide Damage swings back and forth during a Conflict, but each point of Morale Damage inflicted is permanent for the rest of the Conflict (it cannot be undone or healed for the duration of that battle). Reducing Tide Breakpoints puts an enemy under more stress to push the Tide back before it breaks, but reducing Morale Threshold clearly defines when an enemy will leave.

GMs may want to modify Player values for Tide Breakpoints and Morale Thresholds in particularly extreme situations, but this should be done sparingly. A PC's values for these stats represent their essential ability to handle Conflicts. Even if a brawny warrior is pulled into a delicate debate, they still maintain the composure and bravery learned on the battlefield, even if they don't particularly know how to inflict Tide Damage within the constraints of a social setting. Player Characters also represent the heroes of the lands; they may feel fear, but they push on in the face of it. Only reduce Tide Breakpoints when the party is struggling overall (remember, Tide is shared among all the Characters, so the group can usually cover when one or two Characters are at a disadvantage). A good example might be when the party is forced to fight someone they don't feel strongly motivated to oppose. In this case, the GM might reduce the party's Tide Breakpoint by 1 point to show that they are hesitant to go all-out.

Reducing a Character's Morale Threshold allows the GM to alter the way individuals experience a Conflict, without punishing the whole party by changing the Tide Breakpoint. This is a good Modifier to use when one Character is heavily injured, or facing something they would rather avoid. In these cases, the lowered Morale Threshold means they will be forced to leave the fight sooner. These cases should be rare; even a single point of change to Morale can cause a Character to leave a battle much more quickly, making it easier to overwhelm that side of the Conflict. Adding or subtracting two points should be saved for the most extreme cases.

Example

The party is composed of soldiers, fighting to put down a rebellion among peasants in their own lands. Because the Player Characters personally know the peasants, and vice versa, the GM decides that both sides will have a Tide Breakpoint of only 5 for this Conflict; neither side will be able to stomach killing their countrymen for very long. It is revealed that one Character's personal servant, a lifelong confidant, is among the enemy combatants. The GM reduces that Character's Morale Threshold by 1 to show that the Character really does not want to stay in the fight and risk seeing their servant killed (or even worse, dealing the deadly blow themselves).

Initiative

Initiative Order is important in Mysteries of the Yōkai, because when several Characters on the same side act one after the other, they can break the Tide Bar before the opposing Characters have a chance to push the Tide Marker back. This forms a lot of the overall battle strategy for players, who will often hold Actions so they can attack back-to-back.

Initiative Order at the Start of Rounds

As mentioned in the Initiative rules in the Conflict chapter on page 111, when a Round ends, the GM notes the remaining FP of each Character (PC and NPC) and uses these numbers to determine the order for the next Round. The exact order usually needs to be changed slightly, as the numbers rarely work out perfectly. The GM needs to make sure that no more than half of all the Characters on each side act before at least one Character on the opposing side acts. As mentioned above, this would be a large advantage. For example, players could ensure they had the most FP remaining, and then all act before any enemy Characters at the start of the Round. This would allow them to break the Tide Bar, possibly multiple times, before the enemies could even act.

In order to break up clumps on either side, move the first Character on the opposite side up into the middle of the clump (or as close as possible).

Example Initiative Adjustment

Initial Turn Order

- Yukano
- Hideki
- Hikaru
- Jun
- Crow tengu
- Crane tengu

Since no more than half of a side can act, only two of the four PCs can go before an enemy. The GM should move the crow tengu in between Hideki and Hikaru

After Adjustment

- Yukano
- Hideki
- Crow tengu
- Hikaru
- Jun
- Crane tengu

Delaying Turns

Once a Round begins, Characters on either side can choose to Delay, holding their Full Action until later in the round. Unlike the Initiative order at the start of the Round, the GM does not need to worry about maintaining splits between clumps of Characters. If either side decides to Delay, they are opening the door for the other side to clump as well. This can often lead to taking a lot of damage, and then inflicting a lot of damage, with each set of damage being unresisted. This is a high-risk, high-reward tactic, and some groups may want to use it. Be sure to talk with your players if they want to risk it, and as long as they're aware of how things work you can freely let them try (and live with either the success of failure it brings).

First Round Initiative

When a new Conflict begins, the GM sets the Initiative order based on the story leading up to the Conflict. You should place Characters (on both sides) at the top of the order if they are prepared for combat, more invested, or more vigilant. This order must still follow the "no more than half" rule, so to maintain game balance it may be necessary for a Character to go later than might make sense for the story.

Resolving Conflicts — After the Battle

A Conflict ends when one side has no more Characters remaining, due to being forced out by Morale Damage exceeding their Threshold. One side can also choose to flee the battle, resulting in the other side winning.

When a Conflict is over, the winning side determines the story outcome, within limits set by the events of the battle itself. In physical Conflicts, injuries or even death may be acceptable, whereas in a debate or investigation they may not make sense. When the NPCs win a Conflict, the GM will decide what happens to the party, which is usually fairly clear by what has been revealed about the NPCs so far in the story. When the players win they may not have such an easy resolution, requiring the GM's permission or even needing to resolve conflicting opinions between the players.

Winning and losing should steer the story, not dominate it. Even when the players lose a Conflict, they may take benefits from the battle along with punishment. For example, a desperate fight to rescue a kidnapped victim could still result in the victim being freed in the case of a defeat, but perhaps the party is more heavily injured or loses some valuable equipment during the rescue.

Player Victories That Break the Game

Sometimes, the players want to resolve a victory in a way that could damage the GM's plans for the story or world. Killing an important NPC, enslaving a group of yōkai and weaponizing them, or demanding that the Emperor dance around in a dog costume after being defeated in a social debate are all potentially campaign crippling requests, but surprisingly common for some groups of players. GMs and players should discuss

theses kinds of problems before the campaign starts (see "Starting a New Campaign" on page 340 in the Gaming Groups Guide), to make sure everyone is at least aware of how each person wants to play the game. If one person is a grim champion of justice who believes only killing a terrible menace can protect the world, but the GM wants to run a campaign entirely about redeeming villains, some compromises will need to be established — and it's much better to do this while planning the campaign rather than in the middle of a session after a long Conflict.

In the end, the GM still has to approve the story resolution of all Conflicts, no matter which side wins. GMs should keep in mind that a player victory should be rewarding, and still attempt to give the players the essence of what they want, even if some details need to change to preserve the game's story.

After-Battle Player State and Injury

The rules for Tide and Morale don't track individual health or states for Characters. This abstraction is powerful for allowing players to take any kind of Actions they want to affect a Conflict, but results in a situation where it may not be clear what kind of lingering results the battle might have on the party. An enemy may use a weapon-themed Attack Action and succeed against a Character multiple times, in which case it makes sense that the PC would be physically injured, but it's not strictly defined by the rules.

GMs need to keep track of what happens to the PCs during a battle, and then account for it in the story afterwards. Physically injured PCs may have penalties to any Body Attribute Checks. Characters who are tricked or manipulated by NPCs will not instantly reverse these effects after battle; though their minds may clear when given a chance to think, they could still linger on questions raised by an opponent's manipulation or be distracted by the strain. When the players lose a Conflict, these effects are likely to be even more pronounced.

After a Conflict, the GM will describe the outcome and include any game effects that result. Though rare, this could even include the death of a Character (usually NPCs, rather than PCs). More often, the Characters will have some Modifiers until they rest and recover as a natural part of the story.

Suggested Modifiers Based On Conflicts

Occured in Conflict	Suggested Modifier
Character was lightly taxed, injured, or otherwise affected in a way that remains after the Conflict ends	-1 or -2 to relevant Checks.
Character was forced out of battle, but rallied	Character is still suffering from whatever pushed them out (injury, fear, etc.). They will have their Morale Threshold reduced in any similar kind of Conflict until they recover.
Character was forced out of battle, but did not Rally	As above, but the Character will always be placed last in Initiative order at the beginning of new Conflicts, and may suffer an additional -1 to any Checks related to this kind of Conflict to show their hesitation.
Specific Actions were taken to disable a Character's Ability (such as breaking a Character's wings to disable flight)	The Ability remains unavailable, or only usable with a negative Modifier, until the Character recovers.

Death In Battle

Death is a rare occurrence in Mysteries of the Yōkai, as the game is usually more focused on exploration and adventure than a high Character turnover. Even in the case of NPCs, the default game setting rarely has the players killing enemies; usually they are driven away, befriended, or simply knocked out. GMs can simply have NPCs fade out of story prominence when defeated; there is no need to have the PCs stalk the battlefield to kill the injured enemies. Because of this, GMs shouldn't

have defeated enemies return to threaten the PCs without a good story reason, otherwise the PCs may feel obligated to kill an enemy to prevent them from continually being a threat.

Play groups may alter these rules if they want a more realistic or grim campaign setting. This should be a story resolution aspect of Conflict, rather than a numerical mechanic; it doesn't matter how brutal a setting is, Attacks will still do the same damage. The abstraction means that 3 points of Tide Damage could be a strike with a sword that somehow only stuns an opponent, or it could be a grisly slash that spills an oni's entrails onto the floor.

Three or More Sided Battles

The Tide and Morale rules are designed for resolving Conflicts between the players and enemies, with all enemies lumped into one general group. There may be times when it is necessary to track enemies as two or more distinct groups, such as when the groups of enemies are fighting against each other as well as the players.

Using the Standard Rules

GMs can continue to use the standard rules, but indicate which enemies belong to which "side" on the Zone Tracker. In these cases, some enemy units will actually attack other enemy units of the other faction, instead of attacking players. When this happens, resolve the Actions as normal, but the damage is always inflicted against the enemy side. While this may seem to be an odd contradiction, remember that the standard rules represent the abstraction of "anything that helps the players moves the Tide Marker against the enemy side", including Actions that benefit one enemy while harming another.

This is usually a good choice for physical combats, where the players are more concerned about whether they are the ones left standing at the end, not with the specifics of the Actions taken by one enemy against another enemy.

Three Sided Conflicts with Two Trackers

In some cases, the exact Actions of each side may matter. This often comes up in political negotiations and debates where the players must contend with opposition on two fronts, taxing the effort they can dedicate to opposing each side at the same time.

For these kinds of Conflicts, the GM sets up two different Conflict Trackers, one for each opposing enemy group. For these battles, it doesn't matter what the enemies do against each other, as one side's loss is negated by the other side's gain (for accurate tracking of enemy vs enemy, see below).

Players are arranged on both Trackers. It is possible for a PC to be in a different Zone in each Conflict (for example, taking an aggressive approach to one group of enemies in the Aggressive Zone, and avoiding the other group of enemies in the Cautious Zone). Initiative order includes all three groups of Characters in the same list, and all enemies count as being on the same side when dividing Initiative Order to make sure the players aren't overwhelmed.

During a Round, each Character acts as normal, and PCs must choose which of the two Trackers to act on for their entire Turn. For that Turn, they can only move, take Actions and so forth, on the chosen Tracker, but can still be affected by other Characters (friendly and enemy) as normal on both Trackers.

Because the above rules make it very hard for the players to manage both Conflicts due to having roughly half as many Actions as the enemy, this kind of Conflict should be used sparingly. It can make a great choice for a dramatic and desperate battle, or it can be used when two groups of enemies that are both far weaker separately than the PCs unite to challenge the heroes together.

Three Way Battles with Three Trackers

This option provides the most control for three-sided battles, but requires the most time and effort. It is recommended that GMs use this kind of Conflict very sparingly. It is best used when a battle is very important, and the PCs can take Actions that would turn their enemies against each other.

In this case, set up one Tracker between the PCs and each enemy, and a third tracker between the two enemy

groups. The GM controls the enemies and describes to the players what Actions were taken and the results of them whenever the enemies attack each other, and resolves enemy vs player Actions as described above.

Battles With Four or More Sides

Tracking more than three sides in a Conflict is not recommended. The Conflict mechanics are designed to focus on the PCs, and most battles can be abstracted to "PCs vs anyone opposing the PCs". GMs finding themselves in situations where there are four or more distinct groups in a Conflict should combine some of the groups based on their intentions towards the other groups. In most cases, the GM can use one of the above options for three-sided battles by combining any groups of enemies that will not attack each other into the same group.

Another option is to build encounters so that the players resolve one Conflict before moving on to another. Even in a large battle the PCs can only be in one place at a time, so the GM may want to resolve an encounter with one group using the standard rules, then move on to the next, and so on until the full battle resolves. The GM can describe what is happening to the other groups beyond the players' range of influence as the PCs take Actions, so that they are aware of the overall battlefield. In these cases, it is not necessary to handle these side battles using the game mechanics, the GM can simply decide what happens and relay it to the players.



World Building

Setting the Stage

Many GMs already have some ideas in mind about themes, characters, or plotlines they would like to explore with their players. Likewise, players have their own expectations, goals, ideas, and Character histories that may impact the setting you are trying to build. If you or your group are having trouble developing your setting, take a look at the Setting Guide together and have everyone discuss the things they like.

Roleplaying games are a collaborative process, and weaving the ideas of everyone in the group together from the very beginning can be very rewarding. Some groups may want to hold a session dedicated to collectively building the setting, its potential antagonists, the powers that be, and the state of the world. This kind of involvement in world building can make everyone feel invested and more willing to interact with the story from session to session. Knowing what sparks your players' imaginations, and the kinds of things they want to see, will be valuable for designing scenarios for their Characters and help to make everyone feel more involved.

It is a good idea to design your worlds with contingencies for change and a willingness to adapt and respond to player choices. It is helpful to build your world around Characters, their motivations, and the processes that might affect their environment. When you know about these things, it is easier to figure out how Non-Player Characters and the setting might respond to the decisions and actions of your party. It is common for Player Characters to "go off the rails" and make decisions that you didn't plan for, and keeping this in mind from the beginning can help you manage changing situations.

Usturobune Shrine

The Yōkai Scrolls tell a somewhat credible tale of a mysterious object that fell from the sky one fateful night in a village far to the East. The object was said to be a large hollow sphere with a disc-shaped ridge running around the middle.

The villagers took this object as a sign from the heavens and built a shrine to worship it as a *yorishiro*, an object that kami may use as a vessel. This shrine became known as the "Utsurobune" or "Hollow Ship" Shrine (うつろ舟　神社). It is said that the villagers who live around the shrine are able to create wondrous artifacts and ingenious traps, which they use to defend the shrine from evil spirits and wicked men. Legend also tells of a hero who originally found the hollow ship and rescued a young girl from inside, only to find himself pursued by all manner of yōkai; but that is a tale for another time.

Adding Details to Your Setting

Once you have some ideas about your setting, it's good to list them out and see where they all fit together. Any plotlines that you have listed could benefit from being connected to other story details in your setting. This lets you link and tie everything together, to make a story that can continue no matter where the players decide to start and where they decide to go to next. Look through all the factions that you have so far and note how they relate to each other. Then add a couple more groups in case your players need a new conflict, or enter unplanned territory.

If you need more inspiration, many of the set pieces in the Setting Guide were left intentionally open-ended to allow for Game Masters to insert their own details. You can weave your ideas into these examples, editing them to fit the themes you developed in the first steps.

When you have a set of "Powers that Be" for your own setting, consider how they might relate to your party, the world, and each other. Take a look at the people and groups that are important in your setting. How might their motivations put them at odds with each other or the party? How are they able to influence

your players and their stories? Are they allies or foes? Many of the NPC groups listed in the Powers that Be section of the Setting Guide could be either (or both), depending on the choices your players make. Creating nuanced groups is useful because it lets your party choose who they would like their allies and enemies to be through the process of play.

What are the consequences of letting these groups complete their agendas? Who might be hurt, who might be angered? And who might be helped or saved by them?

After you have figured out how your groups might impact the setting, create a couple of locations and populate them with your Powers that Be. Consider who is in power in these places. Look at who maintains the status quo, and who seeks to upset it. These locations will form the starting point for your players to explore the world. By looking at the kinds of conflicts that exist within the setting, you give the party interesting problems to address.

Finally, take a look at the setting you have built, and the concepts and backstories of the Player Characters. Try to incorporate their details into the setting. Consider how the Player Characters might be personally connected to the Powers that Be, the story, and the setting. After you have built your setting, then it's time to begin planning for your starting sessions.

The Grasping Library

The Grasping Library is a scholar's dream that runs the risk of becoming their nightmare. No one knows exactly how old the Grasping Library is, but its collection is vast enough to fill its cavernous halls with tomes of all sorts of esoteric indecipherable scripts. There likely isn't a greater collection of information on legendary history, the spiritual realms, or supernatural phenomena. Most people believe the Grasping Library is a mere folk tale, and for many centuries all that existed of the Library were stories.

But in the wake of Emperor Shōren's Grand Rite, the Grasping Library returned, and its collection of present-day books is increasing, though no one knows exactly how. Despite its true location in The World Beyond, doors to the Library exist all over Nippon. They open to anyone who is able to find them, and anyone is free to enter and leave. Visitors are free to take some books too. But that is not without its penalty. For the first couple of weeks or so, there are no ill effects of borrowing a book from the Grasping Library. Any longer, however, and a notion enters the mind that the borrower (or anyone else holding the book) needs to return it to the Library. As time passes the impulse turns into a compulsion that steadily becomes more and more difficult to ignore. At its extreme, the compulsion becomes an obsession at the cost of sanity, health, and the priorities of loved ones.

The extreme case would only occur in extraordinary circumstances were it not for the fact that upon the next full moon, the door leading to the Library closes in one place and opens elsewhere. The doors leading to the Library are always the same, but they are scattered throughout the lands, only one is ever open at a time. The most unfortunate of book borrowers are those who misplaced their scroll, or borrowed one right before their door closed on the day after the full moon.

It is important to note that any new book that enters the Grasping Library's halls and remains past the next full moon will be claimed by the enchantments too. In general, it is not a good idea to use the Library's services near a full moon.

Using the Library in your Sessions

The Grasping Library makes for a convenient source of information, lore, and research for players. It can appear near any location, making it easy to weave into scenarios. The features of the Library and its enchantments could provide interesting conflicts where the players must eventually return a text they removed from it, or help someone else who is under the compulsion to return to the Library. The Library is usually free of any librarians or caretakers, but it is assumed they exist to prevent vandalism, and to organize bookshelves. These could be characters that players can call upon for aid, and have conditions, consequences, and quests of their own.

Campaigns

Introduction

Mysteries of the Yōkai is a game that can be played over an extended period of time. Individual sessions can last for several hours, and then the game pauses until the next one. The overarching game world that persists from session to session is referred to as a campaign. There are many ways to plan, create, and play in campaigns; as such, it is difficult to offer any prescriptive advice on the subject. Here are a couple of methods you might like to use when creating campaigns but feel free to mix, match, combine, or discard these methods in favor of the ones you prefer. The point of an RPG is to have fun, so use whichever methods result in the most enjoyable campaign for you and for your players.

Make sure to also check out the "Gaming Groups Guide" on page 339 for advice on finding players and figuring out what type of campaign to create for them.

Pre-building

Pre-building means planning out the world, characters, stories, and challenges ahead of time. Having some notes from the steps detailed in "World Building" on page 218 can be helpful for getting started. While it's possible to pre-build vast compelling narratives, keep in mind that everyone at the table has some say in where the story goes and it's not possible to predict what other people will do when faced with the situations you've created.

Improvisation

What do you do when the players decide to fight a yōkai you only expected them to talk to? What if, instead of going to the temple the merchant told them about, the players decide to sneak into the merchant's house to try and uncover their true intentions? In those situations you need to improvise, think quickly, and make up details on the fly.

Improvisation is a skill that improves with practice; while it can be daunting for new GMs, the best way to get better is to improvise more often. Improvising doesn't always mean making up details on the spot, it could just be taking a situation or Character you had planned to use elsewhere and using it with some slight modifications. For example, if the players fight an NPC you didn't expect them to, use the stats and Abilities for a different enemy.

Improvisation is often required as a normal part of an RPG, it is not a sign of a problem (in fact, players taking an active hand is usually a good sign they are engaged). Don't panic or feel you have to overcompensate if you need to improvise, simply change the story however you must to keep it flowing.

Preparing for Your Sessions

It is important for most GMs to do at least some preparation for their sessions.

It can be tempting to design your campaign as a specific story with events that lead to specific conclusions. When scenarios are designed in this manner, a lot of content may be potentially ignored or unused if players take unplanned routes.

When making plans, it can be helpful to ignore the specifics of how things should happen and focus more on the story's "set pieces" — Characters, places, and key situations. The advantage to using set pieces is that they can be moved or inserted into the plot as the decisions of the Player Characters steer the story. By leaving details and story conclusions open, a Game Master can better adapt and involve the Player Characters in the story. This is why designing Characters and groups with solid motivations can help keep the story moving forward. They work as agents to move the plot, and make decisions in response to Player Characters. Most scenario set pieces should have a goal or process in mind. This helps predict how they will develop and the actions they will take throughout the scenario.

These set pieces should impact the story in some way no matter what actions the players choose to take. If left to their own devices, they would all reach certain outcomes that have consequences on the plot.

Example Set Pieces	Example Outcomes
A crime lord will keep working to destabilize the local lord and obtain power.	*The crime lord may have been foiled by the actions of the party, but he succeeded at stealing an artifact while they protected the lord.*
A massive cloud of ash and soot billowing over a village that spreads as time goes on.	*The cloud of ash would cover the whole village, and vulnerable people may end up in critical condition from the choking fumes.*
The books in the Grasping Library will compel their holders to return them.	*A local guard discovered a book and disappeared, leaving his family behind while he returns the book to its Library.*
The local mayor wishes to see their village safe no matter the cost.	*The mayor makes a contract with an enterprising spirit to protect his people, but they now suffer consequences.*

Running your Sessions

Much of a Game Master's work involves preparation, but there are still many important duties once play begins. You will be the one to present the story, and the setting in which it takes place. Most of the NPCs will be played by you, including all those that directly oppose the party (some allied NPCs may be occasionally controlled by players who enjoy having additional Characters). Each player will decide on their own Character's Actions, but you will need to resolve the overall effect they have on the story, as well as if they succeed when there is a chance of failure.

During play, the GM mediates the setting, the mechanics, player actions, and the outcomes of those actions; this aspect of Game Mastering is often called arbitration. It is up to you to both decide when Checks are needed in response to a player's decision, and to interpret the results of those Checks, especially if the group cannot come to a consensus.

During Conflicts or Extended Checks, the Game Master is usually the one that decides on NPC Actions. Enemies opposing the Player side in a Conflict should be always be run by the Game Master.

Your First Sessions

The first sessions of your campaign, especially if it involves a newly-gathered group, can be important to help everyone figure out their Characters and the roles they would like to play. When the play group meets to create Characters, they can discuss their ideas and develop them together. You may want to run some small, casual sessions with the Characters to allow the PCs to get acquainted. Whether or not these sessions become a part of the canonical story of your campaign should be for everyone to decide. Through this process, the players can decide how their Characters meet up and begin to work together as a party. Figuring out these motivations and their origins can be very helpful to Game Masters who want to plan scenarios that include Player Character stories. Without them, the party can become disjointed and difficult to manage as Characters pursue their own agendas without common goals to tie them together.

It is a good idea to let your players redefine or rebuild their Characters in the first few sessions of the main campaign. Make sure to offer them this chance, and let them know when you decide to lock the Characters down. It may be difficult for some players to understand their Characters completely before a campaign begins. The player may have Abilities they no longer want, goals the player hadn't fully developed, or aspects of the Character that they later realize they don't enjoy.

It is important to halt rebuilding after a few sessions, as it could become disruptive to play.

Getting the Player Characters Together

In order for the Player Characters to go on an adventure together they need some motivation or circumstance to put them all on the same path. It's an old standby of tabletop RPGs to have the PCs happen to meet in a tavern and spontaneously decide to go off on an adventure together. While there's nothing wrong with this method, there are many other options for starting adventures that your group may find appealing. Please keep in mind that you should always discuss the themes and goals of the game with the players before you start, and remember that players may have come up with their

own motivations for their Characters that are important to them but may not necessarily align with the goal of your game.

If you want to make sure all the Player Characters already have common ground, start with Characters who already know each other from adventures in their backstories. A good way to do this is to have the players pair off and come up with a story of how their Characters met and how their experiences shaped their relationships. After everyone is done, have them swap partners and repeat the process. This method is excellent for ensuring that Characters are able to work together. Even Characters with a "lone wolf" personality are likely to gain some measure of respect for other Characters on the team if they have shared successful adventures in the past. It's also an excellent icebreaker, making it the perfect activity for the first pre-game session you have with your players.

Another method for creating established relationships between Characters is to start the first session in the middle of an active scene. Describe what happened leading up to these events and let the players decide on some details of what their Characters did or why they joined in.

> *Perhaps Yukano the Miko overhears Hideki the Samurai's plans to find the Yata no Kagami, one of the Imperial Regalia. Knowing that Yukano's player also wants to find the mirror, the GM asks her if she wants to join him. The player decides Yukano isn't straightforward enough so she wants to secretly follow him out of the temple. On the next day, Hideki is attacked by bandits and Yukano steps out of the shadows to assist him in dispatching them. The game would then begin with Yukano and Hideki fighting the bandits with their relationship already established.*

A good method of making sure the Player Characters all have a stake in the plot is asking each player to describe why their Character would be interested in the scenario you've presented. Not only does this help them come up with reasons for their Characters to be invested, it also allows you to create additional plot hooks that are more personal to the players. For example, if you ask a player to describe why their Character is interested in investigating a shapeshifter smuggling ring, they might say that in addition to their desire for justice, their Character's long-lost brother often did jobs for smugglers and they hope to find clues to his whereabouts. With this information you can add some clues that relate to the brother and work with the player to help them eventually find their brother later in the campaign.

Example Beginnings

Each motivating factor is not exclusive to the others, and using a combination of factors can ensure that the party has multiple reasons to involve themselves. Keep in mind that these starting motivations will eventually resolve or change throughout the campaign. But it is important that they exist in the beginning to help the individual Player Characters discover their personal reasons for staying with the group as the campaign moves forward.

Here are a couple of example beginnings that might work for your group:

Guided by an NPC

The party is gathered and guided by an NPC who requests something of them. Through some incentive or another they all agree to take on that mission.

Examples of being guided by an NPC

> *The Bureau has sent out a request and the Player Characters have all accepted the task and the rewards it may bring.*
>
> *A shaman speaks of an ill portent that must be prepared for, and the party members seem to be involved in his visions.*
>
> *A local kami is dying, calling to anyone who can hear it to aid in its plight. The Player Characters decide to help it.*

Inciting Event

An event occurs in the immediate vicinity that the party must set right. They have to work together to handle it, but in doing so they become friends.

Examples for inciting events

> *A band of aggressive yōkai attack the village that the Player Characters are visiting, and they are the only ones around to stop them.*
>
> *The protective wards surrounding a city have fallen, leaving it vulnerable to all kinds of supernatural attack. The Player Characters are individually invested in keeping the city safe.*
>
> *The players are waiting for a vital delivery by ship. The ship is taken by pirates before it arrives in port, and the party must work together to recover it from the pirates.*
>
> *A local warlord has demanded that all outsiders in his domain be imprisoned under suspicion of an assassination attempt. The party is arrested and together decide to break out, but in doing so they fall under direct suspicion.*

Backstories Involving the Party

Some of the party members' backstories are related, or end up involving the other Characters personally, drawing them together as a band. These beginnings will be more personal to the Characters, their concepts, and their backstories.

Examples that involve Character backstories

One of the Characters is hunted by a faction in the world, and the others are considered guilty by association

All of the Characters find themselves involved in the criminal investigation of a high-profile murder. Some of the Characters are accused, and the other Characters must clear their friends with nothing to start from but their personal belief in their innocence.

Each party member has an heirloom that is part of a set that multiple factions are collecting.



Keeping Things Moving Forward

Every Game Master has their own personal style. Methods that work for one group may not work at all in a new campaign. But there are a couple of methods that can help keep your group engaged and the campaign's story moving forward. Sometimes sessions end up slowing down, or the Characters can become lost. It can be helpful to communicate with your group and see how they felt about the last session, or their feelings about the campaign as a whole. Many Game Masters take some time after or in between sessions to discuss the campaign with their players either individually or as a group.

The previous section discussed how circumstances can incite the player party to start working together, even if they might have had different motivations initially. Over time these conflicts will resolve, and you will need to introduce new problems and motivations. This helps keep players and their Characters invested in the situations arising from the story and setting.

Sometimes players can get lost or confused about what they should do next to progress the story, and the game begins to slow. This often occurs in stories confined to a limited location, or with missions or scenarios that have strict requirements for completion or story progression. Running mysteries in particular can be tricky for this reason. In the process of trying to figure out the plot, players often try things they believe may help lead them to the answer. They can get stuck when their solutions are different from the Game Master's planned ones and their actions lead to dead ends. It can be helpful to think not about how the players should figure out the truth, but rather think about how their methods can lead them to clues or solutions.

Example

> *While investigating the Cricket Demon Kinutsura, Wataru decides to see if the caged crickets he purchased could lead him to the demon's human disguise. As an abomination of nature, normal crickets should be repulsed by Kinutsura, but the Game Master instead decides that they can sense its unnatural nature and lead the party to the places it has been. Wataru's creative idea is rewarded and the party avoids reaching a dead end. Alternatively, the Game Master could say that the normal cricket's aversion to Kinutsura can be used to triangulate its lair.*

When players search for clues with Skill Checks, even if they fail their roll it is important to give them a new lead. Use the outcome to determine how it happens, or any complications that arise from the Action.

Example

> *The local authorities have barred all civilians from an active crime scene. As a private investigator, Hikaru must be quick and silent while she scopes the area. The GM imposes a negative Modifier on Hikaru's Investigation Check to account for the well-guarded crime scene. A low dice roll causes Hikaru to fail her Check. She is caught and escorted out, but not before she pockets a note found in the victim's robes. As a consequence of her failed roll, Hikaru can no longer investigate the scene before it is tampered with and the local authorities will be less friendly to her in future interactions, but the GM has still given her a lead to the next plot point.*

Using failed rolls to represent successes that have complications can help keep the session interesting and prevent it from slowing down. It is a useful technique that can be applied to all kinds of Checks and situations. For example, if a Character fails their Check to pick a lock, you may allow them to succeed at the cost of injuring their hand or triggering a trap.

A planned Conflict encounter can end up being more difficult or easier than you intended. This will either make a unimportant Conflict last too long, or end a dramatic battle in an unsatisfying way. Handling these situations requires a bit of improvisational skill. In these situations Game Masters can edit the plans for their encounters on the fly. This might mean editing the Morale Threshold of an NPC, other times it means shifting the results of some of your rolls to keep the encounter moving forward. For encounters that are meant to be more difficult, letting the "boss" have backup arrive or power themselves up can help keep things dramatic.

Continuing Your Campaign

A technique that story writers use is to make sure that every major action and decision made by the Characters has a consequence on the story. This can help Game Masters develop plots and scenarios that are deeply connected with the Player Characters. When designing scenarios, it is a good idea to have a couple of potential outcomes in mind depending on the motivations of the groups and Characters that are involved. When the Player Characters complete a scenario, consider how their actions changed the story. What are the consequences of each choice? In almost any case if one power is toppled there are factions who stand to lose and others who would benefit.

> *By deciding to aid the Great Wolf Kami Haiga, the party has cemented her protection over the nearby lands. This has drawn the ire of those who would benefit from Haiga losing power. The next scenario involves the party dealing with the hidden forces*

plotting her demise, as they have now been forced to reveal themselves before Haiga can ruin their plans further.

Factions like groups or clans are designed to have their powers shifted around, if one faction is taken down, then there are always others that stand to benefit from that shift in power. Likewise, there others who stand to lose from such a shift. Even if the Players work towards a faction's success it will usually lead to another losing influence and power, potentially making new antagonists for the Players as a result. Changing the balance of power is a good way to adapt the world to the player's actions.

It can be difficult to plan around such major changes, but by following set-pieces and keeping factions centered around representatives and the people who are impacted by them (see "Representatives" on page 149), it should become more intuitive.

The village of Tomida is generally unremarkable to mortal eyes, but it remains a contested territory between snake yōkai and the kitsune clans. Though at first glance it seems that the snake yōkai are malicious, in the grand scheme of things their struggle is more relatable. Players who support the snake yōkai over the kitsune might end up making interesting changes to the world that impact groups and people far from the conflict. But in doing so, the party might risk drawing the ire of the celestial kami Inari.

Likewise, if they party supports the kitsune, they could gain Inari's favor, but the snakes have good reason for their desperate attempts to take control of the village, and driving them out might lead the insect yōkai factions to become too powerful now that their rivals have lost an important place of power.

Campaign Themes

The first step when designing your campaign is to set the theme of the game. It's important to talk to the players and make sure everyone is on the same page. If the players are expecting something different than the GM, the disconnect will make the first few sessions difficult.

It will often happen that not everyone agrees on a single overall theme. This is fine, as themes can be modified to incorporate elements of the other themes so that everyone has something to do. If most of the players want to explore mysteries, but one or two are more direct wuxia martial art types, it's easy for the Game Master to include challenges at key points in the adventure that pit the players against different types of obstacles. Evil kung fu masters or terrible monsters that hide in lairs obscured by time and riddles give the thinking Characters the chance to shine during the chase, and the brawny Characters the spotlight during the final battle.

The theme categories below are a good starting point to get you thinking. Find the elements of one or more themes and use them as a starting point to build from.

Traditional Folklore

The basic setting explained in the rulebook of Mysteries of the Yōkai is based on traditional Japanese folklore, with some modifications to make the game more approachable. The overall feeling of the game is one of exploration and investigation; the Characters have some power that sets them above the average human, but there are still many things out there that can defeat careless players.

Traditional Folklore stories usually mix combat and social interaction, leaning more towards talking first and fighting as a last resort. While terrible monsters exist, most of the supernatural world is just different and misunderstood by the humans of the day, not in competition with it. As the lines between the two worlds blur, the players will be at the forefront of determining how humans and yōkai come to see each other.

In Traditional Folklore stories, it's usually good for players to be specialized in a handful of fields and be open to improvising, both in-world as their Characters, and when approaching stories as players. The lore and Game Master suggestions presented in this book often go against established tropes, and can even turn them

back and forth during play. Many tanuki might be tricky and mischievous, some might be the equivalent of organized crime bosses, but the players may later encounter a noble-spirited tanuki who wishes to live the ideals of Bushido.

Game Masters usually employ a mix of power levels in a Traditional Folklore setting. Players will save villages from low-level oni, play games of Go against a powerful elemental dragon kami, and argue politics with the Emperor after they learn of the plight of a starving village of ten peasants. In these games, the NPCs are not usually balanced against the capabilities of the Player Characters. Sometimes the players will encounter hordes of nonthreatening monsters which they will easily sweep away without even needing to use the Tide system. In other encounters the enemy will have numbers that the players can't hope to overcome with direct dice rolls, requiring them to explore the world to find "silver bullets" and manipulate the situation to confront the powerful foe in an arena that works in their favor. If the party can't defeat a warlike kami with swords and spells, they may need to invoke ancient laws and pacts that the kami is bound to respect. If the party wants to convince a noble to vote their way, they may not be able to play the political games required to sway the vote directly, but they can bring stories of the suffering of the peasants from their travels to sympathetic advisors who will whisper in the right ears. An evil warlord may be untouchable through court politics, requiring the players to directly assassinate him in order to free the people at his mercy.

Anime

Anime is a broad genre that covers many themes and power levels, but there are some consistencies to keep in mind when making any campaign intended to feel like an anime.

The biggest defining characteristic of an Anime is usually that the Player Characters are the central focus of the world. They go anywhere they need to be, and don't worry about local laws and politics (at least not after they leave the area). The party can be defeated, but only by named enemies who have their own backstory that is revealed in the course of the story; players don't have to worry about their Characters randomly dying of starvation or exposure to the elements. The PCs may have a hard path ahead of them, but those who endure can reshape the world with their willpower.

Mysteries in Anime games usually follow more of a sandbox approach, rather than traditional novel or movie plots. The players will explore and poke and prod, gathering a collection of information and experiences, and then make their own assumptions about what is going on. Once they come to a conclusion, the GM will have to deal with them stomping around the world and making things right. These kinds of games are usually more about the players figuring out what is wrong and making it right, rather than enjoying the experience of an unfolding story that doesn't require the players to take control from the GM.

Anime usually, though not always, involves Characters with powers and abilities far beyond the NPCs of the game. Characters will throw fire, deflect swords with their hands, and mentally intimidate nobles and powerful kami with their sheer force of will.

Enemies in Anime games are more often closely matched to players if the scene actually goes to the Tide system. Hordes can usually be dispatched with a Skill Check, whether it be Fighting to defeat them or Manipulation to scare them away. Enemies that are defined as more powerful than the players in the story usually end up still being defeatable, so their actual statistical numbers are not as high as they would be for the same enemies in other genres. A regional guardian kami in a Folklore game might have a set +6, but for Anime games, the GM can usually just take the highest Modifier among the party and add +1 or +2.

Mystery

Mysteries in tabletop roleplaying games require some changes from traditional novel and movie experiences. While some of the tropes and building blocks of the Mystery genre can be reused, other media have the benefit of the writer controlling the experience; the reader or watcher always gets exactly the information the writer wants them to. In a role playing game, the interface between GM and players, handled through the Characters, can be imprecise. The GM may be moving through the story, assuming the players understood a clue from the first scene, without realizing they have completely misinterpreted it.

In a Mystery game, the fun for the players is usually more about experiencing the story as it unfolds. This is a change from many other forms of gaming, where the players are usually spending more time on their own goals and paths. Sometimes, this kind of focus can be construed as "railroading", an experience that some gamers don't find enjoyable. Mystery is a theme that requires a lot of communication between everyone at the table before the campaign starts; the GM should be

clear that the players will be playing in a limited part of the world, with things not related to the mystery generally ignored.

This doesn't mean the players have nothing to do in a mystery. The very problem with designing mysteries is also the greatest benefit of roleplaying through them: The GM gets to play in the game alongside their "audience", seeing the emotions the players experience as they learn and come to understand each new piece of the puzzle. The GM can pause play to make sure everyone is clear about what is going on — something an average writer would love to be able to do when they write convoluted stories that make perfect sense to them, but probably do little more than confuse the reader or watcher. At the end of the day, a mystery in an RPG is a game, one that should be fun for everyone at the table. This Theme usually leads to a closer relationship between GM and players during the session, and is less about the players defeating a horde of enemies.

Mysteries can involve challenges of any strength, but usually follow a pattern of seeming impossible at first, then being almost guaranteed once the players have the right tools. In a village where NPCs are being murdered each night, it can seem at first that the players are helpless, but as they gather clues and build their plans from what they know, they should be able to defeat even enemies that would have much higher Modifiers in other genres.

Martial Arts

Martial Arts games can vary greatly from epic wuxia battles of good versus evil to episodic comedies about cursed high school students that change form when exposed to water. While the arts themselves are the glue that holds the campaign together, they are actually just a lens to be used to examine the humanity of the characters performing these impressive feats of the body.

Game Masters should establish the kind of martial arts that are available before Players begin making their characters.

If the story is going to revolve around a single school, the PCs will all share some basic similarities in Abilities, and the play group will want to build both the Technique list and the Philosophy of the school beforehand. Even in these kinds of games, Characters still have room for individuality. Indeed, it is the differences between students that makes the school feel more realistic. One PC may follow the code strictly and hang on the master's every word, while another may be a maverick out to prove their changes to the style are superior. During the course of the campaign, these two Characters will have plenty of opportunity to clash, but will also rely on each other to get through the more difficult challenges of life. They may even learn something from the other's approach, and build a mutual, if begrudging, respect.

In stories where PCs come from different schools, they will each need to develop the Techniques and background for their school, working with the GM to make sure these details fit the rest of the game lore and the intended power level for the campaign. In these kinds of games, PCs are usually eager to show off the superiority of their own style, but due to the way martial artists see the world, they are always interested in learning from others. Even if they disagree with the opponent's beliefs, they often find something they can take away from the encounter to strengthen themselves.

Gaming groups should note that while Martial Arts as a term itself implies warfare or bodily combat, most stories of this genre include a good amount of conflict that doesn't involve punching and kicking. Martial Artists are competitive by nature, and always out to better themselves. This can open doors to all kinds of encounters. GMs may have a school's master stump students with philosophical questions and challenges in order to teach them lessons that will, in the long run, be far more important than how to take a fall safely. Students might seek out famous eccentric heroes for lessons, and be required to solve a mystery or prove themselves against the supernatural before the hero will train them.

There are several sub genres of Martial Arts that can be the basis for Campaigns.

Wuxia (pronounced "woo-shyah") is one of the classic forms of Martial Arts media. Originating in ancient Chinese stories of wandering heroes, wuxia was a natural fit for media that came after novels, especially movies, leading to the Kung Fu explosion in cinema in both the east and west. Wuxia also proves to be a great fit for Role Playing Games, which tend to be about exceptional individuals (the PCs) who take part in epic adventures to save the world from the forces of evil. Classic wuxia strays a bit from traditional Japanese folklore; wuxia heroes are still very polite and respect societal systems, but they are far more likely to break cultural taboos. They will just do so with a smile and kind words. In fact, wuxia can often

feel odd to western viewers, who might see this open opposition intertwined with friendly interaction to feel fake. However, these kinds of Characters are simply a different wrapper for the loveable rogue who entertains you while picking your pocket, or the charming gunslinger who lives by the mantra that "If you have to kill a man, it costs nothing to smile while doing it". Wuxia stories tend to be on the higher end of power scales, and often have a lot in common with anime in terms of what the heroes can do, the kinds of world shaking enemies they fight, and the fact that the PCs are usually the only ones who can (or will) step up to make things right.

Comedy Martial Arts play the conflicts for laughs, and the tone of the Campaign is usually light. Heroes tend to be clearly good, and opponents clearly bad, but on top of those simple terms, the things that make the heroes who they are is their personalities. Heroes in this Genre are certainly going to do everything they can to overthrow corrupt Emperors, seal away ancient demons, or rescue a little kid's cat from a tree, and in each of these cases they will do it with a smile while something bizarre happens around them. The humor itself can vary as much as the gaming groups prefers; one group may run a game where pun-slinging cartoon animals batter each other with mallets, and another game might look almost like an Anime or Mystery game, but every Character is named after a famous band or pop song (and has corresponding quirks to match their name). In Comedy games, the restrictions on Martial Arts tend to be less strict; these games are less about what a particular School can do, and more about how those Techniques can create hilarious situations that provide Role Playing opportunities for Players to show off their Character's personalities.

Traveling Pugilists: Some genres of Martial Arts put the development of Characters and their backstories second to the actual combat. These kinds of games will focus on the battles between individual Characters instead of the organizations and political powers of the game world. The PCs will often travel to seek out new opponents, and can reliably count on others to arrive to Challenge them. GMs may wish to use Extended Checks a lot in these kinds of games; the full Conflict Rules may take too much time when a sessions needs a lot of quick, one-on-one matches to be resolved. A common way to model these duals is to have a "best two out of three" series of Extended Checks where each of the two Characters can use any of their Techniques or Skills to make Improvised Attacks, and the winner is the first Character to break the Tide Bar twice. In these kinds of fast paced matches, Signature Attacks, especially those that do D6+1 one more damage, may end the fight a little too quickly, so GMs may want to restrict these to "finishers" and limit them to only being used after a certain number of successful Improvised Attacks (say, 2 or 3).

Samurai stories tend to share many things in common with Martial Arts stories. While these Characters will be much less likely to reject the system than the standard nameless wanderer, their adherence to honor (even in the time before codified Bushido) makes them close siblings to Martial Artists. These kinds of Campaigns will focus more on the struggles of the Samurai and their retainers to protect and better their own holdings than the drive to prove oneself to oneself, but most of the same Conflicts can appear, just with different wrappers. Challengers to a Samurai's land won't come knocking on the *dojo* door and challenge the model pupil to an exhibition match, but will instead call out a Samurai Lord in the Imperial Court to prove that they deserve their lands and title. A proper Samurai will never sing their own praises over cheap sake in a roadside inn, but is just as likely to enter a fight if someone vocally questions their ability. Samurai stories tend to play out a lot like Martial Arts stories, but they have a lot more reliance on the Character's place in society.

Player Power and Agency

As touched on in several places in the previous sections, many themes depend heavily on the power levels of the players and the enemies they face. Everyone needs to be clear on the overall power level of the campaign from the start. It can be frustrating during the game for a player to feel their Character should be able to take an Action, only to be told it would disrupt the game.

The first thing to consider for power is the actual mechanics that the players are bound by. This starts with overall Potential. GMs that want lower power campaigns might want to give players less starting Potential. However, directly reducing Potential prevents players from having a well-rounded collection of Abilities. If the goal is instead to limit the heights of power, GMs may simply want to restrict how many points can be put into specific Abilities. A 50 point Character is going to be much weaker, but will lack more than a couple of Skills and a low-damage Attack. If the GM instead caps Modifiers at +3 and Attack Damage at D6, players will be well within the realm of normal humans, but will still have their remaining Potential to spend on rounding out the Character and allowing them to be more than a one-trick pony.

On the other side of the coin, a GM running a high powered campaign needs to make sure the players are aware of the things they will be facing before they come to the table. If the GM plans to throw an entire country against the players, they will need to be able to survive. This means the ability to outfight a horde of soldiers, outmaneuver brilliant politicians who try to turn the peasants against the players, and convince allies to join them in their struggle. These players will not only need higher Modifiers, but should include Characters with a variety of Abilities, so their enemies cannot manipulate them into Conflicts the players have no hope of winning.

Agency

Every gaming group is different, and every player is going to enjoy different aspects of the tabletop experience. Some players enjoy following a story and seeing what the GM has built into the world for them to find. Others want to explore their Character's sense of right and wrong, and make the world conform to it. Any style of play is equally valid, but problems arise when players want conflicting things, and it's even worse when the players and GM are trying to play different games.

Before starting a new campaign, it's a good idea to have everyone talk about what they want out of the game. While this is a good time to begin thinking about Characters and their goals, it's much more important to talk about what the players, as human beings playing a game, want. The entire purpose of a tabletop RPG is to spend time with people, mutually enjoying a game together. That doesn't mean that everyone will always be equally entertained by every single plot point and fight; that rarely happens. But it does mean that everyone should be comfortable in the experience that is being shared. More on inter-player discussions and dealing with potential problems can be found in the "Gaming Groups Guide" on page 339, but the GM should get a good idea of what everyone wants, and try to find a theme that allows each Character to provide those experiences for their player.

Some themes and player styles may not work very well together. A Mystery campaign is probably going to be very frustrating for a wuxia disciple with a black-and-white view of the world and the intention to punch things until everything is right. A player that gets the most enjoyment out of interacting with the other players at the table may be equally at home regardless of the power level of the game, but if the theme prevents them from inter-party scenes and focuses entirely on the party interacting with the world, they could get frustrated.

