

# *Fox Magic*



*by Christopher LaHaise*



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## *Additional Thanks*

Wikipedia has been an invaluable resource for finding Japanese legends and the names of the gods of Japan, as well as provided information on locations and historical figures. A special “thank you” goes out to everyone who has taken the time to add to this public store of knowledge. If you need insight into various aspects of Japan, including culture, tradition, etiquette, and mythic figures, I would strongly suggest visiting Wikipedia.

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## *Required to Play*

*Fox Magic* is a pen-and-paper roleplaying game and requires the following:

- Two or more players, with one player acting as game master.
- One or more copies of the rules.
- Writing materials (paper, pens, or other means of storing game notes and character sheets)
- Four to ten 12-sided dice. These dice can be found in most game stores and are relatively cheap.

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# *Fox Magic*

*by Christopher LaHaise*



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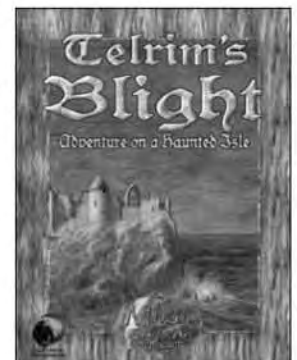
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# *Introduction*



# Introduction



*Fox Magic* is inspired by Shinto, the religion of Japan. Shinto teaches that everything, from a tree in the middle of a park to the bird which roosts within the tree, contains a spiritual essence called a kami (commonly translated as “god” or “spirit”). Kami are not restricted to individual things, however; they also preside over groups: Thus, the park itself has a god that watches over it, and the birds have a guardian spirit. The spirits are collectively called *yaoyorozu no kami* or “the eight million gods”. It is presumed that the kami are quiescent, the spirits asleep and only awakened when called upon (if then). You play a fox whose spirit has awakened, allowing the host to become self-aware and magical. When the fox spirit awakens, the fox ceases to be a normal fox, and becomes a kitsune. Other things may have an awakened spirit as well, and future supplements may look at the awakened animals and creatures such as the tanuki and the oni. *Fox Magic*, however, will concentrate on foxes.

While inspired by the legends of the kitsune, the setting is flexible. There are fox legends throughout Asia and Europe with common threads, and you are not confined to playing the game using only Japanese foxes. The legends of France and Great Britain are particularly bloody, while the foxes of China may be sinister and manipulative. No assumptions are made about the time period. Your group may decide to play in ancient Japan, at the dawn of time when the gods first looked down upon the world. The game may take place during the Meiji Restoration, when the gaijin came to Japan and traditional values were set aside to create an industrialized Japan. You may play in the modern world, your foxes contending with current technology and confronted with modern values.

If you have watched any anime or read manga, you will have encountered some of the many different ways in which the supernatural is used in stories. Mood varies from serious and dramatic shows such as *Vampire Princess Miyu* to more light-hearted (but no less dramatic) movies such as *Spirited Away*. The game may be set in a fictional world where magic and the supernatural exist side-by-side with mortal society and are feared (*Mononoke Hime* or *YuYu Hakusho*), or where they are a part of everyday life (*Ranma ½* or *Naruto*). Even relatively “slice of life” anime and manga may have the supernatural present in one form or another (*Fruits Basket* and *Combat Butler Hayate*). The theme of the game can be varied, tailored to the desires and needs of your group. The most common style of play is usually a “stranger in a strange land” approach, with the foxes attempting to blend into society, balancing their

duties and obligations with the need to fit into civilization. Imagine a handful of foxes blending in with a local school, watched over by their parents. How do they keep their true nature a secret? How do they interact with students? What if the foxes followed a mortal family to another country a few generations back? How do they balance their duties to the gods of Japan when faced with values and traditions which may run contrary to their own?

## Recommended Material

Legends of the kitsune and other creatures of Japan can be found in countless books, manga, and film. Listed below are just a sample of some of the inspirational works that you can find these fascinating creatures in.

### Books

*The Fox Woman* by Kij Johnson provides plenty of rich details about life in ancient Japan as it tells the bittersweet story of a fox falling in love with a human man. There is also a close examination of how the fox-maiden learns to take human form, and of the rich mansion (which is really a hole in the ground) that her family builds for her husband.

*Sandman: The Dream Hunters* by Neil Gaiman and Yoshitaka Amano is a lovely example of how mortals can become entangled in the affairs of yokai... and of how a fox takes revenge on those who wrong her.

Also by Neil Gaiman, “The White Road” (included in his collection *Smoke and Mirrors*) retells the English folktale of Mr. Fox, with a wicked little twist.

*Returning my Sister’s Face* by Eugie Foster is a collection of beautifully told stories of yokai and yurei. The stories include a rabbit-maiden confronting her vulpine mother-in-law, a badger teakettle, and two foxes taking opposite sides in an affair of revenge and love.

*Yokai Attack! The Japanese Monster Survival Guide* by Hiroko Yoda and Matt Alt has more profiles of weird monsters than you can shake a prayer strip at. Done with humour, an eye for the bizarre, and unapologetically cartoony illustrations, this book is an excellent source of opponents for a *Fox Magic* game.

*Kemono Storytelling*

*Kemono* (“beast”) is a genre of Japanese art which features animals acting like humans. Usually, this style of art is found in paintings, but it is also seen in most visual media in Japan. Animals found in *kemono* works are usually called *jujin* (“therianthrope”) or *kemonobito* (“beast-human”). If the character looks human except for some unusual animal traits (such as fox or cat ears, pointed canines, cat’s eyes, or a fox’s tail), the type of character is called a *kemonomimi*.





*Basho and the Fox* by Tim Myers and Oki S. Han: this children's book tells the charming tale of the great poet-monk Basho and his haiku contest with a proud kitsune.

*Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things* by Lafcadio Hearn is a classic collection of Japanese tales of the supernatural. Though there are no kitsune in it, there are hungry ghosts, mujina, and other creatures. There is a film of the same name by Masaki Kobayashi, which contains some of these stories.

*Yu Yu Hakusho* by Yoshihiro Togashi is a long-running manga series. The early story arc consists mostly of short vignettes about supernatural elements intruding on modern-day Japan. The character Kurama is a kitsune who possessed a woman's infant son, and came to love her as a mother in spite of himself.

*Kitsune: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance, and Humour* by Kiyoshi Nozaki is unfortunately long out of print, but it is one of the oldest and most detailed guides to kitsune in English.

## Films

*Onmyoji* and *Onmyoji II* (directed by Yojiro Takita) deal with the fox-blooded Abe no Seimei and his confrontations with evil forces and political intrigue. Two things to watch for are the different magic styles practised by Seimei and a rival sorcerer, and Seimei's not-quite-human behaviour: when everyone else is at their most solemn and worried, he starts to *laugh*.

Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams* is a collection of surreal short pieces, most having to do with the supernatural. There is one with a snow-maiden and another with yurei soldiers, but the segment most relevant to this game is the very first one, in which a boy sneaks out to view a fox wedding.

*Hellboy Animated: Sword of Storms* by Phil Weinstein and Tad Stones, written by Hellboy creator Mike Mignola, provides a Western-eye view of Japanese mythology as our favourite demon-blooded occult investigator meets kappa, oni, a kitsune, and more.

Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* doesn't have any foxes, but it's a wonderful introduction to the world of spirits both major and minor, and shows how cleverness and virtue can prevail over powerful magic.

## Glossary

*Fox Magic* uses a lot of Japanese terminology as well as terminology specific to the game, and there are a number of concepts which do not translate easily. Below are some of the more common names and concepts used in *Fox Magic*, as well as other words which may be inspirational, or help give you an idea for your games.



## Mundane Words

**bishounen:** A beautiful man.  
**bushi:** A male warrior. A warrior woman is called a buke no onna.  
**dojo kuge:** (or dojo) Court Nobility. Equal to the samurai but not warriors.  
**Mikado:** "Emperor". The Emperor of Japan.  
**miko:** A temple maiden.  
**onna-bugeisha:** "Woman Warrior". A samurai woman who decides to take on the duties of the warrior instead of the duties of a housewife. Often includes vows of chastity, though may marry other women.  
**samurai:** A noble of the warrior caste.  
**Shinto:** The religion of Japan, which involves reverence of the kami.  
**sohei:** A Buddhist warrior-monk, related to the yamabushi.  
**yamabushi:** A warrior monk who resides in the mountains as a hermit.  
**yojimbo:** A bodyguard.

## Spirits and Creatures

**bakemono:** See obake.  
**byako:** (Or byakko) A shrine fox, associated with Inari.  
**Fortunes:** ("shiki fukujin") Lesser gods of Japan. Term used for the Game Master. Equivalent to "Saints".  
**genko:** A messenger fox, associated with Inari.  
**hebi:** A snake yokai who can change into human form.  
**fox wife:** A name often used for a kitsune in female human form.  
**henge:** "Shape Shifter". The word hengeyokai is used to represent shape shifters with magical powers.  
**kami:** The living spirit of a concept, creature, or object.  
**kappa:** A yokai found in rivers that has a turtle-like appearance.  
**kitsune:** A fox yokai believed to possess magical powers.  
**koumori:** A bat. Symbol of chaos, unrest, and unhappiness.  
**kuko:** A "wind fox". Associated with sickness and disease.  
**kumo:** A spider. Symbol of industry and hard work. A spider yokai is known as a jorogumo.  
**kyubi no kitsune:** A fox with nine tails, considered to be powerful and ancient.  
**mujina:** A badger. A trickster yokai that often appears without a face.  
**neko:** A cat. Cat yokai are called bakeneko, while powerful cat demons are called nekomata.  
**nezumi:** A rat. Considered to be the messengers of the gods and symbols of good luck.  
**nogetsune:** "Wild Foxes". Servants of the Jewel Maiden.  
**obake:** (or bakemono or obakemono) A yokai shape shifter.  
**okami:** A wolf. The Japanese wolf is extinct, but is believed to be an avatar of the gods and a guardian of the pure.  
**oni:** A powerful demon or ogre.  
**reiko:** "Ghost Fox". A kitsune who may turn into spirit form.  
**shakko:** "Red Fox" A common kitsune. Shakkou also means *unlucky*.  
**shikomi:** "Foul Women of Yomi" The hags who serve Izanami in Yomi.  
**shiryō:** An ancestral spirit, rather than an unquiet ghost (yurei).  
**tanuki:** "Raccoon Dog". A yokai with incredible shape shifting powers. Known for having a fondness for alcohol and a large "pouch".  
**tengu:** "Heavenly Dogs". A type of yokai that takes on traits from birds of prey (usually kites or ravens). Feared yamabushi.  
**tenko:** "Celestial Fox". A powerful breed of kitsune.  
**usagi:** A rabbit. It is believed rabbits live on the moon and make mochi (a treat of sticky rice).  
**yakan:** (or yako) "Night Fox". A kitsune prone to causing trouble.  
**yaoyorozu no kami:** "The Eight Million Gods". The kami or spirits of the world.  
**yuki-onna:** "Snow Maiden". A spirit of winter and the snow.  
**yurei:** A ghost or unquiet spirit, rather than an ancestral spirit (shiryō).  
**zenko:** "Benevolent Fox". A kitsune who is helpful.

