

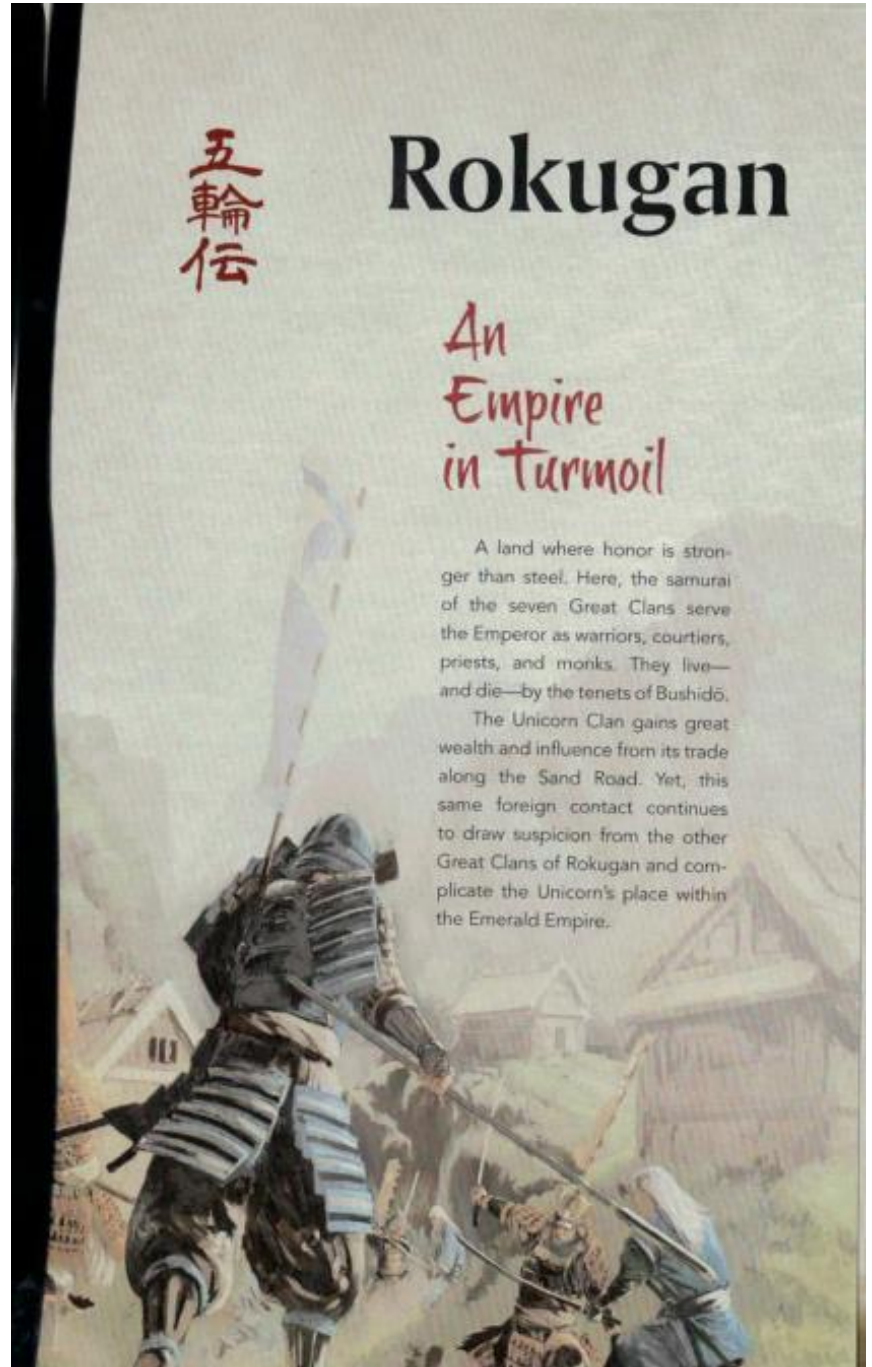
五輪伝

Rokugan

An
Empire
in Turmoil

A land where honor is stronger than steel. Here, the samurai of the seven Great Clans serve the Emperor as warriors, courtiers, priests, and monks. They live—and die—by the tenets of Bushidō.

The Unicorn Clan gains great wealth and influence from its trade along the Sand Road. Yet, this same foreign contact continues to draw suspicion from the other Great Clans of Rokugan and complicate the Unicorn's place within the Emerald Empire.