It's not necessary to completely lock in these kinds of decisions and enforce them religiously, but the clearer everyone's picture is before the game starts, the more things can be steered towards a story that everyone will enjoy if they start to go off track. And one of the core principles of tabletop gaming and GMing in general is that things go off track, all the time.

Character Progression

One common aspect of tabletop RPGs is the progression of Characters from session to session. Though it's possible to play a single, self-contained adventure and resolve it, the time it takes to set up a game usually leads to Players wanting to continue the story and see their Characters grow through the choices they make and the effects they have on the game world. Whether the story in following sessions picks up immediately from where it last left off, or the game is more episodic, the most memorable Characters change over time.

Character Rewards

As a campaign progresses, GMs should reward Players for their participation in the game. Most of these rewards will come in the form of increased Potential for Characters, or external rewards such as wealth, fame and power.

Giving Out Rewards

There are different ways to reward Characters, and different levels of rewards will affect the way the campaign moves forward. GMs should find a middle ground between too few and too many rewards. Too few rewards will make Characters feel static, and Players may feel they are controlling mechanical game pieces rather than individual people. But too many rewards can shift the focus of play to a treasure hunt or power grab, instead of being about the importance of Player choices and the effects those choices have on the world.

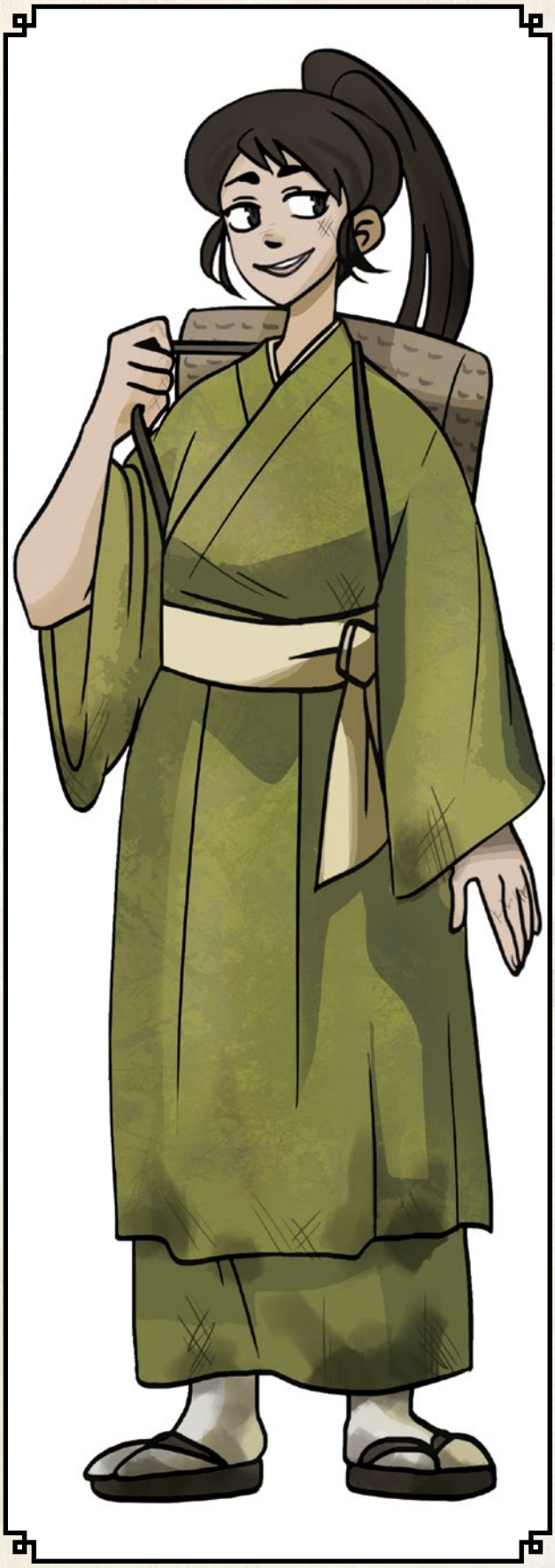
When you begin a new campaign, you should have a good idea of the power level and tone your play group wants to model. This is a good starting point to base rewards on. Higher power campaigns may not need to increase power through rewards as quickly, as the Characters begin with a good amount of options, and rewards may be better given in the form of things that are earned with that power. A campaign focusing on spiritual nobility may give less monetary reward, but Player actions in the world may result in gaining the help of powerful NPCs that the PCs have saved and helped.

Discuss rewards with your Players before the campaign begins. The best rewards are ones that appeal to Players individually, and you may need different rewards for different Players. One Player may want to collect magic weapons because their Character loves riches, while another is a smith who seeks to study the works of others. Some of the party may have no interest in wealth, while others hoard it. There are also rewards that have nothing to do with itemized in-game worldly goods. Players may feel rewarded when the gameplay lets them achieve goals they set for themselves. See the "Gaming Groups Guide" on page 339 section for ideas on how to use what the Players want as rewards that help drive the story.

Once you know the kinds of things that your Players might enjoy, you can begin to think about how to work them into your campaign in ways that don't disrupt the story you have planned. Larger rewards can be broken into smaller pieces, or hinted at for later. For example, if one Player wants their Character to become a samurai lord with lands and followers, you won't give them that reward right away. Not only would this be a very powerful reward for that Character compared to the others in the group, it wouldn't make sense for it to happen overnight. In a case like this, the GM could have the Character's actions noticed (and rewarded) by local nobles for a few sessions, bringing them to the eventual attention of the Emperor, who could first award them with a title of nobility, and then later give them land. From there, the Character could continue their adventures in the story in order to find skilled followers to work on their lands, and fill their coffers with the resources needed for their lands to prosper. All of this could take many sessions, depending on the planned length of the campaign, and the other world changes the GM has in mind.

Post-Session Rewards

Every gaming session should include some kind of reward for the Players, no matter how small. Whether you wait until the end of the evening's gaming and have an out-of-character discussion with the Players where you give rewards, or you spread them out throughout the course of play, be sure that each Player feels they got something new from coming to the table for that game.



Potential Progression

The universal reward for all Players and Characters, regardless of their individual goals, is Potential. Potential allows a Player to improve their Character in whatever way they choose. This takes the pressure off the GM to tailor rewards to each Player and hope they like them.

Players should always receive Potential after every completed session. Each PC receives the same number of Potential, so that all Characters in the party always have the same number of Total Potential (see "A Character's Total Potential" on page 9). The exact amount of Potential you award can greatly impact the balance of the campaign. Giving more Potential increases the speed at which Characters get stronger. If a Player focuses all their Potential on one or two Abilities, they will soon find challenges that use that Ability become less difficult. Some Players enjoy that experience, while others may grow bored of the game if it lacks challenge. You can always set “power limits” in your campaign if you feel it’s dangerous to accumulate too much strength too quickly, but be careful not to set the cap so low that Players feel they can’t play as experts in their fields. The PCs are the heroes of the world, so they should be able to perform above the NPCs.

If you set caps on how much can be spent in a particular area, this will cause Players to branch out and buy additional Abilities. This has its own set of benefits and possible balance problems. Players may find that new Abilities let them solve problems in different and exciting ways, but you need to be careful of a party having every single trick in the book, as they may bypass your traps and puzzles in an anticlimactic way.

The default power level of the game setting assumes Players begin with 100 Potential, representing Characters that are just starting their adventures, but are still much more skilled than the average NPCs in the world. This allows starting Characters to have Modifiers of around +2 to +5. The jumps to +4 and +5 cost a lot of Potential, and most Characters will aim to get their core focus Abilities there as soon as possible. Generally, this section assumes that an average campaign will meet once a week for an afternoon or evening. If your group meets less often, you may want to increase rewards, otherwise it could take several real-world years for your PCs to advance in power to the same level.

Recommended Potential Rewards

1-2 Potential with Restrictions	These kinds of small rewards can be given in the middle of sessions to show growth in important situations. For example, a Character who rises to the challenge and saves the day with an Attribute Check could be rewarded with 1 Potential directly to that Attribute (the Player could not spend it elsewhere). This is also a good reward for short or easy sessions. If the PCs spend the session resolving their own side stories, the GM could allow them to each gain 1 Potential in a Skill of their choice.
2 Potential	This is the recommended default reward for a normal session. If the PCs faced challenges and overcame them, 2 Potential is just enough to make a small improvement to one Ability, though many Abilities will require 2 or 3 sessions to reach the next benefit if they are already in the mid to high range.
3-4 Potential	GMs can increase the amount of Potential awarded to 3 or 4 if they feel the Characters performed impressively, or if the Players themselves worked well together and everyone had a fun night at the table. 4 Potential is enough to gain a new Ability, or increase a low-powered existing Ability to the next Modifier. This is a good choice when the Players defeat an "officer" or "mini-boss" level threat, or make big changes to their world, such as saving a town or turning a potential enemy into an ally.
5+ Potential	5 or more Potential should be reserved for major campaign milestones and events. Defeating a powerful villain, befriending an influential kami, or resolving a long-running plot are all important events that deserve enough Potential that PCs should be able to noticeably grow in competence from their actions. 5 Potential is usually enough to raise a secondary Attribute or Skill by +1. GMs may need to award more Potential to more developed Characters in order for them to increase Modifiers that are already in the +4 or +5 range. For example, when the party saves the entire country during wartime, if the Samurai isn't able to increase their Signature Attack Check (through an Attribute or Skill increase) at all, even though that Attack led to the party's success, it can be very demoralizing for the Player.

Profession Progression

Professions are used to represent the things a Character is good at due to their training and livelihood. Each level of Mastery provides a Character with one Mastery Point to spend on Benefits related to their Profession. These Benefits are meant to allow Characters to succeed at tasks where it wouldn't make sense for them to struggle, given their concept and backstory.

Professions are set up in such a way that they represent the experience and previous adventures of a Character before a Campaign starts. Characters will still learn as they go through a Campaign, but this growth is relatively slower than Potential, due to the difference in time when comparing a single session to the Characters entire life up to that point.

GMs should award 1 new Mastery Level whenever the PCs accomplish a major goal, or grow significantly as professionals. This will usually be every 2-3 sessions, depending on how the plot plays out. Mastery Level is a way for a GM to show Players that they are becoming increasingly more accomplished heroes. The gameplay benefits of Mastery are different than spending Potential on new Techniques; spending Potential gives a Player more tools for facing dangers and overcoming challenges while spending Mastery Points allows a Player to define the things their Character can do without worrying about failure.

Maximum Mastery Points per Benefit

Some Benefits may raise a Character to a level of competence that is too high for a GM's intended Campaign feel. For example: the Professional Quality Benefit allows a PC to automatically count a dice roll as being a certain number when taking actions that fit into their Profession; at maximum level, this provides a replacement roll of 15, which not only makes it unlikely the PC will fail, it also significantly raises the average Margin of Success.

A GM that wants to provide PCs with multiple Mastery Points to spend, but doesn't want a single Benefit to become overpowered, can limit how many Mastery Points can be spent on each individual Benefit. This limit should slowly increase over the course of the Campaign.

Wealth and Items — Tangible Rewards

Rewards of Potential give a Player a way to increase their Character's performance with their core Abilities. Things purchased with Potential are permanent, even if they are temporarily disabled during a story. Because of this, GMs have to be careful of the rate at which these rewards are introduced to the campaign. There will be many times the GM wants to give rewards that are not particularly balanced, but are exciting for the PCs. For example, the GM may want to give the Players a sudden influx of wealth. Instead of carefully trying to judge the amount of coins or gems the Players receive, the GM can simply work a plot point into the story where the Players come into a large (but non-specific) amount of wealth. Similarly, a Character could be rewarded with a powerful sword or an artifact that allows them to become invisible. If these rewards end up being detrimental to the plot later, the GM can arrange for them to be removed, without invalidating a Player's choices or destroying those elements of a Character that are core to their identity.

Giving Wealth Rewards

Many concepts in Mysteries of the Yōkai are abstracted, including wealth. Individual currency is not usually tracked (unless a specific campaign focuses on something like traveling merchants). All Characters are assumed by default to be able to afford standard living expenses and anything required to do their jobs. This means they are not required to take odd jobs to afford room and board, they always have equipment required to perform their Skills, Bureau Agents could charter a ship or ride mounts to a town they were asked to investigate, and the like.

Additional wealth can be awarded by the GM to allow PCs to purchase either more luxurious versions of these basics, or items that provide mechanical Bonuses in the game. For example, every Character who fights with a weapon is assumed to always have a weapon, which is already built into the stats of their Signature Attack. A PC who comes into a windfall of currency or who earns the favor of a master swordsmith may turn these rewards into a high quality sword that provides a +1 to Attack Action Checks (see "Low Powered Items" on page 236 or "Craft (Ranked)" on page 90 for ideas on building gear that gives game Bonuses). A PC granted with land or a building in a town would give the party a place to rest and plan, instead of being required to find a quiet tavern to discuss employment opportunities

with NPCs. Some Players may simply want to have their Character always purchase the highest quality *sake* and clothing because it fits their Character concept.

Giving Item Rewards

Items are a more specific form of wealth. Not only are they more tangible, but they usually provide different play options. These abilities tend to be more interesting than a Bonus to die rolls, to set them further apart from abstract wealth. For example, a GM that wants to award a Player with an interesting magical staff would probably want to avoid giving it +1 to Checks or Damage. Those Bonuses are stable and reliable, but they end up feeling more like a removable stat increase. The GM could instead create a staff that attracted nearby animals and made them friendly, or a set of clothing that changed color with the wearer's mood (which a clever Player Character could turn into a kind of magical camouflage by drawing upon different emotions to change the colors of the cloth as they hid in different environments).

The section: "Special Items" on page 236 includes several items of various power levels, but GMs should feel free to create their own. These kinds of items are a good way to customize rewards for Players based on what they have mentioned wanting; small Abilities and Bonuses can be built into items (or even things like NPC followers or pets) that give the PC more impact in the parts of the story they enjoy.

World-Shaping Rewards

Less easily quantifiable than money or bowls of rice, world-shaping rewards give the Players something that alters the actual game world in their favor. These kinds of rewards include land grants and titles, but also smaller things like the favor of NPCs. PCs who find a peaceful solution with a yōkai may be able to contact that yōkai later for assistance or information regarding current problems. Becoming high level Bureau Agents or direct agents of the Emperor allows the PCs to move about the world more freely and make requests of NPCs. An artist or crafter who becomes famous for their work will draw NPCs to them for commissions, and in the process open story options in parts of the world the Players might not normally associate with.

In addition to expanding the Players' world, the PCs may themselves shape the world itself. A Player who builds a fortress monastery or Shinto shrine that stands forevermore has become a part of the world, a living legacy that can't be taken away.

Non-Tangible Rewards

Many rewards are for the Players, not the Characters. Most Players have goals outside of increasing their power and money (even when those are their Character's primary goals). "Player Goals" on page 343 discusses several things that your Players might enjoy, and there's always more. Every Player is different, and good GMs make sure to tailor parts of the game for each Player. When a Player's Character is given a chance to excel at aspects of the game the Player enjoys, it immerses the Player more heavily in the game in ways that are deeper than stat-lines and item lists. These kinds of rewards are also nice because they don't need to be balanced (other than making sure one Player's fun doesn't detract from the other Players); the more you can work these rewards into a game (and the more that the Players can reward the GM with the kinds of things the GM enjoys), the better the game is for everyone. Always keep an eye out for opportunities to let the PCs do their own thing and have a meaningful impact on the story. If you have a chef Character, it's not going to be fun after the first couple of times to make them roll a Check to make good food, and your Player is likely to get sick of doing it as it becomes a chore. But if you create a story where the PCs are challenged by roaming chefs to cook-off battles, and randomly insert a new chef every few adventures, the Player will feel valued as part of a unique storyline, rather than for the total Bonus they can add to a Cooking Skill Check.

Taking Away Rewards

There may be times when it is necessary for a GM to temporarily or permanently remove some of the things a PC can do. If a story calls for the party to be captured, they will obviously need to be disarmed and have no access to their weapons for a short time. A powerful artifact may be loaned to the party to save the home area of a kami, but then be returned before the PCs move on to the next adventure. A Character who came into money but spends it too quickly will have their overall wealth decreased or removed entirely.

The most important rule when considering taking away rewards is that anything a Player purchases for their Character using Potential can never be permanently lost. This is vital to keep in mind, especially when Players are defining their Abilities: it would not be fair to limit how Players create their Characters by forcing them to define every Ability in ways that minimize the potential for loss. For example, one Character may purchase Armor as a physical set of armor, while another might define it as the hard hide of a demi-yōkai. If a group of NPCs captured the party and you only ruled that the Character who defined their armor as an item lost the Bonus, every Player in your game would quickly redefine everything as inherent, and most Players would be unable to create the Characters they want. In situations like this, you may need to let realism take a backseat. A Character with a Signature Attack that is a Ki Blast might be so ragged from being kidnapped that they can't use their Attack any more than the Character whose dagger has been taken away.

You should only take away Character Abilities very sparingly. Whenever you are designing adventures and find they require disabling Character choices, consider whether the story itself is actually worth it. If it is, further consider whether the Characters will need to take Actions with their now-limited set of Abilities.

Example

The GM needs the Players to have a discussion with an enemy officer, but is worried that the party might attack the NPC instead of talking. One option would be to have the Players captured, preventing them from being able to attack at all. In this case, the Players could feel unfairly punished by the needs of the plot, especially if they are playing Characters who are too skilled to be easily captured.

The GM might consider allowing the party to capture the officer instead, trusting they will not attack a helpless prisoner of war. If that is still a concern, the GM could send a messenger from the officer, asking the party to an unarmed meeting. In this case, if the Players agree, they are willingly disabling their own Abilities temporarily, rather than the GM forcing it upon them.

When taking away rewards that are not part of the actual Character, make sure the Players don't feel penalized for simply enjoying having and using something that you gave them. It's probably inevitable that some rewards will end up being harmful to a story in unexpected ways, so the play group needs to find a way to deal with this that is acceptable for everyone.

GMs should never simply take things away from a Player. If something is disruptive to the game, the first step is to talk to the Player, outside of gameplay, and let them know what the problem is. Discuss potential options with the Player in order to find the solution that works best for both of you; the Player might have options you hadn't considered. Once a solution is found, work out an in-game explanation that makes sense. A Character with too much money might donate it to an orphanage or invest it in a new farmstead. Since you are taking away a reward the Character has earned, these changes should include an equivalent but less-disruptive replacement. The Player who donates their money would lose the flexibility of buying anything they want, but might gain NPC allies as the orphans grow up or the farmstead becomes prosperous.

Special Items

Mysteries of the Yōkai abstracts most common items and currency out of the game. There is no need to count how many coins a Character has to purchase new clothes, and players don't have to write down every item of adventuring gear they carry. In most cases, these things are all assumed to be there, and ignored in the interest of not slowing down play.

Special Items include anything that has game rules or Modifiers. High quality weapons, magical or blessed items, even specially trained animal partners, are included in this category. Special Items are inserted into campaigns by the GM; players cannot simply go and buy them at the market or commission a smith to make them. Items that have special rules are too rare to be available in unlimited quantities, and are never assumed to be carried by a Character as part of their Profession (see "Profession Benefits" on page 90).

- Low Powered Items
- High Powered Items
- Ability Items
- Unique Items

Low Powered Items

The most common Special Items Characters will gain access to will be of lower power levels. These usually provide a +1 Modifier of some kind; the simplest will give a +1 to a specific Skill, more useful items may give +1 to a group of Skills or an Attribute, while those almost as strong as High Powered Items could provide a +1 Bonus to Tide Damage. GMs can usually allow players to possess several of these at a time without worrying about unbalancing the campaign, especially if they don't provide multiple Bonuses to the same Ability.

Example Low Powered Items

Master Quality Tools

The most common Low Powered Special Items tend to be mundane items that are of excellent workmanship or the highest quality materials. These items provide a +1 to their related Skills when used. For example, Master Quality Tools for an Investigator would include a magnifying glass, powders for finding prints, and an organized note system. A Character with these items (counted as a single item for rule purposes) would make any Investigation Checks at +1.

Non-Flame Light Source

There are many kinds of items that can provide light without the dangers of an open flame. Glowing stones are the most common, but these items can range from a lantern filled with fireflies to a stone toad that projects light from its eyes when the person carrying it focuses their ki.

Items of this kind will allow Characters to see in the dark, and don't consume fuel or create smoke. They are safe to hold and carry.

Custom Clothing and Armor

Players who want their Characters to wear armor can take the ***Armor*** Technique (see "Armor" in the Techniques section on page 38) and model it as clothing or physical armor. Custom Clothing allows the GM to give the Character an additional Bonus besides Armor (these items do not inherently provide Armor-based damage reduction, even if they are

themed as armor). Usually this is one of the minor Bonus Modifiers, such as +1 to a Skill. For example, a Character who has purchased ***Armor*** as a set of noble robes later receives a gift from a famous seamstress who is also a notorious thief. These new robes contain many hidden pockets for concealing items, giving the Character an additional +1 to Vice Skill Checks.

Specially Trained Animals

Characters whose Professions cover working with animals are assumed to have access to those animals, with the animals being of average quality. However, Specially Trained Animals can provide bonuses based on their training. This can be as simple as +1 to related Checks (usually to Nature Affinity), but can also cover tricks the animal has been taught to perform. A trained guard animal could provide a +1 to Survival Checks made to prevent the Character being surprised by wild animals, or a +1 to Evaluate Checks to determine what a substance is.

These animals could also provide a limited-use Ability. For example, the guard animal could defend the Character in combat, allowing the Character to use Turn Aside Attack once per Conflict, using the animal's Ki and Focus Points (making it free for the Character, but temporarily exhausting the animal).

Example: Guard Wolf

Once per combat, the player may have the Wolf divert an enemy by attacking them. This allows the Character to use Deflect as if they had spent 4 Ki, giving them a Defend roll of 3D6 + 10.

Badge of Office

A badge of a particular office demands a strong measure of respect, especially because such things are hard to counterfeit. The particular benefits depend on the office itself. All Bureau Agents are issued badges that identify them, but the lower ranking of these would do little more than have NPCs pause to hear the PC out. The badge of an Officer could provide a Bonus of +1 to Interaction Checks, while the personal seal of the Emperor may resolve most situations without even needing the PC to make an Opposed Check.

These items rarely carry a mechanical Bonus to Checks; their benefits tend to be story related.

One-Use Abilities

Many items provide an effect similar to an existing Ability. The most common of these are the ubiquitous *fuda*, spell or warding tags designed to do anything from providing good luck to warding off evil spirits. GMs who want to give their Characters a taste of Abilities outside their normal toolkits can create a single-use item that provides that Ability. The type of item usually reflects the granted Ability, but not always. For example, most items that provide limited flight are usually based on a flying animal in some way, but it's not impossible that someone out there built sandals of flight, or a pillow so soft and fluffy that one actually floats while lying on it.

Homes and Buildings

Homes and other buildings owned by a Character provide many benefits. Not only do they shelter the Character from the elements, they provide a place for Characters to meet and plan, hide from enemies, or just perform Skills that require space (such as metalsmithing, which is rather hard to do on a street corner in a random village).

Phoenix Paper

Phoenix Paper is a category of magical paper that has a special effect when burned. Different papers can be created to react differently to fire, and each requires its own methods and special materials. All of them share a common requirement, however: they must be created from wood, bamboo, rice, or other similar media that has been touched by a phoenix. The more closely associated it was to the yōkai, the better the enchantment on the paper. For example, rice from a field that a phoenix flew over once will provide weak paper and require more power from the artificer. Wood from the tree where a phoenix nested its young would provide powerful paper and require only minimal involvement on the part of the creator.

During creation, the paper must be infused with a particular behavior when it is exposed to fire. The easiest enchantment to create is one where the paper reconstructs itself after being burned. The exact delay can be chosen by the enchanter, and will usually be a matter of minutes or hours. This kind of paper is very popular with spies, couriers, ninjas, and the like. Because it can be destroyed when there is danger of being caught, and then recovered later, it is often used to carry sensitive information through hostile territory.

Other popular forms of the paper can be used to create an effect when burned. A message sent with emotional attachment could be burned to speak the words aloud in the voice of the writer, while a traveling performer might create papers with the dialogue of entire casts of players, then burn them during a play being enacted with puppets or trained animals. An enchanted door that can only be opened by the voice of the master of the house might be bypassed by an agent (or intruder!) carrying phoenix paper imbued with the master's voice.

Players may wish to create their own phoenix paper, or even magical paper that reacts to different elements. The GM can use this as a hook for an adventure to gather the rare materials required, and provide the players with the finished paper as a treasure reward they can use in creative ways.

Daiki - The Traveling Merchant

In smaller cities, there is often only one or two vendors, and possibly a traveling merchant or two. In larger cities, merchants need something to set them apart beyond simply their wares. In both of these cases, Daiki is a memorable encounter for anyone looking for something not normally available in town. Daiki is a traveler, his job takes him up and down the country, and traveling is as much a part of his job as selling wares. In fact, travel itself is often part of why shoppers come to Daiki, as it certainly isn't his prices. Daiki knows what is happening across the country, and he knows where to get you what you want. He also knows that people will pay for that knowledge, and often inflates the prices of both goods and information to reflect the convenience of what he offers.

Daiki is a good way for GMs to provide player groups with either information or rare goods, especially when they are away from larger cities. The GM can establish early meetings with Daiki, likely not selling much, if anything, to the players, due to his higher prices. In later adventures, he may appear again, a friendly face that can be trusted, even if the players grumble about his prices. Daki may even take a liking to the group, especially if they spend freely, and tailor some of his acquisitions to include things the players are likely to want or need, even if they don't know it yet.

High Powered Items

High Powered Items follow the same rules as Low Powered Items, but provide stronger Bonuses and benefits. These kinds of rewards should be given sparingly. Players may want to seek out items of this kind to strengthen their main Abilities; in such cases, the GM can build an entire adventure around a Character receiving an item that provides a +2 Bonus, while an item that gives a +3 might require several sessions and trials. High Powered Items that allow the use of Abilities can usually be used more than once, but not an unlimited amount (2-10, depending on the specific Ability and what the GM wants the players to be able to do with it). Alternatively, they could provide an unlimited number of uses, but limit how and when the item provides its Ability. For example, a High Powered protection fuda could provide a Protective Circle Ability at all times, but only centered on the shrine where it was placed, and only against Attacks made by supernatural enemies.

Example High Powered Items

Masamune's Konya Wa Fubuki

This is a master crafted sword by the famous smith Masamune. It can be used in conjunction with any Signature Attack that utilizes melee weapons. It provides a +1 to Attack Checks for that Action, and does an additional 1 Tide Damage. Once per Conflict, the user may choose to move any enemy Character after resolving a successful Attack against them. The user pays 3 Ki and changes the zone of the enemy to any other zone of their choice.

NPC Ally - Mariah

Mariah is a bakemono, a normal creature or object that changed into a yōkai after it gained spiritual power or characteristics. Mariah was once the loyal steed of a clan lord's messenger. The messenger served his master well, and was rewarded with the most intelligent horse with the greatest endurance from among the lord's stable. For years, the two were an inseparable pair, taking messages both vital and trivial across the lord's holdings. However, as both rider and mount got older, their speed and endurance began to fail them. There came a time when, delivering vital medicine to the lord's grandchild, Mariah fell and injured her leg. Stopping only long enough to care for Mariah's wounded leg,

her partner then continued the rest of the way on foot, delivering the medicine in time to save the lord's heir, but dying from the strain in the process.

The passing of her rider and the memory of his dedication had a transformative effect on Mariah, making her more than a mortal horse. She became as healthy as she had been in her prime, and never again aged. Even more impressive, Mariah took on the very aspects of the wind itself; she could disappear, moving incredibly quickly and hiding from the sight of those who might try to stop her.

Mariah travels the world, seeking out new riders as each previous one passes on. She is drawn to those with loyal hearts who serve a cause with all that they are, but find themselves not strong enough to fulfill their duties.

GMs can introduce Mariah as a "reward" for players who serve a cause (such as the Bureau, or a samurai lord) in place of money or treasure. Once she has accepted a Character, that Character can ride her during travels in the story. This provides the Character with the ability to travel much faster than normal, and arrive at their destination without being stopped by enemies. Mariah is not a warhorse, and does little in physical Conflicts, but can be used to arrive unexpectedly or avoid being attacked. See the rules for the ***Stealth*** and ***Movement Powers: Flight*** in the Techniques section, and allow the PC to use aspects of those powers when riding.

Unique Items

Unique Items are created by the GM to provide any kind of bonuses they wish to design. These can be story, mechanical, or both, and do not need to use existing game Abilities. These kinds of items are the hardest to balance, and should be given out sparingly. On the other hand, they can be the most exciting rewards, and provide entirely new story opportunities when possessed by the Characters.

Ideas for Unique Item Effects

- The holder can see spirits
- The item (and possibly the bearer) never becomes dirty
- Call or repel animals, spirits, or a similar group of targets
- Create a substance (such as water, food, or fire, etc) at will or in a limited way (once per day, only when the bearer is injured, or similar)
- An increasing Bonus. For example, adaptive armor could gain +1 point against a specific Damage Type (Body, Mind, or Soul) when the wearer is hit by that kind of Attack, up to a maximum of +3, resetting when the wearer is hit by a different Attack or at the end of combat
- Disable or counter specific Abilities (dispel magic, prevent a supernatural creature from regenerating, drive away bad weather, and the like)
- Allow the owner to gift their own Abilities to other Characters (a pair of armbands that let the wearer use the other Character's Signature Attack as if they possessed it as well)

NPCs as Unique "Items"

NPCs are not actually items, but they can provide a powerful set of Abilities to a Character. A simple pet or animal would be modeled using the Simple Item rules, but a demon butler who protected the Character with combat skills, handled their master's business affairs, and was also a source of underworld information would be as powerful as any artifact that provided a Character with a Signature Attack and Bonuses to Interaction, Manipulation, and Vice. This NPC would also have the benefit of having a personality, providing more interesting story opportunities for both the player and

the GM. The GM should create such NPCs, giving the player the list of Abilities and describing their personality. The player could then make decisions for the NPC during play, as long as the GM felt the choices weren't counter to the NPC's personality.

Example Unique Items

Staff of Toshiro

The Staff of Toshiro is an ancient wooden weapon, though its usefulness lies more in its special abilities rather than its martial combat strength. This staff originally belonged to the monk Toshiro, who dedicated his life to helping others and spreading peace and understanding. Over the decades, Toshiro's philosophy and ki-imbued the staff, and now anyone who carries it can feel the faint presence of the old monk as they travel. The staff itself seems to recoil when used to strike opponents, but will pulse with energy when the wielder attempts to foster camaraderie or turns inward to meditate (see Special Abilities, below).

Game Masters may make the Staff of Toshiro available to players during play. Toshiro himself may still be alive, and gift it to a party that helps him or shows great kindness to others. The party could also come across a descendant of Toshiro, or an owner who previously received it as a gift, and is looking to pass it along to a new recipient. A player who wanted to start the game with the Staff of Toshiro (or other powerful Items created for the campaign) could take the ***Well-Equipped*** Technique (see page 62) and then have the GM designate some number of Craft Points as permanently unavailable for each item obtained (based on that item's power), so long as the Character owns that item. For example, the Staff of Toshiro should require 7 Craft Points to be marked as in-use so long as the Character has the staff.

Special Ability: Strength In Unity

The user can speak words of reassurance and peace to their allies, bringing a new sense of resolve and purpose. The Character can use the following Action in Combat:

Strength In Unity

Action Type	Full	FP	2	Ki	Varies

Pay 1 Ki per Character on your side.
Make a Leadership Check. The difficulty of this check is: 13 + (2 times the Morale Damage inflicted against your side)

If the Character does not have Leadership, or has a Modifier less than +3, they count as having a +3 when using this Action.

After making the Check, you can spend additional Ki; each 2 points of Ki increase your Check result by +1.

If the Leadership Check succeeds, all Characters on your side gain a 1 point Bonus to their Rally Value (Characters are able to return to battle 1 point of Morale Damage sooner).

In addition, for every Margin of Success (for every 3 points by which this Check beats the Difficulty), Heal the Player side by 1 (move the Tide Marker 1 away from your side, without moving it into the enemy side).

Special Ability: Peaceful Mind

While in possession of the Staff of Toshiro, the Character adds +1 to the result when using the ***Ki Balance*** Universal Action in Conflict (this does not modify the free Ki Release at the end of a Round).

Special Ability: Mediation Through Understanding

When the Character is attempting to foster peace or understanding through their actions, they receive a +2 to any Interaction or Manipulation Checks.

The Fushokubai

The Fushokubai's simple appearance belies its incredible power, though anyone with any connection to ki or the supernatural will sense at least an aura of danger from this large shard of glass.

The Fushokubai is, in fact, a piece of a larger and more powerful artifact, though even some of the most learned sages who examine it are unaware of its history. The original item was an enchanted mirror that allowed the owner to imagine other worlds, and step into them when their image appeared in the glass. At some point, the mirror was shattered into three pieces, each piece containing all of one kind of worlds; paradises, dark dimensions and hells, or alternate versions of the mirror's own world. The Fushokubai contains the link to the dark and warlike worlds, and anyone possessing it has the ability to visit these worlds simply by peering into the glass while their mind is obsessed with dark or violent desires. Squeezing through the glass (the piece is not as large as the full mirror, but still allows a human to fit through with a little discomfort) takes a person to the world that most closely fits their thoughts at the time.

On the other side, a large tear appears in the very fabric of time and space, through which the traveler can return to their own realm. Originally, the glass would not allow anyone or anything from the visited world to return to the source world, but the last person to possess the glass was not satisfied with being unable to return with looted magical treasures, and altered the glass through powerful magic. Now, items can be transferred back to this world, but so can living creatures. Considering the nature of the dimensions linked to the glass, it may only be a matter of time before an invasion of oni and demons dooms Nippon.

Prism Edge

The Prism Edge is a masterwork blade, created from an iridescent glass, forged to the durability of diamond. The creator of this blade is lost to history, but the blade itself has appeared in many prominent battles and stories of heroism. It changes hands regularly, though few details exist of these exchanges. Many sages believe the blade has a will of its own, arranging events so that it changes hands whenever it is needed elsewhere. Others argue that the combination of the value of the artifact and the inherently dangerous lives of its owners led to a natural progression around Nippon. Either way, the Prism Edge would make a strong asset to any Character who could find, and keep, this incredible weapon.

Special Ability: Infinite Layers In Infinite Colors

The Prism Edge is forged of thousands of panes of glass in every hue of the rainbow. These small shards are each able to absorb and store the natural energies of the universe. The owner of the Prism Edge can Release unstable Ki from their body into the blade as they fight. This has the dual benefit of keeping the Character safely in balance, while empowering the blade with a reservoir of Ki that is focused by the blade into one of the two effects listed below.

Whenever your Character Releases Ki, choose to activate either the Warm or Cool part of the blade. The listed effect can be used by the Character until the other part of the Prism Edge is activated.

Special Ability: Warm Hues

While there is Ki in the Warm Hues of the Prism Edge, Attack Actions made with this weapon gain +2 to their Checks.

Special Ability: Cold Hues

While there is Ki in the Cold Hues of the Prism Edge, damage done by this weapon ignores 1 point of each category of Armor (Body/Mind/Soul).



❖ Chapter 6 ❖

Bestiary

Filling Games With NPCs

Non-Player Characters (NPCs) include every Character in the game not controlled by the Players. The GM uses these Characters to interact with the PCs and to tell stories that expose more of the game setting to the Players.

The majority of NPCs do not need to be developed to the same level as PCs; only very important or reoccurring NPCs need to have full stats and backstories. In the case of an NPC that only appears to interact with the PCs for one scene, a GM only needs to have notes on a few stats (usually for any Opposed Checks they expect the NPC to make against the PCs) and a rough idea of the NPC's personality. With those notes the GM can improvise anything else that needs to be made up during the game, keeping play moving quickly.

In the case of important NPCs, the GM should prepare a list of Conflict stats for anyone who might get involved in a full Conflict or Extended Check. This includes NPCs that will assist the players. For Ally NPCs, the GM can either allow some of the Players to control the NPCs during the Conflict, or they can be played by the GM like opposing NPCs, with the GM explaining what actions each NPC takes.

The following section includes a range of NPCs across different power levels and usefulness to types of stories. GMs should feel free to alter these stats as necessary. Yōkai can be as varied as humans, there may be individuals with unique powers, those who are much stronger or weaker than the average of their type, or even completely defy the norms. PCs may encounter honorable and wise oni, kitsune with no ability to create illusions but strong fire magic, or a kodama that has become as powerful as a greater kami. GMs can also use the stats listed here as a baseline to create their own NPC types.

Conflict NPCs

Most adventures will include one or more NPCs that oppose the players, either directly (combat, barring passage, demanding payments, and so on) or indirectly (a murderer that must be tracked down, an invisible yōkai that steals from the local village, a shaman that curses the PCs from a distance, etc). The Bestiary section includes statistics for an average version of each listed species or profession.

When choosing pre-designed NPCs to use in a Conflict, the GM should focus mainly on the Abilities and traits that they expect to actually use. If it will most likely be a physical fight, there's no need to develop the home life and hobbies of an oni, and similarly, if the Conflict is a social court intrigue, the NPC doesn't need to have its weapon and Ki Blasts defined with game stats. While it's useful for a GM to think about each NPC a little before the game so that improvisations are easier, fully developing all but the most important NPCs is usually unnecessary.

Neutral NPCs

Depending on the role the GM intends for a neutral NPC to play, it may require a lot of development, or nearly none at all. A strong warrior that could either join the party or oppose them, depending on the Players' actions toward that NPC, will probably require a lot of Conflict stats and some useful Skills outside of battle. The ancient master of a martial arts school that the party seeks out for knowledge of a cure for spirit poisoning doesn't need to have his Abilities fully numbered and balanced; the GM can simply describe the scene where the master casually defeats an upstart student as the party enters the dojo to convey the feeling of the master's ability without having to roll any dice.

When creating a neutral NPC for an adventure, the GM can either choose a few Abilities relevant to the expected interaction, or assign the Character an overall Bonus to any Actions the NPC takes (see the "Determining Difficulty of Checks" on page 207 for tips on what values to give NPCs).

Ally NPCs

Ally NPCs usually require the most development, because they will be sharing "screen time" with the players. Unless the party has specifically sought out an NPC to perform some activity they can't do themselves, GMs are advised to keep NPCs at roughly the same or lower levels of ability than the Player Characters. These ally NPCs can provide a great window for the GM to temporarily roleplay with the party, but stories are always more satisfying when the players resolve challenges without the NPCs being the cause of success.

Story NPCs

Story NPCs are those that the GM does not expect the Player Characters to make Opposed Checks against. They may have no interest in a fight, may be so weak or so powerful that any Conflict would be resolved with story descriptions instead of dice rolls, or may be so foreign that the Characters don't interact with them in any normal ways that would result in contested Checks.

During the course of the story, these NPCs may change to one of the other types. Previously unimportant Characters the players were only supposed to interact with for clues may become party favorites as their personality comes out in conversation; these NPCs usually return as allies. Even the most powerful kami can be defeated by a mortal if the players can find a way to challenge them in an area beyond their primary specialty (a powerful warrior kami could be convinced that Go is a perfect abstraction of war and challenged to a game; whereas the kami would likely have insurmountable stats like +15 in a physical battle, it might only have a +8 in the tactical thinking used in Go, allowing the party to actually defeat it). Forces of nature might manifest with avatars, allowing the party to interact with something relatable instead of concepts like "an angry wind" or "an obstinate fire of shadows".

Unique Individuals

When certain NPCs are used repeatedly in a campaign, they can take on a particular reputation among the players. This can often be a good thing, as it contributes to a consistent world, and creates a memorable group of NPCs for the players to interact with. However, GMs should remember that even the most bestial yōkai tend to have some level of sentience, and the more powerful yōkai and kami are very much like humans in their individuality. GMs can develop unique representatives of a particular race, faction, or profession to showcase the power that individual choices have on their lives.

The point of using these kinds of NPCs is not to trick or ambush the players. GMs shouldn't make a fire monster that is immune to water simply because the party has two Ki users with water-based Attacks. When revealing these kinds of stand-out NPCs, give the players a window to learn about them when they aren't completely distracted by more pressing goals (such as trying to survive). A tanuki committed to honesty may have taken a vow never to shape-shift, even when it would make the most sense to do so; in this case, as the players realize over time that they have never seen the tanuki change, they may wonder why, and look deeper into the story before them. If a GM has established kama itachi to have blades instead of hands, perhaps one particular kama itachi becomes obsessed with human weaponsmiths, but is unable to hold mortal weapons. This particularly dedicated warrior weasel may use bandages to attach bought, salvaged, or even stolen, human weapons to its arms. In this case, the GM could modify the Abilities of the kama itachi every time the NPC is encountered, to represent different powers from the different masterwork weapons the yōkai has collected over the years.

When making unique NPCs, the GM should decide if the particular NPC is an exemplar of their group, or an outcast or oddity. In the case of an NPC that excels, use the same base stats for that NPC's entry, and include additional Abilities. For NPCs that choose to walk a different path than their fellows, remove or reduce some of the normal Abilities in order to add the new unique ones.

Creating Conflict Encounters

GMs will need to create the specifics of each part of the story based on what they expect to happen (though it's always good to remember that PCs may go in completely different directions than anticipated). For story based scenes, there is usually no need to write down detailed stats for NPCs; these scenes can be resolved with either Story Resolution or Checks (see "Checks" on page 102).

Because Conflict resolution is intended to be used when the playgroup wants more precise results, the GM will need to develop the NPCs that are to be used with a high level of detail ahead of time. This prevents the game from slowing down during play because the GM had to make up something on the spot. These NPCs don't need to be created with quite the same level of detail as a PC, but any planning you do ahead of time will pay off at the table.

Designing An Encounter

The first step to building an encounter is to decide what the basic details will be for the scene. Make notes of the area the scene will take place in, and list out all NPCs that will be there (including ones that may not be either directly opposing or helping the PCs).

Throughout this section, the examples follow a GM building a possible encounter. For these examples, our GM Andrew is creating a Conflict based on the PCs helping a local lord's soldiers defeat a group of bandits.

Choosing a Location

The location the Conflict takes place in will be important to develop with both a broad overview and a list of specific points of interest. Create a short description that you can read to the Players, either through the course of the scene leading up to the Conflict, or as the Conflict begins. This description grounds the Players in the Conflict, and lets them think about what kind of things they may want to do in the battle. At this stage, think about what Actions will be allowed or not, especially Attack Actions.

The Conflict between the soldiers and bandits could happen in a number of locations, based on how the story goes. Andrew decides that it's likely that the battle will happen either if the bandits initiate a surprise raid, or if the soldiers track the group of bandits into the wilderness.

Andrew creates three locations; the town of Hidano, a forest setting, and the bandits' base of operations, which is a mobile camp set up near the foot of a large hill with a nearby river.

The Town of Hidano

Andrew has already created many of the details for the town when creating the story scenes he intends to use to introduce the PCs to the villagers and the lord's soldiers. He takes these base details and adds a collection of additional information that would be good in a physical conflict. He decides that there is no wall around the town, but the western edge has a collection of ditches and unstable ground due to the farming that happens there. The bandits are unlikely to attack from this direction, but if the PCs could force them to, it would give the defenders an advantage. Most of the buildings are gathered in the north, so any battles taking place here would be in close

quarters, favoring hand to hand attacks. The south is wide open, so the bandits would have to face any ranged attacks the defenders could muster. The soldiers likely have a few archers, and the PCs could use spells or their own bows if the bandits attack from this direction. Andrew decides the east is touched by a nearby forest, which will make it easier for the bandits to approach undetected. This also makes him think that the bandit camp should be set to the east of the town.

Kamenori Woods

Because of the town design, Andrew now knows the bandit camp is to the east, and there is an intervening forest between the two locations. This makes it very likely that encounters between the PCs, soldiers and bandits could take place here, so Andrew decides to note some details about the area. He knows that he wants a guardian kami for sure, and after reading through the list of NPCs later in this section, he is interested in including some Kodama. He also finds the karikage to be a very interesting creature, so he makes a note that having one in the area could be interesting.

The Bandit Camp

At this stage, Andrew still hasn't fully developed the bandits, so he only makes a few notes that he will come back to. He knows there will be a river near where the bandits stay so they have enough to drink and wash in, and he decides they will be using a hill as shelter from the elements, though he hasn't decided whether this will be a natural cave or a human-built structure.

Selecting and Building NPCs

Once you have the basic premise of an encounter, the next step is to collect all the details of the NPCs that may take part in it. Opposing NPCs will usually be the focus, but having allies can help the PCs when the GM wants to include a superior foe, and they can also provide a friendly presence to interact with during the Conflict's story (this can be especially helpful if the PC group is small, just make sure the PCs are still the focus of the story).

A list of NPCs with stats is provided at the end of this section. This list is a collection of common types and general categories (such as bakemono, which covers any kind of animal that becomes special enough to act as a yōkai) with a few very specific niche challenges that the GM can use for inspiration (such as the umi bōzu, a massive sea creature that is unlikely to be encountered unless the campaign has a high focus on traveling the ocean).

These NPCs are provided to give the GM a quick way to put opponents into an encounter without needing to create them from scratch, but they should not be seen as the entire list of choices for building encounters. GMs should feel free to create as many new NPCs as they need for their games. These can be created using the Potential rules used for PCs, or a GM can take an existing NPC's stats and change the description and some minor details.

Andrew looks through the tables list in "Humans and Demi-Yōkai" on page 270 and writes down the stats for Soldiers, Peasants and Outsiders; these will cover the majority of the humans in the story. However, Andrew also wants the bandits to have a strong leader and someone who can use Ki in some way. For the leader, Andrew creates a full Character using the Potential rules. Since he wants this to be a Challenge level enemy, he gives the bandit leader 200 Potential compared to each of the PC's 100. While the PCs overall have more Potential, the 200 allows the bandit leader to have values higher than any one individual PC in most Skills. Finally, Andrew includes a mystic oni among the bandits, giving them some special abilities such as curses (represented by the Banes Technique).

Andrew has noted that he wants kodama and a karikage to live in the woods, so he includes their stats in his list of notes. He also wants to include a guardian kami. Most local area Kami (see "Kami" on page 283) would probably be Matched or Challenge level, Andrew wants this particular kami to be a major focus of the

campaign, and decides it will be a Major kami. He names this kami Ashiguro and decides that its domain is water. The kami can be contacted by mortals near any source of water, from the rivers all the way down to a well in town. Andrew doesn't want Ashiguro to have a single body, so he notes that it will be impossible for any Character to attack Ashiguro in Conflicts that use physical attacks. He then gives Ashiguro a +9 Total Modifier to all Checks it makes, except for any Ki Attunement or Nature Affinity Checks made involving water; these will receive +15.

