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Sample file



INTRODUCTION



Welcome to Strongholds of the Empire, a sourcebook for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game! The purpose of this book is to provide more information on the various settlements around the Emerald Empire, both for GMs to use as settings for their campaigns, and for players to develop their characters' backgrounds more completely. Each of the strongholds detailed in this book contains a brief history, the major locations and individuals within that area, and new mechanics, some of them based in that area to help players build characters that are completely integrated with the stronghold in question. In keeping with our tradition of timeline neutrality for 4th Edition, we have attempted to present these strongholds free of major storyline influence. In some cases, obviously, that was not entirely possible, but we hope that every stronghold or city detailed in this book can be used, at least to some extent, in a game set in any era of Rokugan's history, whether it be past, present, or future!

The cities and strongholds described within this book include the following:

Broken Wave City – The largest coastal port controlled by the Mantis Clan.

Clear Water Village – A center of trade and intrigue for the Crab Clan.

Dark Edge Village – A Unicorn Clan holding well known for its dueling grounds.

Nikesake – The center of diplomatic relations between the Phoenix Clan and their allies.

Otosan Uchi – The Empire's original Imperial City, eventually lost to the Spider Clan.

Water Hammer City – A center of the Dragon Clan's smithing traditions.

Toshi Ranbo – Otosan Uchi's successor, hotly contested by the Crane and Lion clans.

Zakyo Toshi – A den of vice and iniquity, perfect for its lords among the Scorpion Clan.

In each chapter, the details of the unique stronghold or city are examined. There are certain components that are uniform in their presentation. In each chapter, you can expect to find:

HISTORY AND TIMELINE

Although care has been taken to keep the cities as neutral as possible in terms of timeline and setting information, the information pertaining to the city's past as established in the existing storyline has been included should you choose to make use of it. If not, some of the ideas and information should still be of use to you in creating your own story for the city's background.

CITY DENIZENS

First in broad strokes and later by specific character, each chapter describes the sort of people who live within the city and includes a small number of its most important personages.

LOCATION GUIDE

The most important and most interesting locations found within each city are described as well, giving ample opportunities for a character's history or future to involve them in a number of different ways.

NEW MECHANICS

Each chapter also contains a small number of new mechanics, typically in the form of Advantages and Disadvantages that represent a character's ties to the city in question, and Alternate Paths that help represent some of the ideas and archetypes presented in each chapter.



REGIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

For the most part, the Advantages and Disadvantages introduced in this book relate to a character being born in or spending much of their life within a specific city or area. Although these traits are closely linked to the clan featured in each chapter, at least thematically, there's no reason that any other clan's members can't have that same Advantage or Disadvantage if they are from the same area. Likewise, if a GM has a city that is an integral part of the campaign and which is similar thematically to one of the cities detailed in this book, the name can be changed on any of the traits to make them more suited to the setting in question. Naturally, a GM should feel encouraged to make minor changes as necessary to ensure that using Advantages in this manner is an effective and enjoyable modification for all parties involved.

Random Encounters and Adventure Hooks

One of the main challenges that every GM faces is that of how to generate the little details that add flavor to an adventure and help draw their players into a setting. It isn't necessary for you to describe every little thing the characters see at every step, but a good GM wants the players to live in the moment as their characters, and every detail you present helps create that sense of immersion. Furthermore, you can also use that random passerby on the street or that little building down the block as a hook onto which you hang conflict and challenge, whether spontaneously generated or as part of your pre-set plan.

You can find ideas for these sorts of details in the random encounter tables and descriptions of Rokugan in the L5R 4th Edition sourcebook *Enemies of the Empire*, especially for wilderness and rural areas. And when it comes to creating a sense of a small farming village, it is probably sufficient to know that they are fairly dull places; most of the residents are agricultural workers who spend all day in the fields and eat, sleep, and maybe drink at night. Some of the residents are tradesmen or serve some other specialized function, but the rhythms of agricultural work dominate, day in and day out.

But the Empire's towns and cities are rich and complicated environments, and since this is a book devoted to cities, we offer here some additional options for filling out the time your characters spend in those environments.

