

JADE REGENT



JADE REGENT

THE EMPTY THRONE

● PART ONE: THE IMPERIAL CITY

Entering Kasai ahead of the advancing rebel army, the PCs must win the hearts and minds of Minkai's people while avoiding capture at the hands of the Jade Regent's inquisitors.

PAGE 8

● PART TWO: HONORING THE PAST

The PCs and Ameiko travel to the mysterious island called the Imperial Shrine to receive the blessings of Minkai's past emperors, but the PCs must first face the incarnations of Minkai's most evil rulers.

PAGE 14

● PART THREE: HONORING THE FUTURE

As their army engages the usurper's forces outside the city, the PCs must enter the Imperial Palace to confront the Jade Regent and Anamurumon, leader of the Five Storms, and place Ameiko on the Jade Throne of Minkai.

PAGE 33

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“Tide of Honor” uses the medium XP track.

13 The PCs begin this adventure at 13th level.

14 By the time they leave the Well of Demons and the Imperial Shrine, the PCs should be 14th level.

15 The PCs should be 15th level before the final showdown with the Jade Regent and his allies.

The PCs should be 16th level by the adventure's end.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Minkai has had its fair share of dark times that have left their stains on the empire's long, proud history. But one period in particular was darker than most. An age of fear, blood, and steel—a time when a single charismatic warlord named Anamurumon rose to power among the bandits of the Minkai countryside and terrorized the entire nation. In direct defiance of the emperor and the will of the gods, Anamurumon foolishly sought what his lowly birthright denied him—the very seat of power in Minkai, the Jade Throne.

Anamurumon's rise came about during the reign of Emperor Shojinawa Kenshiro. The warlord's forces raided and burned several cities, abducted and ransomed important diplomats, and slew many of the emperor's best samurai. At the height of his power, Anamurumon had seized the largest farms and threatened every trade route around the imperial capital of Kasai, all in an effort to starve the capital and force Emperor Kenshiro's capitulation. In 4247 AR (6747 by the Tian Imperial Calendar), Anamurumon managed to draw out the emperor and strike a mortal blow against him on the battlefield. But the warlord was unable to claim his stolen throne, for Anamurumon had underestimated the power and favor invested in the imperial families by the gods. With his dying breath, Kenshiro called upon the power of the *Shojinawa Seal*, one of the five *Imperial Seals* that symbolized the goddess Shizuru's blessing and the imperial families' divine mandate to rule Minkai. Anamurumon was struck down and fell victim to a terrible curse. With their leader rendered impotent, Anamurumon's forces were routed by the emperor's reinforcements, thereby preserving the empire even as Kenshiro passed away.

Anamurumon's soul was ripped from his body and cast into the void, a disembodied spirit cursed to wander the Great Beyond for eternity. Seething with jealousy and rage, Anamurumon's spirit appealed to Fumeiyoshi, god of dishonor and envy and patron of the oni. Ever jealous of Shizuru and those blessed with her favor, Fumeiyoshi heard Anamurumon's plea and answered the former warlord's prayers by returning him to the Material Plane as a wind yai oni. But Fumeiyoshi's gift proved to be a curse as well as a boon, for as an oni, Anamurumon was now bound by the *Laws of Golden Perfection*—the complex compendium of rules put in place by the gods that prevents the oni from taking direct action to seize control of the mortal world and rule over mankind. And though his new oni form was much more powerful than his previous human body, that very form now forever prevented Anamurumon from claiming the Jade Throne he so craved.

In addition, when he manifested in his new form on the Material Plane, Anamurumon found himself trapped in the House of Withered Blossoms in the Forest of Spirits.

This ancient pagoda was both a palace and a prison for the oni inside, a tenuous brotherhood of cruel, corrupted spirits clothed in flesh, who only grudgingly accepted Anamurumon's arrival in their midst. Anamurumon devoted the next 4 centuries of his unnatural life to maneuvering for power among their ranks and planning an escape from the House of Withered Blossoms, still powerfully driven to strike back at those who defeated him. He established a single identity for those oni who rallied to his cause, thenceforth known as the Five Storms, and slew all who opposed him.

When the Five Storms finally broke free of their prison in 4651 (7151 IC), Anamurumon directed them to insinuate themselves into every segment of Minkai society. This painstaking process took 50 years of deception, bribery, and blackmail. The kuwa oni found it particularly easy to pass as humans, and many took human wives, gaining access to every industry and faction, making it possible to manipulate Minkai's economy, politics, and cultural traditions. At the same time, the Five Storms focused their efforts on infiltrating or destroying the five imperial families of Minkai, thus paving the way for the Five Storms' eventual takeover of the empire.

Meanwhile, some oni—Anamurumon in particular—sought the means to sire half-fiend children and tiefling grandchildren, correctly deeming that oni-blooded tieflings would fall outside the *Laws of Golden Perfection*, and could thereby further his goal of taking the Jade Throne through subterfuge rather than direct action. The Five Storms took special care to conceal the nature of these children whenever possible, hiding any superficial evidence of their oni heritage behind armored masks, long kimonos, or the face paint of geisha as necessary. The more monstrous offspring were spirited away to serve the Five Storms more openly. The Five Storms sent many of these more overt half-fiends and tieflings into the wilderness, encouraging and supporting them in forming bands of allied brigands. They then called upon these unconscionable misfits to manufacture external crises to occupy the emperor—a member of the Higashiyama imperial family—while their more hidden members continued the steady infiltration of his inner circle.

To this end, Anamurumon raised and trained his most promising grandchild, a young boy named Soto Takahiro. The boy's mother died during childbirth, courtesy of a poisoned cup of medicinal tea arranged by Anamurumon himself to ensure that his grandson would bond only with him. As Takahiro grew up, so too did he grow in power and status, his mind constantly shaped and hardened by Anamurumon to suit the oni's plans. Eventually, at his grandfather's urging, Takahiro joined an order of samurai devoted to protecting the Higashiyama clan, and was assigned to protect one of their younger scions, Shigure,

JADE REGENT

who Anamurumon planned to elevate to the Jade Throne by arranging the deaths of his elder siblings in the line of succession. When Shigure finally became emperor in 4708 (7208 IC), he brought Takahiro with him as his personal bodyguard—all according to Anamurumon's plan.

The days of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure proved short-lived, however. Just a week later, Takahiro manufactured a ruse with the assistance of the emperor's closest advisor—a young oracle named Renshii Meida, whom Takahiro had seduced. Takahiro and Meida claimed her divinations had revealed that there would soon be an attempt on Shigure's life, and convinced the emperor of the truth of these allegations with evidence taken from the assassinations of his predecessors. Rightfully alarmed, Shigure agreed to go into hiding at the Imperial Shrine—a magical island in Kasai Harbor where only those of imperial blood or their chosen guardians can set foot, making it a perfect location for the emperor to hide while others rooted out the assassins.

Upon taking the emperor to the island, Takahiro further convinced Shigure to give him the *Higashiyama Seal* and invest him with the regency of Minkai in the emperor's name, so that Takahiro could serve as temporary ruler in Shigure's absence. However, as soon as Shigure performed the ceremony to bequeath this power, Takahiro slew the emperor, thus fulfilling Meida's prophecy, and Takahiro and Meida threw Shigure's body into the Well of Demons at the island's heart. Returning to the mainland, Takahiro, now calling himself the Jade Regent, selected his grandfather Anamurumon as an advisor to the throne. Meanwhile, the Five Storms spread stories that the emperor had gone into hiding while the unnamed threat against his life remained.

Without the divine mandate to rule granted to the five imperial families by Shizuru, the Jade Regent can never become the legitimate emperor of Minkai. But over time, with no true heirs to claim the throne, the Jade Regent will become the de facto emperor, and Minkai will pass irrevocably into the hands of the oni, ushering in a new dark age of terror, blood, and excess.

But all hope is not yet lost. In the imperial capital of Kasai, people whisper of a lost princess, a daughter of the Amatatsu family and true heir to the Jade Throne, who has returned to Minkai. Rumors of her approach have caused the Jade Regent to withdraw to his palace, jealously guarding the seat of power while his agents actively seek her out. Dragging forth those charged with conspiracy, the Jade Regent's minions threaten to execute them one by one unless the heir reveals herself. But before she can claim her birthright, the princess must first receive the blessings of the former emperors of Minkai. Only then—with her champions by her side—can she finally challenge the Jade Regent and reclaim the empty throne.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Having gained support for Ameiko's claim to the Jade Throne from many different factions in Minkai in "Tide of Honor," the PCs finally turn their attention to infiltrating the imperial capital of Kasai and directly challenging the Jade Regent. The people of Kasai are suffering myriad hardships under the Jade Regent's rule, and the PCs have an opportunity to intervene in some of these affairs, winning the support of the common people as they try to conceal Ameiko's identity from the Jade Regent's inquisitors.

To obtain the blessings of Minkai's former emperors and legitimize Ameiko's claim, the PCs must escort Ameiko to the fabled offshore island known as the Imperial Shrine, an otherworldly place where Minkai's emperors go to commune with their ancestors for advice. There, they encounter the ghost of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure and learn the full extent of the Jade Regent's betrayal. But Shigure withholds his approval of Ameiko until the PCs recover his body from the Well of Demons. These horrifying, half-flooded caverns lie steeped in the evil of Minkai's past, and the PCs must do battle against the dark powers of that domain to fulfill the emperor's wish.

Once they've secured the blessings of the past emperors, the PCs return to Kasai, ready to confront the Jade Regent in the Imperial Palace. While their allies occupy the bulk of the Jade Regent's forces outside the city, the PCs must infiltrate the palace and navigate its many traps and defenders, including an honor-bound guardian of the imperial line who possesses powerful artifacts that can aid the PCs in their upcoming showdown with the Jade Regent. Upon finally reaching the throne room, the PCs must battle not only the Jade Regent, but also his closest advisors and the leader of the Five Storms, the wind yai oni Anamurumon. With the Jade Regent's defeat, Ameiko can claim her rightful place upon the Jade Throne and establish a new dynasty to rule the empire of Minkai!

PART ONE: THE IMPERIAL CITY

"The Empty Throne" begins with the PCs having forged alliances with Minkai's criminal, mercantile, and martial elements, represented by the ninja, the geisha, and Jiro's ronin and the samurai in "Tide of Honor." With these supporters in place, the time finally arrives to strike directly against the Jade Regent. The ronin Hirabashi Jiro advises the PCs and Ameiko to make their way to the imperial capital of Kasai, where they should make contact with an old man named Asachi Isao, the leader of a group of sympathizers to Ameiko's cause in the city. Isao can provide them with a safe base of operations in Kasai, where the PCs can learn the current situation in the capital and prepare for Ameiko to receive the blessings of the previous emperors before claiming her throne. Jiro and the PCs'

THE EMPTY THRONE

other allies will follow with the rebel army, intending to draw the majority of the Jade Regent's forces away from the city so the PCs and Ameiko and can strike the final blow against the usurper.

Through their own network of spies, however, the Five Storms already know of these developments and the PCs' intentions, prompting the Jade Regent to retreat into the Imperial Palace in Kasai. The Regent has already put the city under martial law, claiming that the same assassins who once threatened Emperor Higashiyama are now spreading rumors of an Amatsatsu heir to destabilize his regency and sow further chaos in the capital.

As a result, the Jade Regent's agents execute citizens who speak out against his rule, claiming that such criminals are conspiring with foreigners to put an outsider on the Jade Throne. The Jade Regent further decrees that he'll continue to kill such traitors until Ameiko and her allies turn themselves over for execution. This environment has created a tense situation in Kasai. Most of the city's inhabitants fear the Jade Regent and his soldiers, and are afraid to call attention to themselves lest they be targeted. Others believe his lies and actively turn over anyone acting suspiciously to the Jade Regent's Typhoon Guard. Into this environment, the PCs must escort Ameiko and keep her identity secret until all their allies are in place.

Read or paraphrase the following introduction as the PCs approach Kasai.

A long line of peasants, pilgrim monks, and arriving merchants extends from the guarded gates of Kasai, the capital city of Minkai. Above the din of the noisy crowd, guards question—and in some cases aggressively interrogate—each visitor before allowing him or her into the city. Some have their goods confiscated, and are led away in tears under the harsh glare of suspicious eyes. Others seemingly satisfy their examiners with honeyed words or surreptitious bribes as they pass inside.

INFILTRATING THE CITY (CR 15)

Since becoming aware of Ameiko's survival and her presence in Minkai, the Jade Regent has put his private mercenary army, the Typhoon Guard, on high alert. The PCs must come up with a viable plan to make their way past these troops if they want to avoid undue scrutiny when entering the city. More information on the imperial capital of Kasai can be found in the Kasai gazetteer on page 70.

Creatures: Each gate into the city is guarded by an ogre mage commander and four kuwa oni Typhoon guards. Similar forces also regularly patrol the city's streets, and invisible flying oni patrol the skies over Kasai as well. The Typhoon commanders are also capable of perceiving invisible creatures. Anyone attempting to enter the city invisibly or by flying over the outer walls

WHAT ABOUT AMEIKO?

Up to this point, the PCs have likely left Ameiko and other significant NPCs safely behind with their caravan during most of their adventures in the campaign. In "The Empty Throne," however, Ameiko and the other NPCs have a more active role to play. Ameiko, in particular, must receive the blessings of the previous emperors of Minkai, and refuses to sit idly by while others risk their lives for her legacy, especially once the PCs finally face the Jade Regent. Having Ameiko take a more active role at this point serves to build credibility as she wins the hearts and minds of the people of Minkai in becoming their empress. And if Ameiko is going to put herself into danger, it is unlikely that many of the other significant NPCs will be willing to let her do so alone.

The encounters in "The Empty Throne" assume that some or all of the significant NPCs whom the PCs have befriended over the course of the campaign will be accompanying the PCs throughout the adventure. As a result, these encounters are significantly more difficult than an average party of four characters would normally expect to face. You should adjust the encounters in this adventure to provide a challenge for your group, depending on which NPCs accompany them. If the PCs only take Ameiko with them, you might want to make the encounters easier by reducing the number of foes or their levels. On the other hand, if several NPCs are with the party, you might need to increase the difficulty of some encounters to match the larger party's Average Party Level (see page 397 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*).

At the same time, you should ensure that the NPCs have leveled up to a point close to the PCs, perhaps just a level or two behind. Ameiko might take levels in bard, rogue, or even aristocrat to reflect her advancement over the course of the campaign. In any case, you should use this not as a method for Ameiko and the other NPCs to steal the show and upstage the PCs in their shared task, but rather in order to further the roleplaying opportunities among your group and develop the characters the PC have most likely grown somewhat attached to.

will be met by a patrol of four Typhoon guards led by a Typhoon commander. Even if the PCs teleport into Kasai or find some other way to enter the city undetected, most crossroads and major public areas are also closely watched by oni patrols, who accost the PCs at some point while they travel through the city.

If the PCs openly enter the city through one of its gates, they can attempt to disguise themselves to escape the oni's notice. Each character must make a DC 26 Disguise skill

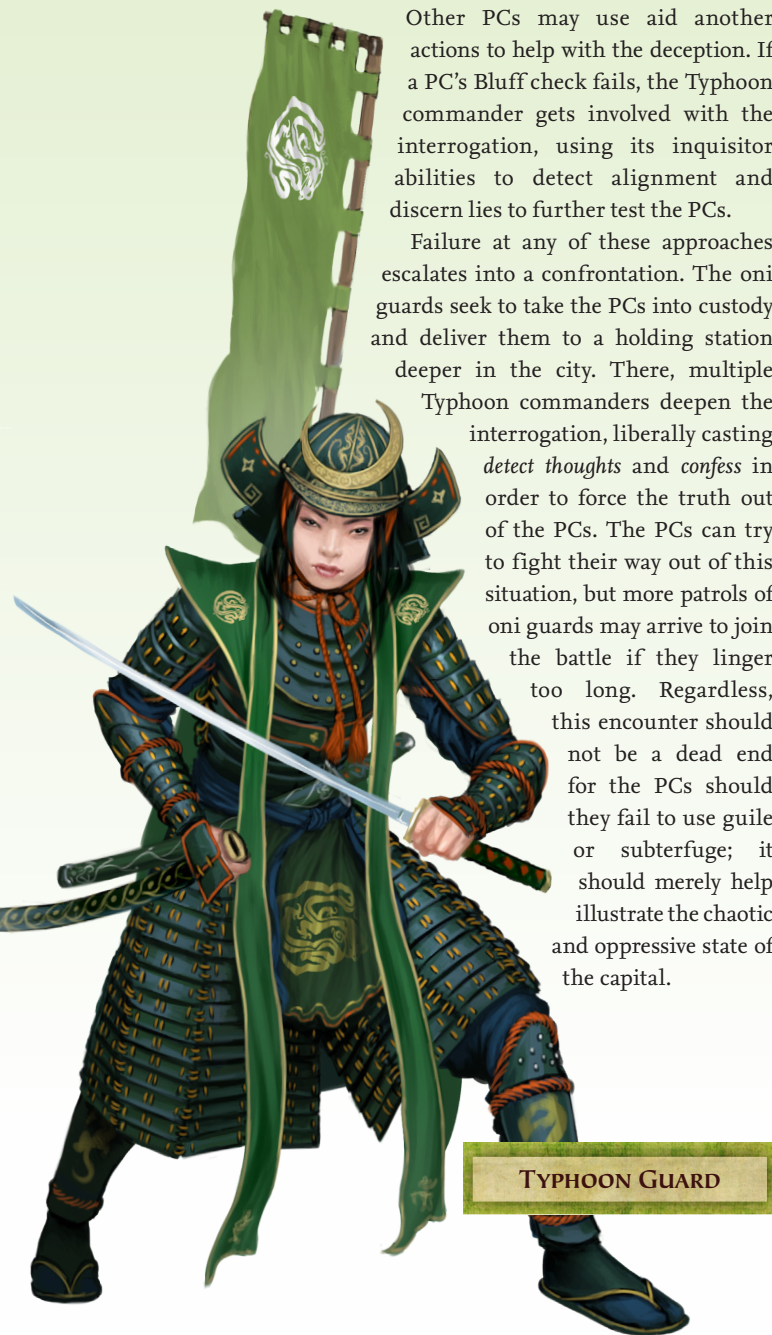
check to safely pass through the gate without arousing suspicion (the oni are assumed to be taking 10 on their opposed Perception checks). Any female characters (including Ameiko) take a -4 penalty on this check, as the oni are specifically looking for a daughter of the Amatsatsu family. As long as no one pierces their disguises, the PCs are free to enter.

Alternatively, the PCs can also bluff their way inside by answering the guards' questions. Feel free to roleplay this interrogation by making the players sweat it out, but in the end, each character must make a successful Bluff check, opposed by the guards' Sense Motive checks.

Other PCs may use aid another actions to help with the deception. If a PC's Bluff check fails, the Typhoon commander gets involved with the interrogation, using its inquisitor abilities to detect alignment and discern lies to further test the PCs.

Failure at any of these approaches escalates into a confrontation. The oni guards seek to take the PCs into custody and deliver them to a holding station deeper in the city. There, multiple

Typhoon commanders deepen the interrogation, liberally casting *detect thoughts* and *confess* in order to force the truth out of the PCs. The PCs can try to fight their way out of this situation, but more patrols of oni guards may arrive to join the battle if they linger too long. Regardless, this encounter should not be a dead end for the PCs should they fail to use guile or subterfuge; it should merely help illustrate the chaotic and oppressive state of the capital.



TYPHOON GUARD

The commanders are all inquisitors of Fumeiyoshi, the Tian god of dishonor and envy and patron of the oni. All of the Typhoon guards are samurai of the order of the Black Daimyo (see page 11). They wear green armor that emulates the Jade Regent's own and carry vertical banners called *sashimonos* emblazoned with the white dragon of Minkai on a green field. Both the commanders and the guards keep their human forms unless attacked, at which point they revert to their true oni forms.

TYPHOON COMMANDER

CR 13

XP 25,600

Ogre mage inquisitor of Fumeiyoshi 5 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 221, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 38)

LE Large outsider (giant, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *see invisibility*; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+8 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 188 (13 HD; 8d10+5d8+122); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +19, **Ref** +9, **Will** +15

SR 19

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee +2 *naginata*** +22/+17/+12 (2d6+15/x4)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +15/+10/+5 (2d6+9/x3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (20 ft. with *naginata*)

Special Attacks bane (5 rounds/day), destructive smite (+2, 6/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +11)

Constant—*fly*

At will—*darkness*, *invisibility*

1/day—*charm monster* (DC 16), *cone of cold* (DC 17), *deep slumber* (DC 15), *gaseous form*

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)

At will—*detect alignment*, *discern lies* (5 rounds/day)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +7)

2nd (3/day)—*confess** (DC 14), *detect thoughts* (DC 14), *see invisibility*

1st (5/day)—*command* (DC 13), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *shield of faith*

o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 12), *brand** (DC 12), *detect magic*, *resistance*, *sift**

Domain Destruction

TACTICS

Before Combat A Typhoon commander always casts *see invisibility* before going on its guard shift, making sure to renew it every hour. Before combat, a commander also casts *shield of faith*.