Finally, since water will likely be a major factor in the campaign because of Ashiguro, Andrew decides to include a tribe of frog-like yōkai. There are no specific frog related yōkai listed in the entries in the book, but the kappa are pretty close to what Andrew wants, so he uses their stats as a base. Because he envisions them acting like a gang or crime syndicate, he switches Medicine for Vice. Instead of superhuman strength caused by the water bowls on a kappa's head, the GM decides that his frog mafia will all have a collection of equipment from their previous victims. He represents this by lowering the STR modifier of the kappa, but giving them better Armor and Damage ratings.

Choosing the Number and Type of Enemies

After the choice is made for which kinds of NPCs to include, the encounter should be altered in order to set the difficulty and feeling the GM wants for a particular encounter. Many encounters, especially ones earlier in a story or game session, will tend to be easier for the players than the ones that take place at the climax of a story. These easier encounters give the Players a good chance to make meaningful decisions of how to act and use their Abilities, without being pressured by a high chance of failure, or a heavy story penalty if they do. Not all Conflicts need to be dangerous, or even based on ill-will between the two sides. Many yōkai are known for enjoying challenges and displays of ability, and even NPCs that begin as enemies can become allies or friends based on the Player's actions.

NPC Levels

NPC entries in this book are divided into the following categories:

Minion

Minions are the weakest of opponents for PCs. Usually each one is weaker than an individual PC, and require large numbers to be a threat. Minions can either be pitted against the PCs in a large group, or can be included beside Matched or Challenge enemies in small numbers in order to support the more powerful NPCs.

Matched

Matched NPCs each have roughly the same power level as one PC. These kinds of NPCs make good challenges to draw on the specific focus of a PC, and GMs may want to design Matched enemies using the Potential rules and an amount of Potential equal to the PCs. These kinds of encounters usually include the same number of Matched enemies as there are PCs (often with a specific NPC pitted against a specific PCs strengths and weaknesses), but sometimes a lower number of Matched NPCs will face the PCs with a group of Minions. For particularly difficult encounters, the GM can outnumber the PCs with Matched enemies, or include a few Matched enemies alongside a Challenge enemy.

Challenge

Challenge enemies will stronger than individual PCs, though they might total less overall Potential than the PCs combined. Challenge enemies work best in small groups (1-3, depending on the number of PCs) with Minions included so the PCs aren't able to overwhelm the Challenge through their number of Actions and Focus Points.

Legend

Legend level NPCs are so strong that the PCs are unlikely to defeat them in types of Conflicts that favor that NPC's strengths. The PCs will have to work to engage these enemies in ways where they can take control of the battle. For example, an ancient and wise kami with no physical body will probably have a +12 or higher Total Modifier in any Checks made for intellectual based Conflicts. PCs may not even be able to affect it at all with weapons, making physical battles impossible. The PCs might be able to challenge the kami

to a game of skill that the kami is not familiar with, in this case the overall stats of the Legend would be closer to a Challenge NPC. Or, the PCs may instead offer to face a different challenge in exchange for what they want from the kami. For example, if they defeat a tribe of oni that is threatening the kami's territory, it will give them what they seek. This group is likely to be difficulty, for example 3 Challenge Level and 7 Minions. The PCs would need to find ways to split the oni into groups before defeating them, but it would be easier than facing the kami.

Special Rules: Hordes

Sometimes NPCs need to exist in the game setting that are simply too weak individually to challenge the players. In these cases, multiple NPCs can be grouped together to act as a single NPC for rules purposes; these groups are classified as Hordes. A Horde counts as a single NPC for all rule purposes: it gets a single Turn in each Round, when Attacking or being Attacked it counts as a single character, it only counts once for the purposes of Initiative, etc. Hordes have the additional following rules.

Horde Number

Hordes begin a conflict with a set of stats as listed in their particular entries in this section. However, as the PCs attack the Horde, they tend to easily defeat or drive away individual members within the Horde. A Horde starts with a Horde Number (an abstraction of how many times the Horde can suffer from a successful player attack before fleeing, not an exact number of individuals in the Horde).

Each time a PC succeeds with any Attack action against a Horde, reduce that NPC's Horde Number by 1. A Horde receives -1 to all of it's Total Modifiers for each Horde Number it has lost, to a minimum of +1. Apply this Modifier before any others that apply (such as the Banes and Boons Technique). Any Tide Damage inflicted by Attacks still happens. If the Penalty would reduce one of the Horde's Checks below the Minimum Values listed above, then use the Minimum Value for that Check instead.

Hordes do not have a Morale Threshold. When an NPC's Horde Number reaches 0, the NPC is immediately forced to leave the Conflict. Hordes can never Rally.

Example

A group of Ko-Tengu is being modeled as Horde:8. The GM assigns them stats, including +3 Strength Modifier and +3 Fighting (Associated with Strength) Modifier. When it Attacks, it rolls 3D6 + 6, and against any Attack with Fighting listed as a Defense Skill, it can roll 3D6 + 6. Each time it loses a Horde number, it receives a -1 to each of its Total Modifiers. When making a Fighting Check, the Total Modifier is reduced, not Strength and Fighting separately. If the Horde has lost 4 of it's Number, it would take a -4 to Fighting Checks, and roll 3D6 + 2. If the Horde had lost 7 of it's Number, the Total Modifier would be reduced to a minimum of +1 for Attack Actions. Once 8 successful Attacks have been inflicted against the Horde, it immediately leaves the battle, using the same rules as Characters forced out to due to Morale Damage.

Note that Horde is a term for mechanically grouping NPCs together, from a story perspective, a Horde can contain any number of individual NPCs from a small gang to a swarm of ants. Mechanically they are abstracted into the one Horde Unit with a Horde Number to represent its collective strength. Any time more than one NPC is grouped together to act as a single character for Conflict rules, it is a Horde. A Horde in a physical Conflict might be three oni acting as one synchronized team, while a Horde in a public trial could be dozens of angry peasants shouting as a singular crowd. Normal NPCs can also be grouped into Hordes for non-standard Conflicts. For example, in a game where the players are guardian kami of entire regions, a samurai lord's entire army would be modeled as a Horde enemy.

Building a Group using NPC Levels

If the GM knows roughly how they want an encounter to play, they can fill it with a collection of NPC Levels that match the feel they are seeking. The following set of tables contain suggestions for groups of NPCs the Player Characters could encounter, but they are just a starting point; feel free to alter these suggestions to use the numbers and types of NPCs you need to make a story work. Conflicts should never feel like a collection of ratings to be overcome with the PCs' own stat values, they should be an interesting play experience where Players make choices on how to act based on what they are able to do and what goals they want to reach.

For all of the following encounter tables, X is the number of Player Characters. The "Example Encounter" column details assume a group size of 4 when listing specific NPCs.

Simple or Fast Encounters

If the GM is looking for a short Conflict to give the PCs a chance to shine, a small group of Minions or Matched enemies is a good start. Keeping the group small reduces the time required for making decisions during each turn, and weaker enemies have a lower chance of pushing the players to making desperate actions to recover from Morale Damage. This lets Players experiment with less than optimal actions and have fun with things they would never try in dire situations.

Group Size	Example Encounter
X-2 Minions	*A pair of bakemono thresh birds steal some of the PCs small magical items. The GM can run this encounter as an Extended Check to catch the yōkai before they escape with the goods.*
X Minions	*Four athletes challenge the PCs to their local sport. They are quite skilled compared to normal NPCs, and the PCs may struggle at first until they have learned the rules, but the PCs have much higher Modifiers and will likely win the game in the end.*
X-2 Minions, 1 Matched	*A samurai and two soldiers. The PCs are confronting a corrupt samurai on the orders of the local lord, but the samurai will not dishonor himself with surrender. Two particular soldiers feel more loyal to the samurai than their lord, and turn traitor with him.*
1 Challenge	*One karikage. Because the PCs will act 4 times more often than a single NPC, they can defeat even higher Difficulty enemies pretty easily. In this case, the karikage may be caught by surprise and be unable to use its **Create Obstacles** Technique, which would otherwise prevent the PCs from ganging up on it.*

Standard Encounters

These kinds of Conflicts are best used to resolve important story points that the PCs shouldn't lose, but will not win easily.

Group Size	Minion
X Matched	*Four humans. A group of famous bandits has learned of the PCs and decides to challenge them. The GM designs each NPC using the Potential rules with the same amount of Potential as each PC. Each bandit has a specialty that has a Total Modifier one better than the best PC (such as +6 Fighting if the best PC has a +5 fighting), but has several Abilities lower than the PCs that can be exploited to defeat them. These NPCs try to goad the PCs into fighting on their terms, playing off anything they can (the honor of a PC samurai, taking a PCs family hostage, fighting in a village that hates magic if the PCs have sorcerers, etc). If the PCs can't alter the situations of the Conflict, they are likely to lose, but exploiting the bandits' weaknesses will give them the upper hand.*
1 Challenge, X/2 Matched, D3 Minions	*One kami, two Storm Demons, two bakemono. The GM has introduced the PCs to a hidden village of a ninja clan that has recently decided to return to interacting with the world after a long period of solitude. The clan is seeking to form an alliance with a strong group of outsiders: in exchange for information about Nippon, they will dispatch agents to assist their allies. The PCs learn of this clan and enter negotiations to be allies, but they discover that a band of yōkai adventurers is also being considered. The head of the ninja clan declares that the group that impresses them the most in one month will win their patronage. The GM sets up this encounter as a special kind of Conflict. Actions that the PCs take in adventures will inflict Tide Damage against the yōkai and vice versa, with each week being one Round and the ninja clan choosing the side that has inflicted the highest Morale Damage on their opponents after four Rounds. The GM also sets a specific list of actions that count, such as helping the clan in their daily tasks, providing useful information on political powers in the world, and defeating enemies of the clan.* *The GM will probably not play out full Conflicts with the yōkai that the PCs aren't involved in, but several of the PCs plans may overlap with theirs, leading to more traditional Conflicts between the groups that result in Tide Damage to the overall Conflict Tracker.*
1 Challenge, 1 Matched, X*2 Minion	*A powerful noble lord, his advisor and a collection of advisors has leveled charges against the PCs to the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. This conflict is a trial and debate, the GM only allows improvised attacks based on the facts PCs provide against the allegations of the NPCs. The Minions are witnesses with a Morale Threshold of 1, if the PCs can debunk their claims, they are removed from the Conflict. However, the lord's advisor is a shrewd advocate, and the lord himself holds so much influence that his claims will be much less carefully checked than the PCs.*

Difficult Encounters

Difficult encounters make a good wrap up for an entire arc of a story. They can also be included in the middle of a game that is mostly being resolved through Story resolution as a way to change the pace and resolve dangling plot elements.

Group Size	Minion
X-1 Challenge	*A former legendary kami has been splintered into three separate bodies embodying different elements. The dissonance between their physical bodies (one composed of fire, one composed of water, and the last composed of plant material) has caused the three to fall into infighting. These battles are damaging the very lands they are supposed to protect.* *Due to the link between the kami, they can only be defeated by sealing the their powers into a single source again, but the trio do not want to lose their individuality. The PCs can tire them with a physical battle and then perform the sealing ritual, or they can seek out other options, such as draining their individual powers to create a protective enchantment on the area, freeing the three to leave and pursue new lives.*
1 Legend, but PCs Have Help	*A guardian kami has become corrupted by Taint. It has turned against the inhabitants of its domain. The GM allows the PCs to take actions to weaken the kami before the battle. The kami stats with a +20 Total Modifier to all Checks, but each Conflict the PCs succeed at winning before the final battle reduces that Modifier by -1.* *For the final battle, the kami has a group of Matched level NPCs supporting it, but any allies the PCs have made in the campaign earlier may join them. This is a good place to bring back important NPCs, but the GM can also provide the PCs with a group of Horde type (see later in this section) NPC allies representing soldiers, peasants, minor yōkai, etc.*

Returning to designing the example encounters:

Using the stats he wrote down earlier, Andrew can create some probable encounters to use in the campaign. While the events of the story as it unfolds during play may change these, they act as a good starting point.

The climax of the adventure will be the final battle between the bandits and the PCs (plus any potential allies).

If the battle takes place in town, all of the bandits will be attacking, and the PCs will have the assistance of both soldiers and peasants. He builds the following list of NPCs:

Bandits

- 12 Minions built using the Pawn Minion rules under Humans, but none have more than a +2 Total Modifier to Attack and Defend Checks
- 4 core bandits using the Lance Matched Human rules.
- The bandit leader, who is created using a full Character sheet and 200 Potential
- The bandit's sorcerer, using the mystic oni entry

Town

- 6 Soldiers created using the Lance Minion rules.
- Soldier Officer, using the Knight Challenge rules.
- 2 Horde type enemy groups representing the peasants. These each have a Horde Size of 7, but have a Total Modifier of +0 to all Checks they make.

This creates a very large Conflict. Since there are 4 PCs and 27 NPCs, each Round is likely to take a long time. Andrew could decide to split the battle into two separate conflicts (for example, the bandits may split their attack to the North and East of town). This would reduce the total number of Characters in each Conflict, but would be harder to track, and the Players in one battle would have to wait while Andrew switched between each group. Alternatively, the NPC numbers could be reduced through the course of the campaign. If the PCs fight smaller groups of bandits before the final battle, their total number could be reduced. In this case, the PCs may overwhelm the bandits with the assistance of the soldiers, so the GM may need to have the bandits trick some of the soldiers into leaving town before the final battle.

Andrew makes a few notes on the setting for town battles. If the battle is happening in the north, the buildings will make it harder to move around. He decides that no Characters can be in the Cautious Zone if the battle takes place there. Any soldier or peasant NPCs will receive a +2 to Defend Checks when fighting there to represent their familiarity with the streets.

Next, Andrew makes a few notes on the karikage. He imagines this will be a simple encounter that will occur if the PCs are moving through the woods in the twilight or early morning hours where the shadow powers of the karikage will be the most useful. Since the entry for the karikage notes that it can use Create Obstacles to prevent it from being outnumbered, Andrew decides not to include any other NPCs in this encounter.

For the kodama, Andrew wants to make sure the PCs don't physically attack the kodama, but rather engage in a social Conflict. He scripts out several ways the PCs could encounter the kodama, including seeking their help after hearing about them from the townsfolk, and a chance to save some of the kodama from bandits trying to harm them.

Andrew decides that the PCs will have to prove themselves to the kodama, who are hesitant to trust humans, especially after the recent actions of the bandits. He will have the kodama speak to the PCs with the help of an ancient living tree in the forest. The kodama will also act as an additional method to introduce the PCs to the guardian kami if they have not met it beforehand.

For the Conflict, Andrew decides to build it as an Extended Check. For this Check, he creates a list of actions the PCs can do to appeal to the kodama (each of these activities will work as an Improvised Attack, doing 1 point of Morale Damage plus any MoS). He also creates a list of things that will cause the kodama to trust the PCs less, which will also count as Improvised Attacks. This Conflict will take place throughout the rest of the adventures of the Players: whenever someone does something on the list, it will trigger an Attack Action that the play group will track. Once this Extended Check has begun, Andrew will also inform the Players that they can attempt other Actions not on the list; if these Actions seem like they would sway the kodama, they can trigger Attack Actions as well.

Actions to Sway the Kodama

- Save a group of kodama from the bandits
- Meet the Guardian Kami
- Arrange a peaceful meeting between the town and the kodama
- Giving the kodama gifts, or spending time playing with them
- Removing an axe has been lodged in the kodama's tree. This axe is flooded with a malicious ki that prevents the kodama from removing it themselves.
- An old forester that befriended the kodama has stopped visiting. The players will find he has passed on of old age, but left a personal belonging in his home, along with a will asking that it be delivered to the kodama.
- The karikage is a natural predator of the kodama, so removing it from the area will make them happy.

Actions that Could Push the Kodama Away

- Damaging the forest during their other activities
- Being rude towards the kodama or their ancient tree
- Offending the Guardian Kami
- Any actions that make the PCs appear to be working with the bandits
- The karikage is intelligent and may make deals with any PCs who best it. In exchange for sparing its life, it will attack the Bandits. Making a deal with the karikage will offend the kodama and make them fear the PCs.
- If the axe noted above is removed, the tree will 'bleed' a golden sap until it fully heals (several days). This sap is a powerful medicine, but taking it without permission of the kodama will make them consider the PCs to be thieves, even if they have removed the axe.

Andrew wants the local guardian kami to be too powerful for the PCs to defeat in a direct battle. The kami can be confronted in various ways in order to persuade it to assist the humans, or at least not align itself with the bandits. He creates a similar Extended Check to the kodama, but chooses different Actions the PCs can take.

Actions the PCs Can Take Confronting the Kami Ashiguro

- Produce evidence that the bandits hurt the area
- Argue that the humans of the town, while they may take from the land, return as much as they take in different ways, no different than the animals and spirits who also live there
- Impress the kami with a show of skill. Andrew waits to build this list until he has talked with the Players to learn what each PC is good at and what goals the Players want their Characters to achieve. He will then tailor a challenge for each where their specific Skills can impress the kami.

If the PCs impress the kami or endear themselves to it, it may provide assistance to them. The kami is still mainly focused on protecting the area, so it will not be an active ally that can be called on routinely, but it may offer a rare service from the following list:

- Reveal the exact location of the bandits' camp if the PCs have not already found it
- Gift the PCs with special, blessed wood. The PCs can take this to the fletcher in the town, who can turn it into powerful bows for the townfolk to use to defend the town, even after the PCs leave.
- If the PCs have proven the bandits to be damaging to the area, the kami may directly engage them, but only when they are actively causing harm, such as poisoning the river near the town in order to siege it if the defenders prove too strong.

Increasing or Decreasing Difficulty and Stats

When building encounters, the GM may want to alter stats of NPCs from those listed. This will happen most often when the PCs have begun to gain Potential from adventuring in the campaign and become more powerful, requiring enemies to have higher Modifiers. A play group might also wish to use lower powered heroes to begin with (such as only starting with 60 to 80 Potential), which would require enemies to have reduced values.

Raising Stats

The NPCs presented in the book are balanced for a group of PCs built on 100 Potential each. As PCs get more powerful, their Modifiers increase, and they gain additional Abilities that give them more freedom to exploit enemy weaknesses. It's not possible to have exact values that should be added to NPCs, because how the PCs spend their Potential can vary wildly. If the Players spend all of their Potential increasing a single Skill, they will be much more powerful when involved in those kinds of Conflicts, but remain as powerful as a starting PC in other types. The table below works by suggesting a modifier to the printed values of NPCs based on the average modifiers for the party.

Using the table

To use these modifiers, take the Total Modifier values of the PCs in the kind of Conflict you are building (physical battles, social debates, banishing rituals, field research for the Bureau, etc). Once you have the average value, use the Change By value for that number from the table. Keep in mind that this uses Averages, so if the PCs are very different from each other, this may result in the same kind of balance problems that came up for beginning PCs with very different stats. For example, if the PCs contain the following Modifiers for their Investigation Checks (+8, +7, +2, +1), the Average would be 4.5, meaning they would still be in the No Change category. However, the PCs with +7 and +8 are going face very little challenge from most NPCs, while the +2 and +1 PCs will struggle. In these cases, you will need to manually adjust your encounters.

Average Modifier	
+1 to +3	-1
+4 to +5	No Change
+6 to +8	+2
+9 to +10	+5
+11 or more	+8

Note: These changes are to the Total Modifiers for NPCs. Do not apply them multiple times (for example, do not apply them to both the Attribute and the Skill when making a Skill Check).

Party Size

Larger Parties

If the PCs number more than 6, conflicts can end up taking a lot of time. GMs may be tempted to reduce the number of enemies, but remember that if one side out-numbers the other, they will have a much easier time winning the Conflict, even if the other side has higher values. This is because each Character receives their own Turn during Conflicts, as well as Focus Points. Even if the PCs are weaker than a single "boss" enemy, they can quickly deplete the enemy's FP and then inflict Tide Damage multiple times in a row before the enemy can push the Tide Bar back against the players.

If the game group is large enough that Conflicts are becoming a chore instead of fun, the GM may consider splitting the party among several separate conflicts. This can cause the Players not engaged in the current conflict to become bored while waiting, though if it speeds up each Conflict enough, it might warrant doing so. More information on managing Conflicts and Player engagement can be found in the "Gaming Groups Guide" on page 339.

Small Parties

Mysteries of the Yōkai is balanced around a default party size of 3-5, though it can also be played with two, or even one PC. In these cases, GMs should keep in mind that the group will not contain the same mix of skills of a larger group, and be careful to build Conflicts that don't require any specific Skills or Techniques that the PCs don't have.

NPC Entries

The rest of this section will consist of entries describing different NPCs. Here is some of the information you will find in these entries.

Name

The name of the NPC as well as any titles or alternative names.

Level

An indication of the rough difficulty of the NPC with the given stats (see "NPC Levels" on page 248).

Modifiers

This section lists the standard Modifiers to Attributes and Skills. For Skills, the Total Modifier that is used by GMs when making Checks is shown on the left side of the entry. The right side lists the Modifier for the Skill and the Associated Attribute (these values are not used very often in games, but may come up if something is modified, for example if the PCs use a Bane that lowers a Target's Skill Modifier)

Conflict Stats for Conflict:

Morale Threshold, Rally Value, Focus Refresh, Ki Limit and Armor.

> *Note that entries leave the Rally Value blank as most NPC enemies will not Rally if forced out of Conflict. GMs that do have their NPCs Rally should determine those numbers individually depending on the Conflicts they are designing.*

Inherent Abilities

This section lists the Abilities possessed by most average members of the kind of NPC being described. Unless an individual has a reason to not have these Abilities, they should be included. For example, a maimed tengu may have lost a wing in battle and be unable to fly anymore.

Each entry lists a description of the Ability, along with any rules for using it (usually this will be one or more Techniques (see the "Techniques" on page 35 for full rules, entries contain an abbreviated version of the rules for reference).

Exceptional Abilities

Some NPC types have commonly seen elite members: leaders, shaman, heroes, etc. This section lists some Abilities that GMs may want to give to noteworthy members of an NPC type.

Lore

This section describes the NPC. It includes the mythology of the NPC, how it interacts with the world and PCs, and more in depth descriptions of how its Abilities impact the game world, beyond simple game mechanic descriptions.

Tips For Using

This section lists some examples of how the GM can use the NPC in situations where the PCs fight it (Conflict), work with it (Ally), interact with it with no initial bias (Neutral) and how the GM can use the NPC without directly using the stats and game rules (Story).

Variants

Some NPCs are seen in variants that are so common they are listed here. For example, an oni is usually regarded as a large, lumbering brute, but there are many cases where an oni is a master of supernatural forces, and these 'mystic oni' are common enough (and differ enough in rules) that they are listed separately.



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Animals

Nippon is filled with many "normal" animals, those without supernatural abilities or origin.

> ***Level***: Minion or Horde
>
> *Most animals will be Minion or Horde type, though a few of the most ferocious animals can be considered Matched type for starting PCs.*

Animals are broken down into four categories: small, large, burden and yōkai-animal. Each category has a base Attribute value, and each individual animal will have specific Attributes that are higher than the base for their category.

Skills

In general, animals only tend to have the Nature Affinity and Survival Skills. These will always use their highest Attribute as the Associated Attribute. The Modifier for the Skills themselves are listed by category; combine the value with the specific animal's highest Attribute to find the Total Modifier for that animal's Skill Checks. These two skills can be used to cover most actions an animal takes, including ones that crossover with other skills. For example, an Animal can use Survival instead of Evaluate in order to understand the danger a human poses to it.

Some animals can be trained by humans to perform other skills. See Professions in the Character chapter and the Tamer Technique.

Small Animals

Small Animals include anything large enough to have the ability to affect a PC, but still small enough to generally pose no threat to an individual human. A fly doesn't need game stats, since it will be, at most, a story aspect, but a hawk could actually inflict damage to a PC if panicked. Most normal dogs, even feral ones, fit into this category, as they can be dangerous, but easily dealt with by humans as skilled as the PCs. Any small animal not listed here can be used by the GM by using the closest equivalent stats (which can be modified if the GM feels they are not quite correct). For example, a rabbit is close enough to a small cat that they would have the same game stats.

- +0 in all Attributes
- +2 Modifier in Nature Affinity and Survival (Add the Attribute Modifier of their highest individual Attribute when making Checks)
- No Armor
- Morale Threshold of 1, 2 Focus Refresh, and Ki Limit of 6
- Small Animals do not have Signature Attacks. When forced to attack larger foes (like humans), they will use an Improvised Attack with Survival that does Body damage.
- Unless used in a Horde, most small animals are not even worth using in a conflict that doesn't include more powerful enemies to oppose the PCs.

Bats

Bats can fly and are active at night, making for good distractions and annoyances for PCs acting in the dark. +3 AGI, +2 PER, -1 STR, -2 CON.

Birds

Birds are most often encountered by PCs when they are trained by humans, as wild birds tend to be too skittish to stay around humans long enough for their stats to matter. Birds can be trained to attack, but have fragile bodies, and are easy to defeat if a PC can actually hit them Birds have +3 AGI, +2 to any Defend Actions, and have the Flight Technique.

Dogs

Dogs come in two distinctly different types of encounters. Wild dogs tend to be savage and protective of their territory, likely to fight with little provocation, but fleeing as soon as they are in

danger. Domesticated dogs are more disciplined, only fighting if they are commanded or their charges are in danger, but often fighting to the death to protect them. This category can include dog-like animals, like foxes and raccoon-dogs. +2 STR, +2 END, +2 PER, Morale Threshold of 2 (3 for trained dogs) and Armor: 1/0/1.

Cats

Small cats make for very short encounters, as they tend to avoid anything frightening. They can be used as plot points due to their stealth and cunning, requiring players to chase or trick them. +3 AGI, +4 PER, -1 STR.

Snakes

Snakes have many important roles in traditional stories. They don't have the same level of malice associated with them as they do in western mythology, but can still be tricksters or dangerous natural threats. Snakes may be used in role playing situations, but when stats are required, they tend to be elusive and strike quickly, but flee when faced with any kind of real threat. +1 AGI, +1 PER, and any Attacks (including Improvised Attacks) made by a poisonous variety of snake inflict either D3 FP Drain or D3 Ki Poison.

Large Animals

Large Animals possess traits that make them dangerous to humans, though most will still be considered Minion type against PCs, who tend to be much stronger than normal humans. Large Animals can still be grouped into Horde type enemies, but have enough strength that several of them used as Minions might provide a slight challenge for new PCs.

- +2 in all Attributes
- +4 Modifier in Nature Affinity and Survival (Add the Attribute Modifier of their highest individual Attribute when making Checks)
- Armor: 1/0/0
- Morale Threshold of 2, 3 Focus Refresh, and Ki Limit of 8
- GMs who want large animals to deal more damage may select an appropriate Signature Attack from the list on page 68 and make any free modifications. Most Attacks from Large Animals will have the Body Domain.

Bear

Bears are some of the largest land-based animals that PCs will commonly come into conflict with. Though massive, a bear at peace is relatively sedate, and yōkai-animal versions of bears are often friendly with nature-based PCs. When threatened however, bears are terrifying opponents, using their mass, strength, and natural weapons against foes. +5 STR, +4 END, all Attacks do +2 damage, and increase armor to 3/0/0.

Boar

Boars combine the bulk of bears with the speed of wolves, all wrapped into a package full of rage that rushes against enemies without heeding any danger to itself. +2 STR, +1 END, +2 AGI, -1 INT, -3 DIS, -2 RES, all Attacks do +1 damage, increase Armor to 2/0/0.

Cats - Large

Unlike their smaller counterparts, large cats are very likely to enter conflicts with PCs. Any PC in their territory is considered prey until they demonstrate strength, and even when a human drives away a hunting cat, it often returns later to try again. Cats attack with a combination of natural weapons, speed, and strength. They lack the endurance and morale of other large animals, but have higher skill and damage while they remain in the conflict. +2 STR, +4 AGI, +1 INT, +3 PER, all Attacks do +2 damage, and gains +2 on all Defend Checks. Reduce Morale Threshold by 1

Crocodile

Like Sharks, Crocodiles provide good animal foes for PCs in games set near water. Unlike Sharks, they can exist on land, where they become slower, but their mass and toughness still make them dangerous. In the water, they possess great speed and control of their movements, giving them the advantage against PCs, even those skilled at swimming. +3 STR, +2 AGI when in water, +3 END, all Attacks do +2 damage, increase armor to 2/0/0, and has the Technique ***Movement Powers: Swimming***.

Horse

Horses tend to avoid conflicts, so stats for them are more useful when the players have their own horses which are forced into conflicts. Horses can still be dangerous creatures due to their size and strength. In fact, this often makes them unintentional dangers to humans, especially those who don't show proper caution around even the most well trained ones. +2 END.

Ox

Oxen are beasts of burden, very rarely encountered undomesticated. While they can be stubborn and resist farmers directions, they don't tend to favor direct attacks. Oxen are still massive creatures, their mass and strength can prove lethal if they can trample an opponent. +4 STR, +5 END, -1 INT, -1 PER, increase armor to 3/0/0.

Shark

Sharks (and other similar predatory water creatures) are a very specific kind of threat. Completely helpless on land, where PCs will spend most of their time, a Shark is a true danger when faced underwater. Sharks combine the most dangerous traits available to large animals; mass, natural weapons, skill, and aggressive hunting tendencies. (Underwater) +3 STR, +2 END, +3 AGI, all attacks do +2 damage, +1 to Attack and Defend Checks, and has the Technique Movement Power: Swimming.

Wolf

Wolves hunt in packs. GMs should determine whether they will use a Horde type enemy, or have multiple Minion type wolves in the encounter. Wolves are physically menacing, and well versed in working together. +2 STR, +1 END, +1 AGI, +1 Int, +2 DIS, all Attacks do +1 damage, and Wolves are always considered to have the ***Teamwork*** Technique (increase the breakpoint of the Tide Bar against wolves by 1).

Burden Animals

Burden Animals are those trained by humans. In most cases, this will be to perform some kind of physical labor, or to guard a person or place, but there are many examples of animals being trained for other tasks, such as messenger birds or using cats to detect the supernatural.

- Burden animals start with the closest stats from either Large or Small animals.
- A burden animal can then either have 1 Skill with a +3 Modifier (using it's highest Attribute as the Associated Attribute), or increase its existing Nature Affinity or Survival Skill by a further +2.
- Finally, a Burden animal can either add one further Skill with a +2 Modifier, or choose one Technique worth up to 20 Potential.

Example Burden Animal - Warhorse

Specially bred and trained for samurai, the Warhorse is larger, stronger and better disciplined than other horses.

Begin with the standard Horse stats (Large Animal, +2 End (total of +4 with base Large Animal stats)

Add Fighting at +3 (Associated with the highest Attribute (END) for a total of +7)

Add Heavy Strike to represent its ability to trample enemies during a battle.

Yōkai-Animals

Yōkai-animals are animals that have achieved some level of intelligence or sentience greater than what is normally associated with their species, but are not yet true yōkai. See the "Bakemono - The Changing Ones" on page 198 or "Bakemono Animals - Shapeshifters" on page 263 for information on true yōkai that share traits with animals.

It is very common in stories to find animals that possess one specific trait that makes them special. This was often used to teach the reader a lesson by having a hapless traveler encounter the animal and resolve some kind of issue central to that animal's trait. For example, a stray fox living at a shrine may have become incredibly greedy, attempting to get those who pass by to donate to the offering box. If they do not, the fox may trick them, or even rob them.

GMs can use the standard stats for an appropriate animal, and then increase the necessary stats or provide techniques required for the animal to interact with the PCs in the way the story requires it to. Semi-yōkai are also useful without stats for purely role playing purposes, though the GM should be prepared with an idea of the creature's basic capabilities, since PCs are likely to at least make contested Checks against them.

- Yōkai-animals start with the closest stats from either Large or Small animals.
- A yōkai-animal will have two additional Skills with a Modifier of +2 in them (using its highest Attribute as the Associated Attribute)
- A yōkai-animal can choose up to 30 Potential of Techniques

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Animals tend to enter Conflicts with PCs when they scare, threaten or intrude on the domains of animals, though some predators will specifically seek them out and attack. Depending on the interests of the playgroup, animals can be used as disposable enemies with no moral dilemma, but be sure to talk to all players before becoming too casual with discarding them. Animals can also provide a chance for playgroups to explore stories involving restoring or maintaining natural balance, as enraged animals will often be one of the first signs humans notice that something is wrong.

As Neutral Characters

Animals tend to be neutral by default, even predators. They rarely fight to the death, and once either side disengages, animals will usually forget about the encounter (animals don't tend to hold grudges).

As an Ally

Players may wish to train animals, or may be joined in their journeys by yōkai-animals. When players possess appropriate Professional Skills, they can train Burden Animals, creating the NPCs themselves, but usually the GM will design the animal (especially yōkai-animals).

Story

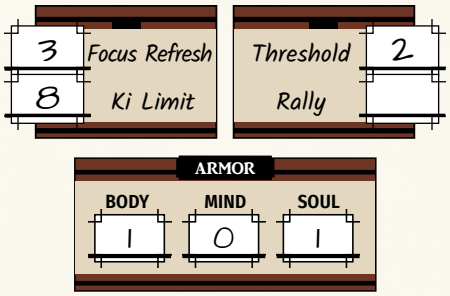
Because animals don't have language and tend to possess low intelligence, they generally enter a story in ways that don't include interacting with the PCs on a role playing level. However, animals often befriend humans (especially yōkai-animals), and the plights of a beloved friendly animal can lead PCs on adventures just as easily as friendly human or full yōkai NPCs.

Bakemono Animals - Shapeshifters

Animals that have for one reason or another become changing spirits. These yōkai have close ties to the mortal world and are invested in the events that go on within it. Because of their ability to alter their appearances these bakemono are often tricksters and shapeshifters that can disguise themselves as other things and blend in with humanity.

Level: Minion or Matched

Each bakemono varies in power and ability depending on their origins, age, and exposure to ki. Important NPCs may even be Challenge or Legend.



Building Bakemono

Attributes

Use the Attributes of the animal the bakemono spirit is based on, then increase any attributes for the particular yōkai , as appropriate for the story. Usually this will be INT and ZEA at least, as bakemono gain increased ability to think, communicate and use ki and other supernatural abilities when they transform. Bakemono that grow in size or become more fierce may have increased STR or END.

Skills

Follow the same method as used with Attributes, but almost all bakemono gain at least a +3 total modifier in Ki Manipulation, and will often have much higher. Due to their origins, these yōkai will have a high rating in Nature Affinity, combining their origin in their habitat with their increased capacity to think (though some bakemono may become so far removed from their natural form that they startle other animals and cannot easily return to their old way of life). Add any additional Skills as appropriate for the type of bakemono being created. These skills will usually have a +2 to +4 total Modifier if the GM wants them to be Matched type, or +5 to +8 if they are intended to be a Challenge type.

All bakemono should have Alternate Forms, Illusions, and/or Modify Body to represent their particular way of changing form.

The listed stats are average for bakemono, and may differ by type. For example, a thick skinned animal will have higher armor, while a quick or active animal may have a greater Focus Refresh.

Signature Attacks: Below are three kinds of Signature Attacks that can be used to cover various ways that bakemono commonly attack. These can be renamed or adapted to fit most backgrounds, but the GM should feel free to create unique Signature Attacks for strange bakemono.

Signature Attack

Physical Attacks — FP 1 KI 0

Total Check Modifier: +Varies
Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Choose From Defenses
DAMAGE: D6 | DOMAIN: Body
RANGE: 1 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: - | MOVE:

The yōkai uses their body, claws, teeth, martial arts, etc to physically attack their foes. Associated Skill and modifiers depend on the described nature of the Attack.

DEFENSES: STR, AGI, Fighting, Evaluate, Nature Affinity

Signature Attack

Beguile — FP 1 KI 1

Total Check Modifier: +Varies
Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Choose From Defenses
DAMAGE: D3+1 | DOMAIN: Mind
RANGE: 2 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: - | MOVE:

The bakemono uses shape-shifting, mental tricks, or manipulation of the environment to confuse or beguile their target. Associated Skill and modifiers depend on the described nature of the Attack.

DEFENSES: INT, ZEA, Evaluate, Investigation, Manipulation

Signature Attack

Minor Magic — FP 2 KI 3

Total Check Modifier: +Varies
Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Choose From Defenses
DAMAGE: D3 | DOMAIN: Soul
RANGE: 5 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: D3 | MOVE:

The bakemono wields minor spells, curses, cantrips, or prestidigitation to damage their target. Associated Skill and modifiers depend on the described nature of the Attack.

DEFENSES: INT, DIS, PER ZEA, RES, INS, Investigation, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinity

Lore

Of the yōkai, the bakemono animals (pronounced "bah-kay-moh-noh") have the closest relationship with humanity. Shapeshifting animals have origins as mundane creatures in the mortal world. By gaining spiritual power, either through age, experience, or exposure to supernatural energy, the animal begins to gain sentience, ultimately becoming a yōkai.

While spirits can become disjointed from the mortal world, shapeshifters remain invested in the events and wellbeing of those who live within it. Because of this, civilizations in the mortal realm have always been in contact with one kind of bakemono or another, even if the humans weren't aware of their true identities as shapeshifters.

Shapeshifting animals gain abilities that allow them to change their forms or give themselves new appearances. They use these techniques to disguise themselves as humans and explore (and sometimes exploit) human civilization and culture. These disguises are often just barely convincing, but certain shapeshifting animals like kitsune (foxes), mujina (badgers), and tanuki are fairly adept at passing as human. Kitsune in particular are well known for their ability to impersonate specific humans in great detail.

It is rare for a yōkai to make an absolutely flawless disguise as it requires them to study a person thoroughly. Shapeshifting animals have great difficulty hiding all of their features when they are disguised, only expert shapeshifters are able to make truly passable disguises. An experienced or perceptive individual who knows what to look for will be able to identify the ordinary shapeshifters in their human forms. Most illusionary animals are unable to fully change their shadows or their reflections, though many are good at hiding these features using clothing and lighting.

To read more information about bakemono and their origins, see the section of the Setting Guide called "Bakemono - The Changing Ones" on page 198.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Versatile characters in Conflict, many shapeshifters have alternate forms with different strengths and weaknesses. Their ability to disguise themselves make them adept at adding confusion to a battlefield. Shapeshifters can pretend to be bigger more powerful yōkai or humans when threatened and use that to demoralize their foes. This isn't always a ruse though, if the shapeshifter is powerful enough they are able to even mimic the abilities and strengths of other creatures temporarily.

As Neutral Characters

Shapeshifters are usually ready to strike a deal, especially if it involves favors, gifts, or treasure. In particular, both tanuki and kitsune will uphold a bargain, even one that is detrimental to them. If a shapeshifter feels indebted to someone, regardless of their fondness or ire for them, they will go to great lengths to repay them. Care should be taken when making deals with shapeshifters however, because they may only follow the letter of the agreement, rather than the intent. These individuals also expect others to do the same, and PCs who break bargains may quickly gain a reputation in the supernatural world.

As an Ally

As tricky as they can be, it is relatively easy to work with shapeshifters. Many of them are very loyal to their friends and respond well to kindness. If they feel indebted to someone they will work to repay that debt, though often they have their own ideas for what constitutes payment. A shapeshifter ordered to work with the party will usually act professionally making them reliable allies until the terms of their agreement is met.

Story

Shapeshifters are everywhere and have been a part of Nippon's society even before the Age of Spirits. It is likely that all characters have knowingly or unknowingly met one at one point. Human society is filled with things they fancy. Shapeshifters like things that can't be easily obtained in the spirit or animal realms. For example, both otters and tanuki love *sake*, and many foxes cannot resist the luxuries and comforts of wealthy humans.

A shapeshifter's love of pranks is well known. Many stories begin with shapeshifters making a bet to elicit some sort of reaction from a target. They cannot resist using their abilities to teach lessons to the foolish or inexperienced, often testing people to see if they hold true to their values. Especially, foxes have a strong urge to teach humility to arrogant people who come their way (the hypocrisy of their own pridefulness is often lost on them). On occasion this backfires, and the tricksters end up tricked or humbled themselves.

Shapeshifters can replace other individuals, creating many complications for the PCs. If the PCs try to collect on payment for a job, only to find the other party never agreed to it, they will either have to accept the loss of payment, or find the shapeshifter and attempt to recoup the payment from them. Shapeshifters can also be used by the party to replace important NPCs in the world, either temporarily or permanently, in order to effect change. An overthrown evil warlord or underworld boss is certain to eventually be replaced, so the PCs may want to install their own leader that they can trust.



Bakemono Variants

Kawauso

Most Kawauso (pronounced "kah-wah-oo-soh") are ordinary otters that have become bakemono. They are playful yōkai, with a penchant for harmless pranks and tricks. Kawauso are formidable shapeshifters, and are second to none at sound mimicry; but they often lack the language comprehension and acting skills to use to maximum effect. They can struggle with quick conversations, and may try repeatings things they have overheard, rather than fully engage in a dialogue. They are shy creatures, and would generally keep to themselves, were it not for a particular love of alcohol. Kawauso venture into the human realm often to get a taste of good sake, but their natures usually result in trouble of one form or another. They find that human society is filled with such seriousness that many a kawauso feel the need to use their magic to make humans laugh out loud, even if their targets don't know why.

Kawauso tells when transformed: Tails, discolored nose, odd gait, awkward speech or grammar, and difficulty answering detailed questions.

Building Kawauso

Kawauso will have the standard Attributes for small animals, but due to their increased interaction with other races, often have higher INT and INS. Specific individuals may have increases in other Attributes that represent the traits that make them special.

All Kawauso will have Interaction and Manipulation, but due to their more casual attitudes, often have lower total modifiers (+1 to +3). Kawauso also have the ***Translator*** Technique, but their speech will often sound like someone who is not quite familiar with the words they are using. Due to their natural swimming abilities, Kawauso count has having the rules for ***Movement Powers: Swimming*** (no additional FP cost to move between zones when in water) and a bonus of +2 to any Fighting Checks they make, when in the water.

When using the ***Beguile*** Signature Attack (listed under "Building Bakemono"), Kawauso who successfully hit a target may also move that Character 1 zone (representing their skill in tricking others with their voice mimicry).

Kitsune

*When a fox gains a certain amount of spiritual power, it becomes a **bake-kitsune** (pronounced "bah-kay-keet-soo-nay"), and may grow additional tails. The number of tails a kitsune has is a reliable indicator of its magical prowess, though some exceptions do exist. Kitsune ("keet-soo-nay") are master human impersonators, but they often choose forms that are a little too beautiful, attractive, or ideal. Less experienced kitsune are unable to hide their tails or whiskers when transformed. All kitsune are able to produce balls of spirit energy known as fox fire, the properties and color of this fire is dependent on the individual and is used as a means of identification.*

Kitsune tells when transformed: Tails; eyes that are smaller, squinting, or slightly crossed; pointed teeth; discolored hair; or whisker markings.



Building Kitsune

Kitsune vary tremendously based on how powerful they are, or how many tails they have.

Kitsune with only a few tails will use the Attributes for small hunting animals, but will have increased supernatural ability. These Characters will be either Horde (Size 2-5) or Matched type enemies. Increase the following for each additional tail:

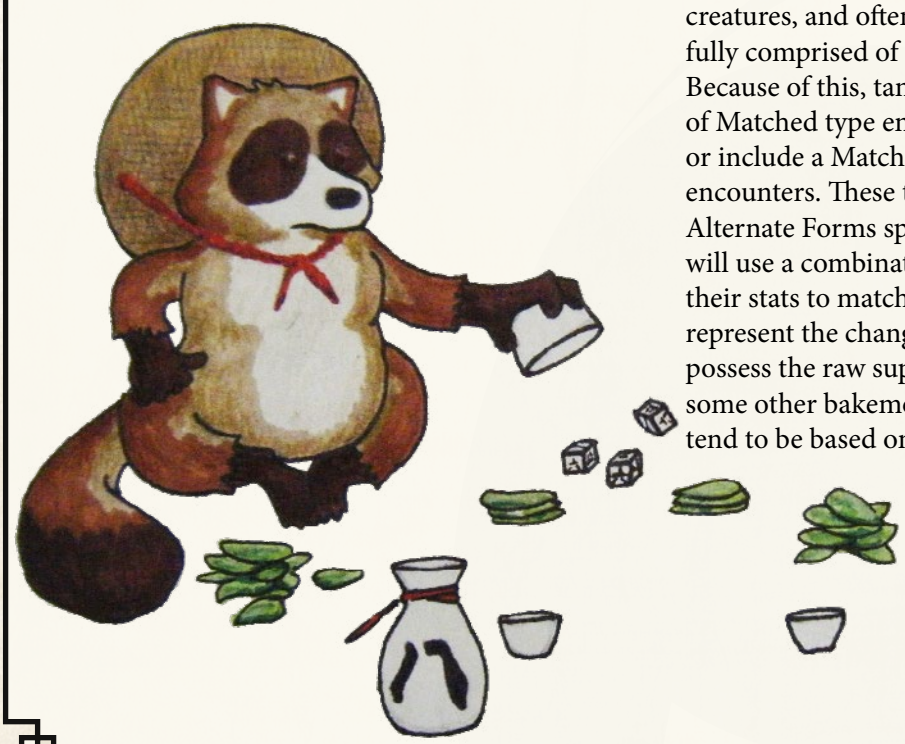
- ZEA: +1.5 per tail (round up)
- Ki Limit: +2 per tail
- Manipulation: +2 per tail
- Attack Checks with Minor Magic: +1 per Tail
- Damage with Minor Magic: +1 damage per 2 tails (round down)

Powerful or particularly old Kitsune will have many tails, and should be counted as either Challenge or even Legend type enemies. Because these will usually be important NPCs, GMs can design them using the same rules that Player Characters are created with. A group of powerful Kitsune will usually be based on the same Total Potential as the PCs, while a single Kitsune will usually have two to three times as much as a single PC and be accompanied by a few allies of lesser ability. These kinds of Kitsune will always have high values in Mind and Soul stats, powerful Ki Abilities (Signature Attacks, Ki Limit, and Techniques that can be used with their magic, such as Ignore Armor), as well as Alternate Form, Illusions, and/or Modify Body.