Shinjo's Journey

In the years following the Day of Thunder, Shinjo-no-Kami was troubled. She felt that she had failed her fallen brother, Fu Leng, as well as the Empire she had sworn to protect, which had been saved not through the actions of the Kami but through the wisdom of Shinsei and the heroism of seven mortals.

To protect the Empire from any further unknown threats, Shinjo resolved to journey beyond its borders, for how could Rokugan hope to defend itself from dangers about which it knew nothing? And so, she gathered to her the bravest and most faithful of her followers and made preparations to travel to the west. Shinjo released her vassals from their oaths of loyalty before she left on her great journey. Yet many of her people chose to travel with her anyway. The amiable Ide, the wise Iuchi, and the courageous Utaku Shiko (the daughter of Utaku the Thunder) led their followers at Shinjo's side. The Ki-Rin Clan had not even left Rokugan yet, and already they had changed and become something different from all the clans they would leave behind.

In the year 45 by Isawa reckoning, Shinjo and the Ki-Rin passed beyond the border of Rokugan and outside of all knowledge of the Emerald Empire. They carried with them a mirror, crafted by Isawa and blessed by Hantei-no-Kami, said to reflect the image of its twin so that Shinjo could continue to speak with her brothers and sisters in the Empire. They also bore a sandalwood fan, a gift from Doji-no-Kami to her favored sister.

THE UJIK AND THE MOTO

The Ki-Rin's journey almost ended in disaster scarcely one-hundred *li* beyond their own borders, when they found themselves wandering the desolate and punishing Plain of Wind and Stone. This desert was brutally cold in winter and perishingly hot in summer, with so little water and food that the Ki-Rin began to starve. To make matters worse, they were soon attacked by a band of horseback-riding nomads known as Ujik. Although the courage and skill of Shinjo's samurai were second to none, doing battle with such a mobile and flexible enemy seemed impossible until Shinjo and Utaku Shiko captured a handful of Ujik horses and adopted Ujik tactics.

Impressed by the prowess of Shinjo's people, the Ujik halted their raids and began to trade in peace with Ide and the rest of the clan. With the addition of Ujik horses and by adopting Ujik nomadic practices and herding techniques, the Ki-Rin soon were no longer starving, but began to thrive. In time, many of the Ujik joined the clan, binding themselves through promises of fellowship and a number of strategic marriages. These Ujik, now called the Moto, soon became a vital part of the Ki-Rin Clan, and the friendship of the Ki-Rin allowed the Ujik to press back against their traditional enemies, human and otherwise, at the limits of their territory.

The Ki-Rin spent "a generation," perhaps as much as one hundred years, living among the Ujik. By the time they were ready to move on, every single Ki-Rin was mounted atop a sturdy Ujik desert horse, and the entire clan had adopted the Ujik saddle and, even more importantly, the stirrup. Now, when they made war, Shinjo's people fought from horseback.

SHINJO'S CAPTIVITY

During their conflict with the Ujik, Ki-Rin scouts and explorers had been hard at work probing the limits of the unassailable mountains to the south and the trackless deserts to the west, the so-called Burning Sands. In time, the Ki-Rin Clan saw no other course, and rode west once more.

Traveling across the Burning Sands was the greatest challenge yet faced by the Ki-Rin, but when they reached the lush river valleys of the Cradle of the World, they were rewarded with splendor and gifts such as they could scarcely believe. The pharaohs of Rempet claimed divine lineage from the Sun God, Shem, and they declared Shinjo-no-Kami to be their sister from afar. She and her followers were lavished with riches by the sorcerer-king Nephrentep. Half-dead with hunger and thirst, the Ki-Rin eagerly accepted the hospitality of Rempet, even as Shinjo and some of the elders of the clan were troubled that the priests and nobles of the city openly practiced slavery.



Nephrentep's hospitality was a ruse. As soon as the Ki-Rin let down their guard, the pharaoh struck, snatching Shinjo from among them and spiriting her away to his temple-palace. The sorcerer-king's undying guard attacked the Ki-Rin and drove them into hiding. Iuchi declared that the sinister priests of Rempet were blood sorcerers and that they intended to use Shinjo-no-Kami's divine blood in a ritual to prolong Nephrentep's life. The Ki-Rin all agreed that they would die before they allowed such a fate to befall their beloved Shinjo.