## Proper Names

**Abe no Seimei:** Legendary Onmyoji and son of a kitsune.  
**Amaterasu Omikami:** The goddess of the sun, ruler of Heaven.  
**Amatsu-Mikaboshi:** The Void. Nothingness. The god of the stars and space.  
**Ame no Uzume:** The goddess of the dawn and of mirth.  
**Inari:** (or O-Inari) Fortune of Fertility, Foxes, and Rice.  
**Izanagi no Mikoto:** "Exalted Male". The first man and god.  
**Izanami no Mikoto:** "Exalted Female". The first woman and goddess.  
**Jewel Maiden:** Another name or title for Tamamo no Mae.  
**Susano-O:** The god of storms and the sea, brother of Amaterasu.  
**Tamamo no Mae:** (or the Jewel Maiden). One of the most feared kitsune of legend. Slain by an archer, she was later redeemed by a Buddhist monk and has become the Mother of Foxes.  
**Tsukiyomi Okami:** The god of the moon, ruler of the night. Brother of Amaterasu.  
**Uke Mochi:** The goddess of food. A female aspect of Inari.

## Mystical and Supernatural Words

**akasha:** (Hindu) The essence of all things. Also Chi.  
**akashic sorcery:** The ability to channel Chi as a form of magic.  
**bachi:** A curse placed by the divine.  
**chi:** Essence or spiritual energy.  
**den:** A group of foxes that are living or working together.  
**hito-dama:** "Ghost Flames". Often blue-white or green-white lights.  
**hoshi no tama:** "Fox Ball" or "Star Pearl". A portion of a kitsune's spirit in a ball.  
**kitsune-bi:** "Fox Fire". Flames or lightning created by a kitsune.  
**kitsune no yomeiri:** "Fox Wedding" Sun showers, indicating a kitsune being married.  
**kitsune-tsuki:** "Fox Possession". The state of being possessed by a kitsune.  
**mahou:** Magic. Often associated with witchcraft or sorcery.



- oni-bi:** "Demon Fire". Flames produced by an oni or simply powerful or supernatural fire.
- onmyodo:** Magic which calls upon the principles of yang and yin. A person who practices this magic is called an onmyoji.
- "seduction":** Mesmerism. The kitsune ability to control the mind of another.
- shugendō:** An ascetic religion involving the search for enlightenment and the respect of the kami. A person who studies this path is a shugenza.
- Takamagahara:** "The High Plain of Heaven". Heaven. Also called Tengoku.
- torii gate:** A large gate and arch found at shrines and sacred places, marking the barrier between normal and sacred ground.
- yokai:** A monster or spirit with supernatural powers.
- Yomi no Kuni:** "Home of the Dead". The underworld. Also known as Yomi or sometimes Jigoku.

## More Examples

- onmyoji (ohn-myoh-jee)
- nogitsune (noh-geets-nay)
- mahou (mah-hoh)
- kami (kah-mee)
- tanuki (tah-noo-kee)
- Inari (ee-nah-ree)
- Abe no Seimei (ah-bay noh say-may)
- Tamamo no Mae (tah-mah-moh noh mah-eh)



## Pronunciation Guide

While not comprehensive, this guide to pronouncing Japanese should be enough to get by for playing *Fox Magic*. Japanese has rules for what sounds can combine with one another. Each kanji used in Japanese is a specific sound combination. Connected to these combinations are a series of rules on their use. Some sounds that we recognize in English do not exist in Japanese, such as "c", "f" (except as in fu), "l", "q", "v", and "x". The sound for "g" is always hard. When using a Japanese word, the plural for the word is the same as the singular. You may face an army of *samurai*, who are armed with *katana*. "n" as a stand-alone character is short at the end of a syllable, and is pronounced *m* if it is before "b", "p", or "m". "r" is a particular sound in Japanese, sounding something between "l" and "r". As such, some English words can be spelled as either, such as Lina sounding like "Rina" or "Lina" depending on how you hear it. The sound is actually neither. "u" is often weak when it is at the end of a syllable, creating a brief pause in the word, such as in *kitsune*, (*keets'nay*). In some common suffixes, such as *-desu* or *-masu*, the "u" is silent, making the words sound like *-dess* and *-mass*. "y", when used as a consonant is pronounced as normal, such as in *yes*. When used as a vowel, it is pronounced "ee" as in "eve", not "i" as in bite (such as in *byte*).

### Vowel Sounds

A	AH ("father")	E	EH ("metal")
I	EE ("eve")	O	OH ("opal")
U	OO ("moon")	Y	EE ("eve")

When a Japanese word has vowels together, such as with the word *onna-bugeisha*, each vowel is pronounced uniquely and individually. (In this case, the word sounds like *on-na-boo-gae-ee-sha*). Emphasis is not placed on any part of a word, and each syllable is spoken smoothly and evenly. In most cases, a vowel at the end of a word is sounded, with the exception being for the letter "u", where this is not always the case. Examples include *obake* (oh-bah-kay) and *myoubu* (mee-oh-boo). There are some exceptions to the standard, as well. For example, "ai", in which "ah" and "ee" may run together to make a hard "I", eg. *yokai* (yoh-ky-ee). "ei", in which "eh" and "ee" may run together as "eh", eg. *yurei* (yoo-ray) "ou" is pronounced "oh", eg. *bishounen* (bee-shoh-nen).

### Japanese Mora / Sound Combinations

a	ah	i	ee	u	oo	e	ay	o	oh
ka	kah	ki	kee	ku	koo	ke	kay	ko	koh
ga	gah	gi	gee	gu	goo	ge	gay	go	goh
sa	sah	si / shi	shee	su	soo	se	say	so	soh
za	zah	zi / ji	jee	zu	zoo	ze	dzay	zo	zoh
ta	tah	ti / chi	chee	tu / tsu	tsoo	te	tay	to	toh
da	dah	di / ji	jee	du / dsu	dsuu	de	day	do	doh
na	nah	ni	nee	nu	noo	ne	nay	no	noh
ha	hah	hi	hee	hu	hoo	he	hay	ho	hoh
ba	bah	bi	bee	bu	boo	be	bay	bo	boh
pa	pah	pi	pee	pu	poo	pe	pay	po	poh
ma	mah	mi	mee	mu	moo	me	may	mo	moh
ya	yah			yu	yoo			yo	yoh
ra	r/lah	ri	r/lee	ru	r/loo	re	r/lay	ro	roh
wa	wah							wo	oh
				fu	foo				
				n	"n"				
kya	kyah			kyu	kyoo			kyo	kyoh
gya	gyah			gyu	gyoo			gyo	gyoh
sha / sha	shah			shu / shu	shoo			sho / sho	shoh
zya / ja	djah			zyu / jy	djoo			zyo / jo	djoh
tcha / cha	chah			tyu / chu	choo			tyo / cho	choh
nya	nyah			nyu	nyoo			nyo	nyoh
hya	hyah			hyu	hyoo			hyo	hyoh
bya	byah			byu	byoo			byo	byoh
pya	pyah			pyu	pyoo			pyo	pyoh
mya	myah			myu	myoo			myo	myoh
rya	r/lyah			ryu	r/lyoo			ryo	r/lyoh



# Chapter One

*Kitsune*





# To Be a Fox



## Family

Kitsune appear to be normal foxes upon first glance, though they are usually larger than average size. As the fox gains power, he will gradually grow, and can even reach the size of a large dog or larger. Kitsune gain additional tails as they gather prestige and strength (Tails, page 17), and may either put these additional tails on display or conceal them, revealing only one tail. At any time, a fox may conceal his nature, appearing as a normal, mundane fox without effort. A fox knows how to stand and walk on his hind legs, though this is normally done for show or to aid in disguising himself as a human until he learns how to shape shift.

Foxes have a strong need for family. They work and live together as much as possible in groups called *dens*, supporting one another in times of trouble and acting in concert to keep harmony between them. If a fox is unfortunate enough to find himself alone, he will usually attempt to adopt a surrogate family, either by finding other foxes who already have a den to work and live with or by finding a place for himself among mortals to help ease the pang of loneliness. Foxes who decide to live in mortal society often attempt to become companions to wanderers; or if necessary, they will use Seduction (See Abilities, page 25) on someone, becoming a fox-wife or -

## Shape Shifting

Once a fox gains the ability to transform (See Abilities, page 26), he gains a number of forms innately. The most useful ability gained is the ability to take human form. Foxes are, by nature, effeminate when they take human form, usually appearing as beautiful women or androgynous men (called bishounen). Many foxes learn how to take the form of a young woman, regardless of the sex of the fox in question, and can even bear children while in this form. Most foxes have a preferred shape, though some are known to develop a number of additional forms over time. In human form, a fox will usually need to prevent his fox tails from showing. A fox also gains a yokai form, sometimes called the “demon fox” form. This form is used for intimidation and combat, and is larger and more terrifying.

The fox grows to two or three metres in height at the shoulder, with all his tails on display, weaving like serpents. The fox may tailor this form to display his power and provide more of a threat display – glowing eyes are common, and if the fox had learned kitsune-bi (See Abilities, page 24), the tails will often crackle with fire or ghost lights will float around the fox as an additional effect. Finally, the fox gains access to a jujin or “beast-human” form. The fox becomes human-shaped except for having his normal fox head and tails, while soft fur covers his body. While in this form, the fox has human-shaped hands and opposable thumbs, allowing him to use tools like a human does. Most foxes use this form when they need to use hands but do not wish to bother putting the effort into transforming into their full human form.

### Names

A number of archaic words in Japanese end in the suffix “ri”, which adds a divine or sacred quality to the word it is modifying. Foxes have a tradition of choosing names which end in *-ri*, even more so the foxes who serve *Inari*. Below are a list of words that can be considered for fox names, though it is not necessary to choose from these words alone.

- *Akari*: “lantern”, “glow”, “source of light”
- *Giri*: “sense of duty” or “social obligation”
- *Hikari*: “light”
- *Hitori*: “alone” or “solitary”
- *Ikari*: “wrath” or “rage”
- *Inori*: “prayer” or “supplication”
- *Mairi*: “worship”
- *Mamori*: “protection” or “talisman”
- *Matsuri*: “festival” or “feast”
- *Minori*: “crop” or “harvest”
- *Okori*: “genesis” or “origin”

To avoid embarrassment, you may wish to avoid simply putting together random sounds and declaring it your fox’s name. You can either buy a book of international baby names, or find a web page with them easily. An excellent resource for authentic-sounding Japanese names is the *Japanese-English Online Dictionary* where you can find words spelled out in romanji (found at <http://dict.regex.info/cgi-bin/j-e/tty/nocolor/dict>). If in doubt, use an English name associated with what your fox does, or with something which stands out about your fox.

husband. Some foxes integrate themselves into a community, providing assistance and blending in so that they can feel like they belong. Because of the need for family, foxes are rarely willing to harm one another; instead, competing foxes will either develop a hierarchy among the members of the family or community, or they will drive out those who cannot get along with their group. A myobu (See *Inari* page 62) would rather drive away a troublesome nogitsune (See *The Jewel Maiden*, page 63) than kill him.