Tanuki

*Tanuki (pronounced "tah-noo-kee"), or specifically **bake-tanuki**, are raccoon-like dogs who become master shapeshifters when they gain spiritual power. While kitsune usually rely on illusions, tanuki are able to create sturdy solid forms. Meticulously detailed tanuki disguises are nearly impossible to detect even with magic. However, most tanuki lack the patience and discipline to study humans in enough detail to craft these perfect disguises. Tanuki love changing their form and surprising people, from innocuous objects to even humans. But impatient members of their species often cannot help but reveal themselves if people don't catch on to their ruse fast enough. Most yōkai have difficulty remaining disguised if they laugh; and since many tanuki have such lighthearted natures, their disguises can easily slip, revealing their fluffy ears and tails.*

Tanuki tells when transformed: Tails, darkened areas around eyes, incorrect or distorted voice, snickering, increased weight (muscle, paunch, or height).



Building Tanuki

Unlike Kitsune, who tend to gradually increase in power as they gain tails, Tanuki are more often either very similar to their animal form (but with minor abilities in trickery), or much closer to the capabilities of a human.

Minor Tanuki have capabilities very close to a small animal, with one or two Skills or Techniques such as Manipulation, Illusions or Modify Body. Individually, these Characters will not be able to stand up to a full party of PCs in a Conflict, but can provide the GM with many opportunities for story plot points or require Checks or Extended Checks. For Example, the PCs may find a wall suddenly blocking the single useable trail up a mountain. The PCs may have to make Athletics Checks, or climb on each others shoulders to get over the wall, only to find once they reach the other side that the wall has a tanuki tail protruding from it.

More adept tanuki often possess Attributes and Skills closer to humans, and will usually have a +1 to +3 in most Attribute Modifiers. These tanuki will have 2-5 skills that represent their professions and personal hobbies. Tanuki tend to be very social creatures, and often live together in communities fully comprised of tanuki, or with other species. Because of this, tanuki allow GMs to create groups of Matched type enemies with shapeshifting abilities, or include a Matched or Challenge tanuki in other encounters. These tanuki will have either a few Alternate Forms specialized for use in Conflicts, or will use a combination of Modify Body (to change their stats to match their form) and Illusions (to represent the change visually). Tanuki don't usually possess the raw supernatural magic of Kitsune and some other bakemono, so their abilities in Conflicts tend to be based on Body or Mind, rather than Soul.

Humans and Demi-Yōkai

Humans are the most populous of the sentient races in Nippon. For many years, they considered themselves alone, and even today there are many who are unaware of the supernatural. Humanity mostly exists in hierarchal groups directed by laws, but there are plenty of individuals who exist outside of the norm; some by the results of bad luck, others by choice.

Level: Varies based on power level

Humans vary according to what the GM needs them to do. A samurai could be a Matched or Challenge foe, or may even be a Minion in the right setting (such as a Conflict where neither physical combat skills or social rank are important). A band of motley bandits may be a horde enemy, but a master bandit could be a Challenge.

To create Human NPCs, the GM should choose the following details for that NPC:

- **Type** - Simpler NPCs only need a few skills for a specific Conflict, while more important NPCs can approach the complexity of Player Characters. Type determines how much detail an NPC is built with.
- **Level** - Level measures how difficult of a challenge the NPC is, roughly, compared to a starting PC
- **List of Abilities** - Each entry contains a short list of how many Abilities to develop for that NPC.

Quick and Simple NPCs

In many cases, an NPC will not need a fully developed list of Attribute Modifiers, Skills or Techniques. Often, a GM will use several simple NPCs for a Conflict or Story Encounter in which those NPCs only need to perform a limited set of Actions. For example: soldiers or bandits in physical battles, a corrupt Bureau Agent in an Agent review trial, or an Assassin that ambushes the PCs while they are resting.

Later in this entry there are tables detailing the NPC types and how to build them. To use these tables, decide on the basics of the NPC (such as what job they hold in the world, roughly how competent and diverse their skills are, etc). Use one of the table entries and give the NPC the listed Abilities with the Modifiers indicated.

If an item in an entry is listed with a multiplier, take that item that many times. For example, “Kata x2” means you would choose a Kata and apply its bonuses twice.

NPCs built with Katas will often have more or less Potential than the exact values for a Modifier. In these cases, round up to the next value if the NPC has at least half as much Potential as would be required for that value.

Example

2 Potential in a Skill provides a +1 Modifier, while 5 Potential provides a +2. Many NPCs will be built with 2 copies of the same Kata, which provides a total of 4 Potential. Since there is at least half as much Potential as there is needed to reach the next Modifier in the Ranked Potential Table for Skills (see "Buying Skills" on page 15). Rounding it up to 5 Potential would move the NPC's Modifier from a +1 to a +2 in that Skill.

Building Example NPCs

Andrew needs two groups of NPCs for his campaign; a group of soldiers and a group of bandits. He decides the bandits will be Minion types and the soldiers will be Matched. Since the PCs may encounter the soldiers in town during Story sessions, Andrew decides they will need some non-Conflict Abilities. He decides that the bandits are simple enough to not need non-Conflict Abilities since they'll only be used for a quick fight. For the soldiers, Andrew builds them as Lance Matched NPCs, which will have 2 Katas, and increase one Skill by +2 and another by +1. He chooses Katas to represent the soldiers' focus as border guards: Soldier (their standard training) and Outsider (representing the fact that they stationed in a distant town, too far to receive reliable support from big cities or provincial governments). Combining the two Katas, he sees that this gives each of soldiers the following totals:

- ***Agility**: 4 Potential (Modifier: +2)*
- ***Endurance**: 8 Potential (Modifier: +3)*
- ***Strength**: 4 Potential (Modifier: +2)*
- ***Fighting**: 8 Potential (Modifier: +3)*
- ***Leadership**: 4 Potential (Modifier: +2)*
- ***Medicine**: 4 Potential (Modifier: +2)*
- ***Survival**: 4 Potential (Modifier: +2)*
- ***Vice**: 4 Potential (Modifier: +2)*

Finally, Andrew decides that Fighting is the most important Skill for the Soldiers, and increases it by an additional +2. The Soldiers associate Endurance with Fighting, so have a +8 Total Modifier. Andrew decides to split the soldiers into three groups, based on their individual backgrounds. Each group will receive +1 in either Medicine (trained field healers), Survival (soldiers raised in rural areas), or Vice (soldiers raised in cities).

NPC Types

The type of an NPC will determine how many Skills that NPC has. The GM can either choose Katas that represent what the NPC is capable of doing in an encounter (ignoring non relevant Skills that the NPC may actually possess, but don't need to be recorded), or choose some Skills directly. The values of these Skills, as well as the NPC's Attributes, will depend on the NPC's Level (see "NPC Levels" on page 248).

Pawn

Pawns should be used to model NPCs that are very easy to defeat and have a very limited skillset. Simple bandits, peasants conscripted into service, or a street vendor trying to trick the PCs into an obviously bad deal make good Pawns. The Pawn type can also be used for very simple yōkai that lack any kind of supernatural powers.

Lance

A Lance type NPC is a more skilled Pawn. They generally don't have a wide range of Skills, though they may have additional training in Skills that don't apply to the current Conflict. For example, a simple and brutal warlord may have the stats of a Matched General in a war, but if the GM is using that NPC in a philosophical debate, it would be modeled as a Minion or Matched Lance. Lances can represent officers or special members included with a group of Pawns, such as the member of a group of bandits that specializes in burglary.

Rook

Rooks are NPCs that are important enough to a plot to require additional, non-stat details. In terms of Abilities, Rooks are still generally focused on whatever aspect the Conflict is using (though they may have additional skills outside of the Conflict, as the Lance does). Because of this, most of the work in creating the Rook comes from building their personality and weaving them into the plot. They have higher stats than Lance enemies in order to give them dramatic staying power.

Knight

Knights are usually roughly equivalent to Rooks in terms of overall Conflict Abilities, but they have some additional Skills to make them more three dimensional as Characters. For example, the GM is building a reclusive sage whom the PCs need to accompany them to a forest to solve the mystery of why all the animals are sick. The GM would pick Katas that give the sage a high Medicine Modifier, but should also include some of the Potential in Survival and/or Nature Affinity so the sage can apply their knowledge to any plans the PCs create to save the forest. While this NPC will not have as high Modifiers in these nature based skills as an Explorer or Herbalist PC, they can certainly take care themselves. This additional knowledge also opens up potential role playing opportunities (perhaps the Sage and the Herbalist share a scene where they try to assist a sick and confrontational bear after they discover the cure).

General

Generals are very important NPCs that will often return throughout the campaign. The GM should build them with a wide variety of Abilities so that they can appear in different kinds of Conflicts and non-Conflict encounters. Use the allotted Potential to choose Attribute and Skill Modifiers for the NPC that are useful in the expected Conflicts the NPC will appear in, ignoring other Abilities the NPC might have.

King

King type NPCs are a focal point of the campaign. They may be the main antagonist, an advisor or mentor that is constantly assisting the PCs, or a neutral NPC that constantly appears and participates in Conflicts. For example, in a campaign where the PCs are agents of one of the divisions of the Bureau, that division's head may sometimes oppose the PCs (requiring social conflicts to convince them to take actions or give additional resources) and sometimes help the PCs (accompanying the party in field work), but whenever they appear they will need fully developed stats. For this reason, King NPCs should be developed fully using Potential, in the same way as PCs. The exact amount of Potential depends on the level of the NPC, as shown in the table. Even a minion may be very important and need to be developed, regardless of its relative power level.

Bestiary Entry: Humans And Demi-yōkai

	Minion	Matched	Challenge
Pawn	Kata x2 **- OR -** Kata Kata	Kata x2 Kata **- OR -** Kata Kata Kata	Kata x2 Kata x2 Increase one Skill Modifier by an additional +1 **- OR -** Kata x3 Kata Increase one Attribute Modifier by an additional +1
Lance	Kata x2 Increase one Skill Modifier by an additional +1	Kata x2 Kata x2 Increase one Skill Modifier by an additional +2 Increase one Skill Modifier by an additional +1 **- OR -** Kata x3 Kata x2 Increase one Attribute Modifier by an additional +1 Increase one Skill Modifier by an additional +1	Choose 1 Kata and give the listed Attributes a Modifier of +3 and the Skills a Modifier of +5 Kata Kata
Rook	Choose 1 Kata and give the listed Attributes a Modifier of +1 and the Skills a Modifier of +3	Kata x3 Kata x2 Increase one Skill Modifier by an additional +1 **- OR -** Choose 1 Kata and give the listed Attributes a Modifier of +2 and the Skills a Modifier of +4	Choose one Attribute to give a Modifier of +3, and give all others +2 Choose 4 Skills and give each a Modifier of +4
Knight	Choose 1 Kata and give the listed Attributes a Modifier of +2 and the Skills a Modifier of +3 Choose 1 additional Kata. Do not apply the Attributes, but give the listed Skills a +1 Modifier.	Choose 2 Katas and give the listed Attributes a Modifier of +2 and the Skills a Modifier of +4. Increase one of the chosen Skills to +5 Choose 1 additional Kata. Do not apply the Attributes, but give the listed Skills a +1 Modifier.	Choose 2 Attributes to give a +4 Modifier to, all other Attributes are +2 Choose 3 Skills to give a +4 Modifier to Choose 2 Skills to give a +2 Modifier to
General	20 Potential	40 Potential	100+ Potential
King	40 Potential	70 Potential	200+ Potential

NPC Levels

While type determines the variety of skills an NPC has, Level determines the relative values of the Abilities that are chosen. See "NPC Levels" on page 248 for more information on Levels, as well as how many of each kind of type to include in Conflicts to create the intended difficulty level.

Minion

Minions have very low Modifiers in only a few Skills. However, the ability of humans and other sentient species to work together in groups is one of their defining traits. GMs can mix in Minions with different Skills to cover each other or higher Level NPCs.

Example

The PCs are in a heated debate with a Court Noble. One of the PCs makes an Improvised Attack using Fighting to address the issue of the military influence on the Noble's plan. While the Noble has no Modifier in Fighting, one of their Advisors is a Minion Level NPC who does. While this Minion is unlikely to win the Check against the PC, they can use the Intercept Universal Action (see "Universal Actions" on page 120) to at least lose the Check with less MoS for the PCs than the Noble, preserving some of their Lord's face.

Matched

Matched NPCs usually have Total Modifiers close to the same as average PCs. GMs may need to increase the values listed in this section if the PCs have specialized their Potential in only a few Abilities and have much higher Modifiers than the NPCs.

Challenge

When building a Challenge NPC, use the table entries for their relevant Abilities as normal, but then also use the Matched entry to choose additional secondary Abilities. For example, when building a Clan Lord as a Challenge Knight that the PCs will face on the battlefield, use the Challenge entry to choose warfare skills, and then use the Matched entry to choose additional Skills to cover the social, management and educational abilities the Lord has gained from running their domain. This makes it more difficult for the PCs to simply engage the warlord in a battle of wits or tie them up in diplomatic 'red tape'.

Legend

Legend level enemies are not provided with quick build entries. These NPCs are so important to the plot that they should be built with Potential just like Player Characters (and may even be much more powerful than the PCs).

Remaining Abilities

The entries in the table on page 273 allow the GM to choose the important Skills for an NPC of its type. These skills are intended to cover most situations for Conflicts using those NPCs, but if the GM needs values for the remaining Abilities, follow the suggestions below.

- **Hordes Note**: In the case of Hordes (see "Special Rules: Hordes" on page 249), take the base stats for the appropriate NPC entry and give them a Horde number. This creates an NPC that decreases in prowess as they are defeated by the PCs.
- **Minion**: Treat all unchosen Skills as having no Modifier.
- **Matched**: Matched is the default for NPCs; all entries are listed for using them against standard 100 Potential starting PCs. Treat all unchosen Skills as having a +2 Modifier. If the PCs are significantly higher or lower powered than starting PCs, the GM should modify these values accordingly. For example, if the PCs have been adventuring for many sessions and have earned an additional 80 Potential, the GM should increase all Total Modifiers of Matched NPCs by +1 to +2.
- **Challenge**: Treat any unchosen Attributes that the NPC should possess at an average level as +2, and any they would be weak at as a +1.

- **Legend**: Legend enemies are best created using Potential, just like PCs. In some cases, a Legend level opponent may be so powerful that the GM simply counts them as winning any Opposed Check relevant to their abilities (such as a Guardian Kami of Water acting in a body of water in its domain). PCs will often have to find alternate ways to engage these enemies, which is where the Conflict stats will come into play. Even these "off" Abilities will usually have total Modifiers of +10 or higher.

Additional Conflict Stats

	Focus Refresh	Morale Threshold	Ki Limit	Armor
Minion	2	1	6	Place 1 point in two Domains of Choice
Matched	3	3	10	2/2/2 **- OR -** 3 Points in one Domain, 1 Point in each other Domain
Challenge	5-6	5	14+	3/3/3

Rally

In general, most NPCs do not Rally. Less important or lower level Enemies will flee as soon as their Morale Threshold is exceeded, while important enemies will have the highest Threshold on the Enemy Side, and the Conflict will end when they are forced out. GMs can choose to give specific individual NPCs a Rally value if they wish, for very specific encounters.

Techniques

In addition to the Attributes and Skills an NPC possesses, the GM should flesh them out with some Techniques. When building a group of NPCs, each one's Attributes and Skills will usually be the same or similar (most soldiers receive the same training, and most merchants usually have the basic skills needed to conduct trade), but they may differ in the Techniques they possess. A combination of different Techniques and personality quirks can change a mob of faceless archetypes into a memorable group of NPC opponents.

The tables below show how much Potential the GM should spend on an NPC. These values are rough guidelines to provide general balance for encounters, you should feel free to add more Potential when you want an NPC to have certain Techniques, or not spend all of the allotted amount if you want less capable enemies.

	Minion	Matched	Challenge
Pawn	5	20	50
Lance	5	30	80
Rook	15	30	90
Knight	20	50	90
General	40	70	100
King	40	80	150

Demi-Yōkai

There are many yōkai that are very similar to humans, even though they may bear a close resemblance to animals or plants. For example, some tanuki and kitsune spend so much time with humans (possibly as a result of being raised in human culture) that they might be better represented as humans with special powers than as bakemono, or as raccoon dogs and foxes.

GMs can use the human entries to model yōkai that follow a path established by human society. Take the Human entry listed above for the Type and Level of the NPC desired, and include some or all of the Inherent Abilities from the corresponding yōkai entry. Note that using these additional Abilities will make the NPC stronger than a human created with the same Type and Level, so the GM may wish to use a weaker category as a base, or lower one or more of the Total Modifiers for the NPC.

Example

Namazu are a yōkai species that can commonly be found in Nippon. These fish like humanoids are famous for their accuracy in predicting coming earthquakes. There are even rumors that there are groups of namazu who cause the earthquakes themselves. A GM who wants to create a village of namazu could use the relevant NPC entries above. Pawn Minions for random villagers, Matched Rook for a shaman, and Challenge General for the village's champion. Then give each of the namazu the ***Movement Powers: Swimming*** *Technique. The shaman should probably have both* ***Elemental Manipulation: Water*** *and* ***Elemental Manipulation: Earth*** *(especially if the namazu can actually cause earthquakes), and the Champion would spend its allotted Technique potential on water and earth related abilities.*



Ogyi is a namazu agent for The Bureau

Ichiyū - The Roaming Gloom

"One brings sorrow, another brings mania, none bring ease..."

Most people simply refer to an Ichiyū as a gloom, for the atmosphere associated with its presence. It is a spirit of negativity that brings dark and lethargic feelings to humans. They are difficult to perceive and have a penchant for ruining social events.

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+0	Intelligence	+1	Zeal	+5
Endurance	+0	Discipline	+0	Resolve	+1
Agility	+0	Perception	+2	Insight	+0

2	Focus Refresh
12	Ki Limit

Threshold	2
Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	1	3

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+6	Ki Attunement	(ZEA+5)	1
+7	Manipulation	(ZEA+5)	2
+3	Vice	(DIS+0)	3

Inherent Abilities

Technique — **Intangible Aura of Gloom**

Special Technique

Glooms are not fully of the physical world. Because of this, Conflicts including them should restrict the actions that can be taken by PCs. In general, most Abilities can still be used, but the Characters must find creative ways to interact with the Gloom using their standard Attacks and Techniques. For example, a normal weapon attack would not work on a Gloom, but a warrior might inspire those around them with hope by pretending to strike at the Gloom, and then boasting cheerfully of their success. By inspiring hope in others, the Character damages the Gloom approximately equal to the way they would a physical opponent. Glooms also provide a lot of new options for improvised attacks not usually available against physical foes. For example, a Character could use Professional Skills that allow them to sing, dance or prepare tea ceremonies.

The Armor stats provided are for use when applying these rules. Gloom are still hard to dispel with body or soul attacks, because they are a prevalent aura of dread and sadness. Intellect tends to work better, as cold logic can overcome the kinds of fear and depression that cripple the body and soul.

Technique — **Magnify Feelings**

Technique Based on Banes & Boons

The presence of a Gloom in an area causes human feelings to magnify. Usually, this affects sadness, depression, fear, and similar emotions, but large groups of Gloom can lead to elation, mania, and even insanity.

The GM should choose 3-6 ***Banes*** or ***Boons*** that represent the effect of specific Glooms. For example, Attribute penalties can be used to model apathy or fear, while a particularly strong presence of multiple Gloom could end up penalizing Skills or forcing re-rolls because Characters are unable to focus.

Bestiary Entry: Ichiyū - The Roaming Gloom



Bestiary Entry: Ichiyū - The Roaming Gloom

Level: Challenge

The roaming gloom presents a non-standard kind of Challenge. Handling a gloom may often require a Conflict or Extended Challenge designed specifically to repel them. Though they do not like combat, their Auras can be used to great effect against the party by other yōkai.

Exceptional Abilities

In general, a roaming gloom will not possess other Techniques than those listed, but will choose different Boons and Banes to represent its specific affect on the area.

Lore

More often felt rather than seen, Ichiyū (pronounced "ee-chee-yoo") or "roaming gloom" are widely considered to be ill omens. Though the gloom is indeed centered within a hazy veil of melancholy, foreboding, and lethargy, it is not known if any misfortune can be directly attributed to one. It is more likely that it is simply attracted to people and places that might be overtaken by misfortune or possibly even attracts unfortunate individuals to its vicinity.

No scholar has been able to ascertain the origins of these yōkai, but it is likely that they are born of negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and dread. They are few and far between, preferring to wander and avoid the company of their fellow glooms. An interesting phenomena occurs if an even number of Ichiyū are ever gathered in one place. The usual effects of their foreboding auras are reversed, instead causing feelings of joy and elation. The more that gather the more intense the feelings, large enough even-numbered groups can cause these positive feelings to grow to mania and madness. In odd-numbered groups, their negative effects are magnified and can begin to cause thoughts of self harm and even suicide.

Ichiyū can only be seen after nightfall by the light of a fire. At all other times, the only sign of their presence is the general feeling of lethargy and heaviness felt by people in the vicinity. If you see a empty seat at an event but have great guilt about taking it then there's probably a gloom sitting there. They seem to be attracted to fire and lights at night. During night time festivals they can end up ruining the festivities by joining in uninvited after they are drawn in by the paper lanterns carried by festival goers. Perhaps it is not simply the lights but a desire to be seen that motivates them to approach festivals.

Only overwhelming positivity can counteract the negative effects of a gloom. Talented *koto* or *shamisen* players have been known to neutralize its effect by infusing upbeat music with ki. Food and drink made with special care will also help to prevent these bad feelings.

Roaming glooms are nomadic and solitary by nature. It is speculated that they can feel the effects of other glooms and actively avoid each other the way humans avoid them. Glooms show a general lack of interest in humans, while they do not seek out villages, they do not avoid wandering through them either. It is unknown why they choose to wander where they do and stop when they do, they are possibly following a personal agenda known only to them. Be wary of one that wants to help you, because even if its intentions are good inevitably bad fortune will follow.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Gloom aren't much for battle and will quickly flee if directly confronted, but the negative feelings caused by their aura will persist much longer. A more effective way of dealing with them is to enter a conflict with the intent to counter their focus and drive it away by creating an environment it no longer enjoys.

As Neutral Characters

Glooms can complicate social interactions by putting important NPCs in bad moods. Most of these Characters will not suspect the supernatural influence of the gloom in the way PCs might. The PCs may need to drive the Gloom away, but if doing so would be awkward with the NPC around, they may have to lead the NPC somewhere else instead, in which case the NPC would be the one acted on by the PCs, not the gloom.

As an Ally

It is possible to befriend a gloom but it's unclear how they could actually be much help. If the Players manage to befriend two glooms however, the positive aura would lighten their spirits and help them cheer up depressed people. They should take care, more than two could be dangerous as too much positivity could lead to mania and the negativity if one should leave or join would be nigh insurmountable. Gloom are also unlikely to have patience for complicated PC plans, and may wander off in the middle of something they are supposed to be doing.

Story

Putting different numbers of glooms in different places in the story can make for some very interesting scenarios. Anyone who is aware of the Glooms may try to manipulate them, and if multiple parties are doing so, the effects could be far different than any one side intended.

Building Gloom Variants

Gloom variants use the same stats as listed above, they simply take different Boons and Banes to model how many are in the area at the time.

Kamaitachi - The Blade Weasel

Small creatures with blade like arms that attack travelers in a flurry of motion.

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+2	Intelligence	+0	Zeal	+0
Endurance	+2	Discipline	+2	Resolve	+1
Agility	+5	Perception	+2	Insight	+1

5	Focus Refresh
6	Ki Limit

Threshold	2
Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	0	0

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus	Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+4	Athletics	(END+2)	2	+2	Evaluate	(INT+1)	1
+3	Fighting	(STR+2)	1	+6	Vice	(AGI+5)	1

Inherent Abilities

Signature Attack

Sickling Whirlwind — FP 1 — KI 0

Total Check Modifier: +6 — Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Vice (AGI) — Range: 1 — Domain: Body

Damage: D3+2 — FP Drain: - — KI Poison: - — Move: X

A cut made with flickering speed, quicker than the human eye. Kamaitachi cuts are so sharp their victims don't realize their injuries until it is too late.

Defenses: AGI, PER, Evaluate, Fighting, Vice

Technique

Supernatural Speed

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Due to the speed of their attacks, dodges, and retreats, kamaitachi can use the following Techniques:

Calculated Strike, ***Deflect***, ***Fortune's Favor*** (3 uses per Conflict), ***Ignore Armor***, ***Teleport*** (***Movement Power***)

Level: Minion or Matched

Kamaitachi prefer not to confront their enemies head on. They are more dangerous in groups, or teamed up with those who can take advantage of their unique abilities. In certain conflicts where they have the element surprise Kamitachi can be matched with the Player Characters, especially if they are still hidden.

Lore

Kamaitachi (pronounced "kah-mah-ee-tah-chee") resemble weasels with blade-like claws. More specific details on their appearance are hard to come by, due to their traditional practice of attacking travelers at speeds too fast to see and then fleeing the scene. It may often appear that a person is attacked by nothing more than a gust of wind that leaves a strange wound. The wounds caused by Kamaitachi tend to be cauterized, and often can not be immediately felt. These wounds are incredibly difficult to heal, resisting

both normal medicines and ki based healing. Some folklore suggests that burning a calendar and applying it to the wounds can heal them quickly.

Many stories tell that kamaitachi attack in groups of three; the first knocking the victim down, the second inflicting a wound, and the third applying a substance that seals the wound. Whether this sealing process is a kindness to prevent the victim from bleeding to death, or part of the reason these wounds can't be healed is not clear. However, the speed they possess would make it entirely possible for a single kamaitachi to perform all three actions at the same time, and the legend of threes could be an over-exaggeration that comes from brave travelers wanting to make the story of their incapacitation seem less embarrassing ("there was three of them, I swear!").

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Kamaitachi make excellent stealthy attackers to harass the players, without resorting to a full conflict. An extended check could be made where a single kamaitachi or a group of three attacks until it inflicts lingering wounds on the party, or is discovered and driven off. If the players lose the check, they may suffer penalties to Checks for the rest of the main encounter due to the unique wounds that kamaitachi can inflict.

Kamaitachi can also be included with other foes who can keep the PCs focus while the small creatures attack without fear of being trapped or cornered.

As Neutral Characters

Kamaitachi tend to be fickle creatures that attack and then quickly leave, which provides very little chance to open a discussion with them. GMs can create situations where the kamaitachi is temporarily unable to move at full speed, allowing the PCs to choose to help the creature, or capture/dispatch it before it recovers.

As an Ally

Due to their speed and combat prowess, Kamaitachi make excellent combat allies, though they lack any endurance for long fights. They may also be used to weaken the foes of the PCs that would otherwise be too difficult to overcome in direct combat. An allied Kamaitachi provided with sleep powder could help the PCs bypass an entire group of guards without resorting to violence.

Using Kamaitachi in Story

There are several other strange occurrences that often closely resemble a Kamaitachi attack. Malicious storms, or some bakemono (such as the spirits of discarded farming scythes) may also strike out at travelers. GMs could build an adventure where the players meet a peaceful Kamaitachi (perhaps one that even joins them for a time), and then later find that it is being blamed for attacking innocents near it's home. The players would then have to investigate to discover if the kamaitachi was the culprit, and if it was not, may have to find proof of the real cause (and deal with it).

The cure for wounds received by Kamaitachi can become an adventure in itself. Players may even have to seek out the knowledge of the correct cure first. GMs can create their own folklore on the way to heal these wounds, using the kamaitachi battle as a way to guide players to another, linked goal.

Kami

The gods of Nippon, from the mighty deities in the heavens to tiny spirits that protect a single pond.

Level: Varies

A kami's power directly depends on its domain, devotees, age, and the amount of ki it holds. Kami with devoted subjects (which can include animals or even other kami) can become especially powerful.

Kami (pronounced "kah-mee") vary so much in power, personality and ability, that no set of stats can cover them. The Kami Variants list at the end of the entry includes rough power levels based on type of Kami, but GMs should build each kami in their game to be unique, having the appropriate Skills and Techniques that are required for that Character.

Only the most simple of kami will be less than Challenge type. These kinds of spirits rarely enter into prolonged conflicts with the PCs, but the GMs may use them as plot points, or challenge players by requiring Checks or Extended Checks to discover or defeat the actions of these minor kami.

Kami with significance to the story should be created as either Challenge or Legend Characters. These kami will have at least a +4 in all Checks they make, with +6 to +8 in anything that falls under their specialties. They should be given all Skills and Techniques as appropriate. Because these Characters will be so powerful, the GM will need to structure encounters using them in ways that PCs can confront them in ways outside their strengths. For example, a war-like kami would be nearly impossible to fight in a physical battle, but could be out-matched in tactics, or sealed away using ancient techniques. A kami of the mind is likely to out-smart the PCs at every turn, requiring them to use random or illogical tactics in order to confuse the kami. Encounters with kami are a good place to allow players freedom to use Improvised Attacks with most of their Abilities, as long as the Players can find a creative way to employ them.

Lore

There are an untold number of kami in the world so it is unlikely that someone could spend their entire life without being in the presence of kami at one point or another, even if they are unaware of it. Kami are as varied as the phenomena that can be seen in the universe, but all are bound by certain rules, compulsions, and functions. Even if they may have different personalities and outlooks they are compelled to act according to the personified nature that they embody.

While most resemble animals or insects, kami can look like just about anything. Moderately powerful kami can even take human form should they wish to. A kami's appearance will usually be related to their purpose or dominion in some way, an earth kami may resemble a spider with eyes made from precious jewels, while a river kami may be an exceptionally large fish with scales that flow like water. No matter what it looks like, there's always an unspoken quality of power to a kami's true form, humans will almost always feel the presence of a divine influence when they see it, even if they are unable to understand it.

Kami have a strong aversion to pollution and corruption, thus they are often drawn to purity. For many kami this is more than just personal distaste. Tainted spiritual energies, sometimes known as *kegare* can directly harm and influence a kami. It distorts them and can cause them to work against their natures, harming those that they protect, and upsetting the harmony and balance they represent. The mortal world is filled with Taint, so kami do not often walk it freely. They usually work through agents and often depend on others to sanctify areas and objects for them to inhabit and directly influence. The Grand Rite has done great harm to kami by bringing Yomi, a realm of Taint and corruption closer to both the mortal and kami realms. Kami more than ever must rely on mortals to aid them in their duties.

Bestiary Entry: Kami



More information on the nature of kami can be found in the Setting Guide section "Kami: The Connection of the Universe" on page 200.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

While a kami's duties are often in the service of a greater balance and harmony, this does not mean they don't work against humans, or even the world. Destruction can be an aspect of nature as the natural cycle of death and rebirth. Unchecked kami of destruction may go too far and threaten humans, animals, and even yōkai.

As Neutral Characters

Kami are bound by the weaves of *musubi* which gives them great power and insight, but forces them to strictly adhere to certain rules. Kami can often sympathize with humans but are too bound by their duties to act on these feelings in the way they would wish. They must often rely on humans to act in their place in matters that they are forbidden from interfering with.

As an Ally

Kami are usually restricted in how much they can help humans, however they may grant Players boons or favors in return for assistance or protection. If a kami owes a debt to the Player, they will have much more freedom to help the Players as much as they can within their domain.

Story

In the Age of Spirits, the protection of the kami has only become more vital to the well-being of the world. But kami who break the bounds of their natures to help humans unbidden are in danger becoming Tainted and sabotaging the well-being of their domain as well as those who live under their protection. Some kami have decided that interfering in the mortal world is not worth the risk to their lives and divinity. They believe the Celestial Plain should be allowed to drift away or even outright work to sever the connection between the worlds for good. But their natures as protectors and keepers of balance cannot be defied so easily. It is still possible to change their minds by appealing to their hearts, obligations, or their desires for more influence and power.

Kami Variants

Kami (Minor)

Kami that are small and represent minor things. These kami are often not much powerful than a common spirit or yōkai. Often, minor kami are much younger than their brethren, it is at this stage that the line between yōkai and kami blends most.

> ***Level***: Minion
>
> *Since minor kami are not significantly more powerful than ordinary yōkai, they often contribute little without the help of others.*

Building Minor Kami

Minor kami will have a +2 to any Check they make, representing the fact that no matter how weak they are, they are still directly tied to their location (minor kami cannot leave their domains). They should have one or two Attributes and Skills with a +5 to represent their divine nature in one particular field. These kami almost always have a small selection of ***Boons*** and ***Banes*** (see Banes & Boons in the Techniques section on page 35) to perform their duties. Many also have ***Illusions*** and ***Universal Translator*** Techniques to help them interact with the mortal world.

Kami (Local)

Kami who protect small area such as a neighborhood, a stream, a cavern, or a large ancient tree. These kami are more powerful than most spirits or yōkai but will still have difficulty dealing with particularly large groups of malicious yōkai or ancient and powerful ones.

> ***Level***: Challenge
>
> *All kami are more powerful within their domains, but local kami are still able to match players if they are on neutral ground.*

Building Local Kami

Local kami will have +4 to +6 Total Modifier when they make Checks, with a +7 to +9 when in their domain or territory. These kami usually have a wide range of Skills and Techniques. GMs should give them everything required to protect their domain, and then include a small number of Techniques that are completely unrelated. These additional Abilities represent the fact that kami have their own personalities and quirks, and having them not only creates more realistic Characters, it opens doors for the Players to interact with kami in ways not directly related to their domain. That can be important when a kami has become unbalanced, angered, Tainted, or the PCs need to take actions that would pit them against the safety of the kami's domain.

Regardless of specifics, Local Kami will have ***Elemental Manipulation*** related to their domain (water manipulation for a stream guardian, earth manipulation for a giant gem-spider that lives in a mine, etc). Because of their divine nature, Local Kami will usually have ZEA and Ki based Signature Attacks, but some may inflict Body or Mind damage as the result of their particular manifestation.

Kami (Major)

These kami preside over an large area of land, such as a city, a forest, a river, or a mountain. They are immensely powerful within their domain but must protect it at all costs, for if their land suffers, so do they.

Building Major Kami

Major Kami will have at least +7 in any Check they make, including those not related to their domains. These "off-stats" will usually be the only way most PCs will be able to directly confront them, as their specialized Abilities can have a +10 or higher Modifier, making it unlikely that PCs will defeat them in Contested Checks. Within their own domains, Major kami can use any Skill or Technique; even if they can't directly act, they can perform something that takes the place of the Ability. For example, if the PCs were to steal a gem from a statue in a shrine in the middle of a town, the guardian kami would attempt to take it back. The kami may not directly be able to pick the pocket of a Character, but they can temporarily possess a weak-willed street thief into doing so, causing it to drop the PC's purse in an alley, which would then be retrieved by a friendly bakemono rat, who would carry it back to the statue, where it would be restored by a monk tending the shrine.

Major kami tend to make better allies than enemies for PCs, due to their great power. Many of the Conflicts that a GM uses a Major Kami for will not be against the kami itself, but as a result of interacting with it. Proving their loyalty, intentions of goodwill, or capability to a kami in return for aid often take the Players all over the kami's domain, and kami are generally slower or less interested in directly fighting the corrupt individuals in their lands than PCs are.

Kami (Celestial)

Heavenly gods that reside in the celestial plane. They are supremely powerful but do not typically directly interact in mortal affairs. More often than not their actions are subtle nudges and signs to humans. They can be prayed to for assistance but it will often be unclear if they heeded your request. They often represent broad concepts like wisdom, war, forests, luck, or the sea.

Building Celestial Kami

Celestial Kami are outside the realm of stat numbers used in the rules. They are so powerful that their actions would defeat PCs, no matter what either side rolled. These kinds of kami are best used as flavor for the story a GM is telling, and may appear to advise or guide PCs.

A GM who wishes to run a campaign where the PCs themselves are on a level they can directly challenge Celestial kami would need to abstract the numbers of the game so that they fit the increased levels of power. In this case, a +3 Strength Modifier would represent being able to lift a continent, rather than a beast of burden, and a +6 Perception Modifier would let Characters be aware of everything that happened in Japan at once. For these kinds of campaigns, Major Kami and the most powerful Oni would be Minion type enemies, and armies of mortals would count as Horde enemies with a +1 Fighting Modifier representing an entire formation of pikemen.

Kappa

Reptilian yōkai that reside in rivers, lakes and streams. Kappa have a bowl-like head filled with water that gives them super-human strength.

3	Focus Refresh	
8	Ki Limit	

BODY	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+4
Endurance	+4
Agility	+1

MIND	Attribute Bonus
Intelligence	+2
Discipline	-1
Perception	+0

SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Zeal	+1
Resolve	+2
Insight	+0

Threshold	3
Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
2	0	0

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+5	Athletics	(END+4)	1
+5	Medicine	(INT+2)	3
+4	Survival	(END+2)	2

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+6	Fighting	(STR+4)	2
+6	Nature Affinity	(END+4)	2

Inherent Abilities

Technique — Aquatic Mastery

Technique Based on Movement Powers

Kappa have the technique ***Movement Powers: Swimming*** (they pay no FP to change zones when in water), and add +1 to any Check they make.

Technique — Masters of Medicine

Special Technique

Kappa automatically succeed at any Medicine Checks they make outside of Conflicts, as long as they have time and the proper materials to work with.

In Conflicts, if a kappa uses Medicine to make an improvised attack, it counts as only doing Healing damage (will not push the Tide Marker into the Player side), but they score a +1 MoS for every 2 points they succeed, instead of every 3.

Technique — Dehydration Weakness

Special Technique

Any Attack actions used against a kappa in a conflict that cause them to lose the water in their heads will do an additional +1 Tide Damage.

Kappa who have lost their water suffer a penalty to all Checks they make. This penalty is equal to -1 for every hour they have been without water, and the kappa will die if this penalty exceeds their END Modifier (in most cases this will be a -5, unless a specific kappa has a higher END Modifier than the normal +4).

Bestiary Entry: Kappa



Bestiary Entry: Kappa

Exceptional Abilities

Technique — **Specialists**

Technique Based on Various Techniques

Kappa tribes tend to have specialists and heroes, just like human societies. GMs can give one Technique from the following list to any of the kappa in a group:

Armor (increase the listed armor, usually a +1 in either Mind or Soul), ***Banes and Boons*** (choose 1 or 2), ***Calculated Strike****, ***Deflect***, ***Elemental Manipulation*** (almost always Water type), ***Helpful Ally***, ***Heavy Strike****, ***Ignore Armor****, ***Overwhelming Force****, ***Protect***

**These combat Techniques can only be used in the water*

Level: Minion or Matched

Like humans, Kappa can vary based on their experience and training. Most Kappa, even with their enhanced strength, lack the training and discipline required to pose a significant threat to PCs. Heroes, shaman and clan leaders will often be modeled as Matched or Challenge Level.

Signature Attack

Signature Attack

Undertow — FP 2 KI 0

Total Check Modifier: +6 (Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute))

Choose From Defenses | DAMAGE: D3 | DOMAIN: Body

RANGE: 4 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: D3 | MOVE:

The kappa uses its incredible strength to grab their opponent and attempt to drag them into the water.

DEFENSES: AGI, END, Athletics, Nature Affinity, Survival

Lore

Kappa (pronounced "kahp-pa") are a freshwater yōkai that live in small tribal groups. They usually reside in underwater caves found in rivers or lakes. They are small in stature, about the size of a child, and resemble a turtle walking upright, with beaked faces, scaly skin, and a thick bony shell. Unlike turtles, kappa have long limbs that end in webbed digits and stringy hair on the sides of their head. The top of a kappa's head is indented like a bowl, in order for a kappa to survive on land, the indentation must be filled with water at all times. If all of the water spills, the kappa will lose its incredible strength. If the indentation is not refilled, they will become ill and die in a matter of hours.

Kappa are highly intelligent but, perhaps due to their aquatic nature, have no written language. Despite this, they have diligently passed their down knowledge through the generations. It is said that the kappa have advanced medical knowledge, far beyond those of humans, able to cure diseases and even re-attach severed limbs. Kappa are very proud of their skills and though they are usually unwilling to teach or train humans, they may be willing to help for a fee or service. They also happily accept challenges to compete with them in any sport, game, or test of skill. While competing, kappa abandon their usual capriciousness and stringently adhere to any rules, customs, or agreements they have made, even to their detriment. It is not known if this rigid sense of honor is a compulsion imposed by the kappa's spiritual nature, or merely a strong cultural norm.

Kappa are omnivorous but prefer foods with a high water content such as melons, eggplant, or their favorite food, cucumber. When eating meat, they prefer offal to muscle, often leaving disemboweled livestock carcasses floating in the river, much to the annoyance of any humans the livestock may have belonged to. While they prefer cucumber to any other food, kappa are not picky eaters, some may even prey on humans if other food is scarce.

Tips for using the NPC

Conflict

Kappa often cross paths with humans due to their tendency to eat livestock and sometimes people. They are a powerful foe and will present a major obstacle to the players if engaged in the water or in groups. They are much easier to deal with in a social setting or contents due to their strict sense of honor which can be exploited by savvy Players.

Neutral

Due to their medical knowledge, Kappa can be used to resolve problems the players cannot. An unknown poison could send the PCs to a Kappa clan seeking a cure, and in campaigns with a more dangerous than average threat level, PCs could even seek them out to restore lost limbs, digits or organs.

Ally

Kappa are semi-aquatic, able to function in water, which gives them access to places most PCs cannot normally reach. Ally Kappa make great explorers and helpers when the party is exploring along the coast, or in swampland.

Story

Kappa's tribal knowledge can be extremely useful to PCs exploring their local area, and GMs can use their stories to reveal more information related to important story events.

Kappa have a bad reputation among humans and will often get blamed for misfortunes that they may or may not be the cause of. Kappa can have personalities as diverse as humans, so even if some kappa are responsible for problems, they may be criminals or outcasts whose actions may lead to unwarranted hostility between human and kappa communities.

Karikage - Hunting Shadow

A stealthy predator who hides in the shadows and terrifies its victims before consuming their souls.

	Focus Refresh	5
	Ki Limit	8

BODY	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+4
Endurance	+3
Agility	+6

MIND	Attribute Bonus
Intelligence	+2
Discipline	+2
Perception	+5

SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Zeal	+1
Resolve	+2
Insight	+1

Threshold	2
Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	2	3

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+8	Athletics	(AGI + 6)	2
+6	Manipulation	(PER + 5)	1
+7	Vice	(AGI + 6)	1

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+9	Fighting	(AGI + 6)	3
+5	Survival	(END + 3)	2
+7	Vice	(AGI + 6)	1

Inherent Abilities

Signature Attack

Terrorize

FP 1 KI 2

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)	Range	Domain
+9	Manipulation (PER)	2	Mind

Damage	FP Drain	Ki Poison	Move
D3+2	-	-	

Karikage are masters of terror. They wield darkness and shadow to stalk their victims unseen. Karikage stir feelings of unease, anxiety, and confusion, whittling down their target's will before attacking them at their most vulnerable.

Defenses AGI, RES, DIS, Fighting, Manipulation, Vice

Technique

Shadow Form and Misdirection

Technique Based on Stealth and Create Obstacles

The karikage will make itself invisible, then trick its foes into attacking patches of light in the darkness. The karikage will begin physical battles hidden (make the roll for Stealth before the Conflict starts) and re-enter it after each Attack it makes. It can create up to 4 Obstacles that require a 14 or higher to remove, which make Defend Checks at +3.

Technique

Advanced Shadow Manipulation

Technique Based on Illusions

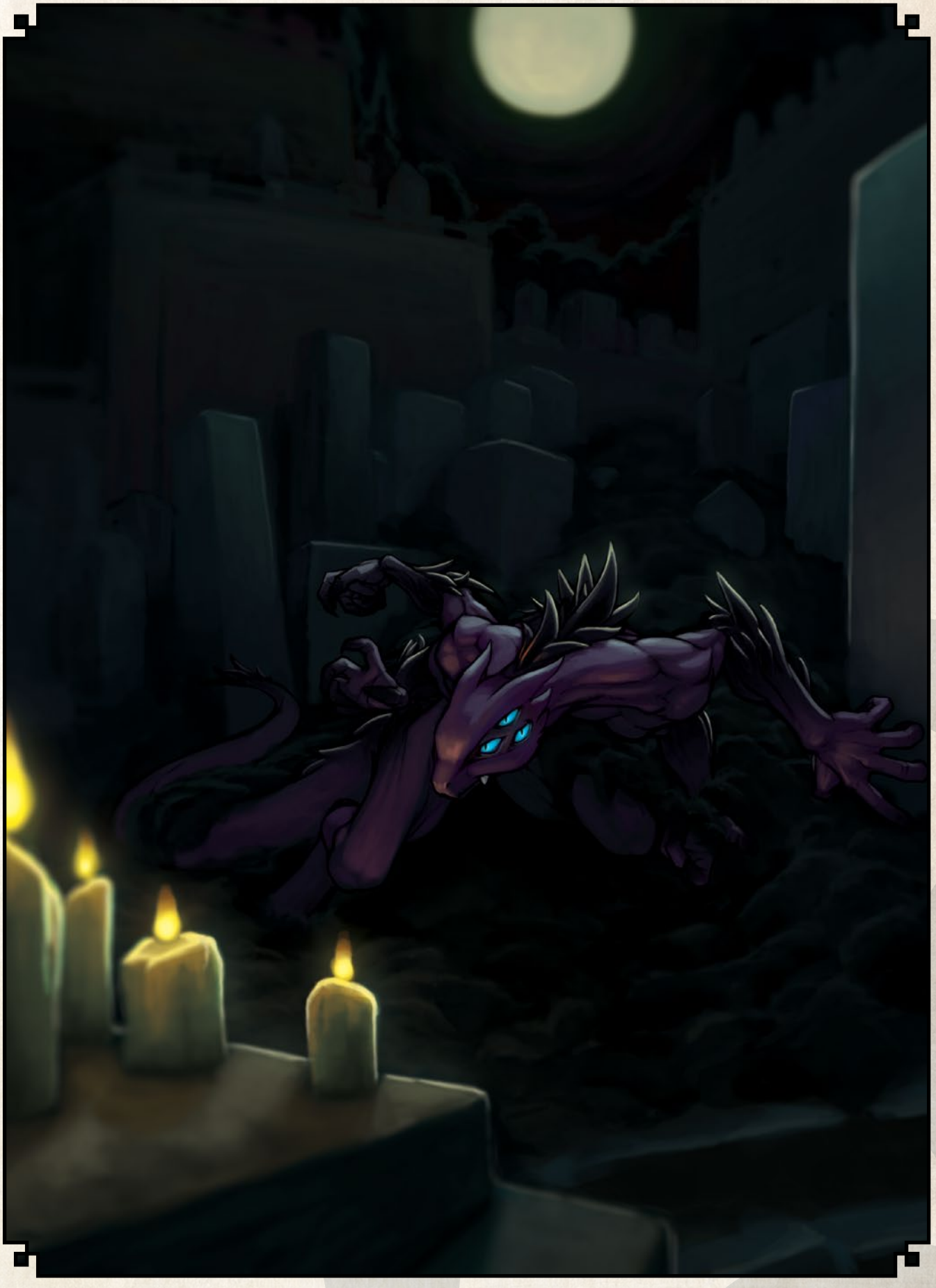
A karikage can also subtly manipulate shadows. Combined with its use of the Manipulation Skill to work its enemies into a state of caution or fear, it can create many different forms of Illusions that draw on the specific imagination of the Characters it is stalking. Karikage use the ***Illusions*** Technique with a Manipulation Check.

