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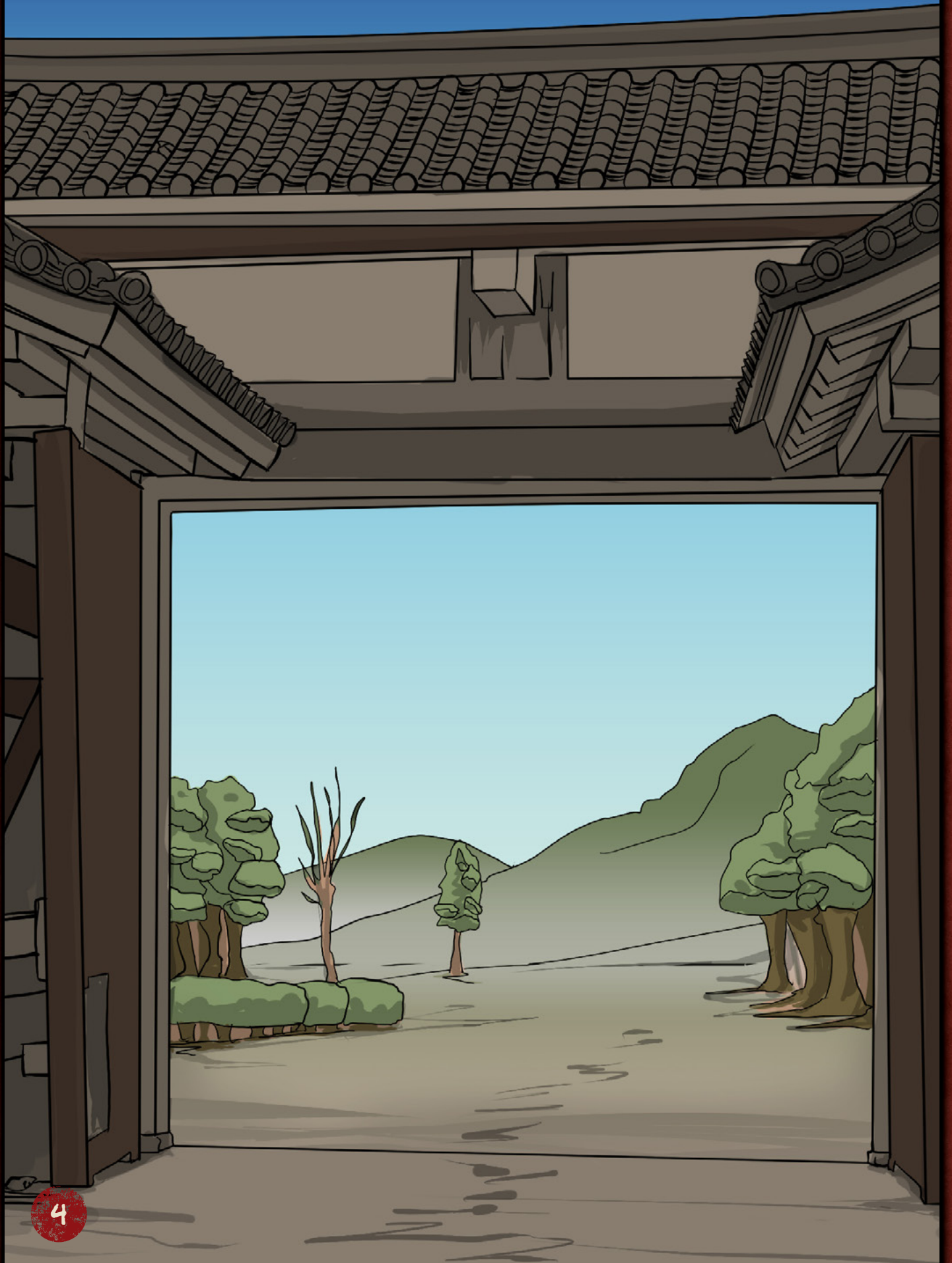
WASUREMONOGATARI

WA

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. ABOUT WA | 5 | | |
| 1.1 The Do of Role-playing..... | 5 | 2.4.2. Battle Skills..... | 27 |
| 1.2 What You Need..... | 5 | 2.4.3. Magic Skills..... | 29 |
| 1.3 The Name..... | 5 | 2.4.4. Professional Skills..... | 32 |
| 1.4 Game Themes..... | 5 | 2.4.5. Tactical Skills..... | 35 |
| 1.5 The Open World..... | 6 | 2.5. Extras..... | 36 |
| 1.6 Collaborate..... | 7 | 2.5.1 Perks..... | 37 |
| 1.7 Other Media..... | 7 | 2.5.2 Flaws..... | 37 |
| 2. THE SCROLL OF LAWS | 9 | 2.5.3 Equipment..... | 37 |
| 2.1. Overview..... | 9 | 2.6. Role-Playing..... | 37 |
| 2.1.1 Character Based Rules..... | 9 | 2.6.1 Character Motivation..... | 37 |
| 2.1.2 Level..... | 10 | 2.6.2 Rule of Drama..... | 38 |
| 2.1.3 Formulas..... | 10 | 2.6.3 Actions..... | 38 |
| 2.2. Character Creation..... | 10 | 2.6.4 Role-playing the Dice..... | 39 |
| 2.2.1 The Same Page..... | 10 | 2.6.5 The Outcome..... | 39 |
| 2.2.2 Concept..... | 10 | 2.7. Rolling Dice..... | 40 |
| 2.2.3 Story..... | 11 | 2.7.1 Basics..... | 40 |
| 2.2.4. Races..... | 12 | 2.7.2 Zero Points..... | 40 |
| 2.2.5 Social Rank & Profession..... | 17 | 2.7.3 Bonuses..... | 40 |
| 2.2.6. Factions..... | 19 | 2.8. Combat..... | 40 |
| 2.2.7 Power..... | 24 | 2.8.1 Turn Structure..... | 40 |
| 2.2.8 Stats..... | 24 | 2.8.2 Initiative..... | 40 |
| 2.2.9 Extras..... | 25 | 2.8.3 Attacking and Defending..... | 41 |
| 2.3. Attributes..... | 25 | 2.8.4 Taking Damage..... | 41 |
| 2.3.1 Health..... | 25 | 2.8.5 Knock Out..... | 42 |
| 2.3.2 Initiative..... | 26 | 2.8.6 Role-playing Stunts..... | 42 |
| 2.3.3 Movement..... | 26 | 2.8.7 Teamwork Stunts..... | 42 |
| 2.3.4 Reputation..... | 26 | 2.8.8 Combo Stunts..... | 42 |
| 2.3.5 Energy..... | 26 | 2.8.9 Ki Surge..... | 43 |
| 2.3.6 Personality..... | 27 | 2.8.10 Equipment Bonuses..... | 43 |
| 2.4. Skills..... | 27 | 2.8.11 Miscellaneous Bonuses..... | 43 |
| 2.4.1 Skill List..... | 27 | 2.9. Out of Combat..... | 44 |
| | | 2.9.1 Actions..... | 44 |
| | | 2.9.2 Professional Skills..... | 44 |
| | | 2.9.3 Tactical Skills..... | 44 |

| | | | |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|
| 2.9.4 Magic Skills..... | 44 | 3.5.3 Recurring Adversaries..... | 56 |
| 2.9.5 Attributes..... | 44 | 3.5.4 Staying Fresh..... | 56 |
| 2.9.6 Unopposed Actions..... | 44 | 3.5.5 Ending the Game..... | 57 |
| 2.9.7 Social Interactions..... | 45 | 3.5.6. Adventure Seeds..... | 57 |
| 2.9.8 Travel..... | 45 | 3.6. Rules & Mechanics..... | 58 |
| 2.10. Character Progression..... | 45 | 3.6.1 The Golden Rule..... | 58 |
| 2.10.1 Acquiring Experience..... | 45 | 3.6.2 Calling for Skill Rolls..... | 59 |
| 2.10.2 Using Experience Points..... | 45 | 3.6.3 Opposed and Unopposed Rolls..... | 59 |
| 2.10.3 Recalculating Stats..... | 46 | 3.6.4 Taking Three..... | 59 |
| 2.10.4 Leveling Up..... | 46 | 3.6.5 Untrained Rolls..... | 59 |
| 3. THE SCROLL OF MASTERY..... | 47 | 3.6.6 Stunts and bonuses..... | 60 |
| 3.1 Overview..... | 47 | 3.6.7 Critical Bonuses..... | 60 |
| 3.2. Play Styles..... | 47 | 3.6.8 Using Traits..... | 60 |
| 3.2.1 Hard and Fast..... | 47 | 3.6.9 Recuperating..... | 60 |
| 3.2.2 Meticulous Detail..... | 47 | 3.6.10 Giving out Experience..... | 61 |
| 3.2.3 The Middle Way..... | 48 | 3.6.11 Beyond Enlightenment..... | 61 |
| 3.2.4 The Comedy..... | 48 | 4 A SPECIAL THANKS..... | 63 |
| 3.2.5 Playing Small..... | 49 | | |
| 3.3. Involving the Players..... | 49 | | |
| 3.3.1 Motivations..... | 49 | | |
| 3.3.2 Integrating the Backgrounds..... | 49 | | |
| 3.3.3 Directing Without Dictating..... | 50 | | |
| 3.3.4 Rolling with the Punches..... | 50 | | |
| 3.4. Antagonists..... | 51 | | |
| 3.4.1 Believable Motives..... | 51 | | |
| 3.4.2 Interesting Monsters..... | 52 | | |
| 3.4.3 Rivals..... | 52 | | |
| 3.4.4 Anti-Villains & Anti-Heroes..... | 53 | | |
| 3.4.5 True Evil..... | 53 | | |
| 3.4.6 Winning and Losing..... | 53 | | |
| 3.4.7 Maintaining Suspense..... | 54 | | |
| 3.5. Adventures..... | 54 | | |
| 3.5.1 Building Plot Lines..... | 54 | | |
| 3.5.2 Increasing Challenges..... | 55 | | |



1. ABOUT WA

1.1 THE DO OF ROLE-PLAYING

Role-playing may be a foreign concept if you've never done this before. If this is the case, we're excited to have you. If not, keep reading, this chapter contains vital information about the nature of Wasuremonogatari.

Role-playing is an activity where several people get together to collaboratively tell a story. Generally, there's a single person called the Game Master (or some variation thereof) who is ostensibly in control of the story. The others are players, who control Characters inside the fantasy world presented by the Game Master.

In Wasuremonogatari, the Game Master is called simply the Master. The Master's job is to facilitate the story.

In other games, the Game Master is the sole arbiter of the plot and has license to goad the Players along if necessary. In Wa, we prefer to think of it a little differently.

It is **everyone's** responsibility to facilitate the story. This is not the sole province of the Master. The Players must be active and invested as well, after all, this is a **collaborative** game. The Master is not there to kill the Players, and the Players are not there to defy the Master. Everyone must collaborate to make the game run smoothly.

The goal of role-playing is to enjoy telling a dramatic, exciting, and sometimes hilarious story with your friends. The golden rule of role-playing is entertainment: if you're not enjoying the game, why are you here? To this end, we'd like to make some suggestions.

Masters should do their best to enhance and expand the story of the world and the characters in it, not crush the life out of the Players. Sometimes, the Players outwit the Master and foil their plans. Masters must learn to anticipate this and be ready for anything.

Players should likewise do their best to make the story interesting for everyone else. Sometimes it's more interesting if your character makes a bad decision or fails at some task. Think about anime and manga characters. They're almost always being challenged with something, even if they succeed frequently.

Everyone at the table (or couch, or dorm, or wherever) is responsible for the enjoyment of the game. The Path of Role-Playing is the Way of Collaboration.

1.2 WHAT YOU NEED

Dice are used for randomized outcomes. Wasuremonogatari uses regular 6-sided dice exclusively. Players may need as many as 5-6 dice for a given roll at higher levels of play.

Characters are usually designed on a Character Sheet. A copy of this sheet is included in the back of the book for photocopying. Downloadable PDF Character Sheets are available at <http://wa-rpg.com>.

1.3 THE NAME

The name of the game is pronounced, "Wah-sooreh-mohnoh-gataree." Wasuremonogatari is a pun, which are quite common in Japanese. It combines the words for **forgotten** with **story**, which we've transliterated to **Lostory**. Monogatari is often used to describe the story of a person or thing, such as the Genji Monogatari. The pun is intended as a reference to Bakemonogatari and Katanogatari.

Wasuremonogatari is quite a mouthful, so we often use "Wa" for short, which is also a reference to the oldest recorded name for the land of Japan.

1.4 GAME THEMES

Wasuremonogatari is stylish. Not just in the design of the game, but in how the game is played. Think of the characters as the heroes and villains of an anime or manga. They have personality, motivation, background, traits, and depth. They ham it up when they need to. They know when to

kick in the screens, they know when to monologue, and the know when to reveal their true powers.

Describe the action of Wasuremonogatari the way you'd see it in your favorite comic or show. This helps the others at the table imagine your character. It enhances the visual component, and brings drama to the action. Draw on the scenes you know and play to the audience: yourselves.

Wasuremonogatari isn't fundamentally about dungeons. Or grinding. Or filler episodes.

Wasuremonogatari is about characters, and how these characters deal with conflicts, internal and external. Often, these characters are warriors, soldiers, or combatants, but this need not be the case all the time. As long as Masters and Players can provide conflict for the characters to participate in, Wa flourishes. Conflict is therefore the most major theme of Wasuremonogatari. When starting a new story, the Master and the Players should attempt to agree on a major theme or two, in addition to conflict. As the story progresses, more themes will invariably work their way in naturally.

Conflict takes all forms. There is conflict between the castes, between the Clans, between the Succession Daimyo and the Bakufu, between the Shadow Clans and the Shrine Association, and between martial arts rivals. There's also conflict in love and conflict in duty. Depending on the direction you want your game to take, there can also be conflict in just getting along with each other.

The simplest and most clear conflict that comes up in Wasuremonogatari is physical combat. Because the world of Wa is so rife with struggle, these conflicts occur frequently. Many of the inhabitants of Kyokutou avoid combat, but those who do not often make good archetypes for the Player's characters.

There is a reason for much of the physical combat, and it can be a theme in and of itself. Clan and faction warfare has engulfed the Fallen Empire in the decades since The Assassination of Emperor Rushiken. Differences in ideology and lineage lead to massive struggles for power, wars that rage across every island of Kyokutou.

Ideological differences also arise in the religions of Kyokutou. The twin religions of Shindo and Chido do not always see eye to eye despite their co-dependence, and sects within each strive for the goals of fractured dogmas.



Personal growth is also a theme that occurs in Wa with some regularity. Many

people, from the lowly peasant to the highest Akahan samurai, seek the perfection of their art. Such a desire for perfection is ingrained in the culture of Kyokutou, and the quest for it drives many men and women their entire lives.

Ever since the Time of Spirits, there have been as many (if not more) spirit residents on the islands of Kyokutou as there have been mortal residents. Ranging from ghostly yuurei to monstrous obake to aloof youkai, few are purely good. Most tend to keep to themselves, content with their own incomprehensible struggles. Some, however, seek mortal flesh and blood, or are sought out by mortals for their powers. Rarely do these interactions occur without conflict.

Romance is a complex theme, especially in fiction, and most especially in the world of Kyokutou. While love is hardly an unknown concept, the reasons for marriage vary greatly between the castes, the Clans, and the professions of those involved. Finding a way to be close to one's love is just as much of a challenge as mastering the art of the sword or attaining enlightenment.

Kyokutou appears to be a very serious world, at first glance. On the contrary, part of what keeps the people going despite all the hardships they face is the fact that they generally have a good sense of humor. Some games, like some anime and manga, may focus more on the aspect of comedy more than the themes of war and revenge, especially for more light-hearted stories.

Once a theme for the overall story is decided, the Players can ascribe themes to their characters as a way of understanding the wider picture of who the character is and who they wish to be.

1.5 THE OPEN WORLD

The book you now hold is only one aspect of the world of Wasuremonogatari. Wa is what we call an Open World, where we, the creators, offer the concepts of the world to the consumers. In this modern climate of intellectual property law, copyright, and lawsuits, this can be a difficult concept to grasp. We offer this world to you, the reader, to use as you see fit. You can write stories in it, film movies, create flash videos, or design video games in it if you wish. We're not licensing the text of this book, just the fictional world and setting described herein. You can find more information about this in the Wasuremonogatari Wiki, available at <http://wa-rpg.com>.

1.6 COLLABORATE

Role-playing is an inherently collaborative activity. You and your friends get together to tell a story **together**. While it's perfectly doable to write your own story in Wa, most of the time you'll probably be playing with others. That said, the most important thing to remember at the table is that you are collaborating. Even if they Master's villain is about to win, even if there is conflict between the Player characters, you are collaborating to tell and exciting story.

Especially when just starting a new story, Players should divulge their backstory to the Master, so the Master can integrate the characters with the story's plot. Rather than forcing the Players to design characters around the plot, the Master and the players should meet half-way, helping each other to fill in the unknowns of the story.

Don't take in-game action personally. Kyokutou is a fictional world. Try not to get bent out of shape when your plans are foiled or your character is defeated. Think of how characters in other media deal with defeat. Try to turn your losses into moments of character growth.

Try not to ruin the fun for the others. If someone takes issue with your character or your story or something, talk it out. Don't let misunderstandings mess up everyone's night.

Help each other. If you see an opportunity for an interesting interaction, take it, use it, or bring it up out-of-character. Just make sure you're not doing it so

often that you're stepping on the Master's toes; they may have something else planned.

Give other Players opportunities as well. Try to help the Master connect the dots. If your character has a beautiful sister and your friend needs a love interest, make the connection. Having the Players characters connected helps them feel like more than just a handful of people thrown together for the sake of some random quest.

When designing non-player characters, the Master should design them to act as foils for the Players, rather than the avatars of the Master. Be wary of stealing the spotlight too much, but likewise, don't leave all the story's movement solely to the Players unless they're comfortable with that responsibility.

1.7 OTHER MEDIA

Wasuremonogatari is informed by many sources. Not all of these sources feature worlds analogous to Wasuremonogatari, but many of them contain themes and characters to draw inspiration from.

Anime & Manga:

- ◆ Naruto
- ◆ Ruroni Kenshin
- ◆ Basalisk
- ◆ Ninja Scroll
- ◆ Utawareromono
- ◆ Chronicles of the Cursed Sword
- ◆ Negima (particularly the manga)
- ◆ Fate/Stay Night
- ◆ Bakemonogatari
- ◆ Evangelion



Music:

- ◆ The Yoshida Brothers
- ◆ Kalafina
- ◆ Ensemble Nipponia
- ◆ Kodo
- ◆ Kiyoshi Yoshida
- ◆ The Soundtrack to Akira
- ◆ The Soundtracks to the Rebuild of Evangelion
- ◆ The Soundtrack to The Last Samurai
- ◆ The Soundtrack to Hero
- ◆ The Soundtrack to Utawarerumono
- ◆ Kawai Kenji
- ◆ AVTechNO!
- ◆ Supercell
- ◆ Agatsuma
- ◆ Yo-Yo Ma
- ◆ God of Shamisen



2. THE SCROLL OF LAWS

2.1. OVERVIEW

The Scroll of Laws contains the rules needed for players to play Wa. The majority of all rules in the game are here, because Wa is about characters, and that's what this scroll covers.

2.1.1 CHARACTER BASED RULES

Wasuremonogatari is a storytelling game, and the key to a good story is a good cast of characters. For

that reason, most of the rules in Wa are based around the characters, especially the ones that the players play. This way, you can relax and focus on the story rather than nitpicking over the rules. It's our goal to get out of your way so you can tell the story you want.

In the Scroll of Laws, you will mostly find information about the rules of the game of Wa. In the following chapters, we will go into detail about character creation, options, statistics, the dice rolling mechanic, and actions in and out of combat.



2.1.2 LEVEL

Level is an abstract representation of a character's power. Level is the most important statistic in that all the other statistics are related to it.

Most of the time, Level is used to determine how many Points and Traits a character has.

Points are equal to $([\text{Level}] \times 9) + 3$.

Traits are equal to $[\text{Level}] \times 4$.

The most direct influence of Level is that it is added to the roll for every Skill, meaning that in general, a character of higher level has an advantage on rolls equal to the difference in Level.

Consider also that as the gap in Level between two combatants grows, the less likely the lower-leveled character is to succeed. At a difference of 3 or more, the lower-leveled character has less than a 5% chance to win in general.

2.1.3 FORMULAS

Wa tries to keep the math of character stats very simple and easy to calculate so that the game is not bogged down in rules minutiae. Here are all the formulas used for creating characters.

- ◆ Level: $[0 \text{ to } 9]$
- ◆ Points: $([\text{Level}] \times 9) + 3$
- ◆ Traits: $[\text{Level}] \times 4$
- ◆ Health: $[\text{Level}] + [\text{Points}] + 3$
- ◆ Energy: $[\text{Level}] + [\text{Points}]$
- ◆ Initiative: $[\text{Points}]d6 + [\text{Level}]$
- ◆ Movement: $[\text{Level}] + [\text{Level}] + 3$
- ◆ Personality: $[\text{Points}]d6 + [\text{Level}]$
- ◆ Reputation: $[\text{Points}]d6 + [\text{Level}]$
- ◆ Skill: $[\text{Points}]d6 + [\text{Level}]$

2.2. CHARACTER CREATION

This chapter goes over the phases of creating a character. This is done at the beginning of a game, when the Master is assembling the Players and setting up the story.

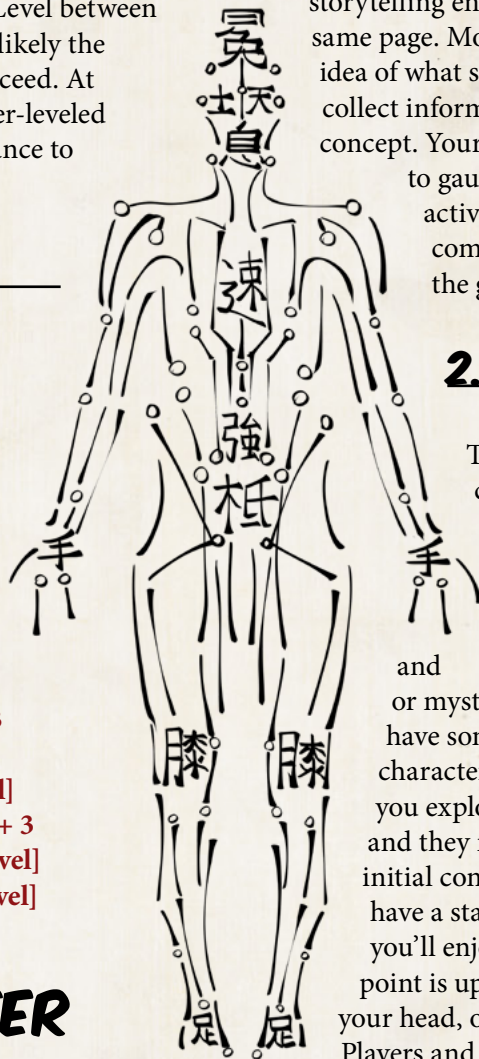
Character creation is very collaborative in Wa. Its best to do a character creation session where everyone is present, or to do the same over a forum or email chain so that everyone can bounce ideas off of each other. It also helps keep everyone on the same page as far as where the story is headed, another important part of setting up the game.

2.2.1 THE SAME PAGE

One of the most important steps for creating a character is getting on the same page as everyone else. You'd probably build a different sort of character for a game about courtly intrigue in the Akahan Clans than you would for a game about trade and piracy in Kinsou. Since the game is a collaborative storytelling environment, everyone must be on the same page. Most of the time, the Master will have an idea of what sort of game they want to run, and will collect information from the players to solidify this concept. Your Master may even have a short survey to gauge your interest in different types of activities. Be honest but flexible, and try to come to a consensus about where you want the game to go with the other Players.

2.2.2 CONCEPT

This is the most basic part of character creation. If you're asked "what kind of character do you want to play?" and you respond in a sentence, that sentence is probably your character concept. Concepts are often short and sweet. They can be clear and simple or mysterious and evocative. The point is to have some central idea to start evolving your character around. Your character will grow as you explore them and answer more questions, and they may even change drastically from the initial concept, but all that matters is that you have a starting point you like and you think you'll enjoy role-playing. How you get to that point is up to you. You can just pull one out of your head, or you can collaborate with your fellow Players and the Master to craft an idea that meshes well with others. It's recommended that you take into account at least the basic idea of the story the Master is going to tell, so that your character isn't lost for things to do to move the story along. Likewise, help your Master out by talking with them about your character concept before nailing it down.



Sometimes, you're just at a loss for where to begin. This happens to the best of us; maybe you're overwhelmed with the possibilities and options, or maybe you're afraid you'll steal someone's idea. Just remember that as long as you have an idea, you can change it however you want. Here's a few ways to prompt some character concept ideas.

One way is to start with internal conflict. Try taking one faction or allegiance and mash it together with another, or try the same thing with a couple of character tropes or professions. Contrast often helps build a character, because as much as the Master will try to give you external conflicts to resolve, it's often just as interesting to have internal conflicts to resolve as well.