Clever Ide found allies in Rempet: the al-Qamari, a secret organization devoted to opposing the Sun Kings. Together, the Ki-Rin and the al-Qamari staged a daring attack on Nephrentep's temple-palace. The attack seemed doomed to failure, as the pharaoh's magic and his undying guard were too strong for the rescuers, until the gods themselves intervened: the moon blotted out the sun, throwing day into night. The moon ruled supreme until the wicked king was cast down and Shinjo was liberated. Once freed, Shinjo united the Ki-Rin Clan and the oppressed peoples of Rempet to destroy the corrupt empire of the sorcerer-kings.

A JOURNEY OUT OF KNOWLEDGE

Not long after destroying the Empire of Rempet, Shinjo gathered her clan to her and pronounced that they would go their separate ways. "The world is too big," she said, "for those on any one journey to ever discover it all." She divided the Ki-Rin Clan into five hordes and sent them each in a different direction. Shinjo took her Blue Horde west. Iuchi took his Green Horde south. Moto Chabi Khan took her White Horde north, continuing the journey across the Burning Sands. Utaku Shiko took her Purple Horde east, into the Ivory Kingdoms. And Ide's Golden Horde remained in place, exploring the coast of the Conqueror's Sea.

The accounts brought back by the three hordes returning to Rokugan—now calling themselves the Unicorn Clan—are sometimes unbelievable. They told of empires of snake-like beings, raiders with the body of a horse and the torso of a human, giants with only one eye, cursed pits and blessed valleys, and the Unicorn itself, a horselike spirit of water and fire that some say fathered Shinjo's children. Tragically, Iuchi's Green Horde never returned. According to rumor, they still ride the world, seeking its uttermost limits.

THE RIDE THROUGH SHADOW

At length, the time came to return to Rokugan. Rather than cross the Burning Sands, the Unicorn rode south of the Pillar of the Sky mountains, into the tangled forests and steep valleys of the Ivory Kingdoms. Although now mounted on the finest horses in the world, the Unicorn struggled to make good time, as they were frequently turned back by the people and creatures they encountered among the hills and valleys. When they reached the eastern edge of the Ivory Kingdoms, they found one more barrier in their path: the twisted, unnatural forest of the western Shadowlands.

According to the Ide chroniclers, it took the Unicorn Clan forty years to cross from the Conqueror's Sea to the Kaiu Wall in Rokugan. It seems an improbable duration for a journey that can now be made along the Sand Road in a handful of months, but the modern route does not account for the Shadowlands. In that cursed place, life and death, and even time itself, do not have the same meaning they do in the rest of the world. Who can say how long the Unicorn rode and fought their way through those blighted lands? Surely, they proceeded with the same mix of boldness and caution that had guided them across the Burning Sands, stopping in places of relative safety and sending forth their scouts, before plunging headlong into danger. The Ide Chronicles are difficult to reconcile with the Imperial Histories in this period.

In 815 IC, the Unicorn finally escaped the Shadowlands. Judged to be an invading Tainted horde by the Crab, they used their foreign magics to smash a hole in the Kaiu Wall and enter Rokugan near Razor of the Dawn Castle. They rode through the Shinomen Forest, up the River of Gold, and across the Spine of the World Mountains, evading or overrunning anyone who opposed them. Finally, they reached their ancestral homeland—and the enormous Lion Clan army that had claimed it for their own. To every samurai they met upon their return to Rokugan, the Unicorn were nothing more than barbarian invaders.

Fortunately for the Unicorn (and the Lion), Ide emissaries brought Doji-no-Kami's sandalwood fan with them to the court of the Crane and thereby proved their clan were the children of Shinjo returned. The Emperor, at the Crane's request, granted the Unicorn claim to their ancestral lands and ended the war. After nearly eight hundred years of exile, the Unicorn were finally home.



The Cradle of the World

Surrounded by deserts to the east and west and seas to the north and south, the "land between two rivers" has been a flowering garden of civilization since the dawn of time. The residents of this fertile region have long maintained that it was in this land that civilization first arose, and so they call their homeland the Cradle of the World.