## Honesty

A fox will keep his word. While a fox will try not to lie, this does not mean he must be open and honest in all that he does. A fox disguised as a woman will not say

“yes” if asked if she is a fox. Instead, she will try to dismiss the question with such shifting words as “oh, that is such a foolish question!” or “do I look like a fox to you?” An exception to this rule against telling untruths is storytelling. Telling stories is important to foxes, and a skilled storyteller is someone to be admired. When a fox needs to trick someone and finds that he must lie to do it, the fox will tell the lie as part of a story, carefully shaping the words in such a way that he is not directly lying to the person. Illusion is one of the more effective tools a fox can use for storytelling. When a fox weaves an illusion, the illusion takes on a state which borders “real.”





Because of this, anything within the illusion is “true” as long as the fox wishes it to be. An illusionary person is a real person for the fox and can talk and act as the fox needs, including telling lies, as long as it is in accordance with the illusions created.

## Morality

A fox exists outside of the normal dichotomy of “good” and “evil.” While a fox may learn such concepts as he grows more experienced, it is not his place to judge someone’s morality this way. Instead, foxes have their own principles. As a kami, a fox sees things from the perspective of one who is a part of nature and the spirit world. What is important to a fox is harmony. A fox wishes to see harmony with the household, harmony with the local community, and harmony with the Gods and Fortunes. Someone who acts in harmony with the world will not be punished by a fox, regardless of how cruel or evil he may be. However, a fox who understands what “good” and “evil” are may test such a person, and once he has fallen out of harmony, the fox may punish him cruelly. Alternately, a good and kind person who falls out of harmony may be given a lesser punishment, tricked and humiliated so that he will know that he has done wrong. How serious the punishment is will depend on the type of fox and how he feels about the person who has done wrong.

## Dignity

Foxes have a sense of pride and superiority that runs deep, and do not like to ask for aid even in truly dire circumstances. Instead, if aid is to come, a fox will want it to be a true act of kindness and charity. If aid is provided to the fox and the person granting it expects reward, the fox will feel truly insulted.

Paradoxically, foxes will usually refuse to come to the aid of another unless specifically asked to do so. To act otherwise, in the fox’s mind, would be an insult to the person in need as it questions their capabilities. *‘If she truly wished for help, she would ask’*, he thinks.

Foxes may be unusual in this regard, but they are also incredibly loyal to those they befriend. Once a fox has given his loyalty, he will feel deeply betrayed if his trust is used against him. Fulfilling his duties and obligations is not personal for a fox, but depending on his breed, his enmity may become a terrible thing to behold, as some foxes take great pains to destroy everything that the victim holds dear. Such vendettas may take hours, days, or the fox may even stretch out the torment of the poor soul’s for generations if the wrong against him was heinous.

## Obligations

The fox is a Trickster figure, and as a trickster, his purpose is to promote harmony. The fox rewards those who please the gods and punishes those who anger the gods, while providing wisdom which is gained through the punishment. The fox’s mandate is not simply to harm someone: Something must be learned from the harm – either the person who is punished learns from his mistakes, or he is made a lesson to those who hear of the punishment enacted. A person who acts with honour, or who is in harmony with the world and the gods, may find himself with a fox who travels at his side, even if he never knows the true nature of the fox companion that he sees only infrequently. A person who acts without care and angers the gods may find his life taking a horrible downturn as the fox punishes and torments him for his misdeeds. A fox may be required to reward a good deed with another good deed and punish cruelty with an even greater cruelty. Foxes who resort to trickery often do so as a test of the victim’s moral character, to see for themselves if the victim is deserving of the protection and blessings of the kami. Those who fail these tests are often punished by having their weaknesses turned against them. Those who atone, showing the foxes true humility, regret, and piety are often left in peace.

## Character Creation

To play *Fox Magic*, you must begin by making a character – a fox who has awakened and become a kami. At the beginning of the game, the game master will decide whether you will be allowed to start as a one-tailed fox or a two-tailed fox (Tails, page 17). Foxes who begin play as one-tailed are taking part in a prelude – a story meant to help you and the other players get a feel for the game and your characters, rather than to provide dangerous conflict. Foxes who begin play as two-tailed are still considered young, but it is assumed that these foxes have had at least a little experience.

## Breed

To begin with, you should first choose which of the eight *breeds* of fox you are playing. Each breed has a specific appearance, personality traits, and purpose. They have recognizable biases and personality quirks which help them stand apart from the other fox breeds.

While your fox need not obey all the stereotypes of their breed, you should have a good explanation for those stereotypes that you wish to deliberately ignore. The type of breed you choose to play will also determine what other people believe your fox will be like. Of course, there is always a grain of truth with such superstitions, so your fox should be recognized as a member of the breed by the way the fox acts.





## Strength

Every fox has one *Attribute* which acts as her strength. When performing any Challenge which uses that Attribute, you always gain one extra die for the roll. No matter how many penalties you may have, you will always roll a minimum of two dice for that specific Attribute.

## Ban

Each fox has a *ban* that is associated with the Attribute which is her *strength*. A ban is a spiritual limitation, forcing the fox to act in a certain way. If the fox encounters her ban during play, you may choose to allow the fox to succumb to her ban and act accordingly. Doing so allows her to recover an expended Attribute Point aligned with the fox's strength. If you wish to resist the ban, however, the fox must spend an Attribute Point instead. You may choose to introduce her ban in a Scene, specifically to succumb to it and thus recover an Attribute Point, or the Fortunes may decide to introduce a ban, thus testing you at an inconvenient time.

## Special Senses

Each breed of fox has a sense unique to them, helping them to fulfil their duties. This sense has no mechanics to it, and is simply a part of the fox which can be used to assist in roleplaying. When a player wishes to use a sense, they may simply describe it as part of their normal game play. These senses are described with each of the breeds, but is mentioned here specifically to make things clear for both the players and the Fortunes.

*Byako Kitsune* hear the voice of the greater kami, those who have wisdom and advice to grant the fox, so that they may share it with others. These spirits can be used to provide the fox with insight into their current circumstances, or provide needed history or information.

*Genko Kitsune* hear the voices of the Fortunes and Gods, and often act to deliver these messages to others or follow the commands given. The Fortunes may instruct the fox to deliver a message to a specific individual, or to watch over someone the Fortunes have taken an interest in.

*Kuko Kitsune* hear the voices of the miko-kami, the "little gods" of the world. These lesser spirits tell the fox of old pacts and promises, and the spiritual condition of the region he is in. Through them, the fox learns the state of the area and what may be happening there.

*Reiko Kitsune* hear the voices of the dead, whether they are ancestral spirits watching over their descendants, the spirits of the underworld, or the unquiet dead. Through the dead, the fox can gain insight into a person's past, and can learn of wrongs done or desires unfulfilled.



*Shakko Kitsune* do not hear voices, but instead have an innate affinity for human culture. If asked, these foxes often state that they hear the voice of humanity itself. Through their connection to humanity and mortal civilization, these foxes can blend seamlessly into society almost by instinct.

*Tenko Kitsune* can hear the prayers that are not made within a sacred shrine or temple, or which are directed specifically to them. These foxes use the prayers that they hear to understand the spiritual needs of the community, and use these petitions for aid to enforce celestial judgement.

*Yakan Kitsune* do not hear voices, but can instead subconsciously sense the harmony of a region and when this harmony is about to be disturbed. Not well understood, these foxes instinctively look for locations and people who may be trouble in the future, and cause disruptions which often bring these problems to the foreground.

*Zenko Kitsune* do not hear voices, but can instead intuitively sense the needs of the community or group they are a part of, and understand what actions are necessary to keep harmony within the community. The fox instinctively knows what must be done, though not

necessarily why, before there is any indication that action is needed.

The senses of a fox are a mystical gift, allowing him to hear the world. It is not a power he should ever take for granted. When roleplaying a fox using his senses, try to capture the sense of otherworldliness that comes with it.

*Optional Rule: Additional Bans*  
In some beliefs, a spirit suffers from restrictions or bans which help define it while also granting it additional power. If this rule is used by the Fortunes, a fox may take on additional burdens, granting her further complications while providing her with spiritual strength. When this rule is being used, your fox may take additional bans. Starting with her first tail, you may choose or create a new ban for the fox, and may also design a new ban each time your fox gains another tail. This is by no means mandatory, and if you find a ban particularly troublesome, you can instead remove a ban when your fox gains a tail instead. However, a fox must always have the ban associated with her breed. A ban can be associated with any Attribute, but must be approved by the Fortunes. For each ban taken, the fox gains one additional Ability. If the ban is lost, so is the Ability associated with that ban. Unlike with the ban associated with the fox's breed, the ban does not provide an associated strength. Additional bans may mirror the bans of other breeds, and may be associated with a mixed heritage, or the fox making an oath during the course of a Story which becomes indelibly a part of the fox's character.





## Byako Kitsune

**Nickname:** White Fox

*"I shall tell you the story of the first white fox. She was a wise and noble soul, and could hear the spirits of the wind, who would bring to her knowledge from far and wide. But her life was hollow, for what is wisdom without others to share it with? What use is knowledge if you keep it to yourself?"*

*"So, the white fox took her husband and her five children, and she left their home. She wandered across the land until she came to the base of Inari Mountain, in what is now Kyoto. There, the white fox and her family came to the shrine of Inari, where they bowed, and she said: 'Great spirit, we have been graced with wisdom. We wish to protect this world, but find it difficult to do as we are. We wish to become your servants from this day forth.'*

*"Inari was pleased, and accepted the family. Our patron gave the upper shrine to the husband, but the lower shrine, where the visitors would come, was given to the white fox. O-Inari gave her the name Akomachi, and she shared her visions with those who came to her."*

The byako kitsune are believed to be the descendants of Akomachi, the first White Fox. These foxes are nearly always female, and are often the spiritual heart of a fox den, providing wisdom to those who approach with reverence and humility. To glimpse a White Fox is often seen as a good omen.

### Appearance

**Pure.** The White Fox manifests as snow-white or pearly in colour, and may have fur which breaks the light that touches it into faint rainbow hues along her hide. Some byako may also have grey or off-white touches in their fur as well. Rare is the byako with silver fur, which can be an indication that she is the reincarnation of a person of great wisdom. Her eyes are usually such a light shade of blue or grey that it is almost white. In human form, the White Fox tends to have pale, perfect skin, and beautiful white, silver, or grey hair which is never out of place. She will be slim and delicate, graceful and serene. When in a more whimsical mood, she may take the form of an elderly matron, slight of frame, but bearing a calm serenity to her. Many byako take on the role or guise of a *miko*, serving a shrine or temple and blending in with the staff. Male byako will often appear as graceful, beautiful men, and can often be mistaken for women.

### Personality

**Serene.** A byako will cultivate an air of enlightened patience and serenity and usually contents herself with watching the world around her, keeping her attention on the harmony of the region she has taken as her own and the shrine or temple she has dedicated herself to. A White Fox does not act without having the necessary information to make an informed choice, but when she does act, the impact of her actions or words will have a profound affect. She is rarely one to act rashly, and is often the unspoken leader of her den.