Another way is to take a character idea you've seen in some other media and re-imagine that character with some major change to the core of what makes that character tick. Try changing a single attribute of the character's personality and consider how the character changes because of that.

You can also generate ideas by reading the background material for the world, looking for places where characters might fit. The bystander of one story could well be the hero of another, and that could be you.

You could also just sit down and discuss the ideas for the campaign with the Master and the other Players. They might have an idea for a relationship, ally, or rival already thought up.

Or, the party might be lacking skill in an area you might be interested in.

Here are some sample character concepts.

- ◆ Kitsune Reijin ninja daoist
- ◆ Ningen Tohana-clan samurai swordsman
- ◆ Hanjin Ginrei Bakufu warrior-diplomat
- ◆ Okami Hanjin wolf-spirit ashigaru
- ◆ Ningen Matsuyori-clan pirate
- ◆ Obake metalsmith serving the Court of the Kami

Once you've got a basic idea, a character concept, you can start elaborating on it.

2.2.3 STORY

A character's Story is the collected information about that person's life, like a superset of their backstory. Once you've got a concept, you can start to build on that concept and crafting your character's personal backstory, history, goals, aspirations, personality, fears, flaws, quirks, and all the other little details that make a character fun to role-play.

There are two main ways of coming up with these details: the introspective way and the collaborative way. You'll probably end up using both since they excel at generating different types of details.

The introspective way is good for discovering the



character's personality and thoughts. It involves asking yourself a number of questions about the character. These are often reactions to situations, such as "how would the character react to seeing the shogun's retinue in the street?" Or they may be more emotionally directed, such as "what does the character think of their peers?" These questions help you consider the character's thoughts, personality, and behavior. The goal here is to generate details and challenge you to think more about the deeper parts of the character that might not have occurred to you yet.

There is no fixed list of questions to use in the Introspective Way, but here are some sample questions to consider. We encourage you to come up with your own, or ask the Master for some.

- ◆ What does the character think about the Succession Wars?
- ◆ What does the character want to do with their life?
- ◆ What does the character regret?
- ◆ What does the character fear?
- ◆ How is the character different in public and private?
- ◆ What is the character's romantic life like?
- ◆ What would other people say about the character?
- ◆ How does the character feel about fighting?
- ◆ What would it take to get the character to go on an adventure?
- ◆ Who does the character want to protect?
- ◆ Who does the character hate?

On the other hand, the collaborative way is good for figuring out how the character interacts with others and what has happened to them in the past. It involves discussing situations and events with the Master and the other players. It also helps players make their characters unique because they can hear the responses of others and tailor their character to fit with them. The Master should encourage discussion by prompting the group with questions about recent events, tidbits from the game's story hook, and hypothetical situations the characters might find themselves faced with.

Much of the collaborative way revolves around a dialog between the Master and the Player about integrating the character into the story. The Master is the focal point for this, collecting the stories and backgrounds of the players' characters and organizing and manipulating them into a cohesive plot. This is the essence of the collaborative way, because the Master and the players both must be flexible and help each other craft an interesting story. Players should give the Master as many plot hooks into their character as possible, and the

Master should strive to formulate a game that all the players will enjoy.

One of the most important aspects of this is having characters who are well integrated into the story at the very beginning. It's much easier to get into the game when there's no tavern scene where adventurers meet to go on a quest, thus breaking the suspension of disbelief from the very beginning. To avoid such awkward scenes of meeting, it's best to have everyone related somehow, at least in a way that lets the Master introduce them with some interest and familiarity. The Players can help this by giving the Master as many "hooks" or empty slots for relationships as possible. These hooks can be as simple as "My character is married," to a whole character concept for a relationship, to a detailed non-player character that they're related to in some way. These need not be the other Players' characters themselves, but can act as the relationship bridges between the Players.

2.2.4. RACES

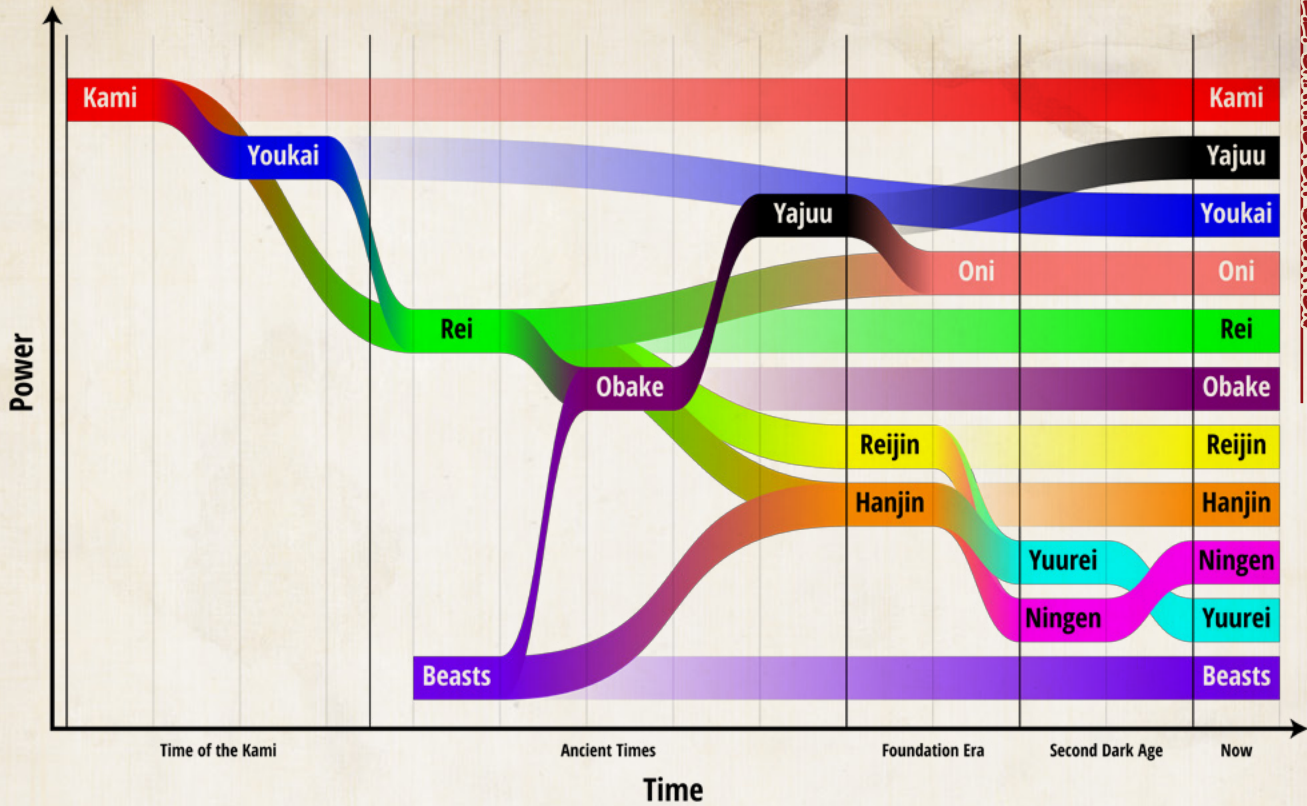
Though there are literally thousands of different races, species, types, categories, and classifications of people in Kyokutou, there are only ten major classifications needed to describe the vast majority of those sub-groups. These are treated as individual "races" despite their factious, chaotic nature. Indeed, some rei appear to be nothing more than ningen, while some yajuu disguise themselves as kami. Things are often not what they seem, especially in the world of spirits.

It should also be noted that while all of the listed races can produce offspring together, the Mortal Races most often intermarry, and while marriages between the same race tend to preserve the power of a race's blood, mixing of the races usually results in ningen offspring within a few generations. For this reason, racial and familial purity is important to the Clans, especially at the higher echelons.

The mortal races are most appropriate for players' characters, though it can be interesting to have a story that includes a rei or youkai that is hiding its true form. The Master has the right to restrict Players to the mortal races if having an immortal in the group would interfere with the story.

2.2.4.1 NINGEN

The largest mortal race, the ningen are what we would consider normal humans. Though there are many non-human races and people in Kyokutou, ningen



are more numerous and visible than those groups. They owe their overwhelming numbers to mixing between the reijin and hanjin races back during the Foundation Era, when the First Empire was coming into power. As the spirit-peoples mixed, grew, and spread, they slowly lost their spiritual power, leading to the relatively mundane people of today.

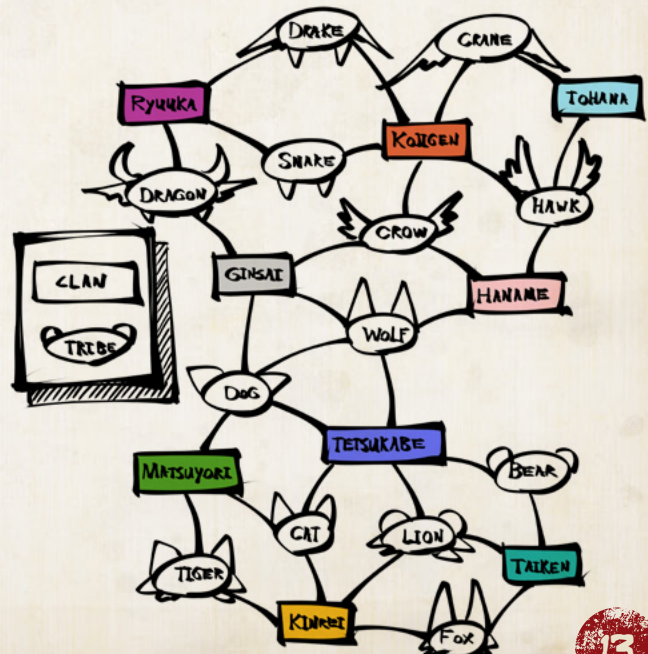
Ningen have round, hairless ears on the sides of their heads, smallish noses, generally hairless bodies, and no extra limbs besides their arms and legs. They possess little spiritual power and are comparatively short-lived. Their hair and eye colors range over the entire spectrum, hinting at their ancient heritage, but tend towards earth tones.

Ningen are seen by the other races as a sort of ultimate muddying of the waters. Ningen themselves often look at their race as the neutral middle-ground, where stability and steadfastness are key.

Due to the spiritual nature of the social system of Kyokutou, ningen are generally lower in social class than the mortal races retaining spiritual power. Paradoxically, after the Shinru Reformation, in which an ancient Emperor exiled the disorderly spirits from Kyokutou, the ningen have risen to all levels of society.

2.2.4.2 HANJIN

Literally, hanjin means “half-person” though determining which half is what is sometimes difficult. Hanjin are the second most personally powerful race of Mortals, descended from the rei and the beasts of the Ancient Times. Hanjin look much like their reijin cousins, but are somewhat less spiritually endowed and usually more physically impressive, particularly compared to ningen.



There is a concept called the Spiritual Divide between the hanjin & reijin, and the Ningen. Because of this divide, the Ningen see very little difference between the Hanjin and the Reijin, considering them both to be “spirit people” capable of amazing feats and possessed of fell powers. The majority of ningen look upon the hanjin with fearful respect.

In truth, the term hanjin dates back to their origin, relating to their half-spirit status as offspring of mortal (though immensely long-lived) beasts, and the immortal rei. It is said that they sacrificed their spiritual awareness for the physical prowess needed to survive in the wilderness of early Kyokutou.

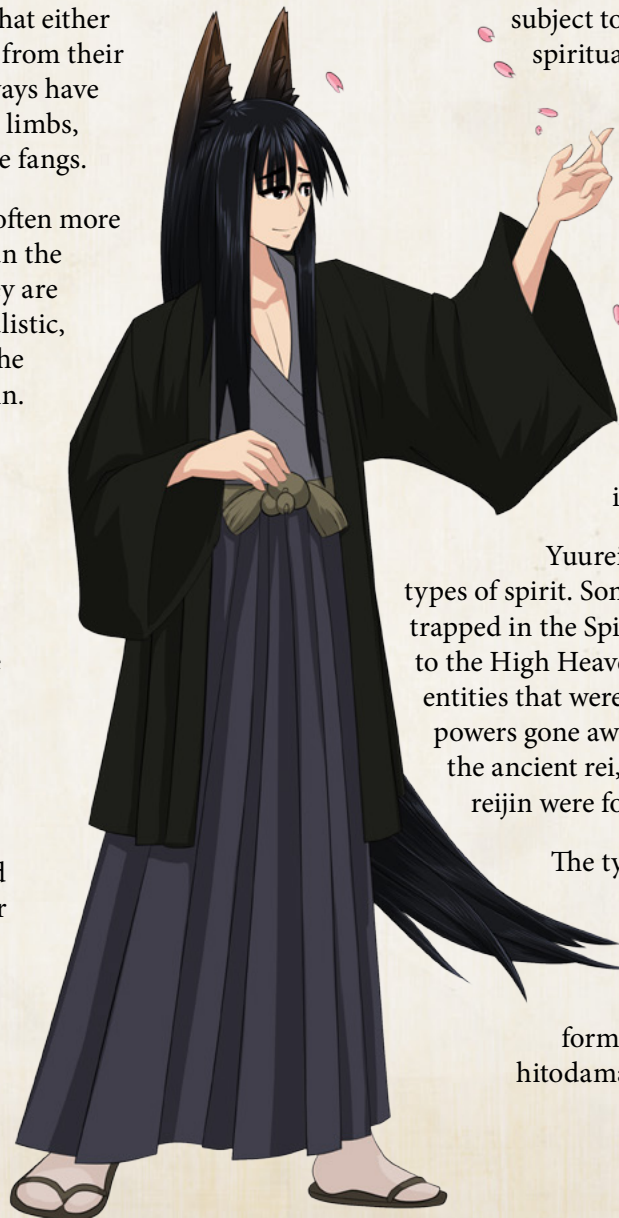
Because of their mixed heritage, individual hanjin bear little resemblance to one another. They are loosely categorized into “tribes” relating to their physical features, with the most populous groups being the Cat, Dog, Tiger, and Rabbit tribes. Some of the more rare tribes are the Wolf, Dragon, Phoenix, and Fox tribes. Hanjin often have long, furred or feathered ears that either sit upright or hang down from their heads. Hanjin almost always have tails, and some have feral limbs, claws or talons. Most have fangs.

Hanjin personalities are often more boisterous and rowdy than the Ningen or Reijin, and they are sometimes seen as animalistic, bestial, or barbarous by the others, especially the reijin.

2.2.4.3 REIJIN

The enigmatic reijin are the most powerful of the Mortal Races. They have the closest heritage to the rei, the spirit people who once inhabited the land of Kyokutou. Their deep connection to the Spirit World and their personal power makes them feared and respected by all other mortal people. Reijin are often found at the upper echelons of society,

occupying positions of great power



and importance. They are long lived and tend to be more wise than their mortal cousins.

The reijin are physically chaotic and hard to categorize. They are similar in many respects to their ancestors, the rei, often displaying powers and appearances relating to their spiritual theme. Just as there are elemental rei, there are elemental reijin, just as there are bestial rei, there are bestial reijin, and so on. Some reijin appear as little more than spiritually powerful ningen, while others are nearly rei incarnations of archetypal kami, such as Ryuu, Kitsune, Bakeneko, or Kyuuketsuki. Most of the time, these spiritual themes are passed on between generations, leading to spiritual family groups that resemble hanjin tribes.

Reijin are often considered aloof because of their long lifespans. They are often monks, priests, or other types of spiritualists, or at the very least high-ranking samurai who can use their spiritual powers in combat. Paradoxically, they are also known for being passionate and emotional beings, occasionally subject to propensities that match their spiritual themes.

2.2.4.4 YUUREI

Yuurei, also known as ghosts, are the first rank of Immortal spirits. The range greatly in individual power, with some as weak as a ningen child and some more powerful than a master priest. Yuurei are mysterious entities that rarely interfere with mortal life.

Yuurei are actually a number of distinct types of spirit. Some are the spirits of dead mortals, trapped in the Spirit World and unable to ascend to the High Heavenly Plain. Others are fabricated entities that were brought into being by spells and powers gone awry. Others still are remnants of the ancient rei, split from their bodies when the reijin were formed.

The tying theme of yuurei types is that they are generally incorporeal at least part of the time. Some types, like shikigami, are capable of changing between forms at will, while others, like hitodama, are stuck with ghostly bodies.

Yuurei existence is a complex, trying one. By definition, yuurei are trapped between the Mortal World and the Spirit World. Depending on the power of the individual, some are able to lead pleasant lives while others are bound to a place for an eternity of suffering.

Because the other types of spirit are so esoteric, mysterious, and rare, most of the time when a mortal encounters something fearful and inexplicable, they blame a yuurei for the phenomenon, and occasionally, they are right.

2.2.4.5 REI

The rei are one of the most mysterious races of Kyokutou. Most spiritual entities that interfere in the lives of mortals are of the yuurei, obake, or youkai varieties. While the kami are revered and the oni despised, the rei are largely unknown to the Mortal Races. They occupy a domain between the Mortal World and the High Heavenly Plain, where they need not interact with the Mortal World for any reason. When they do, they do so for honor, duty, or personal reasons.

The rei are substantially more powerful than the yuurei, and their powers and forms are often very reminiscent of the kami themselves. Wise priests claim that rei are analogous to ningen in the Spirit World, forming the bulk of the population of spirits. Only a fraction of the Spirit World is explored and understood by Mortals, and the rei inhabit the parts not yet reached.

Rei come in a vast array of forms but they are usually related to the basic body-plan of the ningen. They often sport multiple tails, wings, horns, long ears, spines, claws, and powerful auras. Many have strange features somehow related to their powers and desires, such as fiery eyes or icy talons. They seem to wear their hair long and dress in clothes so fine they would be seen as royalty in the Mortal World.

2.2.4.6 YOUKAI

Supposedly descended from the Kami in the ancient days before time began, the youkai are powerful spirits with commanding abilities and diverse, passionate personalities. They are some of the most dangerous entities a mortal can encounter, heedless of mortal power, laws, and society. While the rei prefer to remain in the Spirit World, youkai are more often seen in the Mortal World, where they tend to feed.

Youkai are strange, fell creatures with almost as many forms as there are individuals. Many are somewhat humanoid, others are shaped like gargantuan, god-like versions of powerful beasts, and others are completely unique. Many of the most famous spiritual entities originate from youkai, such as nine-tailed foxes, dragons, tigers, phoenixes, great snakes, hawks, and others.

It is said that when the kami were broken into pieces during The Time of Shattered Rei, the youkai were formed from the largest shards of the gods, often taking one of their many forms.

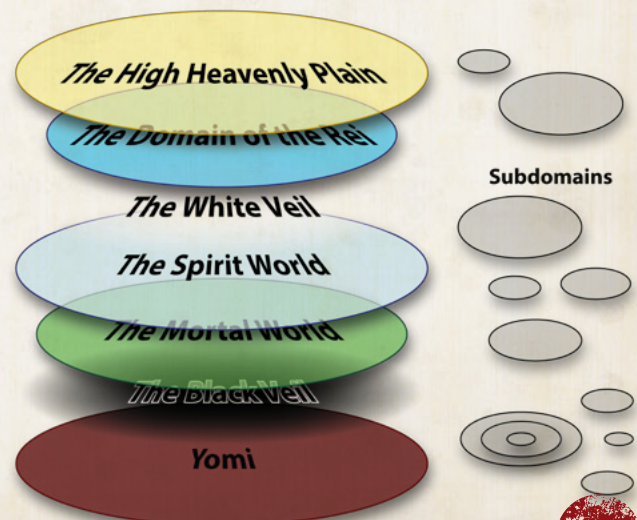
Youkai are known for being very intelligent, cunning, and violent in personality. They do not like the Shinru Reform as it has severely hampered their ability to feed on the spiritual power of the Mortal World. Though they usually care little for the lives of mortals, they sometimes form bonds with them, for better or worse.

2.2.4.7 KAMI

The kami, or gods, are the most powerful class of beings in existence. They are the descendants of the original creators of the world, and they have such incredible powers that they often have domain over an entire sphere of influence, such as war, peace, suffering, purity, wealth, or food.

The kami are revered and worshiped by mortals, often in exchange for blessings or boons. They are not absentee, but they do not interfere in the lives of mortals often, usually content to oversee things from a distance.

There are two distinct populations of kami, those who live in the Mortal and Spirit Worlds, and those who



live beyond the Veils on the High Heavenly Plain, or in the depths of Yomi. In general, the Gods of the Earth pay fealty to the Gods of the Heavens. Many of both types have places in the Court of the Kami, a sort of grand spiritual council that directs the cosmos.

2.2.4.8 OBAKE

Obake means “transformation,” and so the creatures bearing this label are often known for their ability to transform, or strange, transformed appearances. Current understanding in Kyokutou classifies them as lesser demons, related both to the rei and the beasts.



Chaotic in appearance, many obake shapeshift between two or more forms. Others are permanently transformed into grotesque mockeries of their original shapes. They often have wide maws full of sharp teeth or fangs, lumpy, squirmy flesh, and disproportionate bodies.

Though it appears that they are not all evil, most are vicious tricksters who delight in torturing others. The power of an individual obake is usually correlated with how dangerous their behavior is: filth-lickers tend to be relatively weak and can be scared away with a broom, while soul-eaters tend to be usually very powerful and hard to get rid of.

Because of their behavior, they are seen as a blight on the land of Kyokutou. They were even more prevalent in the days of the Reestablishment Era, and their antics eventually lead to the Shinru Reform and the banishing of the spirits of the land.

Though some obake live in or travel through the Spirit World, they are mostly a phenomenon of the Mortal World, where they live and feed off the torment they cause on others. It is believed that Yomi is densely populated with obake.

2.2.4.9 ONI

Oni are the most powerful demons that the Mortal World is generally aware of. They are usually bulky, large humanoids with powerful features and impenetrable skin ranging from deep reds, to blues, and even greens. They are vicious, savage creatures when interacting with others, but they are not unintelligent and can be reasoned with by very, very skilled mortals or other powerful spirits.

Oni are one of the most visually similar groups of spiritual entities. They are generally classified by color, which seems to relate to their personalities. Red oni tend to be ferocious and aggressive, while blue oni are usually cold and calculating. Purple oni are usually a combination of both, but are terrifyingly intelligent. Green oni are conniving, lying, cheating creatures that are usually smaller than their counterparts.

Despite their propensity for attacking mortals and spirits on sight, some priests and monks claim that they are not evil, exactly. They believe that the oni represent the ultimate loss of self-control, a branch of the spiritual tree where the passion of supernatural entities has completely taken over the mind. Even so, when an oni is encountered, it almost always means havoc.

Because of their violent nature, most mortals fear and hate them, though some warriors respect them and style themselves after their power and ferocity. A rare few even have the courage to



hunt them, to protect the land of Kyokutou from their violent outbursts.

2.2.4.10 YAJUU

Hidden in the deepest, darkest recesses of the secret world of Kyokutou, there are a handful of men and women who speak in hushed tones about dark gods with the ability to unmake the world. These dark gods are called the yajuu and it is taboo to even utter their names aloud or to inscribe them on a surface.

Yajuu are so dangerous and so powerful that none are known to exist alive and free in the Mortal World. The ones that do exist there are locked away in ancient graves created by the powerful supernatural monks of the Court of the Kami. Others slumber in severed bubbles of the Spirit World, inside great cages of energy, where their corruption can damage less of the universe.

Despite their slumber, the yajuu are restless. They desire to return to the worlds and devour them whole. Pieces of them sometimes escape like dew on the side of a cold glass, only to wreak havoc in whatever world they find themselves in.

2.2.5 SOCIAL RANK & PROFESSION

Kyokutou is a land of strict social convention. Lifestyles, professions, and relationships are all directed by one's social standing. This standing is usually divided into nine ranks.

The lowest social rank are called the dorei. They are slaves and serfs and comprise about 5% of the population. Most people are made into dorei from higher castes, either as captured prisoners, punished criminals, or by human traffickers. Because there are few ways for dorei to rise in social standing, the children of dorei are usually considered dorei themselves, causing this bleak group of people to expand greatly in the wake of fall of the Empire.

The next rank are the heimin, the peasants and farmers of Kyokutou. Before the fall of the Empire, they were considered a higher rank than the merchants and craftsmen because it was their fields that provided for the country. Now, with the Succession War driving constant political change, the heimin are considered lowly, despite the fact that they make up more than 40% of the population of the islands.

Above the heimin are the saikushi, the class of craftsmen and artisans. They create tools and objects of art for the more wealthy castes and are now valued more than the heimin because of their skills.

Next are the chounin, the social caste of merchants, traders, and marketeers. During the Empire, they were seen as filling an unimportant role in society, merely exchanging goods between those who created them and those who needed them. Now, they are one of the most powerful classes of people, and their power is still growing. Because they act outside the boundaries of the Clans, they often operate in large organizations that trade across the entire length of the land. They make up just 15% of the population, but they are rapidly growing.