During Combat Each commander generally relies on *charm monster* or *deep slumber* to subdue most would-be troublemakers. Against stronger opponents, a commander turns invisible, flying above combat if necessary, and

THE EMPTY THRONE

invokes its justice judgment ability, granting itself a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls before imbuing its naginata with the *bane* weapon special ability.

Morale A Typhoon commander fights to the death, unwilling to face the wrath of Anamurumon or the Jade Regent should it flee.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 19, **Con** 28, **Int** 14, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +21 (+23 trip); **CMD** 37 (39 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Outflank*, Weapon Focus (naginata**)

Skills Bluff +18, Disguise +18, Fly +14, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +8, Survival +10

Languages Common, Giant, Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (Small, Medium, or Large humanoid; *alter self* or *giant form I*), cunning initiative, flight, judgment 2/day, monster lore +3, solo tactics, stern gaze, track +2

Gear +3 *do-maru*** , +2 *naginata*** , masterwork composite longbow (+9 Str) with 20 arrows

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

** See *Ultimate Combat*.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Kuwa oni samurai 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 208, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 18)

LE Medium outsider (human, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +3 Dex, +1 natural, +1 shield)

hp 121 each (11 HD; 5d10+6d10+61); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +14, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities resolve 3/day; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk katana* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+6/18–20) and mwk

wakizashi* +16/+11/+6 (1d6+3/18–20) or

mwk katana* +19/+14 (1d8+9/18–20) or

2 claws +17 (1d6+6)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +17/+12/+7 (1d8+6/x3)

Special Attacks banner +2/+1, challenge (+6 damage, DR 2/—, 2/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +7)

3/day—*darkness*, *fly*

1/day—*charm person* (DC 13), *deep slumber* (DC 15),

invisibility (self only)

TACTICS

During Combat Typhoon guards are well trained in cooperative combat tactics. One of them always takes to the air to

support the others with archery. The others attempt to flank opponents, attacking with both katanas and wakizashi.

Morale Typhoon guards fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 32

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (katana*)

Skills Bluff +10, Disguise +10, Fly +8, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +16, Ride +10, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +6, Stealth +10

Languages Giant, Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (any human; *alter self*), mount, mounted archer, order of the Black Daimyo (honor in all things 2/day), weapon expertise (katana)

Gear +2 *steel lamellar** , masterwork composite longbow (+6 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork katana* , masterwork wakizashi* , banner

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Order of the Black Daimyo (Ex) A samurai of the order of the Black Daimyo follows the teachings of General Susumu, the Tien god of war and patron of evil samurai. A samurai of the order of the Black Daimyo functions as a samurai of the order of the warrior, simply replacing the pursuit of honor with the pursuit of glory.

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

Story Award: If the PCs manage to enter the city while avoiding combat with the guards, award them 51,200 XP.

A FRIENDLY FACE

After winning their way into Kasai, the PCs should make contact with their sympathizers in the city, a group led by a frail, almost ancient man named **Asachi Isao** (LG male venerable human aristocrat 9). An old friend of Jiro's, Isao has taken it upon himself to prepare rooms at his family compound to safely and secretly house Ameiko and the PCs. Isao's family is also one of the few who remember and honor the Amatatsu family. Isao knew Ameiko's great-grandfather, who left him much of the wealth the Amatatsus couldn't take with them when they fled. Isao sold many of their lesser art items over the years, reinvesting the money from each transaction and elevating his own family in status. Even so, he only views himself as a caretaker of the original funds, and can provide Ameiko and the PCs with additional funds to use against the Jade Regent should they need them. It will take Isao several days to liquidate his investments into cash, however. You can use these funds to make up any shortfall in the PCs' wealth or provide them with an additional reward for safely getting Ameiko to Kasai, but the PCs should probably remain close to their recommended wealth by level (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 399).

JADE REGENT

In addition, Isao can provide a great deal of information to the PCs. Thanks in large part to the Amatatsu family, the Asachis are now wealthy nobles. As such, Isao is in tune with much of the current happenings in the city as well as the more recent actions of the Jade Regent. In their conversation with him, Isao answers the PCs' more likely questions as follows.

Who is the Jade Regent? "A man named Soto Takahiro. He's a lifelong friend and former bodyguard of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure. They grew up together as children. Since taking the throne, however, he's changed. His hand falls heavy upon Minkai. His regency is not at all what the people expected."

Where is the Jade Regent? "Since learning of your arrival in Minkai, he's hidden himself in the Imperial Palace, under the protection of his Typhoon Guard and surrounded by his closest, most trusted allies—Anamurumon, his chief magistrate; Renshii Meida, his seer and lover; and his chief assassin, known as the Raven Prince. For now, the Jade Regent issues all of his edicts through his chief magistrate, Anamurumon."

How did the Jade Regent come to claim the throne? "Emperor Shigure must have granted him the right of regency. The Jade Throne would accept no other. Without the emperor's blessing, Takahiro would have no mandate to rule. But because the throne accepts him, so too do the people. For now."

If things are so bad, why don't the people rise up against him? "They have much greater problems worrying them. I suspect Anamurumon has devised many of these to keep the people occupied and ensure their complacency."

What kind of problems are facing the city? "Starvation for one. The Typhoon Guard collect a heavy rice tax, taking food from farmers and storing it in a large granary in the city. The soldiers gorge themselves on what others have labored to produce, leaving too little to feed the people. They claim this keeps the army well fed and ready to defend Minkai, but it also weakens those who might take up arms against him."

"The Jade Regent also holds many of our daughters captive. His guards accost women at the city gates and in the marketplaces. Surely you've seen them? That's because the Regent's seer, an oracle and diviner named Renshii Meida, foresaw your coming. They know that a daughter of the Amatatsu family holds the last of the *Imperial Seals*. And that's why they search for you in the city and across Minkai—to deny Ameiko her birthright, for it would end his reign. My own daughter, Harumi, is held somewhere in the palace, along with daughters from many other

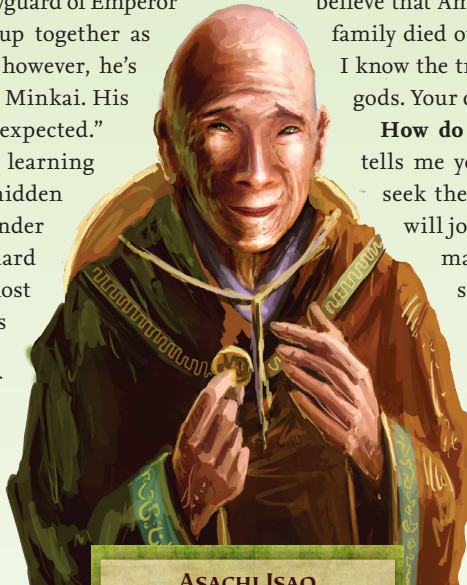
prominent families. Officially, they are 'wards' of the Jade Regent, but they no doubt face nightly interrogations at the hands of their captors.

"Lastly, the people are afraid. The Jade Regent's inquisitors are everywhere. They know our thoughts when we conspire against him, and they drag off any who might stir rebellion, torturing them for information before staging public executions in the marketplace. He'd have us believe that Ameiko is an imposter, that the Amatatsu family died out long ago. But I knew the Amatatus. I know the truth. Ameiko's return is the will of the gods. Your destiny is to make things right again."

How do we overthrow the Jade Regent? "Jiro tells me you have an army. You've done well to seek the support of so many—and even more will join your cause here in the city, once you make your presence known. If you can, sow distrust between the Jade Regent and his allies to pit them against one another and weaken their resolve."

"But all of that will mean nothing if you don't first seek the blessings of the emperors of the past. There is a magical island in Kasai's harbor, known as the Imperial Shrine. Only those of imperial blood, or their sworn guardians, may set foot on the island where they can commune with

their ancestors. Some say that Emperor Shigure fled there. If so, you must convince him to return or ask his blessing for Ameiko's ascension. Only then can she claim the Jade Throne."



ASACHI ISAO

SETTING THINGS RIGHT

The Jade Regent and the Five Storms have created a variety of problems in Kasai, and after talking to Isao, the PCs might wish to look into some of the grievances he described. Solving and exposing some of these situations helps the PCs undermine the Jade Regent's control and win more of the people to their cause. Isao certainly encourages them to do something about each problem. Feel free to run any of these encounters in any order, either before or after the PCs go to the Imperial Shrine in Part Two. Until all of these situations have been remedied, however, for every day in which the PCs fail to resolve at least one of these situations, reduce their total Rebellion Points by 1 (see the sidebar on page 13).

FOOD SHORTAGE (CR 15)

Since secretly taking over the capital of Minkai, the more gluttonous members of the Five Storms have seized most of the nation's food supply. Feasting upon whatever bounty the outlying farms have produced, they've left

little for anyone else. As a result, starvation has become a real problem in Kasai—those in the Imperial Palace hoard all the food and the citizens waste away.

Presumably, the PCs (and especially Ameiko) will want to resolve this situation, both to save the people they intend to rule, and also to start winning the hearts and minds of Minkaian by undoing some of the depredations the people have suffered at the hands of the Jade Regent. The easiest way to complete this mission is to sneak into the city's main granary at night, defeat the guards, and steal the rice.

Creatures: The Jade Regent has stationed four taotiehs at the granary to guard his hoarded rice. The taotiehs resemble large marble statues of tigers, but they are actually gluttonous constructs built around pockets of extradimensional space, enabling them to swallow creatures of almost any size. The taotiehs attack any creatures other than oni entering the granary and attempt to swallow them whole. The constructs fight until destroyed.

TAOTIEHS (4) **CR 11**
XP 12,800 each
hp 107 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 260*)

Treasure: One of the taotiehs has swallowed a *stone of good luck*, which is disgorged when the construct is destroyed.

Development: Provided the PCs win their way past the taotiehs, they must still transport the heavy bags of rice back to Isao for distribution to the people. If the PCs don't come up with a way to do this themselves, a successful DC 28 Diplomacy check is required to convince Isao's allies to manually load the rice onto carts in the middle of the night and distribute it throughout the city. Award the PCs +3 Rebellion Points for successfully ending the food shortage.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully raid the granary and distribute the rice, award them an additional 51,200 XP.

CAPTIVE HEARTS

While diligently searching for Ameiko, the Typhoon Guard have instituted a policy of checking all female newcomers at the city gates, holding them under the auspices of determining any claim they might have on the throne as the lost Amatatsu heir. In reality, they're attempting to identify Ameiko and eliminate her before she can openly identify herself and oppose the Jade Regent. The oni have also taken daughters from several important families as hostages and imprisoned them in the Imperial Palace, separating them from their families to deter their relatives from siding with a challenger to the throne.

If the PCs wish to take away this leverage and gain the support of Kasai's nobles, they'll need to find these women and free them. The women are being held in the Imperial Palace's Hall of Meditation. See area **H25** for details on the prisoners and their captors.

REBELLION POINTS

Throughout "The Empty Throne," the PCs have a chance to earn Rebellion Points (RP) to build support for Ameiko's claim to the Jade Throne while subverting the Jade Regent's authority. Most of these scenarios involve undoing the damage caused by the Five Storms and impressing the citizens of Kasai, but the PCs also gain or lose Rebellion Points for the allies they acquired (or failed to acquire) during the previous adventure, "Tide of Honor," as follows. If the PCs defeated the bandits of Seinaru Heikiko, award them +1 RP. For each ninja clan the PCs hired, award them +1 RP. If the PCs instead ensured the ninja's noninterference, award them +0 RP. For each ninja clan the PCs failed to either hire or ensure the noninterference of, they lose 1 RP. If the PCs rescued the geisha O-Sayumi, award them +1 RP. Finally, if the PCs killed Sikutsu Sennaka, award them +1 RP.

As this adventure progresses, you should track the total number of Rebellion Points accumulated by the PCs to determine how well the transition of power goes and how stable the empire is when Ameiko takes the throne (see *Concluding the Adventure* on pages 48–49).

In addition, the PCs' Rebellion Points undermine the trust and cooperation between the Jade Regent's supporters. The Jade Regent and his primary allies each have a Teamwork Score that represents the strength of their alliances with one another (see the NPC Gallery on pages 50–61). The Rebellion Points the PCs accumulate in this adventure lower each major NPC's Teamwork Score on a one-for-one basis, determining how united these individuals remain in the final battle against the PCs.

A PUBLIC EXECUTION (CR 15)

Habesuta Hatsue, the sohei who the PCs befriended in "Tide of Honor," took it upon herself to infiltrate the capital ahead of Ameiko's arrival. Her efforts to rally the citizens into opposing the Jade Regent did not go unnoticed, however. She was captured by the Typhoon Guard, who used torture and magical compulsions to draw out information about Ameiko and the PCs. Now, the oni plan to publicly execute her, both to serve as an example to the people of Kasai and to hopefully draw out her allies in a rescue attempt. If Hatsue is accompanying the PCs or died in the previous adventure, you should replace her with another minor ally of the PCs, perhaps another ronin from Jiro's band.

When Ameiko learns of the planned execution, she urges the PCs to act, believing they must demonstrate support and concern for their allies if they're to win the people to their cause and motivate their followers to strike against the Jade Regent. The execution is scheduled to occur in the

JADE REGENT

Imperial Market (area H3) just outside the Imperial Palace, where a large crowd has gathered to witness the event.

Creatures: A Typhoon commander named Katasho commands the four Typhoon guards tasked with carrying out the execution. Katasho hovers invisibly above the crowd, using *detect thoughts* and *detect alignment* to identify those who might be sympathizers. If he picks out Ameiko or one of the PCs, he uses his *scroll of follow aura* to make sure he doesn't lose them in the crowd, then calls them to the attention of the guards, who move to attack the PCs. Note that the large crowd in the marketplace counts as difficult terrain and provides cover for anyone on the ground (*Core Rulebook* 436).

As part of the execution ceremony, the guards read aloud the victim's crime of conspiracy against the throne and deride the existence of a supposed Amatsatsu heir. They implore the crowd to turn in any such imposter. If you wish, Ameiko could reveal herself at this time in an attempt to challenge the guards and save Hatsue's life, but this also ensures that Katasho targets her over anyone else.

KATASHO CR 13

XP 25,600

Male Typhoon commander (see page 10)

hp 188

TACTICS

Before Combat Anticipating sympathizers intervening in the execution, Katasho casts *see invisibility* and *shield of faith*.

During Combat Katasho stays in the air to assess his adversaries.

From there, he targets at least one opponent with his *wand of dimensional anchor* to ensure it won't escape by magical means. Thereafter, he invokes his justice judgment ability and imbues his naginata with the *bane* weapon special ability.

Morale If anyone uses fire or acid against Katasho, he switches his judgment ability to resist the appropriate energy type. Although eager to capture the Amatsatsu heir, he realizes when he's been overmatched. If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Katasho casts *darkness*, *invisibility*, or *gaseous form* to escape back to the Imperial Palace and alert the Jade Regent, even going so far as to take a hostage from the crowd to prevent the PCs from stopping his retreat, if necessary.

STATISTICS

Additional Combat Gear *scroll of follow aura** (CL 10th), *wand of dimensional anchor* (7 charges)

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

TACTICS

During Combat Two of the Typhoon guards take to the air while the other two remain with their prisoner.

Morale Typhoon guards fight to the death.

Development: If the PCs successfully rescue the condemned sohei, award them +2 Rebellion Points. If they also publicly reveal Ameiko's presence to the crowd, award them an additional +2 Rebellion Points.

PART TWO: HONORING THE PAST

Sometime after arriving in Kasai, the PCs should heed Isao's advice by seeking out the Imperial Shrine. Isao discourages them from attempting to fly or teleport to the island, explaining that its unusual wards make it impossible to find unless they observe the proper ceremonies and travel there by boat. Isao tells them they must first pass through the island's five torii gates before the island's true nature is revealed to worthy visitors. He directs them to a trustworthy fisherman named **Kadei Ejigoro** (N male venerable human expert 5), who can take them to the island of the Imperial Shrine. The crusty boat captain proves just as ancient as Isao, looking like he might fall down from a stiff wind. His harbor boat, the *Weeping Willow*, makes frequent forays to check lobster traps in the bay, and Ejigoro is more than willing to drop the PCs off at the island, telling them they can signal him from shore when they're ready to leave.

THE IMPERIAL SHRINE

The Imperial Shrine is a mysterious island off the coast of Kasai that serves as a cemetery for Minkai's imperial families. When Shizuru, goddess of ancestors, honor, and the sun, created the *Imperial Seals*, she also created a magical conduit to the Great Beyond, allowing those in possession of an *Imperial Seal* to make contact with the ancestral spirits of those laid to rest on the island who were once ordained by the seals as well.

When an emperor dies and is interred in the Imperial Shrine, his soul passes on to Pharama's Boneyard, where he becomes a petitioner and is sent to his ultimate fate. Unlike most petitioners, however, the souls of Minkai's emperors retain memories of their former lives because of Shizuru's conduit, even as they transform into outsiders. This connection with the Material Plane allows Minkai's former emperors to guide their successors with lifetimes of knowledge and wisdom, even beyond death.

Unfortunately, Emperor Shigure's death and the treachery of the Jade Regent have left the island in disarray. Many of its guardians have activated and the wards that once protected the shrine against the influence of Minkai's evil emperors have failed. These malevolent spirits now hunger to extend their reach beyond the island's shores, and they pose a significant threat to the PCs' goals while there.

REACHING THE IMPERIAL SHRINE

Not just anyone can access the Imperial Shrine and seek out the ancestral spirits of Minkai's emperors. Shizuru's

THE EMPTY THRONE



conduit keeps the island “out of phase” with the rest of the Material Plane. Anyone traveling to the Imperial Shrine without an *Imperial Seal* finds the island uninhabited, home to only a handful of birds and other wildlife.

Only a scion of one Minkai’s five imperial families, or their chosen guardians, can set foot on the true interior of island. Five distinctive torii gates rise from the shallows surrounding the island, and those wishing to visit the true Imperial Shrine must pass through each of these gates while in possession of an *Imperial Seal*. Doing so allows such scions to actually access the island’s otherworldly shrine and cemetery.

Those who go around the gates or reach the shore without an *Imperial Seal* can sense something unnatural and eerie about the otherworldly island with a successful DC 23 Wisdom check, but success doesn’t allow them to see or interact with the island’s shrine or cemetery.

A. TORII GATES

Twin vermilion posts rise from the shallow water here, about twenty feet apart and fifteen feet high, joined together by an upper lintel painted black.

Five of these torii gates stand in the waters surrounding the Imperial Shrine. Together, they ward the island from unauthorized visitors by keeping it slightly out of phase with the rest of reality. Only an *Imperial Seal* passing through all five gates can activate them, enabling those in possession of the seal to reach the island’s true interior.

B. SHIZURU’S TEMPLE

A single stone dock juts into the water from the island’s shore. A rectangular wooden building stands on the shore just behind the dock.

This small temple is dedicated to Shizuru, the goddess of ancestors, honor, and the sun, the patron goddess of Minkai and creator of both the *Imperial Seals* and the island’s magical conduit to the afterlife.

B1. ENTRANCE

Exits lead east and west from this wide room. Two small shrines sit on either side of the double doors to the west, and artistic tapestries of the celestial realm adorn the rest of the walls.

JADE REGENT

The shrines are dedicated to Pharasma and to Tsukiyo, the Tian god of spirits and the moon. Mourners offer up prayers here to prepare themselves before laying the dead to rest, or when seeking guidance from their ancestors.

B2. CEREMONY ROOMS

Four small sitting rooms branch off this long hallway. Low wooden tables, seating cushions, and sleeping pallets stand on the tatami mats covering their floors.

These chambers provide all the necessary facilities to house and comfort the grieving families and servants of any emperor being laid to rest at the Imperial Shrine. The mourners typically gather here before journeying through the cemetery and across the bridge to the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D).

B3. MEDITATION SHRINE (CR 14)

A huge statue of a golden-scaled dragon dominates the west wall of this chamber, towering almost to the top of the twenty-foot-high ceiling. Small shrines sit to the north and south. In the corners flanking the room's only entrance, two large braziers scent the air with the tang of sandalwood incense.

This shrine is dedicated to Shizuru. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the dragon statue as a representation of the goddess. The two smaller shrines are dedicated to the ancestors of Minkai's imperial lines.

Creature: In addition to the island's normal defenses, the Jade Regent has left behind a guardian of his own, a rokurokubi—a haglike creature with an elongated neck and sorcerous powers—named Kiyomi. Kiyomi has agreed to guard the island for a period of 5 years to prevent any remaining imperial scions (such as Ameiko) from visiting the Imperial Shrine and discovering the true fate of Emperor Shigure. Using the power of the *Higashiyama Seal*, the Jade Regent made Kiyomi one of the emperor's chosen guardians, thus allowing her to freely travel throughout the island. In exchange for her stewardship, the Jade Regent promised to sire a child with Kiyomi at the end of her period of service, and the thought of such a powerful and unabashedly corrupt figure to father her child far outweighed any concerns Kiyomi might have had about the deal. For his part, Takahiro has no intention of living up to his end of the bargain, for without an *Imperial Seal* in her possession, Kiyomi is effectively imprisoned on the island, and the Jade Regent has no fear of reprisals at her hands.