MUNDANE ENCOUNTERS

Every moment you spend in the open in an urbanized environment, you will notice someone going about the business of daily life. Here are some ideas for such mundane details:

Peasants or traders bringing in food from an outlying village.

Laborers transporting building materials.

A food peddler hawking rice balls or mochi (red bean paste buns) from a cart.

A shopkeeper or innkeeper splashing water outside his establishment to purify the ground (mornings).

Monks tending to a small shrine to one of the Fortunes.

A group of soldiers on patrol.

Mendicant monks asking for food.

Monks helping hermit with their work.

A Clan magistrate and his yoriki speaking with a suspect.

A crier proclaiming a sumai competition.

A magistrate and yoriki from another Clan, passing through.

A provincial Governor or other high-ranking clan samurai and his entourage, passing through town.

A clan diplomat and his yojimbo passing through town.

A Miya Herald proclaiming news on behalf of the Emperor.





THE MARKETPLACE

Commercial establishments are always a popular destination for player characters in an urban area. Often, these are located in open marketplaces, where various types of merchants set up cheek-by-jowl with each other. Rokugan is superficially no different from any other fantasy setting in this respect, but finer details can make it distinctive:

Weaponsmith / Armorsmith / Fletcher.

Rice merchant.

Fishmonger (fish will be preserved if the location is inland).

Food seller (simple prepared foods, such as rice balls, noodles, baked goods, steamed buns, cooked fowl or fish on skewers, etc.)

General goods merchant, selling the sort of items found in a traveler's pack.

Healer or apothecary selling services, as well as herbs and medicines (and perhaps poisons).

A stable with horses, oxen, or other beasts of burden.

A musician performing in a stall or booth.

A theatrical troupe performing in a large stall or booth.

Jewelry and luxury goods.

Curiosities, perhaps including minor nemuranai or goods of gaijin origin

Note that weapons and armor are more tightly controlled in Rokugan than in many fantasy settings, since only samurai are allowed to own most weapons and armor. Therefore, it should be difficult to find weaponsmiths and armorsmiths who are willing to make their goods available to the general public.

INNS AND SAKE HOUSES

Inns and sake houses are popular destinations for player characters, not only because they are the safest place to spend the night in an urban environment, but also because they are excellent places to glean local intelligence. Of course, it needn't be an easy or direct process for the PCs to get the information they want. A wise GM will require them to settle in and socialize for a time before cutting to the chase. Here are some ideas for what characters visiting a respectable inn or sake house will find:

Heimin having a drink at the end of the workday.

Gambling in the back room.

Off-duty soldiers having a drink.

A ronin looking for work

Two customers playing go or shogi.

A musician playing for the customers' entertainment.

Bandits having a drink.

A thief looking for customers who will be too drunk to resist a robbery attempt.

A traveling merchant with tales from elsewhere in the Empire.

A traveling merchant looking for caravan guards.

A traveling merchant with a curious item for sale, perhaps including nemuranai or goods of gaijin origin.

A prominent samurai and his entourage, causing a stir by his very presence.

CONFLICT

A conflict that draws the attention of the player characters is a perfect example of how an accidental encounter can provide a gateway to adventure, or at least a diverting sidelight to a larger story. Some conflicts are the stuff of everyday life and happen in the larger world regardless of what the player characters choose to do. A conflict can force the characters to take notice. Here are some ideas for conflict situations your characters might come across:

An unattended child crying.

A heimin man and woman arguing.

A drunk causing a public disturbance.

A samurai bullying a heimin.

A heimin bullying an eta.