The songou are a dwindling class of people who bear honorary titles but are not members of the Clans. These titles are hereditary and are often related to the deeds or skills of their ancestors, in whose footsteps many members follow. The songou titles were given by the Imperial Family before the Assassination of Emperor Rushiken and the fall of the Empire, so no new titles have been granted for the last fifty years. The songou make up less than 1% of the population.



They are mostly craftspeople, artist, soldiers, or servants of some skill.

The Kyuuhan, or Nine Clans, are a collection of large samurai houses that are divided into three main groups. The lowest group are the Hirokihan, or Purple Clans, among which are the draconic Ryuuka, the stout Tetsukabe, the ferocious Taiken, and the arboreal Matsuyori. These are the youngest clans, but in the modern age, they are some of the most active and powerful.

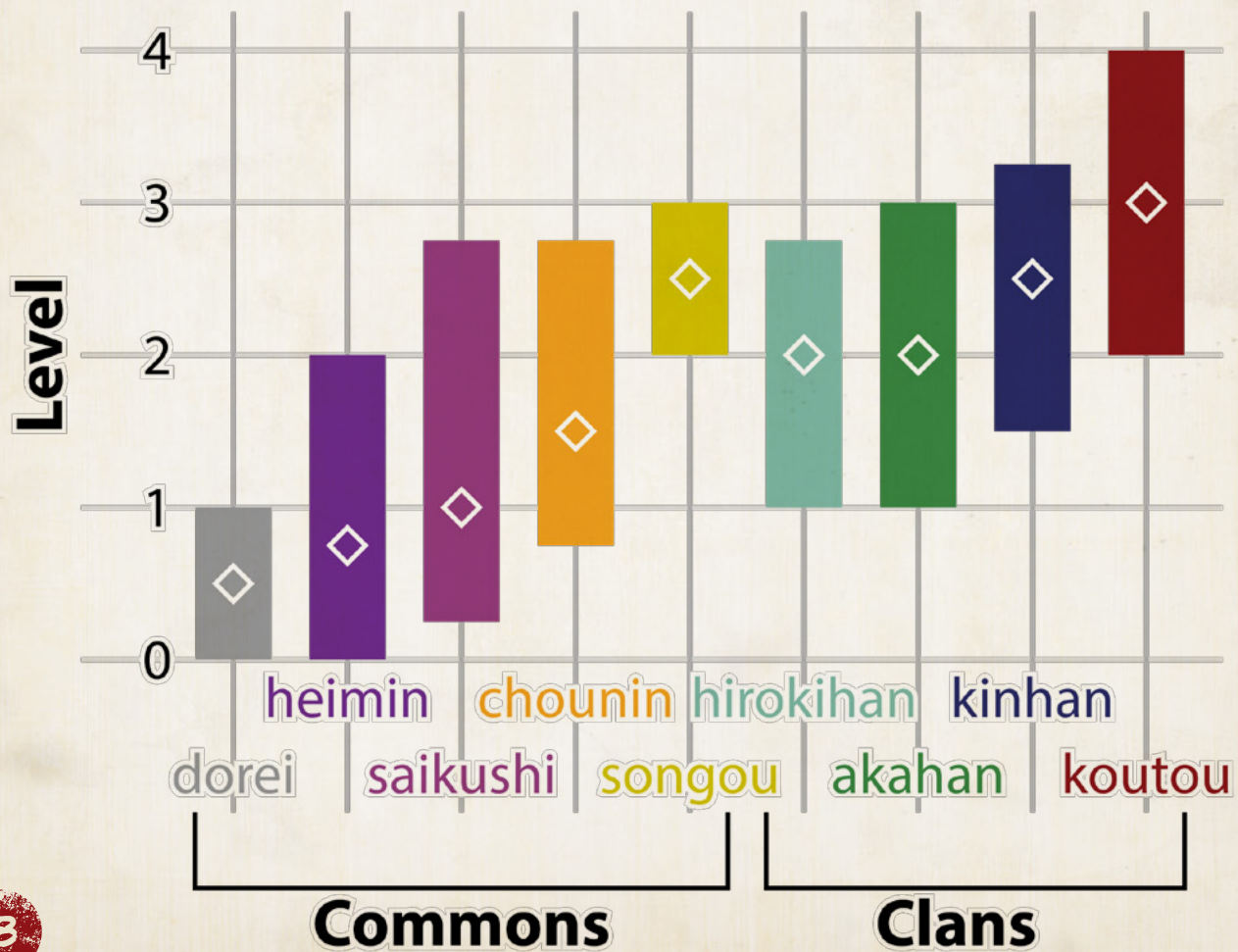
The Akahan, or Red Clans, are the next rank up, comprised of older clans. They are the patient Haname, the spiritual Kojigen, and the Tohana sword experts. The Akahan have been targeted by the younger Hirokihan clans because of their deeper connections to the old Empire, though they are still strong.

The Kinhan, or Gold Clans, have been hunted, exiled, and persecuted for the last five decades for their close relationship to the Imperial Throne. It is widely known that any member of the Kinhan would be considered a higher ranked heir to the throne, and for that reason the Hirokihan have hunted them to near

extinction. The Kinrei clan are known for their magic and spiritual powers, while the Ginsai clan are known for their wisdom, insight, and strategy.

Above the Kyuuhan would sit the highest rank, the Koutou, or Imperial Family, comprised of the legendary Hakuren clan. Unfortunately, the Hakuren clan have been systematically destroyed by the Daimyo of the Succession Wars in an effort to gain the throne. There are now no living members of the Hakuren clan or the Koutou, though distant relatives show up from time to time in the Kinhan before they too are sought out for assassination.

While the lower social ranks (dorei, heimin, saikushi, and chounin) are all based on types of professions, members of the Kinhan have many different types of jobs. Some are samurai warriors, others retainers of higher-ranked members, others still politicians or councilmen who direct the affairs of the clans. Because each clan is essentially self-contained, members of a clan can end up in almost any sort of profession needed in support of the Succession War. The microcosm of clan life revolves around Head and Branch type families, with the less-glamorous



professions going to the families of lower stature. Despite this, there is much room for social climbing in the clans.

2.2.6. FACTIONS

Though most people of the land of Kyokutou owe their allegiance to their family and social rank, many are part of organizations that transcend the normal social boundaries.

These organizations are useful for bringing together a team of people with vastly different backgrounds, as they often have need of small groups of people with specific skill sets. This makes factions (or alliances of factions) excellent places to start when building a party of characters.

2.2.6.1 THE BAKUFU

The Bakufu of Kyokutou is a military organization that is not based on the Clan system. The organization pays fealty to The Emperor only and has been acting in his stead since The Assassination 50 years ago.

The Bakufu doctrine is that the clans should not take power, and that instead, the rightful successor to Emperor Rushiken should be crowned. They use their military power to oppose Daimyo who are clearly corrupt and have been known to plot assassinations against leaders they deem to be unworthy. On the other hand, they are also the primary supporters of the Kinrei and Ginsai Clans, who are currently the most likely candidates for the True Successor.

The Bakufu accepts members from any caste, class, race, creed, clan, or position. Many of the members are descendants of minor houses founded during The Century

War, a period when many clanless and common people were given honorary titles and family names. The Shrine Association and the Temple Association both contribute many members, as the Emperor was vested with divine power.

The title of Shogun is given to the highest ranking member of the Bakufu, provided they are fit and able to lead military action. The Shogun is assigned the (somewhat hypothetical) duty of leading the Empire in the absence of the Emperor.

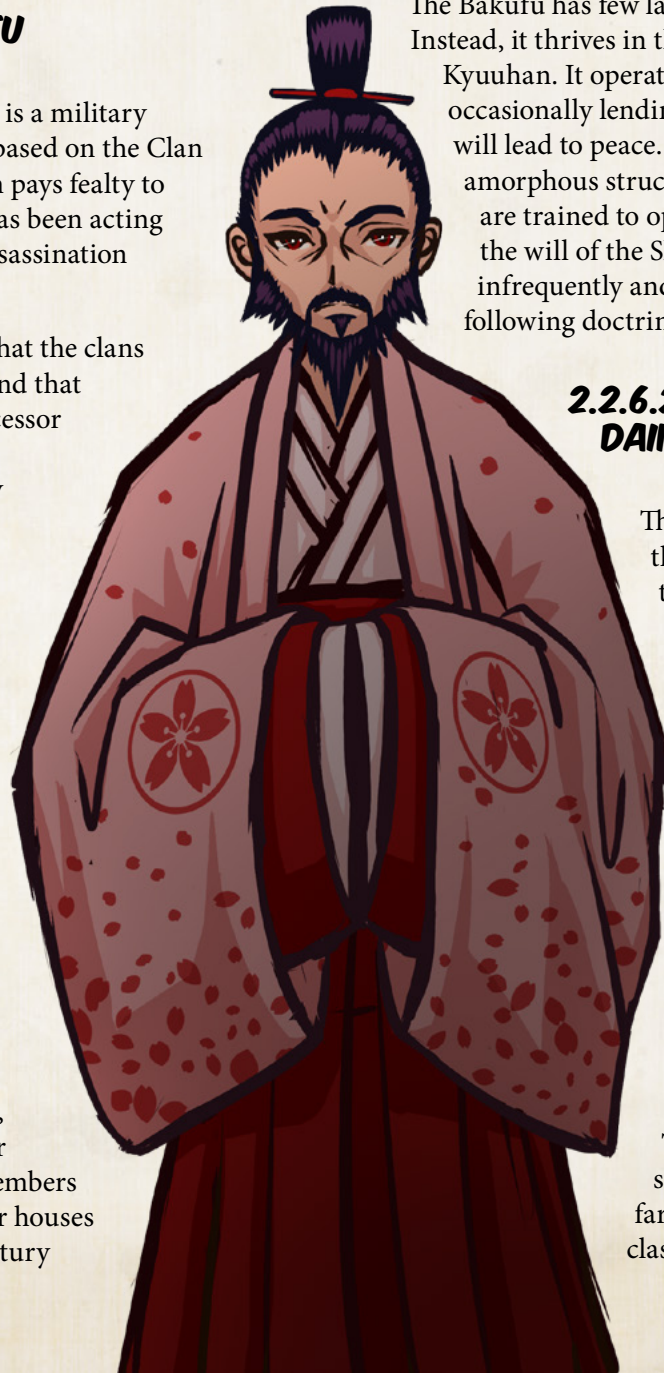
The incumbent Shogun is Minato Narikaji, a Kinrei branch family successor. He leads the Bakufu with a policy of non-involvement and parallel asymmetrical warfare, subverting the plans of the Clans against each other and relying heavily on the common masses and their religious connections.

The Bakufu has few lands that it solely controls. Instead, it thrives in the crevices left by the Kyuuhun. It operates in semi-secrecy, occasionally lending aid to Daimyo when it will lead to peace. Because of this dispersed, amorphous structure, agents of the Bakufu are trained to operate in cells that follow the will of the Shogun. They receive orders infrequently and conduct their missions by following doctrine and teachings.

2.2.6.2 THE SUCCESSION DAIMYO

Though not a specific faction, there is a separation between the Succession Daimyo and the daimyo not actively fighting the Succession War. The Succession Daimyo are the leaders of the Tetsukabe, Taiken, Ryuuka, and Matsuyori clans. While the Tohana, Kojigen, and Haname clans do not actively participate, they are frequently forced to protect their borders, and so the War reaches every nation in the land in some way or another.

The Succession Daimyo are seen by the peasants, farmers, and lower classes as tyrants and



dictators, happy to sacrifice millions of lives for their own gain. Though many common folk feel that the Succession Wars are unnecessary, they dare not speak of it.

2.2.6.3 THE SHRINE ASSOCIATION

Throughout history there have been many organizations acting as intermediaries between the The Spirit World and the The Mortal World. The most recent of these is called the Shrine Association. This organization was founded during the Reestablishment Era by Emperor Gaisen and continues to conduct affairs among the Shindoist faith across borders and clan boundaries. Though The Assassination caused great upheaval, the Shrine Association continues to offer it services and enforce age-old principles on the various shrines of the land of Kyokutou.

2.2.6.4 THE TEMPLE ASSOCIATION

The Enlightened Path is by definition a difficult one to walk. The Temple Association exists to help others along the path. It is formed by a number of independent temples, monasteries, abbeys, libraries, and cloisters which send representatives to several levels of closed council. These councils operate on local, territory, and regional levels, providing a strong guiding hand for the Chido faith.

Because of the various complexities and intricacies of the Chido faith and its many branches, there are numerous sub-councils and hidden sects that fall into a gray area of the Temple Association's jurisdiction.

Though there is no central place of leadership, the city of Waradate is a de facto gathering place for councils and meetings.

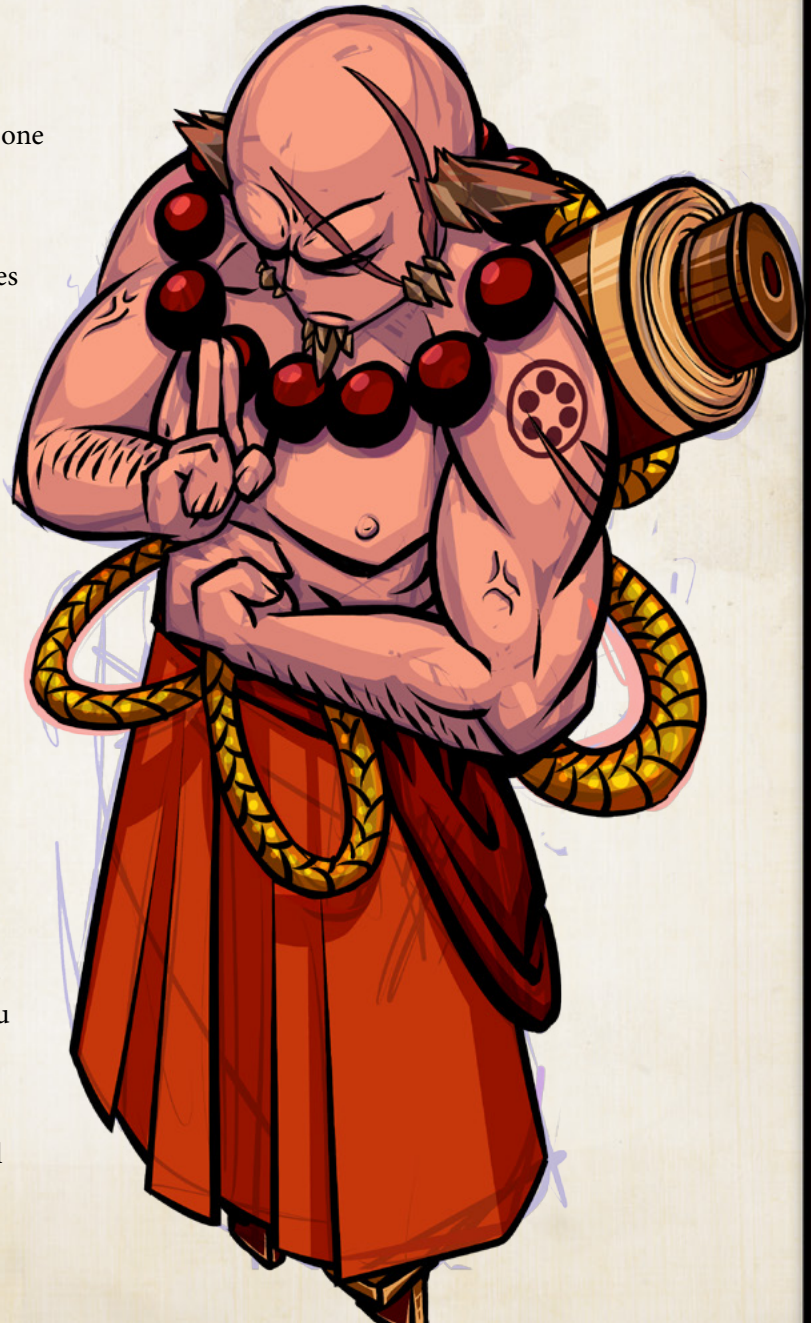
2.2.6.5 KUROSUUHAI

Practitioners of Kurodo, or The Path of Darkness, the Black Cult is a loosely associated group of cells that operate counter to the Shrine Association, the Temple Association, the Bakufu and any remnants of The Empire. Their goals are complex and inscrutable but they tend to focus their efforts on destroying the current establishment and releasing fell powers. They are known as powerful

magicians and are rarely spoken of out of fear. Many superstitions surround them and their dark powers.

2.2.6.6 THE SENKEI HERMITS

While not governed by any sort of overarching group, the Senkei Hermits generally operate in the same sort of fashion, no matter where they are found. They are typically venerable, wise, powerful, and deeply knowledgeable in Shindo, Chido, Onmyodo and other mystical arts. They are often powerful martial artists as well. The status of Senkei Hermit is one that is largely bestowed by public perception; if one is a powerful old hermit living on a mountain with a wealth of knowledge and a poor attitude towards visitors, one will probably be considered a Senkei Hermit.



Senkei Hermits are generally created by a long, hard life of fighting and philosophy, dabbling in many arts, and the seeking of truth. It is their great wisdom and knowledge that leads them to cloister themselves in the mountains.

2.2.6.7 THE SHADOW CLANS

The Shadow Clans are families and houses disgraced, fallen, or exiled from society. Most Shadow Clans bear some singular shame, though a few have been branded based on collective deeds and behavior. Speaking of any one of the Shadow Clans is taboo. It is a desperate daimyo indeed who contracts a member of one of these secret, cryptic groups.

The Dachiro clan is a family of ninja who remained at the Imperial Capital of Hakusuke even after it was destroyed. They live among the ruins, helping the destitute and homeless who still reside there.

The Fuukabe clan were known for their skill at creating spiritual barriers, but they were branded because one of their greatest seals broke, releasing a terrible god-like spirit into the world once again.

The Naonaga were likewise great sealers of spirits and demons, who took the dishonor upon themselves to seal up a ravenous great dragon kami in Kouyu.

The Shisai were experts in the Chido Path of Enlightenment, but they were destroyed when a daimyo learned of their skill in the Dark Path of Kurodo.

The Taiyuri family, and more specifically the Yuritachigumi (or Lily Sword Group) were known for being experts in both the sword and the scroll, but they were systematically suppressed by the Succession Daimyo for investigating the assassinations of the heirs.

Two of the most infamous Shadow Clans are considered to be extinct: the blood-splattered Satsui ninja clan, and the wielders of the Cursed Eye, the Datenshime clan. Many others have been lost to the centuries as they died out.

2.2.6.8 GHOST HUNTERS

The term Ghost Hunter or Reishi is applied to many travelers who have one or more of the following traits

- ◆ Travels in search of demons, oni, obake, or other evil spirits

- ◆ Hired to resolve spiritual conflicts, by force, guile, or spiritual power
- ◆ Utilizes Shindo or Chido for purposes outside normal day-to-day upkeep of a temple or shrine
- ◆ Has skill in Onmyodo
- ◆ Operates under the direction of spirits in mortal affairs

Often, by the general populace, anyone with moderate skill in the mystical arts outside of a temple or shrine (the socially acceptable place for such skills) is considered a Reishi, and they are usually feared for their powers. This fear dates back to The Shinru Reform, when Emperor Shinru banished the unruly spirits from the Empire.

Reishi are often employed in secret by the Kyuuhun, the Shrine Association, and other Factions for their tactical advantages.

2.2.6.9 THE ROYAL GUARD

Before The Empire fell, the Royal Guard comprised a large portion of Hakusuke, the imperial capital. In the five decades since The Assassination they have devoted themselves to solving the mystery of Rushiken's Killer. They operate outside the Bakufu, members often belong to both organizations. There is some contention among them about whether they should continue to pursue the Killer, or if they should align their operations with the Bakufu to better protect potential heirs.

2.2.6.10 THE FISHING GUILD

Kyokutou has long depended on the ocean and the sea for its main food source. The Fishing Guild arose in the wake of The Assassination to fill a gap in the administration of the proper usage of the seas. They are now one of the most powerful factions of non-royal, non-military people in the land.

2.2.6.11 THE COUNTER-REFORM MOVEMENT

This group of factious cells seeks to lift the spell that Emperor Shinru placed on Kyokutou in order to control the spirits. Most members have some spiritual power, and many have some sort of spiritual ancestor or heritage. Others consider the treatment of spirits in the modern world to be immoral and wrong, while others still believe that there is much favor to gain by releasing the spirits.

2.2.6.12 THE INNER GARDEN

The Inner Garden is a sort of secret service branch of the Bakufu. Their agents often take positions protecting potential imperial heirs, furthering Bakufu policies in secret, or removing threats to the Empire.

2.2.6.13 THE KAMINZOKU

The Kaminzoku are descendants from a powerful tribe that lived in the Kachou area at the end of The Foundation Era. They worship a single fire deity that dwells in the highest mountains of Northern Kachou in the caldera of an ever-active volcano. They are known for their fierce, stubborn, fiery dispositions and their extreme skills at martial arts. They have a culture all their own that has slowly borrowed more and more from Kyokutou culture over the centuries.

2.2.6.14 THE KACHOU MILITIA

The Kachou Militia proudly counts its years back to The Court of Flowers, when they began protecting their Kaminzoku brethren from the obake and spirits, thus they are older than the Kojigen Clan, in a sense. Since their founding, the order has lapsed several times and been resurrected just as many, often by Kaminzoku people.

The modern Kachou Militia is more politically charged and consists of fewer Kaminzoku native people than it used to. Nowadays it focuses its efforts on keeping Kachou safe from the depredations of the Kyuuhan. It is allied with the Kojigen clan, whom they share lands with, but operates separately. Membership is seen as a badge of great honor among people from Kachou, and even a fair number of members of the Kojigen Clan have served in the militia.

2.2.6.15 THE WARADATE MERCENARY ARMY

Kachou is one of the most politically flexible countries in Kyokutou. Not only is it home to the Kojigen clan, The Kachou Militia, and the self-governing Kaminzoku people, but its capital city is also



host to a powerful independent army, The Waradate Mercenary Army.

This army serves any faction, clan, or country so long as they meet the following restrictions:

- ◆ Under no circumstances does the Waradate Mercenary Army stand against Kachou interests
- ◆ The Army will not interfere with Souhitojima
- ◆ The Army will not attack regions or territories that were not part of The Empire before The Assassination
- ◆ The Army will always accept surrenders from practitioners of Chido
- ◆ The Army will never engage in combat against another branch of itself

The Waradate Mercenary Army is composed mostly of well-trained warrior-monks, ashigaru, archers, and specialized Chido monks.

2.2.6.16 THE KURETAKE MERCENARY FLEET

Based in the free port and martial arts metropolis of Kuretake, this large fleet of ships sails under its own flag. It is known for getting involved in old clan disputes, routinely siding with past allies. The Fleet is quite strong compared to what most of the clans of the Kyuuhan can field, and thus its presence is seen as a sure bet in a sea battle.

Members of the Fleet must go through a rigorous set of challenges and trials, and it is said that any individual member of the fleet is a marine skilled enough to take on a squad of land-based swordsmen alone, though this is probably exaggerated.

2.2.6.17 THE BLUE WAVE GROUP

A ninja group from Souhitojima, the Blue Wave Group is archetypal of ninja groups from the island, though it is one of the largest. Like most groups on the island, The Blue Wave Group takes jobs on contract from other factions, clans, and groups, carefully balancing their assets against other operations in progress. Seeing themselves as above the political turmoil of The Succession Wars, they take jobs from high bidders and sell their allegiance back and forth all the time. They also occasionally sell willing agents on long-term contracts, netting them large profits

at the expense of effectively losing a member. Their membership is so large that numerous spymasters are needed to keep track of operations and agents across every country in Kyokutou. Their agents are embedded in every organization in the land.

Ironically, The Blue Wave Group is also seen by the Clan-based ninja agents and shinobi as the antithesis of everything it means to be a ninja. These ninja believe that the true path of the Shinobi (and the path of the Samurai in general) is to serve a single master, to the exclusion of all else. This contention is the root cause of many a ninja battle.

2.2.6.18 THE DOKUBARI NINJA

In contrast to the Blue Wave Group, the Dokubari are a faction of ninja and shinobi that trade exclusively on favors and political maneuvering. Members serve the group and the group serves some secret patron, though because of the system of cells used, no one is sure who the patron actually is. Based around the concept of trusting one's superiors, the Dokubari are very hard to track, locate, or anticipate. Their members are often very skilled in poisons and medicines, preferring guile to out-and-out combat.

2.2.6.19 THE KUUSEI FLEET

The Western Island of Kuusei is slightly closer to the Northern Kingdoms than Dokoku's western island. In contrast to the relationship between Kinsou and the Southern Kingdoms, the one between Kuusei and the Northern Kingdoms is one of trade and peace. The Kuusei Fleet serves this relationship in two ways: they promote trade, ferrying goods from Sakimon to Hangudoshi and back, and they police the northwestern waters to protect the trade route from pirates, be they from the Southern Kingdoms, the borderlands between the Kingdoms, or even from Kyokutou. The majority of the members of the Kuusei Fleet are fluent in the tongue of the Northern Kingdoms.