A byako can be very emotional, but does not let her feelings control her. Instead, the White Fox uses her emotions as a tool to aid her in her duties. She may feel deep love for someone, and will show her devotion in a thousand small acts, and when she feels joy she shares her happiness with those around her. It is when a byako has hurt or wronged that she is at her most dangerous. Rather than allowing her anger or sorrow to overwhelm her, the White Fox hones her emotions to a fine point, and uses it as a weapon against her enemy. An angry byako is one who will systematically destroy her foes, slicing apart their lives with the precision of a surgeon.

### Patron

Nearly all White Foxes will swear their services to Inari, fulfilling the obligations of their ancestors. Those byako who do not feel the call to Inari will usually find a shrine or temple that has need of their presence, and serve there, helping to bring harmony and peace to the holy site while turning their attention to the surrounding community.

### Strength and Ban

(Wisdom) The White Fox is a source of wisdom, and can hear the whispering of the *kami* about her. She uses this wisdom to provide insight and guidance to those around her. It is her sacred duty to provide wisdom to others, however, and because of this she must honestly answer any question presented to her. If for some reason she does not wish to provide the petitioner with an answer, she may instead choose to provide a riddle, or answer the question with one of her own. Regardless of how she replies, however, the answer to the question must be given in some form.

"Before you act, have you considered the consequences? Perhaps I can offer some advice."





## Genko Kitsune



**Nickname:** Black Fox

*“You want to know the story of the first black fox? I am not much of a storyteller, but this is what I do know. Once, he had no name, but he did have a lovely wife and five strong children. His life was peaceful, as far as things go, but his wife was plagued by strange visions and would speak of things and places she should not know of. To find a way to bring herself peace, she asked her family to abandon their home, and led them across Nihon towards Inari Mountain.*

*“Along the way, the black fox defended his family. He was forced to battle dogs, to trick humans, and to pit his wits and courage against the strange creatures they found within the forests and swamps. They slowly made their way to the distant mountains, and once there his wife prayed at the shrine she found.*

*“Inari was pleased with the family, and gave us her blessing. To the father, she gave the upper shrine, and she gave him the name Osusuki. Because of his courage, he was made a messenger of the gods, and guardian of the shrine.”*

The genko kitsune are thought to be the descendants of Osusuki, the Black Fox. They are nearly always male, and hear the whispers of the Fortunes, providing them with messages to deliver or omens to provide. When not delivering messages for the Fortunes, they patrol their shrine or temple, ensuring it is safe. Glimpsing a Black Fox is seen as a good omen.

### *Appearance*

**Proud.** The genko will usually have glossy black or charcoal gray fur which is kept flawless. A very few Black Foxes have midnight blue fur, which is often taken as a sign that the fox is the reincarnation of a soul of great dedication and duty. A genko will often have amber or jade eyes. In human form, he is usually pale-skinned, but lithe and trim, preferring to be graceful and athletic. His hair is long, usually coming down to the small of his back. If in the mood for mischief, he may take the form of an elderly man, disguising his true strength until it is needed. Many Black Foxes take on the guise of a monk or sohei, serving at a temple or tending a shrine. Female genko often appear as trim, lean figures who might be described as “tomboyish”.

### *Personality*

**Dedicated.** The genko takes his duties seriously, alert for dangers to his domain and those he protects. He prefers not to be alone, swearing himself to a companion who acts as a guide

and touchstone. A genko prefers to answer to a byako if at all possible, protecting their companion and acting as a messenger when needed. In the den, the Black Fox will answer only to the leader or those who they consider to hold authority. Very few genko act as den leader, preferring to be given a duty to perform or a role to call their own, and fulfilling their obligations with skill and honour. The genko are dignified and strict, but are not above using guile to fulfil their duties. When acting as a messenger or guardian, if the direct approach will not suffice, they will result to cunning and trickery to perform their duties. A Black Fox may use trickery to ward off intruders, or misdirection to avoid a conflict that is not necessary. The genko does not see it as his duty to judge or punish – there are other, more wiser foxes for that. He will note those who act against the will of the Fortunes, however, and ensure that others fulfil their duties in good time.

A genko is a dedicated companion, though he does not feel as deeply as his byako counterpart. He is loyal, but if his trust is betrayed can feel deep pain. Such Black Foxes prefer to disappear, rather than confronting those who have broken faith with them. If the genko must confront someone who has betrayed his faith, however, he is usually direct and without mercy, performing as he feels he must.

### *Patron*

Nearly all Black Foxes will swear their services to Inari, fulfilling the obligations of their ancestors. Those genko who do not feel the call to Inari will usually find a shrine or temple that has need of their presence, and serve there, helping to bring harmony and peace to the holy site while turning their attention to the surrounding community.

### *Strength and Ban*

(Skill) The Black Fox is quick to learn new things, his journeys providing him with insight into the way the world works and giving him a variety of useful skills. As his ancestors were aided by Inari, he is sworn to aid others. Any sincere or selfless request for aid specifically to him or to his shrine or temple must be answered. The genko are known for providing assistance to others if they are in dire need, and some will go out of their way to help those in distress or to answer prayers that are not directed at them specifically. When a Black Fox provides aid, even if he is reluctant to do so, his efforts will always be sincere and to the best of his ability.

“The gods have asked me to bring you this message.”





## Kuko Kitsune



**Nickname:** Air Fox

*"I once saw a hiker going through my woods. He had been told by the villagers that the area was haunted. He had been told that if he must go through, he should bring an offering. He was told to stay upon the path, and never to go at night. He had ignored all their warnings. I followed him from the village and into the woods. He walked past my shrine, and left no offering. He sang loudly and disturbed the animals. He wandered from the path to pick my berries and drink from my springs. And so, after the third time he ignored the rules I had placed on those coming into my woods – I made the path disappear. I made his compass spin and twirl. And soon, he was lost.*

*"The night came, and he was scared. So I helped him. My tail tips glowed like lamps, and he rushed to follow them. I sang songs in a sweet voice, and he called out to me. I led him through thorns and marsh, past wasp nests and brambles. For days he followed me, hungry and desperate. Finally, I left him at the edge of the woods, at my shrine once more. He knelt and begged mercy and thanks that he had survived, and gave me the last of his rice balls. I let him go."*

The kuko kitsune tend the sacred places, whether it be a hidden grove or a shrine lost for generations. They listen to the whispers of the miko-kami (little gods), fulfilling ancient oaths and sacred pacts forgotten by others over the generations. Many Air Foxes live on the outskirts of civilization, tending to places long forgotten. In a den, the kuko act as the voice of the kami, speaking for them when they are unquiet, helping to appease the many spirits that live about them, and ensuring that the actions of the den are in harmony with the spirit world. Kuko tend to be male, though they do not have any qualms about changing sexes when it suits them.

### *Appearance*

**Mysterious.** The kuko will usually have cream-coloured fur, ranging from a soft yellow to a light brown, and dark yellow or brown eyes. Some foxes are born with a dark yellow coat, which is considered a sign that the fox kuko is the reincarnation of a powerful shugenza or other elemental sorcerer. Air Foxes often have darker trim to their fur colour. It is rare for a kuko to have a specific human form, preferring to develop a number of personae varying in age and sex to suit his needs. He can usually be identified by his mannerisms, which allows those who know him to identify him through his myriad personas. In most cases, the Air Fox will wear clothing which can be seen as traditional or archaic, and in most cases his human guise will be fit and healthy, regardless of appearance.

### *Personality*

**Capricious.** The kuko is the soul of mischief, and enjoys tormenting others he comes across. Both friends and enemies are often victim to his pranks and tricks, while strangers are prodded and tested to determine their moral character. An Air Fox is very territorial, staking out a region for himself and his den, and will defend it to the death. Rather than boldly attacking trespassers, however, the kuko will observe them to learn their intent, and if they meet his satisfaction, he may allow them to pass with only a modicum of inconvenience. If he finds they have disrupted the harmony of his domain or have not paid the proper respect he feels is due, they *will* be tormented.

An Air Fox is quick to make friends, but is just as quick to forget the people he has made friends with. If a true bond is made, however, the kuko proves to be a loyal – if potentially frustrating – companion. If betrayed, he is both vicious and merciless, showing no remorse for the actions he takes against his enemies. His tricks become dangerous, and can easily cripple or kill. Worse is if he decides to allow his enemies to live, for he will never tire of tormenting them and destroying their lives.

### *Patron*

Most Air Foxes swear fealty to the Jewel Maiden, finding her views to coincide well with theirs, or have a shrine made to themselves to mark their domain. Kuko can work well with other foxes, but very few feel the need to answer to Inari, finding most people unworthy of their protection.

### *Strength and Ban*

(Spirit) The Air Fox is strongly connected to the spirit world, and their connection to the kami is stronger than most other foxes. While this gives them a strong spiritual connection, it also means that holy sounds can cause discomfort. A "holy sound" includes temple gongs and church bells, taiko drums, or chimes used for religious purposes. When within earshot of such sounds, any active abilities or spiritual powers are negated. If the fox resists this ban, they are protected for the scene from that one source.



*"This way, I know a shortcut! Would I lead you astray?"*



## Reiko Kitsune



**Nickname:** Ghost Fox

*"The house was obviously cursed. I could sense the onryo who waited there, the ghosts of those she had killed bound to serve her until she was released. Each yurei was a shield, preventing me from simply removing her. I had to unwrap this riddle, release each ghost in turn, working backwards from last month's death to the very first. This would be... difficult. If I was wrong, she would know, and she would come for me. I did not think I was strong enough to face her. Weeks of study, of reading newspapers, of following patterns. A dozen exorcisms to send each yurei to his or her final rest. I thought I was ready. I stepped into the house and confronted her.*

*"I forgot her son. She had not killed her son, her husband did, and so I thought he was exempt from her curse. I was wrong. I barely escaped with my tails intact, but now she has marked me as she had marked all her previous victims. And so I sit in my shrine, and I look outside. And I see her across the street. Watching me. I fear that this is going to be... difficult."*

The reiko kitsune are the keepers of the dead, beholden to ensuring the peace is kept between the ancestors and their living descendants. They hear the whispers of both the ancestor spirits who have risen to serve the gods and those who have fallen into the depths of the underworld. Ghost Foxes act as the spirits of retribution for the dead, listening to them and acting to punish those who have wronged them. In a den, she speaks for the dead, the ancestors and the yurei who need tending to. She upholds the duties the living have for the dead and ensures that the actions of her den-mates do not cause quiet ghosts. Reiko tend to be female, and most prefer to keep female form.

### *Appearance*

**Mournful.** A Ghost Fox is often pale blue or gray, though some few have fur a darker, unnatural blue in colour. Such dark foxes are believed to be the reincarnation of powerful exorcists or spiritualists. In human form, the Ghost Fox tends to be pale and unnerving in appearance, thin and sickly or delicate. Her hair is dark, often braided down her back, or cut short as a sign of mourning. She dresses in dark colours such as indigo or black, and may be mistaken for wearing gothic or funeral garb.

### *Personality*

**Unnatural.** As a speaker for the dead, the reiko hears many things. As such, she tends to speak of things she honestly should not know, or know about people before she ever met them. The Ghost Fox usually appears sombre, with a dry wit and deadpan sense of humour which easily combines with her wardrobe to make others feel uneasy around her. This is probably for the best, as the reiko knows her contact with the dead can put others at risk, and while she must often live among humanity, her activities can easily endanger the lives of others. Only her den may be up to handle anything which comes looking for her.