When not skulking about the cemetery or Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns, Kiyomi lives here in Shizuru's shrine, daydreaming of sitting next to the Jade Regent as his empress, with all of Minkai hers to do with as she pleases. If

alerted to the PCs' arrival on the island, Kiyomi hides herself to trail after them and kill them one by one. If encountered here, Kiyomi has her neck retracted, appearing as a human woman wearing a long, hooded robe that conceals her gnarled, clawed hands and otherworldly skin tone. She attempts to pass herself off as a priestly monk of Shizuru and caretaker of the cemetery, and is more than willing to guide the PCs to the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D), only to lead them to the cemetery's guardians instead. If discovered or attacked, Kiyomi elongates her neck to make the most of her monstrous powers in battle, throwing off any pretense of disguise.

KIYOMI

CR 14
XP 38,400

Rokurokubi (see page 90)

hp 195

TACTICS

During Combat Kiyomi activates her nightfall aura and attacks foes caught within it with her bite and claws, focusing her attacks on attractive characters or those with high Charisma scores in an attempt to afflict them with her rokurokubi's curse. She casts spells to further hinder her opponents, using her elongated neck to deliver touch spells from outside melee range.

Morale Kiyomi has no wish to sacrifice herself for the Jade Regent, and flees deeper into the island's interior if reduced to fewer than 75 hit points, only to return to get her revenge, perhaps as the PCs are exiting the Well of Demons (area G). Unable to escape the island itself, Kiyomi fights to the death if cornered.

Treasure: Kiyomi has gathered a significant amount of treasure here, stolen from the graves and tombs on the island. Her horde includes a +3 *light steel shield*, a *tree feather token*, a *lesser strand of prayer beads*, and assorted jewelry and art objects worth a total of 5,000 gp.

C. MIKADO CEMETERY

Minkai's former emperors are laid to rest in the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D); the cremated remains of their trusted guardians and advisors, and the lesser scions of the imperial lines are interred in this cemetery, which takes up most of the southern half of the island.

C1. INCENSE KIOSK

A lonely kiosk stands at the entrance to this crowded cemetery.

Treasure: Among the buckets, brushes, and incense burners stored in this simple caretaker's kiosk lies a single block of *incense of meditation* left there by a visiting priest of Shizuru many years ago.

THE EMPTY THRONE

C2. YUA'S LAST ACT (CR 14)

The path through the graveyard ends abruptly before a cluster of obelisk-shaped tombstones.

Haunt: Many years ago, two evil samurai named Akio and Yua fell in love with each other while serving an equally malign emperor. Jealous of their love, the emperor arranged Akio's death to have Yua for himself. After interring Akio's ashes in the Mikado Cemetery, Yua finally learned of the emperor's treachery. When the emperor approached her that night in her bedchamber, Yua slew him and stole his family's *Imperial Seal*, taking it with her to the Imperial Shrine so she could grieve once more over Akio's grave. The chosen guardians of the other imperial families came after her and the seal, but rather than fight them, Yua committed ritual suicide with her own sword. Because of her perceived betrayal of the emperor, Yua's body was never cremated, nor were her ashes interred next to Akio's. Instead, her spirit has lingered on, festering for many years until the Jade Regent's betrayal of Emperor Shigure echoed her own, at which point Yua's spirit manifested as a haunt at the site where she committed suicide while grieving over her lost love. The haunt manifests as an overwhelming sense of sadness coupled with the vision of a lovely female samurai taking her own life, compelling those who visit Akio's grave to repeat Yua's sacrificial act.

SUICIDE COMPULSION

CR 14

XP 38,400

LE persistent haunt (20-ft.-radius centered on area C2)

Caster Level 14th

Notice Perception DC 29 (to feel a sudden rush of sadness, loneliness, and regret)

hp 63; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect When triggered, the haunt compels creatures to commit ritual suicide as Yua did. Each round, a random creature in the haunt's area must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or draw its weapon and attempt a coup de grace action on itself. This action deals the creature's normal weapon damage for an attack. An affected creature must make a Fortitude save with a DC equal to 10 + the damage dealt to avoid being immediately slain by the suicide attempt. If anyone tries to prevent this self-inflicted attack, the haunted creature makes a single attack against that person with its weapon as an immediate action. If the attack is successful, the supernaturally guided strike automatically scores a critical hit. The haunt targets a new creature each round while it persists.

Destruction To permanently destroy the haunt, the PCs must recover Yua's remains from the pauper's grave in Kasai where she was buried, cremate them in the crematorium (area D2), and inter them properly next to Akio's grave.

C3. SHADOWY CROSSING (CR 13)

A soft wind blows through the gathered leaves covering this intersection of paths.

Creatures: Because of the powerful turmoil created by the Jade Regent's betrayal of Emperor Shigure, several evil spirits have manifested throughout the Imperial Shrine. This includes six greater shadows of former nobles from Minkai's imperial families, who have risen from their nearby graves. None of these nobles ever ascended to the Jade Throne, but much like the Jade Regent, they coveted its power and that of the elder siblings who outlived them. In addition, a side effect of the island's turmoil has created an *unhallow* effect (CL 15th) around the shadows' gravesites. The shadows lash out at anyone who comes near.

GREATER SHADOWS (6)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 58 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245)

TACTICS

During Combat The shadows rely on the *unhallow* effect to protect them from channeled positive energy, never straying more than 20 feet from their cremated remains. They attack from below ground or from just within the various gravestones, using them for cover.

Morale The shadows fight until destroyed.

C4. THE GUARDIAN GRAVE (CR 14)

A strange dust hangs in the air among the gravestones here, swirling in small eddies amid the light.

Creature: One of the more potent guardians of the cemetery resides here—a gravebound warden, a construct created from a collection of small tombstones and shrines containing the urns of cremated samurai. Each of the warriors whose remains make up the body of the warden were once loyal servants of sitting emperors of Minkai, interred here not so much to lay them to rest, but to allow their enduring spirits to continue watching over the final resting place of those they protected in life. The death of Emperor Shigure, however, has the warden on high alert. No longer capable of knowing who to trust, it views all newcomers to the island as enemies.

The warden lies hidden here in its alternate form, appearing as part of the crowded cemetery (the shaded portion on the map). When a living creature enters the 40-foot-radius area of the *hallow* effect created at the time of its construction, the warden animates and transforms into its bipedal form, attacking and pursuing anyone in the area. The warden is limited in its movement, however, confined to the same 40-foot radius of the *hallow* effect.

GRAVEBOUND WARDEN

CR 14

XP 38,400

N Gargantuan construct

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 5, flat-footed 29 (-1 Dex, +24 natural, -4 size)

hp 164 (19d10+60)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +24 (2d10+13/19-20)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. cone, blinded and sickened for 1d6+1 rounds, DC 21 Fortitude negates, usable every 1d4 rounds), powerful blows

TACTICS

During Combat The gravebound warden charges into opponents to attack with its slams. It uses Bull Rush, Cleave, and Overrun attacks as often as possible, pausing only to employ its breath weapon before renewing its assault.

Morale The gravebound warden fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** 4, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +19; **CMB** +32 (+36 bull rush or overrun); **CMD** 41 (43 vs. bull rush or overrun)

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Overrun, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack

Skills Disguise +15 (to imitate a cemetery), Intimidate +11, Perception +14

Languages Minkaian (cannot speak)

SQ alternate form, gravebound

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alternate Form (Su) A gravebound warden can transform itself into a field of gravestones, miniature shrines, or stone coffins. While in this form, the warden gains a +20 racial bonus on Disguise checks to imitate a crowded cemetery. It requires a full-round action to change forms.

Breath Weapon (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, a gravebound warden can exhale a 60-foot cone of ash and grave dust. Any creatures within this area must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or be blinded and sickened for 1d6+1 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Gravebound (Su) A gravebound warden is assigned a specific site sacred to the dead to guard. This site is always marked by either a permanent *hallow* or *unhallow* effect, determined at the time of the warden's construction. The warden cannot willingly leave this area and defends it against all intruders except those named during the casting of the spell. This gravebound warden is bound to a 40-foot-radius emanation from a *hallow* spell (CL 15th).

Powerful Blows (Ex) A gravebound warden adds 1-1/2 times its Strength modifier on damage rolls with its slam attacks and threatens a critical hit on a 19-20.

C5. BRIDGE OF CELESTIAL INSIGHTS (CR 14)

Past an archway inscribed with Minkaian characters, a bridge of luminescent light stretches across the silver waters of a moat. The bridge leads from the cemetery to a long, tombstone-shaped island. A large torii gate stands at the opposite end of the bridge, opening into a courtyard surrounded by several stone structures peeking above the trees.

This bridge serves as the only means for the living to access the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns. An effect similar to a permanent *antilife shell* rebuffs anyone attempting a different crossing to the island, but those who pass under the archway to cross are unaffected.

Trap: The archway bears a sign in Minkaian indicating that only those close to death may visit the spirits of the former emperors of Minkai. While



GRAVEBOUND WARDEN

the arch was originally meant as a symbolic, ceremonial gesture, anyone passing under it triggers a *greater glyph of warding* that delivers a *harm* effect, putting visitors close enough to death to make it easier for them to commune with the spirits on the other side. Now, given the many dangers set loose on the island, it simply adds to the perils of the Imperial Shrine.

GREATER GLYPH OF WARDING CR 14

XP 38,400

Type magic; Perception 31; Disable Device 31

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset automatic

Effect spell effect (*harm*, 130 damage, DC 19 Will save half, cannot be reduced below 1 hit point)

D. SHRINE OF THE HEAVENLY SOVEREIGNS

The emperors of Minkai refer to this tombstone-shaped islet as the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns. Reserved only for those who have held the Jade Throne, it is much more expansive than the narrow confines of the neighboring Mikado Cemetery. Quiet groves and gardens occupy the islet, as well as a small pond surrounded by several shrines and tombs.

D1. PERFORMER'S STAGE

This covered stage sits three feet off the ground, its roof held up by four cedar columns. Low-lying hedges and flowering shrubs decorate its base with several trails connecting it to the structures and gardens on either side. The imperial families of Minkai use this stage for elaborate ceremonies before laying deceased emperors to rest in one of the many shrines or tombs on the islet.

Treasure: The masterwork musical instruments on the stage—a biwa mandolin, a tsuzumi drum, a shakuhachi flute, and a samisen—are magical, enabling players to summon an *unseen servant* to play a routine performance on the instruments. The instruments are worth 400 gp each.

D2. CREMATORIUM (CR 14)

The air is hot and dry in this stone chamber. Doors lead both east and south out of the room.

Creatures: This crematorium is occupied by a furnace golem, a humanoid-shaped furnace of black iron with a roaring magical fire in its belly. Under normal circumstances, the golem follows a very strict procedure to complete the rites to cremate the remains of deceased emperors within its body and inter the subsequent ashes in properly prepared urns. Now, however, the dishonor the

Jade Regent committed by throwing Emperor Shigure's body into the Well of Demons has caused the elemental spirits animating the golem to go berserk. The golem activates as soon as anyone opens the crematorium's door, attempting to grab them and cremate them in its furnace interior. The golem fights until destroyed.

FURNACE GOLEM CR 14

XP 38,400

Tome of Horrors Complete 333

N Huge construct

Init -1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 7, flat-footed 29 (-1 Dex, +22 natural, -2 size)

hp 144 (19d10+40)

Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6

DR 15/adamantine; Immune construct traits, fire, magic;

Resist cold 20

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee 2 slams +28 (4d6+11 plus 2d6 fire and grab)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (50-ft. line, 10d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 19 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), furnace interior, grab (Medium or smaller), heat (2d6 fire)

STATISTICS

Str 32, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Base Atk +19; CMB +32 (+36 grapple); CMD 41

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Furnace Interior (Ex) A furnace golem can try to shove a grabbed opponent up to two sizes smaller than itself into its interior by making a successful grapple check. An opponent thrown into the furnace golem's interior is trapped as a metal grating closes over the opening in the same round. A trapped creature automatically takes 2d6 points of fire damage each round. Escaping the creature's interior requires a successful DC 30 Strength check to bend the bars. Alternatively, a trapped creature can escape by dealing at least 25 points of damage to the bars (AC 22; the golem's damage reduction applies to attacks against the bars as well). A Huge furnace golem's interior can hold two Medium, eight Small, or 16 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A furnace golem is immune to spells or spell-like abilities that allow spell resistance. Certain spells and effects function differently against it, as noted below.

- A magical attack that bypasses a furnace golem's cold resistance slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw.
- A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

JADE REGENT

D3. STOREROOM

A multitude of clay urns, cremation trays, and iron brushes lie scattered about this storeroom, which houses all of the necessary supplies for the crematorium next door.

D4. STANDING TOMBS

The ceiling of this low tomb reaches only eight feet in height. Its anteroom is dry and dusty, while an ornate bronze door seals off an adjoining sepulcher.

In addition to the numerous shrines and graves on the islet, the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns also holds two aboveground tombs for honored emperors.

Creature: The easternmost tomb (area **D4b**) contains the remains of Empress Amatatsu Onoko, one of the few good-aligned former rulers of Minkai to return to the Imperial Shrine since the Jade Regent's treachery. Although her ashes lie within a bejeweled urn in the sepulcher, Onoko now leads a new existence as a trumpet archon in service to Shizuru. Like all emperors interred in the Imperial Shrine, Onoko retains her memories of her past life, and the goddess of ancestors and honor sent her to assess the turmoil left behind on the island by Emperor Shigure's death. While she recognizes the torment suffered by Shigure's ghost, the archon is powerless to help him, as she is unable to penetrate the Well of Demons to seek out his body.

If the PCs come here before speaking to Emperor Shigure in area **D7**, the tomb is uninhabited. If the PCs come here to commune with the Amatatsu ancestors after talking to the emperor's ghost, the archon soon makes an appearance. Onoko appears as a marble-skinned Tian-Min woman with white-feathered wings, wearing a beautiful cloth-of-gold kimono and carrying a traditional Minkai conch shell horn called a *jinkai*. Onoko represents a potential ally for the PCs on the island. She can converse with them about the shrine's purpose and history, as well as the events she's managed to piece together from Shigure's rants. She can also fill in any gaps in the PCs' knowledge if they were unable to get answers to all of their questions before enraging Shigure.

Although she was a former empress of Minkai, Onoko cannot give her blessing to Ameiko until the handmaiden devil Amatatsu Maemi is defeated in the Well of Demons (see area **G10**). However, if the PCs succeed at a DC 23 Diplomacy check while conversing with her, Onoko agrees to aid them however she can, including casting *raise dead* or other healing spells should any of the PCs fall victim to the island's dangers. A character in possession of either the *Amatatsu Seal* or the sword *Suishen* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #50 61) gains a +4 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy check.

AMATATSU ONOKO

CR 14

XP 38,400

Female trumpet archon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 21)

hp 175

TACTICS

During Combat If attacked, Onoko teleports into the sky outside her tomb so she can release a blast from her jinkai trumpet to paralyze her foes. She casts *divine power* and changes her jinkai into a greatsword so she can attack foes with her Power Attack.

Morale Onoko doesn't wish to fight the PCs. If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, she uses *plane shift* to return to the celestial realm and report to Shizuru.

D5. KOI POND

Dozens of orange and gold fish float lifeless at the surface of this small pond, some half-covered by lily pads, water grass, and cattails. A small footpath follows a zigzag pattern along wooden planks to a small gazebo to the east.

Since returning as a ghost, Emperor Shigure has inadvertently killed all the koi fish in this decorative, peaceful pond by passing through it.

D6. ROJI GARDEN

Two cherry trees and the life-sized jade likeness of a grieving maiden occupy this sandy garden. Alternating rocks of pink and white granite mark the boundary of the garden, where a smooth path circles around to a stone mausoleum flanked by twin golden statues of kirin.

The emperors of Minkai established this quaint roji garden as a place for peaceful meditation before the mausoleum of their predecessors.

D7. IMPERIAL MAUSOLEUM (CR 14)

Behind the immense double doors of this mausoleum lie five chambers, four at each point of the compass and one smaller square chamber joining them. Each chamber holds a small shrine decorated with Minkai heraldry, bowls of incense, and dried flowers, and contains carefully stacked urns of gold, silver, and bronze.

This stone mausoleum holds the physical remains of Minkai's former emperors, mostly in the form of ashes contained in ornate urns. Emperor Higashiyama Shigure came here to be close to his ancestors when he fled to the Imperial Shrine, but he never found the safety he sought—he was brutally murdered in the mausoleum by Soto Takahiro and Renshii Meida.

Creature: Despite the fact that his physical body lies at the bottom of the Well of Demons, the ghost of Emperor Shigure has chosen this place—the site of his murder at the hands of his chosen guardians—as his retreat. When the PCs first arrive, Shigure remains hidden to observe them, but he soon detects the presence of the *Amatatsu Seal* and manifests before them. He introduces himself as the rightful emperor of Minkai, and demands to know who the PCs are and what they are doing in the Imperial Shrine.

Shigure has an initial attitude of unfriendly toward the PCs, but he is eager to gain their help in recovering his body and laying his remains properly to rest, so he is willing to hear them out. Each round, the PCs may ask him one question by making a Diplomacy check. However, the longer Shigure is faced with the PCs' living presence, the more intense his anger and frustration grows, manifesting as a trembling of the urns upon the stone shelves and pedestals around the room. On the first round, the PCs must make a DC 25 Diplomacy check to ask their question. Each subsequent round, the DC of the Diplomacy check to ask a new question increases by 5. A character in possession of the *daikyu of commanding presence* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #53 6c) gains a +4 circumstance on the Diplomacy check. If the PCs fail a Diplomacy check, Shigure's anger overcomes him and he lashes out at the living in blind, impotent rage.

Emperor Shigure's responses to the PCs' likely questions are outlined below.

How did you die? "I was betrayed by my childhood friend and bodyguard, Soto Takahiro, and my closest advisor, Renshii Meida. They told me I would be safe here, away from the assassins who killed so many of my family. But they lied. The only threat to my life came from their honeyed words and poisoned blades."

Can you give us your blessing? "I'll give my blessing to no one while my body lies with the disgraced and the dishonored! I have only curses now for those who survive me! I cannot rest! I cannot find peace! And I won't give peace to anyone else while I'm denied it!"

Where is your body now? "They cast it into the Well of Demons, a great chasm in the hills of this island. The holy waters of Shizuru pour down into the well to drown the sins of my wicked predecessors. But after the treachery and dishonor enacted here upon a living emperor of Minkai, not even the Empress of Heaven can contain their evil, which extends farther beyond the well with each passing day. Soon the spirits of the evil emperors will broaden their reach into Kasai and beyond into my stolen empire. And I may as well join them if it means I can face my murderer again. But I fear that outcome, for I know I'll lose myself to it, becoming as much a monster as the ones who took my life."

If we retrieve your body, will you give us your blessing? "Yes. If you recover my remains from the Well of Demons, and properly inter them by cremating them and placing

the ashes in one of the urns here, I'll grant you the blessing of the Higashiyama family. But my blessing alone won't be enough. You must obtain blessings from the ancestors of all five of the imperial families."

How can we get the blessings of the imperial families? "Normally you could commune with the spirits here, in the Imperial Mausoleum, but Takahiro's crime has severed the connection and driven most of the goodly spirits away. You'll have the Higashiyama blessing if you recover my murdered remains. It's been a long time since an Amatatsu held the throne, but the tomb of Empress Amatatsu Onoko lies just west of here in one of the standing tombs—perhaps you can commune with her or one of your other ancestors there to request their assent. But you must still gain the blessings of the Shojinawa, Sugimatu, and Teikoku families, and I fear your only choice is to seek their blessings inside the Well of Demons. Those within represent the most evil and depraved of Minkai's emperors, but the Jade Throne will still honor their blessings, provided you can bargain for them. Otherwise, you must set things right by recovering my body and destroying those inside the Well. Once the sanctity of the Imperial Shrine is restored, you can properly commune with the ancestors to receive their blessings."

EMPEROR HIGASHIYAMA SHIGURE

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 161 (see page 52)

Development: If Shigure is slain, his rejuvenation brings him back 2d4 days later. By that time, his anger has cooled somewhat, reducing the DC of the initial Diplomacy check to question him to 20 (though his anger, and the DC, once again increases each round).

E. ETERNAL SPRING

When Shizuru created the conduit of power connecting the Imperial Shrine to the Great Beyond and the ancestral spirits of Minkai's emperors, she also created a magical spring on the island and placed a *suijin kami* (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #52 88) to act as guardian of its sanctity. The waters of this spring flow out of the island's western hills to fill the Lake of Tears (area F), surround the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D), and contain the malevolent influence of Minkai's most evil emperors by washing away their sins into the Well of Demons (area G). Since Shigure's assassination, however, the kami of the spring has lost focus. The waters have grown less potent and the evil emperors of Minkai have begun to taint them with their wicked influence.