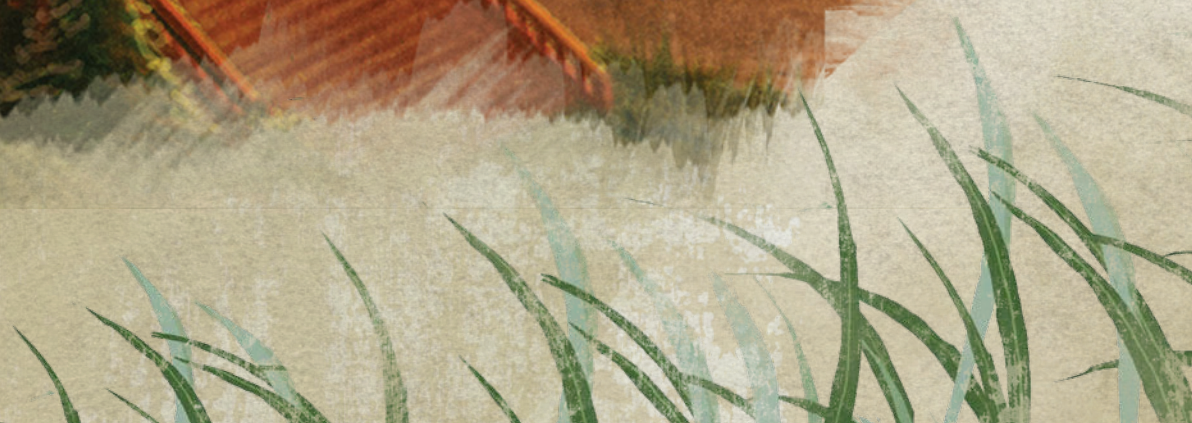
A crime in progress.

An argument between samurai, involving a slight to the honor of one of the disputants.

A criminal being apprehended by local magistrates or soldiers.

A duel between samurai.

A maho-tsukai summons an oni.





Sample file



BROKEN WAVE CITY

Another wave boomed against the rocky shore, throwing a plume of spray over the two figures standing near the surf.

Yoritomo Ryoma laughed and spread his arms. "Almost as bracing as the deck of a kobune, eh Moshi-san?"

His companion smiled and wiped water from her face. "Indeed," Moshi Kameko replied, then glanced at the construction crew loitering nearby. "But I assume you requested a halt to work on the City's new break-wall for more than aesthetic reasons...?"

Ryoma pointed at the next wave rolling towards them. "When it strikes the rock, listen."

Kameko frowned as the wave slammed into the rock and burst upward like shattered crystal--

Her frown deepened. There...a hollow sound that echoed after the wave had sluiced back into the sea.

Ryoma gave her an expectant look. "Did you hear it?"

"Yes. There is empty space...one of the tunnels of the Ningyo, perhaps...just beneath us."

"Hai." He stamped his foot. "Kaigen's Island still holds secrets, eh?"

"Well, much of it does remain unexplored."

Ryoma nodded. "Hai. And we can hardly proceed to start Broken Wave City's new break-wall on land that may collapse under the first load of stone." He shed his sandals and kimono. "That is why I have asked you here, Moshi-san. I am a strong swimmer, but the water kami play here with particular vigor."

She nodded her understanding. "Perhaps we can soothe them for a while." She held out her hand, palm up and

cupped. As the spray from the next wave descended, she closed her eyes and placed her other hand over the water she'd caught, moving it in a stroking gesture, as though petting a cat. The ocean subsided to a flat calm for perhaps not a bow-shot in all directions.

"The kami will be placated for only a short time," she said, her eyes still closed.

Ryoma grinned and leapt into the water.

Kameko willed the kami to remain calm, but they jostled and tugged, anxious to resume their wild play. She began to worry that Ryoma wouldn't return before she had to release them. But then a hand clamped onto the rock and Ryoma finally clambered back out of the surf. Kameko opened her eyes and the waves roared back to life.

She looked at Ryoma as he rubbed water from his hair. "So...did you find anything of interest, Yoritomo-san?"

He shrugged. "I have investigated many of these tunnels. Only a few have anything of note...bits of wrecked ships, things that may have once been cargo, deposited there by currents or, perhaps, the doings of the Ningyo, or even stranger creatures."

Kameko frowned impatiently. "And what of this one?"

"Another unfortunate example."

"Ah. Unfortunate."

Ryoma gave a slow nod...then his face lit with a grin. He opened his closed fist, revealing mud--and the glitter of golden coins, all of strange design.

"Unfortunate, indeed," he laughed. "There was too much of this for me to carry in one trip!"