When a Ghost Fox bonds with another, she gives them quiet support, guiding them in a way that will give them strength and make their ancestors proud. She is not forceful, and prefers to let others shine while working behind the scenes. If hurt, the reiko becomes more sullen and withdrawn, but if angered, she is filled with an intensity which is both obvious and terrifying. Against her enemies, she can be as relentless and horrific as the yurei she hunts, having learned more than enough to create a living nightmare for her foes.

### *Patron*

Reiko will often swear fealty to the Jewel Maiden, acting to punish those who have angered their ancestors or disturbed the dead. Ghost Foxes prefer small, personal shrines to them, something out of the way so that they may have privacy, and in a place where they are given some protection from ghosts who disapprove of their interference.

### *Strength and Ban*

(Spirit) The Ghost Fox has a powerful connection to the spirit world, allowing her to hear the whispers of the dead. Her unnatural existence is also her bane, however. Anyone who sees the reflection of a reiko in human guise will instead see her in *jujin* form. If presented with her reflection, this ban may be activated, negating all Spiritual powers the Ghost Fox has active. In the presence of lamplight (candle or oil lamps), the reiko's shadow also takes *jujin* form, though her shadow remains normal in the presence of artificial light.

"Do not look to me for mercy, you have brought this upon yourself."





## Shakko Kitsune

**Nickname:** Red Fox

*"I was out and about one day, hunting chickens, when I stumbled upon a snare that the farmer had set out for some pest or another. It really hurt my ankle, and it must have had bells attached someplace because I could hear the farmer coming in no time. Well, I turned into a pretty young woman, and you should have seen the look on his face to see this girl on the ground with a snare around her ankle. He was overcome with guilt, and offered to help me out of the snare and see me safely home.*

*"Well, I took him to my den – of course it looked like a nice, simple home. I fed him soup and rice, and gave him tea, and naturally we wound up sharing a bed. I kept him around for a week, telling him to stay and be comfortable while I 'tended to my duties'. By that time, the joke was played out, so I dropped the spell, and let him find himself one morning in a smelly old cave having eaten leaves and grubs. The look on his face? Priceless."*

Often mistaken for common foxes, the shakko kitsune is capable of blending in nearly anywhere. Unlike other kitsune, the Red Foxes do not have a strong connection to the kami. Instead, the shakko find they have a strong connection to humanity. Blending in among people comes naturally to the Red Foxes, who learn to take advantage of this very early in life. In a den, the shakko are the ones most likely to go out among the populace when contact with people is considered necessary. There are slightly more female shakko than there are male, but this is rarely an issue with the Red Foxes, as they freely switch between male and female as it suits their purpose.

### Appearance

**Common.** A Red Fox is usually russet or brown in colour, with black highlights to their fur patterns. On rare occasions, a shakko will be born with luxurious red fur the colour of blood, and such foxes are often believed to be the reincarnation of someone who has died with an important, unfulfilled need. In human form, a Red Fox will blend in with the people around her, and while she may look incredibly attractive, the details of her appearance quickly fade from memory, leaving only impressions once she has gone. She will usually have dark red or brown hair, and dark brown or black eyes.

### Personality

**Charming.** A Red Fox is a charming, persuasive individual, able to win over her enemies with soft words and a strong personality. She hates to be ignored, and often acts as if the world revolved around her. At a party, a shakko will frequently be the storyteller, spinning humorous jokes and anecdotes about the things she's been involved with, each tale larger than the last. She hates to truly offend, but if someone gets under her skin she'll be more than willing to have fun at their expense.

A Red Fox can be an overwhelming companion. She tends to pull her friends and partners into her wild escapades, getting them into and out of trouble. She is loyal, but can prove to be exhausting as she seems filled with endless energy. The shakko can be a demanding and jealous partner, expecting attention and not tolerating any idea of someone else holding as important a place in her companion's heart. This jealousy can take a dark turn if it is proven founded. A Red Fox as an enemy is truly dangerous, as she will show no hesitation in turning even the closest of her enemy's friends against them. The power of the shakko is in the way she influences others, and that is a very formidable weapon.

### Patron

Shakko are unlikely to swear fealty to anyone, and prefer to act independently of the Fortunes. When a Red Fox does decide to swear fealty, it is usually to Inari, serving as one of the *myoubu*. Shakko have no real preference for where their shrines are dedicated, whether it is in the city, or out in the countryside.

### Strength and Ban

(Cunning) Red Foxes find themselves at home among people, and always have a story to tell about how they outsmarted one person or another. They take pride in their quick thinking and silver tongues. This pride can defeat them, however, as they can not refuse a challenge of wits or intellect. If presented with a puzzle, riddle, or other intellectual challenge, the shakko will find her curiosity getting the better of her. An obvious act to put the Red Fox into harm's way can be safely ignored, but if the shakko has the means to prove her cunning safely, she will act. A common dare or a public show of wits may trigger this ban, as can an unfinished Sudoku puzzle left out with a pen.

"Oh, what's this? How does it work? Let me see! Give me a moment, I can figure this out!"





## Tenko Kitsune



**Nickname:** Celestial Fox

*"None suspected he had a mistress. I would not have known, if his wife had not come to the shrine, filled with doubts. She was certain he was turning away from her, and she was scared and filled with sorrow. I watched and followed him, wearing the form of a courier to his office, then his secretary to listen to him during the day. I was his driver who took him home after work. I was his daughter as he ate dinner. I watched him for a week, and learned all I could about him. And I learned that he did not have just one mistress, he had many.*

*"I devised a plan. I took his form and called each woman in turn. I told them to meet at a certain place, at a certain time. And then, the next day, I took his favourite, and I called him. I told him I had a surprise for him, and to meet with me. Done, I followed him from his office, and watched as he entered the park. And there, I watched as his many lovers all saw him and approached. And then they saw one another. And then they knew. I saw the hurt within their eyes. I felt their anger. I knew their betrayal. He saw me behind them, and then he knew he would pay for his deeds."*

The tenko kitsune believe themselves to be the tools of divine retribution and reward. The Celestial Foxes can hear the prayers of the living, but only those which are not made at a temple or shrine; such prayers are for the Fortunes alone. The tenko hear the prayers of those who have not found a place to petition the gods, and judge how to act accordingly. Some Celestial Foxes have their own shrines, waiting for those who come to them, and answer the prayers given as they see fit. Within a den, the tenko speak on behalf of the mortals, ensuring the needs of the people are met, whether it is to reward the pious or to punish the wicked. The majority of the Celestial Foxes are female.

### *Appearance*

**Regal.** The Celestial Fox is a brilliant silver or gold colour, their fur glistening and flawless. It is accepted that all tenko are the reincarnation of those whose prayers went unanswered, leading to tragedy. In human form, the Celestial Fox appears stunningly attractive; the word that frequently comes to mind to describe her is "flawless". Her hair will usually be either a bright golden or soft silver colour, with eyes of azure blue or emerald green. A tenko dresses to impress, drawing others to her and always attempting to leave them with a powerful lasting impression.

### *Personality*

**Mercurial.** The Celestial Fox is often seen as alien and chaotic, her emotions shifting from moment to moment. When in a pleasant mood, the tenko is often described as *alluring*, *enthraling*, or *mysterious*, and when she is in a temper she is described as *tempestuous*, *ferocious*, and *baleful*. In all cases, when a mood comes to the Celestial Fox, she must act upon it. How she reacts to a shift in her mood may be subtle or blatant, but the outcomes of her actions are felt for some time afterwards.

The tenko is a dangerous companion, in large part due to her ban. A Celestial Fox can be a passionate lover or a trusted friend, but to wrong her invites disaster upon her lover if she feels even for a moment that she has been slighted. The tenko is a demanding partner, as she expects her companion to be of exceptional moral character. If her expectations are not met or she carries doubts, she will arrange tests, and if such tests are failed she may bring ruin upon her lover if steps are not made to atone. Like other foxes, the Celestial Fox is a loyal partner, but she will not hesitate to enforce her will upon her companion if she feels he is not up to the standards she has set for him. If she is actually wronged by one she cares for, her wrath is inescapable and complete, leaving her enemy's life in ruins – if they survive.

### *Patron*

Tenko consider themselves the children of the Jewel Maiden, and as such almost universally swear loyalty to her. The Celestial Foxes believe it is their place to punish and reward, and use the stories of Tamamo-no-Mae as inspiration for their activities. Many tenko also attempt to gain one or more shrines to themselves, allowing them to hear the prayers dedicated to them whether or not they serve the Jewel Maiden or O-Inari.

### *Strength and Ban*

(Wisdom) Celestial Foxes feel a sense of urgency and divine purpose, carrying with them the prayers of the mortals about them and the understanding of the needs of the people. When subject to a wrongdoing, a tenko will respond with a greater wrong against the offender. When a kindness is performed against a Celestial Fox, she will be compelled to reward it with a greater kindness. Minor infractions can be safely ignored, but any action the tenko feels would anger or please the Fortunes must be responded to in kind.

"I am as you see me, my lord. Why would I be anything different? Allow me to ease your worries."





## Yakan Kitsune



**Nickname:** Night Fox

*“Six hundred and seven... six hundred and eight... six hundred and nine. I count the grains of rice spilled across the floor, tidying them up, putting them away. I watch the girl smile and take pictures as I work, and I think of how it all went so wrong.*

*“I had cut off the hair of every woman on this block, except hers. No matter how hard I tried, I'd not been able to get her alone. I love watching the girls cry and wail when they wake up with their hair snipped short. It doesn't hurt them, but they panic and scream and weep. Harmless fun, right? But no. Every time I thought I had her, something happened. But this time... I thought I had her.*

*“Her window had been open a crack, and I thought that this was my chance. I slipped into her room... and knocked over the jar of rice she had set by the window. All that lovely rice, scattered across the floor, taunting me. She wasn't even in her bed! She was across the room, in the hall, waiting for me to come. And now, I'm sitting here gathering the rice as she watches me. She's told me she'd been watching me for weeks, and wanted to talk to me. Her hair cascades down her back, and I look at it, and I think about the scissors beside me. But the rice! Six hundred and twenty. Six hundred and twenty one...”*

The yakan kitsune (or yako kitsune if female) are a primary cause of stories involving fox mischief. It is in their blood to cause chaos, and they have a dislike for complacency. Night Foxes believe what they do is valuable – it alters the perceptions of the people around them, and helps to promote change. If it happens to be a bit of an inconvenience for the subject of their attentions, so what? Within a den, a yakan is tolerated, because when they stir the hornet's nest they tend to find legitimate problems which lurked beneath the surface that deserve the den's full attention. Whether it be an unquiet ghost that has not yet come to power, or a dark sorcerer whose plans have not yet come to fruition, the yakan have a habit of finding those who would have become a greater problem if they had been left alone just a little longer. It seems as if the Night Foxes have a sense for where their mischief might do the most good. Almost all yakan are male.