OLD REMPET

From the east, where Lord Sun rises in the morning, came a mortal woman in the final days of her pregnancy. She was soon delivered of a divine child, the son of Shem, the Sun God, whom she named Horiz-Rem. This child rose to become the first pharaoh priest-king of Rempet, the Kingdom of the Sun God. Horiz-Rem had many wives, lived a supernaturally long life, and fathered more than ninety children, who became the ruling nobility of Rempet. Within a handful of mortal lifetimes, Rempet became the greatest empire in the world, and until its fall, its pharaohs all traced their lineage back to Horiz-Rem, and through him to Shem himself.

Thanks to their divine blood, the noble priest-kings of Rempet took as a given their right to rule over all of humanity. As these rulers were sorcerers, there was little the people of the Cradle or its neighboring tribes could do to stop them. Even the djinn were helpless before the pharaohs. Rempet soon enslaved entire tribes, using them to grow crops and build enormous pyramidal temples and tombs. Only the al-Qamari opposed the pharaohs, but these "Children of the Moon" were forced to operate at night, striking from hiding, and were seldom more than a nuisance.

However, with each successive generation, the divine essence of Horiz-Rem was spread more and more thinly. The pharaohs, unwilling to accept a lifespan of a mere century or two, began to delve deep into their sorcerous arts for means to prolong their lives. Through the use of blood magic, they defied death, replacing some of their slaves with undying servants. It is believed the rulers of Old Rempet were the first to discover the secret of unliving life.

When Shinjo, herself a divine being, came to Rempet, the pharaoh Nephrentep immediately seized on a plan to use her blood in a sorcerous ritual to bestow upon himself the divinity of Horiz-Rem. The scheme ended in disaster, however. An alliance of Shinjo's followers and revolutionaries from within the enslaved Nehiri tribes stormed the seat of Nephrentep's power, slew him, and ended the reign of the pharaohs.

THE NAMELESS PROPHET

Over the century that followed, Rempet died by pieces. One by one, various external threats and slave revolts led by the al-Qamari toppled the sorcerer-priests from their thrones. The Cradle of the World collapsed into warring tribes and city-states, where djinn haunted the wild places and rogue sorcerers stalked the shadows.

Into this chaotic scene came the Nameless Prophet. Some claim he was born into a pre-Rempet Nehiri noble house, others that he was the son of a slave and a pharaoh, still others that he was a traveler from a distant land. In any case, the Prophet brought new teachings and a new way of life to the Cradle of the World, and these did much to bring peace to the region. He claimed to bring the Word of Heaven to both humans and djinn, and that service to Heaven and not earthly power was the true path forward for humankind. His first followers took on the mantle of the al-Qamari, and the new faith became known as Qamarism.

The Prophet (his name has been concealed for fear of sorcerers wielding Name Magic) founded a new empire in what is now the City of God in the Mountains of Shem. He led his followers down into the valley of the Queen's River, converting the Nehiri tribes and city-states he found there by prayer or by strength of arms, as required. Soon, Qamarism had spread across the entire land between the two rivers, and throughout the Mountains of Shem and the Mountains of Qamar.

THE PROPHET'S END

At length, the Prophet's time came to an end. Although some hold that the Nameless Prophet simply moved on to bring his teachings to the rest of the world, most scholars agree that he died and was buried in the City of God, at an advanced age, and after fathering many children. The Prophet's death left his nascent empire without a ruler, so his followers gathered together to decide who should lead them. Eventually, they chose from within their number a single great and wise thinker, who became the first caliph, and so the Qamari Caliphate was created.