F. LAKE OF TEARS

The people of Minkai named this body of water the Lake of Tears, believing that Shizuru herself cries over it with each fallen emperor. During imperial funerals, hundreds

JADE REGENT



of floating lanterns are released across the lake's surface. The lake is actually formed from the cascading waters of the Eternal Spring (area E). Two torii gates stand where the waters empty from the lake's basin to the north and south. The southernmost stream fills the moat surrounding the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D), while the northern flow pours into the Well of Demons (area G).

G. WELL OF DEMONS

When Shizuru opened the conduit between the Imperial Shrine and the Great Beyond, she couldn't limit the access to just the celestial realms. Instead, anyone interred in the Imperial Shrine would have the means to connect with the island, including those who passed on to Abaddon, the Abyss, Hell, or beyond. To minimize the influence these creatures might exert over sitting emperors, she created a massive chasm that opened into natural caverns beneath the island's northern reaches, which soon became known as the Well of Demons, and she used the sacred waters of the Eternal Spring to contain the spirits of those evil emperors and cleanse their sins from the island. While Minkai's good former emperors can be contacted from the Shrine of Heavenly Sovereigns, one must go to the edge of the Well of Demons to commune with the spirits of these evil emperors.

Into this maelstrom of iniquity, the Jade Regent and his accomplice Renshii Meida cast the body of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure. The sheer potency of their betrayal sent a ripple through the Well's waters and across the planes, attracting the attention of foul devils, demons, daemons, and evil spirits, each one an exceptionally malevolent scion of an imperial family who once sat upon the Jade Throne. Many of these former emperors had long hungered to return to the Material Plane and use their fell powers to usher in a new age of evil in Minkai, and Shigure's death provided them with the opportunity to do so via Shizuru's conduit. Upon their return to the Imperial Shrine, however, these fiends found themselves physically trapped within the Well of Demons. The sacred waters of the Eternal Spring bar dimensional travel into or out of the Well. Spells of the teleportation subschool and spells that allow astral or ethereal travel work normally within the confines of the Well, but they cannot be used to enter or exit the Well. Summoning magic is unaffected. As a result, any former emperors who enter the Well find themselves trapped there, both physically and magically, and those emperors who now reside in the Well work feverishly to figure out a means of escape so they can spread their influence into Minkai and the greater world beyond.

In actuality, the Well of Demons holds a variety of evil outsiders and undead, not simply demons, who have carved out their own miniature fiefdoms in the caverns of the Well. These “domains” are veiled with illusions similar to *mirage arcana* that respond to their inhabitants’ wishes, enabling them to change the appearance of the caverns to reflect their individual characters and personalities. These illusions are divine in nature and cannot be dispelled. The former rulers of Minkai inhabiting the Well continually plot and scheme against one another while they struggle to find a means of escape. The upper caves have become a battleground between the forces of the Abyss and Hell, with the demons of the nalfeshnee Shogun Teikoku Sokai set against the devils of the handmaiden devil Empress Amatatsu Maemi. Below, the lower caves are disputed between the minions of the thanadaemon Emperor Sugimatu Nobinoru and the undead spirit of Emperor Shojinawa Ito, who currently holds Emperor Shigure’s body.

Emperor Shigure and Amatatsu Onoko can explain the origin and function of the Well of Demons to the PCs. Onoko was unable to enter the Well to recover Shigure’s remains, lest she be trapped there herself. Shigure feels drawn to the Well, and every day, his predecessors imprisoned there call for him to join them. So far he’s resisted their taint, but it’s only a matter of time until his undead condition drives him to evil and his spirit is drawn into the Well.

G1. DESCENT OF THE DEPRAVED (CR 14)

High hills stand above a gaping chasm in the ground. A narrow, muddy path descends into the abyss, winding in a spiral as it passes multiple times under a cascading waterfall from the small stream rushing down the cliffs.

The spiraling path descends 150 feet to the fiendish pool in area G2.

Haunt: A fiendish influence permeates the entrance to the Well, manifesting as a haunt beckoning visitors to willingly jump from the cliffs.

VERTIGO DROP **CR 14**
XP 38,400
 NE persistent haunt (5-ft.-by-70-ft. upper portion of the path)
Caster Level 14th
Notice Perception DC 30 (to feel a momentary falling sensation)
hp 28; Trigger proximity; **Reset** 1 day
Effect Anyone spending more than 1 round looking into the Well of Demons experiences an overwhelming sense of vertigo and feels irresistibly drawn to the bottom of the chasm, as if subject to a *sympathy* spell. All creatures on the path must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or lean forward until they fall into the pit. Anyone who falls takes 11d6

points of lethal falling damage plus 2d3 points of nonlethal damage as they plummet into the fiendish pool (area G2).
Destruction Destroying all of the inhabitants in the Well of Demons and performing a ceremony of renewal at the Eternal Spring (area E) destroys this haunt.

G2. FIENDISH POOL (CR 15)

The roar of falling water fills this massive cavern, echoing off the stone walls. The water floods the cavern before falling into a second chasm on the north side of the chamber. Several passageways exit the cavern, leading to higher ground.

The muddy path from area G1 ends at a sandy beach to the south. The outer fringes of the muddy pool are 4 feet deep, and are considered a deep bog (*Core Rulebook* 427). The depth increases to 15 feet in the center of the cavern. A strong current pulls toward the chasm to the north, requiring a DC 15 Swim check to move through the water.

Hazard: Despite the kami-influenced spring emptying into this pool, the waters have become tainted by the demons of the Well. Anyone venturing into the water is subjected to a strain of demon fever far more virulent than the norm.

GREATER DEMON FEVER
Type disease, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 22
Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day
Effect 1d6+2 Con damage, target must make a second Fort save or 2 points of the damage is drain instead; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

Creatures: Three omox demons occupy the pool, serving as sentinels for their demonic shogun Teikoku Sokai. The tainted water grants any demon fast healing 10 while immersed in it—a fact that makes the omoxes the undisputed masters of this primary cavern. The omoxes keep primarily to the deeper waters in the center of the cavern, and keep careful watch for any duplicity from the devils in the upper caverns (areas G7 through G10). The demons attack any interlopers traveling through their domain.

OMOXES (3) **CR 12**
XP 19,200 each
hp 162 each; fast healing 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 79)
TACTICS
During Combat Each omox takes turns slinging slime to entangle victims. The demons use *telekinesis* to pull opponents into the water, making frequent use of their liquid leap ability to close on foes and attempt to smother them. If necessary, they use *acid fog* and *stinking cloud* to block off exits and keep the PCs in the water.
Morale The omoxes rely on the fast healing properties of the pool to keep them going as they fight. If reduced to fewer

JADE REGENT

than 50 hit points, they temporarily retreat into the depths to restore themselves. Once one of the demons is slain, one of the others teleports to warn the hezrous in area **G5** before rejoining the battle.

G3. SIDE CAVERN

The ceiling of this sand-filled cavern is only 5 feet high. It is currently unoccupied.

G4. OVERLOOKS

A rocky escarpment runs the length of the cavern's western wall here, forming two ledges that overlook the fiendish pool from the south and west. These ledges stand 70 feet above the pool, opening into a series of side caverns.

G5. THE DEMONS' PLAYGROUND (CR 14)

Three tunnels open into this sunken cavern where a cloying mist seeps from the moist rocky walls, hiding most of the chamber floor. Fifty feet overhead, giant stalactites hang from the ceiling, resembling enormous teeth stretching within ten feet of the ground. Some of their ends have broken off, and now lie scattered amid the rubble at the edges of the mist.

Creatures: More loyal demon servants of Emperor Sokai live within this cramped hall, normally occupying themselves with some new scheme to spread the demonic taint of the water in area **G2**. The demons have determined that if they can corrupt and redirect the Eternal Spring so that it pours into the bay of Kasai, it will enable them to escape the Well of Demons and enter the Material Plane unchallenged. So far, however, the *suijin kami*'s influence continues to linger. Sokai has tasked the hezrous here with finding a way to entice the *kami* into manifesting so they can slay it and take over the island.

HEZROUS (3)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 145 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 62*)

TACTICS

Before Combat If warned of the PCs' approach, the hezrous all assume *gaseous form* to hide and drift among the noxious vapors in the center of the cavern, then circle behind each of the PCs to attack from surprise.

During Combat After returning to solid form, the hezrous attempt to grapple their opponents so they can nauseate them. They make liberal use of their *chaos hammer* and *unholy blight* abilities, even invoking them in mid-grapple, if necessary. If prevented from using this tactic, they rely on their claws and teeth to deal as much damage as possible.

Morale Any hezrou reduced to fewer than 50 hit points teleports to area **G6** to join Sokai.

G6. DEMONIC THRONE ROOM (CR 15)

The natural caverns give way to an opulent throne room, paved with golden tiles joined together by fist-sized rubies. A magnificent bower of silk cushions sits atop a dais at the far eastern end of the chamber.

All of the decorations in this chamber are the result of the Well's *mirage arcana* effect, which conceals the bare stone of the cavern.

Creature: This region of the Well is home to the tainted soul of Shogun Teikoku Sokai. In life, he ruled the First Kingdom of Minkai, known as the Teikoku Shogunate, taking the title of shogun rather than emperor. Sokai ushered in an age of unparalleled eugenics in Minkai, attempting to elevate certain bloodlines above all others—specifically, the five imperial families of Minkai, but most especially the Teikoku line. He subjugated lesser noble lines by seizing their property and enslaving their scions to enrich himself and his cronies. After Sokai lost his life in a violent uprising against his decadent rule, his most loyal followers transported his remains to the Imperial Shrine. When his soul passed into the Great Beyond, the powers of the Abyss welcomed him and reforged him into a nalfeshnee. Since then, Sokai has focused his efforts on returning to Minkai with the help of his demonic allies. If alerted to the PCs' presence, Sokai uses his *robe of blending* to appear as he did in life: an imposing Tian-Min man with the samurai's traditional *chonmage* hairstyle—shaved on top with an oiled topknot in back. Once in combat, however, he returns to his natural form, that of a bloated fiend with tiny black wings and a tusked boar's head.

To secure the Teikoku blessing, the PCs must either destroy Sokai and his demonic minions, or alternatively, they can negotiate with the nalfeshnee. In exchange for his blessing, Sokai requests that the PCs tear down the torii gate north of the Lake of Tears (area **F**). The demon claims this will allow him and his minions to vacate the crowded Well of Demons for the greater freedom of the open waters. While this is true, Sokai has an ulterior motive. If allowed to gain direct access to the Lake of Tears, he and his demons will ensure the destruction of the *suijin kami* at the Eternal Spring (area **E**), thereby allowing them to redirect its waters to spill down the hillside and into the bay of Kasai. This would expand Sokai's influence enough to create a direct portal to Golarion from the Abyss. Sokai does everything he can to convince the PCs that he only wants to access to the lake so he can put aside his rivalry with the devils, daemons, and Emperor Shojinawa's ghost. If necessary, Sokai offers to sweeten the deal by offering the PCs information about his rivals, which they can use to defeat them or force their acceptance of Ameiko as well. If the PCs rebuff his offer, Sokai roars and attacks.

THE EMPTY THRONE

**TEIKOKU SOKAI****CR 15****XP 51,200**Male advanced nalfeshnee (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 65, 294)**hp** 231**TACTICS**

During Combat Sokai immediately invokes his unholy nimbus, then casts *slow* and *unholy aura* to hinder any would-be attackers. He relies on *feblemind* and *greater dispel magic* to combat spellcasters and uses *Awesome Blow* against anyone who gets close to him, trying to knock them into the northern passageway and off the escarpment. Otherwise, he fights with tooth and claw.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Sokai teleports to the fiendish pool in area **G2**. After the waters heal him, he attempts to summon 1d4 hezrous and plans an ambush for the PCs when they return from the upper caverns. Sokai commands his hezrous to rise from the pool and grapple foes in the water while he casts *call lightning* to electrocute those in their grasp. Trapped in the Well of Demons, Sokai fights to the death.

Treasure: In addition to wearing his *robe of blending*, Sokai carries an *obsidian steed figurine of wondrous power* (his mount when he was a mortal samurai) and wears an ornate gold and jade ring worth 100 gp.

Development: If the PCs accept Sokai's offer to receive his blessing, deduct 2 Rebellion Points from their total.

G7. DEVIL'S BEACH

A sandy beach leads to a wide cavern where a passage climbs to the north.

This cavern marks the boundary of the region ruled by the handmaiden devil Amatatsu Maemi. She and the demon Sokai do not get along, fighting a proxy war through their hellish and abyssal allies to control this level of the Well. While Maemi and her erinyes have taken the high ground, the demons control the pool and waterfalls. More recently, the two have entered into a shaky truce as they consider the growing threat of rivals in the deeper levels of the Well.

G8. THE HANDMAIDEN'S HANDMAIDEN (CR 14)

High rock shelves line this narrow passageway, marred by a forest of stalactites and stalagmites that resemble nothing less than the narrow bars of a cage in the ebbing glow of the luminescent lichen growing upon them.

Creature: In life, Empress Amatatsu Maemi eschewed the company of men, always preferring women as her closest confidantes. Since becoming a handmaiden devil in Hell, Maemi has continued that trend, taking an evil outsider named Shiori Heikkaki as her own handmaiden and consort. Heikkaki is a shiko me, a Tian fiend personifying the corruption of death, and serves her empress as bodyguard, assassin, and lover. Heikkaki wears a featureless porcelain mask to conceal her fiendish features. Long, twisting horns grow from her head, and a hairless rat's tail pokes out from beneath the skirts of her blood-spattered kimono. Maemi has commanded Heikkaki to guard this approach to her territory. Heikkaki stands motionless here in her wind stance, making her effectively invisible while she studies the strongest-looking PC for 3 rounds in preparation for a death attack.

SHIORI HEIKKAKI CR 14

XP 38,400

Female advanced shiko me assassin 6 (*Jade*

Dragons and Hungry Ghosts 42)

LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 19, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +8 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 205 (19 HD; 13d10+6d8+110)

Fort +11, **Ref** +19, **Will** +11; +3 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge;

Immune ability damage, ability drain, cold, electricity, energy drain, negative energy

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *naginata** +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d8+6/19–20/x4 plus poison) or

2 claws +22 (1d4+5)

Ranged mwk composite shortbow +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d6+5/x3)

Special Attacks Black Lotus sorcery, death attack (DC 18), elemental stance, quiet death, sneak attack +3d6, true death (DC 21)

Sorcerer Spells Known (caster level 12th; concentration +18)

6th (4/day)—*mislead* (DC 22)

5th (6/day)—*dispel good*, *waves of fatigue*

4th (7/day)—*enervation*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 20), *unholy blight* (DC 20)

3rd (7/day)—*displacement*, *major image*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 19), *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day)—*blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *false life*, *ghoul touch* (DC 18), *misdirection* (DC 18), *spectral hand*

1st (8/day)—*chill touch* (DC 17), *disguise self*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 17), *ventriloquism*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 16), *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *touch of fatigue* (DC 16)

TACTICS

Before Combat Heikkaki casts *false life* every day and poisons her *naginata* with black lotus extract.

During Combat Heikkaki begins combat in wind stance by making a death attack with her poisoned *naginata*, then flies into the air to cast *displacement* and *dispel good*. She stays out of melee reach to attack foes with her spells, combining normal spellcasting with quickened spells such as *blindness/deafness* and touch spells delivered with *spectral hand*. If forced into melee combat, Heikkaki switches to fire stance and attacks with her *naginata*, casting *mislead* to maneuver around her opponents and make sneak attacks.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, Heikkaki casts quickened *false life* or *vampiric touch* to regain hit points. She fights to the death to keep intruders from trespassing in her mistress's domain.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 27, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +17; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 41

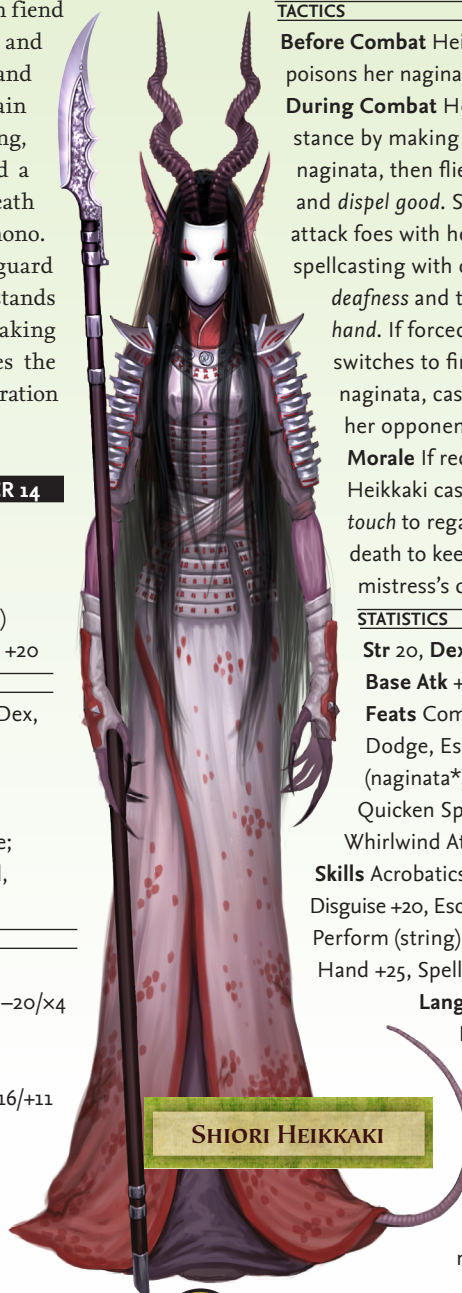
Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials⁵, Improved Critical (*naginata**), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quicken Spell, Spring Attack, Stand Still, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Acrobatics +25 (+29 when jumping), Bluff +20, Disguise +20, Escape Artist +25, Fly +24, Perception +20, Perform (string) +20, Sense Motive +18, Sleight of Hand +25, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +25

Languages Auran, Common, Ignan, Infernal, Minkaian, Tien

SQ hidden weapons, poison use

Combat Gear black lotus extract (3 doses); **Other Gear** +2 *silken ceremonial armor**, +1 *naginata**, masterwork composite shortbow (+5 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork samisen



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Black Lotus Sorcery Shiko me practice a dark form of magic called Black Lotus sorcery that depends on human blood and bone, black lotus powder, and the secretions of demons and oni for its efficacy. This blood magic allows Heikkaki to cast illusion and necromancy spells, as well as spells from the Evil cleric domain, as a 12th-level sorcerer. Cleric spells from the Evil domain are considered arcane spells for a Black Lotus sorcerer.

Elemental Stance (Su) Most shiko me can assume one of three elemental combat stances, but Heikkaki has mastered two of these stances. In fire stance, Heikkaki gains the burn ability (2d6, DC 21) and immunity to fire, and can cast *burning hands* as a spell-like ability at will (CL 7th). In wind stance, Heikkaki becomes effectively invisible while motionless, gains a fly speed of 80 feet (good maneuverability), and can cast *glitterdust* and *gust of wind* as spell-like abilities at will (CL 7th). Heikkaki may switch between stances as a swift action.

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

G9. THE DEVIL’S COURTYARD (CR 13)

Huge basalt columns hold up the ceiling of this mammoth courtyard. A balcony to the southwest and two elevated platforms to the east look down upon the room’s ivory-tiled floor. Imperial tapestries of green and gold hang from their edges. To the south, a decorative overlook provides a breathtaking view of a waterfall as it pours into the misty depths.

Empress Maemi has manipulated the Well’s *mirage arcana* effect here to make this cavern look like her favorite courtyard in the Imperial Palace where she once ruled. The raised platform and ledge to the east and the balcony to the west stand 40 feet above the floor, while the ceiling rises to a height of 80 feet.

Creatures: Maemi has garnered the support of an entire aerie of erinyes, taking these devils as trusted consorts. These winged devils prove exceedingly loyal guardians for their empress’s lair. They attack anyone who intrudes upon their domain, binding and dragging them before their mistress.

ERINYES (6) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 94 each (Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 75)

TACTICS

During Combat The erinyes use group tactics to bring down opponents, three of the devils targeting foes with their entangling ropes while the others fire flaming arrows or use their spell-like abilities. If entangled victims continue to struggle, the erinyes lift them to the ceiling to drop them to the floor. Dropped creatures take 8d6 points of damage from such a fall.

Morale Once half their number are slain, the remaining erinyes flee to area **G10** to join Maemi, using *greater teleport* if necessary to disengage from the fight.

G10. THE EMPRESS’S BOUDOIR (CR 15)

An ornate railing lines a stone balcony that opens into a small cavern. Delicate silk curtains hang from a forest of stalactites on the ceiling, and plush carpets cover the floor. A huge bed draped in satin sheets and a multitude of pillows occupies the rear of the chamber, behind a regal throne of carved jade. The stirring scent of jasmine and lotus blossoms fills the air.

The Well’s *mirage arcana* effect makes this cavern appear as a comfortable and elaborately furnished bedchamber. Amatatsu Maemi treats this entire rocky shelf as her boudoir, often stealing away here with Shiori Heikkaki or a favored erinyes when not overseeing their attacks against her demonic rivals.