2.2.6.20 THE KINSOU RAIDERS

Unlike the Kuusei Fleet to the far north, The Kinsou Raiders prey upon the massive trade route between the Southern Kingdoms and Kyokutou as pirates. Because Kinsou is currently under the confirmed jurisdiction of no Clan, the pirates are relatively free to come and go as they please. They make port along the coasts of Kinsou, in the deeper, recessed coves and

bays of the western side of the island. Though the Southern Kingdoms sometimes send war fleets to protect their cargo, the Kinsou Raiders have made a good deal of money profiteering from the trade route. The specifics of a given raid are left to the captains of the ships involved, but generally it is seen as favorable to take a Kingdom ship with no casualties, as this prevents the buildup of military forces along the trade route. The Kinsou Raiders rarely steal from Kyokutou ships, so as not to displease the Sea Youkai or Dragons that live in the waters.

The Kinsou Raiders have strange relationship with the Youkai known as Kaizokuhime. They fear the power of her own pirate ship and pay her fealty, but she is known to appear among them for her own amusement, so they speak of her in the highest praise as though she might be present.

2.2.6.21 THE DAMTSUSHIMA YOJIMBO

Damatsushima is one of the most contested territories in all of Kyokutou. It has been battled over and trampled by the Tetsukabe, Matsuyori, and Ryuuka clans so frequently in The Succession Wars that it is now little more than a flat plane of dirt and stone between North and South Mokutomo.

People once lived on Damatsushima, and the island's fate was not their choice. Over the years, they hired more and more soldiers to protect them, and now they are known as the Damatushima Yojimbo. These powerful soldiers are nearly-permanent residents of the island and they live to protect the island from any sort of Clan incursion. Some of the most powerful fighters in the world have gathered here for this cause, leading to an ever-increasing war of power and attrition.

2.2.6.22 THE GANEDA FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Kinsou is contested by the Ryuuka and the Tohana clans, in an abstract, distant sort of conflict. The Ganeda Freedom Fighters present a third side to the conflict, preventing either of the clans from gaining the upper hand. They seek to keep the island free of Clan influence, where capitalism thrives and merchants are king. Strangely, the Bakufu has a policy of backing them, indicating that there may be a more political side to the Freedom Fighter's fight.

2.2.7 POWER

The next step in character creation is largely determined by the Master, but involves a lot of feedback from the Players. To determine what power level the characters are, the Master will assess the challenges discussed for the game, the perceived power of the characters, and where they expect the story to go.

From this, the Master will declare a group Level that the characters will start at.

In Wa, the Levels of power are fewer and more meaningful than in other role-playing games. They range from 0-9, with Level 0 representing animals, some ghosts and spirits, and other small creatures, and Level 9 representing the entities who have attained enlightenment. The bulk of the human population are Level 1, with soldiers, magicians, monks, priests, and other powerful sorts of people taking up Level 2. Above Level 2 are veterans, heroes, mysterious powers and fell spirits.

Many games will start at Level 1 or 2, with the heroes just starting their adventures. Other games will start at a slightly higher power level, to accommodate for characters with lots of backstory and power.

Note that the range of levels for a given race isn't a limit, it's merely where the majority of individuals lie on the scale of power. Heroes, the characters the Players are playing, are often outside the bounds of normal society and can frequently reach levels of power higher than bulk of the mortal races.

2.2.8 STATS

Once a starting Level has been decided, you can begin to think about your character's statistics, or "stats". These numbers act as a quick and dirty assessment of your character's abilities.

24

LEVEL 9

LEVEL 3

LEVEL 1

LEVEL 6



The stats are used for conflict resolution, to determine success in any kind of competitive or strenuous activity.

You already know one of the stats, and that's your character's Level. The other stats are grouped into categories: Attributes, Skills, and Traits. Attributes are like fixed properties of a character, things like Health and Reputation. Skills are things that the character can do, such as Melee attacks or Crafting. Traits are specific techniques and powers associated with either an Attribute or a Skill. Traits are interesting powers that are used in role-playing the character that can provide bonuses to a given dice roll.

You'll find more information about each of the specific stats in the next few chapter.

The number of Skills, Attributes, and Traits you can have is based on your character's Level.

Points are used to buy Skills and Attributes. The number of Points you have is equal to $([\text{Level}] \times 9) + 3$.

Traits is merely the sum of all traits you own. The max number of Traits you can have is equal to $[\text{Level}] \times 4$.

You will gain Points and Traits over time, and these will cause you to Level Up. At the beginning of the game, make sure you take Skills, Attributes, and Traits that befit your character concept, story, and power. This will help you and the others take on your roles.

Remember that these stats are not the only part of your character. They represent how your character does something, not why.

2.2.9 EXTRAS

There are some miscellaneous things that may occur during character creation, but these are optional. Not every game will include them, and not every character in a given game will have them. The use of Extras is decided by the Master on a per-game basis. Most games won't need them at the start. There are three main types of Extras: Perks, Flaws, and Equipment.

Perks are small powers, benefits, or attributes that a character has that make their lives a little easier. These are often racial or professional in nature, from the powerful senses granted by hanjin ears to a nearly limitless supply of food for a member of the Fishing Guild. Perks aren't as powerful as Traits, but they can often be used in the same context for role-playing benefits.

Flaws are analogous to Perks, except that they make life a little harder. Note that this is often more interesting to the Players and the Master, providing the character with limits they must work around. Examples might include the disdain reijin show for simple professions, or the persecution that comes from Kinrei heritage.

Equipment is handled differently in Wa than in other role-playing games. In Wa, we don't want to concern ourselves with individual arrows and how much weight we're carrying. Instead, we're assumed to have what we need for the task at hand, unless the Master reasons otherwise. A samurai, therefore, is assumed to be armed with their daisho under most circumstances. Equipment is thus used to represent extraordinary objects or artifacts of great power. You wouldn't usually bother writing down that your ninja has shuriken unless they were enchanted whirlwind shuriken crafted by the Snow Woman in Fuutou.

Likewise, you wouldn't bother to track your samurai's sword unless it was Senjogahara the Blade of a Thousand Battles. Another interesting use of Equipment would be to note the *absence* of an item that a character typically used or needs. Individual pieces of equipment do not have statistics to interfere with your character's stats. Instead, they are used in role-playing to help you perform stunts that are interesting and exciting for the group.

2.3. ATTRIBUTES

This chapter goes over the phases of creating a character. This is done at the beginning of a game, when the Master is assembling the Players and setting up the story.

Character creation is very collaborative in Wa. Its best to do a character creation session where everyone is present, or to do the same over a forum or email chain so that everyone can bounce ideas off of each other. It also helps keep everyone on the same page as far as where the story is headed, another important part of setting up the game.

2.3.1 HEALTH

The Health Pool represents a character's physical durability and stamina. It is a Pool attribute, with the following formulas.

- ◆ Max Health: $[\text{Level}] + [\text{Points}] + 3$
- ◆ Current Health: $[\text{Max Health}] - [\text{Damage}]$

The idea of Health is not complex. When a character reaches 0 Current Health, they are Knocked Out and unable to act, fight, or use Skills or Traits.

Depending on the situation, the character may still be conscious and able to speak, but this is the exception rather than the rule. In other instances, the Master may allow a character to role-play certain Traits while they are Knocked Out. Examples might include the use of Will Not Stay Down or Kami's Soul traits, or the activation of an Artifact that depends on the character's life force.

Health Traits are often used to reduce Damage dealt in combat, to explain how a character continues to act in the face of overwhelming adversity, or survive nearly-fatal events. They are also used to give flavor to defensive rolls by "taking it" rather than avoiding the attack.

2.3.2 INITIATIVE

Initiative is an active Attribute that is used to determine what order a character acts in conflict situations. It is calculated as: **[Points]d6 + [Level]**, the same a Skill.

When a conflict breaks out between several characters, the Master will ask for Initiative rolls. Any ties on this roll are rolled off until they are settled.

Initiative Traits can be used in Initiative rolls, of course, but can also be used to enhance descriptions of other combat maneuvers as well.

2.3.3 MOVEMENT

Movement is a measure of how quick on their feet a character is. Some characters accomplish this by being very flexible and agile, while others use special techniques or magic to enhance their speed.

Contests of Speed are often called Chases. Chases can be handled similar to Initiative rolls, or for longer sequences, characters add their rolls together to determine the distance they've traveled. Ties generally mean that the distance



between the tied characters doesn't change even though their location has.

Movement Traits are also sometimes used to explain defensive rolls by evasive or slippery characters. Movement Traits can be used by lightning-fast attackers as well.

2.3.4 REPUTATION

Reputation is an important concept in the culture of Wa. Social standing is often the most important single aspect of a relationship between citizens of Kyokutou. While a beggar with an impeccable reputation will never be treated higher than a lesser lord with a terrible reputation, reputation can greatly change the way people of similar social station react to one another.

Reputation is an Active Attribute with the formula: **[Points]d6 + [Level]**. Though it is technically rolled by players to influence others, this is often treated as a passive ability, without the owner having to interact with the character in question. Merely knowing of the owner's Reputation is enough to change the behavior of others. As such, Reputation can be used by characters who are unconscious or even absent from a scene.

Reputation Traits are often used for intimidation and respect. They often tinge the interactions of a character with others. The Master should be aware of any Reputation Traits of the Players and have non-player characters react appropriately. Players should likewise consider the influence of non-player characters' Reputations when interacting with them.

2.3.5 ENERGY

Energy is a measure of the different types of mystical power a character has access to. Much of the time, this refers to a character's Ki, but some magicians and monks have access to other sources of energy, such as the Spirit Wind, Chakra, or pacts with dark creatures. All of these sources are measured by Energy.

Energy is a Pool Attribute with the following formulas.

Max Energy: **[Level] + [Points]**

Current Energy:
[Max Energy] - [Spent Energy]

Energy is usually spent in one of two ways: Recuperation and Boosting. Characters can Recuperate by channeling their Energy into their bodies. This takes one turn in combat and allows the character to transfer 1d6 Energy to the same amount of Health. Characters can also use Energy to Boost their abilities, granting themselves a bonus on a single roll. This effect is visible to everyone who can see the character, often provoking counter-boosts from opponents.

Energy Traits can be used request rerolls on Recuperation, or to enhance Boosts. Magicians and other mystics often use Energy Traits to enhance their powers.

2.3.6 PERSONALITY

Personality is an unusual Attribute. It combines willpower, cunning, charm, and personal magnetism into a single stat that is used in contests of will. Personality is often used between lords and royalty as a means to get what they want.

Personality is an Active Attribute with the following formula: **[Points]d6 + [Level]**.

Personality is often used in intrigue settings and spy missions, as well as comedies and romances. It provides characters with a way to win fights without resorting to combat.

Personality Traits provide characters with mechanical tags that indicate how a character acts. These Traits can be used in just about any situation, helping enhance the characterization of a person in the game and how they react to an event.

2.4. SKILLS

This massive chapter contains information about the Skills of Wa.

2.4.1 SKILL LIST

Battle Skills

- ◆ Beast Heritage
- ◆ Dodge
- ◆ Guard
- ◆ Hand to Hand
- ◆ Melee
- ◆ Ninjutsu

Ranged

Magic Skills

- ◆ Darkness Path
- ◆ Demonic Techniques
- ◆ Enlightened Path
- ◆ Esoteric Techniques
- ◆ Five Elements
- ◆ Sage Techniques
- ◆ Spirit Heritage

Spirit Path

Professional Skills

- ◆ Art
- ◆ Business
- ◆ Craft
- ◆ Diplomacy
- ◆ Fieldcraft
- ◆ Labor
- ◆ Perform

Religion

Tactical Skills

- ◆ Athletics
- ◆ Awareness
- ◆ Deception
- ◆ Stealth
- ◆ Strategy
- ◆ Truth

2.4.2. BATTLE SKILLS

Battle Skills revolve around combat, plain and simple. They are as diverse and varied as the fighters who use them.

Many Battle Skills require intense, rigorous training to become proficient in. The concept of martial arts is intertwined with these Skills.

Battle Skills are mostly found among warriors, soldiers, and criminals, though there are some civilians who train in them for sport.

2.4.2.1 BEAST HERITAGE

Beast Heritage is not a martial art, a school of fighting, or a theory of combat. It is a physical manifestation of feral power. It is the type of combat that animals rely on: teeth, claws, fangs, hide, talons, and instinct.

Beast Heritage is of course popular among animals, but many spirits, youkai, and demons also possess these basic combat abilities.

Beast Heritage Traits:

- ◆ Claws
- ◆ Concealment
- ◆ Fangs
- ◆ Flight
- ◆ Hardened Shell
- ◆ Hardy
- ◆ Immense Strength
- ◆ Leathery Hide
- ◆ Powerful Senses

2.4.2.2 DODGE

Dodge is the ability to evade attacks completely. It is one of the most popular defense mechanisms in the world, and is instinctively used by animals, cultivated by martial artists, and mastered by shinobi.

Advanced uses of Dodge can position a fighter in an advantageous position for attack, in addition to evading blows. At greater levels, users can even seem to disappear from view.

Dodge Traits:

- ◆ Acrobatic Evasion
- ◆ Counterstep
- ◆ Water Flows
- ◆ Bending Around the Wind
- ◆ Guiding the Strike
- ◆ A Hair's Breadth
- ◆ Ghostly Body
- ◆ Body Flicker
- ◆ Godspeed Evasion

2.4.2.3 GUARD

Guard is the ability to deflect, absorb, or block a blow. In mortals, this is often done with armor or by raw muscular power, shouldering an attack out of the way. Guard is most often found among soldiers, where moving around to avoid an attack may expose a companion to danger.

In the rare offensive role, Guard is used to smash an attack back at the attacker, causing damage to them or their weapon.

Demons, martial artists, and the more physically impressive youkai also use Guard.

Guard Traits:

- ◆ Battle Sense
- ◆ Muscle Guard
- ◆ Weapon Parry
- ◆ Aura of the Veteran
- ◆ Strike the Strike
- ◆ Invulnerable
- ◆ Iron Skin
- ◆ Stone Bones
- ◆ Sword Ki Defense

2.4.2.4 HAND TO HAND

Hand to Hand combat is an ancient form of battle invented by humanoid peoples. In absence of other methods of attack, the body itself becomes the weapon. In modern times, it is composed of many different martial arts, all of which teach different forms and expressions of the same basic principle.



Hand to Hand is often a complex mix of attack and defense, relying on strikes, throws, elbows, kicks, grabs, and pushes instead of swords and spears. Many schools feature highly ritualized routines that expert users can deploy at lightning speed.

Hand to Hand Traits:

- ◆ Hard Counter
- ◆ Knife Hand
- ◆ Opening Gate
- ◆ Iron Hands
- ◆ Choke Grip
- ◆ Driving Slam
- ◆ Pressure Point Strike
- ◆ Sealing the Body
- ◆ Stonebreaking Strike

2.4.2.5 MELEE

Essentially the opposite of Hand to Hand, Melee is the art of attack and defense using a close-ranged weapon, such as a katana, yari, naginata, kodachi, tetsubo, or bo staff.

Melee ritualized similarly to Hand to Hand, with thousands of schools of combat devoted to the subject. Each has their own philosophy, style, and favored set of weapons. All of the modern armies of the Mortal World rely on Melee as the backbone of their fighting ability.

Melee Traits:

- ◆ Crushing Blow
- ◆ Overhead Strike
- ◆ Parry the Strike
- ◆ Penetrate Defenses
- ◆ Furious Charge
- ◆ Cutting the Arms
- ◆ Multiple Blows
- ◆ Instantaneous Draw
- ◆ The Supple Blade

2.4.2.6 NINJUTSU

Ninjutsu is the application of a number of esoteric, quasi-mystical fighting arts. It is employed by secret agents, spies, shinobi, and ninja. The powers of Ninjutsu are part martial art, part onmyoji mysticism, part elemental technique, and part deception.

As with other Battle Skills, there are numerous schools that teach Ninjutsu, most of which are secret. Practitioners are tested mercilessly and are often sworn by oath or heart seal to an organization related to the school.

Concealing one's true capabilities is core to Ninjutsu, so most practitioners keep their Ninjutsu a secret.

Ninjutsu Traits:

- ◆ Concealed Weapons
- ◆ Grappling Techniques
- ◆ Surprise Attack
- ◆ Battlefield Misdirection
- ◆ Poisoned Blade
- ◆ Elemental Strike
- ◆ Hidden Techniques
- ◆ Yin-Yang Strike
- ◆ Secret Techniques
- ◆ Sealed Techniques

2.4.2.7 RANGED

Ranged is the art of attacking an opponent at a distance. This is often done using a bow, such as a yumi or daikyu, or with a thrown weapon, such as a kunai, shuriken, or senbon.

While it would appear that the Ranged Skill cannot be used defensively, there are situations it can be used creatively in, for example shooting an arrow into a foot to foil a charge, or throwing a blade to distract a spell caster.

Ranged Traits:

- ◆ Leading the Target
- ◆ Hail of Arrows
- ◆ Directing the Target
- ◆ Incredible Distance
- ◆ Intercept Attacker
- ◆ Pinpoint Accuracy
- ◆ Ranged Counter
- ◆ Return Shot
- ◆ The Arrow is Truth

2.4.3. MAGIC SKILLS

Magic Skills are the most obscure, mysterious, and inscrutable Skills in Kyokutou. The vast majority of people of the Mortal World barely realize that these strange and fell powers even exist.

In general, Magic Skills are ones that deal with powers outside the normal abilities of a ningen mortal. They encompass many spiritual powers, from those powered by one's internal peace to those powered by harnessed dark energies.

Magic Skills are rarely found among non-clergy. Most of the time they are employed

by the state sanctioned spiritualists of the Shrine and Temple Associations, but there are rare freelancers who use their skills to make a living solving spiritual problems. There are also a few small cults dedicated to other, more occult gods who use these powers. Magic Skills are a defining trait of the spirits.

2.4.3.1 DARKNESS PATH

The Darkness Path is one of the most rare and dangerous powers in all of Kyokutou. It mirrors the Enlightened Path, following a twisting, winding path of knowledge, rather than an illuminated path of wisdom. While it can be used for neutral, or even beneficial purposes, most of the time the temptation to use its advantages is too great. The majority of people who walk the Path of Darkness end up corrupted by its dark power. Even dabbling in the art can be enough to affect the mind.

The Darkness Path is considered by even the most powerful priests and monks to be too powerful and dangerous for anyone to use, with the exception of a very small number of wizened scholars. In reality, it sees frequent use among those who dwell in the shadow, particularly the Kurosuhai, or Black Cult.

Darkness Path Traits:

- ◆ Shade in Fog
- ◆ Shadow Talon
- ◆ Dusk of Spirit
- ◆ Terror Release
- ◆ Shadow Moves First
 - ◆ Know the Secrets
 - ◆ Return to Darkness
 - ◆ Light and Shadow

◆ Awaken the Void

2.4.3.2 DEMONIC TECHNIQUES

Demonic Techniques are extremely dangerous powers that rely on the power of sealed or contracted demonic spirits, such as oni or obake. While there are redeeming features of the Darkness Path, the Demonic Techniques have none. At best, the user can only hope to control their own desires and power long enough to escape. At worst, the user is swallowed up by the spirits they attempted to control and returns to the world inhabited by things that should have remained bound.

Demonic Techniques are not in popular use among any group in Kyokutou. They are frequently sought by cabals and other dark organizations, but they are rarely found. Oftentimes, they are taught by the most insidious servants of the dark powers.

Demonic Technique Traits:

- ◆ Demonic Seal
 - ◆ Draw Spirits
 - ◆ Fell Techniques
 - ◆ Obake Consort
 - ◆ Unstoppable Ferocity
 - ◆ Summon Entity
 - ◆ Demon Install
 - ◆ Fiendish Release

◆ Unbinding the Bound

2.4.3.3 ENLIGHTENED PATH

The Enlightened Path is the Skill of Chido, one of the two most widespread religions in all of Kyokutou. It deals with inner peace, enlightenment, and the journey of life and death. It is most familiar as the presence of monasteries and temples in every region of the land.

Owing partially to its widespread use, much of the religion deals with the day to day life of its adherents. The Skill, on the other hand, is reserved for devout



practitioners, such as monks and clergy. They use the Enlightened Path Skill to perform the many rituals and forms needed to guide others along the Path.

Enlightened Path Traits:

- ◆ Prana of Stoicism
- ◆ Sutra of Inner Peace
- ◆ Prana of Gentle Force
- ◆ Sutra of Cleansing
- ◆ Sutra of Banishment
- ◆ Sutra of Purification
- ◆ Prana of Knowledge
- ◆ Prana of Inviolability
- ◆ Sutra of Outer Peace

2.4.3.4 ESOTERIC TECHNIQUES

The Esoteric Techniques, also called Onmyodo, are a mysterious art of spiritual power and peace. They deal with opposition, contrast, unity, divination, and the balance of Yin and Yang. The Esoteric Techniques are as rare as they are potent, and they are usually found among mountain hermits and mystics who seek to transcend the world.

The Esoteric Techniques often fill the gaps between other spiritual powers, drawing on the truth of things to blend energies, uncover secrets, and divine the future. The Esoteric Techniques are seen by most as a power reserved for spiritualists on the path to mastering not only themselves but the world around them.

Esoteric Technique Traits:

- ◆ Reading the Signs
- ◆ Yin-Yang Release
- ◆ Walk the Hidden Path
- ◆ Create Shikigami
- ◆ Spirit Barrier
- ◆ Banishing Word
- ◆ Ki Chakra Union
- ◆ Thousand Petals Chakra
- ◆ Astral Dominion

2.4.3.5 FIVE ELEMENTS

The Five Elements Skill is a very basic form of magic that is popular among many groups of mystics. As implied, it is the mastery of the elements Fire, Water, Wind, Earth, and Void. Users usually specialize in a single element, though more powerful practitioners use several at once to create unique combinations.

The Five Elements are used by most spiritualists as a method for attack or defense. Many clans even

employ small organizations of elementalists called “godaisha” who wield elements related to their clan’s heritage. The Five Elements are also popular among spirits, and often mortals with a touch of spiritual heritage find themselves with a talent for one or more of the Five Elements.

Five Element Traits

- ◆ Earth Release
- ◆ Fire Release
- ◆ Water Release
- ◆ Wind Release
- ◆ Void Release
- ◆ Elemental Manipulation
- ◆ Elemental Blast
- ◆ Elemental Body
- ◆ Elemental Aura
- ◆ Elemental Storm

2.4.3.6 SAGE TECHNIQUES

The Sage Techniques are less of a proscribed form of magic than a collection of skills that sages, hermits, and mystics tend to acquire over time. The Sage Techniques draw their power from many different sources and are usually found after long years of introspection.

The Sage Techniques are often employed as a way to diffuse combat or foil attacks. Those who use this skill usually do not desire to compare skills and prefer to pursue enlightenment rather than conflict. Because of this, many of the Sage Techniques are focused on the self rather than the external world.

Sage Technique Traits:

- ◆ Ascetic Body
- ◆ Ascetic Mind
- ◆ Ascetic Soul
- ◆ Peace with the Spirits
- ◆ Seeker of Perfection
- ◆ Diamond Lotus Chakra
- ◆ Kami Attendant
- ◆ Spirit Sage Eyes
- ◆ Spiritual Ascendance

2.4.3.7 SPIRIT HERITAGE

Spirit Heritage is the supernatural analog to Beast Heritage. It represents the innate natural talents and abilities of a spirit, demon, or kami. These powers are very different from what mortals are used to experiencing, leading to one of the reasons

for the gap between the Mortal World and the Spirit World.

Spirit Heritage is possessed in some form by almost all yuurei, youkai, rei, obake, oni, kami, and yajuu. Reijin also see some Spirit Heritage, though to a lesser extent.

Spirit Heritage Traits:

- ◆ Chaotic Appearance
- ◆ Spirit Fire
- ◆ Spiritual Connection
- ◆ Telepathy
- ◆ Incorporeal Form
- ◆ Transformation
- ◆ Energy Feeding
- ◆ Fearful Presence
- ◆ Bestow Bounty
- ◆ Bestow Curse
- ◆ Gigantic Form
- ◆ Divine Power

2.4.3.8 SPIRIT PATH

The Spirit Path is the Skill of Shindo, one of the two main religions of the land of Kyokutou. It focuses on making and keeping peace with spirits and directing or guiding supernatural entities. In its more aggressive forms, it can even bind or seal spiritual beings who are causing trouble.

The Spirit Path is usually used by priests of the Shrine Association, but it is also seen among village spiritualists, Clan-bound magicians, and members of dark cults. It is popular with reijin as well, in light of their knack for the supernatural.

Spirit Path Traits:

- ◆ Kami's Blessing
- ◆ Pleasing Offering
- ◆ Answered Prayer
- ◆ Gather Ki
- ◆ Purify Spirit
- ◆ Seal Power
- ◆ Spiritual Barrier
- ◆ Guide Spirit Energy
- ◆ Seal Spirit

2.4.4. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Professional Skills are abilities that one uses for employment, to gain wealth, or to perform duties. For the majority of peasants (and thus most people in Kyokutou) these Skills are what define one's life.