THE SABORIM

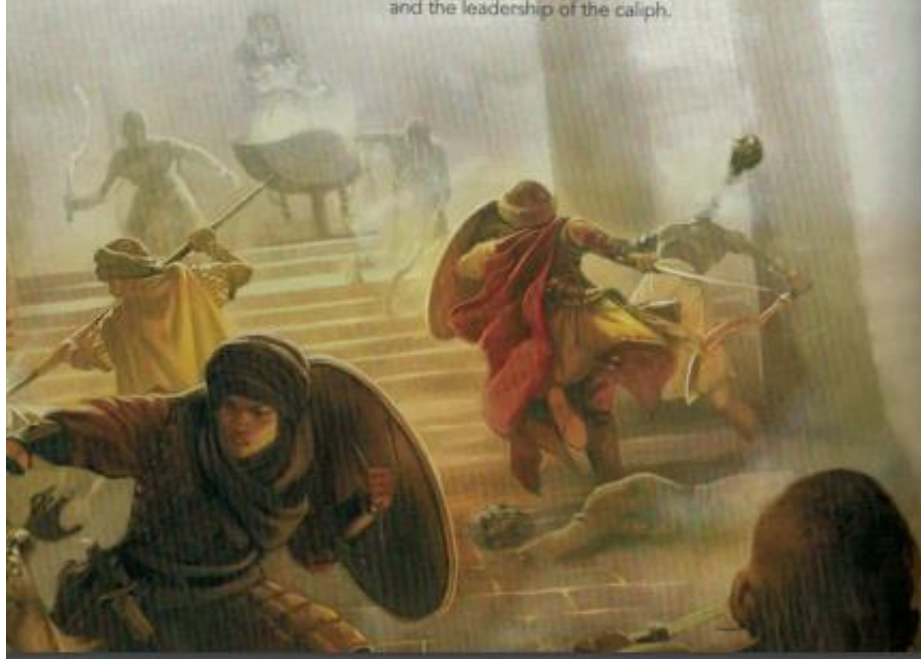
The Qamarist faith has suffered many schisms throughout its history. The first dates from the death (or disappearance) of the Prophet, when a key sect of his followers refused to accept the authority of the caliph chosen to succeed him. The Saborim ("those who wait") have long had a strained relationship with mainstream Qamarism. Still, their dedication to the Word of the Prophet and their scholarship and skill in medicine and alchemy are widely admired, so Saborim communities are generally tolerated throughout the Caliphate.

The Spread of the Word

The first caliph, Mahmoud ibn Mansur, immediately founded a new capital for his Caliphate in a prime location on the King's River. Al-Zawira, also known as the Round City, soon became the jewel in the Caliphate's crown and the envy of all other cities in the world. But Mahmoud did not rest there.

BY SWORD AND BY BOOK

The Qamari Caliphate began in the heart of the Nehiri homeland, between the two rivers, but it soon spread far across the Cradle of the World. The Caliphate first turned its attention to the Twilight Kings, the undying remnants of Old Rempet who lived out cruel pantomimes of their living days even as the desert sands swallowed their once-verdant cities whole. Bolstered by their faith and with the aid of the Twilight Kings' remaining living slaves, the Caliphate cast down the mummified pharaohs and united the last of the Nehiri tribes. In the North, the warlike Suhili fought a desperate battle against the monstrous legions of the baleful god Zeth, who ages earlier had drowned in the Cursed Sea after doing battle with Shem. The Caliphate came to their aid, and the Suhili accepted both the Word of the Prophet and the leadership of the caliph.



The Sogdan city-states in the West were plagued by internecine war and the depredations of a terrible manticore, whose trickery and treachery created fresh conflict whenever peace emerged. Emissaries from the Caliphate brought a message of peace and fellowship to the Sogdians, and clever Qamarist teachers bested the manticore at its riddle-game, breaking its influence on the region. Even the proud Bandar across the Sea of Jewels, who had resisted the early imperial ambitions of both Mweneta in the far south and the Caliphate, eventually bowed to the teachings of the Prophet, and their leaders became emirs under the caliph's authority.

THE LANDS AND TRIBES OF THE CALIPHATE

The heartland of the Caliphate encompasses the traditional homeland of the sun-browned Nehiri, the black-haired people of the river. Consisting of the valley between the King's River and the Queen's River, the so-called Cradle of the World is the most fertile land in all the Caliphate, lush with gardens, orchards, and bountiful crops. The Nehiri who live there are firm in their faith and devoted to scholarship and learning—indeed, their capital, al-Zawira, is known by another name, the "City of Books."

Across the Mountains of Shem to the west lie the city-states of the Sogdians. Renowned as builders and engineers, the olive-skinned Sogdians build great towers and ziggurats. Their grandest city-state, Ninua, boasts a great ziggurat standing proud on the coast of the Conqueror's Sea; its beacon can be seen from a great distance to aid sailors and pilgrims on their journeys. In ancient days, so the legend goes, the Sogdan people were all united and worked together to build a tower tall enough to reach the Heavens. But the gods—or God, according to the new Qamarist understanding of the world—became angry at the Sogdians' pride, struck down their tower, and cursed them to live in strife with one another forever more. Since then, the city-states of the Sogdians have often gone to war with one another, and even in this time of relative peace and prosperity, the Sogdians have a gloomy outlook, blaming every misfortune on their ancestral curse.