Creatures: Empress Amatatsu Maemi sat on the Jade Throne of Minkai for over 200 years, though she remained childless for the entirety of her reign. She lobbied the powers of Hell to extend her life and beauty as long as possible, pledging her soul to them in return. Eventually, Maemi died childless and alone, and the *Amatatsu Seal* and the Jade Throne passed to another branch of the Amatatsu line. The devils of Hell held her to her contract, and accepted Maemi into their ranks, transforming her into a gylou, or handmaiden devil. Now granted a true eternity to perpetuate her evil, Maemi has gathered more handmaidens to her side, intent on returning to Kasai and retaking the Jade Throne for her own selfish pursuits.

Maemi sits upon her regal throne here, an illusory replica of Minkai’s Jade Throne, while two of her erinyes handmaidens attend to her every whim. If any of the erinyes from area **G9** escaped, they are also found here, eager to repay the PCs for their defeat. Maemi appears much as she did in life, courtesy of an *alter self* spell—a beautiful, ageless Tian-Min woman dressed in Minkai imperial regalia, though her head tentacles are visible, writhing about her elaborate coiffure. To receive the Amatatsu blessing from Onoko (see area **D4**), the PCs must slay Maemi and her erinyes playthings. Maemi offers to give the PCs the blessing herself if they spare her, however, but only to Ameiko or another female Amatatsu scion. She speaks of the glory that will return to the empire when an Amatatsu daughter once more rules Minkai, and promises to share her knowledge and advice with the new empress. Of course, Maemi wants nothing more than to sit on the Jade Throne again herself, and if the PCs accept her offer, she does everything in her power to manipulate and corrupt her descendant.

JADE REGENT

AMATATSU MAEMI

CR 14

XP 38,400

Handmaiden devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 86)

hp 187

Weaknesses vulnerability to ancestral weapons

TACTICS

During Combat Maemi casts *black tentacles* to occupy opponents on the ground while she flies into the air. She targets those unaffected by the *black tentacles* with *charm monster*, directing charmed victims to defend her before she closes to attack any remaining foes with her claws and tentacles. Upon grabbing a victim, she immediately transfers it into her tentacle cage to keep it occupied.

Morale If her current handmaidens fall in battle, Maemi attempts to summon more erinyes. Once they're all eliminated or if she's reduced to fewer than 60 hit points, she tries to capture a victim in her tentacle cage and hold it hostage to negotiate. If she has no other option, she fights to the death.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vulnerability to Ancestral Weapons

(Ex) Maemi is vulnerable to ancestral weapons of the Amatatsu family, such as the sword *Suishen* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #50 61). Against Maemi, *Suishen* functions as an *outsider (devil) bane* weapon.



MIU AND UME (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

Advanced erinyes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 75, 294)

hp 112 each

Treasure: Maemi's elaborate headdress functions as a *major crown of blasting*. In addition, her jewelry and rich clothing are worth a total of 5,000 gp.

Development: If the PCs accept Maemi's offer to receive her blessing, deduct 2 Rebellion Points from their total.

G11. LOWER FALLS

The waters of the fiendish pool in area G2 drain through this chasm, plunging 150 feet into area G12 on the lower level of the Well of Demons. The noise of the waterfall drowns out any other sounds. The omoxes in area G2 tend to avoid the falls, preferring not to antagonize the daemons and undead below, while the erinyes in area G9 keep a close eye on the chasm from their aerie.

G12. LOWER POOL

Behind the rushing falls, a small skiff floats in the water, tethered to a stone ledge. The ledge climbs the cavern wall to the east and west before ending at two overlooks about fifty feet above the basin. The pool stretches farther south, where a handful of small, sandy islets dot the water's surface.

The islands and lower pool of the Well belong to a group of daemons allied with the former emperor Sugimatu Nobinoru. The daemons care little for the conflict between the demons and devils of the upper caverns, focusing instead on corrupting the Imperial Shrine into a secret repository of souls they can abduct and usher into Abaddon. To accomplish this, the daemons have transmuted the demon-tainted water flowing down from area G2.

If they can replace the waters in the moat around the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns (area D) with this daemon-blighted water, it would alter Shizuru's conduit to trap the souls of anyone interred in the Imperial Shrine, allowing the daemons to harvest the souls at their leisure.

The ledge to the west ends before an *illusory wall* (DC 25 to disbelieve), placed there by the dread ghost of Emperor Shojinawa Ito (see area G19) to mark his territory and keep the incarnations of other former emperors from disturbing his plans.

A skiff belonging to the thanadaemon Nobinoru is moored against the north wall of the cavern. If the PCs board the skiff, it steers itself across the pool, bringing them directly to the daemon's landing (area G15) so that Nobinoru can speak with them.

Hazard: Just as in area G2, anyone venturing into the tainted water here is subjected to a disease—in this case a daemonic wasting plague.

DAEMONIC WASTING

Type disease, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 23

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d4 Con damage and 1d4 Cha damage; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

G13. ISLE OF SKULLS (CR 14)

A collection of stark-white skulls lies piled upon this sandy shore, each glowing from within with a soft white light, illuminating its unseeing eyes.

Creatures: Several hydrodaemons have taken over the lower pool, slipping between the islands as they work to transmute the tainted waters. Any living creature that crosses the pool or approaches the island quickly attracts their attention, as the daemons seek to harvest more souls.

ADVANCED HYDRODAEMONS (6) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 115 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 67, 292)

TACTICS

During Combat The hydrodaemons cast *summon monster V* to summon Large water elementals, then attack with a barrage of *acid arrows* and sleep spittle before using their glide ability to rise out of the water and pounce upon the PCs.

They grapple foes in an effort to hold them under the water and drown them, or use summoned elementals to create vortexes under anyone pulled into the water.

Morale The hydrodaemons fight to the death.

G14. CAVES

These caves are generally uninhabited and left alone by the daemons. If the PCs have not yet encountered them, there's a 30% chance of encountering one of the hydrodaemons from area **G13** in one of these caves at any given time.

G15. DAEMON'S LANDING

A long cavern extends off this wide sandy beach, supported by three columns of water-carved rock. A single passageway leads west.

If the PCs boarded Nobinoru's skiff in area **G12**, it brings them here, making landfall on the beach.

G16. MIASMA OF SOULS (CR 15)

This long cavern is deathly silent. To the north, a wall of eldritch blue light flickers from floor to ceiling.

Emperor Nobinoru has not bothered to manipulate the Well's *mirage arcana* effect to hide or cloak this cavern in any way, preferring the dead black natural stone.

Creatures: In life, Emperor Sugimatu Nobinoru survived to the venerable age of 110, resembling a withered ghoul more than a man when he finally passed away. His last act as emperor was to command his loyal samurai to put every remaining member of his family to death so none could ever surpass his accomplishments. Before all of his kindred were slain, one of the other imperial families stepped in and stopped the slaughter, but so decimated was the family line that it would be several centuries before another Sugimatu again sat upon the Jade Throne. Nevertheless, Nobinoru almost succeeded in

destroying his family, and his heinous crime brought his soul to Abaddon, where the fell powers of that realm both rewarded and punished him by transforming his soul into a thanadaemon.

Unlike the demons and devils of the upper caverns, Nobinoru has little desire to reclaim the Jade Throne or his former life. Instead, he hungers after the souls laid to rest in the Imperial Shrine. To that end, Nobinoru has opened a tiny conduit to Abaddon, connecting this cavern to a complex weave of necromantic energies on that plane called the miasma of souls. Once the moat around the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns has been tainted by the daemons, Nobinoru can use the power of the miasma of souls to trap the spirits of anyone laid to rest in the Imperial Shrine, enabling the thanadaemon to shunt those souls directly to Abaddon rather than to whatever realms they normally would have reached. To complete the miasma of souls' activation, Nobinoru needs a soul already attuned to one of the *Imperial Seals*. For months now, the thanadaemon has tried to lure the ghost of Emperor Shigure into the Well of Demons to complete the ritual, but Shigure's will remains too strong.

Nobinoru appears as a horned skeletal figure wearing a dark kimono and carrying an ornate staff. He is accompanied by his majordomo, a piscodaemon named Ikku. When the PCs arrive, Nobinoru eagerly turns his attention to them, for any soul attuned to an *Imperial Seal* will serve his purposes. He is more than willing to negotiate and avoids combat if possible, preferring to speak with the PCs telepathically. Nobinoru offers to give the PCs the Sugimatu blessing in exchange for a piece of one of their souls—a soul attuned to one of the *Imperial Seals*. The daemon refuses to explain how it will be used, but he assures them it will cause no permanent damage, nor obligate them in any way to him, either in life or death. In exchange for this gift, he offers not only his approval of Ameiko's ascension, but also the location of Emperor Shojinawa Ito (in area **G19**) is the keeper of Shigure's body, and directs the PCs to Ito's domain to the north.

If the PCs accept Nobinoru's offer, the daemon holds up his end of the bargain. A character that parts with a piece of her soul automatically gains two permanent negative levels (no save), but these negative levels can be removed normally with *restoration*. If the PCs refuse to meet Nobinoru's terms, Ikku attacks while Nobinoru telepathically contacts any remaining hydrodaemons in area **G13**, ordering them to cut off the PCs' retreat before attacking the PCs himself.

The conduit to the miasma of souls manifests as the wall of light to the north, pulsating with an overwhelming aura of necromancy and conjuration. The effects of the miasma extend throughout the entirety of this cavern.

JADE REGENT

Any living creature that falls below 0 hit points within this area is targeted with a *death knell* effect that transfers the dying creature's power to Nobinoru (DC 13 Will save negates). In addition, once per day, Nobinoru can use the miasma of souls to target a single individual with a *trap the soul* effect (caster level 20th, DC 22 Will save negates). If possible, Nobinoru attempts to learn such an individual's name during their conversation so he can include it when he invokes this power, thereby increasing the DC by +2.

IKKU CR 11

XP 12,800

Male advanced piscodaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 72, 292)

hp 159

TACTICS

During Combat Ikku casts *stinking cloud* before attacking opponents with his constricting tentacles and claws.

Morale Ikku fights to the death.

SUGIMATU NOBINORU CR 14

XP 38,400

Male advanced thanadaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 74, 292)

hp 202

Weaknesses vulnerability to ancestral weapons

TACTICS

During Combat Nobinoru activates the miasma's *trap the soul* power on the first round of combat. He then uses *air walk* to get above the PCs, summoning 1d4 hydrodaemons to aid him before launching *enervation* rays at anyone the daemons fail to bring down. He uses his fear gaze on any warriors who get close to him and makes full attacks with his energy-draining quarterstaff.

Morale Upon reaching 100 hit points or fewer, Nobinoru uses his soul crush ability to crush a cacodaemon's soul gem (see page 64 of *Bestiary 2*) to gain fast healing 15 for 15 rounds. Unable to leave the Well of Demons, Nobinoru fights to the death.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vulnerability to Ancestral Weapons (Ex) Nobinoru is vulnerable to ancestral weapons of the Sugimatu family, such as the *thundering blade of the House of Sugimatu* (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #52 61). Against Nobinoru, the *thundering blade* functions as an *outsider (daemon) bane* weapon.

Development: If Nobinoru is killed, his power no longer holds the portal to Abaddon open. The conduit to the miasma of souls closes, and the effects of the miasma end. If the PCs accept Nobinoru's offer to receive his blessing, deduct 2 Rebellion Points from their total.

G17. VESTIBULE OF THE UNDYING (CR 14)

Two exits lead from this large cavern, one to the southwest and another that rises fifteen feet to the northwest.

Creature: Emperor Shojinawa Ito was a master of both necromancy and illusion, commanding legions of undead raised from his own slain troops. He often disguised these undead soldiers to make them indistinguishable from his regular, living troops to unnerve and intimidate his enemies. When his own commanders questioned the rapid growth of his undying army, the emperor had them ritually slain to ensure their eternal unquestioned obedience as undead. One of these champions, a graveknight named Akatsuka Katsumoto, occupies this cavern, bound to defend his emperor in death as well as life. Katsumoto appears as a desiccated corpse wearing bloodstained o-yoroi armor of ancient make, his piercing eyes glowing red from within the shadows of his kabuto helm. He attacks any creatures who venture into his master's domain.

AKATSUKA KATSUMOTO CR 14

XP 38,400

Male human graveknight fighter 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 138)

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24

Aura sacrilegious aura (30 ft., DC 20)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 26 (+10 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 180 (13d10+104)

Fort +17, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12; +3 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +3, channel resistance +4, rejuvenation; **Immune** acid, cold, electricity, undead traits;

SR 25

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *katana** +28/+23/+18 (1d8+19/18–20 plus 3d6 acid) or mwk *wakizashi** +24/+19/+14 (1d6+10/18–20 plus 3d6 acid) or slam +22 (1d4+12)

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +20/+15/+10 (1d8+12/x3)

Special Attacks channel destruction, devastating blast (8d6 acid, DC 20), undead mastery (DC 20), weapon training (heavy blades +3, bows +2, light blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat Katsumoto unleashes a devastating blast on the first round of combat, then focuses his attacks against any obvious champion of faith (e.g., a cleric or paladin), seeking to eliminate that foe first. Against grouped opponents, he releases another devastating blast.

Morale As in life, Katsumoto fights until destroyed to protect his emperor, though he rejuvenates in 1d10 days unless his armor is completely destroyed as well.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 35

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dazzling Display, Disruptive, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative^B,

Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Mounted Combat^B, Ride-By Attack^B, Spellbreaker, Spirited Charge, Step Up, Strike Back, Toughness^B, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (katana*), Weapon Specialization (katana*)

Skills Climb +21, Intimidate +28, Perception +24, Ride +24

Languages Infernal, Minkaian, Tien

SQ armor training 3, phantom mount, ruinous revivification (acid)

Other Gear +2 *o-yoroi**, +2 *katana**, +1 *composite longbow* (+7 Str) with 20 arrows, masterwork wakizashi, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +2

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

G18. WINGS OF DARKNESS (CR 14)

This dark cavern is utterly silent, and shadows lie thick around the edges of the chamber. Sloping passageways descend to the east and west.

Creature: When Emperor Ito first manifested in the Well of Demons, he explored all of the Well's caverns in his ghostly form. In this chamber, he discovered the body of a void yai oni, bound here centuries earlier by a previous emperor. Ito used a foul necromantic ritual to transform the corpse of the fiend into an undead nightwing that would do his bidding once he broke free of the Imperial Shrine. The undead abomination lurks in the shadows near the 50-foot-high ceiling. It swoops down to attack any living creature entering the chamber, but it is unable to fly effectively in the tight space of the cavern, and must land at the end of every turn. The nightwing chases fleeing opponents throughout the Well (squeezing to exit this cavern), but is unable to leave the confines of the Well of Demons. It fights until destroyed.

NIGHTWING CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 195 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 203)

G19. THE EMPEROR'S RETREAT (CR 16)

Starry patterns grace the ceiling of this long cavern, dimly illuminating a shadow-filled hall of decorative sculptures below. A black throne rests against the west wall, below long banners depicting the Tien characters for sacrifice and death. A regal crown of black and gold sits on the throne's massive seat. A discernible chill fills the air, and the sour stench of death emanates from a long-dead corpse lying on the chamber floor.

The banners, crown, throne, and other decor in this room are all illusions, courtesy of the Well's *mirage arcana* effect. A passage to the south leads to area **G12**, hidden behind an *illusory wall* placed there by Ito. The only thing

that isn't an illusion is the decayed corpse on the floor—the bodily remains of Emperor Higashiyama Shigure.

Creature: Emperor Shojinawa Ito represents one of the greatest of Minkai's evil rulers. Descended from a bloodline steeped in necromancy and dark magics, his reign mars the history of the Jade Throne, prompting the keepers of imperial records in Kasai to all but purge his name from their scrolls. Only a handful of historians know that Emperor Ito unnaturally extended his life by becoming a lich, disguising himself with magic so no one would realize his undead nature. He even formed an undead army to defend him and expand Minkai's borders. Eventually, however, his people questioned his unnaturally long lifespan, and Ito finally met his end when the ancient sovereign dragon Daidorei, disguised as a peasant, traveled to the Imperial Palace and slew the undead emperor in a conflagration of magical fire. Daidorei also correctly divined the location of Ito's phylactery on the Mount of Seven Shrines, and destroyed it as well.

But Ito's legacy did not end with the destruction of his body and phylactery. Rather than craft a single phylactery, Ito had harnessed the energies of the Imperial Shrine to craft a second phylactery, splitting his soul as a safeguard against those who would try to remove him from the Jade Throne. The second phylactery could not return him as a lich, however, and his physical remains crumbled to ash, leaving only his spirit intact. Ito returned as a dread ghost, and because his second phylactery was hidden among his family's funerary urns in the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns, his spirit became confined to the Imperial Shrine. In time, the other imperial families removed the Shojinawa urns, dumping them into the Lake of Tears. Although Ito's phylactery still rests at the bottom of the lake, the sacred waters of the Eternal Spring drew his spirit into the Well of Demons, where he is now confined.

Over the centuries, Ito has searched for a way to break free of the Well of Demons and the Imperial Shrine so he can return to Minkai and reclaim the Jade Throne. But bodiless spirits cannot pass the torii gates ringing the island, so he's spent countless decades trying to lure visitors into the Well so he can possess them and depart the island inside a physical body. Ito thought he had found his ideal answer when the Jade Regent hurled Emperor Shigure's body into the Well, believing he could use Shigure's corpse to deceive Minkai and assume the throne again. But Ito hasn't yet been able to adapt his malevolence ability to possess a dead body, and he grows frustrated as his reanimation experiments continually end in failure.

When the PCs arrive, Ito manifests over Shigure's remains to defend them. Ito looks much as he did in life before his transformation into a lich. He still wears his imperial crown and regalia, but they are burnt and blackened, reflecting the manner of his death. Ito refuses

JADE REGENT

to give up Shigure's corpse until the PCs explain who they are and why they need the body. Once Ito realizes that Ameiko seeks to wrest the throne away from the Jade Regent, he agrees to part with Shigure's remains, but only if she (or another Amatsatsu scion) lets him possess her until they leave the island. In truth, Ito has no intention of returning Ameiko's body if she agrees. Instead, he plans to use her to put himself on the throne again. If the PCs refuse his offer, Ito attacks. If he gets the upper hand and defeats the PCs, he doesn't slay them, but rather focuses all of his attention on possessing Ameiko or another Amatsatsu scion with his malevolence ability and escaping the Well of Demons and Imperial Shrine.



SHOJINAWA ITO

SHOJINAWA ITO CR 16

XP 76,800

Male human dread ghost sorcerer 14 (*Advanced Bestiary* 72)

NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 22, flat-footed 27 (+4 armor, +9 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield)

hp 206 (14d6+155)

Fort +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +8, incorporeal, rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits; **SR** 24

OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +9 (16d6, Fort DC 26 half)

Special Attacks corrupting gaze (DC 26), it was meant to be 1/day, malevolence (DC 26), power over undead, spectral flame strike

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +23) 12/day—touch of destiny (+7)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +23) 3/day—spectral flame strike (DC 24)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 14th; concentration +23)

7th (4/day)—*finger of death* (DC 26)

6th (6/day)—*create undead*, *disintegrate* (DC 25), *mislead* (DC 27), *veil* (DC 27)

5th (8/day)—*break enchantment*, *cone of cold* (DC 24), *feeblemind* (DC 24), *shadow evocation* (DC 26), *waves of fatigue*

4th (8/day)—*animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 23), *enervation*, *freedom of movement*, *illusory wall* (DC 25), *phantasmal killer* (DC 25)

3rd (8/day)—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 23), *protection from energy*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 22), *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day)—*acid arrow*, *blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *blur*, *false life*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st (9/day)—*alarm*, *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 20), *shield*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 19), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 21), *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 19)

Bloodline Destined

TACTICS

Before Combat Ito casts *blur*, *false life*, *mage armor*, and *shield* before any fight, doing so from within the safety of the cavern walls or floor, if necessary.

During Combat Ito uses his spectral *flame strike* and spells such as *cone of cold*, *fireball*, *scorching ray*, and *waves of fatigue* to target massed foes. Against individuals, he casts spells like *bestow curse*, *disintegrate*, *enervation*, *finger of death*, and *phantasmal killer*, or attacks with his corrupting touch. If his enemies seem able to hit him with any frequency, he casts *mirror image* and uses *vampiric touch* along with his corrupting touch to replenish his lost

hit points. If Ito seems too powerful for your PCs, reduce the speed with which he attacks them. Have him waste every other round, as necessary, to convey the emperor's arrogance and disdain for his opponents.

Morale Ito fights until destroyed, knowing full well that he'll re-form in just a few days. Of more concern to him is the loss of Emperor Shigure's corpse, which he strives at all costs to protect as a bargaining chip. The only way to permanently destroy Ito's ghost is to destroy his second phylactery, a funerary urn that lies at the bottom of the Lake of Tears (area F).