History:

Broken Wave City holds the distinction of being one of the newest holdings in Rokugan; certainly, it is the newest large city. The land upon which it sits did not even exist before the year 1167. Kaigen's Island, as it came to be known, was raised from the sea at the climactic battle of the War of Fire and Thunder, fought between the Phoenix and Mantis Clans.

The Mantis launched what was intended to be a decisive attack on the Phoenix, resulting in an engagement that came to be called the Battle of Broken Waves. In the midst of the clash, a corrupted Mantis fleet known as the Dark Wave emerged from hiding, attacking Mantis and Phoenix alike. Putting aside their conflict to face this new threat, the Phoenix Elemental Master of Earth, Isawa Sachi, raised an island from the bottom of the sea while Yoritomo Naizen, the Mantis's Master Sensei of Tempest Island, summoned an enormous ocean wave. Caught between the hammer of

the wave and the anvil of the new island, the Dark Wave was annihilated. In the aftermath of the battle, the Phoenix surrendered rather than see more conflict and death result from what was clearly a sinister manipulation of the two Clans. As compensation, the Mantis claimed the new lands created by Sachi, as well as the sea-trade routes nearby.

Yoritomo Naizen, the new Mantis Clan Champion, immediately ordered the construction of a castle on the largest of the islands. The isle was named after Kaigen, who, along with Sachi, perished with the Dark Wave. The castle itself would be called Kyuden Kumiko, in honor of Naizen's predecessor Yoritomo Kumiko, who had fallen in mortal combat with the commander of the Dark Wave fleet. Kaigen's Island offered a number of prospective locations for the castle, but the best was high ground overlooking a deep natural harbour on the southwest shore, facing the Phoenix coastline.

The island immediately posed a succession of serious challenges. Since it was actually a portion of the ocean floor abruptly lifted above sea-level by magic, the marine life raised along with it quickly died off, leaving nothing but a barren expanse of volcanic rock and coral, layered with mud. No trees meant no timber for construction. The only building material immediately available was stone, but since even stone structures require some lumber in their make-up, the Mantis were forced to import timber, as well as rope, lamp oil, paper, and all the myriad other construction materials needed from the mainland.

But this was only the beginning of the problems for the island's new owners. Ocean storms thundered across the barren land, damaging and delaying the construction efforts. Rain and ocean spray saturated the ocean silt blanketing much of the island, making it slump in dangerous mudslides. And the island itself proved unstable, suffering from periodic earthquakes as the rock adjusted itself to its new and unnatural existence above water. One particularly violent tremor triggered a cascade of volcanic eruptions at the island's western end that continues to this day. Fortunately, this volcanic field, known as the Fire Fountains, is far enough from Kyuden Kumiko and the city growing in its shadow that it presents no immediate danger. An intriguing side-effect of this volcanic activity is that the island is actually growing, as lava spills into the sea and hardens into new rock. If the eruptions continue, scholars estimate Kaigen's Island will almost double in size in as little as twenty years.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty faced by the Mantis, however, was the general lack of even the most basic resources on the island. Cities in Rokugan face many problems, but few suffer difficulty finding sufficient wood for fuel, arable land for the cultivation of crops, or fresh water for the use of their residents. Unfortunately, none of these basic



things occur naturally on Kaigen's Island. With nothing available but bare rock, briny mud, and salt water, virtually everything else must be brought in by ship. For some commodities, this was feasible, but for fuel, soil, and water, the effort and expense involved meant shipping wasn't an option.

Faced with such a dilemma, another Clan might simply have surrendered to what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles and left the desolate island to the wind and waves. Not so the Mantis. Kaigen's Island had been too hard-won and its significance figured too prominently in Rokugan's politics for the proud Clan to abandon it. Cisterns were constructed around the island to catch fresh rain-water for drinking and bathing. Sea-weed, dried and bundled, provided a source of fuel, as well as a valuable nutritional supplement to the abundant fish caught in the surrounding waters. And when mundane means fell short of what was needed, the Mantis turned to their shugenja. The Moshi, masters of fire and water, called upon the kami to purify sea-water for drinking, and to provide fire, when needed, to supplement the fuel resources offered by marine plants and fish oils. Even the newly-joined Kitsune family, attuned to the earth, worked to pacify the worst of the island's tremors and mitigate the greatest threats from rock-falls and mud-slides.