Professional Skills are used by every social class and caste in the hierarchy of the fallen Empire, from Labor used by slaves and serfs, to the Craft Skill used by artisans, to the Diplomacy of politicians and leaders.

2.4.4.1 ART

Art is the Skill of creating visual works. It encompasses calligraphy, ikebana, sumi-e, Ukiyo-e, sushi, and others. It is even used for the more decorative parts of physical objects, from shoji screens to sword hilts. Art itself is considered a high skill, and though most of the best artists are of the middle classes, it is much enjoyed at all levels of society, especially the rarefied heights of aristocracy.

The Art Skill is usually owned by members of the saikushi (artisan) or chounin (merchant) classes, and the demand for it is growing as the Clans race to glorify themselves. Many members of the Clans are also skilled in Art, but usually more as a pastime than a profession.

Art Traits:

- ◆ Clever Allusion
- ◆ Desiring to Exist
- ◆ Sympathetic Resonance
- ◆ Time and Age
- ◆ Expert Calligrapher
- ◆ Subtle Beauty
- ◆ Elegant Refinement
- ◆ Harken Back
- ◆ Profound Tranquility
- ◆ Transience of Beauty



2.4.4.2 BUSINESS

Business is the skill of trade and mercantile dealings. It is used in any situation where negotiation, managing, marketing, or calculation skills are needed.

The Business skill is the defining characteristic of the chounin merchant class, who make a living by transporting, trading, dealing, and marketing goods of various sorts.

In the past, before the Assassination of Emperor Rushiken, the chounin were considered a lower class than the heimin peasantry. In recent years, they have used their skill in Business to climb the ladder of social status.

Business Traits:

- ◆ Personal Connection
- ◆ Skilled Service
- ◆ Fence Goods
- ◆ Market Research
- ◆ Consummate Merchant
- ◆ Mental Calculation
- ◆ Blind Negotiation
- ◆ Mastery of Management
- ◆ Mastery of Numbers

2.4.4.3 CRAFT

The Craft Skill constitutes the ability to make something out of raw materials. It is often used to create furniture, buildings, objects, weapons, armor, and tools. It is also used to refine materials, such as milling rice, smelting ore, and cutting lumber.

The Craft Skill is one of the most pervasive Skills in the world. Every member of the heimin peasantry uses this Skill on a daily basis, and many members of the middle social classes also use it to perform their duties. It is even seen among the higher classes as a hobby or way to perform a service that does not involve war and combat.

Craft Traits:

- ◆ Decoration
- ◆ Function
- ◆ Minimalism
- ◆ Simple Elegance
- ◆ Clan Specialty
- ◆ Quality Materials
- ◆ Custom Tailored

- ◆ Function Becomes Form
- ◆ The Pathos of Things
- ◆ Embody Philosophy

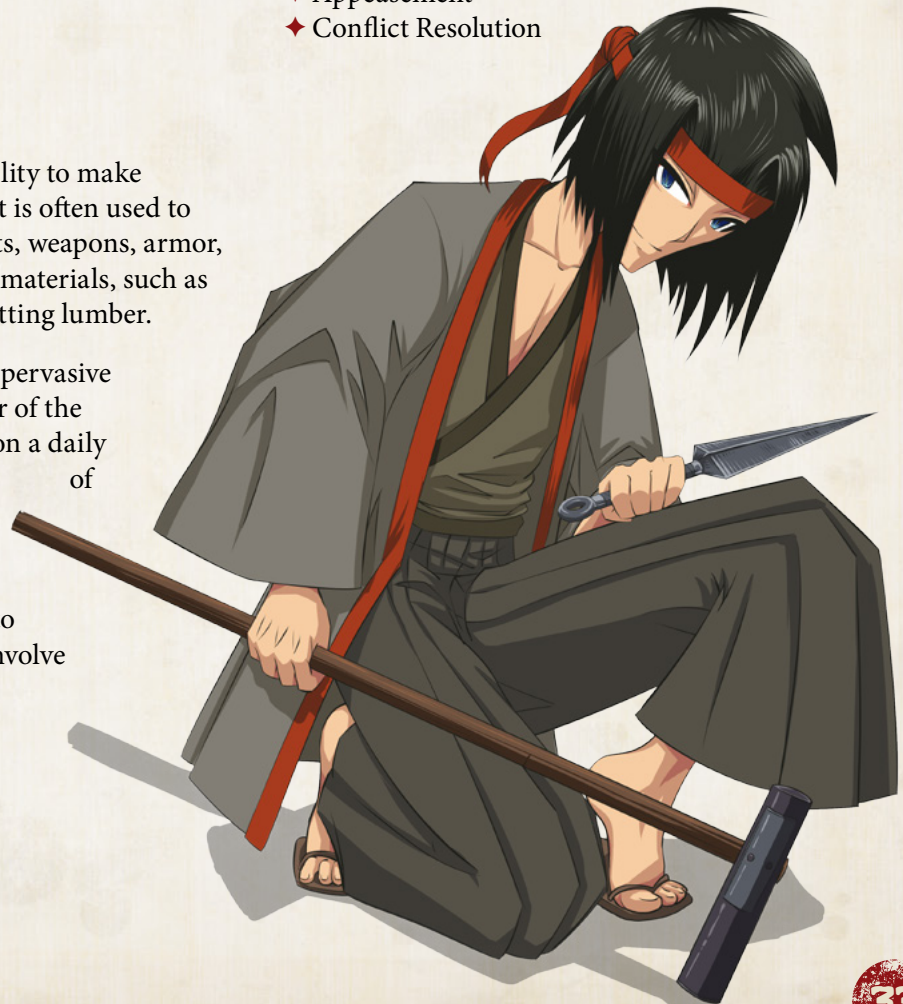
2.4.4.4 DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy is the Skill of speaking with others. It is often used to confer honor, negotiate politely, resolve conflicts, impress others, assuage doubts or concerns, and show respect. Diplomacy can often neutralize dangerous situations before Tactical Skills even become necessary.

Respect and honor are very important concepts in Kyokutou, where the hierarchy of the entire civilization is founded on these ideas. Diplomacy is therefore very popular, especially in professions and social classes that deal extensively with other people, such as merchants, servants, shop owners, politicians, and negotiators.

Diplomacy Traits:

- ◆ Hard Bargain
- ◆ Sweeten the Deal
- ◆ Trustworthy
- ◆ Appeasement
- ◆ Conflict Resolution



- Skilled Negotiator
- ◆ Subtle Intimidation
- ◆ Cultivate Relations
- ◆ Empathic Expert

2.4.4.5 FIELDCRAFT

The Fieldcraft Skill represents one's ability to survive in, move through, and effectively use wilderness environments. It encompasses a number of tactical and survival skills, such as building a fire, finding food and shelter, observing the terrain for enemies, overland travel, camouflage, and escaping detection. It sometimes stands in for Stealth or Awareness in wilderness environments and can be used to track others or to hide one's own tracks.

Fieldcraft is often used by hunters, gatherers, scouts, special agents, ninja, and people who live in the mountains.

Fieldcraft Traits:

- ◆ Navigation
- ◆ Rapid Overland Travel
- ◆ Survival Basics
- ◆ Concealment Expert
- ◆ Hot Weather Expert
- ◆ Tracking Expert
- ◆ Weatherproof
- ◆ Cold Weather Expert
- ◆ Hunting Expert
- ◆ Sea Expert

2.4.4.6 LABOR

Labor is the Skill of physical work. It covers a large number of specialties, including earthmoving and stone masonry, farming and crop gathering, manufacturing, and goods transportation. The Labor Skill helps the user work smarter, better, and faster, as well as harder.

Labor is nearly as pervasive as the Craft Skill. It is used by the majority of heimin peasants to work their farms and fisheries. It is rarely seen above the middle classes.

Labor Traits:

- ◆ Disciplined
- ◆ Manual Dexterity
- ◆ Material Gathering
 - ◆ Naturally Suspicious
 - ◆ Organized Effort
 - ◆ Mechanical Advantage



- ◆ Working the Land
- ◆ Bountiful Harvest
- ◆ Material Production
- ◆ Moving the Earth

2.4.4.7 PERFORM

The Perform Skill represents one's ability at music, dance, or theater. Most performers specialize in one instrument or area, such as the shamisen, the taiko drum, the odori dance, or kabuki. Perform is considered a high Skill, like its cousin, Art, and is enjoyed by all social classes in some form or another.

The Perform Skill is possessed by many, though few rely on it solely as their profession. Many of the lower and middle class have some skill in Perform, coming together for the many festivals of Kyokutou. The better the performer, the more likely they are to rise through the ranks and rely on their skill for their livelihood. Many of the best performers are celebrities who occupy a small cul-de-sac of the social order.

Perform Traits:

- ◆ Dance
- ◆ Musical Arts

- ◆ Tea Ceremony
- ◆ Theatrical Arts
- ◆ Instant Infatuation
- ◆ Pleasant Discourse
- ◆ Bittersweet Performance
- ◆ Art of Fascination
- ◆ Unparalleled Grace

2.4.4.8 RELIGION

The Religion Skill represents a worshiper's faith, resolve, and determination to follow the strictures of their doctrine. This skill differs from the various Magic Skills in that it does not tap into the actual source of power, but symbolizes a person's devotion to that religion. Rather than producing miracles, the Religion Skill is more about the day-to-day functioning of the religions as organizations.

The Religion Skill is held by nearly everyone in Kyokutou, at some level. It is most powerful in priests, monks, and the clergy of the popular religions, but is also held at high level by scholars, theologians, and philosophers.

Religion Traits:

- ◆ Chido Practitioner
- ◆ Inner Strength
- ◆ Shindo Practitioner
- ◆ Devotee
- ◆ Kurodo Practitioner
- ◆ Low Priest
- ◆ Senkei Practitioner
- ◆ Theologist
- ◆ Yodo Practitioner
- ◆ High Priest

2.4.5. TACTICAL SKILLS

Tactical Skills are all about gaining an advantage, usually in relation to another person. Tactical Skills are useful for gaining the upper hand before, during, or even after combat. Oftentimes one or two Tactical Skill rolls stand between peace and war.

Tactical Skills are often found in soldiers and special agents of various sorts, where rapid dominance is a necessary and strategy is essential.

2.4.5.1 ATHLETICS

The Athletics Skill represents a character's physical agility, grace, and movement ability. Athletics covers

running long distances, sprinting, climbing, swimming, jumping, and other physical activities.

Athletics is usually countered with Athletics; most of the time these competitions are a matter of performance. Athletics can also be used in Movement scenarios or Chase sequences.

Martial artists, shinobi, ninja, and couriers are among those skilled in Athletics.

Athletics Traits:

- ◆ Dancer's Grace
- ◆ Free running
- ◆ Acrobatic Maneuver
- ◆ Airborne Step
- ◆ Slippery Body
- ◆ Outmaneuver
- ◆ Outrun the Wind
- ◆ Ricochet Climb
- ◆ The Highest Road

2.4.5.2 AWARENESS

Awareness is the opposite number of Stealth. It is used to perceive things, usually of a visual or auditory nature. Awareness is used to find things, spot people, and search areas.

Awareness is usually used to counter Stealth, but sometimes it can be used to counter Deception, Strategy, or Battle Skills.

Monks, priests, investigators, and shinobi often have excellent Awareness.

Awareness Traits:

- ◆ Cultivated Senses
- ◆ Feral Senses
- ◆ Deep Empathy
- ◆ Fine Tuned Senses
- ◆ Spiritual Awareness
- ◆ Distant Senses
- ◆ Instant Survey
- ◆ Precognition
- ◆ Mind Sight

2.4.5.3 DECEPTION

Deception is the Skill of lying and machination. Deception allows a character to convince others of untrue or partially true facts, disguise falsehoods, bluff, feint, and otherwise confuse others.

Deception is often used in court and politics, but it is also important to spies and information agents of all sorts.

Deception is usually countered with Truth, but sometimes Awareness, Personality, or Reputation can stand in. Powerful spirits often see through Deception, and have it themselves.

Deception Traits:

- ◆ Guile
- ◆ Misdirection
- ◆ Poetic Voice
- ◆ Smiling Eyes
- ◆ Consummate Conman
- ◆ Unusually Trustworthy
- ◆ Silver Tongue
- ◆ Gilded Words
- ◆ Fox's Mask

2.4.5.4 STEALTH

Stealth is the ability to remain unnoticed. It allows users to pass undetected from place to place, to evade scrutiny, and to conceal items on their person or elsewhere.

Stealth is one of the most important skills for thieves, outlaws, ninja, and couriers. It is also useful in court and politics, where it is used to facilitate the gathering of information. Stealth can also be used by powerful spiritualists to hide their own spiritual presence.

Stealth Traits:

- ◆ Camouflage
- ◆ Crowd Blending
- ◆ Extreme Patience
- ◆ Quickchange
- ◆ Evade Scrutiny
- ◆ Preplanned Distraction
- ◆ Into Thin Air
- ◆ Invisibility
- ◆ Conceal Presence

2.4.5.5 STRATEGY

in many types of situation where several parties are competing for something, from army-scale battles, to small tactical incursions, to important business deals.

While Strategy is useful in many situations, it is most often found in those with some sort leadership position. It is also found among rebels, guerrillas, spies, assassins, and other individuals operating on their own.

Strategy Traits:

- ◆ Combat Stratagem
- ◆ Taking the Initiative
- ◆ Battlefield Calculation
- ◆ Terrain Usage
- ◆ Utilizing Surprise
- ◆ Weak and Strong
- ◆ Power Disposition
- ◆ Use of Intelligence
- ◆ Target of Importance

2.4.5.6 TRUTH

Truth is the ability of a character to separate fact from fiction. It is mainly used to counter Deception, though it is sometimes used to defend against illusion-based or mind-control magics, or to uncover information about hidden or unknown subjects. Some monks use Truth as a path to enlightenment.

Investigators, spies, politicians, court officials, and clan leaders often possess Truth, as do many religious officials.

Truth Traits:

- ◆ Discern Lies
- ◆ Poetic Eye
- ◆ Ignore Misdirection
- ◆ Wary of Answers
- ◆ Empirical Analysis
- ◆ Sensing the Ties
- ◆ Philosophical Thinker
- ◆ Sensing the Balance
- ◆ The Unclouded Mind



2.5. EXTRAS

Extras are bits of information about a character that are optional. They are typically utilized as traits,

giving extra options for players to use while role-playing.

Extras may or not be used in a game at the Master's discretion. Because they are not bought with points and have no specific mechanical benefit, players can write down Extras during character creation. The Master can choose to enable or disable Extras as desired.

2.5.1 PERKS

Perks are special bonuses that a character has. They are often in the form of racial capabilities, such as the powerful senses of the hanjin or the innate magical skill of the reijin. Other types of perks may be related to a character's background, such as personal wealth or a large number of contacts.

2.5.2 FLAWS

Flaws are personal, social, or physical problems that plague a character, for example the mental instability of Yuurei, or a social stigma from one's dorei heritage.

Flaws are excellent tools for role-playing. They often turn a bland superhero into a complex, round person with their own problems to deal with. Interpersonal flaws are great for this.

2.5.3 EQUIPMENT

The Equipment Extra is a catch-all for objects of importance that the character is carrying. In Wa, we don't track individual items unless they're valuable, unusual, or otherwise specifically important. In general, a character is assumed to have the tools necessary to do their job, for example, weapons and armor for samurai, seals and robes for a priest, and so on. The Equipment Extra is for special items, like a sword that transforms into a person, or a piece of the Imperial Regalia. In some situations, it may be beneficial to note less valuable items, such as food or

water when lost, or shards of a particular sealing stone. In short, if it's an important item, it can go under Equipment.

2.6. ROLE-PLAYING

The term "role-playing" gets used a lot in Wa. When we talk about role-playing, we mean taking on the role of a character, not just rolling dice all night long. The role-playing we're concerned with is focused on characters, storytelling, and drama.

While the characters are often warriors of some kind, you will notice that the rules for combat are somewhat light and flexible. Wa's rules aren't supposed to force a fight to go one way or another, they're supposed to support the story. That is easier with lighter rules because it means that less time is spent going over rules cases and counting numbers and more time is spent telling the story itself.

2.6.1 CHARACTER MOTIVATION

As in any role-playing game, deciding a course of action for your character is a complex task. Since Wa focuses so much on the characters and drama of the situation, deciding what to do comes down to

character motivation, rather how create the highest dice roll. Remember, we're here to collaboratively tell a story, not rack up the most points. Here are a few suggestions for breathing some life into your character.

Always keep in mind the relationships between your character and the others in the scene. A normal person wouldn't be caught dead disrespecting a member of the Kinhan. If your character's lover is a hostage in the battle, consider how that would affect your character's state of mind. If your character has never seen a spiritual event, meeting



a Youkai would be quite a surreal, terrifying experience, even for a veteran warrior.

Remember also that most people do not wear their true emotions on their sleeve. There is often a certain amount of self-censoring that goes into people's actions. Your character might appear humble before a lord, but secretly despise the man because of past events. A noblewoman might be cold and aloof to traveling mercenaries in spite of the fact that she desperately needs their help. Often this behavior is caused by cultural norms and perceptions enforced by the strict, stratified society of Kyokuto.

The people of Kyokuto are often inherently humble, downplaying their importance, skills, or attributes, even when praise is deserved. This effect is more pronounced between people of vastly different social standing; peasants will often bow or prostrate their way out of even the lightest praise from a samurai or lord, and Clan samurai are known for being almost melodramatic when their masters applaud their efforts.

Very few characters focus exclusively on one thing at a time. Even in the middle of a fight, people find themselves distracted by how their allies are doing, whether their loved ones are safe, and how best to fulfill their duties. How do outside factors influence what your character is doing right now? In a positive way, or in a negative way?

Beyond that, always remember to stay true to the character. Sometimes people do just act out, but most of the time there is a reason for what they do, even if no one else knows what it is.

2.6.2 RULE OF DRAMA

Wa is intentionally a dramatic, exciting world with dramatic and exciting characters. There will almost always be conflict in some form, because it is the source of that drama. Sometimes, there will be a choice between a simple, easy way of doing things, and a hard, dramatic way of doing them. We greatly encourage you to take the hard way, because that is what stories are all about. It would hardly be interesting to take an army to a duel, unless the duelists are the heroes. It would be boring for a powerful martial artist to move up into the mountains to avoid a rival, unless that rival comes knocking once again.

This doesn't mean that the characters of the story have to be bumbling klutzes. There isn't usually a need to throw a fight by role-playing that your character trips, unless losing that fight enhances some other aspect of the drama of the story. On the other hand, if the characters have captured their adversary, it might be interesting if one of the heroes accidentally let slip an important secret.

The rule of drama often shows itself in the format of the heroes being the underdogs. When a single man or woman stands against an army, there is something about the situation that makes us want to root for the outgunned. Sometimes, it's better for the drama of the story to keep moving rather than consolidate power. Sometimes, it's better to intentionally play the underdog, because it's more exciting when the underdog finally wins.

2.6.3 ACTIONS

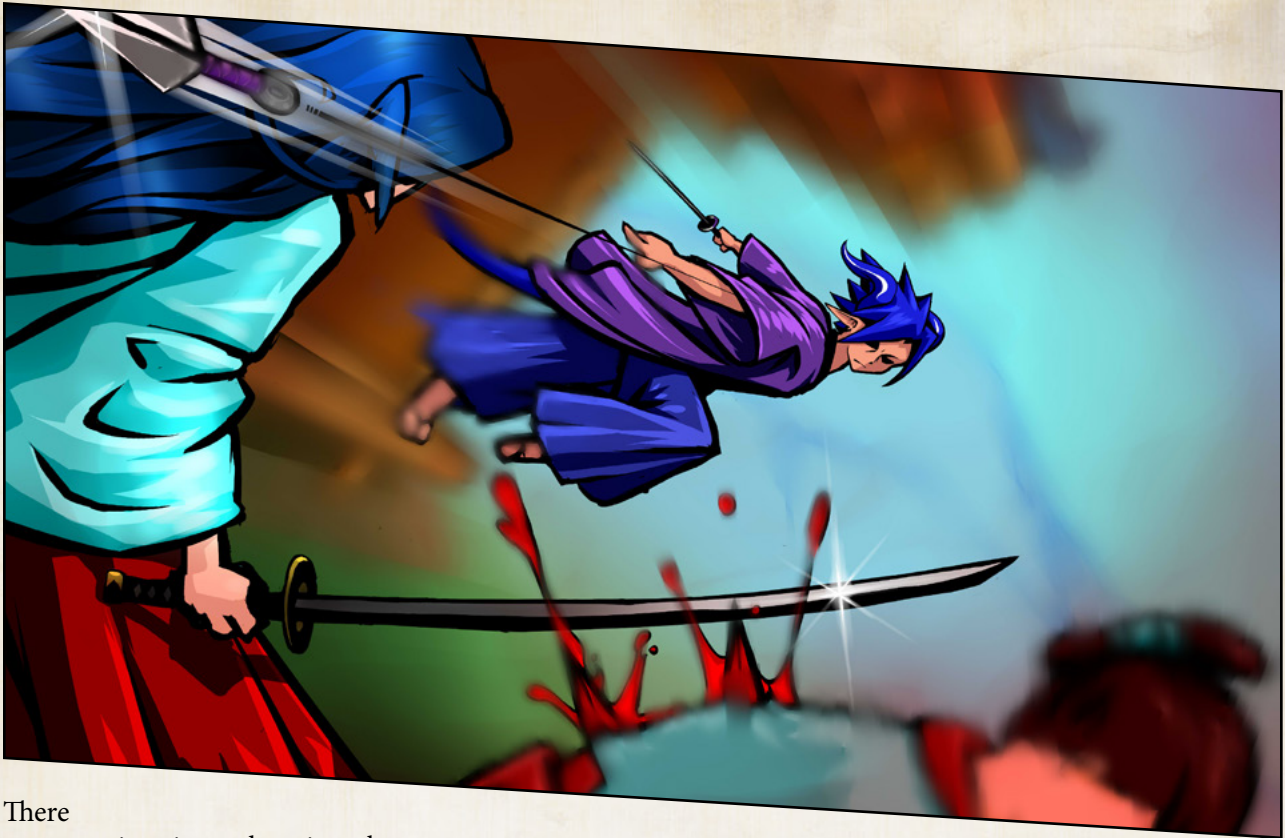
While many of the scenes in your game may consist of high-level planning, conversation, or travel, others will require a more detailed description of events. In these situations, usually combat or at least competitive in nature, Players use Actions to describe individual things their characters do.

Actions are fundamentally an attempt to do something, not an entire event. Because the Master is the arbiter of what does actually occur, player Actions are usually phrased as "my character does this," or "my character tries to..." instead of "my character does this, and this happens to the bad guy." This leaves the outcome up to the Master, who selects an outcome that is dramatic and fits with the direction of the story.

Actions range in complexity from very simple to complex stunts and they are the basic unit of conflict resolution in Wa.

A character attempts to do an Action, and from there the conflict is resolved in one of two ways. Either the Master resolves the action by describing the events directly, or (as is most often the case in combat situations) dice are rolled to add an element of chance to the event.

Because the rules of Wa are designed to support the story, not interfere with it, dice are not required for every conflict. Most of the time, the Players and the Master tell the story together directly, dictating Actions of characters and the reactions of others as they make sense to everyone.



There are even situations where it makes sense to role-play combat without using dice at all, such as when a character is facing a vastly more powerful force, or is physically or emotionally compromised and unable to properly act.

Other times, when the situation requires tension and an element of chance, the Players and Master resort to dice rolls to help determine the outcomes of Actions. Again, the Players declare their Actions, roll the dice, and the Master describes the outcome based on the Player's Action, roll, and role-playing.

2.6.4 ROLE-PLAYING THE DICE

It's important for the Players to feel like the dice are just an expression of chance, a method for creating conflict, not an adversary to beat. A poor roll of the dice can be just as interesting as a good roll.

While the ultimate outcome of an Action is up to the Master, it's encouraged for Players to take ownership of their rolls, to describe how their characters performed based on the die roll.

If you roll poorly, take ownership of the failure, and describe what mistake your character made. Perhaps they aren't used to fighting this type of enemy, or perhaps the adversary got the drop on them. They could be distracted, confused, or caught in the middle of deciding between actions.

Make sure to take ownership of your good rolls, too. Describe how you added an extra attack to the combo to punch through your opponent's defenses, or how you channeled your anger into zen-like peace to overcome a dangerous spell.

The point here is that it breaks everyone's suspension of disbelief if Players are complaining about dice rolls in the middle of otherwise well-described combat. Respond in-character to the rolls, and keep the momentum going.

2.6.5 THE OUTCOME

The outcome of an Action is determined by the Master, who knows what direction the story will take and what sorts of challenges lie ahead. Sometimes, you'll like what the Master has described, and sometimes you won't. Remember that this is a collaborative story, and that you are one part of the whole. The Master's job is to make sure that the story keeps going, and sometimes that means that an enemy has to escape or a friend has to get hurt. As a Player, it's your job to stay in character and direct your desires into the character instead of back at the other Players or the Master. If you're sore about losing a fight or failing a mission, showcase how your character deals with that emotion. Role-play how determined and focused your character

can get. Remember that conflict is dramatic, and without drama, we wouldn't be having fun. In other words, remain calm.