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 28

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Expanded Arcana* (2), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]), Spell Focus (illusion), Toughness

Skills Bluff +18, Fly +19, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +22, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +19

Languages Draconic, Minkaian, Tien

SQ bloodline arcana (gain luck bonus to saves when casting personal-range spells), fated (+3)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Power Over Undead (Su) Ito gains Command Undead as a bonus feat, and can channel energy 12 times per day, but only to use that feat (DC 26).

Spectral Flame Strike (Sp) Ito can cast *flame strike* three times per day as a spell-like ability. Unlike normal *flame strike*, however, the spectral flames are infused with negative energy. Half the damage is fire damage, but the other half is negative energy damage and is therefore not subject to fire resistance.

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

Development: If the PCs accept Ito's offer to receive his blessing, deduct 3 Rebellion Points from their total.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE EMPERORS

Once the PCs have recovered Emperor Shigure's remains and defeated or gained the blessings of the denizens of the Well of Demons, they can return to the Shrine of the Heavenly Sovereigns. Emperor Shigure is true to his word, and gives Ameiko his blessing if the PCs recovered his body from the Well. If the PCs defeated Amatatsu Maemi, the trumpet archon Amatatsu Onoko gives her blessing as well. In addition, once the PCs properly inter his remains in the Imperial Mausoleum, Emperor Shigure rewards them with a potent spiritual elixir called *seishinru* (see page 61) to aid them in their coming conflict with the Jade Regent. He also tells the PCs to "look behind the dragon" to find the treasure vaults below the Imperial Palace

(areas **H16** through **H21**), where they should seek out the sovereign dragon Teikono. According to Shigure, Teikono is honor-bound to serve the Jade Throne, and the PCs might be able to secure his aid as well.

If the PCs did not bargain with the inhabitants of the Well of Demons for their blessings, they can now contact the ancestral spirits of the Shojinawa, Sugimatu, and Teikoku families, thus gaining the blessing from all five imperial families. The ancestors have one final task for Ameiko and the PCs, however. With four out of the five imperial families of Minkai destroyed, the new emperor must protect the lines of succession to the Jade Throne. The families' *Imperial Seals* were stolen when the Five Storms eradicated the family lines, but the ancestors can still sense them, hidden somewhere deep beneath the Imperial Palace. If the PCs can recover these lost seals, the four extinct imperial families can be rebuilt by using the seals to invest new scions with the right to rule Minkai.

Development: Once all of the inhabitants of the Well of Demons have been destroyed, the waters of the Eternal Spring eventually wash away the fiendish taints in the pools within the Well, and the Imperial Shrine returns to normal. Although no demons, devils, or other fiends physically remain within the Well of Demon, an evil presence can still be detected within its caverns—the spirits of Minkai's evil emperors. With the Imperial Shrine again in balance, Shizuru's conduit once more reestablishes contact with the spirits of the goodly emperors, and anyone in possession of an *Imperial Seal* can once again commune with them at the Imperial Shrine. If the PCs failed to get one or more of the blessings from the ancestors of the five imperial families, deduct 1 Rebellion Point from their total for each missed blessing.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully recover Emperor Shigure's remains and lay them properly to rest, thus restoring the equilibrium of the Imperial Shrine, award them 38,400 XP and +1 Rebellion Point.

PART THREE: HONORING THE FUTURE

Once Ameiko obtains approval for her ascension, the PCs can finally turn their attention to deposing the Jade Regent. The rebel army assembled by the PCs in "Tide of Honor," commanded by Hirabashi Jiro and Sikutsu Itsuru, approaches Kasai, and the Jade Regent sends his Typhoon Guard to meet them outside the city. News of the arrival of a rightful Amatatsu heir to the Jade Throne spreads quickly through streets of the imperial capital, and the people of Kasai rise up against the Jade Regent's rule. This adventure assumes that the PCs were able to build a strong alliance between the different factions in "Tide of Honor," such that the Jade Regent pulls the majority of his forces out of the city and the Imperial Palace to face the rebel army. If this is not the case, you may want to increase the number of guards

JADE REGENT

in Kasai and inside the palace, though you should be aware that this will make the PCs' task even more difficult.

Against this backdrop of rebellion, the PCs must secure the Jade Throne for Ameiko. With the knowledge gained from Emperor Shigure and the imperial ancestors, the PCs will likely want to seek out the treasury below the palace along the way in search of the stolen *Imperial Seals*. These potent artifacts could greatly enhance the PCs' chances against the oni. The PCs face the choice of seeking out these vaults first, or heading directly to the throne room to confront the Jade Regent. Either way, they face a harrowing series of challenges as they proceed.

ENTERING THE PALACE

The Imperial Palace is more than just a stately residence for the emperor of Minkai—it is also a fortified, multi-level castle, designed with a number of tactical and magical defenses built into the grounds of the palace. A series of moats, bridges, and causeways controls access to the Imperial Palace, all under the watchful eye of archers in the palace and surrounding towers.

It is up to the PCs how they wish to enter the palace. Openly approaching the castle through the outer gate, parks, and causeways to the palace's main gate opens the PCs to attack from the guards posted to defend these areas. The PCs might try to enter the castle stealthily, but the guards are watchful, and the Typhoon commanders can see invisible creatures. A DC 10 Swim check is required to swim any of the moats surrounding the palace, and DC 30 Climb checks are necessary to scale the castle's smooth walls.

Those using magic to bypass the normal approaches to the palace face a different array of countermeasures. While nothing prevents PCs from flying over the palace grounds, the Typhoon guards can also take to the air, and guard patrols are quickly ordered to attack such intruders in the air while archers target them from the palace's windows and towers. While nothing blocks teleportation or extradimensional travel into or within the palace walls, the Imperial Palace is warded against spells and effects of the scrying subschool, making teleportation a risky means of gaining entrance.

Once inside the palace, the PCs will have to face a series of guardians and traps. It is up to them how they move through the palace, and whether they try to avoid the guards or defeat the palace's defenders before their meeting with the Jade Regent. Because of the large number of guards present in the palace, try not to throw all of them at the PCs at once. The PCs are here to fight the Jade Regent, not get bored slogging through his lower-level guards. Remember that most of the guards are selfish oni who won't necessarily rush to their fellows' aid immediately. If the entire palace is alerted to the PCs' presence, the guards can respond in waves, interspersed with other encounters to keep things interesting. Regardless of the PCs' actions, the Jade Regent and his allies should

probably remain in the throne room (area **H33**). To claim Ameiko's title, she and the PCs must come to the Jade Throne, and the Jade Regent is more than willing to wait for her there rather than risk falling prey to an ambush.

As they explore the Imperial Palace, the PCs might be tempted to loot it for treasure, but they should keep in mind that most of the palace's riches belong to the emperor of Minkai—meaning that if they are successful, that wealth should belong to their friend Ameiko. As a result, many of the palace's rooms do not have any treasure listed, even though those rooms likely contain a wide variety of valuable furnishings and decorations, as befits the palace of an emperor. Of course, any treasure or gear carried by the palace's oni defenders may be looted by the PCs as normal.

H. THE IMPERIAL PALACE

The grounds of the Imperial Palace constitute an entire island dominated by a massive, man-made plateau upon which the fortified palace rests. Two moats separate the island from the rest of Kasai, and are kept free of boat traffic by aggressive patrols of the Typhoon Guard. Within the grounds themselves, the island includes both a public marketplace and several interconnected parks. The people are granted access to these locations during the day, but the guard maintains an unyielding curfew at night.

Hi. MARKET BRIDGES

A stone bridge crosses the lower moat of the castle grounds, leading to a vast marketplace somewhat overshadowed by the massive plateau supporting the nearby Imperial Palace.

These two bridges connect the imperial grounds to the rest of the city, bridging the moat that separates the palace from the more affluent neighborhoods of Kasai.

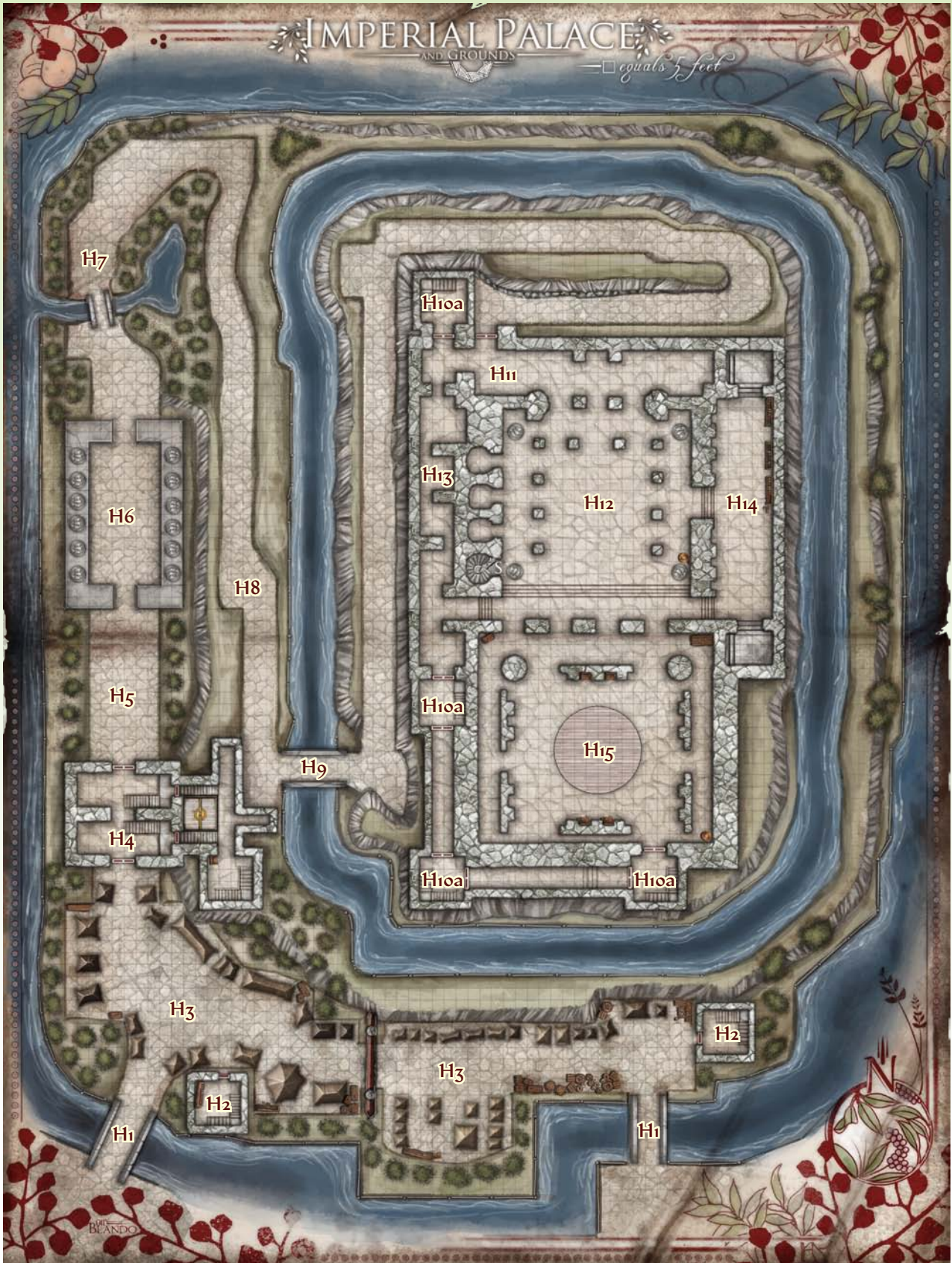
H2. GUARD TOWERS (CR 14)

This small stone tower bears a lacquered roof supported by wooden beams. Green banners depicting the imperial dragon of Minkai hang from the upper stories.

Two of these 20-foot-tall towers overlook the Imperial Market. A wooden stairway connects to the lookout post on the second floor, which is equipped with arrow slits. The towers' outer doors are made of strong wood and barred from the inside (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

Creatures: Four Typhoon guards are posted in each of these small towers. Two of these guards usually remain in the lookout post while the other two stay on the ground floor, watching over the outer door. During the day, there is a 50% chance that the latter two guards are patrolling the market outside (see area **H3**).

THE EMPTY THRONE



JADE REGENT

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H3. IMPERIAL MARKET (CR 14)

Dozens of open-air stalls and tents crowd the edges of this main thoroughfare, following a long path between the two moats surrounding the Imperial Palace. A red torii gate stands in the middle of the marketplace.

During the day, street vendors crowd this avenue, offering everything from food and clothing to jewelry and fine-crafted weapons to palace residents and commoners alike. At night, however, the marketplace lies deserted, dark, and silent under the watchful eyes of the tower guards.

Creatures: While the market is open, guards routinely patrol the stalls of the market, typically shaking down vendors for extra coin or some merchandise that catches their eye. The locals bear these indignities without complaint, as many who have voiced their dissent have been led into the guard towers never to be heard from again. During the day, there is a 50% chance of encountering a patrol of four Typhoon guards (two from each of market's guard towers) in the market.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H4. OUTER GATE (CR 14)

A stone gatehouse and matching tower block the way forward, the massive gates sealed from within. Several birds roost atop a bell tower rising from the middle of the structure.

This small gatehouse controls the flow of people from the marketplace to the parks outside the palace and also serves as the outermost defense of the approach to the castle. To the east, wooden stairways provide access to a 30-foot-tall bell tower and 20-foot-tall guard tower. When closed, the wooden gates are barred from the inside (hardness 5, hp 40, Break DC 30).

Creatures: Four Typhoon guards typically stand watch here, ushering visitors through during the day and guarding the gate at night. The guards use the bell tower to capture the attention of market-goers during the day to make public announcements to make. If attacked, the guards ring the bells to warn the palace of an assault.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H5. SATOMI PARK

Peach trees line this thoroughfare leading beyond the outer gate. To the north, a gentle hill climbs its way to a park filled with stone monuments.

The first of three parks within the grounds of the Imperial Palace, this garden was named for Empress Amatatsu Satomi, who favored the shade and refreshing fruit of the meticulously groomed peach trees here when she wished to escape the heat of the summer sun.

H6. MONUMENT PARK (CR 14)

Brightly lacquered statues watch over this wide, tiled plaza from atop stone pedestals. Carved in the likeness of samurai warriors, each stands at attention with a katana and wakizashi.

Emperor Teikoku Kenshiro commissioned this park as a tribute to the many samurai who have served the Jade Throne since the founding of Minkai. Small placards at the base of each statue identify the name of the Minkai hero or legend it represents.

Creatures: The 12 statues are ceramic constructs crafted to defend the Imperial Palace. These advanced terra-cotta soldiers are armed with katanas and wakizashi, and gain Exotic Weapon Proficiency (katana) as a bonus feat. During the day, the soldiers remain still so residents of the palace may enjoy the park. At night, however, or if the alarm bell in area H4 has been rung, the soldiers animate and attack any intruders in this area, unless they are accompanied by Typhoon guards. A character in possession of the *Amatatsu Seal* (or other *Imperial Seal*) can make a DC 15 Charisma check to command the soldiers and order them to halt their attack, but they will not leave their posts in the park.

ADVANCED TERRA-COTTA SOLDIERS (12)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 80 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 262, 290)

Melee katana* +10/+5 (1d8+3/18–20) and wakizashi* +10 (1d6+1/18–20)

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

H7. TAIRAKA PARK

A wooden bridge crosses a shallow creek in the center of this well-maintained park. To the east, the creek widens into a small pond surrounded by cattails and long-stemmed flowering plants.

Empress Sugimatu Yoshie instituted this natural park hundreds of years ago. A devoted gardener, she often looked after this park, and legends claim that the plants she grew here granted a variety of healing effects.

H8. CAUSEWAY

The road to the palace takes on a noticeably steeper grade here, rising as it doubles back toward the outer gate. This steep hill has seen the deaths of thousands of soldiers, both defenders falling back to Imperial Palace and those attackers cut down by the archers defending its walls.

H9. ENPERASHII BRIDGE (CR 15)

An arched bridge crosses an elevated moat here. Surrounded by three towers, it opens onto a wide road that winds up to the Imperial Palace following the plateau's ledge.

This well-defended bridge lies within the field of fire of archers in three guard towers (areas **H4** and **H10**). It provides the only access to the Imperial Palace from the castle's surrounding grounds.

Creatures: Two earth yai, oni who have taken stone giant form, stand on the far side of the bridge. The oni are invisible, and they defend the bridge against any invaders approaching the palace.

EARTH YAI (2) CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Pathfinder Adventure Path #53 88

NE Large outsider (giant, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+6 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 184 each (16d10+96); regeneration 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +16, **Ref** +11, **Will** +14

SR 24

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee greatclub +23/+18/+13/+8 (2d8+12) or
2 slams +23 (1d10+8)

Ranged stony missile +21 (3d6 plus Awesome Blow)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks spiky skin

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +18)

Constant—fly

At will—darkness, invisibility (self only), passwall (stone only)

3/day—spike stones (DC 16), stone shape, stone tell

1/day—earthquake, repel metal or stone, transmute mud to

rock (DC 17), transmute rock to mud (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat The earth yai cast *earthquake* to collapse the bridge, dropping attackers into the moat and burying them beneath the rubble. If enemies attempt to fly over the moat, the yai cast *repel metal or stone* to drive them back, and fire stony missiles at any remaining foes.

Morale If one of the earth yai is slain, the other takes to the air and flees the city.

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 22, **Con** 23, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 41

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Precise Shot, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Pinpoint Targeting, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot

Skills Bluff +21, Fly +27, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +21 (+29 in rocky terrain); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in rocky terrain

Languages Common, Giant

SQ change shape (Medium or Large humanoid; *alter self* or *giant form I*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Spiky Skin (Ex) An earth yai may grow spikes from its stony skin at will as a free action. These spikes are treated as armor spikes that deal 1d10 points of damage.

Stony Missile (Su) As a swift action, an earth yai can fire an incredibly dense stone from its third eye. This attack has a range of 200 feet, with no range increment, and deals 3d6 points of bludgeoning damage. Upon striking the target, the stone immediately makes an Awesome Blow attempt against the target using the earth yai's CMB.

Treasure: Each of the earth yai is carrying 2,000 gp worth of coins, gems, and jewelry stolen from the Imperial Palace. In addition, one of the earth yai carries a *fire elemental gem*.

IMPERIAL PALACE GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor of the Imperial Palace normally receives guests and petitioners on a daily basis, either seeking an audience with the Jade Regent or reporting for duty. Since the arrival of Ameiko and the PCs in Minkai, however, Anamurumon has forbidden anyone from visiting, turning away foreign dignitaries and supplicants alike. Within the palace halls, the servants are no longer allowed to leave for fear someone may assume their identities to gain access to the palace. The oni have already subjugated most of the servants with charms or intimidation, confining them to their quarters when they aren't otherwise occupied with their daily routines.

Most of the chambers on the ground floor are 20 feet high, unless indicated differently in their description. Doors are made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23). *Continual flames* in shaded lamps provide light in most rooms and corridors.

H10. PALACE TOWERS (CR 14)

Four guard towers are incorporated into the castle's walls. These towers are 50 feet tall and rise a full three stories, all connected by wooden stairs. The lookout posts on the third floor of the towers are only accessible by ladders on the second floor. The tower doors are made of strong

JADE REGENT

wood, and those leading into the palace proper are barred from the inside (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25).

Creatures: Four Typhoon guards are usually posted in each of these towers. Usually, at least half their number take up archery positions in the lookout posts (**H10c**), while the others guard the towers' lower levels (50% chance of being in either area **H10a** or **H10b**).

TYPHOON GUARDS (4) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H11. ENTRY HALL (CR 16)

Jade tiles decorate the dark stone walls of this long hallway, hung with banners, tapestries, and small shelves filled with porcelain urns and vases. Three large doorways open to the south, while a smaller adjoining passage leads west.

The main doors to the palace are made of strong wood and are barred with iron (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 30).

Creatures: Four clockwork golems were brought to the palace centuries ago by an adventurous member of the Amatatsu family, who found the constructs in the clockwork necropolis of Pan Majang and exorcised the evil spirits possessing them. The golems are stationed here to hold the main doors against intruders. One of the golems stands near the entrance to the guard tower (area **H10a**), while the others maintain positions to the east near the entrances to the inner sanctum (area **H12**).

CLOCKWORK GOLEMS (4) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 118 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 137)

TACTICS

During Combat Two of the golems seal off the ends of the corridor with their wall of gears ability while the others charge forward to grapple and grind opponents. When the two attacking golems are destroyed in a death burst of shrapnel, the remaining golems re-form and attack.

Morale The golems fight until destroyed.

H12. INNER SANCTUM

Massive wooden pillars support the ceiling above this immense chamber. Four statues stand in the corners of the room, reaching nearly as high as the ceiling, each depicting a different creature—a brightly scaled carp, a sly fox, a leaping hare, and a coiled imperial dragon. Small flights of steps provide access to corridors to the south and east, while three alcoves extend into the west wall.

The alcoves to the west contain small shrines dedicated to three of the most popular gods in Minkai: Daikitsu,

goddess of agriculture and rice; Shizuru, goddess of ancestors and the sun; and Tsukiyo, god of jade and the moon, represented by the statues of their sacred animals—the fox, the carp, and the hare.