Their basic needs addressed, the Mantis threw themselves into the task of developing Kaigen's Island. The great castle of Kyuden Kumiko was to be the centerpiece of a new settlement, a city named after the great battle that had seen the island born – the City of the Broken Wave. Only a few months after the seawater had sluiced off the newly risen island, the foundations of Kyuden Kumiko were set in the rock and the first of its mighty walls raised. At the same time, the first traces of the city appeared at the foot of the castle's gate. Stone quays were laid into the harbor, providing docks for the merchant ships bringing building materials and other goods from the mainland and the Islands of Silk and Spice; with these came warships, first as escorts and immediate protection of the new settlement, but ultimately, to stay. The Third Storm, one of the three great Mantis fleets, has now come to be based at Broken Wave City, giving the Clan a powerful military presence only a few miles from the Rokugani mainland.

Today, although Kyuden Kumiko itself is essentially complete, Broken Wave City remains very much a work in progress. Certainly, much the same could be said about any city; no inhabited settlement is ever really "finished." But in the case of Broken Wave City, this is especially true. Every structure is new, built since the island rose. Many are only partially complete. Even in the "older" sections of the city, there is much new construction. As a result, the city feels vibrant, like a living, growing thing, full of energy and possibilities. The harbor bustles constantly, with fishing boats and merchant kobune jockeying about among the majestic warships of the Third Storm. Much of the population is transient – crews of ships staying at dock only long enough to turn around cargo – so trouble is common enough to ensure the city magistrates are rarely short of work. Those who call Broken Wave City their permanent home tolerate these troublesome visitors because of their

TIMELINE NEUTRALITY

Of all the strongholds described in this book, Broken Wave City is by far the most timeline specific, in that it was created relatively recently in the canon storyline and has a rather specific set of events surrounding its creation. However, the event leading to the island's creation could easily have taken place at a different point in the Empire's history, perhaps taking place in a short confrontation between the Phoenix and Mantis clans centuries ago. Barring that, the city could exist on a naturally occurring island anywhere along Rokugan's coast (a particularly good choice if you wish to create friction between the Mantis and any clan with seaside holdings in your campaign). If even that does not suit your needs, however, the locations and NPCs from this chapter can easily be lifted from Broken Wave City and located anywhere in the Empire, although obviously a port setting would be best.



ultimate importance to the city's well-being. But those who have put down roots here know they are the true heart of Kaigen's Island. They are proud of what they have accomplished in their short time on the barren island, and look forward to a day when they are no longer dependent on imports for basic necessities.

Such a day may come sooner than many expected. Already, several small rice paddies have been coaxing life near the city. Even more unexpectedly, grasses, flowers and even small shrubs have begun to sprout from what was once submarine mud, their seeds carried to the island by birds or seaward winds from the mainland. If a reliable source of fresh water can be secured, many feel Broken Wave City could be completely free of its overseas dependencies within a generation or two.

Many challenges remain, however, and the island has proven time and again that it cannot be taken for granted. While most of its surface – particularly close to the City – has been explored, some sections, especially along the northern shore, are covered with virtually impenetrable masses of thick, crumbling coral. Elsewhere on the island, many caves and strange, circular tunnels have been located. Named "The Tunnels of the Ningyo," these have proven extremely dangerous to explorers; deep pitfalls, collapsing roofs, toxic air and scalding jets of steam are only a few of the hazards within. More ominously, a few have contained evidence of Taint, perhaps remnants of the Dark Wave after it was smashed against the island by Yoritomo Kaigen's great wave.

Kaigen's Island keeps many secrets yet.





Timeline

The following timeline summarizes the major events affecting Broken Wave City:

1167, the Month of the Horse - The Battle of the Broken Wave occurs. In its aftermath, the island raised from the ocean by Isawa Sachi and used by Yoritomo Kaigen to destroy the Dark Wave fleet is claimed by the Mantis as a "spoil of war" and named Kaigen's Island (although the Phoenix sometimes refer to it as Sachi's Anvil instead). Construction immediately begins on port facilities in the sheltered harbor named the Bay of Thunder. These docks, intended to support the construction of a new castle to be called Kyuden Kumiko, will become the base for the Third Storm of the Mantis fleet.