The Cursed Sea, home of the drowned god Zeth, lies to the north, and the steppes that run up to its shores are the home of the Suhili, the people of the plain. The fair-skinned Suhili still live a seminomadic life, as many tribes did in the days before Rempet. They have only one great city, Zymarkin, the City of the Bronze Gate. Proud warriors, the Suhili fight an eternal battle against the dragons, monsters, and minions of Zeth that emerge from the Cursed Sea whenever the moon is dark. Suhili prefer to fight from horseback or from their swift and deadly chariots whenever possible, and they have long since adopted the stirrup from their contact with the Ki-Rin Clan.



The dark-skinned Bandar live to the west, across the Sea of Jewels. Divided roughly between the nomadic shepherds of the highlands and the city dwellers along the seacoast and the north-flowing Serpent River, the Bandar are in fact a dozen or more allied and related peoples united by a shared language and a long history of intermarriage. These close alliances have turned the Bandar into a mighty merchant kingdom, controlling trade between the rest of the Caliphate to the east, the Mweneta Empire to the south, and the Vyzantari Kingdom across the Conqueror's Sea. The various Bandar emirates, especially the city of Mozedu, are among the most powerful and wealthy of any in the Qamari Caliphate.

The Sand Road

When the Unicorn Clan returned to Rokugan in 815 IC, they found a land as foreign to them as any in which they had ever traveled. Despite their best efforts, the Unicorn struggled to be accepted by their cousins in the Emerald Empire, and Shinjo's people lived always in a state of conflict with the other clans. Weakened by their long ride through the Shadowlands and still struggling to adapt to a new way of life, the Unicorn made a number of missteps in the first few decades after

their return that not only limited their influence and respect among the other clans, but threatened their very existence. In short, the other clans were wealthier and more respected than the Unicorn, and almost all were more numerous. Aside from their horses, which the Unicorn were reluctant to part with, they had little to offer the Emperor or the other clans.

In 845 IC, a new Great Khan assumed the leadership of the Unicorn Clan. Shinjo Temujin resolved to find a new source of wealth and power for his clan, and so he ordered one hundred of his finest scouts to search for a safe route through the Burning Sands to the Cradle of the World and the Ivory Kingdoms. The exotic artifacts and treasures of the West, Temujin reasoned, would give the Unicorn long sought-after leverage in their negotiations with the other clans and might finally earn the Unicorn the respect they deserved. By 850 IC, after the death of nearly half of Temujin's scouts, a route was finally established, and the Sand Road was born.

Trade with the West soon made the Unicorn one of the richest clans in the Empire. The silk, tea, and art they sent west were repaid with caravans bursting with nephrite jade, precious stones and metals, honey, sugar, opium, cotton, and gaijin artifacts of all descriptions. The Unicorn also eagerly traded horses and other livestock in both directions, but these riches they kept to themselves. The other imports they sold on to the clans and Imperial families. This made them an invaluable part of Rokugan's economy and gave them the time and allies required for them to grow and recover from their long exile. In time, the city of Khanbulak on the border of the Empire became the largest and richest city in all of the Unicorn lands—and the Moto family, which controls it, grows ever more powerful, despite their great losses upon their return to Rokugan.

THE WAY STATIONS

Shinjo Temujin ordered that a way station be built every fifty li (about a half day's walk on foot) along the entire length of the Sand Road. These way stations were to be equipped with storehouses, paddocks for horses and camels, and cisterns or wells for water, and they were to be guarded and resupplied when necessary by the khan's own soldiers. While the reality of this order has never quite been realized, as many way stations are still unfinished or undersupplied, enough of the Sand Road is so provisioned as to make a journey across its length merely difficult rather than punishing and probably fatal. Gaijin merchants who make use of the Sand Road must pay sizable tariffs to contribute to its upkeep, but they usually judge the cost reasonable considering the benefits the way stations offer. Thus, the system remains in place and may even one day be finished.

GEOGRAPHY

According to the most recent survey, conducted during the reign of Shinjo Khulan Khan, the Sand Road runs some 12,500 li from Khanbulak to al-Zawira. A message-rider changing horses at each way station can make the entire journey in just over two weeks, but most caravans take something closer to four months.