Technique

Surprise Strike

Technique Based on Ignore Armor

The karikage will use ***Ignore Armor*** when it makes an Attack from Stealth.



Bestiary Entry: Karikage - Hunting Shadow

Level: Challenge

Exceptional Abilities

In general, karikage don't tend to possess Abilities outside of the stealth and terror listed above. However, a GM may provide them with a specific Technique to make them more unique, or to tie them into the current story.

Lore

While many yōkai are difficult to perceive without spiritual training, the karikage ("kah-ree-kah-gay") is particularly difficult to notice even for trained exorcists. Karikage prefer to appear on the very edge of human perception, revealing just enough of their presence to cause their prey to feel nervous and uneasy before suddenly vanishing, leaving them bewildered and doubting their own senses. The karikage will then relentlessly stalk their unfortunate victim, tormenting them psychologically and feeding off the fear and confusion. Finally karikage will reveal itself in a cloud of smoke, a man-sized violet-skinned reptilian creature with four clawed arms and six glowing eyes. It's horrific appearance paralyzes those without the mental strength to resist, allowing the karikage to consume their soul.

Karikage are solitary creatures, it is incredibly rare for two or more to share territory. They prefer to hunt humans who are alone or in small groups, as it can be difficult for them to adequately terrorize a larger group of humans. Their enhanced senses allow them to track the body heat of humans and see in the dark, but leave them very vulnerable to bright lights which will temporarily blind them and may disrupt their ability to conceal themselves. They also posses the ability to sense human emotion, particularly fear which they can sense from great distances.

Karikage are repelled by fire; a torch or lantern is an excellent tool for fighting them. Their fear of flames is enough that they will not attack humans near a campfire but may attempt to lure or frighten them into fleeing the camp where they will be easily picked off.

It has been speculated that karikage are a type of ikiryō, a spirit formed from the emotions and ki of a living human. Their penchant for tormenting people from the shadows could be evidence that they are formed out of deeply hidden feelings of malice such as envy or a secret desire for revenge.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Karikage will avoid any form of Conflict when it is daytime, or in a brightly lit area. Their powers require shadows to be most effective. In addition, they hunt as much to absorb fear as they do to feed, so they will try to manipulate the emotions of their prey. Characters can use most standard physical abilities in battle, though they are likely to need to get rid of the obstacles (shadow tricks and illusions) created by the karikage before they can attack it directly, while it will strike from the Balanced Zone using the rules for the Stealth Technique (see "Stealth" on page 58). In addition to physical attacks, Conflicts with a karikage open up a lot of options for creative players, as any change to the battlefield that removes darkness or inspires hope to drive away fear will be very effective.

Game Masters may also introduce a Conflict with a karikage's identity hidden with Stealth at first so the PCs need to ascertain what it is while fending off its Terrorize attacks.

As Neutral Characters

Generally, it is impossible to interact directly with a karikage without a Conflict. However, the presence of one may cause the PCs to avoid the area, leading them along a different path to their goals than they had originally chosen to take.

As an Ally

It is unlikely that the players could ally with a karikage, but they could potentially use them to their advantage by tricking their enemies into walking into karikage territory. That said, the world of Mysteries of the Yōkai is a setting where even something as savage and malicious as a karikage could produce an individual that is less two-dimensionally cut and dry evil. A karikage could be presented as a mastermind, a villain that used it's abilities to enjoy fear, rather than killing outright. In this case, this villain may temporarily ally with the PCs against a bigger threat (no doubt betraying them as soon as it suits the karikage).

Story

While most conflicts with a karikage tend to be direct, they present a lot of openings for the GM to inject the story with additional emotional elements. Characters who face fear and terror in battle may seek to understand it, and even conquer it, after the battle. A party that loses a conflict to a karikage but manages to flee would need to strengthen their resolve before returning for a rematch, which opens up many plot points for the GM to flesh out.

Kodama - Tree Spirits

Tiny tree spirits who protect the forest

Focus Refresh	2
Ki Limit	12

BODY	Attribute Bonus
Strength	-3
Endurance	+0
Agility	+3

MIND	Attribute Bonus
Intelligence	+1
Discipline	-1
Perception	+3

SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Zeal	+0
Resolve	+0
Insight	+4

Threshold	1
Rally	

ARMOR	BODY	MIND	SOUL
	0	0	2

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+6	Evaluate	(INS + 4)	2
+5	Ki Attunement	(ZEA + 0)	5

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+6	Investigation	(INS + 4)	2
+9	Nature Affinity	(INS + 4)	5

Inherent Abilities

Technique — Natures Gifts & Curses

Technique Based on Boons & Banes

Near their own tree, kodama can perform supernatural feats akin to low level magic. Particularly ancient kodama can perform more powerful manipulations, and can even affect places elsewhere in the same forest. GMs should create a list of specific Boons and Banes based on the power and age of the specific kodama they are using, and use one per remaining Horde Character in a Conflict. These Abilities will always have the Maintain modifier; each time a specific kodama is driven away (the Horde size is reduced), remove the effects of that particular Boon or Bane.

Technique — Manipulate the Forest

Technique Based on Create Obstacles

Kodama can shape the trees and plants around them. Instead of a Boon or Bane, a Kodama can create one obstacle that requires an 11+ on a Contested Check to remove. There can not be more Obstacles at any time than the remaining Horde Size for the kodama.

Technique — Optical Tricks

Technique Based on Illusions

Kodama can create illusions within their forests. Usually this will be to either conceal themselves, or make themselves visible in a way that is comfortable to humans (fireflies, friendly looking elderly humans, etc). When multiple kodama combine their powers, they can create illusions on a larger scale in order to manipulate those who enter their forest. The entire Horde can create a single illusion that is not restricted to only affecting the kodama.



Bestiary Entry: Kodama - Tree Spirits

Level: Minion (or often Horde)

Lore

Kodama (pronounced "koh-dah-mah") are a type of kami who arise from particularly old or sacred trees. Although they appear to be separate creatures, kodama and the trees they reside in are one and the same. If a kodama is destroyed, it's tree will wither and die, if the tree is cut down, the kodama will perish as well. Humans often mark kodama trees with a sacred *shimenawa* rope to prevent them from being cut down or otherwise accidentally disturbed. These trees have a thick reddish sap and will appear to bleed if they are cut. Be warned, a terrible curse will befall anyone wicked enough or foolish enough to cut down a kodama's tree.

Kodama are rarely seen, preferring to respond to human attempt to contact them with faint echoing voices. Should they choose to show themselves, their physical form may vary depending on how powerful they are. Most kodama appear as tiny humanoid creatures made of twigs and leaves of their tree. Young kodama are at first only able to manifest as balls of light and are often mistaken for fireflies. Extremely ancient and powerful kodama can sometimes take the shape of elderly humans, and may interact with travelers without ever revealing their true nature.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Players who are disruptive or disrespectful to the trees may find themselves under attack by the kodama. Often this is a fight against the forest itself as paths close behind the players, animals attack, and heavy branches break off and fall on their heads.

As Neutral Characters

Kodama who don't have a relationship with humans who revere them may distrust the motives of people passing through their forest. They may attempt to test the players to discover their intentions, how they react may cause the kodama to regard them as either friend or foe.

As an Ally

Friendly kodama can guide players through their forest, bless them with good luck, or even share the ancient wisdom of the trees. Kodama also make good "friendly" or "cute" allies, giving the PCs a safe and relaxing place to spend time recovering from more dangerous or stressful ordeals.

Story

The relationship between the people of Nippon and the forest is a very important one. The people often rely on the forest to provide for them and the forest relies on humans to sustain itself. If this relationship becomes strained, it may be necessary to appease the kodama or help them with any problems they're are having. If the kodama are happy, the fields of nearby towns will be vibrant and bountiful. But if they are upset or in danger, then crops may spoil and livestock may fall ill.

Nue

A terrifying and legendary beast with the head of a monkey, the limbs of a tiger, the body of a tanuki, and a snake-like tail.

4	Focus Refresh	**BODY**	Attribute Bonus	**MIND**	Attribute Bonus	**SOUL**	Attribute Bonus	Threshold 4
17	Ki Limit	Strength	+3	Intelligence	+0	Zeal	+2	Rally
		Endurance	+2	Discipline	+1	Resolve	+2	
		Agility	+3	Perception	+3	Insight	+0	

ARMOR

BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	1	1

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus	Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+6	Athletics	(STR+3)	3	+4	Fighting	(STR+3)	1
+3	Ki Attunement	(ZEA+2)	1	+6	Nature Affinity	(AGI+3)	3
+6	Survival	(END+2)	4	+6	Vice	(AGI+3)	3

Inherent Abilities

Technique — **Shapeshifting**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Nue are able to shapeshift at will (use ***Modify Body*** for reactionary changes during a Conflict, and ***Alternate Forms*** when the Nue disguises itself as part of the story).

Technique — **Bitter Intent**

Technique Based on Banes (Banes & Boons)

Nue revel in causing problems for others. For those they don't consider a threat, they will usually simply play petty pranks and cause misfortunes. However, any Character that angers a Nue is likely to be constantly harassed. GMs should allow Nues to use any Bane from the available list, subject to what form of suffering they wish to inflict on their target. Be sure to track the Ki Maintain costs on these Banes, as Nue are likely to keep multiple going as long as they can remain near their targets.

Signature Attack

Nue generally don't tend to take the kind of meticulously focused actions that make up Signature Attacks, and would not likely re-use them enough to become formalized. Instead, in their true forms Nue focus on using their vast repertoire of Banes along with the occasional Improvised Attack.

Due to their potent shapeshifting abilities, Nue are able to wield a wide array of Improvised Attacks their base form wouldn't normally have. They can even use Signature Attacks from other NPC entries by taking on the parts and traits of other yōkai.

Lore

Nue (pronounced "noo-ay") are rarely heard from and even more rarely seen. Often the only sign of a nearby nue is its cry; a long haunting whistle which could be mistaken for the call of an ordinary thrush-bird if not for its profoundly sorrowful quality. Any who catch a glimpse of a nue's true form, could hardly mistake it for a thrush. Nue are monstrous beasts often depicted with the head of a monkey, the limbs of a tiger, the body of a tanuki, and a snake-like tail. Considering the patchwork nature of their bodies, it is unsurprising that nue are capable of a large array of abilities. The tanuki portion of their body is thought to give nue the ability to transform. Most often they take the form of a pitch-black cloud, which allows them to travel great distances and hide in the night sky. This form contributes to the rarity of nue sightings, most humans will not realize the significance of the cloud even if they notice it. Though very powerful nue are able to take on complete alternate forms, most can only take on the parts and pieces of other yōkai, objects, and creatures. A nue's transformation ability is often quite limited, especially when compared to that of a true shapeshifter yōkai such as a tanuki.

The vindictive nature of nue are well documented in tales and accounts. They are known for cursing humans with horrible illnesses that no medicine or holy ceremony can cure. To maintain the curse, the nue must visit its victim regularly, often hiding nearby while doing so. If the nue is driven away, or killed, the victim will quickly begin to recover. But even a nue's death is not necessarily the end of its malice. With its dying breath, a nue can curse its own body, bringing ruin to all near where it lays. The effects of the curse can be mitigated by either carefully removing the remains from the area, or by giving the nue a proper ceremonial funeral, which can purify the body and remove the curse. Both methods come with their own dangers, in general killing nue is not recommended, even if one has the ability to do so. Although they prefer stealth and subterfuge to direct confrontation, nue are extremely dangerous and quite formidable in battle. It is inadvisable to attempt to fight a nue without proper preparation or outside of a particularly advantageous situation.

Nue reside deep in the mountains, far away from any humans. This combined with their rarity and tendency to hide themselves makes for a distinct shortage of information about their habitat, motivations, and day-to-day behavior. There exist various stories and tall tales about their origins or motivations, but these are most certainly nothing but rumors and speculation.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Nue can be used to challenge PCs in a way that differs from more common brutish attacks. Nue not only have a wide range of shapeshifting and curse abilities, they also hold grudges and need to be dealt with care.

As Neutral Characters

Nue often hide and curse their victims from a distance, making their influence difficult to notice. Players may be called on to investigate supernatural occurrences, only to find a nue responsible. In these cases, they could deal with the nue in ways beyond Conflict if they want to avoid the constant harassment that would come from a direct fight.

As an Ally

Nue are not known for allying with anyone, though it is possible that their ire might be redirected toward a different target by the PCs.

Story

A suspected nue is a great impetus for the Players to investigate an area. Whether or not a nue is actually there, the possibility of one is enough to inspire paranoia and uncertainty within all the characters. Nue can also be used as a red herring to hide a different source of curses.

A dead nue can be used as a hidden source of trouble. Unsuspecting humans may end up frequenting an area where a nue's body is buried. As they experience strange phenomena without any clear sign of what might be causing it, they will look to assign blame to whatever unfortunate being, human or not, that happens to be in the vicinity.

Nue killed by PCs leave lingering problems that must be cleaned up before success can be fully claimed.

Oni

To most people, oni (pronounced "oh-nee") evoke images of giant humanoids; muscular and horned brutes that are more demon than man. But these infamous oni are only one kind of an entire class of yōkai. Oni yōkai are so varied in size and form that the commonality of their origins can be difficult to ascertain.

Their depictions usually share common themes as forces of malevolence and violence. However, it would be incorrect to assume that all oni are compelled by villainous tendencies. Instead, an oni's temperament is often directly related to the circumstances of their origins and ancestry.

There are several ways for oni to come to be. Strong thoughts, actions, and emotions can attract certain kind of ki and affect the spiritual realm. When enough emotional energy saturates a person, creature, object, or even a location, it can transform them into something new. If that energy is influenced by malicious intent or negative emotions, an oni can be formed. Just about anything can become an oni, but it is more common for sentient beings to become one. Human oni are the most encountered form in Nippon.

Those who have been transformed into oni are likely to remain in their new form forever, but that does not mean they cannot overcome the wicked forces and emotions that changed them. There have even been oni that have become resolute protectors of villages and temples. While immensely difficult, it is also possible to convert a rampaging oni into a guardian kami instead, pacifying its ire and helping it transform into something new. These pacified oni can become powerful forces for good, but the records detailing the methods for their transformation have been lost with the fall of Heian.

Not all oni are formed by corrupted ki. Natural-born oni may outwardly resemble their parents, but may not have committed any malicious actions. While it can be difficult for them to resist it, the offspring of oni do not have to continue the cycle of malice that transformed their parents and ancestors. Unfortunately, many natural-born oni still succumb to it, but more and more learn to reject its influence with each generation.

Bestiary Entry: Oni



Oni (Brute)

Massive powerful and menacing, human oni are the subject of horror tales and stories used to scare children at night. They are well-known for their brutish strength and aggressive natures.

4	Focus Refresh					Threshold	4
6	Ki Limit					Rally	

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+5	Intelligence	+1	Zeal	+1
Endurance	+4	Discipline	+1	Resolve	+2
Agility	+1	Perception	+2	Insight	+1

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	0	1

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus	Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+6	Athletics	(END+4)	2	+2	Evaluate	(INT+1)	1
+7	Fighting	(STR+5)	2	+6	Nature Affinity	(STR+5)	1
+5	Survival	(END+4)	1	+3	Vice	(RES+2)	1

Inherent Abilities

Technique — **Violent Combatants**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Most oni are brutish physical combatants, using their size and muscle to overpower smaller or more cerebral individuals. The GM should give each oni one or more of the following. When building groups of oni, it is usually best to spread out abilities to prevent oni from feeling like carbon-copied generic villains.

Armor (increase Mind or Soul by +1), ***Calculated Strike*** or ***Heavy Strike*** (representing their lumbering, but powerful attacks), ***Ignore Armor*** (representing the way massive weapons make most forms of armor meaningless), ***Unyielding*** (oni are extremely hard to force out of Conflicts, whether they are physical battles or not)

Note on Attributes and Abilities: Oni vary among individuals more than any other foe listed in this section. The numbers listed here are a baseline for the average, overall capabilities of an oni, but GMs should alter individuals in any way they see fit in order to represent the kind of Character they wish to have appear in the game.

Level: Matched, Challenge

Most oni are Matched or Challenge Level encounters, though on occasion they'll be a Minion depending on the kind of Conflict.

Exceptional Abilities

The Abilities listed under Inherent are the ones that naturally come from the oni's form. However, oni are as unique as humans, able to learn virtually any Skill and use any Technique. The GM should choose 2-3 Additional Skills for the oni, and give each one a total overall Modifier of +4 (note that these Skills do not default to being Defend Skills like usual, but each one can be upgraded for a particular oni by taking one less Skill). In addition, give the oni one Technique that makes sense for it's personality. These Abilities should be chosen with a theme that helps the oni feel more real as an individual, instead of just a caricature of violence.

Lore

Oni that were once humans are the most common type of oni, and the ones most people think of when using the term. Human oni have predominant horns and tough lacquered hides of various colors, the most common being red, blue, black, or yellow. Individuals can vary greatly in size but the majority are taller than ordinary humans. Most human oni are heavily muscled, and even the weakest are capable of great feats of strength.

Tales of human oni often have them depicted as slow, gullible, and easily tricked, but this is not the case for all of them. While human oni are known for their brute strength, a sizeable number of them are actually very intelligent, or at least in possession of a sharp form of low cunning and wit. Some are also capable of fearsome and overwhelming magical power.

Because of their ancestry, human oni are the most common kind encountered by mortals. Their predisposition towards mistrust and aggression can make cooperation difficult, but they are capable learning to coexist with others.

Like other kinds of oni, human oni struggle with the influences that corrupted them or their ancestors. Children born from oni however, have the opportunity to break the influence that corrupted their parents. Unfortunately, many of them are unable or unwilling to do so, perpetuating the cycle for the next generation.

Oni that have overcome their troubled legacy often seek to join existing communities or form ones of their own, but as communities grow, they risk falling to infighting or corruption. Many oni flee the destruction caused by oni warlords seeking to unify the populace through force. Oni may seek a place among the communities of other races, but they can have difficulties integrating. Those that have broken the influence of their ancestors at a young enough age are more able to cooperate with others than those who have not.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Since oni are so diverse, the options and strategies they can use in conflict vary widely with the individual and circumstances. Some oni are strong and straightforward attackers, others are cunning sorcerers, and there are entire classes of oni that rely on primarily guile and manipulation. Oni frequently have a major emotion or quality that they express disproportionately. Such behavior is likely related to their transformation or (if they are natural-born oni) what changed their ancestors. Oni formed from rage, wrath, or malice are more common, so many oni struggle with aggressive tendencies.

One or two common human oni should provide intermediate challenge for a group of Player Characters. Since oni are often portrayed as the main villain of stories, a particularly powerful oni can provide a good boss conflict for the climax of a session or set of scenarios.

As Neutral Characters

Oni love alcohol and getting drunk. Even the most evil of them can still be courteous and honorable. Depending on the kind of oni, they seem to enjoy flattery and deference. Many oni struggle with internal problems, sometimes a patient person and a willing listener can reach their lost humanity under the layers of monster. But Players should take care to not to press a sensitive topic too hard, lest an oni lose control of their emotions.

Oni are usually quite competitive even about mundane things, they don't often refuse challenges or competitions. They can be sore losers though. Oni very rarely lie, and can often take things too literally. Even the evil ones can be overly trusting of a person's word.

As an Ally

Any oni can potentially ally with other races. In the case of the PCs, this usually requires the oni to be able to control it's more savage emotions, but a patient party may be able to benefit from the fury of an oni comrade, while helping them learn to control it.

Story

Oni provide a good method for the GM to reveal the overlap between the physical and supernatural worlds to the players. A human's fall and transformation to an oni can be the focus of an entire plot arc, especially if the original Character that became an oni was known to the PCs beforehand.

Oni are often the perceived cause of problems, especially by those with little or no knowledge of the supernatural. Many Characters may approach the PCs for help with an 'oni' problem, only for the PCs to find out the real cause is something very different. This can lead to problems if the PCs have prepared to fight a brutal physical foe, instead of the real culprit.

Oni Variants

Oni (Mystic)

Oni that specialize in overwhelming magical prowess. Able to weild the most heinous of spells and curses by tapping into the malice that transformed it or its ancestors. Mystic oni are not a special kind of oni, any variant of oni can be a mystic oni.

Building Mystic Oni

Level: Matched or Challenge

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+1	Intelligence	+1	Zeal	+5
Endurance	+2	Discipline	+1	Resolve	+4
Agility	+1	Perception	+2	Insight	+1

+4	Athletics	(END+2)	2
+2	Evaluate	(INT+1)	1
+7	Ki Attunement	(ZEA+5)	2
+7	Nature Affinity	(ZEA+5)	2
+3	Survival	(RES+2)	1
+6	Vice	(RES+4)	2

4	Focus Refresh	Threshold	3
II	Ki Limit	Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
1	2	2

Technique — **Vicious Magic**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Some oni are defined by their supernatural elements, rather than their physical prowess. These Characters will have one or more from the following list, depending on how powerful the GM wishes to make them. The oni will be able to use these Abilities:

Bender of Fate, ***Banes and Boons***, ***Create Obstacles***, ***Divine***, ***Elemental Manipulation***, ***Illusions***, ***Protect***

Change the Domain of Signature Attacks wielded by mystic oni to Soul and use a Skill that is Associated with Zeal for its Attack Check.

Note that most mystic oni will not have the "Violent Combatants" Inherent Ability, except for those of a higher power level.

Kijo

Kijo (pronounced "kee-joh") are a variant of human oni. Although they seem to have a more feminine form, men and women alike can become kijo. What separates a kijo from other kinds of oni is its long and unkempt hair, glowing yellow or red eyes, and sharp claws.

While they are not as physically imposing as their oni cousins, what they lack in stature and physical prowess they have in magical ability. It is theorized that ki attunement is a factor in kijo transformation, which may explain why they are rarer than other forms of human oni. They may be known for their magical prowess, but kijo are still capable of feats of strength comparable to other kinds oni, it's just less common.

Kijo are often more secretive than other oni and can go for years without being noticed by mortal society. The hags and witches that live in secluded woods and mountains may, in truth, be kijo instead. If a kijo looks older, some people may refer to them as an onibaba (oni hag), but it is unclear whether or not appearance is any indicator of a kijo's age, so this term is often seen as an insult.

Level: Matched or Challenge

Building Kijo

Start with Oni (Mystic) or Oni (Brute).

For Mystic Kijo: reduce their Zeal to +3, increase their Insight to +3 and increase their Ki Attunement to +3.

For Brute Kijo: reduce their Strength to +3, increase their Agility to +3 and increase their Fighting to +3. All Kijo have some magic so give them a Ki Attunement of +1 and one of the Techniques listed in the "Vicious Magic" Inherent Ability from the Oni (Mystic) variant.

Reiki - A Vengeful Oni Ghost

When an oni dies, on occasion they can form a ghost known as a reiki (pronounced "ray-kee"). Like humans, oni can form ghosts for any number of reasons, but the most common cause is a lingering unfulfilled need. This need can be as innocent as sentiments that must be expressed to a loved one, or as serious as murderous revenge. In this way, a reiki is not too different from a yūrei. However, since oni are often more powerful than humans, their spiritual strength can make their ghost far more dangerous.

As a more formless spirit, a reiki gains new strengths and formidable abilities, most notably the ability to more easily possess objects or animals. Despite its new powers, a reiki can be exorcised using similar techniques and rites as other yūrei, but they require a much more powerful ritual and an experienced exorcist.

Level: Challenge

Building Reiki

Use either the standard or mystic oni as a template, and then increase any of it's listed Attributes and Skills that are lower than the same Ability in the yūrei entry to the same level as the yūrei .

The reiki will lose any physical based abilities (such as Techniques that require weapon skills), but keep any supernatural Abilities, or Abilities that it can still perform when it takes possession of something (a Reiki may still be able to Heavy Strike when possessing a bear, for example). A Reiki must be confronted in the same way as a yūrei, which restricts what Actions can be taken in a conflict against them (see the yūrei entry on page 334).

Sazae-oni

The sazae-oni (pronounced "sah-zah-ay oh-nee") is a monstrous, many limbed sea snail. They are described as having a blend of animal, human, and snail features with two large eyes on the top of their shell. Sazae-oni are known to tempt seafarers by shape shifting their limbs into the form of a seductive person and pretending to drown.

Sazae-oni are formed when a snail gains enough spiritual energy to transform after about thirty years, but are also said to be born when a overly lustful person dies at sea.

Level: Matched or Challenge

Building Sazae-oni

Reduce the Body Attributes of the standard oni by 1 each, increase armor to 3/2/2, and give the Sazae-oni the Alternate Forms and Illusions Techniques. More cunning individuals will likely switch Fighting for Manipulation (with the same total Modifier).

Ushi-oni

Though the ushi-oni ("oo-shee oh-nee"), or gyūki ("gyoo-kee") has several variants and forms, all are described as having ox-like traits. Ushi-oni are frightening and dangerous yōkai with extremely poisonous breaths. They are masters of guile and possess some degree of form altering power, be it through illusions or shapeshifting. They use their disguises, illusions, and even other yōkai to lure unsuspecting victims into their traps.

The ushi-oni's true appearance depends on the individual account and the region they are found. One account describes an Ushi-oni as having an oxen face on a monstrous spider body, another describe it as an ox with the face of an oni, and some say it has the face of an ox, but the rest of its form is humanoid. This degree of variety is not uncommon among oni variants. What they often share in common is how their powers express and how dangerous they can be.

While an ushi-oni is a frightening creature, one that is pacified and properly exorcised can become a powerful force for good and its power evoked to drive away other evils.

Level: Matched Minion or Challenge

Building Ushi-oni

Use either the standard or mystic oni as a base, depending on whether you want it to specialize in Body or Soul Abilities. Ushi-oni always have at least a +4 in both Strength and Fighting, and the Alternate Forms and Modify Body Techniques. An Ushi-oni can reduce the damage of it's Signature Attack to 1 in order to add either “Focus Drain: D6” or “Ki Poison: D3+1” to the Attack.

Orochi

A great snake imbued with ferocious power. Orochi have deep ties to nature and the earth to the point where incredible plants grow upon their bodies, supported by a climate local to each serpent. They often have multiple heads, each one capable of a completely different set of powers. Orochi venom is a miraculous substance, and its effects are unique to the individual heads. Snakes and snake yōkai of all kind revere the orochi for their intelligence and wisdom.

	Focus Refresh	4
	Ki Limit	10

BODY	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+3
Endurance	+3
Agility	+4

MIND	Attribute Bonus
Intelligence	+5
Discipline	+1
Perception	+3

SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Zeal	+4
Resolve	+3
Insight	+3

Threshold	5
Rally	4

ARMOR	BODY	MIND	SOUL
	2	2	2

TOTAL MODIFIER		ASSOC. ATTR.	SKILL BONUS
+6	Evaluate	(INS+3)	3
+5	Ki Attunement	(ZEA+4)	1
+8	Nature Affinity	(ZEA+4)	4

TOTAL MODIFIER		ASSOC. ATTR.	SKILL BONUS
+4	Fighting	(STR+3)	1
+8	Medicine	(INT+5)	3
+6	Survival	(END+3)	3

Inherent Abilities

Signature Attack

Nature's Wrath

FP 2 KI 3

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)	RANGE	DOMAIN
+8	Nature Affinity (ZEA)	3	Body

DAMAGE	FP DRAIN	KI POISON	MOVE
D6+1	-	-	

Orochi have mastery over nature and the elements. So long as their targets are within its territory or range of influence, the very land itself is a weapon for orochi to wield against their enemies and trespassers.

***Exceptional Ability**: In certain individuals, an orochi's mastery over its territory is so powerful that it may control the position of targets within it. In this case, treat this Attack as if it uses the Movement rules for Signature Attacks.*

DEFENSES AGI, END, INS, PER, Athletics, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinity, Survival

Technique

Multi-headed

Special Technique

Orochi are multi-headed creatures. The abilities in this entry cover a single head of an orochi. The GM determines how many heads a specific orochi will have. Each head is treated as a separate Character in a conflict, having it's own FP, Ki, etc. However, all Characters that are part of the same orochi must stay in the same Zone, as they are connected to the same body (some orochi are massive enough to have heads that can be in separate zones, these are rare and should be reserved for a legendary encounter).

Roll a D6 for each head, on 1-4, reduce its Morale Threshold by one, on a 6, increase it by one.

Technique

Experienced

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Each head should have a different Ability, chosen from the following list:

Boons and Banes (choose 1-4), ***Calculated Strike***, ***Deflect***, ***Heavy Strike***, ***Ignore Armor***, ***Overwhelming Force***, ***Protect***

Technique

Shapeshift

Technique Based on Alternate Form

Orochi can take the form of a standard snake of whatever size they wish, in order to hide their otherwise very noticeable presence.

Some orochi can also take a human form. The GM can give this Ability to orochi they want to take part in non-conflict parts of the story.

Signature Attack

Ki Venom

FP 1 KI 2

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)						
+ 8	Medicine (INT)		RANGE 1	DOMAIN Soul			
DAMAGE	D3	FP DRAIN	-	KI POISON	D6	MOVE	

An orochi's venom can destabilize a person's ki flow, disrupting their ability to function and focus in battle.

DEFENSES: DIS, END, RES, Athletics, Ki Attunement, Medicine, Nature Affinity

Level: Challenge or Legendary

If the orochi has more than three heads change its level to Legendary.

Exceptional Abilities

Different orochi (whether or not they are individual heads connected to a single body, or separate Characters) will each select one or more different abilities from the ones listed in the "Experienced" Inherent Ability. Due to their ability to disguise themselves, some orochi (especially those with human forms) may have learned additional Skills. The GM can give them any additional Skills or Techniques that fit that orochi's particular story.

Lore

Orochi (pronounced "oh-roh-chee") are mysterious creatures that are usually spoken of in hushed whispers regardless of whether they be benevolent or malevolent. Legendary snakes of enormous size, the orochi often have multiple heads, forked tails, and bodies covered in plant life. The largest of them are able to support trees of soaring heights and mountainous crags upon their towering forms.

The orochi Shizumasa was so large that a small mountain grew from her back, covered in snowbell trees. Her brother Nawachi carried eight islets, the largest of which held a small temple complex. The largest orochi who ever lived was the legendary tyrant, Yamata no Orochi, whose back was covered in mosses, cypress, and cryptomeria trees. It was said to span eight mountains, eight rivers, and eight valleys. Most orochi are much smaller, about the length of small house when measured from head to tail.

These great snakes have deep ties with nature and the elements. Rare and magical plants grow upon their bodies, some of which can be found nowhere else. Orochi change the very weather around them to support the life that grows from them. Their heads are able to use their connection with the elements to wield mystical powers, each one capable of mastering a different element. Orochi grow additional heads as their power and age increases, and many begin life with only one. It is not known if there is a limit to the number of heads one may grow. Yamata no Orochi was famous for its eight heads and tails, but the River Spring Snake, Izuna, is known to have twelve.

Orochi venom is a powerful substance with effects that vary greatly between the heads. Some are the deadliest poisons, others can transform their victims with a single bite. One orochi lineage was known for their miraculous healing venom, which could cure most surface wounds, broken bones, and counteract poisons. The legendary snake maiden, Shirazami Hiyu is thought to have descended from this family as she also possesses healing venom.

Bestiary Entry: Orochi



The wisdom and intelligence of even the most brutish of orochi is well known. Throughout the ages, people have risked their lives seeking the counsel and gifts of even the most vicious of orochi with the hopes of finding answers when all other avenues are lost. Despite their cunning, orochi have little need for guile and will rarely attempt to deceive those who seek them out. The costs and consequences of agreements with them are often clear and non-negotiable.

Orochi once roamed Nippon openly in the Age of Kami, but the actions of Yamata no Orochi forced many of them into hiding. His legacy would taint all of theirs. While there are still a fair number of tyrannical orochi, many of them would much rather keep to themselves and tend to their territories in peace.

To draw less attention, they can take on other forms, projecting their spirit out into the world and transforming their dormant bodies into natural features of the environment. Several have lived their lives in human forms for generations, but no matter what form they take, they must return to their body regularly to rejuvenate the land around it, lest it all fall to taint and decay.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

While most orochi keep to themselves, their great power can lead them to madness, especially if they fall under the influence of Tainted ki. Orochi villains have risen throughout the ages to terrorize countless people. The legendary snakes sometimes feel a need to gather more power to challenge their brethren, but they are often unaware or indifferent to the effects of their actions. Orochi that have been slighted can exact very disproportionate revenge against their targets.

It is not wise to enter a physical struggle with an orochi with greater than three heads. They wield many powers and that are hard to counteract, and the very climate around them can be used to their advantage. But the story of Yamata no Orochi should serve as a good lesson that even one so powerful can be taken down with a creative and a clever strategy. Yamata no Orochi was so mighty that it forced the earthly kami of Izumo to live in oppressive fear for generations, even at the height of their divine power in the Age of Kami. It took the Celestial Kami Susano-o using the monster's vices against it to defeat it.

Most orochi have compulsions and vices that may be used against them. Getting an evil or corrupted orochi to drink enough blessed or sacred *sake* will likely weaken and purify them. Nearly all of them cannot resist a good drink.

Susano-o had the kami of Izumo brew an "Eightfold-Refined Sacred *Sake*", which he then filled into eight vats, one for each of the orochi's head. Yamata no Orochi drank its fill, becoming intoxicated. It then fell asleep and each head was slain by Susano-o's blade. When he struck the middle tail he found the sword *Ame no Murakum*o, now one of the Imperial Regalia. Susano-o presented the blade to his sister Amaterasu, who would eventually bestow it to her grandson upon his descent into the earthly realm.

While Yamata no Orochi, and other legendary orochi have unimagineable power, they are only a select few among many. Younger and less powerful orochi are far more common and only a little stronger than oni. But it would be a grievous mistake to underestimate any of them. They are still massive snakes with powerful magic and armed with completely unpredictable types of venom.

As Neutral Characters

If the party suddenly finds that the climate has changed or the season is abruptly different they may be in the presence of an orochi. The plants that grow in these areas and on the orochi are usually rare and have great medical value. The mosses that grew on the orochi Nagaosa were such powerful curatives that even drinking the water that had flowed through them could temporarily sustain a person's life. Such effects usually require bringing the ill or injured to

the orochi's domain, as their healing properties can quickly fade outside of it. This can be problematic if the orochi is awake and unfriendly, requiring creative approaches from Player Characters.

Orochi are often indifferent to the workings of mortal life, but since they cannot leave their domains for too long lest they wither away, they often depend on others to help them do things beyond their territory borders. More powerful orochi send out fragments of their spirit out to do their bidding, but on occasion these spirits can become lost or forget their purpose and original identities.

Once they have become reclusive, orochi rely on their spirit projections more, but this can leave their bodies vulnerable. An enterprising Character may be able to steal the body and control an amount of an orochi's power if an orochi's spirit has been away for too long. Likewise the orochi's body can awaken on its own and go on a mindless rampage if it has become tainted or the land around it is threatened.

As an Ally

If the party manages to gain the favor of an orochi it should be a momentous event, one that would gain them both enemies and allies alike. Orochi do not like being disturbed, and are often quite reclusive so them throwing their support to mortals or worldly issues is rare. But in the Age of Spirits, it seems that something is sending ripples throughout The World Beyond that is causing orochi to resurface and once again become active players in Spiritual Politics.

Friendly orochi have particular respect and concern for those who maintain lands, such as groundskeepers, gardeners, or farmers. On occasion, an orochi will donate plants to a human as a test. If their gifts are well cared for, they have been known to approach the caretaker directly.

Story

There have been a string of orochi deaths in Nippon, but the orochi community is keeping it quiet. All kinds of orochi have been slain from tyrannical lords to peaceful guardians. It is unknown who is committing these acts, or why.

There is a cult dedicated to resuscitating Yamata no Orochi, who was able to challenge the greater kami during his life. After he was slain, many yōkai and demons were created from his remains as his taint spread throughout the land. Those who would like to bring him back may seem like they are doing a good thing by slaying demons and their descendants, but their end goal is to bring back a monster by freeing it's trapped power from those creatures.

Orochi Variants

The stats given for orochi cover the level of power that will make them difficult, but not impossible, for PCs to defeat. As indicated in the Lore, orochi are quite capable of becoming so powerful that the PCs will not actually be able to defeat them outright. If the GM wishes to use these legendary creatures, they should structure the story so that the party can either win the respect of the orochi, trick it into doing what they want, or bind it into some form of promise that will keep it from threatening the world.

Orochi with between 1 and 3 heads will make a good Challenge level enemy for a group of 3-5 players. Having more heads than that will usually create an opponent that is of Legend difficulty. Because each head has it's own Turn and Focus Points, GMs do not need to include additional Characters with an orochi in order to prevent PCs from overwhelming it through force of numbers.

Sōkōraiu - The Storm Demon

Elementals who are brash and impulsive, yet friendly. They are born warriors and quite competitive.

BODY	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+3
Endurance	+3
Agility	+3

MIND	Attribute Bonus
Intelligence	+2
Discipline	+1
Perception	+2

SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Zeal	+2
Resolve	+3
Insight	+1

Focus Refresh	3
Ki Limit	8

Threshold	4
Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
2	1	2

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+4	Athletics	(END+3)	1
+5	Ki Attunement	(ZEA+2)	3
+5	Fighting	(STR+3)	2
+4	Nature Affinity	(AGI+3)	1
+4	Vice	(AGI+3)	1

Inherent Abilities

Signature Attack

Flickering Blade

FP 1 KI 2

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)	Range	Domain
+5	Fighting (STR) or Ki Attunement (ZEA)	3	Body

Damage	FP Drain	Ki Poison	Move
D6+1	-	-	

Storm Demons are famous for taming stray lightning bolts and wielding them as blades. These weapons are able to flicker and strike at a range.

Defenses: AGI, ZEA, Fighting, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinity

Technique

Sky Master

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Storm Demons can fly, and can even move so fast in the sky that they can choose to use the rules for Teleport instead of Flight.

Their speed and combat prowess also allows them to use the following Techniques:

Deflect*, *Ignore Armor*, *Overwhelming Force

Bestiary Entry: Sōkōraiu - The Storm Demon

Exceptional Abilities

Technique — **Speed Focus**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Storm Demons that focus on speed can use Stealth and Create Obstacles in order to distract opponents, confusing them to where the Storm Demon will actually be when they attack.

Technique — **Power Focus**

Storm Demons that prioritize power can use the following Signature Attack in addition to their standard one:

Signature Attack

108-Caliber Thunder Cannon — FP 3 — KI 6

Total Check Modifier: +5

Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Ki Attunement (ZEA)

RANGE 2 — DOMAIN Body

DAMAGE 2D3+2 — FP DRAIN D6 — KI POISON - — MOVE

A powerful and flashy burst of lightning that leaves the target stunned at the sheer strength of a Storm Demon's fury.

DEFENSES: AGI, ZEA, Fighting, Ki Attunement, Nature Affinity

Level: Challenge

Lore

Sōkōraiu (pronounced "soh-koh-rahy-oo") or "Storm Demons" are storm clouds encased in ornate armor. They are beings of intense power with mastery over the elements of a storm. Storm Demons are known for wielding flickering blades of lightning and fulger. Though called 'demons', Storm Demons tend to be friendly, though their impulsive and energetic nature tends to make them dangerous to anyone who cannot endure lightning and storms.

Easily excitable, they zoom about the skies searching for any kind of adventure that meets their fancy. Though they possess no malice, they can still be dangerous as they are quick to anger and even quicker to excite. When active, a Storm Demon not only causes lightning to strike in the area around them, but also brings in storms to the area, which can linger for hours after the Storm Demon calms down.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Storm Demon brashness will often lead to them challenging Players to a fight, usually out of pride or sometime due to mistaking them for foes. Convincing a storm demon to calm down is just as valid a way of resolving these fights as defeating them. Storm Demons can often be defeated in an Extended Check to either challenge them in some feat, or convince them to be more aware of their effect on the surrounding people and area.

Storm Demons are also likely to partner with almost anyone, and so can make good hired muscle, manipulated victim, or indebted servant. PCs who open the eyes of these misguided opponents, or free them from whatever binds them to their foes, may actually gain an ally, or at least reduce the number of foes they face.

Bestiary Entry: Sōkōraiu - The Storm Demon



As Neutral Characters

Storm Demons are not inherently hostile, though they enjoy challenges. How the PCs act towards them will determine whether they end up as friend or foe, or simply leave the area out of boredom.

A Storm Demon can also be used as a rival to the PCs, trying to solve the same problems. These kinds of NPCs tend to want to out-do the players, and even if the PCs don't engage in the contest, the Storm Demon can cause problems with it's zeal that the PCs have to clean up.

As an Ally

If the players are able to convince a storm demon that they are powerful and just heroes, the demon will happily assist them. However, their flighty nature means that they will be quick to lose interest and wander off into the sky, especially if the players aren't engaging in battles or challenges often enough.

Story

Storm Demons may often take interest in the same situations that the Players do. Due to their competitive and temperamental nature, they may attempt to resolve the problems themselves. Often, their solution will have much less finesse than what a human would come up with which may lead to their failure or even making things worse.

A Storm Demon rarely thinks too far ahead, but some may challenge the PCs in a way that sends them on a further adventure. For example, the contest may be who can recover the most powerful artifact, collect the most riches, or be adored the most by a local town. These kinds of Challenges often lead away from the Storm Demon (who may in fact not even be there when the PCs complete their part, regardless of whether they succeed or fail).

Storm Demon Variants

While most Storm Demons do not stray too far from the rules listed in this entry, GMs can use the abilities and stats in this entry as a template to create similarly difficult supernatural challenges for the PCs. For example, if they built a low level kami who actively interacts with mortals. It could look very similar stat-wise to a Storm Demon, but with a change in Skills and Techniques to reflect its different background.

Tengu

Yōkai that resemble a cross between a man and a bird. Tengu are fierce fighters renown for their abilities in combat. They are organized into rough tribes centered around arts of war. Most will jump at the chance to prove their tribe's skills are the best.

3	Focus Refresh	BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus	Threshold	3
7	Ki Limit	Strength	+3	Intelligence	+1	Zeal	+1	Rally	
		Endurance	+2	Discipline	+3	Resolve	+1		
		Agility	+4	Perception	+2	Insight	+2		

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
2	0	0

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus	Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+4	Athletics	(END+2)	2	+4	Evaluate	(STR+3)	1
+5	Fighting	(STR+3)	2	+4	Survival	(END+2)	2

Inherent Abilities

Technique — **Tribal Equipment**

Ability Based on Signature Attack and Armor

Signature Attack — **Tengu Combat Arts** — FP 1 KI 0

Total Check Modifier: +Varies
Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Fighting (Asso. Attribute Varies Based on Tribe)
RANGE 1 DOMAIN Body
DAMAGE D6 FP DRAIN - KI POISON - MOVE
DEFENSES: *Varies Based on Tribe, Suggestions*: AGI, END, STR, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting

Each tribe has it's own style of arms and armor, which are usually a product of the resources available to them. The stats listed for the Signature Attack and armor are a baseline for what an average tengu warrior will possess. Poor tribes or young warriors will often have reduced effectiveness (subtract 1 Body Armor and reduce damage to D3 Body), while veterans will have enough experience in combat to know how to defend against all types of damage, as well as better gear they have collected over time (Armor 2/2/2 and increase total Signature Attack Check to +6 or +7).

Technique — **Wings**

Technique Based on Movement Powers

Out of conflicts, Tengu can fly as fast as a bird of prey for sustained periods of time.

In Conflicts, tengu do not have to pay FP to change zones with a Move action.

Technique — **Warrior Techniques**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

Each tengu will have one of the following:

Calculated Strike, ***Fortune's Favor***, ***Overwhelming Force***, ***Teamwork*** (if Teamwork is chosen, enough of a group will choose it to increase the overall side's Tide Breakpoint by +1, with each tengu having 2-3 points each)

Bestiary Entry: Tengu



Exceptional Abilities

Technique — **Tengu War Master**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

A leader or hero will have at least one of the following Abilities, and may have more if the GM wants a stronger foe:

Deflect, ***Create Obstacles*** (used to call in additional tengu with less combat abilities), ***Stalwart***, ***Unyielding***

Technique — **Tengu Mystic**

Technique Based on Various Abilities

A tengu mystic will use Ki to augment the tengu group in battle. This Character will have Ki Well and one or more of the following:

Banes and Boons (choose 1-3, depending on the power of the mystic), ***Divine*** (since this is mostly a non-conflict Power, the GM will need to reveal in the story that a tengu group has access to this Ability before it's effects are used in a battle), ***Elemental Manipulation*** (usually Wind), ***Illusions***, ***Protective Circle***

Level: Matched, Minion

As sentient beings, most Tengu are closely matched in power to Player Characters. Powerful individuals will be Challenge level.

Lore

Collectively, the tengu ("tehn-goo") tribes are the masters of the arts of war. Throughout the ages, humans have sought them out to become students of their techniques and gain an edge in combat. Tengu are only as strong as the strongest humans, and when compared to other yōkai it isn't much. But tengu are skilled and use those skills well.

All tengu are split up into three relative categories based on their level of power: ko-tengu are unintelligent and only average in strength, regular tengu are both strong and agile, but only as smart as a human, and dai-tengu can have insurmountable power and wisdom.

While tengu glorify the combative arts of war, military tactics, engineering, medicine, and even diplomacy are also valued in the tribes.

Read more about the tengu and their tribes in the "The Tengu Mountain Lords" on page 160.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Each individual tengu can have vastly different skills and abilities from another of a different tribe. In this way they are a lot more like player characters and yōkai people than other yōkai. Tengu rarely fight alone unless they have accepted a duel (which they do often). So it is likely that tengu will fight in parties of two to four. Part of the Crow Tribe's success is because their squads are designed with complementary skills to allow them to work together with frightening efficiency.

Tengu are master fighters, but unless they are of a well schooled tribe, they are not very bright and easily tricked. They tend to focus much more on athletic skills and their strength over academic pursuits.

As Neutral Characters

In the past the tengu tribes were in near constant war. Even in more peaceful times they retain this competitive need to prove the superiority of their tribe and its arts. Tengu are proud creatures, especially when challenged about their skills, but they are not above respecting actual excellence when they see it.