1167, the Month of the Rooster - Construction of Kyuden Kumiko begins.

1168, the Month of the Dragon - Kaigen's Island is shaken by a major earthquake. Considerable damage is done to the new construction. The tremor also triggers ongoing volcanic eruptions at the island's western end, and a tsunami that strikes the Phoenix coast. The Mantis provide aid and assistance to several Phoenix villages struck by the tsunami, an act of charity that helps mend Mantis-Phoenix relations following the War of Fire and Thunder.

1168, throughout the year - The Great Keep of Kyuden Kumiko is completed, along with the most essential of

the surrounding defensive works. Foundations are laid for the most important holy places in Broken Wave City, including the Temples to the Sun and to Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea. The city begins to grow along the shore of the Bay of Thunder, giving rise to what will eventually become the Commerce and Fishers Quarters.

1169, The Month of the Serpent - A terrible spring storm sweeps in from the eastern ocean, damaging much of the work underway in Broken Wave City. A wall collapses into the newly-completed court chamber at Kyuden Kumiko, killing or injuring many within, including the City Governor. In the confused aftermath, a young courtier, Yoritomo Ninsei, rallies the remaining city leadership and organizes recovery and reconstruction efforts. Impressed with the young man's abilities, Yoritomo Naizen names him as the interim Governor of Broken Wave City.

1170 and afterwards - Construction continues in Broken Wave City. The original docks are upgraded and expanded to accommodate the Third Storm of the Mantis fleet, now based there. Separate commercial and fishing docks are constructed, along with their associated city quarters. A new Holy Quarter is established, where Shrines to the Fortunes and other important figures of reverence, such as Yoritomo and Kaimetsu-Uo, are located. The Great Clans establish embassies in Broken Wave City, finally fully recognizing the Mantis claim to Kaigen's Island; the Minor Clan Alliance, led by the Tortoise, establishes an embassy soon after. Exploration and development efforts continue across Kaigen's Island, as well as among the smaller outlying islands in the surrounding waters. Many unusual features, such as the Coral Barrens and the enigmatic Tunnels of the Ningyo, are located and targeted for future investigation.

City Denizens

As the preceding History shows, Broken Wave City is a unique place in Rokugan. Aside from small villages and hamlets, which may appear and disappear with the vagaries of weather and crops, there are no settlements in Rokugan as new as this city.

Kaigen's Island is, in essence, little more than an expanse of barren rock, coral and mud. Everything that isn't one of these things – including fresh water – must be imported or created, at least until surface plants and trees take hold and crops can be grown. This is a process likely to take many years, even with the acceleration afforded by the considerable magical power of the Mantis. Until then, Broken Wave City is dependent on imports of even the most basic commodities. The Mantis are convinced the effort and expense is well worth it, as they have finally established a major holding and port very close to the Rokugani mainland. In Broken Wave City, the Mantis see a great opportunity to exercise direct influence on the Empire, gaining the stature and prestige which is their due as a Great Clan. Broken Wave City, like the Mantis Clan itself, is a new reality in Rokugan and one not to be taken lightly.

This background heavily influences those samurai who have lived in Broken Wave City. (Note that, unless a campaign is set at least fifteen to twenty years after the War of Fire and Thunder, there are no actual natives of the city, except for the children!) Because even basic necessities like fresh water and rice cannot be taken for granted, most Broken Wave inhabitants tend to be quite thrifty sorts. Moreover, because the city is set on an island, almost every Mantis samurai who lives there is either a sailor or, at the very least, is deeply familiar with sailing and with the general operation of the bustling port around which the city revolves. Because the city is still in many respects under construction, it is also not unusual for local inhabitants to have or at least be familiar with the sorts of skills that are constantly in demand – crafting, artistic talent, and the study of engineering are all widespread in Broken Wave City's population.