From Khanbulak, the Sand Road twists down through a rocky landscape and into the highlands of the Plain of Wind and Stone. Dry and windswept, cold in the winter and hot in the summer, the Plain of Wind and Stone is home to the nomadic Ujik; herds of horses, deer, and camels; zilants; yaryonds; death worms; and very little else. The Moto family of the Unicorn Clan maintains close ties with its Ujik cousins. These relations are generally good, although it's never wise to discount the threat of rebellious or desperate Ujik who turn to banditry or agitate for war.

To the south and west of the Plain of Wind and Stone, the Sand Road climbs into the lower foothills of the Pillar of the Sky. These mountains, it is said, are the tallest in the world, and the people, trolls, and goblins who live there are tough and often violent. Strangely, some of the Tegensai tribes that live there practice a tradition that seems to have its roots in Shinseism, and some Unicorn shugenja make regular visits to the few temples that cling to the upper slopes. As for the rest of the Unicorn Clan, they trade for the furs and dogs the Tegensai offer when they can and fight off Tegensai bandits when they must.

Beyond the Pillar of the Sky, the Sand Road descends to the seemingly endless, scorched plain of the Burning Sands proper, which extend to the banks of the King's River in the Cradle of the World. Often shunned as an empty wasteland, the Burning Sands is actually quite varied in character and climate, and during its brief rainy season, large parts of the desert bloom with frantic, beautiful life. But for the rest of the year, the Burning Sands are some of the most desolate and impossible terrain in the world, full of dust storms and scorching heat, and offering neither food nor water to speak of. The only human life is a few scattered nomadic tribes and oasis cities, among them canyon-shadowed Emshaal and Ūrumzi on the Dead Lake.

The most important of these oases is the Hidden Valley, almost precisely halfway between Khanbulak and al-Zawira. It is home to the Ganzu people, loyal vassals of the Khan of Khans for a century. The Green River flows down from the Pillar of the Sky and carves a narrow valley from the sandstone hills of the Burning Sands, eventually drying out into a mucky wash of sun-scorched clay, never reaching any lake or sea. But in that valley lie fertile farms and orchards and a small city of the Ganzu. For protection from the heat, the Ganzu build their homes half beneath the ground, and for defense from enemies, they keep even the spires of their temple below the level of the canyon walls; as a result, the farms, the river, and the city are all quite secret. The Hidden Valley is invisible from more than a dozen paces away in any direction. Who knows how many roving bands of foes have passed by, never the wiser?

Djinn and Sorcery

When the Ki-Rin first crossed the Burning Sands, they were dismayed to discover that their prayers to the kami went unanswered: there were no kami here. Instead, they soon discovered that beings of smokeless fire, called djinn, dwelled in the hidden and remote regions. Entirely new prayers, offerings, and rites would be required to commune with them, and luchi looked to the local people to learn how to do so.

NAME MAGIC

In addition to a type of blood sorcery almost indistinguishable from the *mahō* of Rokugan, the sorcerers of Rempet had practiced a form of Name Magic. By speaking the True Name of a djinni, demon, or other supernatural being, a sorcerer could compel the spirit into service or bind it to an object such as a lamp or ring. Some powerful sorcerers could use their Name Magic on mortals. Qamarists refuse to speak the name of the Prophet or of their God for fear of being accused of sorcery.



MANTICORES

Also known as sphinxes, manticores are terrible and powerful monsters who have been the bane of civilizations since time immemorial. Manticores are known to take human form when they desire, but their true forms resemble great hunting cats or birds of prey—or sometimes both together—with human faces. They eat only human flesh and are said to take great delight in secrets, riddles, and wordplay. Their magic is as powerful as that of any human sorcerer, and some sorcerers seek them out to learn their mystic arts.

Jann, the weakest djinn, are flighty, ephemeral creatures of smokeless fire. They are often invisible, and while possessed of myriad powers no mortal can hope to equal, they are simple, strange, and fey beings, relatively easy to appease and even control. Jann are the most numerous of the djinn and the type most frequently bound by Name Magic.

Ifrits are often possessed of physical bodies, which may be replete with animalistic features such as horns or the snouts of jackals. Their physical prowess is formidable, and many are able to fly great distances in the blink of an eye, lift entire palaces above their heads, or perform other incredible feats at the whims of their masters. More human than jann, ifrits are proud beings who are prone to flattery and sometimes reward humble or pious humans. Like all djinn, they can and do vanish in an instant.