### Appearance

**Sly.** The Night Fox is a dull brown or gray in colour, allowing them to blend in with his surroundings. Some believe that the yakan are reincarnations of those poor souls who have died of

boredom. In human form, a Night Fox appears as a wiry, slim figure, with a cunning look to his brown or grey eyes. His hair is unkempt, and he tends to dress to blend in with the local street cultures or gangs. Often, a yakan will be mistaken for a “punk” or other troublemaker.

### Personality

**Impish.** They say a bored Night Fox is a danger to everyone around him, and that could be true. The yakan seem to be born to cause trouble, and find it hard not to play tricks and test everyone's patience. Night Foxes enjoy a strange sense of humour, using puns and word-play while confusing and testing everyone's sense of reality. The yakan also have a sense of pride, however, and prefer style to vulgarity, so while those around them may groan at a pun or prank, they will also shake their heads in admiration of the Night Fox's cleverness.

The yakan makes for an interesting companion, and likes to test the perceptions of those he is with. His partner may find her furniture rearranged every so often, requiring her to find out where everything is, or may find her books arranged in reverse alphabetical order for no reason whatsoever. The Night Fox requires patience from his companion, as he is willing to follow nearly any whim that strikes him when he's bored, but if his partner has a sense of humour, he can be quite entertaining. If crossed, however, the yakan is a dangerous opponent. He will turn all his power on the one who has hurt him, tormenting them with trickery and pranks which can go from mild inconvenience to the blackest humour. Those who witness the death of a Night Fox's enemy often remark on the grim irony or the absurdity of the death.

### Patron

Yakan prefer to serve the Jewel Maiden, but also tend to forgo having shrines to themselves. They like the ability to move as they need without being tied down to a shrine or temple. Night Foxes who forgo any oath are usually drifters.

### Strength and Ban

(Cunning) Night Foxes enjoy showing their cunning and upending the lives of those around them, but dislike having things disorganized themselves. Yakan are obsessed with organizing and must sort out and count scattered objects. Spilled rice must be sorted and tidied, scattered sticks will be organized, and sunflower seeds strewn about will be gathered and counted. The Night Fox can ignore this ban if they are in actual danger.

“Me? Why would I do something like that?”





# Zenko Kitsune



**Nickname:** Benevolent Fox

*"I have served lords and ladies, magistrates and courtiers, warriors and sorcerers. For generations I have attended the rich and the poor, but you will never see my name in any record or document, there is no photograph of me, nor any portrait. It is not my place to stand out, it is my place to help others to stand out.*

*"Why am I here? You have great potential, child. Your life may be surrounded by chaos, but I will help you to find the eye of the storm. Your home will be a place of tranquillity, a haven where you can focus and prepare yourself for the challenges of the day. I will shelter you, and ensure harmony is kept in your home, as long as you do not stray from the path you walk now.*

*"That being said, your breakfast is ready, and your homework done. Your clothes are set aside for you after you bathe. The bus will be here to pick you up in forty minutes; you will not be late. Let me know when you are ready to come home, and I will pick you up. I think you will like dinner."*

The zenko kitsune are the source of most legends about fox wives – those foxes who transform into beautiful maidens to marry and live among humanity. It is the nature of the Benevolent Foxes to aid the noble and pure, to bring harmony to the household and help to those who have need. The zenko enjoy peace, attending to the needs of the household to ensure that everything is in order. They help to ease the minds and spirits of those they have taken a liking to, so that their charges can continue to do good works. A Benevolent Fox has an intuitive sense of what is required to keep her home or den in harmony, ensuring the family remains healthy. The vast majority of zenko are female.

## Appearance

**Delicate.** The Benevolent Fox is a rich chocolate or chestnut brown in colour, and usually has black highlights. Many believe the zenko are reincarnations of servants who have brought honour to their families, and that this incarnation is a reward for their good deeds. In human form, Benevolent Foxes appear as graceful, delicate figures, with dark brown eyes and fine features. A zenko usually dresses herself in formal yet elegant clothing, and prefers her dark brown or black hair braided or tied back and out of the way.

## Personality

**Kind.** The Benevolent Fox is very empathic, tending to the needs of others before she looks to her own needs. A zenko is helpful, assisting the family, shrine, or den she is associating with, and eases the lives of those around her. She is still a fox, however, and takes her duties as a kitsune seriously, ensuring those she is helping are worthy of her attention. If there is disharmony, the Benevolent Fox will correct it, and if there is strife, she will attempt to put an end to it. She may be strict, but she is never cruel.

As a companion, the zenko is perhaps the most desired of the kitsune. She is a caring companion, seeing to the desires of her partner, and while there is harmony she will ensure the comfort and joy of the one she cares for. If there is any fault in the Benevolent Fox, it is that she is rarely willful, and for those who prefer their partners filled with fire, she may disappoint. If betrayed or crossed, rather than confront her partner, a zenko is prone to simply disappear, never to be seen again. For those who feel remorse, this may require a long journey to atone, while others may just wonder where their companion has gone. If confronted, the Benevolent Fox will rarely be aggressive, preferring to depart rather than engage in conflict. If pushed, a zenko prefers illusion and trickery.

## Patron

Most zenko do not take a patron, though some may have a small shrine dedicated to them if they have served a family over generations. Those who do feel the need to swear an oath turn to Inari, finding the benevolence there to their liking.

## Strength and Ban

(Skill) The zenko has an intuitive understanding of how to keep a home safe and how to ensure harmony. She dislikes clutter and can become obsessed with cleanliness. The Benevolent Fox cannot abide a domain that is not tidy, and she will do her best to clean up spills, remove stains, and straighten out the area she is in. If she is in actual danger, this ban may be ignored.

*"Your appointments have been postponed, your guests have arrived and are being entertained, the dinner has been prepared, the staff are waiting on your word, and here is a gift for you to give to the magistrate to congratulate the birth of his son. I think you are ready, my lord."*





# Tails



Kitsune have between one and nine tails, each representing the fox's achievements and indicating roughly how powerful the fox is. Depending on the wishes of the Fortunes, a fox begins with only one or two tails, which are recorded on the *Tails* section of the character sheet. Your fox begins young, and has yet to gain experience in the ways of the world. As the Fortunes provide Stories for your fox,

he will become more experienced, gaining additional tails and the power that comes from these tails. At the end of each Story, you are expected to write a quick paragraph or two indicating what your fox has done and what he has learned. A fox's deeds create a growing *legend*, helping to grant the fox greater power and eventually earn him additional tails. These Stories are used to determine if and when the fox progresses. How quickly the fox progresses is determined by whether the Fortune is using *Quick Play* rules or *Campaign* rules.

## Quick Play

At the end of each Story, the Fortunes examine how your fox has progressed and what he has learned during the course of the Story. If the Story is impressive and shows growth, the Fortunes may allow the fox to gain a new tail. A fox must outdo all his previous accomplishments to gain each additional tail.


### Losing Tails in Quick Play

Losing a tail in *Quick Play* always removes the weakest tail – and the Story associated with it. For the fox to reclaim the tail, he must surpass the accomplishments of his most recent tail, meaning that repeatedly losing tails results in the fox having to strive harder to recover ground.

### Death in Quick Play

If the fox is slain he loses his weakest tail, the legend lost to fuel his rebirth. The fox remains out of play until the next Scene, at which time he has recovered from his loss enough to continue in the Story. While your fox is out of play, you cannot gain the Tempo and must simply wait until the Scene ends. Because the weakest tail is lost, recovering it will be harder.

## Campaign Play



For longer games, where the Fortunes and players expect to play a large number of sessions, you may wish to use *Campaign Play*. Stories are recorded as with *Quick Play* rules, but progression is slower. A fox will need to have a number of Stories to the number of tails he is preparing for. Thus, a fox with two tails will need three Stories to gain a new tail. Unlike in *Quick*

### Auspicious Tails

A fox is considered fortunate and blessed when she reaches a certain number of tails. These tails are considered to be auspicious or “lucky” for the fox. When a fox gains the appropriate number of tails, she gains an additional ability that is connected to the tail gained. The benefits from having five, seven, and nine tails are cumulative with one another.

#### One-Tail

Being a one-tailed fox is considered fortunate, simply because the fox has awakened as a kami. One-tailed foxes are usually protected and guided by their stronger brethren until they have proven they are capable of surviving on their own. Sometimes, these foxes are placed together to learn and to protect one another, forming a surrogate den of foxes.

#### Five-Tail

Five is considered a lucky number. In most cases, older foxes place young foxes in a group of five for good luck. Once a fox has gained five tails, she is considered “adult” and given the respect of her peers for attaining this degree of legend. Once per Story, a five-tailed fox is allowed to spend a Story Point to re-roll any failed Challenge, to represent her good fortune.

#### Seven-Tail

Seven is the number of enlightenment. It is said that Buddha walked seven steps at his birth, and seven also symbolizes yang chi. A fox with seven tails is considered a wise fox and is expected to teach and share her wisdom with younger foxes. Seven-tailed foxes are allowed, once per Scene, to spend a Story Point to ask the Fortunes for one piece of insight connected to the current Scene. The fox may request knowledge about the location, about someone present, or even about what the foxes should attempt to accomplish. The Fortunes will answer the question truthfully and helpfully, though it is up to the Fortunes to decide how much detail to provide.

#### Nine-Tail

Nine is the number of completeness and perfection. The fox's fur turns white or gold, and she is called a kyubi-no-kitsune (nine-tailed fox). Foxes this legendary gain incredible insight into the world and all within it. Once per Scene, the fox may spend a Story Point and ask the Fortunes about anything happening in the world. The fox can immediately see and hear what is occurring as if she were present.

*Play*, Stories do not need to be progressively more challenging and more epic to be accepted. Each Story *does* require some indication of the fox growing and learning, providing the players and the Fortunes an indication of how the fox is maturing over time. Of course, common threads and interweaving Stories are still preferred.

### Losing Tails in Campaign Play

Because of the increased difficulty of gaining tails, it is more difficult to lose tails as well. When a fox would normally lose a tail, he sacrifices one of the Stories which was dedicated to the tail he is currently earning. If the fox has no Stories to sacrifice at the moment, then he loses a tail and cannot count the current Story towards reclaiming it.

### Death in Campaign Play

A fox who is slain in Campaign Play loses one of the Stories dedicated to his next tail and cannot count the current Story. Beyond this, the rules listed under *Quick Play* still apply.

## Common Threads

It is not enough to write down a Story and expect it to provide the fox with a tail. Since he is attempting to build a legend, it is much better for each Story to have a common thread with the Stories which came before. Showing how he has evolved and learned from previous events – and how these events tie into the current Story – increases his legend and provides him with greater opportunity to grow.



In addition, a fox may lose a tail if his Story falls into obscurity. Having previous Stories tie into current events keeps these Stories alive, allowing his legend to remain relevant and strong. If the Story is not yet enough to provide him with a new tail, see how it ties into previous events and keep note of this: while it may not provide enough for a tail, it might be enough to provide a jumping-off point to the next Story, strengthening the upcoming Story and providing a bridge. Foxes love to hear epic stories, and providing him with a solid legend will raise his status in the eyes of his peers.

## Gaining Tails

Gaining a tail provides your fox with four additional Attribute Points and one new Ability. You may choose to sacrifice one Attribute Point to gain a second Ability. When a tail is lost, you lose four Attributes Points and one Ability. You may sacrifice an additional Ability to keep one of the lost Attribute Points; but remember, you may never have fewer Abilities than the number of tails you possess, and may never have more Abilities than twice the number of tails you own.