Finally, it should be remembered that the Mantis are seeking to make Kyuden Kumiko an important hub in their relations with the Empire. As shown in the "Important Personages" section later in this chapter, complex political relationships are par for the course in Broken Wave City. Clearly, relations with the Phoenix, from whom Kaigen's Island and the trade routes around it was claimed at the end of the War of Fire and Thunder, are problematic. But the Crane and Crab also both stand to suffer from the shift in Imperial politics represented by Broken Wave City, so experience with political

maneuvering and intrigue, at least in part revolving around trade, characterizes all those who have spent significant time in this remarkable city.

The Old Quarter

The Old Quarter, including both Kyuden Kumiko and the buildings that exist within its shadow, is only "old" in a relative sense, since no part of the city can truly be called "old." What would eventually become the Old Quarter was the island's original settlement, housing construction crews and those supporting them while the castle of Kyuden Kumiko was under construction. The original docks were also located here, taking full advantage of the shelter afforded by the Bay of Thunder, as well as proximity to the site of the new castle. All of this means that the Old Quarter is now the most desirable real estate in Broken Wave City. The homes of the wealthiest and best-connected residents are located here, as are the embassies from the various other Clans. Buildings in the Quarter are generally large and well-appointed, and are separated by high walls and well-tended gardens; the latter particularly demonstrate the wealth of those who live here, since the plants and the soil must all be imported to the rocky island. At the foot of the road leading down from the castle's gate is the Great Pier, used only by those ships carrying important persons or delegations. The rest of the docking space at the head of the Bay of Thunder is used exclusively by the Third Story of the Mantis fleet.

The City's Chief Magistrate, Tsuruchi Takamasa (see "Important Personages"), maintains his headquarters in the Old Quarter.



KYUDEN KUMIKO

The great castle of Kyuden Kumiko looms over the Old Quarter and the Bay of Thunder, dominating Broken Wave City. It is named in memory of Yoritomo Kumiko, the Mantis Clan Champion who died fighting the Dark Wave fleet at the Battle of Broken Waves. Her successor, Yoritomo Naizen, proclaimed the construction of the castle as the first order of business for the Mantis on their newly-claimed island. It can be said, therefore, that Broken Wave City really came into existence to serve and support Kyuden Kumiko. This makes the relationship between the castle and the city different than many other places in Rokugan, where castles are often built as defensive and governance structures for existing towns and cities.

While not the largest of Rokugani castles, Kyuden Kumiko is certainly among the more impressive in terms of fortress engineering. Given the barren nature of Kaigen's Island, the Mantis were forced to rely mostly on the island's dark, volcanic stone for the castle's construction. As a result, the looming towers and walls of Kyuden Kumiko present a sombre, brooding face to the world, more reminiscent of the utilitarian works of the Crab than the usual flamboyance of the Mantis. Within, however, it is a very different place. The Mantis have spared no expense to furnish Kyuden Kumiko with the most ostentatious displays of wealth. Where wood is exposed, it is rare types like bloodwood, mahogany, and

tropical walnut. Spectacular artwork – some of clearly gaijin origin – is interspersed among exotic plants, colorful chattering birds, and glittering displays of crystals, gems and ceramics. The combined effect is somewhat jangling and off-putting to the more refined tastes of most mainland Rokugani. This is no accident; because of its proximity to the mainland, Kyuden Kumiko is rapidly becoming the main interface between the Mantis and the rest of Rokugan not only for trade, but also for political and diplomatic relations. If the juxtaposition of the castle's dour exterior and its conspicuous displays of wealth within cause other clan delegations to be made uneasy, so much the better.

The interim Governor of the City, Yoritomo Ninsei (see "Important Personages"), lives in Kyuden Kumiko and oversees the Court here.

THE GREAT PIER

The Great Pier is the largest single dock in Rokugan, designed to accommodate any vessel afloat. It is here that ships carrying important visitors or delegations to the City arrive. Ships of the Imperial families customarily dock at the Great Pier, as do those ships carrying embassies from the Great Clans. Should the Emperor ever deign to visit the City, it is here the divine feet will first touch land. A broad road leads from the base of the Great Pier to the gate of Kyuden Kumiko looming on the hills above.