The marids are the greatest of the djinn, combining all the physical power of the ifrits with all the mystical abilities of the jann. Marids, when they choose to manifest a body, often appear very humanlike, but of enormous size and noble bearing. Marids were once worshipped as gods by primitive and superstitious humans. Only the most powerful or foolhardy sorcerers would attempt to bind a marid with Name Magic, as these proud beings will surely take a most painful revenge should they ever break free.

Due to the Prophet's disapproval of slavery, sorcery is generally banned throughout the Caliphate. Nevertheless, many caliphs and emirs have kept court sorcerers in their employ. These positions are justified by the argument that as long as the sorcerers are negotiating fair trades with the spirits, no forbidden slavery is occurring. Still, some courts have outright ignored the Prophet's prohibitions.

COURTS OF DJINN

The djinn belong to this world, not Heaven or Hell, and are an older race than humankind. There are many tribes and nations of djinn, and their numbers are impossible to calculate. Djinn may nonetheless be helpfully divided into several distinct types, three of which are described below:

The Secret History of the Unicorn

This document, maintained by Ide chroniclers during the entire length of the Unicorn's exodus from Rokugan, was begun by Ide himself. It is the only written record of that time to survive to the present day, but it has never been shared with the rest of Rokugan, for fear that it will be used as evidence against the clan in the Imperial Court.

Many of the stories contained in the Secret History are, by necessity, secondhand or apocryphal, as the chronicle was maintained only by the Golden Horde during the time the clan was divided. Several of its stories about the other hordes seem fanciful or supernatural, but according to the Ide, this is no reason to discount them as false.

SHINJO AND THE UNICORN

Shinjo-no-Kami's party was sorely distressed, lacking food and water after its journey across the Black Plain. At length, the travelers found a green grove centered on a pool of clean water, and their spirits were lifted. But Shinjo warned them: "Eat nothing, harm no animal, and drink no water. This is the spirits' place, and I must ask them for their blessing lest we anger them."

And so Shinjo went into that place, and her people made camp and awaited her return. After eight days, Utaku Chiaki, desperate to feed her people, took up her bow and shot a deer, then took her waterskin and gathered water from the grove. The people ate and drank and were grateful, but suddenly the grove vanished, the pool of water turned murky and foul, and no trace was left of the plenty of the oasis. And there was no sign of Shinjo. Then, a brilliant horned horse of white light appeared and galloped to the west, and so the people followed it, and soon they found the green grove again, and a pool of water even more beautiful and clean than the last. They waited there for Shinjo, and after eight more days, she appeared to them.

"The Unicorn spirit of this place is wroth," she said, "for the life of the deer you slew. Only another life can appease him."

"But lady!" cried her followers, misunderstanding her words. "We will be lost without you!"

"Fear not," she said. "I will not die, and you may stay here a time and eat and drink to your heart's content, for the Unicorn has given us his blessing." And the people saw then that she was with child, and so they made their home in the green grove for some months, until Shinjo was at last delivered of five beautiful children. "One of these children must return here to dwell with the Unicorn and to replace the life you took," she said. "But I will not make that choice for them. In time, they will be old enough to decide for themselves."

SHINJO AND THE WORLD-DEVOURER

Shinjo-no-Kami stood on the shore of the Endless Sea, and she knew that she could go no further, for no lands lay ahead. A great shape rose in the water, like a serpent or a demon that towered above the tallest tree. "Turn back, little god," spoke the monster, "for I am the mother of earth and sea, and I hunger."

Shinjo named the being Orochi, the Great Serpent. "And what appeases your hunger?" Shinjo asked, for her compassion for all things stayed her hand.

"All that lives, all that breathes, the very soil and the earth itself, I will consume until all the world is gone, and only then will I birth a new world to consume," said the monster. And Shinjo saw that here was the great enemy beyond the borders of Rokugan that she had rode out to find.

"Go back," she said to her followers. "Return to the Emerald Empire, that none of you remember, and make it your home, for they will need your wisdom and your strength in the time to come." And she drew her sword, and mounted her steed as swift as the air, and rode out above the waves to do battle with the world-devourer. Once, twice, three times she rode in a circle around the beast, slashing with her sword, and on the fourth pass the creature opened wide its jaws and swallowed half the ocean, and Shinjo along with it, and together they vanished beneath the waves.

But they say that Shinjo lived on past that day, for the belly of such a great beast contains all the world that it has already swallowed, and perhaps Shinjo has already killed the beast and rides even now to return to her people. After all, her promise was: "I will always return."