## Attributes

Once you have determined the breed of fox you are playing, you must assign points to the fox's Attributes. Attributes represent the various strengths of the fox and explain what he is skilled at. Each Attribute begins at a rating of one. If you are playing a one-tailed fox, you have eight additional points to spend on these four Attributes. If you are playing a two-tailed fox, you have, instead, twelve points to spend. Any unspent points may be saved for *Abilities*.

## Cunning

The *Cunning* Attribute represents how clever and charming a fox can be. The fox uses *Cunning* to think his way out of trouble and to outwit his opponents. In the wild, the fox uses *Cunning* to escape predators and to know his way around his domain, while a fox within society uses this Attribute to seduce and beguile as well as to keep one step ahead of his foes. A clever fox does not need to harm someone to get his way: He makes his enemies harm themselves.

## Skill

The *Skill* Attribute represents the training and talents the fox has. The fox uses *Skill* to perform tasks in the world of humans, from reading and writing to singing and dancing, from using a sword to firing a gun. A fox in the wild uses *Skill* to know where to hunt and how to track and keep his sense of direction. A fox without skill cannot survive – in the wild or amongst humanity. It is through the use of *Skill* that a fox knows the proper customs and manners of humanity, the spirit world and the wild.

## Spirit

The *Spirit* Attribute represents the spiritual strength of the fox: just how strong a kami he is. The fox uses *Spirit* to fuel most magical and supernatural abilities, granting him spiritual might when cunning and skill are not enough. A fox with a weak *Spirit* is barely a kitsune at all: he is a lesser spirit to be pitied and ignored. A fox with a strong *Spirit* is a lesser god unto himself, respected by his peers for his magical prowess.



## Wisdom

The *Wisdom* Attribute represents the knowledge the fox has acquired over time and the experience to use that knowledge. The fox who uses *Wisdom* is one who knows much about the worlds, both the world of mortals and the world of spirits. The fox knows of distant places and can glean insight into what occurs around him. A fox who does not have *Wisdom* is one who knows very little, prone to getting into trouble without knowing why and without the education to provide him with avenues of escape.

## Sacrificing Attributes

At the beginning of each Story you start with each Attribute fully restored, except for any ongoing costs you may have from certain Abilities (page 21) or *Conditions* (page 35). Attribute Points are sacrificed during a Scene to fuel Abilities, as a response to the Abilities of others, and as a result of engaging in Challenges (page 33). These points are lost briefly and are recorded as expended on your character sheet. At the beginning of each Scene, each Attribute recovers one Point.

## Investing Attributes

When an Ability is activated, it may require you to *invest* the Attribute Point used. The Ability will continue to be functional as long as the Point remains invested, preventing the fox from recovering the Attribute Point. If the you wish to recover the Point, then the fox must end the Ability's duration.

## Attributes and Tails

Each time a fox gains a tail, he gains four additional points to spend on Attributes. You may sacrifice some of these points to give the fox additional Abilities, though doing so excessively will weaken the fox. If the fox loses a tail, you must sacrifice four points from the character's Attributes – though, again, you may also sacrifice Abilities to mitigate this cost.





## Story Points

Story Points are a special pool of points given to each player and to the Fortunes. Story Points are expended to fuel exceptional Abilities, refresh Attributes, and manipulate the Story itself. You begin with a number of Story Points equal to your lowest Attribute, while the Fortunes begin with a number of Story Points equal to the total number of tails possessed by the players.

Story Points may be expended to recover Attribute Points. You may do this once per Scene, allowing your fox to recover all points in a single Attribute except for those that have been invested. In addition, Story Points may be sacrificed to allow the fox to perform additional *invocations* (page 33) during a Scene, or to invoke Conditions (page 35). Some powerful Abilities (page 21) may also require the fox to spend a Story Point.

During each Scene, you may be able to gain additional Story Points. When you control the Tempo, you have control of the Story's direction, and if you make the Story interesting and entertaining, the Fortunes may reward you with a Story Point. Since you will have far fewer Story Points than the Fortunes, it is imperative that you try to make the Story memorable and entertaining, thus allowing you to recover your Story Points and gain more to assist you through the Story. Any Story Points left over at the end of the Story are lost, however, so it is better to use them as you get them than hoard them.

## Foxes by Another Name

There are many legends of tricksters and shape-shifting foxes, and you do not need to feel confined to Japan. Here are a number of other countries, and their name for *the fox*.

- |                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| <i>Huli Jing</i> | Chinese |
| <i>Kuhimo</i>    | Korean  |
| <i>Renard</i>    | French  |
| <i>Zorro</i>     | Spanish |





# Chapter Two

*Abilities*



# Abilities



An awakened kami possess abilities beyond those normally available to the mortal world and the mundane things that exist within it. These abilities are what define the spirits and the duties of the servants of the gods. The fox is no different, and upon becoming a kitsune, she gains access to a vast number of incredible powers. A fox begins with a number of free Abilities equal to the number of tails she possesses and may never have less. For each tail the fox possesses, she may sacrifice one Attribute Point to gain an additional Ability if she so chooses. If the fox loses a tail, she loses one Ability and may also sacrifice one additional Ability to prevent the lose of one Attribute Point (as long as this does not bring her below her minimum allowed Abilities).

## Using Abilities

The fox must *invoke* an Ability to use it. Invoking an Ability requires that the fox have control of the Tempo and give the Tempo to the target of the Ability unless the Ability specifies otherwise.

The cost of using a Ability is usually two Attribute Points, but may also require a Story Point. Under rare circumstances, more powerful Abilities may require the fox to sacrifice a Story (or a tail if using the *Quick Play* rules). Each Ability lists two Breeds. If the kitsune is a member of either Breed, then any Attribute Cost for using that Ability is reduced by one.

Some Abilities last for as long as the fox wishes to maintain them. These Abilities require the fox to *Invest* the Attribute Points spent. Invested Points may not be recovered until the fox stops maintaining the Ability.

## Awakening

**Breeds:** Kuko, Tenko

**Cost:** Spirit Challenge and Story Point *or* Story

**Description:** The fox breathes a portion of her own spirit into a fox or into a dying mortal. The target awakens, becoming a kitsune of the same Breed as the fox. Creating a new kitsune is considered a serious undertaking, and the fox is responsible for the safety and education of the new kami. The recipient need not be willing for this Ability to be used on him.

**Mechanics:** The fox breathes into the mouth of the target. If the target is human, he must be *Defeated* (page 37). If the fox does not wish to perform a Challenge when using this Ability, she may sacrifice a Story for the Cost and automatically succeed. If she does not wish to sacrifice a Story, she must roll a 12 to successfully awaken the spirit in the target. A result of 7 or higher allows her to continue in her attempt at awakening the target, allowing a new roll the each time she gains the Tempo. If the result is 6 or less, the Ability fails. In the case of a *Defeated* target, failure results in the target's death as the fox's spirit overwhelms the recipient. If successful, the recipient becomes a fox with one tail. A human does not transform into a fox, but instead

becomes a fox spirit within a mortal host. (see *Kitsune-Tsuki*, page 24).





## Bachi

**Breeds:** Byako, Genko

**Cost:** Spirit Challenge, Investment, and Story Point

**Description:** The fox may lay a divine curse upon someone, marking her as suffering from the wrath of the kami. The person suffers misfortune and finds the world turning against her while the fox enforces this punishment.

**Mechanics:** The fox places a divine curse upon an opponent, invoking this Ability. If successful, the victim suffers the “Divine Curse” Ongoing Complication. Anyone may use this Complication as a normal Complication, but the fox may invoke it when the victim must roll for a Challenge by spending an additional Spirit Point. The victim uses the *lowest* die rolled as the Result of the Challenge, rather than the highest. Each time the fox wishes to invoke this Complication’s special effect, it costs a Spirit Point, but these additional Points are not invested.

## Den

**Breeds:** Shakko, Zenko

**Cost:** Cunning Investment

**Description:** The fox creates one or more rooms within a burrow or house, combining the spirit world and fox illusion without altering the physical world. Furniture and other household items are crafted as the fox sees fit, but may not leave this domain. From the outside, the area will not appear abnormal.

**Mechanics:** The fox may create a number of “rooms” equal to his tails. Each is a 3-metre-square space and looks appropriate to the domain the fox is using. They may be joined to create larger spaces and do not have to be individual, separate rooms. Each room may contain furniture and decorations that match the look the fox is aiming for: A fox den may have comfortable blankets or piles of leaves, while the home of a samurai warrior may have fireplaces, sword racks, tables, and lanterns. These items vanish if removed from the domain. The fox gains the “Den” Ongoing Condition. Any Scene which takes place within the Den allows the fox to describe the Location. The fox may invoke the Den once each Scene they are within it without expending an invocation or Story Point. If a witness cannot see illusions, they will not realize the true size of the “room”, nor any objects which were created to fill it; and, while Faith may be used to destroy a Den, those within are not harmed and will be ejected from the domain if it cannot house everyone present. A fox whose Den is destroyed by Faith does not gain “Faith Struck.”

## Fox Blessing

**Breeds:** Shakko, Yakan

**Cost:** Wisdom Investment and Story Point *or* Story



**Description:** The fox may temporarily grant an Ability she possesses to a mortal she touches, or may instead make it a permanent gift by sacrificing a Story. Being granted the use of an Ability is considered a great honour when bestowed upon someone by a kitsune, and is not to be taken lightly – a fox who grants a portion of her power to another is showing great trust.

**Mechanics:** The fox touches the target, invoking this Ability to grant the mortal any one Ability that she possesses. If the fox sacrifices a Story, she loses the Ability but permanently grants it to the mortal, without needing to invest Wisdom or spend a Story Point. The fox may revoke this Ability at any time without an Action, unless it is permanent. If the fox wishes to remove the permanent Ability, she must invoke this Ability again, and perform a Challenge against the target. Success removes the Ability from the mortal, but the fox does not recover it: It remains lost to her until she chooses to regain it when she gains a new tail.

## Fox Cry

**Breeds:** Shakko, Yakan

**Cost:** Cunning Investment, Optional Challenge

**Description:** The fox can speak to any animal, and can call animals from abroad to come to her. If necessary, she may also command animals, making them obey her commands, though this Ability does not work on cats or dogs, or any awakened animal.

**Mechanics:** The fox need not invoke this Ability to speak with animals; it is an automatic ability that comes naturally to her. To control animals, this Ability must be invoked, and if the fox is required to summon animals from a distance, she must make a successful Challenge to have them sense her summons and come to her. Once the animals are present, the fox controls them as normal. The fox gains the “Fox Cry” Ongoing Opportunity, which is invoked to command the animals called.

The fox may summon a number of groups equal to the number of tails she possesses. Each group can consist of (tails) large animals such as horses, (tails x 2) medium animals such as wolves, or (tails x 3) small animals such as rabbits. Tiny animals, such as insects, can be commanded in swarms. Each group is a separate Opportunity, and the animals controlled are considered to be Named for the fox.