The fourth statue, the dragon, stands in the southwest corner before a secret door. Emperor Shigure hinted at the existence of this door when he gave the PCs his blessing. The door opens upon a spiraling stairway leading to the vaults below the palace (area **H16**), and can be located with a DC 30 Perception check (or automatically, if the PCs follow Shigure's clue and specifically look behind the statue).

H13. THE WINDING GALLERY

Priceless art adorns the walls and alcoves of this series of small parlors. Exits lead both north and south.

The emperors of Minkai display a small portion of the imperial art collection within this hall, often changing out the exhibits with each change in the season.

H14. IWAKU GALLERY (CR 12)

Velvet ropes close off this long gallery. It appears to be undergoing renovation, as several tapestries, urns, and decorative statues lie piled upon the floor.

The wall hangings and sculptures filling this long hall normally tell the history of Minkai and the various imperial families who have held the Jade Throne. With the Jade Regent's ascendancy, however, Anamurumon has roped off the gallery and started removing these priceless relics to make room for the trappings of a new age.

Traps: Anamurumon forbade the servants from entering this gallery, and placed two magical tapestries from the House of Withered Blossoms here to ensure they would obey his command. The tapestries hang at either end of the gallery beside the stairways leading to the upper levels (area **H22**). All of the oni in the palace know to avoid gazing at the tapestries, as anyone looking upon them triggers the traps, which summon the shades of multiple dire tigers into the hall. They immediately attack anyone before them.

SHADOW TIGER TRAPS (2) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (looking at the tapestry); **Reset** automatic (10 minutes)

Effect spell effect (*shades* [*summon monster VIII*]), summons 1d4+1 quasi-real fiendish dire tigers for 17 rounds, deals only 80% damage to nonbelievers, DC 28 Will save to disbelieve [if interacted with]

H15. TRAINING HALL (CR 16)

An elevated wooden stage fills the center of this large ballroom, approximately two feet off the floor. Several exotic weapon displays line the partitioned walls around the stage, and the musty smell of sweat hangs heavy in the air.

The weapon racks around the perimeter of the room contain a bewildering variety of weapons, mostly monk weapons and more exotic arms, all of masterwork quality. You can use this area to introduce your players to many new exotic Eastern weapons (such as those found in *Ultimate Combat*), but the weapons are all part of the Imperial Palace's collection.

Creatures: The chamber belongs to one of Anamurumon's most loyal supporters among the Five Storms, a kuwa oni named Sudoshi Sento. A master of the martial arts, Sento devoted his time away from the Forest of Spirits into developing a fighting style called the Iron Tempest, based on his own personal philosophy of measured hate and superiority. Obsessed with the sensations of physical exertion and pain, Sento created a fighting school within the Imperial Palace, where he seeks to twist and pervert the minds of his students, turning them into nothing but devoted killing machines for their sensei.

Sento and his followers abhor the raging conflict outside the city, viewing war on the battlefield as a crude and inefficient means of personal combat unworthy of their participation. When the PCs arrive, Sento and four Iron Tempest monks are all engaged in spars with one another, but Sento pauses their workout when presented with visitors to the school. He greets the PCs by complimenting them on the honorable choice they've made to test themselves individually against the Iron Tempest. He then suggests they start by dueling with his students in hand-to-hand combat one at a time to take their measure. If the PCs refuse the honor of such a challenge, he directs his students to surround them and attack as one.

Initially, Sento holds himself aloof from the fighting, declining to participate unless someone attacks him directly. He prefers to stand aside and assess the performance of his students before committing himself to the fray. But once the PCs slay or incapacitate at least two of his students, Sento leaps into the middle of combat to show them what a true master can do. If anyone offers to personally duel Sento alone, he calls off his students and has them stand aside while he meets the challenge. If the challenger defeats Sento, the remaining monks scatter in fear.

SUDOSHI SENTO

CR 14

XP 38,400

Male kuwa oni monk (martial artist) 12 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 208, *Ultimate Combat* 59)

LE Medium outsider (human, native, oni, shapechanger)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +20

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 25, flat-footed 22 (+3 armor, +7 Dex, +4 monk, +4 Wis, +1 natural)

hp 195 (17 HD; 5d10+12d8+114); **regeneration** 5 (acid or fire)

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities improved evasion, physical resistance* (2 points); **Immune** exhaustion, fatigue; **SR** 15

OFFENSE

Speed 80 ft.; fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee +2 *unarmed strike* +24/+19/+14 (2d8+11/19–20) or

+2 *flurry of blows* +25/+25/+20/+20/+15/+10 (2d8+11/19–20)



SUDOSHI SENTO

JADE REGENT

Special Attacks exploit weakness*, flurry of blows, pain points*, stunning fist (14/day, DC 21)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +8)

3/day—*darkness*, *fly*

1/day—*charm person* (DC 14), *deep slumber* (DC 16), *invisibility* (self only)

TACTICS

Before Combat Sento casts *fly* before fighting to maximize his movement options.

During Combat On the first round of combat, Sento attempts to demoralize his opponents with his Intimidate skill. Once he enters combat, Sento uses his flurry of blows to attack any enemies within reach, spending a swift action each round to exploit an enemy's weakness. Against a single foe, Sento uses Spring Attack to make a stunning fist attack and attempt to stagger his opponent, before closing in to attack with flurry of blows.

Morale If seriously injured, Sento uses a withdraw action to fly upward, quickly casting *darkness* to hide until his regeneration restores his lost hit points. Defeat is inconceivable to Sento, so he fights until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 24, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +24 (+26 bull rush); **CMD** 46 (48 vs. bull rush)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Deflect Arrows, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Unarmed Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Staggering Critical, Stunning Fist, Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +24 (+56 when jumping), Bluff +16, Disguise +16, Fly +15, Intimidate +23, Perception +20, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +17, Use Magic Device +10

Languages Minkaian, Tien

SQ change shape (any human; *alter self*), extreme endurance*, fast movement, high jump, maneuver training, martial arts master*

Other Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *belt of physical perfection* +2, *bracers of armor* +3, *monk's robe*

* See *Ultimate Combat*.

IRON TEMPEST MONKS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Human fighter 3/monk (hungry ghost monk) 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 110)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 20, flat-footed 21 (+2 armor, +3 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 monk, +1 Wis, +3 natural)

hp 98 each (11 HD; 3d10+8d8+41)

Fort +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10; +1 vs. fear, +2 vs. enchantment

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 *unarmed strike* +15/+10 (1d10+5/19–20) or

+1 *flurry of blows* +15/+15/+10/+10/+5 (1d10+5/19–20)

Special Attacks flurry of blows, life funnel*, punishing kick* (8/day, DC 16), steal *ki**

TACTICS

Before Combat The monks drink *potions of barkskin* and *shield of faith* prior to combat.

During Combat Sento orders his students to attack the strongest-looking opponents first, urging them to gang up while he deals with enemy spellcasters. Whenever possible, the monks flank with each other and make punishing kick attacks to knock enemies prone. The monks use their steal *ki* and life funnel abilities to replenish their *ki* pools and hit points as needed.

Morale The monks battle to the death, pausing only to drink their *potions of cure moderate wounds* before fighting on.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +15 (+17 grapple); **CMD** 33 (35 vs. grapple)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Punishing Kick*, Step Up, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +17 (+33 when jumping), Climb +12, Intimidate +10, Perception +15, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +16

Languages Minkaian, Tien

SQ armor training 1, fast movement, high jump, *ki* pool (5 points, magic), maneuver training, slow fall 40 ft., still mind

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (CL 6th; 2), *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potions of shield of faith* (CL 6th; 2);

Other Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *belt of giant strength* +2, *bracers of armor* +2

* See the *Advanced Player's Guide*.

THE LOWER HALLS

This portion of the castle lies deep within the raised plateau supporting the Imperial Palace, and contains the vaults of the imperial treasury. While the vaults still hold much of value, they have been depleted far below their normal levels since the Jade Regent took the throne. Except where otherwise noted, the ceilings reach a height of 40 feet. The doors are always locked and made of iron (hardness 10, hp 60, Break DC 28, Disable Device DC 28). Permanent *continual flames* fully illuminate each room and hallway.

HI6. STONE LANDING

The spiral steps give way to a short stone landing before a set of iron double doors to the south. To the north, steps descend to a ten-foot-deep alcove, its rough alabaster walls decorated with frescoes of imperial dragons and menacing samurai.

The palace's more obvious treasure vaults lie behind the double doors to the south, but a secret door (DC 30 Perception check to notice) in the mouth of the largest dragon fresco along the northwestern wall leads to the palace's hidden treasuries. Only the Jade Regent and Anamurumon carry the keys, which fit between the dragon's claws. Both keys must be turned simultaneously to open the door, though two DC 30 Disable Device checks or a single *knock* spell can gain entry as well.

H17. WARDROBE VAULT

Dozens of elaborate costumes and armored suits hang from wooden racks and mannequins throughout this chamber. Many appear far more decorative or ceremonial than functional.

The emperors of Minkai have created and collected a number of priceless robes, kimonos, headdresses, and armors over the years. Many of these outfits date back centuries, and are preserved here for their historical value.

H18. JADE VAULT

Hundreds of gemstones lie separated into individual piles throughout this vault. Rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and other more exotic stones create a scintillating array of colors.

This vault contains all of the gemstones in the imperial treasury. Most of the gems are of lesser value, but a few larger jewels can be found here as well.

H19. CATWALK (CR 14)

A narrow catwalk winds along the wall of this odd-shaped chamber. Below, a deep pit falls away into darkness.

Trap: Midway along this narrow walkway, a trap awaits the unwary. When it activates, multiple ghostly hands emerge from the walls, attacking and shoving intruders off the catwalk and onto the poisoned spikes in the pit below.

HANDS OF THE MANY CR 14

XP 38,400

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger visual (*true seeing*); **Duration** 17 rounds; **Reset** automatic (1 round); **Bypass** hidden lock (DC 25 Perception to locate, DC 30 Disable Device to open)

Effect spell effect (multiple *forceful hands*, CL 17th, bull rush into poisoned pit trap, CMB +26); 50-ft.-deep pit (5d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +20 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each plus poison [shadow essence]); multiple targets (one *forceful hand* for each creature on the catwalk)

H20. GOLD VAULT (CR 16)

Thousands of golden coins fill this chamber, some scattered and others neatly stacked upon the floor. Among them, golden scepters, crowns, and other jewelry also glitter in the light.

This vault contains all of the gold in the palace treasury. Besides the vast array of coins, the vault contains several items of gold jewelry, as well as other more mundane items such as place settings, all of gold.

Trap: A nefarious trap also runs throughout this chamber. When anyone passes the initial alcove to enter the vault without using the hidden bypass, the iron doors shut and lock themselves as the floor begins to thrum with electricity, frying anyone still in contact with it.

LIGHTNING BOLT GALLERY TRAP CR 16

XP 76,800

Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Duration** 1d4 rounds; **Reset** none;

Bypass hidden lock (DC 25 Perception to locate, DC 30 Disable Device to open)

Effect spell effect (heightened *lightning bolt*, 8d6 electricity damage, DC 22 Reflex save for half); multiple targets (all creatures in area H20)

H21. IMPERIAL VAULT (CR 15)

Several columns support the ceiling of this half-sunken chamber. Pairs of stone sentinels stand in alcoves lining the north and south walls, watching over the treasure heaped across the floor.

The impressive art in this vault, with several pieces dating back to the founding of Minkai and beyond, would command a hefty price from any collector.

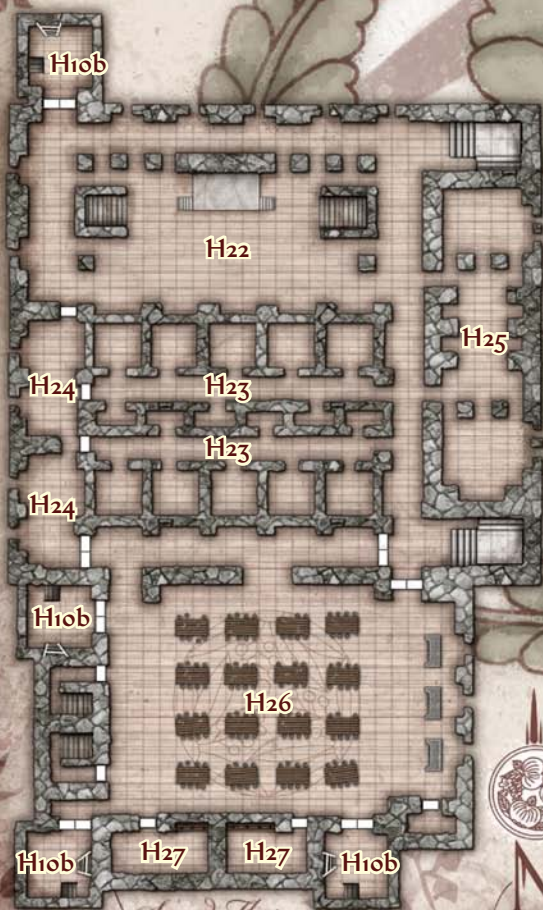
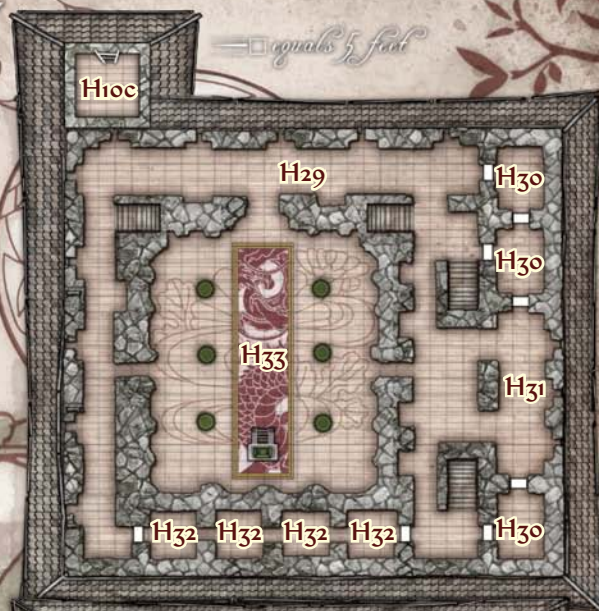
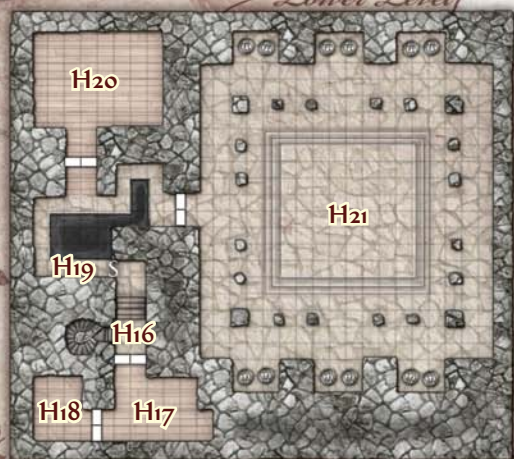
Creature: A sovereign imperial dragon named Teikono lairs within this immense treasure vault, honor-bound to serve the holder of the Jade Throne as a guardian for the next 100 years. Upon the PCs' arrival, Teikono is in his human form, appearing as an unassuming monk meditating amid a collection of priceless urns and other art. Like any samurai serving an emperor, Teikono views his duty as part of his personal honor and cannot step aside, even if he disagrees with the current ruler, the Jade Regent (which he does).

When the PCs first enter the chamber, Teikono greets them courteously and asks them their business. He introduces himself and explains his duty here. If asked about the *Imperial Seals*, Teikono confirms that they are here and that they are under his protection. Teikono willingly admits that he does not agree with the Jade Regent, but his oath is to the Jade Throne, and the Jade Regent now sits upon that throne. If the PCs want the

JADE REGENT

IMPERIAL PALACE UPPER AND LOWER HALLS

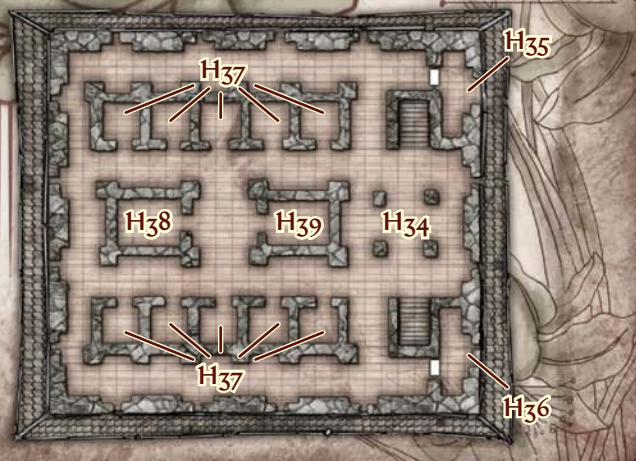
Lower Level



Second Floor

Third Floor

Fourth Floor



BLANDO 11

seals, they must either take the seals from him, or come back with a new emperor. If the PCs tell Teikono that they intend to overthrow the Jade Regent, the dragon wishes them luck, but says that he can take no part. However, if the PCs were to have the seals in their possession when they faced the Jade Regent, these symbols of the true rulers of Minkai might give them a small advantage in their efforts to remove the usurper.

If the PCs attempt to take the *Imperial Seals* or steal any of the room's other treasures, Teikono attacks them, as he is sworn to guard everything in the chamber. However, savvy PCs should be able to subdue the dragon rather than kill him outright, if they wish. Once combat begins, Teikono assumes his natural form, that of a horned, serpentine dragon with shining golden scales.

TEIKONO **CR 15**

XP 51,200

Male adult sovereign dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 100)

hp 225

TACTICS

During Combat On the first round of combat, Teikono unleashes his sonic breath weapon. Between uses of this ability, he attacks with spells or his natural attacks, whichever will be most effective. He targets any raging barbarians or bards using inspire courage with *calm emotions*. If an opponent falls in combat, Teikono ignores that character—the dragon bears the PCs no ill will, and he fights only those who are fighting him.

Morale Bound by his honor, Teikono fights until slain or knocked unconscious. If the PCs heal or return him to life afterward, he is forced to renew his attack. If the PCs wish to save the dragon's life, they must leave him unconscious or subdue him in some other way. Only after Ameiko has successfully claimed the throne can Teikono be released from his oath.

Treasure: The four remaining *Imperial Seals*—the *Higashiyama Seal*, *Shojinawa Seal*, *Sugimatu Seal*, and *Teikoku Seal*—lie scattered among the other treasures in this vault. Anyone casting *detect magic* or using *arcane sight* can readily pick out the intensity of the seals' auras. Otherwise, a DC 25 Perception check made while searching the room reveals them as well. See the sidebar on this page for more information on the *Imperial Seals* and how the PCs can use them against the Jade Regent.

Development: If the PCs subdue Teikono rather than kill him, award them +3 Rebellion Points, as this preserves the dragon's oath to serve the empress of Minkai once Ameiko claims the throne. If the PCs manage to recover all four of the lost *Imperial Seals*, award them +2 additional Rebellion Points.

Story Award: If the PCs subdue Teikono rather than kill him, award them 76,800 XP.

THE IMPERIAL SEALS OF MINKAI

Each of the five *Imperial Seals* not only invests a family with the divine right to rule Minkai, but can also attune itself to a new bloodline, thereby establishing new heirs to the Jade Throne. As such, when the Five Storms assassinated and corrupted the existing imperial families—the Amatatus, Higashiyamas, Shojinawas, Sugimatus, and Teikokus—the oni also secured their family seals and locked them away in the imperial vault, counting on the dragon Teikono to safeguard them so they wouldn't fall out of the oni's hands and create new heirs to challenge the Jade Regent's rule.

The PCs have likely already been chosen as scions of the Amatatsu family by the *Amatatsu Seal*, so they cannot invest themselves as new heirs using the other seals. Nevertheless, the four other seals can still be of use to them in the battle against the Jade Regent. The very presence of the seals in the hands of the PCs is enough to send shivers of doubt straight through the Jade Regent and Anamurumon. If the PCs openly display the *Imperial Seals* when they confront the Jade Regent and his allies, reduce all of the foes' Teamwork Scores by 5 for each seal in the PCs' possession. In addition, if the PCs received the blessings of an imperial family, that family's *Imperial Seal* can be used to cast one of the following spells once during the battle with the Jade Regent and his allies: *cure serious wounds*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, or *restoration*. The seals have other powers, but these are only accessible to scions of a seal's family line.

THE UPPER HALLS

The second level of the Imperial Palace holds most of the facilities necessary for day-to-day living in the castle. Unless stated otherwise, all of the ceilings on this level are 15 feet high. Doors are made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 23), except for the barracks (area H23), where the doors are sliding rice paper *shoji* panels (hardness 0, hp 2, Break DC 10). Small lamps provide dim light for interior rooms and hallways, while rooms with an outside window have normal light.