Tengu love competitions and love being challenged. So it is easy to get one to accept one. They can get competitive about things as mundane as staring contests and ramen eating competitions, especially if it's framed in a way that suggests it could be beneficial to combat at all.

As an Ally

Tengu are individuals and can get swept up in big causes like any person, especially if it can challenge them in some way. While they used to keep to themselves, many of them can't help but wander the mortal world to see the improvements that the humans have made to their combat arts. Tengu have strong senses of honor and duty, especially to their lords. If they feel indebted to someone they will lend their aid in anyway they can. Saving a tengu's life during a dire mission will likely cause them to pledge their loyalty to you until they can win back the honor lost in their defeat. This can often bring more complications than benefits to the recipient of this oath as tengu cultural norms tend to be mostly incompatible with those of other races.

They are straightforward and reliable team mates, but most can be overly brazen in their need to prove themselves.

Story

Tengu are different enough from tribe to tribe that there is no one way to involve them in plot. This also means that the tribes and their members have many reasons to feel animosity or rivalry towards one another. The Crane Tribe as keepers of the medical arts of war are often treated like second class citizens among other tengu, as they feel there's little glory in not fighting.

Tengu will go far in order to master a new technique or a hidden art. They will visit places that old masters have trained or studied to find inspiration. Tengu are very unfamiliar with human society. Their overconfidence and brazenness can prevent them from integrating or blending in with human society. Many lack tact and delicateness and will just walk into human cities and villages even if the villagers have never seen a tengu or a yōkai before.

Tengu Variants

Ko-Tengu (Lesser Tengu)

Smaller less intelligent tengu often used in large number on the front lines of battle

Building Lesser Tengu

> ***Level***: Minion
>
> *When working alone, Ko-tengu pose little threat to PCs. They either coordinate in large groups, or they follow larger or stronger tengu into Conflicts.*

Reduce all Attributes Modifiers by 1, Skills by 1 (for a total of -2 to Skill Checks when Attributes are figured in), and the damage of Signature Attacks to D3. Lesser Tengu are Horde type enemies with a starting Horde Number of 3-6, depending on the difficulty the GM wishes them to provide.

Crow Tribe Tengu

Crow Tengu excel most at the arts of swordsmanship, smithing, and military tactics. While the Crow Tribe might be considered less physically strong than most of their tengu brethren, they can hold their ground with cooperation, teamwork, and strategy.

Building Crow Tribe Tengu

Level: Matched

A group of Crow, also known as karasu-tengu (pronounced "kah-rah-soo-tehn-goo") will always possess enough Teamwork to increase their Tide Breakpoint by +1. Use the following Attributes in place of those for the default tengu.

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+3	Intelligence	+1	Zeal	-2
Endurance	+2	Discipline	+3	Resolve	+1
Agility	+4	Perception	+2	Insight	+2

Crane Tribe Tengu

The Crane Tribe are masters of medicine, healing, and longevity. They have martial arts focusing on medical knowledge to perform precise strikes and using medical herbs as intoxicants and poisons.

Building Crane Tribe Tengu

Level: Matched

Generally, Crane Tribe tengu provide support on the battlefield with their skills.

Use the following Attributes and Skills in place of those for the default tengu:

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+1	Intelligence	+4	Zeal	+3
Endurance	+1	Discipline	+3	Resolve	+1
Agility	+3	Perception	+3	Insight	+3

+4	Fighting	(AGI +3)	1
+5	Medicine	(INT +4)	1
+5	Nature Affinity	(ZEA +3)	2
+3	Survival	(END +1)	2

Signature Attack

Acupuncture Strikes FP 2 KI 2

Total Check Modifier: +5 | Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Medicine (INT) | DAMAGE: D3+1 | DOMAIN: Soul | RANGE: 2 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: D3 | MOVE:

Crane tengu have intimate knowledge of the ki circulation of living beings. This knowledge allows them to strike meridian points with precision and disrupt their target's life energies.

DEFENSES: AGI, INT, PER, Athletics, Fighting, Ki Attunement, Medicine

Signature Attack

Poisons FP 1 KI 3

Total Check Modifier: +5 | Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Medicine (INT) | DAMAGE: 1 | DOMAIN: Body | RANGE: 1 | KI POISON: 2D3 | FP DRAIN: - | MOVE:

Crane Tribe poisons are elaborate and precise. They can baffle mortal doctors, achieving effects on the body that many would consider impossible. They can't be resisted by bodily constitution alone, and must be addressed with counteragents and treatment.

DEFENSES: AGI, INT, PER, Investigation, Medicine, Nature Affinity

Dai-Tengu (Greater Tengu)

Greater Tengu are the highest and strongest form of tengu. Only greater tengu can lead a tribe, and their power is akin to a kami of war.

Building Greater Tengu

> ***Level***: Challenge
>
> *While Greater Tengu are the strongest of form of Tengu, most of them are at a Challenge level for the party. However, important or particularly powerful Greater Tengu might even be Legendary Level.*

Use the following Attributes and Skills in place of those for the default tengu. Greater Tengu will have all Abilities for the normal versions of their Tribe, including any optional choices. Greater Tengu are a Challenge Level enemy, and usually accompanied by a few lesser tengu of their tribe.

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+5	Intelligence	+4	Zeal	+3
Endurance	+5	Discipline	+3	Resolve	+3
Agility	+5	Perception	+4	Insight	+2

+7	Athletics	(END+5)	2
+8	Fighting	(STR+5)	3
+5	Ki Attunement	(ZEA+3)	2
+5	Leadership	(INS+2)	3
+7	Survival	(END+5)	2

Signature Attacks

Signature Attack — **Windslice** — FP 1 — KI 3

Total Check Modifier: +8 | Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Fighting (STR) | DAMAGE: 2D3 | DOMAIN: Body | RANGE: 2 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: - | MOVE: X

A blade of air slices through opponents and can move them according to the Great Tengu's whims.

DEFENSES: ZEA, RES, DIS, Interaction, Ki Manipulation, Survival

Signature Attack — **Tempest** — FP Var — KI 2

Total Check Modifier: +5 | Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute): Ki Attunement (ZEA) | DAMAGE: D6 | DOMAIN: Soul | RANGE: 2 | KI POISON: - | FP DRAIN: - | MOVE: X

Greater Tengu wield powerful wind magic. their mastery of the air and skies gives them the ability to use it to disorient their foes and disrupt their formations.

Use this instead of the normal rules for Signature Attack Movement effects. Select one main target, pay additional FP for Zones and Characters as normal according to Range rules. This Attack costs 2 additional FP for each Character on the opposing side. With a successful Attack Check, Characters in all enemy Zones must roll a D6, and move to a new Zone depending on the result:

1-2: Aggressive Zone, 3-4: Balanced Zone, 5-6: Cautious Zone

DEFENSES: END, STR, DIS, Athletics, Fighting, Nature Affinity, Survival

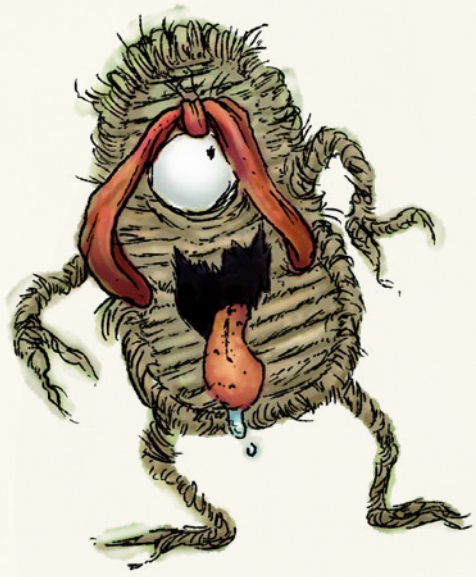
Tsukumogami - Living Objects

Inanimate objects that have come to life as mystical spirits.

In the Age of Spirits, even inanimate objects can take on a spiritual nature, gaining minds of their own, and becoming yōkai. These yōkai of objects are collectively referred to as tsukumogami (pronounced "tsoo-koo-moh-gah-mee"). What causes an ordinary object to undergo such a transformation can be as various as the objects that change. Tools that manage to stay mostly intact for over many years are said to become tsukumogami. Items kept in sacred places of power sometimes become tsukumogami due to accumulation of ki or the will of local kami. Treasured possessions that become lost have returned to their owners as tsukumogami, showing the power of bonds between humans and material things. Some even come into existence through a combination of reasons that will never be known to mankind.

Tsukumogami generally resemble the object they originated from, often in tattered condition. Many of them grow eyes, limbs, mouths, or other features of living things. Some take on a humanoid shape, while others are shaped more like animals. Most tsukumogami have abilities relating to the type of object they were; these powers range from bizarre and useless to dangerous and powerful. For example, a sword may be able to cut things without touching them, while a backscratcher may have the power to always know exactly where a person is itchy.

The intelligence and personality of tsukumogami also varies with what kind of object they are and the nature of their origins. Some may be able to speak and reason. Others may only understand simple commands like a trained dog; many are no different than wild animals and will act according to base instincts. Some miss the company of humans and will seek to be around them once again, while others may wish to avoid them or even be openly hostile. Tsukumogami can even have motivations; they may be focused on doing their old job, playing pranks on humans, or even going off on adventures. Tsukumogami born from carelessly discarded objects may bare a resentment toward humans and seek to take revenge, these tsukumogami that rose from hatred may one day even grow to become their own kind of oni (see "Oni" on page 302).



A bakezōri, the tsukumogami of a straw sandal.



From left to right, starting from the top: tamatebake, nurikado, hinabake, toki-tokei, chōchin-obake, kasabake, shoryōdana, tantō-obake

Level: Minion or Horde (depends on variant)

Building Tsukumogami

Several example tsukumogami are listed in this entry as ideas, but GMs should feel free to create any new tsukumogami they want. Any object can become a tsukumogami, the reasons they change often determine their exact abilities.

Attributes and Skills

Tsukumogami are one of the most varied forms of yōkai. Because any object can potentially become a tsukumogami, the exact Attributes will need to change based on what the GM is creating. Attributes will be based on the original object. For example, a particularly strong or dense object will have a +4 or +5 modifier in STR or END. Because of how tsukumogami form based on the world around them, they often take on aspects of how others perceive their base objects. A pair of glasses may have high INT or PER, while an animated doll could have good INS.

Similar to Attributes, the Skills of a tsukumogami vary, and are based on both the original form and how it fits into the world around it. A guardian statue may have Fighting to protect what it defends, and a piece of discarded clothing may have Manipulation because it haunts it's fickle previous owner. Most Tsukumogami are either Horde, Minion, or Matched type enemies, and will have a +6 Total Modifier in one specific Skill that is most important to them, along with a +2 or +3 in an additional 1 to 4 Skills. Challenge tsukumogami are usually varied enough to have most skills at +3 or higher.

Techniques

Tsukumogami should be given all Techniques appropriate to their from and origin. In some cases, this may make them significantly more powerful than their type indicates. GMs can reduce the overall Modifiers for Minion or Matched tsukumogami to keep them from being too powerful, or simply elevate them to Challenge type and adjust their encounters accordingly.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

Tsukumogami that have become resentful of humans may wish to attack or otherwise inconvenience the players. Tools of war like weapons and armor may be able to challenge the players in combat, while scholarly tools such as scrolls may challenge them to trivia or games of skill. Those with animal level intelligence or lower may simply attack or otherwise harm PCs because of their nature.

As Neutral Characters

Tsukumogami tend to be mischievous rather than actually malicious. Their pranks can often complicate tense situations, but this can be used to the Player's advantage if their rivals run afoul of an embarrassing or inconveniencing prank.

As an Ally

As once useful objects, tsukumogami may wish to be useful to humans once again. If the Players gain their trust, a tsukumogami may be an incredibly loyal ally and will do all within their limited power to assist them. GMs may also create tsukumogami NPCs from the items of PCs that become very important in the course of story events, allowing these NPCs to work with the PCs.

Story

Tsukumogami are usually nuisances to humans and will often be blamed when things go wrong. Their penchant for mischief can cause them to contribute to strange-goings on even when they are not the original cause. They are an element of chaos that obscures the real situation.

Tsukumogami Variants

Bakezōri (Sandal)

A common tsukumogami resembling a straw sandal with arms, legs, a mouth, and one to three eyes. Bakezōri ("bah-kay-zoh-ree") are capable of speech but are not the best conversationalists, instead preferring to chant and sing almost constantly. They miss being able to make the sound of footsteps so they try to make as much noise as possible to compensate, often disturbing the sleep of humans and other creatures.

Hinabake (Doll)

Hinabake ("hee-nah-bah-kay") are created when a traditional Girl's Day doll is left out for too long after the festivities have ended. Normally these dolls are meant to absorb bad luck and send it away when they are put away, but because they are left out, they just continue to attract bad luck and spread it to those around them. Once they become Tsukumogami, hinabake still wish to be useful, but their attempts to secretly help improve their masters lives will often make things worse. Most commonly they will attempt to find suitable spouses for the eligible ladies of the house, only to cause accidental social blunders that drive suitors away.

Hinabake are often mistaken for hinnagami, a mystical artifact imbued with a spirit familiar that grants wishes. Unfortunately for those who make this error, the hinabake will still attempt to make their wishes come true through more mundane efforts and will likely cause the opposite outcome to occur.

Kasabake (Oil Umbrella)

Most kasabake ("kah-sah-bah-kay") are harmless tricksters born from tattered umbrellas, they typically have one large eye, a mouth, and a single leg. Their favorite prank is to sneak up on humans and lick them using their oversized tongue. Instead of saliva, a kasabake's mouth is filled with an oily substance similar to the oil used to waterproof umbrellas. The oil has a very strong odor and is difficult to wash off, but is not harmful to humans.

A close relative of the kasabake is the chōchin-obake ("choh-cheen-oh-bah-kay"), which is formed from a paper Lantern. It shares the Kasabake's love of pranks and oily tongue, but chōchin-obake float through the air rather than hopping around like their one-legged cousins. Sometimes they may also shoot small gouts of flame from their mouths.

Nurikado (Gate)

The nurikado ("noo-ree-kah-doh") is a wall with a gate in it. It appears at night, blocking off streets and roads that were open before. It is similar to the nurikabe ("noo-ree-kah-bay"), a well known yōkai that extends itself to block anyone trying to go around it or over it. Where the nurikado differs from nurikabe is that it will attempt to coax humans into passing through its gate, twisting and turning the paths within it until they are confused. Once they reach the other side, their victim will find themselves far from where they were, often an inconvenient location like on a rooftop or inside a of a bath house designated for the opposite-sex. The gate will then slam shut behind them and disappear with a giggling sound.

Shoryōdana (Spirit House)

The shoryōdana ("shoh-ryoh-dah-nah") is a little different from its tsukumogami brethren. If your family is dutiful with offerings and prayers for the spirit who dwells within the spirit house, upon the first autumn offering of the hundredth year, it may turn into a tsukumogami. Using the ki that it has gathered through the years, the shoryōdana decides to assist the family that kept it so well. Most of the time, this tsukumogami looks no different from the spirit houses or altars that can be found in homes, yards, and gardens. When its services are needed, it becomes active, going so far as to fly away from

its location to assist even distant family members in times of crisis. If the situation requires, it can even project a humanoid form as a servant or butler, bearing the striking colors of autumn in their hair, skin, or eyes.

The ki gathered within this tsukumogami gives it access to many miraculous abilities to aid the family it serves. The loyalty of a shoryōdana is not maintained forever, though. After several generations, if offerings are not properly maintained, it will fly free in search of a new family to help instead.

Tamatebake (Modular Origami)

The tamatebake ("tah-mah-tay-bah-kay") is a bit of an oddity because what may look like a single yōkai is actually made up of modular pieces that fit together into a single complex form. The true form is a single sheet of origami paper adorned with a single eye and a surface pattern that bewitches anyone who looks too closely. A single sheet tamatebake can be of any size but all have the ability to fold themselves into origami shapes, working together with others to form complex forms and bigger yōkai.

It is not known how tamatebake come into being, only a few scholars have been able to study them at all. In the beginning, they are unable to fold themselves into any usable shapes. They are obsessive about finding new forms to master and will fold themselves until they learn a new one. It is probably for this reason that they pester origami artisans who might be able to teach the tamatebake a new shape to learn.

Particularly powerful tamatebake are able to replicate themselves by folding scraps of paper they find, but these new duplicates will only fold themselves into same shape that the original takes. Unless they combine with the others, these duplicates will not survive for very long. When combined, the pieces arrange themselves into intricate shapes. By working together, they may gain abilities that they would not have individually. Although the combined tamatebake gain a significant amount spiritual power, their physical form remains rather flimsy. Removing even a single tamatebake from the structure will cause the entire formation to collapse, sending pieces flying in every direction.

Tantō-obake (Sword)

The tantō-obake ("tahn-toh-oh-bah-kay") is created when a sword has fallen into disuse for a very long time. They are typically too rusted and blunt to cut anything and usually stay inside of their scabbards to hide the poor condition of their blades. Despite being sheathed, the tantō-obake are able to use mysterious powers to cut and slice things without touching them. They have long since forgotten war and compulsively use their power just to cut random objects. Broken sandal straps and shredded boat sails are often the work of tantō-obake.

Toki-tokei (Clock)

The toki-tokei ("toh-kee-toh-kay") is an enigma that is of great interest to machinists and inventors. It is able to use its mechanisms to measure just about any form of time: from celestial maps, solar day counts, the phases of the moon, or even the number of seconds that have passed since the Age of Kami.

The inner workings of the toki-tokei are advanced beyond other mechanical clocks found in Nippon. But its designs and markings clearly indicate that the clock was made by Nipponese artisans. Engineers who have glanced into its mechanisms gain an otherworldly sense of inspiration. Unfortunately, those who come across it don't have long to study it before it leaves as suddenly as it came. It is able to transport people to other places and times, functioning as a temporary gateway, but the locations it shows are never consistent.

Though it is an elusive yōkai, the toki-tokei has nevertheless inspired great improvements in Nippon's technology.

Umi Bōzu - Sea Monk

Bulbous sea monsters that attack ships.

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+2	Intelligence	+0	Zeal	+0
Endurance	+5	Discipline	-1	Resolve	+0
Agility	-3	Perception	+1	Insight	+0

3	Focus Refresh
8	Ki Limit

Threshold	3*
Rally	

* See the ***Limbs*** *Inherent Ability.*

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	0	0

TOTAL MODIFIER		ASSOC. ATTR.	SKILL BONUS	TOTAL MODIFIER		ASSOC. ATTR.	SKILL BONUS
+6	Athletics	(END+5)	1	+6	Fighting	(STR+2)	4
+6	Survival	(END+5)	1				

Inherent Abilities

Technique — **Limbs**

Special Technique

Each limb of an umi bōzu counts as a separate Character. Due to the size of most umi bōzu, the limbs can be in different zones than the main body. Skill Checks for limbs have different modifiers. Each limb has its own FP and Ki Pool. Roll a D6 for each limb: (1-3: Threshold = 1, 4-5: Threshold = 2, 6: Threshold = 3)

The limbs have the following Attributes:

BODY	Attribute Bonus	MIND	Attribute Bonus	SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Strength	+4	Intelligence	+0	Zeal	+0
Endurance	+1	Discipline	+0	Resolve	+0
Agility	+1	Perception	+0	Insight	+0

The limbs have the following Signature Attack:

Signature Attack

Thrash — FP 1 — KI 0

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)	RANGE	DOMAIN
+8	Fighting (STR)	1	Body

DAMAGE	FP DRAIN	KI POISON	MOVE
D6	-	-	

Despite their general lack of coordination, umi bōzu's sheer size make their attacks a force to be reckoned with.

DEFENSES AGI, END, STR, Athletics, Survival, Nature Affinity

Technique — **Creature of the Sea**

Technique Based on Movement Powers and Elemental Manipulation

Umi bōzu have the Technique ***Movement Powers: Swimming*** (no additional FP is required to change Zones when in water).

When outside of the water, umi bōzu are not helpless, due to their massive size, but are awkward. Any Checks made by a beached umi bōzu have a -3 Modifier.

Umi bōzu have ***Elemental Manipulation*** (Water and Wind) can can use it to create waves, storms, and other weather related problems.



Bestiary Entry: Umi Bōzu - Sea Monk

Level: Challenge or Legendary

Separately, the main body and each of the limbs is a Matched type.

Lore

Umi bōzu (pronounced "oo-mee boh-zoo") are ocean dwelling yōkai that come in a wide variety of sizes from as small as a tadpole to as large as a mountain. They are vaguely humanoid with large round heads that are completely featureless except for a pair of large glowing eyes. Their bodies are indistinct, constantly veiled in shadow, making it difficult to discern what they actually look like. Different accounts have described them as hairy, scaly, wrinkled, smooth-skinned, or even as being made out of shadows or smoke.

Umi bōzu are at least moderately intelligent and are capable of speech but are not the most talkative, preferring short sentences and small words when they choose to speak at all. They are largely self-interested, caring little for humans or other creatures. Some consider ships an annoyance and may even attempt to sink them, however they tend to be easily discouraged by any form of resistance as they usually don't care enough about smaller creatures to bear any real malice toward them.

Fully grown umi bōzu can easily capsize even a larger vessel with their massive strength. Often they will do so by accident as they carelessly rise out of the sea creating an enormous wave.

Smaller umi bōzu are called umi kozō. They are known to climb aboard ships by crawling up fishing lines and anchor ropes. Umi kozō have a tendency to be child-like and mischievous, giggling to themselves as they steal provisions and play with equipment, often damaging it.

Tips for using the NPC

Conflict

Large umi bōzu are an epic encounter that can be used to prepare players for other powerful enemies without overwhelming them. Despite their high stats, umi bōzu have low morale threshold meaning the players only need a few successes to repel them.

Small umi bōzu can be used to introduce complications on the player's journey as they need to stop to fight them off lest they steal supplies or vandalize the ship.

Neutral

Umi bōzu will most often represent an obstacle by blocking the way the players need to go. They can create dangerous conditions like whirlpools and giant waves just by moving around, navigating an umi bōzu-populated sea can present a variety of challenges for the players such as avoiding giant waves, detecting submerged umi bōzu, or getting their attention and persuading them to allow safe passage.

Ally

Umi bōzu usually ignore humans but their size and strength can be very helpful to the players should they be able to befriend one. If the players need something that can only be found on the bottom of the ocean or through unassailable waters, convincing an umi bōzu to help may be in their best interests.

Story

Umi bōzu are often omens of coming disasters, so the presence of one can be used to foreshadow a catastrophe. Small umi bōzu are a hazard for fisherman so villages may ask the players to remove them.

Umi Bōzu Variants

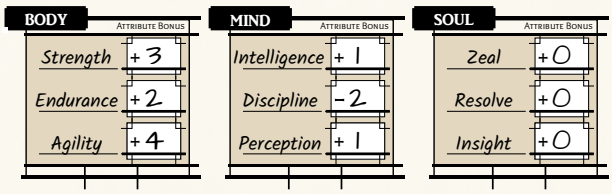
Umi Kozō

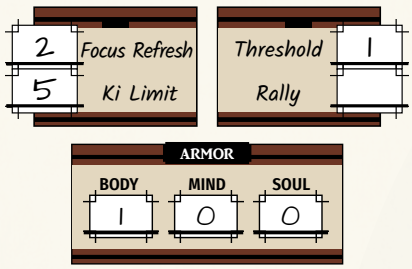
Mischievous juvenile umi bōzu.

Level: Minion

Building Umi Kozō

When small enough to be treated as a single creature, umi bōzu are Minion type enemies, though GMs can reduce all of their Modifiers to a maximum of +2 and create Horde enemies if they wish. Small umi bōzu use the following Attributes, and possess the same Skills and "Creature of the Sea" Techniques as their larger brethren.





Signature Attacks

Most umi kozō do not have enough mass to represent a threat that warrants D3 or higher damage. These creatures can still cause problems to sailors through their actions, and GMs should use Improvised Attacks to represent their actions (stealing provisions, knocking PCs over the side of a ship, etc).

Yūrei - Ghosts and Spirits

Spirits of the dead who remain bound to this world by the obsessions they held in life.

BODY	Attribute Bonus
Strength	-5
Endurance	+5
Agility	+5

MIND	Attribute Bonus
Intelligence	+1
Discipline	+3
Perception	+1

SOUL	Attribute Bonus
Zeal	+4
Resolve	+5
Insight	+2

2	Focus Refresh
II	Ki Limit

Threshold	4
Rally	

ARMOR		
BODY	MIND	SOUL
0	2	2

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+2	Evaluate	(INT + 1)	1
+6	Ki Attunement	(ZEA + 4)	2

Total Modifier		Assoc. Attr.	Skill Bonus
+3	Investigation	(INT + 1)	2
+5	Manipulation	(ZEA + 4)	1

Inherent Abilities

Technique

Incorporeal

Special Technique

Yūrei have no physical bodies, and cannot be harmed with Body damage. Conflicts with yūrei require either Mind or Soul, or that a Player describe how they can use Body based Attacks in a different way. For example, a warrior could attack the target of a yūrei's grudge instead of the spirit itself, or an exorcist could apply the correct funeral rights to the original body of the yūrei.

Technique

Otherworldly Influence

Technique Based on Banes & Boons

Each yūrei will have a selection of Banes and/or Boons that allow it to work towards it's goal. Bitter yūrei will often call upon curses to harm their targets, while a loving family member trapped in the mortal world because of it's love for a human will constantly maintain Boons upon them. Which specific Boons and Banes are chosen will depend on the personality of the yūrei, and their abilities in life.

Level: Matched

Signature Attack

Due to the nature of Conflicts with yūrei, they tend to require investigations and actions taken in the physical world against those still alive, rather than direct ki-blast shoot-outs. However, GMs can give particularly violent yūrei the following Signature Attack in order for it to harm the living.

Signature Attack

Torment FP 3 KI 4

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)	DAMAGE	DOMAIN	
+6	Ki Attunement (ZEA)	D3	Soul	
RANGE 4	KI POISON D3	FP DRAIN D3	MOVE	

Yūrei of particular power are able to distort the physical world to make the area around them more like The World Beyond. They project their torment and emotions around them and when directed at a target, can strike them at their very core, disrupting their ability to function. Powerful emotions in The World Beyond almost become tangible things there.

DEFENSES ZEA, RES, DIS, Interaction, Ki Manipulation, Survival

Lore

While most of the dead pass on peacefully to The World Beyond, those who hold too tightly to this world may remain trapped here, unable to leave until the obsessions they carry are satisfied. All yūrei (pronounced "yoo-ray") have some sort of fixation that keeps them anchored to the realm of the living, often a task that they failed to complete before their death. These fixations range from very modest goals, such as wanting to see a family member one last time or to thank someone for an act of kindness, to complex obsessions, such as perfecting their life's work or taking vengeance upon their killer. Yūrei cannot settle permanently in either this world or the next, and are endlessly shifting between the human realm and the hazy realm of Yūkai (see "Yūkai: The Hazy Realm" on page 144). Those who are more self-aware are able to hide in the Yūkai during daylight or when they do not wish to be found. Yūrei must often be drawn out from the other realm if they are to be confronted.

Most yūrei are fairly benign as their fixations do not involve harming humans. But yūrei should never be taken lightly, especially if their fixation is unknown. A yūrei who wishes for revenge or who views humans as preventing them from fulfilling their purpose can be extremely dangerous. In particular, yūrei that are bound to a specific place, sometimes called *jibakurei* can be very aggressive to humans who venture into their territory. Yūrei cannot be killed, but it is possible to sate their desires and encourage them to leave this world either by helping them complete their tasks or using ceremonies and rituals to absolve them from their suffering. Beyond accomplishing their goals, purifying their spirits will allow them to pass on, though this requires the right knowledge and a strong exorcist. It is also possible to convince some of the more reasonable yūrei to let go of their earthly connections and pass on of their own volition.

Most yūrei look more or less the same as they did when they were alive. Occasionally they will be wearing traditional funeral garments such as a white kimono or the triangular cloth headband known as a "Heaven's Crown". Some may still have signs of the wounds that caused their deaths, missing limbs or bloody stains on their clothes. But those who died peacefully may be mistaken for humans, save for two tell tale signs. The first is that yūrei do not have feet, their bodies fade into nothingness below the shin. This may not be readily apparent if the yūrei is wearing long hakama or a flowing kimono that covers the full length of their body. The second is that yūrei always wear their robes with the right lapel on the outside instead of the left one on the outside as humans do. This can be difficult to notice, but is often a reliable sign you're dealing with a spirit.

Yūrei typically arise when a person is killed in an especially sudden or violent manner, such as a battle, murder, or a horrible accident. People who aren't given proper funerals to move on are also more likely to become yūrei. However, there are some people whose obsessions or regrets run so deep that even with a peaceful death and all the appropriate ceremonies they will still become a yūrei.

Bestiary Entry: Yūrei - Ghosts And Spirits

On rare occasions a living human may become so overpowered with unexpressed passion or rage, that their emotions seep deep into their soul and twist it into something inhuman. While they sleep, their troubled spirit is able to leave their body to act on their obsessions as an ikiryō, a living ghost. The ikiryō's host is often unaware of their spirit's actions. Most either dismiss their memories as dreams and forget them just as quickly or repress them alongside their hidden feelings. Likewise, those who see the ikiryō usually will not recognize it as the spirit of the person they know. Their forms are so distorted they may no longer appear human.

By far the most dangerous type of yūrei are onryō (pronounced "ohn-ryoh"), a powerful type of spirit that thinks of nothing but consuming more ki to enact brutal vengeance against those who wronged them in life. An onryō's power is only limited by the depths of their rage. When the target of their malice is in sight they become nigh unstoppable forces of destruction. Calm onryō resemble wretched unkempt humans with foul stringy hair covering their pale faces. They will fly into a fury at the slightest reminder of the object of their hatred and take on their true from. The form that an onryō takes is as unique to each one as is the wretched story of how they came to be this way in the first place. Some become nightmarish distorted versions of humans, with misshapen and impossible anatomies. Others resemble beasts with countless horns, teeth and claws or dark shapes that twist and flow like a disgusting liquid. Shaken exorcists whisper tales of onryō who became terrible abominations that completely defied all description of shape, color, sound, or smell.

Like other yūrei, onryō only can only exist in this world until their goal is completed. They can be made to pass on in a similar manner but are often more difficult to banish than ordinary yūrei as they are far more powerful. Ancient ceremonies are said to exist that can enshrine an onryō as a kami, transforming it into a powerful guardian called a goryō, but much of the information about how to perform them has become difficult to come by since many records were lost with the fall of Heian. However, nothing is impossible in this Age of Spirits, and it may still be possible to rediscover these secrets.

The most difficult onryō to get rid of are those who wish to take vengeance on a type of person, instead of a specific person or group. For example, some may want revenge against all fishermen, all people who insult the elderly, or all young women. These onryō will often become attached to certain objects or places, lying in wait for potential victims to prey on. This also makes them difficult to identify, as they can avoid detection while hiding within their cursed items.

Any yūrei that stays in the mortal world for too long runs the risk of their unfinished business becoming an obsession that can turn to jealousy or maliciousness, turning them into more mindless onryō. The effects of Taint and negative ki can also form yūrei into onryō or in some cases even into monstrous yōkai. Yūrei transformed in this way are often form the worst kinds of onryō, as they lose sight of their specific obsessions and replace them with a general hatred of the living.

Tips for using the NPC

In Conflict

As noted in their Techniques, yūrei change what Actions can be used against them in Conflicts. This creates a different kind of battle from most physical based enemies, and GMs can use them to allow PCs to make use of their other Skills and Techniques.

As Neutral Characters

When yūrei's goals do not directly help or harm PCs, they may still be affecting the lives of Characters indirectly. The PCs may have to help friends or frightened NPCs who come to them for assistance with the supernatural. Yūrei also present a good opportunity to draw the PCs into a conflict with no clearly 'right' side, a wronged yūrei may seek

justified revenge on a target, but attempt to do so in an unacceptable or extreme way, requiring the PCs to stop both sides from doing terrible things.

As an Ally

Yūrei often have information from the past that may be lost to the living. Unfortunately, a happy yūrei is a short-lived one; it is likely they will only be able to help the Players once or twice before moving on to The World Beyond. A yūrei with a grudge of a particularly grand scope could ask the PCs for help manipulating the physical world in exchange for taking care of the supernatural elements. For example, a murdered advisor to the Emperor seeks the PCs help removing corruption from the capitol, bypassing traps and physical barriers to gather information, but requires the PCs help to beseech the Emperor.

In Story

It is important to always pay respects to the dead and give them proper funerals to avoid their spirit becoming a yūrei. Relationships between humans and yūrei can be very complex, while most view yūrei with some combination of fear and respect some may secretly be happy to have their loved ones still present in some way. Additionally there is an ever present danger of a yūrei becoming corrupted and dangerous if it stays in this world for too long without regular purification ceremonies. The Players will always have interesting decisions to make when yūrei are involved, both about the living and the dead. Do you make them leave by force or fulfill their desires, or let them stay despite potential risks?

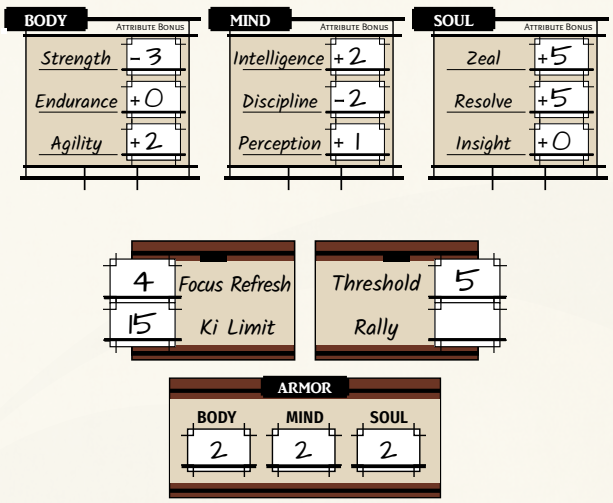
Yūrei Variants

Onryō - Vengeful Ghosts

Vengeful spirits corrupted by their grudges, the power of their hatred is overwhelming.

Level: Challenge

Building Onryō



Skills

Use the same set of Skills as yūrei. Pick one Skill to represent the defining characteristic of the onryō's reason for being and raise it to a Total Modifier of +7. Note that this skill does not have to be one of the default yūrei skills, it can be added by the GM.

Bestiary Entry: Yūrei - Ghosts And Spirits

Inherent Abilities

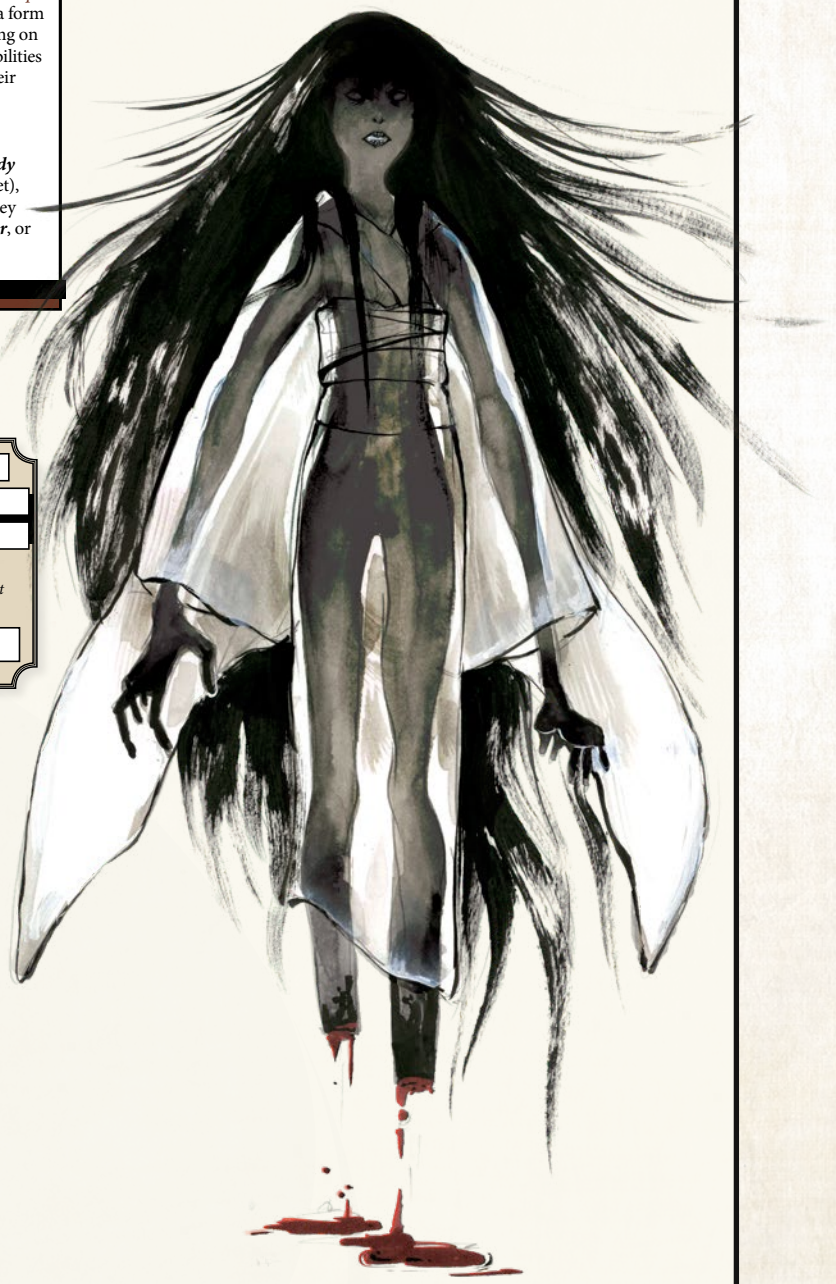
Technique **Undying Grudge**

Special Technique

Onryō think of nothing but achieving their last goal. Usually this grudge is a form of revenge or a desire to complete goals in opposition to their killer. Depending on the circumstances of their death, the onryō will have developed additional Abilities to help fulfill their grudge, as well as clinging on to any relevant ones from their past. The GM should select any additional Techniques that apply.

Some common choices are:

Stalwart (if their target is a group, such as a gang of bandits), ***Modify Body*** (if they have learned to change themselves quickly to adapt to a cunning target), ***Elemental Manipulation*** (generally only non-physical ones, such as Fire if they were burned to death, or Water if they drowned), ***Heavy Strike***, ***Ignore Armor***, or ***Illusions.***



Signature Attack

Signature Attack

Torturous Projection FP 1 KI 1

Total Check Modifier	Associated Skill (Asso. Attribute)	DAMAGE	DOMAIN
+ 7	See onryō Skills	D6+1	Soul

RANGE	KI POISON	FP DRAIN	MOVE
2	-	-	

Onryō are more powerful and focused than yūrei. They learn to hone their emotional projections in a way that maximize damage. Some manifest so strongly that they might inflict Body Damage instead of Soul Damage.

DEFENSES ZEA, RES, DIS, Interaction, Ki Manipulation, Survival

❖ Chapter 7 ❖

Gaming Groups Guide

Starting a New Campaign

Starting a new role playing campaign can be exciting. There's so many choices to make for both the Game Master and the players. What kind of Character will everyone bring to the story? What's the overall story itself? What challenges will our heroes face, and what tone will each session have?

A lot of the overall story and world building usually falls to the Game Master, who will be able to find information and advice about how to plan and prepare the setting ahead of time in the Game Master's Guide. Who and what the Player Characters are should usually be decided by the person playing each Character; after all, it's no fun to play something that doesn't interest you.

While there are lots of individual decisions to make, it's usually best for the long-term health of the campaign if everyone gets on the same page before too much work gets done. No one wants to spend hours developing world stories or character personalities if there will be such a huge clash between what everyone wants that the campaign breaks up after a few sessions. This can be the hardest part of building a gaming group; everyone plays games differently, and we're all here together to enjoy ourselves. This chapter covers several things to consider before and during the creation of a new gaming group.

It's important to note that these are just suggestions, and because every player and every group is different, some may be useful and others may actually be harmful. You should only use the ones that work for you, and throw out anything that feels like it would take away from the fun.

Building the Gaming Group

There's two basic approaches to figuring out what your campaign will be.

If one player has a really good idea for a story or wants to build up the overall world, they can take the role of the Game Master and begin with a set of ideas and world rules. The other players can then consider the GM's concept and create Characters to explore that kind of story.

Going from the other direction, the players can discuss the kinds of characters they want to play. In this approach, once the overall party dynamic is known, one (or more) player(s) can work on coming up with interesting stories that allow the players to focus on the characters, showcasing what they can do and exploring the things that make them who they are.

Building a World

When a Game Master starts by creating the world, it is usually because they have a lot of ideas for the story or interesting things to fill the world with. This can be a great thing, as it means the players have a rich world to explore. As long as the GM leaves the story open ended enough for the Player Characters to be the focus, there usually won't be many problems working the party into the game. GMs should be careful not to let their stories become too specific without letting their players know what to expect; if the GM is imagining a Bureau Files campaign where all the players are experienced and competent Bureau Agents, it would be hard to work in the lazy traveling ramen eater or the selfish swordsman only out for his own fame.

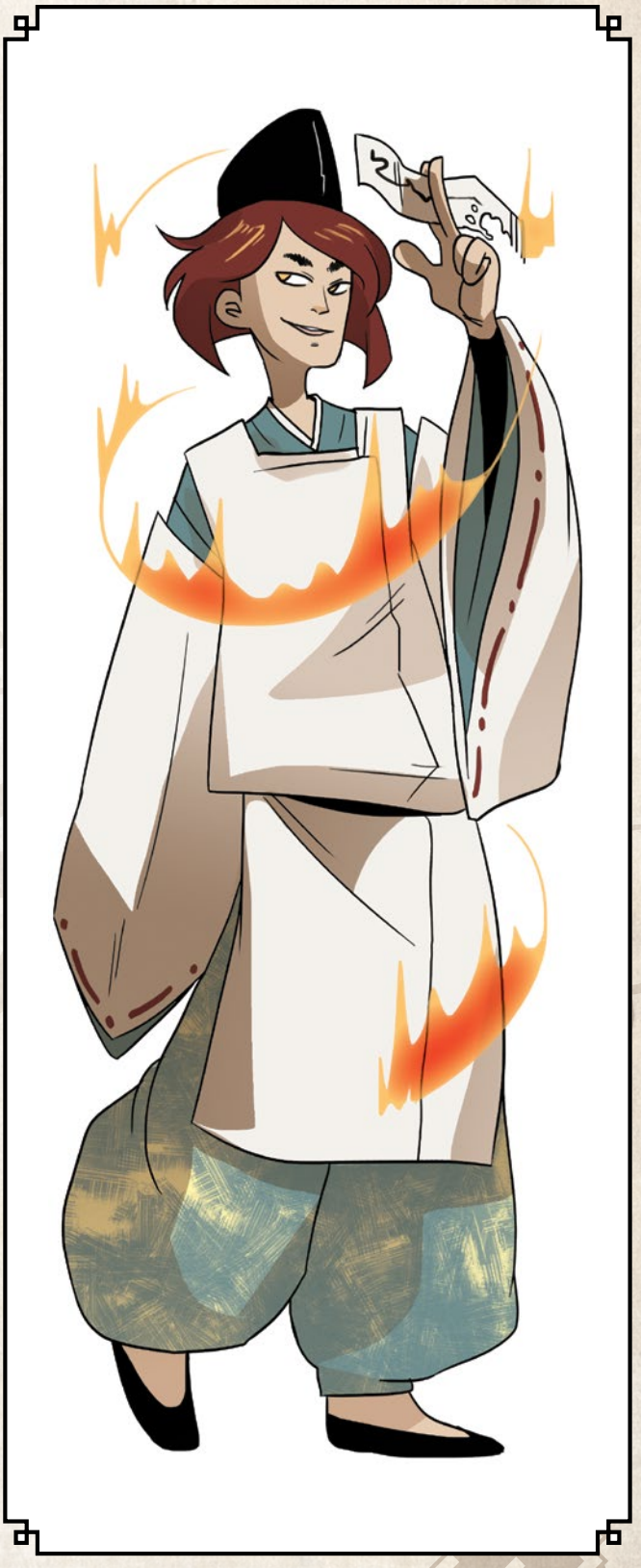
Building Characters

Every player values different things when creating a Character. GMs and players should consider the power level of Characters, a Character's place in the world and how it might change, and the relationships between the other PCs. There's no wrong approach to this; some players want to follow the story and explore the world, and others want to change it with their own hands. It's better, in fact, to have a good mix of player goals, so that each player has a chance to shine as the plot goes in different directions.

If you are new to roleplaying, it might feel intimidating to decide on a Character you want to play. After all, most campaigns play over several meetings, and finding something that's fun week in and week out is a considerable task. Below are some guidelines to get you started along the right track, but don't be afraid to leave some details open so you can change or even create them on the spot as the campaign goes along. As long as you have a core idea of who your Character is, you'll be able to play the game without agonizing over what you would or wouldn't do, or playing as a faceless actor.

Choose an Archetype or Inspiration from the Game, History, or Anime

If you're looking to see the world through someone else's eyes, you can choose to create a Character based on either an idea or an existing character. An idea can be as simple as a single sentence that describes the Character ("noble samurai who defends the helpless"), to as complicated as you want to get. You can flesh out the Character's history, decide how they react to important situations, and create a list of goals that will give you something to seek out during play. You can flip through the Mysteries of the Yōkai book for inspiration; there are plenty of NPC descriptions, short stories, and details about the world you can draw from. You can also start with a character from your favorite anime, novel, movie, or video game. These characters can be a fun place to start from, because, as with playing as yourself, you probably have a good idea how the character will react without stopping to think about it. You might want to vary things up a little from the actual character you're drawing inspiration from; "alternate universe" versions of a character can be just as interesting as the original.



Be Yourself!

One of the easiest ways to create a Character is to simply play one with your own personality, values, goals, quirks, and so on. This lets you explore what would happen if you were in the story yourself. You'll need to separate what you as a player know, and what the Character knows (being "genre savvy" can be a problem, see sidebar), but you don't have to spend hours developing a backstory and checking for consistency; just be yourself.

Being Genre Savvy

Many players are familiar with the lore and setting details of the game. This kind of information could be used to help them make decisions that their Characters wouldn't be able to make. Players should try their best to make decisions that are logical given what their Characters know at the time, even if they could make different decisions based on their own knowledge.