2.7. ROLLING DICE

Rolling dice puts the outcome of an Action in question, leading to tension and uncertainty. This is usually most valuable in competitive situations, such as in battle or spiritual cleansing. Remember though that dice rolls are there to support the story, not interfere with it, and in the unusual situation that no one can rationalize what the dice have declared, it's okay for the Master to describe the situation differently. Just remember that seemingly-bizarre events determined by the dice are often very memorable in retrospect.

2.7.1 BASICS

The most basic we can describe a single Roll in Wa is this: Roll a number of six-sided die (d6), take the highest number, and add a bonus. This is denoted as **[P]d6+[L]**, where **[P]** is the number of Points you have in that Skill or Attribute and **[L]** is your Level. This is the dice mechanic used for Skills, combat, and some Attributes. In general, if you need to roll for it, you'll roll it like this.

Some Rolls will be Opposed, and some will be Unopposed. This is simply whether you're trying to succeed against an animate entity (like a samurai, spirit, or monster) or an inanimate object (like a trap, cliff, or gate). In Opposed Rolls, You'll roll your dice, the opponent will roll theirs, and the highest wins. In Unopposed Rolls, you roll your dice alone, trying to roll above a static Threshold. In all rolls, ties go to the defender, Opposed or Unopposed. You'll find more about dice rolls, combat, and damage in the Combat chapter, next.

2.7.2 ZERO POINTS

If a character has no Points in an Attribute or a Skill that they have at least one Trait in, they roll zero dice and are considered to have a static value in that ability. They may use that ability but never roll dice for it, unless there is a tie.

If a character has no Points and no Traits in a skill, they cannot use the Skill without consensus from the group and the Master.



This usually occurs when a character is forced into a situation in which the character begins to develop the Skill immediately.

2.7.3 BONUSES

There are several kinds of bonuses to a roll. First of all, there are Point bonuses and Dice bonuses. Dice bonuses are rare and are given out by the Master in special circumstances. Point bonuses are much more common and are further classified into several kinds: the Level bonus, Stunt bonuses, Teamwork bonuses, Combo bonuses, Ki Surge bonuses, Equipment bonuses, and miscellaneous bonuses.

The Level bonus is directly incorporated into the normal dice roll and is always used. All other bonuses are detailed in the next chapter. All these bonuses have the effect of adding to the dice roll, rather than giving the character more dice to roll.

2.8. COMBAT

Combat is the most structured type of event in Wa. We'll explore the various options available and the events that can occur in this chapter.

2.8.1 TURN STRUCTURE

Combat in Wa is structured similarly to other role-playing games. Each player acts only on their turn, which occur in sequence based on an Initiative Roll. These turns are organized into rounds. The round is over when all active participants in combat have finished their turns.

During each turn, a player describes an Action, which generally consists of an attack on another character or object, or some type of non-combat activity such as healing another with a spell or creating a barrier. The player rolls dice as directed by the Master, who describes the outcome.

2.8.2 INITIATIVE

When combat begins, the Master will call for an Initiative roll. This roll determines the order in which the character act. Higher numbers go first, and ties are rerolled until they are broken. In the rare instance that several characters in combat have no Points in



Initiative and their Initiatives are tied, they each roll a single unmodified d6 to resolve ties.

When the Master calls for Initiative rolls, players can request to perform a stunt for Initiative, to gain a bonus on their Initiative roll.

The Master will then order the characters by Initiative and begin the first round by calling on the first character to act.

2.8.3 ATTACKING AND DEFENDING

Generally, attacking is an Action while defending against an attack is considered a reaction and does not require an Action to be used. Characters can therefore defend from many more attacks than they can perform in a given turn. Characters can only attack on their own turn, but they can defend at any time, as long as they are not knocked out or otherwise unable to act.

When a character attacks, the player playing that character declares the target and describes the Action they take using their Skills and Traits, optionally

attempting a Stunt of some kind. The attacker then rolls the dice for the main Skill of the attack and declares the result, including any bonuses for Stunts. The defender roll an opposing defense and describes the Skills used, along with any traits.

After both numbers are rolled, they are compared. If the attack is better than the defense, the attack is considered to have succeeded and we move on to the damage phase. If the defense is higher, the attack is neutralized. If both values are the same, the effect is a perfect clash, where the defense exactly meets the attack. Players are greatly encouraged to give a brief description of their characters' reactions to these events.

2.8.4 TAKING DAMAGE

If the total of an attack is greater than the total of the defense, the attack has succeeded and will deal damage to the defender's health. This is calculated by subtracting the Defense from the Attack. For example, an attack of 5 against a defense of 3 results in 2 damage to the defender. The damage is subtracted from the defender's Health. If the defender has any Health or defensive Traits,

they can ask to attempt an extra Stunt to reduce the damage. The Master may allow this, or judge that the damage is already done based on the type of attack and the type of defense involved. They may even allow a defensive stunt, but then decide that the attack has properly penetrated it, thereby allowing all the damage through anyway.

2.8.5 KNOCK OUT

When a character's Health reaches zero, they are Knocked Out. Unlike other games, these characters are still alive, though they might be in serious danger depending on how they were knocked out. The details of how a character dies or survives are often too important to merely gloss over with a die roll, and they should always be handled with role-playing. Even when a character is suddenly killed, the player of that character should secretly agree to the scenario or possibility ahead of time with the Master. Players can voluntarily put themselves in mortal danger for the good of the party, the people, or any other goal, if they so choose, but the Master should be wary that killing main characters can seriously disrupt the flow of the game. Preparation is key.

2.8.6 ROLE-PLAYING STUNTS

Sometimes you'll find that you need an advantage over an opponent, or come across a situation that you really do need to succeed at. It's times like these that Players can unleash the power of role-playing Stunts. These are special actions that go above and beyond the normal Action to try to enhance the story and excitement for everyone. For performing a Stunt, the Master will reward you with a bonus on your roll for an Action, depending on how well you've role-played and described your Stunt. The benefits can be huge for well-done stunts.

Stunts are usually comprised of several chained-together acts, or one single, major action that a character puts all of their resources into. Stunts are usually made up of one or more Traits or pieces of Equipment used in novel ways, for example using an artifact sword that can cut anything to slice down a building as a distraction for a Body Flicker sneak attack. Traits are often used to their maximum potential in Stunts, stretching them to the limits of imagination.

Stunts should be seen as a way to articulate a special combo or complex series of attacks

or defenses that a Player wants their character to perform. They exist as a way to reward players for creative thinking and exciting role-playing, not as a simple tool to gain bonuses on every roll a Player makes. Stunts should be amazing, cool, and awesome to pull off. But be warned, the Master can perform Stunts too, especially with powerful villains.

In general, performing a Stunt takes the place of an Action, so if you do a Teamwork or Combo Stunt, you won't be able to attack or act on your turn aside from the Stunt you're performing.

2.8.7 TEAMWORK STUNTS

Teamwork functions similarly to Stunts. Players can work together to pool their resources and try to accomplish the impossible.

When trying for a Teamwork Stunt, a single character must act as the Focal Point. This character doesn't necessarily have to be the one to deliver the attack or finish the combo, but they must have some hand in the Stunt, possibly as the leader, strategist, or point.

The Stunt may be started by any player so long as the Focus agrees. Any number of players can then add on or modify actions that go into the Stunt, collaboratively creating a team combo. The Combo is delivered on the Focus's turn.

The non-focus characters contributing to a Teamwork Stunt can't act more than would normally be possible in a round. The point is to help each other and set up a chain of short events that unfolds in the Player's favor. The Master then assesses the entire Teamwork Stunt and assigns the Focus a bonus to their roll based on that. Because more people are contributing, Teamwork Stunts are often more powerful than individual Stunts. This is to encourage the use of Teamwork when individual abilities alone are not powerful enough.

2.8.8 COMBO STUNTS

Combo Stunts are similar to Teamwork Stunts in that they involve teamwork, but they function quite differently. Instead of many Players contributing to a single action, a Combo Stunt allows a single character to use their turn to give another character a bonus. The Stunt is performed like a normal Role-Playing Stunt, but the bonus is given to the target character instead.

An example of a Combo Stunt would be one character dousing an adversary with oil in preparation for a fire spell from their teammate. Another might be the use of tag-team tactics by a samurai and ninja pair.

Combo Stunts can be passed on to another player if the first target performs their own Combo Stunt. This means that the entire team could theoretically pass around a giant Combo Stunt bonus until it's big enough to use on the super-powerful villain. Beware, though, because Combo Bonuses are used up and gone after the player uses their action. If a character fumbles their roll, they could drop the entire Combo and lose the bonus.

A single player can only contribute to a Combo Stunt once, so once the bonus comes back around, no one else can add to it and the first character has to use the bonus or it's lost.

2.8.9 KI SURGE

Ki Surge is a special type of bonus that can be performed *after* the dice are rolled and the outcomes are declared. Players can perform Ki Surges on any sort of roll as long as they can describe the effect.

To perform a Ki Surge, the player declares a Surge at any time between the start of an roll and the Master's description of the outcome. It's okay to interrupt the Master for this, but doing so can be irritating to the other players as it can slow the game down, so most of the time the decision to perform a Ki Surge comes down to how well you yourself rolled in the event. When you declare a Surge, you also state how much of your Energy you're spending on it. Energy spent provides a one-to-one bonus on the roll.

After you've declared your Surge and stated your new total, your opponent may decide whether to Surge as well. If they do, they declare how much of their own Energy they're spending, and their own new total. This can go back and forth as long as each party still has Energy to spend.

The visual effect of a Ki Surge is almost always astounding to those who witness it. Energy ripples off the character in question, often taking the form of one of their Traits or enhancing their Skill in some mystical way. Make sure to describe the effects of the Surge on your character.

2.8.10 EQUIPMENT BONUSES

When an artifact or special piece of Equipment is used in a battle, it is functionally equivalent to a Trait. It can be used in combination with other Traits or Skills, or used for an Equipment Stunt the same way traits are used for Role-Playing Stunts, leading to bonuses on the roll. The only difference is the source of the power. Equipment can be traded, given, or stolen, where as Traits and Skills cannot.

2.8.11 MISCELLANEOUS BONUSES

Miscellaneous bonuses are usually situational in nature. Sometimes a shinshi who controls water finds themselves in a battle on a boat, making them massively more effective. Occasionally, a thief might be forced to do battle while partially tied up, making their attacks almost meaningless. Weather conditions, environmental variables, and even, at higher Levels, other characters can be used as Miscellaneous bonuses, of a positive or negative value. This gives the



Master a way to tilt the odds in one direction or another for a whole combat scene.

2.9. OUT OF COMBAT

Depending on the type of campaign you're playing in, combat may be only a small portion of the game. There are lots of things to do in the world of Kyokutou besides fighting. In this chapter, we'll explore some of those actions.

2.9.1 ACTIONS

Out of combat, characters usually have more time and less distractions to deal with. For that reason, there are usually fewer rolls outside of combat. Out of combat situations are much more fluid and less structured than combat situations. They are mostly directed by pure role-playing.

Actions are more flexible in what they can accomplish. In combat, a single Action would be equivalent to a single attack, whereas an action outside of combat might be substantially more complex, such as forging a sword or crossing the city.

Many non-combat Actions are less contentious than combat Actions, and do not require Skill rolls. Crossing the city, for example, does not require an Athletics roll unless you're trying to do so as quickly as possible. The Master can ask for rolls on actions that have a substantial chance of failure, or are potentially too complex.

Out of combat actions can be strung together by players when the situation is stable and under control. You might, for example, have your character go into a town, find the blacksmith, have their weapons repaired, then visit a shrine and a temple to honor their fallen adversaries, all in one action, when the group reaches the town. The Master can either describe how your events go, or they can interrupt the sequence with new events for you to react to.

As usual, remember that Wa is collaborative. It's better to work with the other players to direct the action of out of combat scenes than to try to divert or undermine them.

2.9.2 PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Professional Skills represent the largest section of non-combat actions available to

characters. These Skills are specifically designed for use out of combat, when the character has time to work. They are rolled when the outcome is in question, particularly when a character is competing with another, trying to do their very best, or attempting to earn money or respect.

2.9.3 TACTICAL SKILLS

Tactical Skills, such as Stealth and Strategy, also find much use out of combat, but they often lead to combat situations depending on the outcome. Unlike Professional Skills, they are often seen both in and out of combat.

Tactical Skills, by definition, are about acquiring a tactical advantage over an enemy or adversary. This can result in a combat situation favorable to the winner, a direct bonus given by the Master, or the avoidance of a combat situation altogether.

2.9.4 MAGIC SKILLS

Magic Skills also see fair use outside of combat, and in fact most people do not associate them with fighting. These Skills are often used to influence the world in subtle ways, such as asking for the blessing of the Kami on an event or place, summoning incorporeal mischief-makers to do one's bidding, or calling forth a fog to hide in.

As usual, Skill rolls are only made when the outcome is in question. A simple prayer wouldn't need to be rolled, but a powerful summoning would, for example. Magic Skills are often used in direct competition, either in or out of combat. Non-combat opposed rolls may develop into combat situations quickly, or they may be much larger in scale, such as opposed weather control attempts.

2.9.5 ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are often used outside of combat. Personality and Reputation can be used for an entirely different type of confrontation. Health and Energy Traits can be used for recuperating from debilitating injuries or sicknesses. Movement and Initiative can be used in the same function as Tactical Skills in some circumstances.



Professional Skills represent the largest section of non-combat actions available to

2.9.6 UNOPPOSED ACTIONS

Often in non-combat scenarios players find their characters in situations where they need to perform some action but there is no one to oppose them. The Master will usually handle these situations as Unopposed Skill Rolls, even outside of combat. Examples of these sorts of situations include breaking down a gate, finding their way when lost, and manufacturing a large number of arrows while under siege. As per the usual rules, the Master will decide a Threshold for the roll.

2.9.7 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Unless the story takes place in the remote reaches of the Kouyu Mountains, there will likely be a fair amount of social interaction in the time outside of combat. Players should use this time to articulate the personality of their characters, explore aspects of their pasts, and integrate themselves into the story better.

Depending on the style and themes of the game, the players can also cultivate a number of relationships with other characters, player or non-player. In some games, players may find romance, rivals, families, or even more insidious relationships. The type and style of the relationships that occur in the story is up to the group. Some groups are not comfortable with romantic situations. Others are interested in complex, gritty relationships rife with betrayal and lies. Again, it all comes down to what the group is comfortable with.

2.9.8 TRAVEL

In Wa, the accurate depiction of every mile of stone path isn't what's driving the game forward. We're here for drama and excitement. Traveling cross-country can be very uneventful, even in the more heavily populated parts of the world. In general, long passages should be glossed over unless some kind of event occurs, or the characters need or want to talk with each other.

Occasionally, the Master may judge that there's a possibility of a random encounter on the road. This happens regularly in the war zones of Mokutomo and other dangerous areas. These events will tend to interrupt glossing over travel, interspersing it with more interesting bits of action.

2.10. CHARACTER PROGRESSION

Character growth in Wa is mechanically controlled by the Master's granting of Experience Points. These points are used to gain new Attributes, Skills, and Traits, representing the increasing capabilities of the character.

2.10.1 ACQUIRING EXPERIENCE

Depending on the type of game you're playing in, the Master may grant experience points for achieving specific goals, at the end of a gaming session, or a combination of the two. No matter what format the Master uses, your job as a Player is to keep the story moving. Even if you're not receiving experience points for specific actions, it's just more fun for everyone when the players show investment and are excited about the game.

2.10.2 USING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience Points are used in the same way as Skill Points and Trait Points. You can put an Experience Point in any Attribute, Skill, or Trait that makes sense for your character, as long as your Skills and Traits don't exceed maximum values for your Level.

The maximum values you can have for Skills, Attributes, and Traits are equal to the starting values for the next Level. For example, a character at Level 3 starts at 30 Skill Points and 12 Traits. Their maximum values are 39 Skill Points and 16 Traits, the base values for Level 4. This can be easily calculated using the formulas in the Character Creation chapters: **Level × 9 + 3** Skill Points, and **Level × 4** Traits per Level.

| Level | Skills | Traits |
|-------|--------|--------|
| 0 | 3 | 0 |
| 1 | 12 | 4 |
| 2 | 21 | 8 |
| 3 | 30 | 12 |
| 4 | 39 | 16 |
| 5 | 48 | 20 |
| 6 | 57 | 24 |
| 7 | 66 | 28 |
| 8 | 75 | 32 |
| 9 | 84 | 36 |

This means that you can put points into Skills and Traits in whatever order you want. You

could start a Level by spending Experience Points on Skills until you've reached your maximum, then switch to Traits, or you could simply take whatever Skills and Traits look useful at a given time.

2.10.3 RECALCULATING STATS

Most of the time, you won't have to recalculate much when you spend Experience Points.

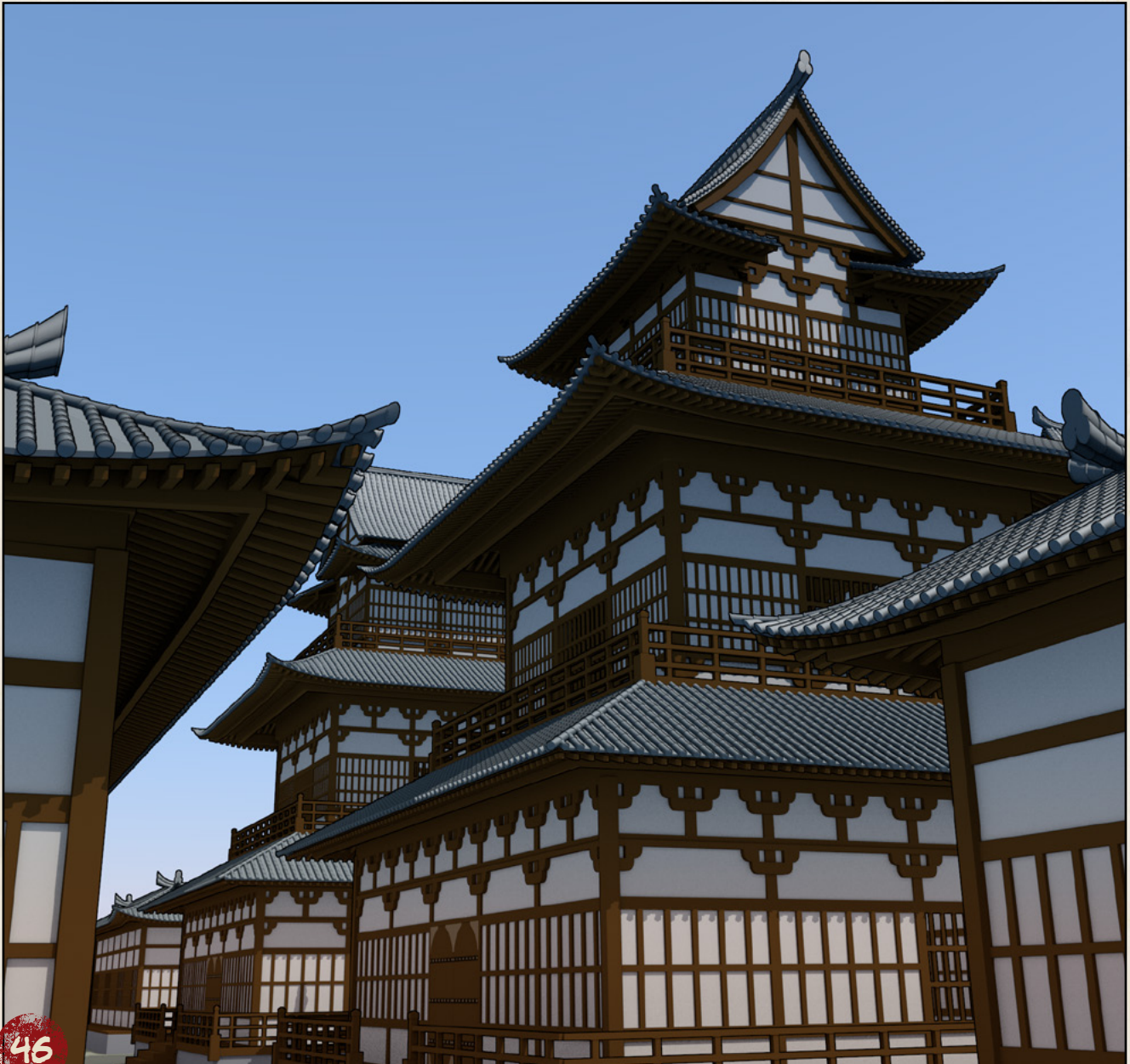
Whenever a Skill goes up, you simply add a die to your roll. Whenever you buy a Trait, you simply write it on your sheet. On the other hand, when you buy Attributes, you may need to recalculate the value for it; simply use the formula from Character Creation to find the new value. When you have spent all your points and you've leveled up, you'll need to recalculate all your Attributes and Skills, but it should only take a moment or two, since the only change

is that your Level (and thus the bonus for all your Skills) has increased by one. Then you can get right back to playing.

2.10.4 LEVELING UP

You can think of Experience Points as being fractions of a whole Level. Each time you use an Experience Point to raise your abilities, you're getting closer to the next Level. Once you've used all 13 Experience Points, your character will be equivalent to one of a level higher; you just leveled up. In this way, leveling up occurs naturally in the course of using Experience Points, rather than being a sudden leap in power.

Don't forget to recalculate your Skills and Attributes, however, so you can benefit from your new status.



3. THE SCROLL OF MASTERY



3.1 OVERVIEW

This scroll is intended specifically for Masters. It contains information about how to run the game, how to use the rules, and how to keep players entertained.

3.2. PLAY STYLES

There are almost as many different styles of playing role-playing games as there are gaming groups. While Wa is squarely aimed at those who prefer story over statistical combat, there are ways to accommodate different play styles.

Keep in mind that these are tendencies and themes, not specific goals. Most games fall into one or more of these types, so it's more of a sliding scale.

3.2.1 HARD AND FAST

Some players prefer the story so much that they're willing to sacrifice statistics and mechanics to facilitate the ease of getting into character. These players are best matched up with a Master who can think on their feet and are up to the challenge of leading the players along an unwritten course. These types of game are somewhat rare, and are sometimes called "freeform" depending on the context. Masters challenged with this type of play will need to be very

decisive in their judgments, able to imaginatively and creatively describe events at the drop of a hat. Because there are fewer or no dice at all to rely on, conflict resolution comes down to raw role-playing, which can be hard on players or a Master who aren't perfectly comfortable playing a game without an unbiased resolution mechanic.

The key in these types of games is to maintain character. Players will need to be vigilant and flexible, able to stay in character very securely, so that the player's aspirations don't influence the character's actions overmuch. The Master will need to be able to pick up and put down non-player characters quickly and seamlessly, to keep up with the fast pace of the story.

As a Master, it pays to have a flexible, changeable plot laid out far into the future, so that as the players whisk through your storyline, you have the ability to refine, tune, or completely change your plot as necessary. In this sort of game, it can be harder than normal to get players to do what you expect them to, so be prepared to follow them just about anywhere.

3.2.2 METICULOUS DETAIL

The exact opposite of the hard and fast way is the style of meticulous detail. Games played this way are more like Dungeons & Dragons, with specified resources, more random elements in the gameplay, and a focus on rules and



limitations. These sort of games are often the province of players who are competitive and enjoy building elaborate characters with powers that work together in complex, synergistic ways.

These are also the sorts of games where individual pieces of equipment may be tracked, adding to the tension of being low on resources. These games often focus on the gritty realities of tough situations, with the Master forcing the players to make hard choices.

It can be difficult to run a game of Wa in this style because of how flexible the rules are. If your group insists, try adding some of these optional rules:

- ◆ Players must keep track of all items their character has in their possession.
- ◆ Energy is now used to initiate any kind of Stunt, at a rate of one Energy per attempt. Players cannot attempt Stunts if they have no Energy.
- ◆ Characters heal slowly, regaining only as Current Health per day as they have Points in Health.
- ◆ Energy can only be regained through prayer or meditation, which takes time at an altar, shrine, or temple.
- ◆ If a character's Current Health drops below 0, they die.

3.2.3 THE MIDDLE WAY

The normal, proscribed method for play is to simply follow the rules as written in the Scroll of Laws. This is the middle way, between the extremes of rules-heavy and rules-light. It is specifically designed to accommodate more story than an average role-playing game, but still has enough rules to make combat fair and balanced.

It's important to remember that the middle way focuses on collaborative storytelling. If your players want to challenge you, or you prefer the players to feel like their characters might die at any time, the middle way might be difficult for you. While the middle way doesn't put the characters directly on the chopping block, it doesn't afford them so much freedom that they can do whatever they want.

To some Masters, especially those more experienced with table-top wargames, the middle way will still appear to soft. We urge you to think less about death as a punishment for a character's failures, and more about the failure itself. What happens when the players fail to rescue a village elder? The village might collapse, leading to a terrible stain on the player's reputations. What happens if one of the characters is knocked out in a fight? They might be kidnapped, taken hostage, tortured, or even brought into the fold of the enemy. Remember that there are always fates worse than death, especially for characters who care about others.