H22. KABUKI THEATER (CR 15)

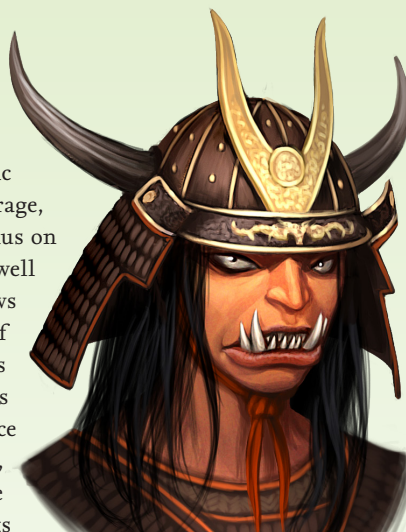
An elevated stage with an ornate backdrop stands along the north side of this chamber. The hall before it is strewn with sitting cushions. Wide stairways lead up to the east and west.

Creatures: The Jade Regent made sure to keep some of his more powerful oni in the palace while the rest of his forces meet the rebels outside Kasai. As a result, five ogre mages have been stationed here to guard the stairs to the palace's throne room and living quarters. Bored and in

JADE REGENT

need of entertainment, the oni have pressed three geisha, **Harumi**, **Tomiku**, and **Wakani** (N female human bards 6; use minstrel statistics, *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 273) into performing for them on the stage. The oni commander, a thuggish brute named Roka Kozu, has a particularly strong obsession with the sense of hearing, and finds the geisha's melodies far more soothing than silence as the oni wait for some danger to present itself. Any incorrect note or off-key tune is like a dagger in Kozu's ears, however, and she is quick to chastise—and beat—the geisha if their performance is not perfect.

When the PCs arrive, Kozu demands the geisha play for the ogre mages and inspire them as they fight. The geisha use their bardic performance ability to inspire courage, granting the oni a +2 competence bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls as well as a +2 morale bonus on saving throws against charm and fear effects. One of the geisha, Harumi, is Asachi Isao's daughter. Eager to escape the oni's cruelty, she uses her bardic performance to inspire courage in the PCs instead, granting them the bonuses above. The geisha are unarmed noncombatants and cower if anyone attacks them, which disrupts their individual performances whether supporting the oni or the PCs.



ROKA KOZU

ADVANCED OGRE MAGES (4) **CR 9**

XP 6,400 each

hp 180 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 221, 294)

TACTICS

During Combat The ogre mages cast *charm monster*, then draw their weapons and turn invisible so they can attack from surprise. When Kozu joins the fray, each of the ogre mages takes turns launching a *cone of cold* at their opponents, caring little if they catch any of the geisha in the spell's area of effect.

Morale The ogre mages fight to the death. Each time the PCs kill one of the ogre mages, another geisha stops playing for the oni, and Harumi encourages them change their tune to support the PCs instead.

ROKA KOZU **CR 13**

XP 25,600

Female Typhoon commander (see page 10)

hp 188

TACTICS

During Combat Kozu turns invisible and flies upward so she can cast *shield of faith* and *divine favor*. She then imbues her

naginata with the *bane* weapon special ability and flies back down to attack. If the geisha turn against her by changing their performance (see below), Kozu wastes at least every other round attempting to demoralize the geisha with Intimidate checks, as the new tune hurts her ears.

Morale Kozu fights to the death.

Development: If the geisha survive, they offer to heal the PCs' wounds with their spells. In addition, award the PCs +1 Rebellion Point for rescuing Harumi.

H23. BARRACKS (CR 15)

Rice paper shoji screens line both sides of this long hall, opening onto small cells. Sleeping pallets line the floor of each chamber, with various personal effects scattered about.

These barracks were designed to house the samurai of the palace's guard contingent, but the Jade Regent dismissed these loyal samurai when he took the throne. The smaller alcoves across the hall are storerooms for the guards' arms and armor, but they are now empty.

Creatures: Five Typhoon guards currently occupy the barracks along the southern hall, one to each of the larger rooms. With the paper-thin shoji doors, the oni can hear and respond to all but the most silent battles that might break out here. If attacked, they swiftly raise the alarm, sending one of their number to alert the guards in the dining hall (area **H26**), who send reinforcements 4 rounds later.

TYPHOON GUARDS (5) **CR 10**

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H24. BATHHOUSES

Several wooden tubs filled with water sit in this chamber, half-hidden by long, white sheets hanging from the ceiling. Next to each window is a fire pit that holds several hot stones among its smoldering coals.

The soldiers stationed at the castle use these rooms as bathhouses, placing heated stones in the wooden tubs to heat the water. Several oni have found this place an absolute delight, and spend a good deal of time here reveling in the sensation of hot water against the flesh that clothes their evil forms.

H25. HALL OF MEDITATION (CR 15)

An aura of restfulness permeates this carefully partitioned hall. Paintings of tranquil nature scenes and a variety of flowering plants and greenery add to its ambience.

Residents of the palace normally use this peaceful hall for meditation and relaxation, but it currently serves as a prison for hostages of the Jade Regent.

Creatures: Nine daughters of various merchants and nobles of Kasai (N female human aristocrats 3) are held in this chamber, hostages to ensure the loyalty of their families to the Jade Regent (see *Captive Hearts* on page 13). The women sleep in the smaller chambers to the north and south, but are otherwise confined to the central room, where their days alternate between fear of their oni captors and mind-numbing boredom. Three jorogumos watch over the captives, serving as both chaperones and jailers. The jorogumos seem to be beautiful human women, but they are actually monstrous spider-creatures. Natives of the Forest of Spirits, the jorogumos agreed to serve the Jade Regent in exchange for a supply of male human “mates” in whom the jorogumos can lay their eggs. The prisoners are all noncombatants, but the jorogumos attack any intruders.

JOROGUMOS (3) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 161 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 156)

TACTICS

During Combat The jorogumos immediately extend their spider legs once combat is initiated, and summon ogre spiders or giant black widow spiders to aid them in combat. The jorogumos use their webs or spell-like abilities to attempt to capture male humanoids for use as mates, and attack female opponents, flanking with their summoned spiders or one another to make sneak attacks.

Morale The jorogumos are not loyal servants of the Jade Regent, and attempt to flee if reduced to fewer than 80 hit points.

Treasure: One of the jorogumos wears a *minor cloak of displacement*, and another wears a *necklace of adaptation*. The third jorogumo wears a jeweled spider pendant on a mithral necklace, worth 1,000 gp.

Development: Award the PCs +3 Rebellion Points if they successfully rescue all of the noble daughters held captive here.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully free all of the captives, award them 38,400 XP.

H26. DINING HALL (CR 15)

More than a dozen low tables surrounded by small cushions take up the floor of this spacious dining hall. Several doors line

the south and west walls, while more exits lead north. To the east, three stone charcoal ovens stand near open windows.

Creatures: An off-duty Typhoon commander named Bogo-Na and the four Typhoon guards under his charge have stationed themselves here to harass the servants still working in the dining hall. Corpulent and gluttonous to the extreme, Bogo-Na has a fondness for overeating, and demands the servants cook him meals five times the size of those a normal man might eat. Although he professes loyalty to the Five Storms, Bogo-Na actually loathes fighting, as it takes him away from his favorite pastime. He takes any interruption of his meals quite angrily, preferring to send two of his guards to reinforce anyone seeking his aid rather than go himself. In addition, 12 cooks (N human commoners 2) scurry about the hall serving the oni. When combat breaks out, they flee the room or cower beneath the tables.

BOGO-NA CR 13

XP 25,600

Male Typhoon commander (see page 10)

hp 188

TACTICS

During Combat Bogo-Na turns invisible and flies upward with the rest of his food, leaving the Typhoon guards to deal with any attackers first. Only after they've been slain does he commit to the battle as well. Even then, he does so in the least strenuous manner possible, always staying aloft. From the air he casts *charm monster* to get someone else to do his fighting for him or hits as many attackers as possible with his *cone of cold* before striking from a distance with his bane-empowered *naginata*.

Morale Bogo-Na has no desire to die, preferring to live so he can continue to indulge his prodigious appetites. If reduced to 60 hit points or fewer, Bogo-Na assumes *gaseous form* and flees through the open windows, following the smoke from the room's ovens.

TYPHOON GUARDS (4) CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 121 each (see page 11)

H27. PRIVY

An unpleasant stench emanates from this closed chamber. Along the north wall, a row of open holes fall away in what can only be a cesspit or open latrine.

Normally kept much cleaner than their current sad state, these privies have fallen into poor condition since the oni killed off most of the staff responsible for their maintenance. No one else has volunteered to take over the task.

JADE REGENT

H28. SERVANTS' QUARTERS

Twin stairwells ascend into this humid upper attic space. Between the musty rafters, wooden partitions block off sleeping cells and workrooms.

The palace servants live in these rooms, which also contain various tools for household maintenance and laundry. Altogether, 15 servants (N human commoners 2) currently reside here, hiding away from the oni until called upon.

THE PALACE LEVELS

The third and fourth floors of the palace's main keep include both the throne room and the imperial family's living quarters. The ceilings are 15 feet high throughout both levels. All doors are locked and made of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20, Break DC 25, Disable Device 25) unless specified otherwise. The living quarters on the fourth floor use sliding rice paper shoji panels instead (hardness 0, hp 2, Break DC 10). Portable lamps with *continual flames* sit in small wall sconces to provide normal light in every room and corridor.

H29. ARCHERS' GALLERY (CR 16)

This long corridor turns at a right angle, following the north and west walls of the palace. Small windows are regularly spaced along the walls.

This is one of the major defensible areas of the castle, as the narrow windows located every 25 feet or so in the outer wall overlook the main approaches to the castle below, from which archers can fire on any attackers attempting to breach the castle.

Creatures: A contingent of eight Typhoon guards keeps watch from the windows. They fire on anyone who approaches, whether from below the castle walls, through the air, or up the stairs from area H22 below.

TYPHOON GUARDS (8) CR 10
 XP 9,600 each
 hp 121 each (see page 11)

H30. GUEST ROOMS

The emperors of Minkai maintained these rooms for important guests visiting the Imperial Palace. Each

one contains a small bed, table, and sitting area, and is decorated according to a unique theme. Currently, they all lie in tatters from the abuse of the Typhoon commanders entrusted with them. Nothing of value remains in any of these rooms.

H31. TEA ROOM

This sitting room is well lit with natural light, and normally provides a space for private meetings, strategy sessions, and tea ceremonies between the emperors and their guests. The Jade Regent and his allies use it for much the same purpose, only they're more likely to argue among themselves than build alliances with diplomats of neighboring countries over tea. The oracle Renshii Meida spends more time here than anyone, taking tea with her handmaidens or using the room to commune with her ancestors, seeking their help in guiding her steps to become the next empress of Minkai.

H32. STOREROOMS

All the collected furnishings of generations of ruling families are stored throughout these chambers, stacked on top of one another in layers until the oldest have become almost irretrievably buried. Occasionally, someone tasks the servants with rooting out some collection to redecorate a guest room or gallery. The easternmost chamber shows heavy signs of such an effort—Anamurumon had the palace servants search for something from Minkai's ancient past that would be more appealing for his personal quarters.

H33. THE JADE THRONE (CR 19)

Six stone columns of solid jade flank the approach to an ornate jade throne atop a short dais in this massive chamber. Banners hang along the walls above detailed frescoes of mountains; forests; and samurai engaged in the arts of archery, swordplay, calligraphy, and flower arranging.

For over a thousand years, the emperors of Minkai have ruled their empire from this room, seated upon the Jade Throne. Said to have been created by the goddess Shizuru's lover, the moon god Tsukiyo, the Jade Throne is in



THE EMPTY THRONE

fact a powerful artifact, both a symbol of the emperor's divine right to rule and the guardian of that right. Only a member of one of Minkai's imperial families, bearing one of the *Imperial Seals* and the blessings of the previous emperors, can claim the title of emperor and utilize the full powers of the Jade Throne. Although he currently sits upon the Jade Throne, the Jade Regent cannot access its powers or claim the title of emperor for himself. His power derives from the regency invested in him by Emperor Shigure, and only once there are no longer any rightful claimants to the throne and all five *Imperial Seals* are in his possession can the Jade Regent seize the true power he craves.

Creatures: The Jade Regent and his closest allies, those most instrumental in his rise to power, await Ameiko and the PCs in this room, the sovereign center of the empire of Minkai. Only two actually belong to the Five Storms—the Jade Regent Soto Takahiro and his grandfather Anamurumon. The others are Renshii Meida, the haunted advisor to former emperor Higashiyama Shigure, and Giras Notori, a famed tengu assassin locally known as the Raven Prince. They've all convened in the palace throne room to ensure Ameiko can't present herself as the rightful heir to the Jade Throne. The Jade Regent currently sits upon the throne, patiently waiting for the Amatatsu heir to arrive and try her hand at facing him. The others have positioned themselves elsewhere in the room. Anamurumon stands alone in the center of the main approach, as eager as his grandson to finally put the last of the imperial families to death and collect the remaining *Imperial Seal*. Notori hides behind the jade column just west of the throne, while Meida lingers at the foot of the throne's dais, seated upon its bottommost step and prepared to shield the Jade Regent from those who would do him harm.

The PCs must face all four of these characters together. They are used to working together, and support each other in battle, as outlined in their descriptions, but depending on how fractured their alliance has become based on the actions of the PCs (see the Sowing Discord sidebar on this page), their level of cooperation with may vary, giving way to selfish goals that might make it easier for the PCs to triumph.

ANAMURUMON CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 230 (see page 50)

GIRAS NOTORI, THE RAVEN PRINCE CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 101 (see page 56)

RENSHII MEIDA CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 131 (see page 58)

SOWING DISCORD

Throughout "The Empty Throne," the PCs have the opportunity to undermine the trust of the Jade Regent's inner circle. They can do so not only by amassing Rebellion Points, which causes the Jade Regent and his allies to argue among themselves, but also through subtler methods, perhaps by planting evidence or spreading information designed to tear down their alliance. Each of the NPCs in the NPC Gallery on pages 50–61 contains details on the information that can sow such discord and reduce their Teamwork Scores, thus affecting these characters' individual tactics and morale.

SOTO TAKAHIRO, THE JADE REGENT

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 207 (see page 54)

Development: If the PCs defeat the Jade Regent and his allies here, award them +5 Rebellion Points for deposing the usurper.

Story Award: Once the PCs defeat the Jade Regent, the ascension of Ameiko (or of another Amatatsu scion) to the Jade Throne of Minkai is all but assured. Award the PCs 51,200 XP for accomplishing this feat, and see Concluding the Adventure on page 48 for the results of their efforts.

H34. GATHERING HALL

Four solid columns hold up the ceiling of this square hall, and the smell of new lacquer rises from the freshly polished wooden floor. Stairways descend to the north and south, while multiple corridors lead to other areas of the palace.

This chamber serves as a mustering area for imperial processions down to the throne room. Since claiming the Jade Throne, the Jade Regent has renovated this hall and the attached living quarters to better accommodate himself, his allies, and his favored minions. The fresh lacquer upon the floor and paint on the walls are evidence of this work, and extend into all the hallways and chambers on this level.

H35. ROYAL SEER'S BEDCHAMBER

This small chamber is richly decorated with thick carpeting, elaborate silk hangings, and small items of beautifully wrought furniture. A sleeping pallet scented with lavender oil lies in one corner, next to a small table holding a variety of perfumes and cosmetics.

JADE REGENT

REBELLION POINT TOTAL

RP Earned Result

1–9	Disastrous: The empire of Minkai remains in shambles. A new oni arises as leader of the Five Storms, who continue their depredations. Emperor Ito's ghost re-forms and finds a way to escape the Imperial Shrine, striking a new reign of terror across Minkai and presenting a new challenge to the empire.
10–15	Mild Success: The spirit of Minkai remains broken by the atrocities its people endured under the Jade Regent. The people acknowledge Ameiko as their empress, but struggle to accept her as one of their own. It takes many years for Minkai to once more establish itself as a power in Tian Xia.
16–24	Success: The people rejoice at the fall of the Jade Regent and embrace Ameiko as their new Empress, ready to usher in an age of hope, renewal, and prosperity. Minkai takes only a few years to recover from the tyranny it endured, and any remaining oni of the Five Storms are soon driven from the empire.
25+	Great Success: The turnaround is dramatic as Ameiko enacts sweeping changes not only to put Minkai back together, but to position it as a leading force in the region for years to come. Minkai enters a golden age of peace and prosperity. The people hail the PCs as national heroes and Empress Ameiko is beloved by all.

When Anamurumon claimed the sleeping quarters closest to the Jade Regent, Renshii Meida had to make do with this small room. She rarely stays here, however, sharing the Jade Regent's bed more often than not. A cabinet in one wall holds a selection of amazingly elaborate and expensive silk robes, headdresses, and shoes, all new outfits for her position as the Jade Regent's consort.

H36. ROYAL ASSASSIN'S BEDCHAMBER

This spartan chamber contains nothing beyond a simple sleeping pallet on the floor. The wooden paneling on the walls is marred with numerous tiny holes and scratches.

These quarters have been given over to the Jade Regent's royal assassin, Giras Notori, the self-styled Raven Prince. The tengu ninja rarely spends any time here, however, preferring to sleep in various secret bolt-holes throughout Kasai. When he is present here, he spends most of his time

engaging in target practice with his shuriken or bow, the source of the damage to the room's walls. There is nothing of value here.

H37. BODYGUARDS' QUARTERS

A simple sleeping pallet and small storage locker sits within each of these small chambers. In times past, these rooms served as sleeping quarters for the emperor's bodyguards, all trained and loyal samurai. The Jade Regent's abandonment of his samurai order to become a ronin left him far less concerned about maintaining the samurai's service, viewing them as potential troublemakers more than trusted allies. As such, he sent most of them on various missions throughout Minkai to keep them away from the palace. A few favored Typhoon guards have claimed some of these rooms for their personal quarters, but none are currently here—all are currently off putting down the uprising outside the city or defending other parts of the palace.

H38. CHIEF MAGISTRATE'S BEDCHAMBER

An oversized sleeping pallet, seemingly designed more for a giant than a man, takes up almost all of the floor space in this chamber, leaving little room for anything else.

This room typically housed the wife and children of a sitting emperor. Anamurumon has claimed it for himself, even though Renshii Meida lobbied strongly for it. Because of his great size when not in his human form, Anamurumon had the servants remove all of the furniture from the room and replace it with additional sleeping pallets so that he can rest in his oni form.

H39. EMPEROR'S BEDCHAMBER

A sumptuous rug decorated with imperial dragons and dire tigers stretches across the floor of this chamber. Rumpled silk sheets cover the stuffed mattress of its sleeping pallet.

Normally reserved for the emperor of Minkai, the Jade Regent Soto Takahiro has taken this room as his personal bedchamber, which he usually shares with Renshii Meida. He keeps nothing of importance here except a small memento that Anamurumon claims belonged to his mother—actually just a cheap necklace the oni took from a merchant caravan the Five Storms raided nearly a century ago before Takahiro was even born.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the defeat of the Jade Regent, Ameiko (or one of the PCs, if Ameiko was replaced in the campaign) can finally present herself as the legitimate heir to the Jade Throne. Provided Ameiko has the *Amatatsu Seal* and received the

THE EMPTY THRONE



blessings of the past emperors, the Jade Throne accepts her as the rightful empress of Minkai. She gains full access to the throne's powers, and can begin to heal Minkai of the damages inflicted upon it by the Jade Regent and the oni of the Five Storms.

In addition, the number of Rebellion Points the PCs have amassed during the course of the adventure determines the state of the empire that Ameiko inherits. Total the PCs' final Rebellion Point score and consult the sidebar on page 48 to tailor the ending of the adventure accordingly. Ameiko rewards the PCs generously for their part in defeating the usurper and restoring her throne; besides a monetary award, Ameiko might also give each PC a powerful or expensive magic item from the imperial treasury, or she might grant the PCs land and noble titles in Minkai. The exact nature of the reward is up to you, but they should be tailored to fit your players' desires and the end of an epic campaign.

If the PCs fail to defeat the Jade Regent, then Minkai enters a new dark age. If Ameiko and the PCs were all slain, then there are no longer any rightful heirs to the imperial families of Minkai. The Jade Regent places the *Amatatsu*

Seal in the imperial vault with the other *Imperial Seals*, thus preventing the spirits of the seals from investing new scions with the right to rule. With no legitimate heirs left to claim it, the Jade Throne accepts Takahiro as the ruler of Minkai, and the Jade Regent becomes the Jade Emperor—with the helpful advice of Anamurumon, of course. This perversion of Shizuru's divine mandate to rule corrupts the Jade Throne, and Takahiro uses the throne's power to spread evil throughout the land. Minkai becomes the garden of excess and depravity that Anamurumon and the Five Storms sought to create, a blight on the lands of Tian Xia. Oni and other monstrous creatures run freely throughout the empire, and the common people of Minkai cower in fear and terror, and pray for an end to their suffering.

But even in this case, all is not lost. The Jade Emperor rules only because there are no other legitimate heirs to the Jade Throne. The *Imperial Seals* still lie beneath the palace in Kasai, waiting for worthy heroes to find them and become scions of new imperial lines. If all of the PCs were killed, perhaps new characters can arise to take their place, recover the *Imperial Seals*, and save Minkai from the depredations of the Jade Emperor.