Build Your Character From Abilities and Gameplay

Some players enjoy taking Actions and exploring mechanics more than discussions and deep personality building. If you find yourself more interested in seeing what you can do with Ki, Geomancy, Alchemy, or Exorcisms than you are deciding the minute details of your Character's backstory, it's easy to build a Character from a list of Abilities and then look at the list to see who the Character is. In this case, you should find a few things that really interest you and purchase them with your starting Potential. These will be the most frequent Actions you take in the game, so you might as well make sure they excite you! From there, throw in a few things that make sense for a person who has your core Abilities, and then consider some fun, random additions. A warrior-hearted Samurai that strives to be the very best is a good goal that will help you get through the adventures, but what makes them more than a collection of numbers? Maybe the Samurai is afraid of a particular opponent, which forced them to obtain a magical weapon that is especially effective against that foe. Spending a few extra points on a Ki-based Signature Technique built as a sword that does Soul Damage because the Character is terrified of Ghosts not only gives you additional mechanics to play with, it helps you shape the Character.

Getting the Party Together

After all of the players have considered what they want out of the game and the GM has come up with the basics of the campaign, it's a good idea to have a gaming session where you just talk about what everyone wants out of the game. Talking about things before the first adventure can find any potential clashes between player goals, or between what the players and GM are expecting.

Conflicting Goals Between Players

It's important to determine very clearly upfront what the players want out of the game. More than any other factor, this will help the health of the campaign. We all play games to have fun, and the game will quickly fall apart if someone's fun has to come at the expense of someone else's. Note that this doesn't mean that players can't compete with each other; it's a perfectly valid goal to pit yourself against another player, and in fact entire genres of gaming are based on this. But this needs to be discussed ahead of time, and all the players involved need to be aware of it and sign off on it; at that point it simply becomes a mutual goal to do their best against each other, and there's no clash of goals.

Please keep in mind that no goals are inherently conflicting or mutually exclusive, even if a lot of commentators in the RPG hobby would like you to believe they are in order to make their articles more interesting. You can love role playing and mechanics equally. You can be a power gamer without disrupting campaign balance. You can enjoy hanging out and watching others have the limelight most of the time, then turn around and pull off a heroic moment of your own just in time to save everyone.

The Importance of Meaningful Choices

All of the discussions of goals in the next section talk about making "meaningful choices". The term can sound a bit overly dramatic, but what it really means is that players get to do things during the game that are important to the story and reward the player for their choices. The meaningful part comes from the fact that situations where there's no choice, or a false

choice (where there is an obviously correct way to proceed, even if others are technically there), are rather boring. Players who simply follow the story without being personally involved can begin to feel like they are characters in a movie or book, and one of the biggest strengths of role playing over other media is the ability of any character to change the outcome of the story.

Game Masters need to carefully balance the choice and freedom offered to players with the overall focus needed to maintain the game world. "Sandbox" style games, where players are given toys and allowed to play freely, can sometimes seem like they could be run by the players alone but they still require a good amount of GM planning in order to be truly engaging. GMs provide an interesting story, world, and characters to interact with, giving players the freedom to pursue their own goals without having to invest the effort necessary to keep the game from going off the rails and crashing. The best game experiences are ones where everyone (players and GMs alike!) work together to craft a shared world and story through their choices, Actions, and use of Abilities.

Player Goals

Role Playing

Role Playing goals usually involve having the player's character interact with others, deciding how the character will act, and seeing the results on the world and those who inhabit it. Meaningful choices for role players usually come in the form of moral dilemmas or personal challenges. The payoff of these choices can just as easily be negative as positive; realistic ramifications are usually more satisfying than the outcome of the dice or receiving money or loot.

A sub-type of goal for Role Playing involves building and developing the bonds of the player's character. These players are less concerned with developing the role, and more focused on experience the social aspect of the game. This is often a comfortable goal for more casual gamers, who are playing to spend time with their friends and are less concerned with the framework of the game than they are with the play aspect.

Because a GM is usually running dozens of Characters, as well as arbitrating the rules, the most satisfying role playing rewards often come from interacting with other players (who usually only run the one Character, and can afford to give that Character more depth and realism). As long as the other players are at least somewhat interested in this goal, they don't need to have it as their main focus; the role player can guide the experience and bring the others along. This can almost become a second Game Master sort of responsibility, and the rewards for it are usually worth the extra work for this kind of player. As the campaign goes on, this player can draw out the role playing interactions in others, making everyone's Character more clearly established and memorable.

Mechanics

Players with Mechanics based goals are usually looking for ways to use the game system itself. Meaningful choices for these players involve learning the game's rules and doing the very best they can within them. Rewards for these players may come in the form of "loot", more powerful Abilities, or new tricks to use. Rewards can also come from successful gameplay, such as bringing the pieces of a puzzle together in an "AHA!" moment that saves the party or defeats the big bad.

Mechanical goals can be broken into two broad types: competing against opponents, and self optimization. Players who enjoy competition will usually give their best against NPCs or even other players, and expect to get as good as they give. There's no enjoyment in defeating easy challenges or competing against someone who doesn't want to play the game, so these kinds of players should make sure that everyone competing goes forward with the spirit of sportsmanship. Characters that enjoy self optimization aren't quite as potentially disruptive at first; they usually find their own ways to amuse themselves by gathering new toys and tricks and retreating to the garage to build the best evil science machine they can. However, when the final result of their handiwork is revealed, it can often have a huge impact on the game, and if the other players weren't paying attention to this Character's story they may be shocked by the jump in world-shaping ability.

Mechanics players make good support for those who are less interested in the rules; they can reduce how much time is required of the other players to study the book, often suggesting ways that someone can reach their goals that other players might be unaware are even possible.

Character Development

One of the main reasons to play persistent games like tabletop RPGs is to watch a Character grow over time. While not every player expects rewards over time, it's

one of the core experiences in games, and one of the most exciting experiences in life to receive a reward for a job well done.

Meaningful choices for Character development goals are usually a natural part of the game, built into most things the player does anyway. Defeated enemies results in treasure, clues, changing the world, or Potential to make the Character stronger. Both role playing and mechanics can be applied against NPCs to change the world. The real difficulty associated with development goals is not in finding ways to put them in the game, but how to balance the rewards. Too much development too quickly will disrupt the flow of the story, making challenges trivial. Too little reward makes playing feel tedious and takes the joy out of accomplishment; everything feels like a grind with no long term effect.

Story Development

Players looking for Story Development for their Characters want to see the Character grow, and the world needs to react to it. These players often find rewards in situations other players might find frustrating; even if their Character fails, how the Character reacts to and grows from the experience can be just as rewarding as seeing their goals come to life through hard work. GMs and the other players can help this Character by giving them prompts and openings; their player will usually do the rest of the work because the path is as rewarding as the ending.

Ability Development

Players looking for Ability development want to increase their ability to interact with the game and world, and add new powers to their bag of tricks. Sometimes this can be accomplished with a mechanical reward: more Potential, rare items, Situational Modifiers, or even the player discovering a way to use their Character Sheet that isn't directly spelled out in the rules. Other times the increase in Abilities will affect the story or world — a Character seeking to become the most powerful sword master will not only grow to defeat opponents through higher numbers, they will see the respect on the faces of their opponents and the awe of the peasants as they travel the land.

Helping Others

Many players base their goals on end results that reward others rather than, or as well as, their own Character. Meaningful choices for these players can include the traditional noble self sacrifice, but they don't have to. In fact, such a story device can become tiring and cliché very quickly, and may well lead to the player expecting to never see anything go their Character's way. GMs should play that card sparingly, and there are plenty of situations where the Character can act in a way that benefits both themselves and others.

There are two main categories of people to help: "real people", the other players at the table; and "game people", the NPCs and the Player Characters.

Other Players

Many players enjoy helping their friends in real life, and they come to the table to do as much as they can for the entire party (this does include themselves; players are encouraged to never feel like they have to sacrifice their own fun). These players are more than happy to take the back seat in a story or pass out heals and buffs in combat. Seeing their friends' Characters become unstoppable, or knowing that their friends achieved their goals directly thanks to their support, are tangible rewards.

NPCs

The moral tone of most Mysteries of the Yōkai games paint the players as clearly "good". Players often base at least some of their goals on helping NPCs in the game. The changing game-world provides a lot of opportunities for this; yōkai are both threats to humans, and in danger of being targeted with false retribution for crimes they didn't commit. The leaders of the various groups and factions need powerful agents, and players can easily find a cause to champion. The great thing about helping NPCs is that it's easy for GMs to provide opportunities; unlike players, NPCs don't complain if they have a dangerous or unfair lot in life. Well, they might in character, but they don't complain to the GM or form unions!

Ouji-sama:
A Cat Named "Prince" Becomes a Yōkai

Nekomata are a kind of cat yōkai. There are two distinctly different kinds of nekomata. The first is a monstrous animal usually found in mountainous areas. The second kind usually begins its life as a normal domestic cat, and becomes a nekomata after a long life. Ouji-sama is nekomata of the second kind.

Ouji-sama spent most of his life as a feral tomcat, an outcast on the streets of a large city. Barely able to survive, the cat became cautious, almost violent, and would probably have faced a tragic end, if not for the intervention of one kind-hearted peasant girl who adopted the cat, against her parents wishes. They felt the grizzled cat was too wild, not to mention old, to be tamed, but the girl believed in the cat, and he came to trust her. Though still untrusting of other humans and yōkai, Ouji-sama tries to repay the kindness of the girl using it's new abilities as a nekomata.

Using Ouji-sama

Ouji-sama can be introduced, along with the little girl, in any mid-sized or larger city. He provides a good look at the way the supernatural world overlaps with the physical, and players can explore how a simple cat has become a strong spiritual creature. He also presents a window into the interaction between humans and yōkai, Ouji-sama shows that both worlds can become friends, but Ouji-sama himself is no simple pet or obedient servant. The cat has his own will, and will show politeness and tolerance, if not actual friendship, to players who treat the young girl well.

Changing The World

Goals that involve changing the world can often be the most difficult for a gaming group. Not only are big world changes actually hard to pull off for the Characters, they can have unexpected effects on the campaign. These goals are certainly workable, they just require additional communication between the GM and players, and some planning far in advance of achieving the actual goal.

Goals that players may want to achieve include:

- Gaining the favor of an important kami
- Establishing a base for their group or a group of important NPCs
- Discovering the answers to unsolved mysteries
- Becoming someone who is renowned across Nippon
- Improving human and yōkai relations for the whole country
- Preventing the threat of wars looming on the horizon

Players who wish to enact large changes on the world may want to tell the GM ahead of time. This allows the GM not only to prepare for the changes, but to build opportunities for the Character into the story. GMs should strive to provide multiple options, and entertain suggestions from the players; this prevents it feeling like a single predetermined event was fully responsible for the changes.

Most changes of this nature involve upsetting convention or the status quo of the world having widespread impacts on the setting, they may affect many Characters that the Player Characters might not even directly know about:

- Ousting the Shōgun for plotting against the Emperor
- Working towards the downfall of an established power, perhaps even the Emperor himself
- Getting Nippon to declare war
- Ending the Age of Spirits by counteracting the Grand Rite
- Usurping the power of a celestial kami in favor of another

These changes are so large that they are likely to impact the entire party and change their interaction with the setting as a whole. It is recommended before attempting these to discuss this together as a group.

Hack and Slash / Loot

One of the oldest ways of playing tabletop RPGs, "hack 'n' slash" historically gained an unsavory reputation a few decades back as being somehow "low brow" or inferior to "more enlightened" role playing. Part of this came as a backlash against lazy gaming, where groups would fill a piece of graph paper with some miniatures and roll dice until everything was dead, and then roll more dice to see what new tools they got to repeat the process. As Hack and Slash fell out of vogue in tabletop gaming, it exploded in popularity in computer RPGs, showing that people really do love battle and loot — they just want a more immersive experience than rolling dice and interpreting the entire story from some combat tables.

The two goals of Hack and Slash and Loot are usually lumped together, but they don't always have to be. A "Scottish duck" yōkai can certainly seek to be the richest duck in the land without ever killing anyone, and most classic wuxia (see "Martial Arts" under Campaign Themes on page 225) stories rarely touch on material concerns.

Meaningful choices in Hack and Slash usually come in the same forms as those directed at Mechanical goals, with a bit of Character Development thrown in; players are looking to pit themselves against hordes of enemies and see how they measure up. This doesn't have to be direct physical combat; in Mysteries of the Yōkai you can use the Tide and Morale system to model any conflict, and this means players can challenge foes in all venues. Perhaps a player wants to be an undefeated trial lawyer who racks up a tally of defeated prosecutors long enough to embroider a cape. A Spirit Master may travel the land, searching far and wide, defeating every monstrous yōkai that threatens the innocent, and choosing those with skills the master lacks to accompany them when facing social or mental trials. What matters to those seeking Hack and Slash rewards is being tested, usually in dramatic or epic ways, and coming out on top time after time.

Loot-based choices usually drive the game, rather than directly affecting the acquisition of the loot itself. Choosing from a loot table is rather immersion breaking, and after a few shopping trips to the magic item store, loot starts to lose its mystery. Instead, those seeking loot usually search for clues, rumors, job offers, or known treasuries that appeal to their materialistic side. This has the benefit of giving the party a reason to travel and visit new locations, and creates side opportunities for the GM to work in other goals, such as exploring the world or helping others.

Smaller requests can usually be given out in a session or two. A player that wants a quality sword can seek a famous smith, while a sage Character can find a lost library or meet a yōkai with hundreds of years of experience. If a Character doesn't want a specific type of loot, the GM can often give them a variety of rewards that open up more choices. Objects of art can be sold, or through research their origin could be found to lead to even bigger sources of treasure. A favor from the emperor might be redeemed for gold, or the party might choose to gain a land grant, giving them a base of operations (which would of course need all kinds of exciting loot to make it even better, driving even more adventures for loot).

Exploration and Puzzles

Exploration and Puzzle goals share some common themes, but differ in how the players go about achieving them. Both goals involve revealing things inside the game world to the players. Explorers are usually hoping to find things, both for the Character and player. Puzzle seekers are less about what they find than the steps required to find it.

Meaningful choices for Explorers involve the preparation and the journey. The destination is the payoff, but if it's something an explorer just stumbles on, it's less rewarding than if the explorer carefully makes plans and then overcomes obstacles and dangers along the way.

Meaningful choices for Puzzle seekers are usually the puzzles themselves. These can be actual puzzles where the Character seeks out clues and combines them, or they can be riddles, mazes, or even understanding an inhuman yōkai's reasoning. The best puzzles have more than one solution, and the most memorable rewards for puzzle seekers involve them using their Abilities in unique ways. GMs don't need to script out every single detail of a puzzle, they can usually just put several interesting tools in play and let the players come up with their own solutions.

Players who enjoy Exploration and Puzzles can often encourage other players in the party to use their Abilities in creative ways that might not normally come up. They may not necessarily be the leaders or

driving forces in a team, but they make good strategists and their goals often lead the party to new places and different kinds of stories.

Competition and Challenge

Mysteries of the Yōkai is a cooperative game, but that doesn't mean there isn't room for competition. Players will face many challenging NPCs, and can even compete against each other as rivals. In general the game mechanics, such as Tide and Morale, don't allow for direct player-versus-player battles as a core focus of a campaign, but they can certainly be used any time the players want to settle a challenge between them. Just split the players into two groups and resolve the battle in the same way as players versus enemies.

Players who enjoy Competition seek out goals where they make meaningful choices against someone else doing the same. This can mean another player, or the GM can provide additional details and attention to an NPC who will act just like a player opposing the party. The GM needs to be careful that this NPC isn't able to take advantage of knowledge the GM has but the Character wouldn't have, even if run by another player.

Challenge can also come from NPCs. The general theme and tone of most Mysteries of the Yōkai campaigns allows for a lot of different kinds of challenges (combat, investigation, negotiation, and similar), but doesn't always focus on direct challenge. Players are usually considered to be more powerful and influential than most NPCs. If the players are looking for more challenging encounters, the GM can increase the abilities of the threats in the story. This can be direct, such as increasing the stat values of enemies; or indirect, by increasing the penalties if the players fail. Challenge campaigns usually involve at least occasional times where the players don't win; it's not much of a challenge if the players never struggle. These losses should be handled in a way that leads to the party having another chance. Especially rewarding stories focus on how the players overcome their own failures and rise above the challenge next time.

Both of these kinds of goals involve a lot of planning and focus on balance. GMs need to be careful to make things difficult without unfairly overwhelming the players. Rewards for these goals often cross over with other themes. Increasing challenges usually lead to increases in ability; being pushed to one's limits is a good way to increase those limits. These goals can also reward the players with fame or help change the world, and often come with the trappings found in hack and slash and loot goals. Challenge and competition might be better thought of as sliders for other goals, and so the GM should adjust the level of difficulty applied to the players as high or low as necessary so that they are having fun, never feeling like the journey is too easy or too difficult.

Managing Campaign Tone and Player Goals

The "Game Master's Guide" on page 205 contains advice for GMs on defining the tone of a new campaign, as well as things like the power levels of the Player Characters and the impact they will have on the world. Often these will change over time as the campaign evolves, but it's a good idea to discuss the situation up front to make sure everyone wants the same thing, or at least a working combination of things.

For example, if the GM is considering a low powered magic campaign where the players are neophyte wizards out to explore the big new world of magic, but the players want Characters that start with the ability to drop mountains on entire species of evil yōkai, it's unlikely anyone will have much fun. The players will feel shackled by the lower power of magic, and might miss out on the subtle nuances the GM reveals in the magic they do use.

Conflicting Player Goals

Each player should explain a little about what they want out of the game. This doesn't need to reference the goals listed in this book at all; they are just suggested classifications to get you thinking about what you might want.

Everyone isn't required to have the same or similar goals; it's perfectly fine if everyone's looking to get something different out of the game. As each player describes what they're looking for, they'll also probably talk about things they don't like. As long as no player is invested in something that makes another player uncomfortable, the group should be able to find ways to weave the different goals together. Having different goals often helps when one plot point is complete and the group is looking for the introduction hook to the next story.

Resolving Conflicts

In most cases you should be able to resolve any conflicts with a discussion among the group. Most players aren't dead-set on their specific goals, and even ones that define a Character don't need to come up during every adventure.

The most important thing to do is talk and be willing to work with the other players. You're likely to be spending many hours on the game across several sessions, so it's in everyone's best interest to find solutions to problems before starting; once you're into the thick of an adventure it's a lot harder to think outside of the game.

Don't be afraid to tell the others in your gaming group what you like and what makes you uncomfortable. New gamers sometimes feel like they need to "go with the flow" or that certain things are expected. Many people worry about conflicts with their friends and social groups, so they don't bring up issues they think are small. As introverts, the creators of this game know all too well how difficult it can be sometimes. But everyone in the group has already agreed that they want to hang out and have fun together; trust that they are willing to work with you, and be willing to work with them.

Unresolvable Issues

Unfortunately, there may be times when a group wants to go in such different directions that the campaign is unlikely to work out. It's a tough situation to be in, but it does happen a lot in role playing. The point of having a pre-campaign discussion is to help find these problems, but things can always crop up later.

Once you've talked about what everyone wants, check to make sure no one is uncomfortable or upset with what was agreed on. Sometimes people just want completely different experiences from the game, and that's fine! Everyone likes different things, and role playing is a hobby that is meant to be a relaxing and fun way to spend time with friends. If it looks like that's not going to happen, you probably shouldn't try to force it. It's much better to agree to find different plans than get stuck in an ongoing experience that makes someone feel bad.

Issues During Play

Good discussion and planning before the campaign can spot most of the big issues, but there are always plenty of small things that show up during a gaming session. These are often rules disputes or disagreements about what makes sense in the story, but any number of things can threaten to derail an otherwise great adventure.

Player Arguments

In the middle of a game, it often happens that players disagree on something. This might be a rule, but more often it's something that results from their Characters disagreeing, especially on which way the group should go, the right thing to do, or similar.

For rules disputes, most groups usually agree that the Game Master will make the final call. In some cases, such as when one player is more experienced with the game system than the GM, one of the players may be the default judge. No matter who it is, your group should choose one person to make a call if searching the book starts to slow down play. However, since it's important to get the rules right for all those involved, it might feel unfair to make snap judgments, so don't feel that it's never okay to stop and figure out a rule. It might break immersion for a moment or two, but it's better than resolving the entire session based on a ruling that leaves some of the group feeling cheated. As long as you can resolve the issue through discussion, it's better to find the interpretation that works best for your group. Only bring in a final judgment if it's clear that no agreement is going to be reached. If the gaming group agrees ahead of time to use this system, they can move on during play, and then go back to the rules after the session is over and spend more time (possibly with clearer heads) to decide how the rule will be handled for the rest of the campaign or for future sessions.

Read through the "House Rules" section under "Table Advice" on page 351 to see how you can change the rules ahead of time if there is a common feeling of dissatisfaction with a rule as printed. Remember, it's your game, you should always make the rules work to fit your enjoyment, not the other way around!

When Character disagreements spill over into player disagreements, the table should take a break and let everyone clear their thoughts. When something is important to the story, it can be easy to get caught up and feel strongly about what the Characters should do. Emotional immersion in the game is great, but if it starts to become an actual fight between players, it's time to take a break. Usually you don't need more than a couple minutes; everyone can grab a drink or snack, stretch their legs, or check their cell-phone games.



Rolling Back The Story (Ret-Cons)

There can be times when someone, or everyone, in the group needs to roll back the story and undo what just happened. This often comes up when a player says something jokingly, but the GM interprets it seriously (out-of-character talk is a big culprit here). Other times, the GM may realize that the players have gone forward misunderstanding something the GM thought they were clear on (this often happens in mystery/investigation plots when a crucial clue is revealed in a less than straightforward way). Finally, something may have happened that everyone looks at and simply decides makes for a bad story.

There's nothing wrong with going back and undoing things that have happened in the game, and it can often make for a better overall session. Both GMs and players should be careful not to do this too often, or for things that don't directly hurt the experience.

Example: Undoing Dice

Sometimes you don't want to let the dice ruin an important event in the game, even though the GM wants the players to have some element of uncertainty in their actions. If the entire party has come up with a great plan and set it into motion with creative and entertaining Actions throughout the night, the GM shouldn't allow the plan to fail completely because of one failed roll, especially if it had a very high chance of success but the player simply had incredibly bad luck. In this case, the GM may decide the Check actually succeeded, but was slightly less than fully effective. If the party brings a plan together in a Check that needs anything above an 11, with a +5 to the roll, and the player rolls three '1's, instead of it being a complete failure the GM might rule that the Attack succeeds, but is at -1 to the final damage (sort of a reverse Margin of Success Modifier).

Player Control of Characters

One of the most important guidelines for staying in the spirit of Mysteries of the Yōkai is that each player has full control of their Character. This starts with Character Creation; players should create the personality of their Character, choose the Abilities that interest them, and then discuss their goals for the gaming experience with the group.

Players should be careful when giving other players suggestions, especially newer or more shy players who might feel pressured into doing something because they think the group would benefit from it, rather than it being natural for their Character. That doesn't mean you shouldn't talk about interesting ideas for other people's Characters; some of the best ideas for great scenes can come from someone else's ideas. But in the end, each player is the best judge of what's right for their Character.

Some other games penalize players if their Character acts "out of character". Usually, this is based on some alignment or class restriction system. Mysteries of the Yōkai leaves it up to the players to play the kind of Character they want, and be the judge of what that means. When these penalty systems are implemented well, they are usually meant to prevent players from taking Actions that feel unnatural for the Character, but are instead chosen to gain mechanical or rules advantages. Basically, these systems are there to prevent the player's knowledge from making the Character take Actions that are illogical in the game world. Mysteries of the Yōkai instead provides a Bonus (in the form of extra rewarded Potential) if the party as a whole acted in an entertaining and natural way (see the GM Section for Potential Rewards). This Bonus should never be withheld because of a player acting out-of-character. If GMs feel this is a problem with one or more of the players, they should discuss it with them personally or have a group discussion, with the intention of getting the whole group working in a way that improves the overall experience.

Finally, the gaming group should discuss whether they want to include situations in the campaign where players lose control of their Characters. Mysteries of the Yōkai is based on Japanese mythology, and many of the stories and themes include aspects of illusion, mind control, possession, and similar effects. While these themes make for incredibly strong and dramatic stories, they do not work so naturally in games. In a story, the author has full control of all the characters, so they can write the plot in a way that reaches the intended conclusions. In a game, however, these themes take control away from the player, which can be incredibly frustrating. The "Game Master's Guide" on page 205 has additional suggestions on how to use these story elements in play, but everyone should be clear that they want to include them from the beginning. If any player's fun would be reduced by them, they should not be included.

Table Advice

Every gaming group is different, and some parts of the rules are often less appropriate for some groups than others. In these cases, groups are encouraged to set their own house rules. In addition to changes to the printed rules, every group has its own social dynamic, and everyone should agree on what's okay and what isn't at the table.

House Rules and Rule Changes

Trying to list all of the possible rule changes would take almost as much space as the rule book, but the general advice is that anything that has been discussed by the group and that most people feel strongly about should be adopted as a house rule. GMs may also want to impose certain house rules to make the game easier to run. For example, some GMs use note paper to pass information to players when the other players wouldn't be aware of it. Other GMs may want to step out of the room with a player, so they can discuss the information in a much easier way than using slips of paper. Other GMs may just tell everyone at the table, and expect players to not act on information that is unknown to their Character.

Table Rules

Different groups will have different standards for what is and is not acceptable at the table. A lot of this will come from your actual social dynamics, and you might have figured it out already. Things like what kind of humor is funny or uncomfortable, or whether people can eat cheesy snacks while there are books around are generally outside the business of this book, but there are several things that come up in the course of gaming. Some of the more common ones are listed below, but it's good to talk to everyone ahead of time, especially if the group is composed of people who are meeting for the first time or don't often hang out. It is a good idea to discuss everyone's expectations and what topics are or are not allowed before the first sessions.

Electronic Devices at the Table

Things like cellphones, tablets, and computers can be very handy assistants when playing the game, but some players find them to be distracting, especially if they're used to play other games, video clips, and other unrelated activities.

Electronic dice rolling programs are another issue that sometimes causes mixed feelings. They can be a quick and space-saving replacement to rolling physical dice on the table, but they can also be noticeably less random (if not actually rigged by the Random Number Generation process used by the program in question).

Music

Some GMs use ambient music and sound effects to enhance immersion in the adventure, and most people tend to be fine with just background music, but for others it might be distracting. Especially when people have highly contrasting musical tastes, everyone should be aware of the issue and focus on keeping the table comfortable for everyone.

Dice

Dice are a simple thing, but they can lead to some of the craziest superstitions, ones that are held with almost fanatical belief by gamers. Touching someone else's dice can be the highest social faux pas among some gamers, and others might consider lazily dropping the dice onto the table while rolling to be tantamount to cheating. One almost universal rule is that dice that fall off the table or land on their edge need to be rerolled, mostly so there's no time wasted arguing over what the result actually was. These kinds of things might seem silly at first, but it's never fun to have a great night of gaming broken by arguments over something fairly meaningless. Discuss with everyone how you will arbitrate dice; doing so once before the campaign begins is usually all it takes.

Other Games, TV, Media

Mentioned briefly above, sometimes other games make their way to the table. This usually happens when the party has split up and the GM is focusing on some players, leaving the others with nothing to do. Game Masters tend to frown on other games, because it comes across as a disrespectful lack of interest in the work the GM has put into the session. But if everyone is fine with it, portable or card games can be a good way to kill a few minutes until the Player Characters are back on the screen.

TV, radio, online streams and videos, and similar media can also be a distraction for some players. If you

enjoy having these kinds of things running, make sure you ask the other people at the table if it would distract them, and be willing to leave them off if anyone asks you to.

Out of Character Talk

While out-of-character talk usually isn't a problem in itself, it can be confusing, especially if multiple conversations are going on at the same time. While you might know that you're clearly joking about taking a silly Action, if others are absorbed in the plot (especially the GM), it might not be as clear to them, and could be taken as something your Character actually does. Other times "meta" discussion — talking about the game with player knowledge instead of Character knowledge — may break immersion for some players. This is something that's harder to decide on before the campaign starts; it's usually something that everyone just needs to be aware and mindful of during play so it doesn't cause problems.

Gaming Aids

This section lists additional resources that can make your games more enjoyable or speed up play. None of these are required to play the game, and you should feel free to skip any that you don't have access to, or don't feel benefit the game for your group.

Tokens

Mysteries of the Yōkai uses two resources in combat: Focus Points, and Ki. These track in opposite ways, but both go up and down during the course of a Round. One good way to track them is to use tokens, glass beads, or other small objects. It's helpful to use two different-colored tokens, to easily keep track of which are Ki and which are Focus Points. You can also use dice, especially "spin down" dice, which have their numbers ordered on adjacent faces of the die so you can easily add or subtract one from the total you are tracking.

Figures

The Zone Diagram is used to track where all Characters are during a Conflict. Anything can be used to represent each Character: dice, coins, paper markers, or whatever. Many players like to use figures, which create a quick and easy visual during play, making it possible to see where everyone is with just a glance. You can buy metal or plastic figures made specifically for roleplaying from your local game store or online shop. Or you can use something you already have — figures can come from pretty much anywhere: other games, toys, capsule figures, building blocks, even gummy bears. Figures also allow players to customize their avatar on the table, and many people enjoy building, modifying, and painting figures to look exactly how they picture their Character.

Maps

While Mysteries of the Yōkai abstracts the exact locations of Characters during a Conflict, maps can still be very useful to help everyone picture adventure locations. Area maps can be helpful when players are exploring or traveling large distances. Even for small encounters using the Conflict rules, a detailed map of the area can give players ideas for Actions to take. Knowing there's only two lanterns in the bar during a fight can be handy, and any Geomancer with time before a battle benefits from knowing the area (and where it needs to be re-aligned). Maps can be as simple or as complicated as the GM wants, from a quickly hand-drawn scribble on scratch-paper to a full color map generated on the computer and printed for the evening.

Session Journals

Session journals are records kept of each adventure. They can range from a simple list of all the major things that happened to actual in-depth journals fully written in-character. Session journals can be used to track the history of the world for writing a later story or archive, or can just be a helpful reminder of what happened last time, especially if your campaign has an irregular or infrequent schedule.

GM Screens

A Game Master Screen is a standing screen behind which the GM can keep important notes, make dice rolls, or prepare props without revealing information to the players. This can be especially handy to have when a session calls for a dramatic scene; the GM can "fudge" dice rolls so that the outcome isn't thrown off track by unfortunate dice results in either direction. Screens help when a player might have wandering eyes (whether they mean to or not) and the GM needs to keep clues and secret information on hand without them being seen.

They can keep their planned session notes, information about potential twists, or even figurines that might be relevant later, hidden.

Software and Apps

There are an unlimited number of software programs and apps out there to assist with roleplaying games, many of which are free. If you find some elements of play are slowing the game down for you, you can often find something to assist you. Having trouble quickly adding or subtracting several numbers to calculate final damage when there's lots of Modifiers? Most basic calculator apps will track a history of inputs while giving you the final result. If people are always forgetting who acts next in Initiative order, many apps can provide a visual tracker. Digital Character Sheets are available on the Mysteries of the Yōkai website (http://www.mysteriesoftheyokai.com/downloads) to help you double check things as you build a Character. Software exists that lets GMs quickly make beautiful-looking maps, and digital dice rolling programs can be programmed with macros containing all of your Skills and Modifiers for quick Skill Check results at the touch of a button.



❖ Chapter 8 ❖

References

Glossary

Ability *page 10*

A general term for Character features that are used during play to make Checks. Attributes, Skills, and Techniques are all Abilities.

Age of Spirits *page 133*

The name of the current era, which began after Emperor Shoren's Grand Rite. It is a time of unprecedented spiritual activity, when yōkai and kami roam Nippon once again.

Armor *page 109*

A Technique that reduces Tide Damage a Character takes. Characters have separate Armor values for Body damage, Mind damage, and Soul damage.

Attribute *page 12*

Abilities that measure the inherent traits possessed by all Characters. Body (Strength, Endurance, Agility), Mind (Intelligence, Discipline, Perception), and Soul (Zeal, Resolve, Insight).

Bakemono *page 198, 263*

Also known as *obake*, or *henge-yōkai*. A category of well-known yōkai who have become spirits by some means. Most commonly they are animals who have in some way become yōkai. The word "*bake*" means "changed" or "changing" and "*mono*" means "thing" or "ones". Bakemono is pronounced "bah-kay-moh-noh".

Bonus *page 14*

A general term for any benefit granted by an Ability. This includes Modifiers, Actions, and other stats.

Bureau of Supernatural Affairs *page 154*

A government agency that is responsible for handling supernatural concerns, including: sorcery and magical crimes, diplomatic relations with supernatural factions, and defense against hostile or dangerous yōkai, creatures, and spirits. It was once shadowy and cabalistic but it has been reformed by Emperor Akitsu into a respectable organization.

Campaign *page 220*

A connected set of game sessions that follows a group of Player Characters as they attempt to complete a goal.

Check *page 102*

Checks are used to resolve any Player Action that has a chance for failure. Checks are performed by rolling 3D6 and adding any Modifiers that apply. Checks can either be made against fixed values set by the GM or against Checks made by other Characters (Opposed Checks).

Conflict *page 105*

The rules system used to resolve complex challenges and actions between the PCs and their enemies. When in Conflict, Characters must take turns attempting to inflict enough Morale Damage on the opposing side to achieve their goals.

Damage *page 108*

Damage is used to track the progress of each side in a Conflict, not actual physical damage. Tide damage is inflicted by Attacks made by Characters. Enough Tide Damage breaks the Tide Bar and inflicts Morale Damage. Characters must leave Conflicts when Morale Damage gets too high.

Dice *page 6*

All rolls in Mysteries of the Yōkai use ordinary six-sided dice or D6. Checks use three D6 (3D6), other rolls may use a single D6. If a roll calls for a D3: roll a D6, divide the result by two, and round up to the next whole number.

Domain *page 12*

Domains are categories used by Attributes and Damage to describe how they affect the world. The three Domains are Body, Mind, and Soul.

Emperor Akitsu *page 150*

The name of the young Emperor newly risen to the throne, he has the empire's best interests at heart but is prone to idealism and naiveté.

Extended Checks *page 106*

A middle ground between a single Check and Conflict consisting of a series of Opposed Checks. Extended Checks are used for short challenges, such as a chase or a competition.

Focus Points *page 107*

Focus Points are used to perform Actions in Conflicts, they represent a combination of the time, effort, and concentration needed to perform the Action while under pressure.

GM *page 206*

Game Master. One Player in the group who arbitrates the rules, plays the non-Player Characters, and usually develops the majority of the story and setting.

Heian *page 126, 142*

The name of the age that preceded the Age of Spirits, also the name of the old capitol city that fell as a result of The Grand Rite.

Kami *page 200, 283*

A term for the various divine spirits of Nippon, they range from grand and powerful celestial deities to the minor spirits of the local rocks, rivers, and trees.

Kata *page 23*

Collections of Abilities purchased as a package deal with potential. They represent skills that would usually learned together as part of a Character's life-path.

Ki *Rules: page 118, Lore: page 195*

A mystical energy inherent to all things. Ki is used to perform some Abilities. As Ki is used, Ki points build up in a Character's Ki Pool; exceeding one's Ki Limit creates penalties to Actions.

Magic *page 196*

The study of manipulating Ki to perform various feats of mysticism.

Margin of Success (MoS) *page 110*

When a Character succeeds at a Check, they gain a Margin of Success Bonus for every 3 points they succeeded by. For most Checks this just improves the story effects of the Check. For Attacks this Bonus is additional Tide Damage. Some Techniques have special Bonuses based on Margin of Success.

Miwa-kyō *page 138*

The capital city of Nippon in the Age of Spirits. It is located on the island of Hazama.

Modifier *Character: page 102, GM: page 209*

Values that are added to Checks to represent story factors that make the Check easier or harder. Some come from Characters or Abilities but there can also be Situational Modifiers based on the story.

Morale *page 114*

A value used to track the progress of each side in a Conflict. When the Tide bar breaks as a result of Tide Damage, Morale Damage is inflicted. Morale Damage can force Characters to leave a Conflict.

Nippon *page 136*

The word people in the Age of Spirits use to refer to the nation and islands of Japan.

NPCs *page 244*

Non Player Characters. Used to refer to any of the Characters created and played by the Game Master.

Osmanthus Emperor *page 145*

The mysterious ruler of the Osmanthus Dominion in the World Beyond. He raised Emperor Akitsu during his stay in the spirit realm. He and his dominion are named for the osmanthus tree. Also also called *Ano-Tennō* or "the Emperor on the Other Side".

PCs *page 8*

Player Characters. Characters made by the real life human Players of the game (not including the Game Master).

Potential *page 9*

The resource that is used to purchase Abilities for Characters. Characters receive a set amount of Potential at creation (usually 100) and can be awarded more by the GM during play.

Rally *page 115*

Rally allows a Character to return to a Conflict after being forced out once the enemy's Morale Threshold is pushed past that Character's Rally value. All Player Characters and some NPCs have Rally values.

Ranked Potential Table *page 11*

A table used to track the Bonuses granted by Abilities that can be improved by spending more Potential. Look up the amount of Potential your character has spent on the Ability and use the highest bonus that costs less than that amount of Potential.

Session *page 220*

A single sitting of playing the game. Usually lasts a few hours and covers a small chunk of story. Multiple sessions over a period of weeks or months make up a Campaign.

Shapeshifting *page 198, 263*

The ability possessed by some yōkai and demi-yōkai that allows them to change their physical form. While certain yōkai are specifically known as shapeshifters, as spirits many yōkai's outer appearances may vary each time you encounter them.

Shōgun Utetsu *page 153*

Tai-Shōgun Utetsu Rinsei is the chief military commander of Nippon. She publically professes loyalty to Emperor Akitsu but is secretly working to undermine him. She believes in the prosperity of the nation of Nippon above all else and is willing to do anything to maintain its stability.

Signature Attacks *page 65*

Customizable Abilities that represent a Character's preferred methods of Attack. Signature Attacks are the most common Actions a Character will use during Conflicts.

Skill *page 14*

An Ability used to perform a set of related activities. Skills use Checks to resolve their success. Skills are purchased and increased with Potential.

Technique *page 35*

Abilities that represent more specialized powers a Character has. Depending on the Character they could be magical spells, ki-based powers, martial arts training, special equipment, social status, or yōkai-heritage powers. Techniques are purchased with Potential.

The Grand Rite *page 131*

The Previous Emperor's attempt to reach the realm of the kami, it ended in a catastrophe that brought the mortal world crashing into The World Beyond and destroyed a large portion of the city of Heian.

The World Beyond *page 143*

The spiritual world where most yōkai are from. Also called *anoyo*, or the spiritual realm.

The World Here *page 136*

The physical world where humans live. Also called *konoyo*, or the mortal realm.

Tide *page 114*

Also called the Tide of Battle. Tide represents the status of the current round in conflict. The Tide value is changed by doing Tide Damage. If the Tide hits the breakpoint, it resets to neutral and Morale damage is dealt to the side it broke against.

Universal Actions *page 120*

A set of Conflict actions that any Character can use without having to purchase anything with Potential. The Universal Actions are: ***Improvised Attack***, ***Simple Defense***, ***Last-Ditch Defense***, ***Ready***, ***Ki Balance***, ***Intercept***, ***Cover***, ***Counter-Attack***, and ***Move***.

Yōkai *page 198*

Nippon's supernatural neighbors. Yōkai come in all forms, shapes, and sizes. Some are more intelligent than humans while others are purely instinctual, akin to beasts. Some are malevolent, while others are helpful. Each yōkai must be handled in their own way. They can sometimes be called bakemono, *mononoke*, or *ayakashi*.

Yomi *page 147*

A realm of blight, death, and decay located in The World Beyond, the kami Izanami was trapped there long ago. It is the greatest source of the corrupting influence of Taint in the mortal world, making it dangerous to humans, yōkai, and spirits alike.

Yūkai *page 144*

The part of The World Beyond that is closest to The World Here. It is home to many lost and vengeful spirits. Also called the hazy realm.

Yūrei *page 334*

Restless spirits of the dead who are fixated on certain things from their former lives. They appear in the World Here but often slip between the mortal realm and Yūkai.

Zones *page 116*

Abstraction of involvement or distance in Conflicts. A Character chooses their Zone based on how they are approaching the battle. The Zones are Aggressive, Balanced, and Cautious.

Rules Summary

Game Basics

- **Players**: The (real world) humans playing the game.
- **Game Master (GM)**: One of the people playing the game, with a special set of duties in the game. GMs usually create most of the story of the game, and run all of the other Characters in the game not controlled by the Players.
- **Character**: The interface between a Player and the game. Players create a Character that has a personality and a collection of Abilities. They choose what their Character does in the story as the game progresses.
- **Abilities**: A collection of game rules that allow Players to take Actions with their Characters. Includes Attributes, Skills, Techniques, and Attacks.

Rule Basics

- **Attributes**: Stats possessed by all Characters. *Strength, Endurance, Agility, Intelligence, Discipline, Perception, Zeal, Resolve, Insight*
- **Skills**: Skills are Abilities that represents a Character's training in a specific area. They provide a Modifier to Checks that use that Skill, and are linked to an Associated Attribute that will also provide it's Modifier when the Skill Check is made.

Conflict Rules

- **Check**: Checks are made to see if a Character can accomplish some action that is non-trivial. Roll 3D6 and add any appropriate Modifiers. If you roll equal to or higher than the number needed, you succeed at the Check.
- **Attribute Check**: Roll 3D6 + the Character's Attribute Modifier.
- **Skill Check**: Roll 3D6 + the Character's Skill Modifier + the Modifier of the Skill's Associated Attribute.
- **Opposed Check**: When two Characters are attempting actions that pit them against each other, they make an Opposed Check, with the highest total winning the Check.
- **Check versus Difficulty Number**: If a Character is attempting an Action that is not against another Character, they must roll equal to or higher than a Difficulty Number set by the Game Master.
- **Attack Check**: Attacks are made against opposing Characters in order to inflict Tide Damage during Conflicts. An Attack Check is made with 3D6 + any Modifiers specified by the Attack. The two normal forms of Attacks are Improvised Attacks and Signature Attacks. The target of the Attack rolls a Defend Check to oppose the Attacker. If the Attacker wins the Check, they inflict Tide Damage on the target's Side.
- **Improvised Attacks**: Any Character can make an Improvised Attack. Players explain what they want their Character to do, and the GM determines which Attribute, or Attribute and Skill, the Check is made with. Improvised Attacks always do a base Damage of 1.
- **Signature Attacks**: These are Attacks created by Players for their Characters. These Attacks can have better Damage, Range, and other values than Improvised Attacks.
- **Defend Check**: A Defend Check is made by the target of an Attack. If the Defender wins the Check, no Damage is inflicted. The most effective Defend Checks come from Skills that have been upgraded to be Defense Skills using Potential.

- **Tide Bar**: The Tide Bar is used to track Tide Damage inflicted using Attacks. Whenever a Character causes damage to an opposing Character, move the Tide Marker a number of spaces towards that Character's Side (Player or Enemy) equal to the Damage inflicted. In most cases, if the Tide Marker moves past '7', the Tide Bar breaks and one point of Morale Damage is inflicted against that Side.
- **Morale**: Whenever a side takes Morale Damage, add 1 to the Moral Damage of that side, and update the Morale Tracker to match. When high enough, Morale Damage forces Characters to leave a Conflict.
- **Morale Threshold**: Every Character has a Morale Threshold stat. If that Character's Side takes more Morale Damage than their Threshold, the Character must leave the Conflict and can no longer take Actions.
- **Rally**: Each Character has a Rally value. If the Character's allies inflict total Morale Damage equal to or greater than a Character's Rally value, the Character can return to a Conflict if they have been forced to leave.
- **Focus Points**: Focus Points are used to take Actions in Conflicts. Most Actions cost at least 1 FP. Each Character has a Focus Refresh stat that determines how many FP that Character receives each Round.
- **Ki**: Ki is a resource used to take some special Actions. Any Character can use an Action that costs Ki. Characters begin a Conflict with no Ki in their Ki Pool, and add Ki to the Pool whenever they take actions with a Ki Cost. Characters have a Ki Limit attribute, and begin to suffer penalties if they have more Ki in their Ki Pool than their Limit. Ki is Released (removed) from the Pool at the end of a Round.
- **Range and Zones**: All Actions have a Range value. Conflict is divided into 6 zones, 3 on each Side. The zones are *Aggressive* (close range, or Characters who are actively engaging the opponents), *Balanced* (medium range, or Characters that are taking a middle ground between direct engagement and protecting themselves), and *Cautious* (far range, or Characters that are trying to avoid the enemy as much as possible). A Character can use an Attack beyond its Range, but must pay additional FP.

Character Creation

Characters are created using a resource called Potential. Each Player receives a certain amount of Potential before the game begins, and can spend it to buy Abilities such as Skills or Techniques. Additional Potential is gained during play, and can be spent between games to increase existing Abilities, or add new ones.

Games, Sessions and Campaigns

Each time the game is played is called a session. Most players usually find a session length of a few hours to be the most comfortable, but this can vary between gaming groups. One session usually represents a small, contained plot, but longer stories can carry over into later sessions. A session is like a chapter in a book, or an episode of a TV show.

A Campaign is a series of adventures that takes place in the same world, usually continuing from the last session. Players create Characters before the Campaign begins, and the GM works with the Players to create a game world, which they fill with stories to be explored in sessions. Characters develop and advance through sessions, and can use earned Potential between sessions to increase their Abilities.

When playing the game, the GM will describe the scene and what is happening, then allow the Players to describe what they wish their Characters to do. If there is a chance that a Character's activities might fail, a Check may be called for by the GM. The GM then describes the outcome after the Check is made. For more in-depth resolution of key story events, the GM can use the Conflict rules.

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❖ Chapter 9 ❖

Credits

The City of Toyomi

Thriving amidst the unconquered wilds of the Ikatsu islands, the city of Toyomi serves as a growing hub for all people who seek adventure and discovery. The archipelago has always been a place of unforgiving danger; wild lands surrounded by chaotic supernatural activity even before the Age of Spirits. The dangers of the main island were too great to establish any longstanding settlement there. After the Grand Rite, Ikatsu island grew larger, and became one of the few places on the Earth with a seamless and open connection to The World Beyond. At certain locations, any mortal or spirit is able to cross the boundaries between the realms simply by walking. Emboldened by greater magical power, sorcerers worked to build inroads into the island and establish Toyomi, Ikatsu island's first and largest settlement.

Enticed by the rare and precious resources of the spiritual realms, Prominent organizations from all over Nippon have active chapters in the city. As the closest city to the uncharted wilds in The World Beyond, Toyomi has become a haven for researchers, explorers, and adventurers looking to make new spiritual discoveries.