3.2.4 THE COMEDY

Some gamers don't dig on melodrama, man, and that's okay. Some people just want to have a good time storytelling with their friends. Treating the game as a comedy can go a long way to tailoring it to that sort of group.

Sometimes, anime and manga are just ridiculous. Try incorporating some of that aspect into the game, to maximize the potential for funny situations, jokes and messing around. In a comedy-style game, much of the fun is in flawed characters dealing with each other poorly, so make sure that the characters have

character, even if they're flat and dimensionless. Play that up, if that's what helps.

If you're really aiming for the sky, treat the whole game as an episode of a fictional anime show, where you're the director/artist/writer, and the player characters are fourth-wall-breaking b-movie actors who botch their lines and make asides to the audience all the time. Kick that fourth wall right in the gonads.

3.2.5 PLAYING SMALL

Sometimes it's hard to find a big group to play with. Other times, you just want to do a small, intimate game detailing the trials and tribulations of a single main character. Or perhaps you're just interested in a new way to spend time with your significant other that doesn't involve television. It's perfectly okay to play *Wasuremonogatari* with as many or as few people as you want. You can play with a group of five or six, or you can play with two or three.

Smaller games tend to focus more on a few characters, of course, and this means that those characters get more "screen time" to showcase their various flaws, abilities, and goals. This can be great for building the story of a few characters, but for other players it's too intimate and intimidating. Make sure you and your players are comfortable in the group before playing this small.

3.3. INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

As the Master, it's your job to involve the players in the game. Making sure the players and their characters are well integrated into the story are important to making the game fun. In this chapter, we'll go over some techniques to help facilitate this.

3.3.1 MOTIVATIONS

The most important thing you can do to help player involvement is to determine (as best you can) the motivations of *both the players and their characters*. For example, one player might claim to be interested in the politics of the Succession, but might find more thrills in the full scale wars instead. This isn't necessarily intentional, it just goes to show that role-playing games are dynamic and it's hard to predict what will be most enjoyable. If you know what

they players are interested in, you have options for directing the game. If you don't, you run the risk of boring your players with stories they don't necessarily care about.

Much of the time, this will come down to paying careful attention to how the players react in the different situations they're presented with. Sometimes, they'll be hanging on your every word, other times, they'll be fiddling with their dice. Try to keep track of what the group enjoys the most, so you can use that information in the future.

3.3.2 INTEGRATING THE BACKGROUNDS

One very good way to get your players engaged is to integrate their characters from the very beginning. You can usually do this by carefully molding the backgrounds of all the characters together so that they're all related before the game even starts. Perhaps the enemy mentioned in one character's background is the disfavored uncle of another, or perhaps someone's rival turns out to be another party member. This is often easier when the players give you lots of hooks for their character, so do your best to encourage this.

The trouble with integrating characters into each other's backgrounds is that you can run out of hooks to utilize. You want to save some of those hooks (plot ideas, characters, etc. mentioned in the players' backgrounds) for your story and villains as well. What better a way to introduce a bad guy than drawing on an adversary that bested one of the players in the past? With complex backstories, this can go a long way to building a game plot from nothing but the character's backgrounds. This makes the players feel like the game is actually about them, not just some drop-in heroes who happen to be playing this adventure scenario packet.

Depending on the players and how inventive and creative they are in character creation, it might be better to meet them half-way on their backgrounds, letting them determine the broad strokes, while you fill in the details so you can better integrate them all together.

It's also sometimes possible to invent character background in the middle of play. In anime and manga, this often shows up as the unplanned addition of a new character introduced as someone's relation, and it can fall flat on its face if there hasn't been any information about that character

ahead of time. But if you carefully mention it beforehand, you can occasionally insert people from the player's pasts, explaining that they just hadn't been important to the story before.

It's also usually a good idea to allow for some back-and-forth over the character backgrounds, because what you find interesting might bore the player or vice versa. It's always better to try to handle that outside of the game session, so it doesn't interrupt the flow for everyone.

3.3.3 DIRECTING WITHOUT DICTATING

Player engagement only begins with their background. It's important to make sure that the players are integral to the story throughout the game. In general, the game should be about them, not some other heroes off doing other things. Make sure the players are almost always pivotal to how the story happens.

Paradoxically, it often helps the players to feel invested when the triggering events of the story happen outside of their control. Imagine you have a group of mercenaries for a party. You might think that they'd like to be there in the room when war is declared, with the option to change the course of that event, but it's often better for them to react to major events like that, rather than have the ability to change them. In this example, it'd probably be better for them to be told that war has been declared by the other faction, and that they're being asked to help the defenders. Instead of giving them the chance to subvert a major plot line and accidentally take the game into territory they wouldn't enjoy (and you don't have planned), you place the triggering event where they can't effect it, and are forced to make choices about how they deal with that event. This way, you can direct the overall series of events according to your own plan, but you can also allow the players to vastly effect the course of the game.

You can also use this technique to integrate the story ideas brought by the players into your own plot line. If the players are interested in ideas or themes that your story doesn't have, you can insert these themes by gently guide the players in that direction by presenting events that occur that the players can choose to investigate. Just be sure that the option is real, and that the players can pursue those events without breaking character.

Remember also that players are well-known for their ability to jump plot lines and pursue courses of action no one could have anticipated. Being a flexible Master is important both for keeping the game moving smoothly and avoiding the trap of over-planning the story. Players presented two options will often choose a third (or fourth, or fifth), as that is the essence of problem-solving, a core trait of players. It's often better to present challenges without presenting solutions, letting the players uncover hints towards the solutions you want them to take. Let them feel like they're in control of their characters' lives, and they'll be happier to play along.

3.3.4 ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES

There will come times when the players do simply walk off the map. Sometimes a player will suddenly take an interest in a detail mentioned in passing. Sometimes a non-player character proves to be more interesting than the villain. Sometimes the current story just runs dry and the group needs something to invigorate it. In these situations, skilled Masters seamlessly divert the story along a new path, exploring whatever events, characters, or themes the group is showing interest in. Most of the time, this means flying by the seat of your pants, making up the story as it goes along.

For some Masters, this is how they run most of their games. For others, this sort of thing can be very difficult. In the end, remember that this is a collaborative game and just follow the cues the players give you. If they pursue some lead that takes them the long way around, don't quash their interest by making the lead turn cold, make it interesting for them. Use any of your resources to fill in the details as much as you can, and do your best to make up the rest.

Sometimes, in these situations, it's okay to admit you don't have anything prepared for that direction. Call for a pizza, take a break, or make an excuse for the player characters to spend some time talking amongst themselves (which many parties have a bit of a problem with anyway) and take a moment to think up some ideas to use for the direction they're taking the plot. It's better to take an actual break and let things settle out than to try to limp along as you lose engagement and excitement.

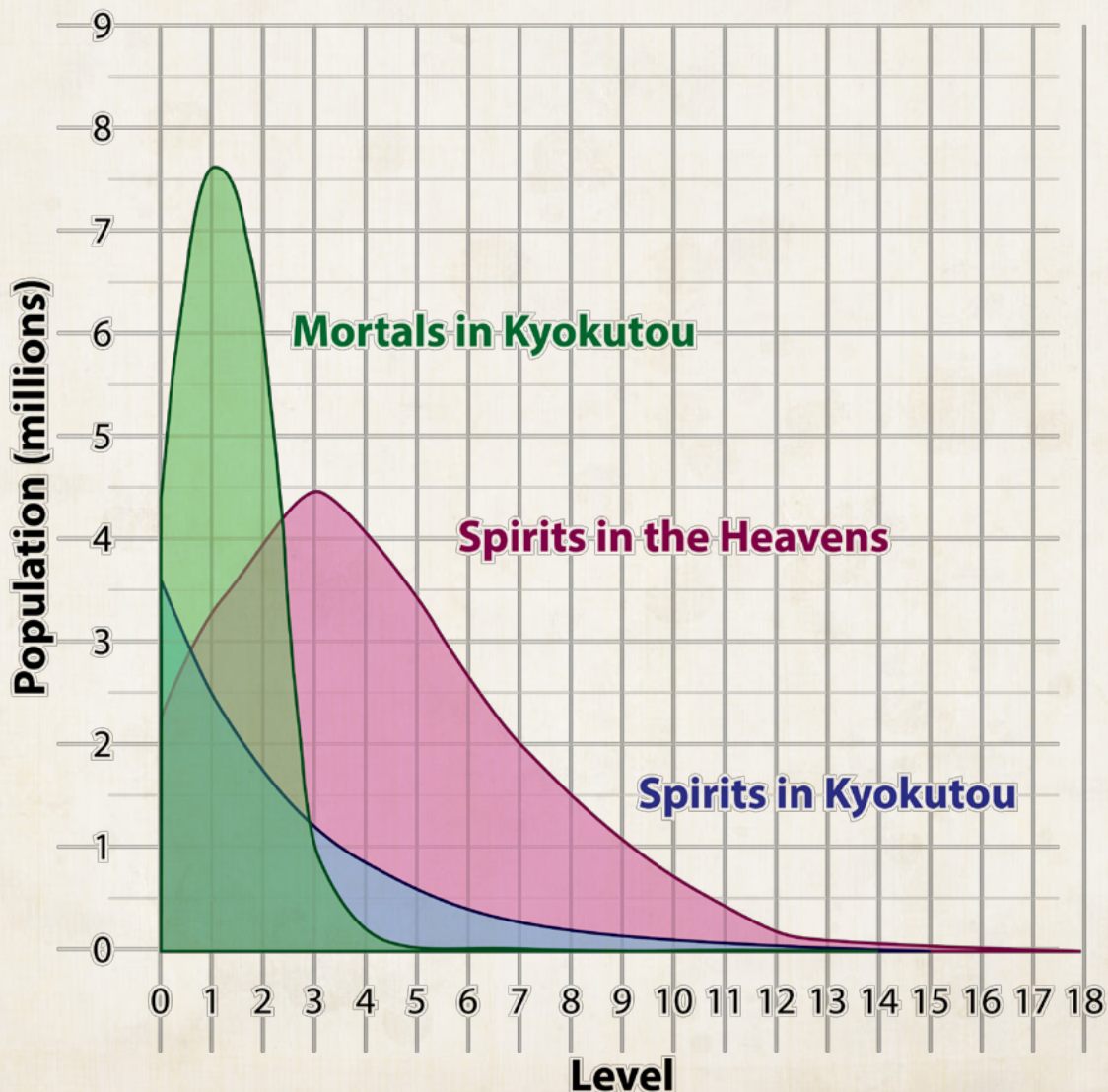
3.4. ANTAGONISTS

Heroes are only as great as the challenges they overcome. The corollary to this rule is that you must create great villains to for your players to defeat. This is a more difficult task than it seems at first. Complex, realistic villains that can get the players to really want to beat them are hard to come by. Most of the time, the players are carried forward under the momentum of being heroes, challenging villain after villain just because they're targets. Most of the time, the key to dramatic adversaries is making them so contrary and antithetic to the player characters that the players will go out of their way to find and stop them. Ultimately, you want your villains to be almost as memorable as the player characters.

3.4.1 BELIEVABLE MOTIVES

The first step to establishing a memorable, realistic villain is to find and establish a believable motive.

Fortunately, in the world of Wa, there are many factions fighting each other. Most of these are set up so that they can be portrayed either as heroes or villains; use one clan as the protagonist faction, and another clan becomes the antagonist, and so on. Ideological differences make for very believable enemies. Part of the theme of Wa is the idea that no one is really right, and no one is really wrong, and that people have to do their best given the situation they're in. Duty and honor can cause many a conflict. Often-times, enemies created this way are more anti-hero or anti-villain than villain, merely working for different, usually conflicting, goals than



the players. This can make for very interesting and memorable adversaries.

On the other hand, sometimes it's good to have villains who are Evil, with a capital "E". We urge you to be careful with evil, because it's used all too often as a cheap escape route for a villain's intent. The villain's motive should be an evil motive, not evil itself. This goes along with the idea of active participation rather than passive participation. The adversaries should *do* evil, not just *be* evil.

There are many ways to portray evil, but all of them relate to how they treat others. Make sure that you try to pick something specific, so that you don't fall into the trap of a generically evil villain. Consider using traits like sadism, sociopathy, exploitation, extreme selfishness, and the corruption of power. Don't forget to modify these base elements as well, just like for a normal character. A sadistic villain will appear flat next to a sadistic villain who is horrified at their own actions.

Some evil villains are redeemable, others are not. Which one you choose to use is up to you and how your story is planned. For example, it makes more sense for a villain to be able to see the error of their ways when faced with a party of monks, priests, and other spiritualists. On the other hand, it makes less sense for a powerful demon possessing great knowledge of the supernatural to be turned to the side of good when faced with the same choices.

These two basic types of motivation apply to any adversary you throw at the players, from giant sealed yajuu dark gods to a rival of equal level and skill.

3.4.2 INTERESTING MONSTERS

The monsters of Japanese legend feel quite foreign to western audiences. This can be good or bad, depending on the degree. If a monster is too foreign, the players may not understand it well enough to be intimidated by it. Take for example a long-nosed old man with raven wings. Most western audiences wouldn't have a frame of reference to compare the creature to, but in Japan, the tengu is steeped in myth and legend. This problem arises less with the more popular legendary Japanese creatures, such as the nine-tailed fox or Kitsune, or Japanese Ryuu dragons.

Ultimately, you'll probably end up needing more than come to mind. The trick to using the new ones effectively is to be very descriptive, both before the players encounter it, and during.

Describing what foul deeds the creature has done and what sort of carnage it has left behind can go a long way to making a previously-unknown creature more than just sword-fodder.

For some groups, it may be useful to describe some creatures in terms of similar entities in other games. An oni might be described as being superficially similar to a balor, for example. For other groups, this can distract from the theme of the game.

Because of the dynamic, fluid nature of the Spirit World of Wa, you should also feel free to modify monster archetypes to suit your story. This can even lead to dramatic scenes where the players think they know what's coming, but they're deeply mistaken.

3.4.3 RIVALS

Rivals are usually used best as foils for the true adversaries. They present challenges to the players, but they are often on the same side, or at worst a side that isn't directly competing with the players. They fight and bicker with the characters because they disagree, not because they despise each other.

Rivals are also useful as recurring characters. They have a tendency to show up like bad pennies, when the players are least expecting them. They often complicate matters without being the direct cause of the conflict.

Rivals are most useful and dramatic when their role changes. It can be very exciting to join forces with the opposing team to fight the big bad, and it can be very scary indeed when the old rival turns to the dark side and really starts trying to kill the players. This is because the relationship is already established and carries meaning to the players and their characters. Be careful that your rivals don't always follow the same script, however, because the players may grow to anticipate betrayals or changes of heart. Usually, you can minimize this by disguising rivals or by integrating them into the story so deeply they can't really be referred to by their archetype. This can take the situation from "any rivals I have always turn evil and betray me," to "Everyone I know betrays me in the end," a much more powerful and in-character line of thought.

3.4.4 ANTI-VILLAINS & ANTI-HEROES

Anti-villains are essentially villains who lack certain villainous traits, or have heroic traits that balance out some of their negative characteristics.

Anti-villains often have standards that set them apart from the truly evil. Some will go out of their way to avoid casualties, others refuse to harm those they perceive as innocent. Others act out of some code of conduct, whether the actions are right or wrong.

Anti-villains are often more philosophical than normal villains, both in character personality, and in how the players end up dealing with them. They are also some of the most likely adversaries to actually defeat the players, as they often lack enough evil traits for others to condemn them completely.

Anti-heroes are the inverse of this phenomenon. They are heroes who lack certain heroic traits, or have one too many villainous ones to appear righteous. Anti-heroes are often presented as the flip side of the coin from the heroes, just a step down the wrong path. They are often very critical of the high-and-mighty players, claiming that there is no way to do what they must without dirtying their hands.

Anti-heroes range from being slightly less than paragons of justice to barely better than the villains themselves. Depending on the story, they may be on their way up or down the villainy scale, eventually redeeming themselves or falling into the black abyss of actual evil.

3.4.5 TRUE EVIL

Sympathetic adversaries are all well and good, but some stories require enemies that are truly, fundamentally evil. Fortunately for the game and the story, these entities do exist in the world of Wa.

It is a dark secret that demons are not wholly evil, as most mortals believe. In truth, most demons are merely unable to control the powerful emotions they are cursed with. But there are some who have completely forsaken the desire to control themselves and given in to their passions. There are even those who have mastered themselves and chosen despite this to commit evil against the world. This is the most fundamental type of evil in the world of Wa: the intentionally immoral. There are of course

also humans, spirits, and even kami who have forsaken morality.

Despite the existence of true evil, it's possible to describe some beings as evil by categorizing them as opposing their own race or group, as happens most often in the mortal world. Usually, people labeled as "evil" are merely following different social rules or pursuing different goals than the norm. But nevertheless, there are individuals who are truly evil, applying their sadistic, selfish, cruel, dispassionate, and hateful tendencies to any and all creatures they meet, whether they are mortal, spirit, demon, or god.

There should always be comparatively few of these adversaries in a game, and many games will proceed just fine without ever encountering the truly evil. This rarefied level of malevolence is usually reserved for very dark and gritty games, because these are the only scenarios where it's possible to really showcase how deeply evil the entity/creature/villain is.

Also remember that just being truly evil is not a motive or a reason itself. Even the truly evil have reasons for the depths of their corruption, though their reasons are often far grander in scale than the reasons of mere mortals.

3.4.6 WINNING AND LOSING

It's often said that there are no winners or losers in role-playing games. This is usually true of the end outcome, but can be inaccurate when describing the state of a game in progress. It is sometimes useful to describe the progress of the players against their adversaries in terms of "winning" and "losing," the same way one can be winning or losing a war still in progress.

As the Master, it's your job to carefully modulate who is winning and who is losing so that there is both tension and conflict in the story. Usually, this comes down to making sure that neither side is winning for too long. Players will rapidly grow tired of a game where they can't beat the challenges thrown at them, but they will also get bored of a game where nothing provides a challenge at all.

Great Masters are good at knowing when to tip the scales from one side to the other. They can sense when the story has been going too long in one group's favor, and time changes in the power balance to take advantage of that. This is often done

for dramatic effect, maximizing the story potential of the changes.

3.4.7 MAINTAINING SUSPENSE

The ability to maintain suspense is a difficult one to acquire. It takes practice to be able to relate a story in a way that keeps the players excited and interested in what happens next.

There are some general rules that can help, though.

The first and most obvious is to protect your plot from the players. Don't tell them what's about to happen, and diffuse questions to ascertain the future. This probably won't come up much as it's second nature to most experienced role-players.

The next is to maintain the suspension of disbelief. It's much harder to create suspense out of character than it is to do so in character.

Next, feel free to change the plot or modify the elements of things before they occur. Sometimes it's helpful to extend or shorten a situation or scene so that the unexpected occurs.

You should also feel free to set up or use red herrings in the plot as well, as long as the players are making some kind of progress. The best use of a misleading clue is not to foil progress, but to uncover new problems that complicate the situation.

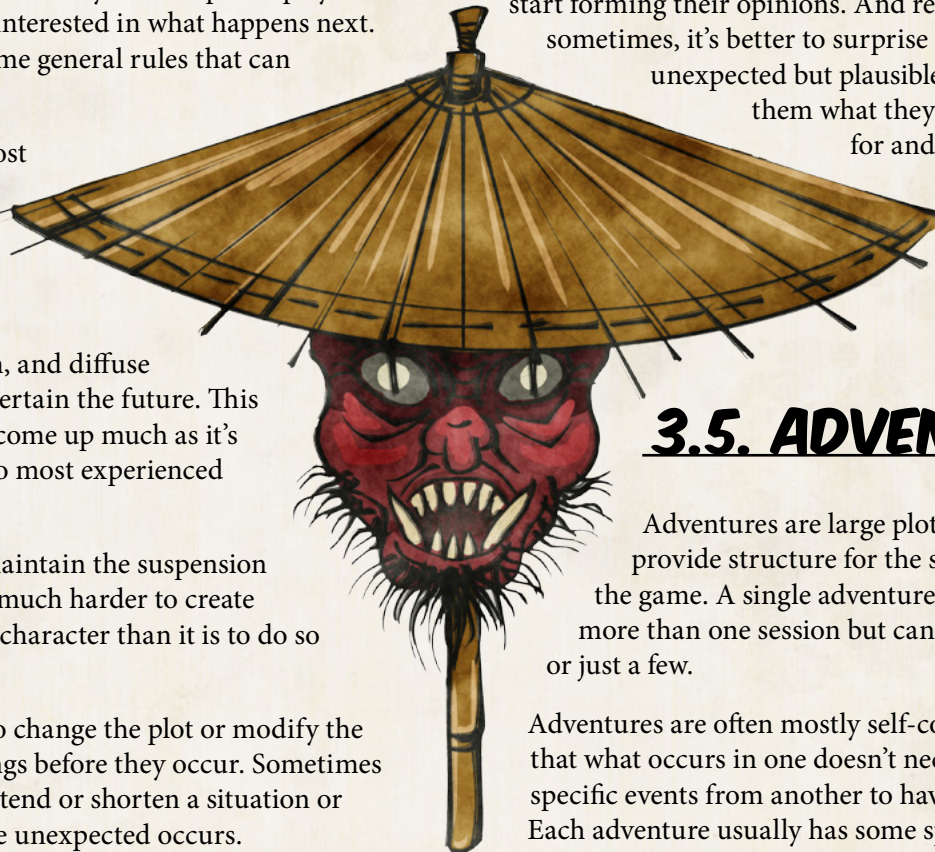
Foreshadow as much as you can safely reveal, particularly if you can find ways to make the obscure the true nature of the signs. It can be very powerful to reveal that a secret the players thought they knew all along was actually completely misunderstood.

Learn to pace your encounters and combats so that the players don't get too far into the villain's minions too fast, or uncover more at a time than they need to for the sake of progress.

Have characters lie. It happens, especially when someone's honor or safety is at stake. Lies and misinformation are a drastically underused

aspect of communication in role-playing games, mostly because they're difficult for the Master to properly plan. Making sure you know your non-player characters and how they feel about the events of the story helps.

Lastly, in the details of individual scenes, make sure to pace your descriptions for suspense, if that's the goal of the particular scene. Don't describe the monster too early, but give enough clues for the players to start forming their opinions. And remember, sometimes, it's better to surprise them with the unexpected but plausible than to give them what they were prepared for and expecting.



3.5. ADVENTURES

Adventures are large plot arcs that provide structure for the story of the game. A single adventure is usually more than one session but can span many or just a few.

Adventures are often mostly self-contained, so that what occurs in one doesn't necessarily require specific events from another to have occurred. Each adventure usually has some specific focus, a lot like a plot arc in an anime or manga. In this chapter, we'll talk about planning, detailing, and running adventures.

3.5.1 BUILDING PLOT LINES

Many writers use a recursive method for designing stories, and that's what we suggest for designing adventure arcs, because it allows you to think ahead, be flexible, and still come up with reasonably detailed events to throw at the characters

The basic method of recursive planning is to take the elements you have sketched out and detail them out with more specificity. You do this several times, iterating on each level to create more and more detail, until you have enough detail to run the game from your plan. It's often nice to go one level of detail deeper than you think you need so that you have easy material if the game stays on course. If it veers, you

already have a goal for the story that you can redirect the action towards. Sometimes, when the players get really far afield, you can even skip elements from the adventure arc and move on towards the next key event. This makes it so both you and the players have some control over the game, without stepping on each others toes too much.

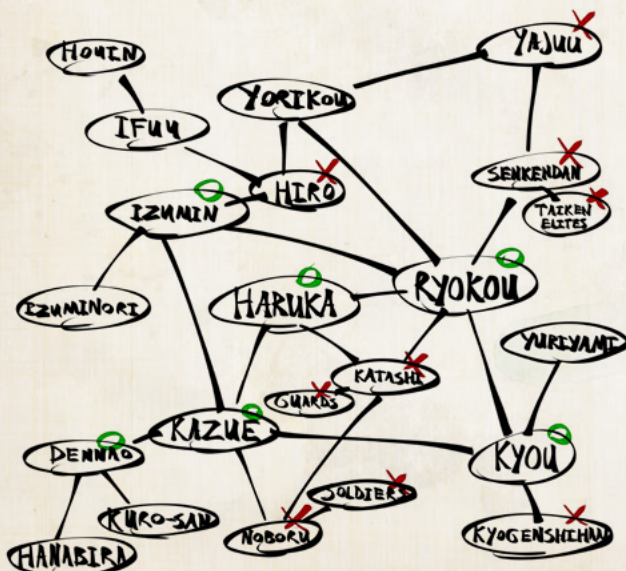
Let's explore an example to illustrate. The starting idea for our adventure is a border conflict in the Succession Wars. Our next level down, we start creating individual parts of that conflict, such as:

- 1 The scouting phase
- 2 The arrival of the enemy army
- 3 The siege
- 4 The overrunning of the city
- 5 The counterattack
- 6 The victory

Each of these is almost like an episode or chapter, and we detail each of them out the same way. For the overrunning of the city, we can generate the following details:

- 1 The duel of the champions
- 2 The fall of the general's camp
- 3 The The last line of defense
- 4 The enemy invasion
- 5 Regrouping in secret

Notice that we start with events that tie into the previous episode/chapter and end with events that tie in with the next. Doing this for each element allows us to easily break down the story into manageable chunks. Depending on how many levels deep you go, and how many of the events you can run through in a single session, you can even turn a short arc into a long one by adding details and complications at lower levels.



Once you have a decent set of events, you can then go and detail out any non-player characters, challenges, obstacles, or monsters that you need for each of the events. With enough time, you can even prepare the entire arc in advance, though it's often better not to over-plan so you don't have to rewrite your enemies to re-balance them later.

3.5.2 INCREASING CHALLENGES

By using the method described above to design your story, you can easily build increasing challenges

| Level Difference | Damage Dealt vs. Received |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| +0 | 50/50 |
| +1 | 74/26 |
| +2 | 89/11 |
| +3 | 97/3 |
| +4 | 99/1 |

into your game. This is desirable because the vast majority of stories move from relatively low conflict to relatively high conflict, and it's what most gamers expect in a story. Consider the very simple concept of a "boss" character; they aren't a boss if they are fought early on and never fought again. The boss naturally stands at the end of the story or arc, stronger and more powerful than anything the heroes have faced so far.

There are several ways to increase challenge over time in Wa. First, you can simply place higher Level adversaries towards the end of the story. You can also just keep increasing the enemies as well, but both of these methods are fairly basic. You can also start manipulating the challenges of the story themselves, going from something like fighting a band of brigands to hunting down a corrupt youkai responsible for plagues and chaos. While the enemy is of course stronger towards the end, the important matter is how complex the task is. You can also increase the risk of the challenges, putting more and more at stake with each chapter of the story. Lastly, you can increase the emotional weight of each part, usually by drawing on the relationships,

good and bad, between the players and the other characters. Most of the time, you'll end up using more than one of these methods, blending them together for your particular story.

3.5.3 RECURRING ADVERSARIES

The most memorable adversaries tend to stick around for more than a fight or two. The best ones constantly plague the protagonists, harassing them and diverting their resources away from the really important (and generally end-game) matters at stake. Recurring adversaries make the game more personal, because the relationship between the characters is built up and established and has time to grow into a very complex conflict.

Oftentimes recurring adversaries do not participate in combat directly, working through intermediaries, minions, and the like. On one hand, minions are often simply cannon fodder red-shirts who have no personality and thus are incapable of intimidating the players and creating tension. This can be dealt with by making sure that the combat situations are always dangerous, even against the low level mooks,

or by creating different groups of minions with their own hierarchy of combat power. On the other hand, sometimes the best intermediaries are people the players are surprised by or even care about, such as townsfolk, manipulated merchants or leaders, or even the loved ones of the player characters. Recurring villains often exploit and corrupt others to force them to do their dirty work. This can lead to complicated or very upsetting situations unless the Master is very familiar with the players and is able to carefully adjust the story on the fly to make sure the game runs smoothly. Drama is important, but sometimes taking out the family is a bit much. Caution with is always recommended when dealing with corruption.

3.5.4 STAYING FRESH

Players can grow bored of the same sorts of challenges through every game. In general, it's best to mix up the types of problems encountered from time to time, depending on your players. Follow the story, and you'll probably find some opportunities to expand the challenge selection. Even in a war, supply lines can be attacked, there are sieges, and occasionally subterfuge is required. Even political thrillers can benefit from



the occasional youkai slipping into the court to cause some trouble.

The real trick to staying fresh is to not go too far abroad to keep things new. Many players have a specific idea in mind for the game, and they can get turned off by a sudden turn of events that takes the game down a different road. Make sure that your new challenges aren't too far away from the direction the story was headed and that they stay plausible.

3.5.5 ENDING THE GAME

Every game comes to an end eventually, whether intentional or not. Many just slip off into the mists of the forgotten when the group breaks up or stops attending. Others are punctuated by school or work schedules. We encourage you as the Master to handle the end of the game with some finality, so that the players have some closure on the story.

Many long running anime and manga encounter the dreaded filler episode, and while playing filler episode sessions can be amusing from time to time, it's usually better for the overall dramatic health of the game to have a defined arc with a defined end to it. Stories planned out in this way tend to avoid aimless wandering a bit better and keep the players entertained. By planning the plot using arcs as described earlier in this chapter, you can effectively set up a game that can either be ended at the end of any arc or be extended into the next. This way, your players won't be left hanging, but there will be the option to pick the story back up if desired. It can even encourage the players to take ownership of their characters, writing stories about them or transporting them to other games of Wa or beyond.

3.5.6. ADVENTURE SEEDS

3.5.6.1 SAMPLE IDEAS

These are sample ideas for stories. Simply roll once to determine the conflict type, then roll on the appropriate table. Remember to modify or manipulate the idea so that it fits in your story.

Conflict Type (1d6)

- 1 Uprisings
- 2 Skirmishes
- 3 Battles
- 4 Villainy

- 5 Spiritual Conflicts
- 6 Supernatural Mysteries

1: Uprisings (1d6)

- 1 Exploited dorei escape their master or area
- 2 Ningen commoners rebel against their reijin masters
- 3 Non-clan merchants buy a mercenary army to fight the local clan
- 4 An oppressed tribe of hanjin rebel
- 5 Remnants of an ancient anti-Empire faction seek to disrupt the Succession
- 8 Rebellion in the Spirit World spills over into the Mortal World

2: Skirmishes (1d6)

- 1 Bandits attack supply lines between towns
- 2 Bandits raid a temple or shrine
- 3 Expensive mercenaries are hired to protect a seemingly normal village
- 4 A well-funded merchant battles a clan detachment
- 5 A mysterious group of rei and youkai are encountered on a mission in the mortal world
- 6 A major ninja war breaks out among the shadow clans, causing widespread chaos

3: Battles (1d6)

- 1 Succession War battle between clan armies
- 2 Battle over major tactical control point
- 3 Battle of honor between two generals or champions
- 4 A temple or shrine is under attack by a foreign enemy
- 5 A squadron of soldiers from the Spirit World appear to do battle with a band of oni
- 6 Two or more elite detachments face off with champions leading the charge

4: Villainy (1d6)

- 1 A well connected criminal becomes a powerful warlord
- 2 A strong general takes up a new, sadistic hobby with his prisoners
- 3 A powerful daimyo is being manipulated without his knowledge
- 4 A sorcerer is using dark magic to absorb innocent spirits
- 5 A magician has discovered a way to tap into demons for extra power
- 6 Something sinister is manipulating the events of the Succession Wars

5: Spiritual Conflicts (1d6)

- 1 A minor infestation of spirits
- 2 Yuurei are drawn to a local graveyard on a massive scale
- 3 A dangerous youkai wants to make a deal

- 4 Two rival kami cause complete havoc while trying to defeat each other
- 5 Oni pour out of a gate and begin taking over the land using corrupted magic
- 6 A grand spell sealing a great and terrible yajuu begins to break

6: Supernatural Mysteries (1d6)

- 1 Something is eerily wrong with people from a particular town
- 2 A local shrine is enchanted by a mysterious power with cursed side-effects
- 3 A seal is discovered on a stone slab under a temple
- 4 All the priests of one particular sect begin behaving differently
- 5 The ancient grave of a sealed kami is uncovered
- 6 Kami are going missing

3.5.6.2 CONFLICT GENERATOR

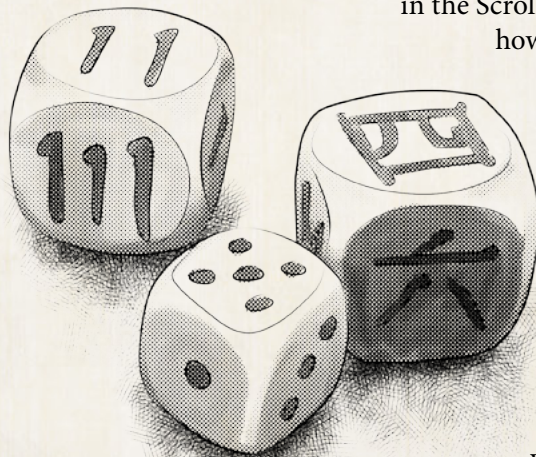
This is a simple generator for creating conflicts between two groups. It can be used as a story starter or as the basis for missions the players are sent on. Roll once on each table, making a note of each selection, then combine them to create a story-starter sentence.

Type (2d6)

- 2 an elite
- 3 a mystical
- 4 a blessed
- 5 a small
- 6 a large
- 7 a weary
- 8 a veteran
- 9 a well-armed
- 10 a vicious
- 11 a malicious
- 12 a corrupted

Group (2d6)

- 2 martial arts dojo
- 3 ninja corps
- 4 band of spiritualists
- 5 clan army unit
- 6 specialist unit
- 7 mercenary group
- 8 mob of bandits
- 9 hidden monastery
- 10 shadow clan team
- 11 Black Cult cell
- 12 group of spirits



Verb (2d6)

- 2 prepares a political trap for
- 3 infiltrates
- 4 guards
- 5 investigates
- 6 is tracking
- 7 attacks
- 8 raids
- 9 has set up an ambush for
- 10 seeks to assassinate
- 11 is giving aid to
- 12 member has fallen in love with a member of

Reroll Type (2d6)

Reroll Group (2d6)

Situation (2d6)

- 2 in an area of spiritual disturbance
- 3 in bad weather
- 4 on a spiritual holy day
- 5 in broad daylight
- 6 under cover of fog
- 7 at night
- 8 using ninja agents
- 9 at an important site
- 10 across rough terrain
- 11 under attack from another faction
- 12 for the bakufu

3.6. RULES & MECHANICS

There are few mechanical rules to Wa, but there are a number of non-mechanical rules and guidelines to the game in addition to the character rules presented in the Scroll of Laws. This chapter talks about how to use them.

3.6.1 THE GOLDEN RULE

The Golden Rule of Wa is entertainment. All other rules are subsidiary. Mostly, the other rules exist to give a framework that you can use to create tension, excitement, and drama, thus leading to an enjoyable session. If anything gets in the way of that for your group, it should be reconsidered.

Keep in mind though that every game has its ups and downs. If a rule or trope or theme doesn't work,

it could just be the situation. If it continues to cause problems, it's time to think about throwing it out, replacing it, or modifying it.

3.6.2 CALLING FOR SKILL ROLLS

Call for Skill Rolls only when the matter is contentious, dramatic, there is a decent possibility of failure, or when failure is dangerous or catastrophic. In general, call for a skill roll when the action is risky.

Do not call for a roll

- ◆ Crossing the street
- ◆ Ordering a meal
- ◆ Performing day-to-day duties
- ◆ Training in a martial art

Do call for a roll

- ◆ Crossing the Street while being shot at by archers
- ◆ Ordering a meal from a possible ninja agent skilled in poisons
- ◆ Performing day-to-day duties without revealing the assassination plot against the daimyo
- ◆ Training in a martial art known for killing most of the students who attempt to master it

3.6.3 OPPOSED AND UNOPPOSED ROLLS

Opposed rolls are specifically for when two or more characters are competing over something. Obvious examples are combat rolls, initiative, stealth, and chases. Some less obvious Opposed rolls might be bargaining, negotiation, overland tracking, tactical troop disposition, or navigating a warship in battle.

Unopposed rolls are for when a character attempts to do something but no one is directly interfering with them. Examples of Unopposed rolls would be forging weapons, crafting items, performing, or producing art. Most Professional Skills are usually Unopposed.

Note that it can be very useful and suspenseful to bluff players by using an Unopposed roll instead of an Opposed roll. Opposed rolls can be turned into Unopposed rolls by assuming the dice rolled 3 (explained below), or by rolling the dice covertly. This is very useful for stealth rolls and other covert operations.

3.6.4 TAKING THREE

Sometimes, specifically when you don't want to spend the time rolling the dice for a given action, you can safely just take 3. This means you assume you rolled a 3 on the dice and calculate from there. This allows you to create passive stats (particularly useful in some stealth scenarios) or just skip rolling dice to keep the game moving forward.

Keep in mind that 3 is slightly below average for 1d6 (the average roll is actually 3.5) and it only gets worse compared to the average roll of more dice. We suggest taking 3 because it trades a mechanical benefit for speed; better rolls ought to be rolled, rather than taken. Taking 3 is lower risk than rolling the dice, and so the reward is appropriately less.

You can allow players to also take 3 in your game, but consider that if the players can take 3, why should there be a Skill check there at all? Why waste time calculating the number when you can have the player talk about the action they're taking instead? Taking 3 is usually set aside for the Master because you already have enough going on while running the game, and taking 3 allows you to prepare some things in advance so you don't have to halt the story to calculate a roll.

3.6.5 UNTRAINED ROLLS

Sometimes a player wants to attempt an action they have no training in whatsoever. This is fine, it happens to a lot of people in conflict situations because it's very hard to be prepared for everything. When this occurs, you have the same options as when a player attempts any other action: either have them role-play the action and judge the result yourself, or have them roll and describe the outcome after.

The problem is that characters who lack Points in a Skill have no dice to roll. If they have a Trait in that Skill, they can use their static value (as though they had rolled zero), but if they have neither Points nor Traits in that Skill, they must roll Untrained, which is a special case.

To do an Untrained Roll, simply roll 2d6 and take the lower of the two, and add no bonuses. Stunts can be attempted to boost this roll, but they need to take into account that the character has no training in that area.

3.6.6 STUNTS AND BONUSES

As the Master, it is your job to judge stunts for roll bonuses. This is one of the most difficult aspects of the game, but it need not be intimidating. Remember that the game is collaborative and that we're all here to have fun and tell a compelling story. Here are the basic numbers:

- ◆ Weak: +0
- ◆ Good: +1
- ◆ Great: +2
- ◆ Amazing: +3
- ◆ Incredible: +4 or Automatic Success (your choice)

It's important (for the Master and the players both) to remember that judging stunts is ultimately subjective. Everyone may have a different opinion of a given stunt, but you'll ultimately be the one to decide how much of a bonus it gets, based on how the player did, how excited and invested the other players have gotten, and how the stunt compares to other recent stunts.

If you're uncertain about a stunt, you can always see what the other players think, though if they're the sort who still play the game like it's a competition against the Master, they'll always err on the high side. After a few sessions, you'll get a feel for what an okay and a great stunt look like, and the players should be adapting to your way of judging stunts.

3.6.7 CRITICAL BONUSES

Critical rolls are not included in the core rules of the game for three main reasons: they add unnecessary complexity to combat, because *Wa* values player's role-playing more than chance, and because they can be difficult to calculate probabilities for, especially using virtual tabletops. However, for many players, this extra element of chance can be quite exciting. Here are several variants of Critical Hit rules that you can use in your game.

Single Bonus: If any roll has more than one die that comes up 6, that roll is treated as a 7. There are no bonuses for more than two sixes. This effects the mechanics of the game the least, but still gives the players a chance for a critical hit.

Multiple Sixes: For each 6 rolled past the first, add 1 to the roll total. Rolling a 4, 6, 6, and 6 results in a 8 on the die. Then add modifiers as normal. This means that it is now beneficial to put many points into individual skills, because more

dice can now result in ever-higher numbers, unlike the normal system where it's not very useful to put more than 6-7 points in a given Skill.

Grouping: Add 1 to the roll for each multiple group, i.e. rolling 2, 2, 3, 3, 4 would result in 6 on the die, +1 for multiple 2's, and +1 for multiple 3's. This limits the possible bonus to +6 on the die, no matter how many dice are rolled.

Bonus Die: When two or more sixes are rolled, roll an extra die. The result becomes the result of that die + 6: 1, 3, 6, 6, with a reroll of 4 becomes a total die roll of 10. This means that players will want more points in individual Skills. Be careful with this one, as it means that high numbers are achievable even at relatively low levels, which can make combat difficult to predict.

3.6.8 USING TRAITS

The skilled use of Traits is even more important for a Master than it is for players for the simple reason that while the group has a general idea of what the player characters are like, they Master's non-player characters are often not as integral to the story and may not have been described until they come into play. Traits are therefore vital to the players' understanding of the non-player characters.

Fortunately, they are also useful shortcuts for the Master to remember the attributes of the of a given non-player character. They can act as archetypes and cues that you can use to improvise with. They can also help you differentiate one character from another for the players, playing up the presence or absence of specific Traits for memorability.

3.6.9 RECUPERATING

The general rule for most combat situations in the normal level of detail is that both Health and Energy refill between each scene. This makes for exciting, cinematic combat, where they players can jump from combat to combat without having to take breaks for long periods. Many anime seem to follow this rule as well, for the same reasons that we use it: we don't want the action to get put on hold for the group to set up camp, break out the cookware, and get some zees. Many times, the heroes take a brief brake to catch a second wind, and keep right on going, often stepping up their game to match the even greater stakes of the next scene. In this way, the combat of many adventure franchises could be interpreted as having

characters who get stronger after each fight, rather than getting weaker.

There are, of course, situations where it's more dramatic for recuperation to take longer, in sieges or when dealing with poisoned or cursed wounds, for example. These situations often call for role-playing that steps outside the normal rules. Because they are far less likely in the course of a normal game, we recommend using the normal recuperation rules and dealing with these situations as they come rather than creating elaborate house rules for recuperation. On the other hand, if your game does feature heavy resource management in terms of maintaining health and energy, by all means, set up a house rule to cover the particulars of your situation.

3.6.10 GIVING OUT EXPERIENCE

There are several algorithms for granting experience points to players. Which one you choose (or how much of each you use) is dependent on how you want to pace your game.

The first method is a fixed amount of experience per session. While this method doesn't take into account the struggles of the players, or how well they did in the session, it does provide a very stable and predictable pattern, making it easier to plan the future challenges of the game. By specifying a number of experience points per session, you can easily tell how powerful the players will be in any number of sessions.

The opposite method is to grant players experience points only when they have accomplished their goals. This method heavily reinforces forward movement of the plot, but it can be difficult to plan for how powerful the characters are in a given number of sessions. It's best to prepare games using this method in a story-driven fashion, rather than a time-driven fashion, so that the players are encountering challenges that are based on their recent successes (or failures) rather than how long they've been playing.

Most of the time, you'll probably find yourself using a bit of both. This middle way is useful for having a decent plan of how far and how long the game should be, while maintaining the ability to reward players specifically for actions in the game.

Characters require 13 Experience Points to level up, so you can use this number to calculate how many points to give out each session to reach a given Level in a given number of sessions. As a baseline, we suggest an average of 3 Experience Points per session. This

means that if you play weekly, the characters will reach Level 9 (enlightenment, the end of "normal" play and the beginning of Epic play) in about 40 sessions, or about a year. Players will attain a new Level about every 4 sessions at this rate.

Because there's constant growth for players and relatively few Levels to achieve, you may want to make sure that you don't give out too many experience points per session, or you'll be running a game with characters who are battling gods in a couple months or so. Remember, even at 3 points per session, players are essentially leveling up (in the typical RPG way) every session, by selecting new Skills, Attributes, and Traits.

You can also think of that 3 Experience per session as a sort of five-star rating, with 3 being the average. As you run the game, you can award extra points for good play or revoke points for slowing the game down, giving the players incentive to keep the game moving.

Keep in mind that the story doesn't necessarily have to end at 9th Level. The next section covers play above Level 9.

3.6.11 BEYOND ENLIGHTENMENT

There are in fact Levels beyond 9. The scale of the cosmos goes all the way up to level 18, double the normal progression. Only the absolute greatest of the great kami and foreign gods attain these dizzying heights of power. Many of the well-known kami fill the Levels between 9 and 18, along with the many spirits of the High Heavenly Plain.

It's not impossible for humans to attain enlightenment and keep adventuring. Beyond Level 9 is considered Epic, usually operating on a distinctly different set of challenges and problems. Most of the time the adversaries of these adventures will be kami, powerful yokai, and awakening yajuu. Adventures will often take the players out of Kyokutou and into the Spirit World, Yomi, and the High Heavenly Plain.

While the mechanics do not change, Epic play can be difficult to handle due to the sheer amount of power available to characters of that Level. We're dealing with several hundreds of Points to play with, and 40 to 70 individual traits. Most of the time, you'll find that the most difficult challenges for the players will be other entities of similar Level, that can fight and maneuver at the same ability.

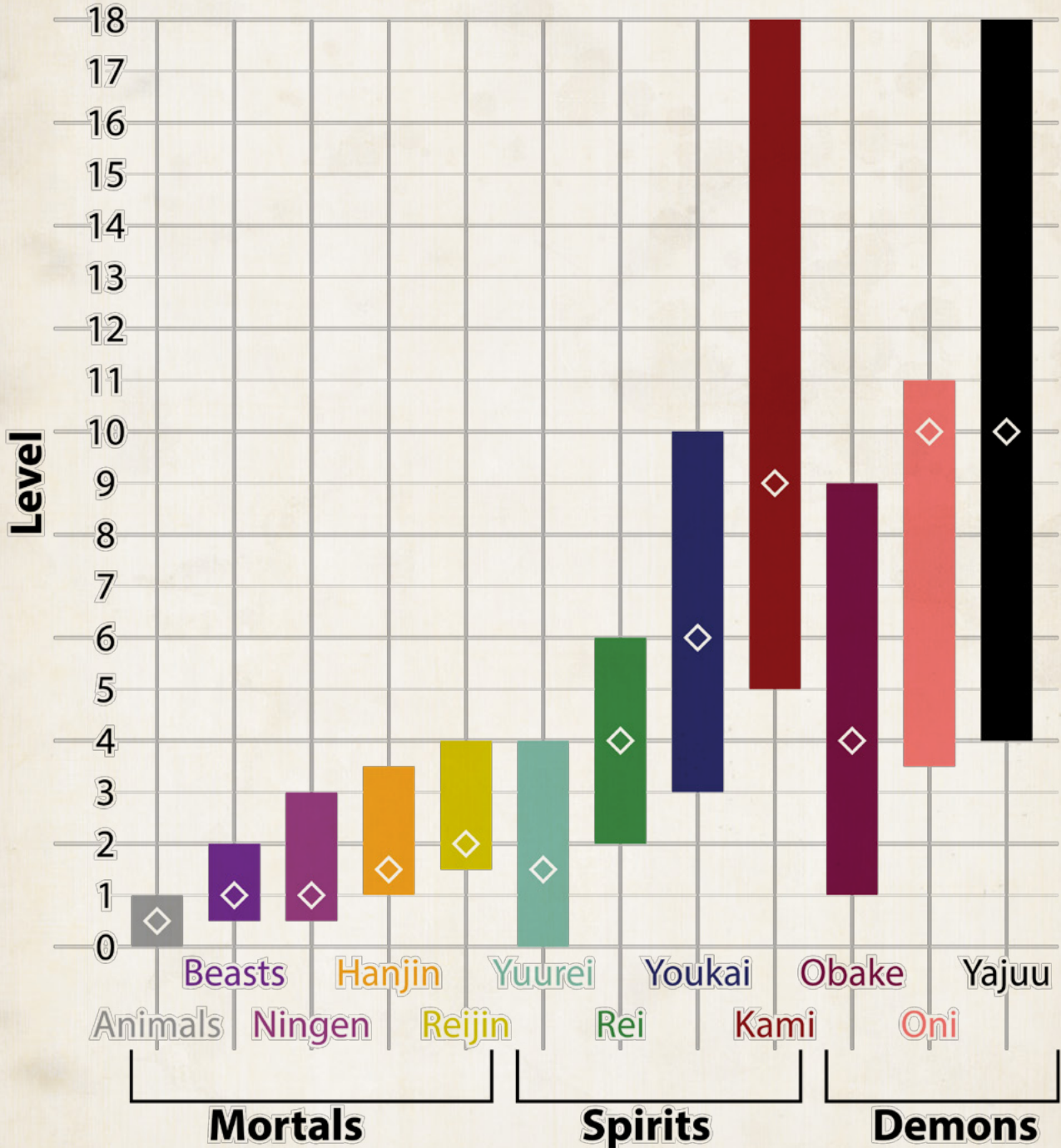
Cosmic, existential problems with the universe also come up.

Epic play is also a good place to introduce new Skills and Traits, since at these Levels, the Players may be buying up entire Skills wholesale.

You can even go higher than Level 9 if you really want; the game mechanics and math technically support a game of any Level, though you may

have to invent some more Skills and Traits for the players to spend their immense point pools on. Since the cosmological characters don't go past Level 18, you'll have to invent entirely new regimes of power to investigate.

Keep in mind that not every game has to go into Epic play, and that Enlightenment is a fine goal for most stories.



4 A SPECIAL THANKS

This project would not have been possible without the support of one hundred awesome people. I'd like to take a moment here at the end of the Kickstarter version of Wasuremonogatari to thank everyone who contributed to the project.

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See you all soon, in the land of Kyokutou. じゃあね。