The city is protected by dedicated group of Warders; sorcerers who specialize in defensive and protective magic. Their spells act as a spiritual wall for a new city, in order to protect it from the ever-present dangers of Ikatsu island. The warders maintain the rite of protection around the clock, with squads taking shifts to contribute its maintenance. Since the establishment of the spiritual wall, it has only been broken once, though how and why is a carefully guarded secret. While life in Toyomi isn't easy, the harshness of living on the frontier has encouraged humans and yōkai to work together, making one of the most welcoming places for people of all kinds.

Recognizing Those Who Made Mysteries of the Yōkai Possible

Mysteries of the Yōkai would have not been possible without the contributions of our backers. Toyomi is the stage in which we will commemorate your invaluable support for our game. We at Warding Circle are ever grateful for the opportunity that everyone gave us to make Mysteries of the Yōkai a reality.

All of our backers will be represented as resident characters within the city of Toyomi. The names listed here were either chosen by them, or based on their names on Kickstarter.

- ***The Legendary Snake Maiden***: Shirazami, Hiyu
- ***Kami of the Ikatsu Islands***: Ruthie
- ***Guardian Kami of the City of Toyomi***: Cherilyn
- ***Kami of the Dancing Forest***: Oba-chan (Ann Trussell)

Resident Kami and Spirits

- ***Kawauso Community Organizer and Humorist***: Donna Prior
- ***Resident Kami of Blacksmiths and Metalworkers***: Dustin Leibnitz of the Forge
- ***Local Kitty Girl Demon***: Hikaroo Kouyama
- ***Passerby Storm Demon***: Cyber
- ***Gloom Banishers***: John & Damielle Hieber
- ***Kami of Modular Origami***: Kyle Schwaneke
- ***Shinzui Spirit of Shoryōdana***: Grayv

Important Locals, Leaders, and Troublemakers

- ***Dai-Onryō***: Ishiguro No Masakado
- ***Resident Warrior of the Sea***: Quizzical_Monk
- ***Masked Running Fox Admin***: Hans
- ***Barbarian Oni Warrior of Odimen***: Dusty
- ***Elementalist of the Flickering Storm***: Jared L
- ***Trickster Tanuki Barbarian***: Tanuki Ra
- ***Local Enlightened Disciples***: Vernon Swain-Nisbet with Jeremy Harris for Ideas
- ***Tomodzuri Clan Representative***: Tom Waßmann
- ***Student of Inari's Tail***: Nicolas Martija

Notable Residents

- ***Phoenix Paper Craftsman***: Letomo
- ***Wielder of the Prism Edge***: Christopher Knapp
- ***Keeper of the Catalyst***: Alexander "The Okay" Jerabek
- ***Friend of Daiki, The Travelling Merchant***: Trevor Millett
- ***Holder of the Staff of Toshiro***: Greth
- ***Friend of Fuzz Head, the Toy Maker***: Henry W. Ulrich
- ***Collector of Secret Techniques***: David Rose
- ***Firestar Admirer***: Laurie Anderson
- ***Culturally Insensitive Badger***: ウェーリン　エトラ Weirin Etora
- ***Tanuki Street Fighter***: Mazaki Kahara
- ***Mariah Horse Rider***: Tou-san (David Trussell)
- ***Shikigami Steward of the Grasping Library***: Kura Noro
- ***Patron of the Drunken Bear***: Mike Halbrook
- ***Priest of the Utsurobune Shrine***: Jin-kichi
- ***Trusted Friend of Ouji-sama, the Princely Nekomata***: Plato Kasserman
- ***Survivor of a Bane Roost Haunting***: T. Glenn Bane (Scaldcrow Games)

Local Teams, Guilds, and Groups

Assigned Bureau Teams

Department of Supernatural Defense - Suiko Task Force

- Erich
- Jonathan Gilmour
- Jyasun Dandari
- Mike Quintanilla
- Morgan Weeks
- Oji-kun

Department of Spiritual Incidents and Disasters - Namazu Response Team

- Amadan
- Debbie Langslet
- Hibiki
- Rowdy Sukaaretto
- Uchū no kiseichū

Department of Spiritual Intelligence - Tsukumogami Infiltration Specialists

- Brandon Smith
- Kitsune Hijikata
- Michael Stevens
- Phil McGregor-san
- Scott Crandall

Department of Records and Spiritual Holding - Dairoku Fūinhan

- Austin MacKenzie
- Charles Brown
- Iruka Jukimo
- Magnus, L.L.
- Minami Watanabe

Department of Magical Research - Nue-Fever Research Team

- Gary Anastasio
- Hiroshi Kaz
- Piper
- Umi Daitan

Local Adventuring Companies

Lunar Dragons

- Brian Cooksey
- Furedo Huramanu
- Kaba no Taito (Sean Tait Bircher)
- Kakikizu Izan
- Krista Griffiths
- Lakshman, the Wandering Monk
- Matthew Nielsen
- Oda Yukimura
- Schinji, The Sword Keeper
- Yannick Loitière

Jagged Blades

- Bell Master NHK
- Chris Morris
- Ignatius Montenegro
- Kaneen-San
- Kita Noriaki
- Makita Niwa
- Mendel

The Grand Six

- Billy Cook
- Daniel-son
- David Larkins
- Hodenese Burenda
- Kevin
- Kinnick

Daiki's Mercantile House Support Staff and Procurement Experts

- Cameron Digredaishi
- 田村大吉 (Daikichi Tamura)
- Daisuke Mitsurigi
- Doug Carter
- Grant Pappan
- Josh Pritchard
- Makyurio Debi
- Ziv

Toyomi Sports and Competition Teams

Toyomi Tatsumaki Archery Team

- Chris Galecki
- Darcy Ross, baker and widow of mysterious circumstances
- Frank Kergil
- Loganbreath
- Michael Gillis
- Miren Wyld
- Nathan Light
- レイ エリーングハン

Kazato Gale-Style School of Blade Arts

- 影のクリストフ (Christof of Shadows)
- Dave DuBois
- Erin
- Fireside
- HallowsEve(CNM)
- Jared Anjewierden
- John C. Post
- K. Pope
- Kyo Van Raden
- Matt Trussell
- Nicholas Macula
- Robert and Amanda Daley

Hasu Go Club

- Jake Mears
- Kavrin
- Prasan Sudangnoi

Commoners and Staff

Inn Staff - The Three Dice

- Bezani Kai
- Big Man Mountain
- Drew Clowery
- Lai Koivu
- Mark R. Lesniewski

Inn Staff - The Blue Bellflower

- Adam Y.
- Bryan Lee Davidson-Tirca
- Kai Yau
- Nitoshi Kori
- Oscar Iglesias

Inn Staff - Kayōda Hotspring House

- Christopher McDonough
- Svend Andersen
- Tenoji Hsien Tails
- Tesshin Billings
- The Honorable Y Poe

Smiths

- adumbratus
- Alex Storyteller
- Micko
- Pingyoru
- Sarah Bishop
- Timothy Baker

Carpenters

- Colm O'Hara
- Dean-san
- Hatayama Raiden
- Matantei Roki Dankmyer
- Megan Peterson
- Steven
- William Palmer
- ショーン ペオキー (Sean)
- 美樹夫 (Mikio) played by Earl C. Hedges Jr

City Guard

- Barukage Pskion
- Billy Bloomberg
- Calvin "Little Dragon" Jim
- Clay Gardnerr
- Dal'Matica
- Fub
- Jefferson Kloepfer
- Jonathan Korman
- kita-no-tenshi
- Olivier
- Patrick McGinley
- Scott W. K. Heyden
- shh
- Steve Sick
- Tenaka
- The Rangdo of Arg
- Yama Kaze
- Yoriashi
- Zhang Ning
- zuaoatori debiddo

Hunters

- Eric Coates
- J A W P
- Jim Hart
- Kaisa Seisui
- Kielo Maja
- Leo
- Megan "Nezumi" Greathouse
- Patrick Bingham
- The Proprietress played by Nick Louks
- Tóth "Sekihi" Péter

Healers and Caregivers

- David Chart
- David Paul Guzmán
- Khorvus del Barakos
- Kristopher Henry
- Nick "Whoa Constrictor" Paavo
- Tim Ellis

Scholars

- Adam RKitch
- Genevieve Cogman
- Jeffrey Spellbinder
- Matthew Broome
- S. Adam Surber
- Sei Shōnagon

Labor Specialists

- Alexandra Iwamoto
- Arthur Le
- Bone Flower
- Chisaka Ken
- Christopher Reed
- Daimadoshi
- Danny Godin
- Dramm
- Faris Hilmi
- Harley Prowler
- Ikari
- Ishi Rokuro
- J.R.Hernandez
- KN
- L. Stiivun
- Michael Treat
- Reverance Pavane
- Richard Appleby
- Shota Watarimono
- The Pink Lady

Rice Farmers

- Cielociel
- Hack Cubit
- Josie Barnes
- Karl Smith
- Krakull
- Masterworld Entertainment
- Matt Holden
- Obs Ref
- Trung Duong
- Walter F. Croft

Playtesters & Proofreaders

In our efforts to make the best game we could, playtesters and readers proved to be invaluable allies and friends. Not everyone who playtested our game through its development gave us their names, but we would like to extend our deepest gratitudes to everyone who played and read our book through its development process.

Veteran Testers

- ***"Bully Monk" Jun*** played by Weylin Etra
- Christopher "***Can I wield a hawk?***" Knapp
- ***Collectible Fuda Enthusiast***: Ben Vandergrift
- ***Dapper Dancer***: Sakai
- ***Fearless Barbarian***: Dusty Parrott
- ***Resident Magical Fusion***: Burisa
- ***Patron of the Proprietress***: Nick Louks
- ***Samurai Cat Summoner***: Jayna
- ***Treasure "Collector" Keiko*** played by David Everett

Playtesters

- Eric Aldrich
- Keith Andersch
- Andy Ernst
- Erin Hawley
- Nathan Kahler
- Brittany Keller
- Shawn Lee
- Shaundell Paje
- Michelle Thompson
- Anthony Underwood
- Kacey Yeo
- And any convention playtesters whose names we didn't catch

Proofreaders

- Roni Lucas
- Rebecca ***"RabidX"*** Stormcrowe
- Weylin Stormcrowe
- ***Yōkai Scroll Curator***: Peter Nozawa Thurwachter
- Ann Trussell
- Anthony Underwood

Production Credits

Andrew Sudangnoi

- Setting Creator
- Author
- Artist
- Layout

Matt Trussell

- Game Mechanics
- Content Design
- Author

Richard Martija

- Producer
- Secondary Author
- Editor

Editing

- Craig T. Judd

Original Layout Design

- Danie Townsley



Indie Game Alliance
indiegamealliance.com

Illustrations

Marisa Erven

- Cover Image: Hideki, Hikaru, and Yukano

Ash Evans

- Bureau Detective ..... page 35
- Namazu Bureau Agent ..... page 276
- Onmyō ..... page 341
- Peasant ..... page 231

Joseph Frueauf

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- Storm Demon ..... page 317

Brittany Keller

- Flowering Tree, Chapter Background

Alex Langenstein

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- Warding Circle Logo

Katie Ryan

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- Mysteries of the Yōkai Logo

Danie Townsley

- Sacred Tree Watermark

Beth Yount

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Creator Comments

Andrew

If you've reached this point, words cannot express my gratitude. That you have reached my comments here is a realization of a longtime dream of mine: to build worlds and games for others to enjoy (this is still true even if you simply flipped to the back of the book to find this note here). Creating this book has been an adventure for me, one that has challenged me at every turn. In these trials I felt myself grow, even as times turned for the worst. But despite my struggles and failures, I wouldn't take anything back, I have gained far too much from all of it. This journey ended up becoming a lot more personal than I ever intended.

I grew up as a stranger in many of the places I have lived. I am familiar with how it is to be treated with disdain; to be judged by my heritage, or things I was born with. I know what it's like to have your culture, your family, or even your own name denigrated in the eyes of others simply for their strangeness. But I also know what it's like to be the approaching that unknown with fear; just how difficult it can be to keep an open mind and a curious heart.

There is so much to Mysteries of the Yōkai. And if we have done our job well, all of our readers will hopefully find something meaningful in the game too. To me, though, Mysteries of the Yōkai is at its core a game about empathy in the face of the unknown.

RPGs bring people together in ways that you just don't experience otherwise. I wanted to build a game where we could explore that unknown. Through role-playing, we could be both the stranger and the ones who approach them — we could learn something about ourselves and grow hopefully into more empathic individuals. If this game could help bring any of that about in even tiny ways, another dream of mine would be fulfilled.

I wanted players to be able to choose empathy or non-violence if they wanted to, and I wanted the game's mechanics to support them. I wished that our players would not only use them, but enjoy them. Matt has built those ideas into systems that still leave me a little awestruck even now. No matter the path players choose to approach the situations in our game, their decisions can have support from our mechanics.

I poured so much of myself into the setting, hopefully you'll find it to your liking and filled to the brim with possibilities. I tried to tap into those deep meaningful feelings, to weave a world that felt alive and breathing — a world with struggles, true, but one filled with hope too. Hopes that entrenched issues can be fixed, that the world can be better, and that peoples with different heritages and cultures can learn to appreciate one and other, difficult as that may be. The Nippon in this book is swarmed by change: bad and good, with many stories that can be told. Here's hoping that I'm not the only one who will tell them. Even one person enjoying what we've built here is a gift to me.

Matt

Yōkai was a really interesting project for me, since it was not the kind of game I am usually familiar with. My deepest thanks to Andrew and Richard for taking the journey with me, for working so hard, and for teaching me as much as they did along the way.

Huge thank yous to our backers, who helped us afford to publish Mysteries of the Yōkai. I sincerely apologize for it shipping late. We had even planned plenty of contingency room into our deadline estimates for the workload, but having big things happen in our lives outside of work was something we couldn't control. Through it all, no one ever complained or gave up on the project, and we're really grateful for all the support you've shown us. We had to make the decision several times whether to cut things out of the book or delay it more, and choose to complete the book, rather than rush to ship a game that was missing important parts. In the end, I really hope that anyone who backed the game enjoys it, and that you feel proud that you helped create it; without your support and encouragement, there would be no Mysteries of the Yōkai.

Creating an RPG to be highly co-operative based was a fun challenge for me. When Andrew originally described his ideas for the game, I was excited to try to build a system where everyone could contribute to any kind of encounter, regardless of their 'class' or ability set. As we iterated on the game over time, we arrived at a system without HP, something that not many games do. It's a bit of a hard sell, but once you get into it, I think you'll find it encourages you to work together. Rather than worry about losing damage because a team-mate has low armor, you're able to attack enemies with

any skill or power you have in order to push the tide back against the opponent. This actually lets you be as individual as you want, regardless of the others in the party. So instead of feeling like the mage is letting your barbarian down in a tavern brawl, you can focus on using your intimidating posture and savage willpower in a debate, rather than everyone at the table sitting around each time the story focuses on one player's area of interest.

If you're new to tabletop RPGs, or even a vet who hasn't really played this kind of system before, I hope you'll dive in and find something you enjoy. But I also hope you feel free to change, remove or add anything you want to the game. After all, the real purpose of any game is to have fun playing with others. We tried to provide the most comprehensive system and game setting as possible so that you don't have to do any work if you just want to focus on playing, but in any game, as long as everyone agrees that something is more fun a certain way, you should always make changes that you want. We've created Mysteries of the Yōkai to give you a place to escape from things that bring you down, I hope you enjoy your journey!

Richard

If you're reading this it means that we made it. This is probably one of the most difficult projects I've ever worked on but I think in the end it was one of the rewarding. It may not be perfect but it's ours. Now when I say "ours" I'm not just referring to "us at Warding Circle" but to all of us, all of you that is. Every backer who bet their hard-earned money on a tiny startup without a single published title under their belts. Everyone who came to our booth at cons and chatted about games, anime, and Japan with us, and maybe even playtested a little. The indies, the designers, developers, and authors who shared their words of wisdom with us, whether over the internet or over beers. All of the awesome people we worked with who made our game pretty, legible, and semi-passably-written . Our friends and loved ones who supported us and helped us keep (most of) our sanity. The teachers, professors, and mentors who got us to the point where we could even begin to consider something like this. It even belongs to you, the person flipping through this book after it caught your eye from the "Staff Picks" or "Best-sellers" shelf (by the way, if you decide buy this book please put this one back where you found it and grab one of the copies from the bottom shelf, the staff didn't actually put it on that shelf, one of us came in and moved it while no one was looking, you'd be doing us a solid if you left it up there and then loudly proclaimed what an amazing game it is, thanks buddy). Anyway, my point is, since this game is yours now, I hope you enjoy it.

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Character: Player:

Mysteries of the Yōkai
~ 妖怪の謎 ~

ATTRIBUTES

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attribute Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

BODY	ATTRIBUTE MOD	POTENTIAL SPENT	MIND	ATTRIBUTE MOD	POTENTIAL SPENT	SOUL	ATTRIBUTE MOD	POTENTIAL SPENT
Strength	+		Intelligence	+		Zeal	+	
Endurance	+		Discipline	+		Resolve	+	
Agility	+		Perception	+		Insight	+	

CONFLICT STATS

Focus Refresh
Ki Limit
Morale Threshold
Rally

ARMOR

BODY	MIND	SOUL

SKILLS

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

TOTAL MODIFIER	DEFENSE		ASSOCIATED ATTRIBUTE	POTENTIAL MODIFIER
+		Athletics	(+)	+
+		Evaluate	(+)	+
+		Fighting	(+)	+
+		Interaction	(+)	+
+		Investigation	(+)	+
+		Ki Attunement	(+)	+
+		Leadership	(+)	+
+		Manipulation	(+)	+
+		Medicine	(+)	+
+		Nature Affinity	(+)	+
+		Survival	(+)	+
+		Vice	(+)	+

SIGNATURE ATTACK

Signature Attack | Costs: FP | KI

TOTAL MODIFIER: +

ASSOCIATED SKILL (ASSO. ATTRIBUTE): ( )

Damage	DOMAIN	RANGE	FP DRAIN	KI POISON	MOVE

Defenses

STR	INT	ZEA	Athlet	Eval	Fight
END	DIS	RES	Inter	Invest	Ki Att
AGI	PER	INS	Lead	Manip	Medic
			Natur	Survi	Vice

TECHNIQUES

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

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PROFESSION

MASTERY LEVEL

DESCRIPTION

RANKS	PROFESSION BENEFIT	NOTES
	Contacts	NUMBER OF CONTACTS
	Craft	CRAFT POINTS
	Good Reputation	
	Knowledge	
	Professional Quality	MARGIN OF SUCCESS / ROLL REPLACEMENT
	Tools of the Trade	

Other Character Information
(Portrait, background, inventory, notes, etc)

KATAS

Katas are Package Deals. By spending 8 Potential, you gain a total of 10 Potential, 2 points in each of the listed Attributes and Skills.

Times Taken	Name	Attribute 1, Attribute 2, Skill 1, Skill 2, Skill 3

ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:
Check: FP: Ki:

CONFLICTS

Checks: Checks are made to take Actions. Roll 3 six sided dice ('3D6') and add any appropriate Modifiers. For example, an Attribute Check is 3D6 + that Attribute's Modifier. If you roll higher than a Difficulty Number set by the GM, or the Check rolled by an Opposing Character, you win the Check.

Attacks and Defenses: Attack Checks are made against Defense Checks in order to inflict Tide Damage against opposing Characters. If the Attack Check succeeds, roll damage for the Attack and move the Tide Marker on the Conflict Tracker that many spaces towards the opposing Side.

Morale Damage: By default, if the Tide Marker moves past the '7' space, the Tide Bar breaks. Reset the Tide Marker to 0, and inflict 1 point of Morale Damage on the side it was pushed against. Morale Damage forces Characters out of Conflicts.

POTENTIAL TRACKING

TOTAL POTENTIAL (STARTING + EARNED): _____ STARTING: _____ EARNED: _____ KATA BONUS: _____

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Character: Hideki Kazato Player:

Mysteries of the Yōkai
~ 妖怪の謎 ~

ATTRIBUTES

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attribute Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

BODY	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Strength	+3	10
Endurance	+3	10
Agility	+1	0

MIND	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Intelligence	+1	0
Discipline	+1	0
Perception	+1	0

SOUL	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Zeal	+1	0
Resolve	+1	0
Insight	+1	0

CONFLICT STATS

4	Focus Refresh	Morale Threshold	4
8	Ki Limit	Rally	5

ARMOR

BODY	MIND	SOUL
3	1	1

SKILLS

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

Total Modifier	Defense	Skill	Associated Attribute	Potential	Modifier
+4	✓	Athletics	(Str + 3)	4	+1
+4		Evaluate	(Str + 3)	4	+1
+6	✓	Fighting	(Str + 3)	10	+3
+5		Interaction	(Str + 3)	5	+2
+0		Investigation	(+)	0	+0
+0		Ki Attunement	(+)	0	+0
+5		Leadership	(Str + 3)	6	+2
+0		Manipulation	(+)	0	+0
+5		Medicine	(End + 3)	6	+2
+0		Nature Affinity	(+)	0	+0
+0		Survival	(+)	0	+0
+0		Vice	(+)	0	+0

SIGNATURE ATTACK

Signature Attack: Gale-Style Blade Arts Costs: FP 1, KI 0

TOTAL MODIFIER: +6

ASSOCIATED SKILL (ASSO. ATTRIBUTE): Fighting (STR)

Damage	Domain	Range	FP Drain	KI Poison	Move
D6	Body	1	-	-	-

Defenses

STR ✓	INT	ZEA	Athlet ✓	Eval ✓	Fight ✓
END	DIS	RES	Inter	Invest	Ki Att
AGI ✓	PER	INS	Lead	Manip	Medic
			Natur	Survi ✓	Vice ✓

TECHNIQUES

Name: Diligent Focus **Potential:** 8

+1 Focus Refresh

Check: Conflict Stat Increase **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: Overwhelming Force **Potential:** 3

When you use an Attack Action, pay for the costs of this Technique, if your Attack Check succeeds, your MoS is increased by +1 for each 2 points you succeed by.

Check: Used with Attack **FP:** 0 **Ki:** 2

Name: Unyielding **Potential:** 10

+1 Morale Threshold

Check: Conflict Stat Increase **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: Fortune's Favor (x2) **Potential:** 2

You can re-roll the dice of a Check you make.

Hideki *can use this ability twice per Scene or Conflict.*

Check: Re-roll one Check **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

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PROFESSION

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DESCRIPTION: Wayward Samurai

RANKS	PROFESSION BENEFIT	NOTES
1	Contacts	NUMBER OF CONTACTS 1
0	Craft	
1	Good Reputation	
1	Knowledge	
1	Professional Quality	ROLL REPLACEMENT 11
0	Tools of the Trade	



The youngest of five brothers and sisters, Hideki has spent much of his life living in the shadows of his older siblings. Trying to stand out amongst the talented, influential, and affluent Kazato clan has been a challenge, one that he has often fallen short in. Even his sister, only slightly older, is renowned as a warrior and already accomplished as a military commander. Despite their closeness as siblings, Hideki has been chasing after her successes ever since becoming of age, unaware of the small amount of envy he feels for her talents.

Growing up surrounded by excellence he has fostered a constant desire to test his skills and become stronger-often leaping headlong into challenges without any consideration that it might be too much for him. He has great difficulty in turning down requests for help no matter how small or large. In spite of his family's best efforts to dissuade him, he often finds himself in trouble when he takes on a task he has no business doing, whether because it is too time consuming or difficult.

As the youngest son of a noble family, Hideki had much expectation placed on him to climb the social ladder. This is a fate he has escaped by declaring that he would travel the land to forge his own name and return as a hero. Though he will never admit it, he is not completely helpless when it comes to navigating the etiquettes of high society, and sometimes even misses the comforts of home and family. The next thing on his mind, however, is how he can prove himself. Not as the noble's son or as the warrior's brother, but a man that stands as a hero in his own right.

KATAS

Katas are Package Deals. By spending 8 Potential, you gain a total of 10 Potential, 2 points in each of the listed Attributes and Skills.

Times Taken	Name	Attribute 1, Attribute 2, Skill 1, Skill 2, Skill 3
3	Soldier	End, Str, Fighting, Leadership, Medicine
2	Wanderer	End, Str, Athletics, Evaluate, Fighting

ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Name: Unconventional Potential:

Associate Leadership with STR

Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:

Check: FP: Ki:

Name: Potential:

Check: FP: Ki:

CONFLICTS

Checks: Checks are made to take Actions. Roll 3 six sided dice ('3D6') and add any appropriate Modifiers. For example, an Attribute Check is 3D6 + that Attribute's Modifier. If you roll higher than a Difficulty Number set by the GM, or the Check rolled by an Opposing Character, you win the Check.

Attacks and Defenses: Attack Checks are made against Defense Checks in order to inflict Tide Damage against opposing Characters. If the Attack Check succeeds, roll damage for the Attack and move the Tide Marker on the Conflict Tracker that many spaces towards the opposing Side.

Morale Damage: By default, if the Tide Marker moves past the '7' space, the Tide Bar breaks. Reset the Tide Marker to 0, and inflict 1 point of Morale Damage on the side it was pushed against. Morale Damage forces Characters out of Conflicts.

POTENTIAL TRACKING

TOTAL POTENTIAL (STARTING + EARNED): 100 STARTING: 100 EARNED: 0 KATA BONUS: 10

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Character: YukanoTominaga Player:

Mysteries of the Yōkai
~ 妖怪の謎 ~

ATTRIBUTES

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attribute Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

BODY	ATTRIBUTE MOD	POTENTIAL SPENT
Strength	+1	0
Endurance	+1	0
Agility	+1	0

MIND	ATTRIBUTE MOD	POTENTIAL SPENT
Intelligence	+1	0
Discipline	+2	6
Perception	+1	0

SOUL	ATTRIBUTE MOD	POTENTIAL SPENT
Zeal	+3	10
Resolve	+2	4
Insight	+2	4

CONFLICT STATS

3	Focus Refresh	Morale Threshold	3
13	Ki Limit	Rally	5

ARMOR

BODY	MIND	SOUL
1	0	2

SKILLS

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

TOTAL MODIFIER	DEFENSE		ASSOCIATED ATTRIBUTE	POTENTIAL	MODIFIER
+0	☐	Athletics	(+)	0	+0
+0	☐	Evaluate	(+)	0	+0
+4	☐	Fighting	(Res + 2)	6	+2
+4	☐	Interaction	(Zea + 3)	2	+1
+0	☐	Investigation	(+)	0	+0
+7	☑	Ki Attunement	(Zea + 3)	16	+4
+5	☐	Leadership	(Zea + 3)	6	+2
+0	☐	Manipulation	(+)	0	+0
+5	☑	Medicine	(Dis + 2)	10	+3
+0	☐	Nature Affinity	(+)	0	+0
+0	☐	Survival	(+)	0	+0
+0	☐	Vice	(+)	0	+0

SIGNATURE ATTACK

Signature Attack: Zen Archery — Costs: FP 1, KI 0

TOTAL MODIFIER: +7

ASSOCIATED SKILL (ASSO. ATTRIBUTE): Ki Attunement (ZEA)

Damage	DOMAIN	RANGE	FP DRAIN	KI POISON	MOVE
D3	Soul	2	-	-	-

Defenses

STR ☐	INT ☐	ZEA ☒	Athlet ☒	Eval ☐	Fight ☒
END ☐	DIS ☐	RES ☐	Inter ☐	Invest ☐	Ki Att ☒
AGI ☒	PER ☐	INS ☐	Lead ☐	Manip ☐	Medic ☐
			Natur ☐	Survi ☐	Vice ☐

TECHNIQUES

Name: Boons — **Potential:** 8

Fortify (+1 End or Res) - 2 FP, 2 Ki
Hone (+2EA(3) Damage to one Attack) - 1 FP, 2EA(3) Ki
Safeguard (+1 to each Armor Domain) - 2 FP, 2 Ki

Check: — FP: VAR — Ki: VAR

Name: Deflect — **Potential:** 2

Action: Simple, Defense
Can be used regardless of Defend Attributes and Skills on Attack

Check: 3D6 + (5 per 2 Ki) — FP: 1 — Ki: 2+

Name: Divine — **Potential:** 2

Contact the supernatural (see full rules in Techniques section)

Check: Special — FP: — Ki: —

Name: Fortune's Favor (x4) — **Potential:** 4

You can re-roll the dice of a Check you make.

Yukano can use this ability four times per Scene or Conflict.

Check: Re-roll one Check — FP: — Ki: —

Name: Ki Well — **Potential:** 7

Increase Ki Limit by +5 (already adjusted on Character Sheet)

Check: — FP: — Ki: —

Name: Protect — **Potential:** 3

Choose one Attribute or Skill. All friendly Characters in the Conflict gain +1 to that Ability.
Attribute: D3 FP, 2 Ki ***Skill:*** 1 FP, 1 Ki

Check: — FP: VAR — Ki: VAR

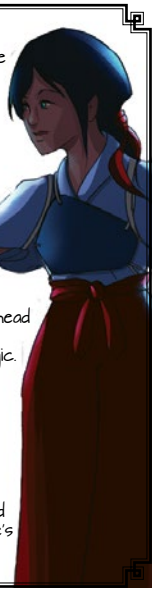
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PROFESSION

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DESCRIPTION: Shrine Miko

RANKS	PROFESSION BENEFIT	NOTES
0	Contacts	NUMBER OF CONTACTS
0	Craft	
1	Good Reputation	
2	Knowledge	
1	Professional Quality	ROLL REPLACEMENT II
0	Tools of the Trade	



At the young age of 8, Yukano was adopted into the prestigious and priestly Tominaga clan from her peasant family. Omens had foretold the clan of her future power and potential greatness. Only two years later, her innate talents all but guaranteed she was accepted at the Myaku Grand Shrine. Valued mostly for her abilities, Yukano began to associate success and praise with her self worth.

A rival clan wanted their son to lead the shrine as head priest. Hoping to damage Tominaga reputation and power, they exploited Yukano's overconfidence and combative nature, urging her to defeat an onryō, a vengeance spirit plaguing a nearby town. Against her training, Yukano sought to defeat it by force. At first, she appeared to defeat the vengeful apparition. But without addressing the source of the spirit's turmoil, it only rose again more powerful than before. Yukano was only saved thanks to her adoptive sister, Asae, the head priestess of her shrine. The ensuing battle greatly injured both of them, taking her sister's right arm, and injuring Yukano's ability to perform magic.

Yukano was forgiven for her mistakes, but the guilt has never left her. Her sister willfully resigned on the promise that the new head priestess would not punish Yukano. To make matters worse, Yukano has yet to recover the powers she lost that day. She realized that without the portents of her ability, she'd still be a peasant with nothing.

Anxious to prove herself to her clan, the young priestess has since decided to do what she can to redeem herself, but her ability to help and console people are still poor. She tries, but no matter what she does she's not great at it. Her strengths still lie in offensive magic.

KATAS

Katas are Package Deals. By spending 8 Potential, you gain a total of 10 Potential, 2 points in each of the listed Attributes and Skills.

Times Taken	Name	Attribute 1, Attribute 2, Skill 1, Skill 2, Skill 3
3	WARDER	Dis, Zea, Fighting, Ki Attunement, Leadership

ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Name: Recover **Potential:** 2

Allows you to coordinate your allies to remove Tide Damage taken. See full rules in Techniques section.

Recover Check associated with: *Ki Attunement (Zeal)*

Check: 3D6 + 7 **FP:** 1 **Ki:** 0

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

CONFLICTS

Checks: Checks are made to take Actions. Roll 3 six sided dice ('3D6') and add any appropriate Modifiers. For example, an Attribute Check is 3D6 + that Attribute's Modifier. If you roll higher than a Difficulty Number set by the GM, or the Check rolled by an Opposing Character, you win the Check.

Attacks and Defenses: Attack Checks are made against Defense Checks in order to inflict Tide Damage against opposing Characters. If the Attack Check succeeds, roll damage for the Attack and move the Tide Marker on the Conflict Tracker that many spaces towards the opposing Side.

Morale Damage: By default, if the Tide Marker moves past the '7' space, the Tide Bar breaks. Reset the Tide Marker to 0, and inflict 1 point of Morale Damage on the side it was pushed against. Morale Damage forces Characters out of Conflicts.

POTENTIAL TRACKING

TOTAL POTENTIAL (STARTING + EARNED): 100 **STARTING:** 100 **EARNED:** 0 **KATA BONUS:** 6

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Character: Hikaru

Player:

Mysteries of the Yōkai
~ 妖怪の謎 ~

ATTRIBUTES

Potential Spent	0	4	10	18	28	40	54	70
Attribute Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

BODY	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Strength	+1	0
Endurance	+1	0
Agility	+1	0

MIND	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Intelligence	+4	18
Discipline	+2	6
Perception	+3	10

SOUL	Attribute Mod	Potential Spent
Zeal	+1	0
Resolve	+1	0
Insight	+1	0

CONFLICT STATS

3	Focus Refresh	Morale Threshold	3
8	Ki Limit	Rally	5

ARMOR

BODY	MIND	SOUL
0	3	0

SKILLS

Potential Spent	2	5	10	16	24	34	45	58
Skill Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8

Total Modifier	Defense	Skill	Associated Attribute	Potential	Modifier
+0		Athletics	(+)	0	+0
+8	✓	Evaluate	(Int + 4)	16	+4
+0		Fighting	(+)	0	+0
+5		Interaction	(Dis + 2)	10	+3
+8	✓	Investigation	(Int + 4)	16	+4
+0		Ki Attunement	(+)	0	+0
+0		Leadership	(+)	0	+0
+0		Manipulation	(+)	0	+0
+6		Medicine	(Int + 4)	6	+2
+0		Nature Affinity	(+)	0	+0
+0		Survival	(+)	0	+0
+0		Vice	(+)	0	+0

SIGNATURE ATTACK

Signature Attack: Deductive Reasoning — Costs: FP 1, KI 0

TOTAL MODIFIER: +8

ASSOCIATED SKILL (ASSO. ATTRIBUTE): Investigation (INT)

Damage	Domain	Range	FP Drain	KI Poison	Move
D3	Mind	1	-	-	-

Defenses

STR ☐	INT ☒	ZEA ☐	Athlet ☐	Eval ☐	Fight ☐
END ☐	DIS ☐	RES ☐	Inter ☒	Invest ☒	Ki Att ☐
AGI ☐	PER ☒	INS ☐	Lead ☐	Manip ☐	Medic ☐
			Natur ☐	Survi ☐	Vice ☒

TECHNIQUES

Name: Deflect — **Potential:** 2

Action: Simple, Defense
Can be used regardless of Defend Attributes and Skills on Attack

Check: 3D6 + (5 per 2 Ki) — **FP:** 1 — **Ki:** 2+

Name: Stealth — **Potential:** 5

Roll an Investigation Check to generate a Difficulty Number. If an opposing Character wants to target this Character with any Action they must first succeed at a Perception or Vice Check against that Difficulty Number.

Check: 3D6 + 8 — **FP:** 2 — **Ki:** 0

Name: — **Potential:**

Check: — **FP:** — **Ki:**

Name: — **Potential:**

Check: — **FP:** — **Ki:**

Name: — **Potential:**

Check: — **FP:** — **Ki:**

Name: — **Potential:**

Check: — **FP:** — **Ki:**

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PROFESSION

MASTERY LEVEL: 4

DESCRIPTION: Prodigy Investigator

RANKS	PROFESSION BENEFIT	NOTES
1	Contacts	NUMBER OF CONTACTS 1
1	Craft	CRAFT POINTS 3
0	Good Reputation	
1	Knowledge	
0	Professional Quality	
1	Tools of the Trade	

Despite being known as a detective prodigy, Hikaru can't seem to get enough work to make ends meet. As a 14 year old of common birth, prejudice against her youth and social status make it difficult for her to obtain paying jobs. Even while on a case, Hikaru's age and background serves as an impediment to her investigations, preventing her from having access to the information and resources given to other investigators. In spite of these setback's, Hikaru's perceptive and deductive skills are more than enough to allow her to stay competitive with official detectives.

Orphaned at a young age, Hikaru found herself homeless. Unable to bear the rumors surrounding her parent's deaths, her relatives disowned her. After her abandonment, the detective investigating her parents' case gave Hikaru a place to stay. He inspired her to walk in his footsteps as an investigator. The lessons he taught Hikaru gave her the resolve to move on. But the mystery surrounding her parents would prove far more convoluted than either of them would have expected. When they began to find links suggesting a deeper and greater mystery, authorities locked the case into confidential records and the detective vanished. Without anyone left to care for her, Hikaru turned to aiding locals with her investigative services. While Hikaru has found solace in unfolding the truths behind her cases, the circumstances of her parents case and the disappearance of the detective still loom over her. She now lives in the detective's residence, using funds from her investigations to pay for his rent.



Hikaru is building a steady renown for her talents, gaining her greater access to more prestigious cases and even occasional work with the Bureau of Spiritual Affairs. With more interesting mysteries available to her, Hikaru has begun to lose interest in the simpler ones. She views them with a degree of apathy even if she can't afford to turn them down. The young investigator travels the land in hopes she'll solve a mystery that will win her the attention of the Emperor. She believes he could bypass the bureaucracy and politics with a promotion that could allow her to close her parents' case personally.

KATAS

Katas are Package Deals. By spending 8 Potential, you gain a total of 10 Potential, 2 points in each of the listed Attributes and Skills.

Times Taken	Name	Attribute 1, Attribute 2, Skill 1, Skill 2, Skill 3
3	Doctor	Dis, Int, Evaluate, Investigation, Medicine
5	Investigator	Int, Per, Evaluate, Interaction, Investigation

ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Name: Unconventional **Potential:**

Associate the Check for Stealth with Investigation instead of Vice.

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

Name: **Potential:**

Check: **FP:** **Ki:**

CONFLICTS

Checks: Checks are made to take Actions. Roll 3 six sided dice ('3D6') and add any appropriate Modifiers. For example, an Attribute Check is 3D6 + that Attribute's Modifier. If you roll higher than a Difficulty Number set by the GM, or the Check rolled by an Opposing Character, you win the Check.

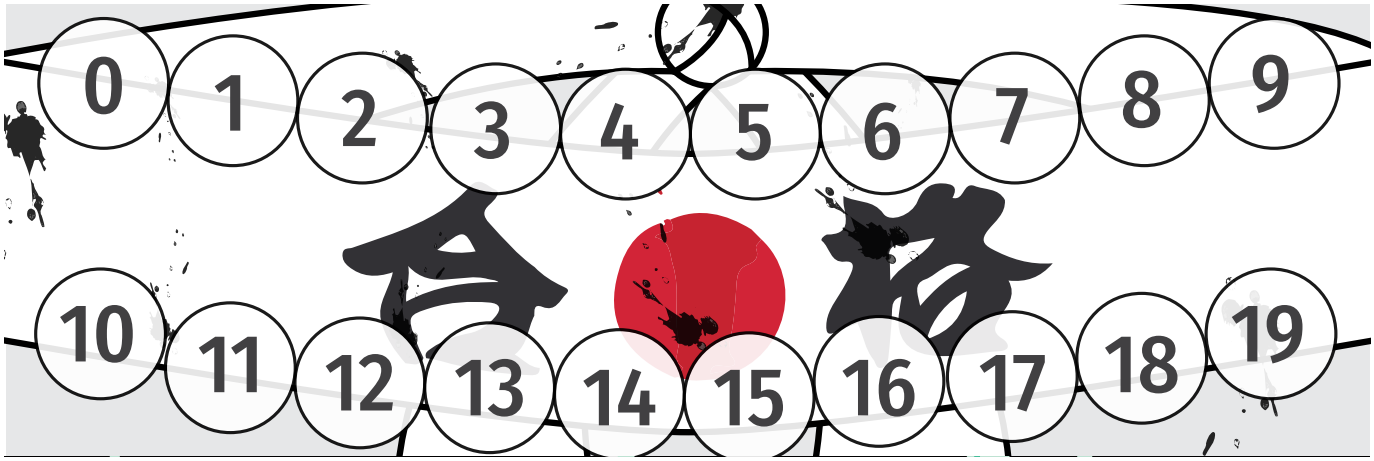
Attacks and Defenses: Attack Checks are made against Defense Checks in order to inflict Tide Damage against opposing Characters. If the Attack Check succeeds, roll damage for the Attack and move the Tide Marker on the Conflict Tracker that many spaces towards the opposing Side.

Morale Damage: By default, if the Tide Marker moves past the '7' space, the Tide Bar breaks. Reset the Tide Marker to 0, and inflict 1 point of Morale Damage on the side it was pushed against. Morale Damage forces Characters out of Conflicts.

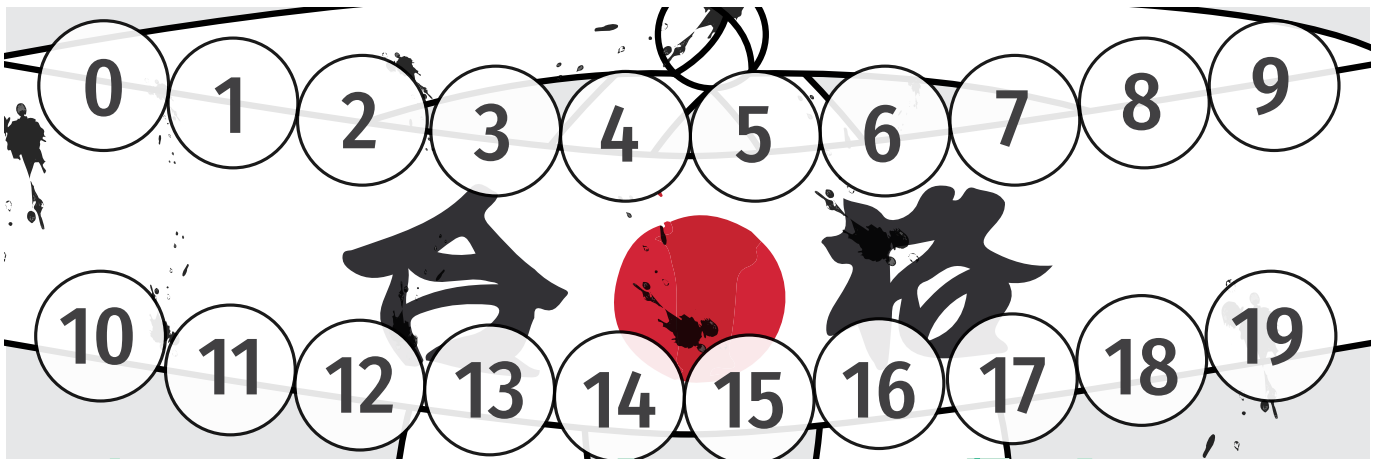
POTENTIAL TRACKING

Total Potential (Starting + Earned): 100 **Starting:** 100 **Earned:** 0 **Kata Bonus:** 16

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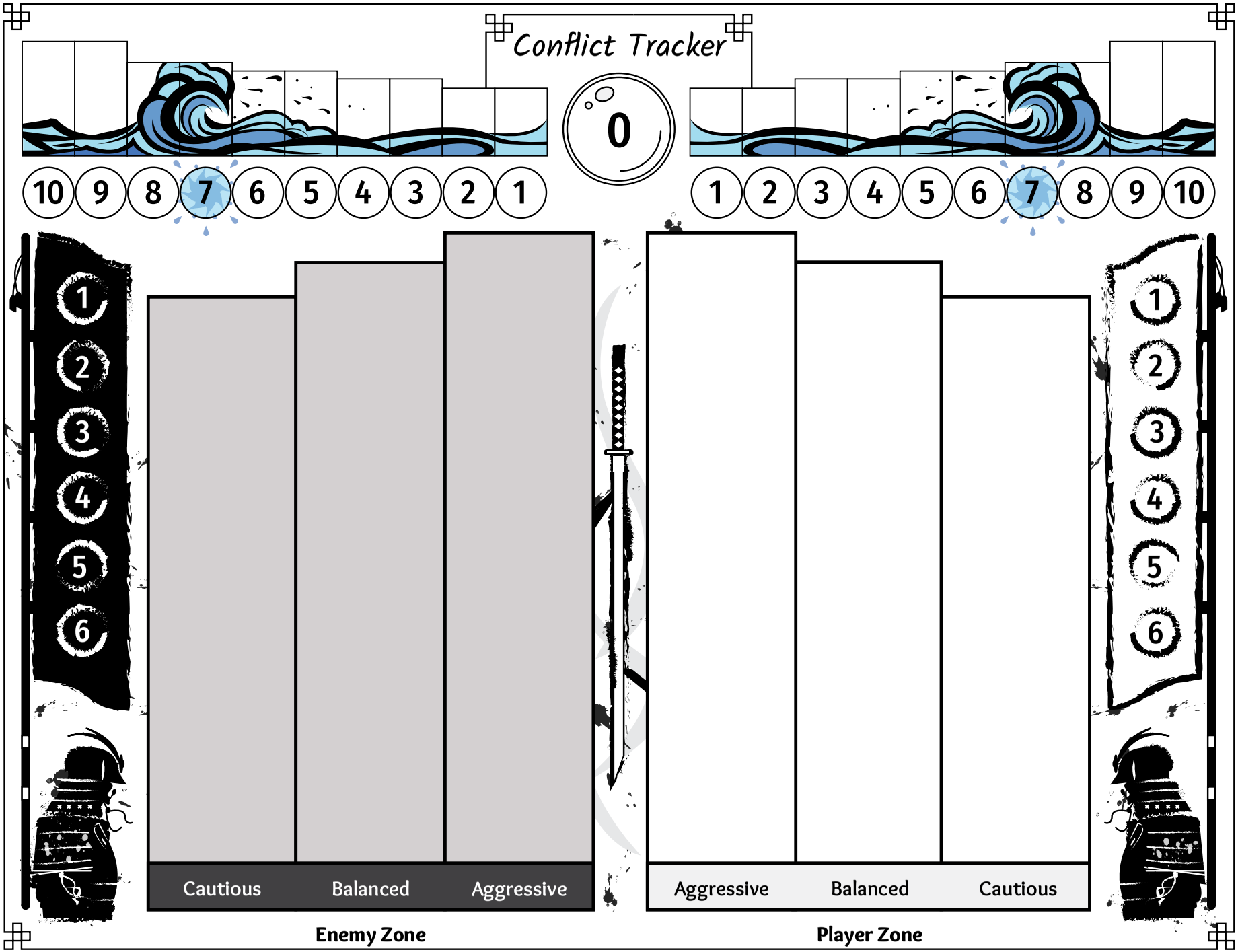

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10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19


0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
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Conflict Tracker
0
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
1
2
3
4
5
6
Cautious
Balanced
Aggressive
Aggressive
Balanced
Cautious
Enemy Zone
Player Zone

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