## Fox Wife

**Breeds:** Tenko, Zenko  
**Cost:** Skill Investment

**Description:** Legends say that a kitsune is the perfect housewife, skilled at keeping harmony in the household, the home under good repair, and the servants content and efficient. But if the fox wife becomes displeased, trouble plagues the home.

**Mechanics:** The fox becomes a master of all domestic skills, and has knowledge of how to perform household tasks without the need to invoke this Ability. This is an automatic ability which comes naturally to her. She may invoke this Ability to create the “Fox Wife” Condition upon the current Location. This domain must be a home, store, park, or other location recognized as a proper domain with recognized borders. The fox may invoke this Condition as an Opportunity or as a Complication as she sees fit.

When invoked as an Opportunity, the domain enjoys perfect harmony. Damage to the domain is found to be not nearly as bad as one might have thought, and eventually the damage is forgotten, the domain having been magically restored. Those within the domain that are favoured by the fox wife find good fortune, while chores and tasks are accomplished quickly and with ease. Any obligations for the domain are met, including the need for bills to be paid or food to be brought in, even if there are unexpected events or occurrences. Sickness and injury pass quickly.

If invoked as a Complication, the domain’s harmony is disrupted. The domain and objects within it become damaged, while those who suffer the fox wife’s wrath are plagued with misfortune. Food spoils, bills are missed, and chores become tedious, the servants surly and recalcitrant. Sickness and injury may plague the household.

## Hoshi-no-Tama

**Breeds:** Shakko, Tenko  
**Cost:** Story Point

**Description:** The fox has taken a portion of her power and created a focus for it, called a “star pearl” or “fox ball.” The star pearl appears as a pearl the size of a baseball and can glow with a soft inner light to provide illumination. While in possession of the Hoshi-no-Tama, the fox enjoys a number of advantages, though losing the fox ball is extremely dangerous. A fox may keep the star pearl in her mouth or may hold it within a tail for protection or within her clothing while she is transformed.

**Mechanics:** The fox *must* spend one Story Point at the beginning of each Story, which is imbued into the Hoshi-no-Tama, but gains the “Fox Ball” Ongoing Condition. The fox may use this as an Opportunity,



but if the star pearl is lost, it becomes a Complication. Once per Scene, the fox may invoke this Condition to waive the Ability Point cost of another Ability or may invoke this Condition to re-roll any one Challenge during the Scene – even one rolled by someone else. If someone gains the star pearl and picks it up, the fox is in grave danger. The holder is immune to all illusions, as well as Kitsune-Tsuki and Seduction Abilities used by the fox. If the owner knows what the object is, she may use it to spend the fox’s Attribute Points during Challenges or to fuel Abilities in place of her own. The fox is not allowed to simply take or steal the star pearl back – it must be given willingly by the new owner, or claimed if it is set aside or discarded.

## Illusion

**Breeds:** Kuko, Yakan  
**Cost:** Spirit Investment, Optional Story Point

**Description:** The fox may create an illusionary reality which has a very real impact upon the world. From simple sounds to complex homes with food and servants, she has the ability to weave stories and images limited only by her imagination. A fox can always see the illusions of another fox.

**Mechanics:** For a fox to ignore an illusion, she must make a Spirit Challenge. Success makes the fox immune to the illusion for as long as she wishes, but does not otherwise damage the illusion itself. The fox may create the “Illusion” Scene-Specific Opportunity. Only those present when the illusion was crafted will see it. Anyone introduced into the Scene later will not see the illusion. The fox may immediately spend one Spirit Point to draw all new individuals into the illusion. This does not require her to have the Tempo. Anything that is created using this Ability is both real and not real. Those who are affected by the illusion will experience things as if they were real – fire is warm, food is filling, and the rain and wind is held at bay by the illusionary roof and walls while the servants whisper and gossip, each becoming his own person over time. Those who are not affected by the illusion will be aware that *something* is there, but will not know what it is, and thus remain unaffected.

The fox may attempt to create the “Creation” Ongoing Opportunity by spending one Story Point. The fox chooses who will see the illusion when it is crafted, even if she is not present (“everyone” is a viable choice, as is “anyone I touch with this ring”). To add or remove someone from the list of viable witnesses, the fox must spend one Spirit Point. Creating an illusionary reality requires the fox to have something real to build upon. Creating food requires the fox to have an edible object, even if it is only a leaf. To create wine, a fox must have something safe to drink, even if it is just water from a stream. A house can be crafted by using dozens of sticks to lay out the borders of the house. Servants can be crafted from paper dolls or small strips torn from clothing.





When performing a grand project with multiple illusions required, foxes may work together to help maintain the illusions, dividing the Spirit Cost between the members, even if they cannot craft illusions individually. As long as one fox has this Ability, the cost may be divided between everyone willing to invest Spirit into the illusions. The cost is divided as evenly as possible. All foxes involved gain the Condition chosen for the illusion and may control and benefit from it.

### *Kitsune-Bi*

**Breeds:** Kuko, Reiko

**Cost:** Spirit

**Description:** The fox learns to call upon kitsune-bi, or “fox fire”. This fire may manifest as flames that burn along the fox’s tails, or a gout of flame that slowly crackles from her mouth or eyes, or as small ghost lights that float and hover about the fox. These flames do not need to burn or cause harm, and can be any of a number of colours. Some foxes prefer to use lightning rather than fire: The choice is made once this Ability is chosen.

**Mechanics:** The fox may invoke this Ability without needing or using the Tempo, and gains the “Fox Fire” Scene-Specific Opportunity. It may be used for a number of effects, limited only by the fox’s creativity, but may also be used as a potent weapon. When invoked as a weapon, the fox may initiate a Challenge. If successful, the fox may inflict either the “Blindness” or “Burning” Scene-Specific Complication on the target. If the target is already suffering from the Condition as a successful attack, another attack with this Ability inflicts an additional, Ongoing Complication of the same type, which does not negate the original Condition.

### *Kitsune-Tsuki*

**Breeds:** Tenko, Yakan

**Cost:** Spirit Investment  
Optional Challenge and Story Point

**Description:** The fox has learned to dominate the will of another by meeting his gaze, either completely submerging the target’s personality and taking over or strongly influencing him so that he will do as the fox desires.

**Mechanics:** The fox may invoke this Ability to make an attempt at possessing an individual. If the target is a Named Character, however, the fox must also spend a Story Point to attempt the possession. If successful, the fox may either command the target’s body or she may allow the person to retain control of himself while the fox’s goals and personality influence him. The fox does not need to keep the gaze of her target and may even attempt to possess multiple people. The maximum number of people the fox may control in a Scene is equal to the number of tails she possesses. Each successful possession that the fox has grants her the “Possession” Ongoing



Opportunity, which may be invoked to command the victim as the fox sees fit. If the fox also possesses *Spirit Form* (page 27), she may leave her body and possess a victim directly, housing her spirit within the body of the person she has chosen. Doing so conceals the fox’s true nature, allowing her to use the mortal’s Skill and Spirit Attributes as she sees fit. If the kitsune’s former body is slain, she is trapped within the mortal’s body. If she is exorcised from a mortal host and has no body to return to, the fox must retreat and find a new human host.

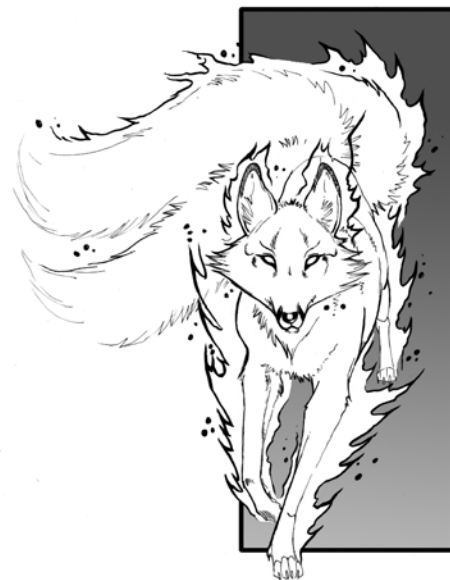
### *Myoubu*

**Breeds:** Byako, Genko

**Cost:** Wisdom Challenge, Investment

**Description:** The fox has sworn herself to the service of Inari, dedicating herself to the Fortune and aiding those who petition the shrine for Inari’s blessing. A fox may not be a Myoubu and a Nogitsune: Once she has dedicated herself to one, she is barred from being sworn to the other.

**Mechanics:** The fox invokes this Ability while within a shrine to Inari, and may only use this Ability once per Scene. If successful, the fox recovers two Attribute Points and may discard one Condition of her choice. In addition, once per Story, the fox may invoke this Ability to accept a task from the Fortune. If successful, the fox gains the “Inari’s Blessing” Ongoing Opportunity. The Fortunes decide what the task must be – it may be to deliver a message, to come to the aid of someone who has petitioned the shrine, or some other sacred task. This Opportunity may be used to grant the fox resolve and good fortune while in pursuit of her sacred duty. Once the task has been completed, the fox recovers one Point in each Attribute and also gains a Story Point.





## *Nogitsune*

**Breeds:** Kuko, Reiko  
**Cost:** Cunning Challenge, Investment, *or* Optional Story Point

**Description:** The fox has sworn herself to the Jewel Maiden, serving to punish those who have angered the Fortunes or who deserve a kami's wrath. A fox may not be a Myobu and a Nogitsune – once she has dedicated herself to one, she is barred from being sworn to the other. The fox follows two rules when punishing the wicked: First, as the warrior who slew Tamamo-no-Mae showed no mercy to her when she asked, the fox shows no mercy to those she has chosen for punishment. Second, as a Buddhist monk showed mercy and kindness to the Jewel Maiden, so the fox will always show kindness to any monk she happens across, providing aid and showing respect for those who redeemed her patron.

**Mechanics:** Because of the ongoing respect the fox shows the Buddhist faith, if the fox is afflicted by Faith (page 28), she may spend a Story Point immediately to remove the "Faith Struck" Complication without harm. The fox need not have the Tempo to use the Ability in this fashion. The fox may mark a target for punishment. If she succeeds in invoking this Ability, the victim suffers the "Maiden's Curse" Ongoing Complication. This Complication manifests as bad fortune and causes the victim to suffer from his vices or character flaws in an exaggerated manner. Only one curse may be assigned per Story, and once the victim has been punished suitably, the fox recovers a point to each Attribute and gains a Story Point.

## *Offerings*

**Breeds:** Yakan, Zenko  
**Cost:** Spirit

**Description:** The fox has a shrine dedicated to them by a mortal, and as long as it is actively used and worshipped at, the fox gathers strength from the faithful, providing assistance to the fox in the performance of his duties. Shrines may be created out of gratitude to a kitsune who has assisted the community or may be created by a penitent mortal who wishes to appease a fox who has been harassing her.

**Mechanics:** Once per Story, the fox may invoke this Ability, recovering one Point in each Attribute, or gaining a Story Point. The shrine must be created by one or more mortals and must see active prayer or worship. This Ability may be taken more than once, indicating the fox has multiple shrines dedicated to him. If the shrine is destroyed, the fox may attempt to have a new shrine created without having to repurchase the Ability again. Until the shrine is created and dedicated, the Ability may not be activated.



## *Respiration*

**Breeds:** Reiko, Shakko  
**Cost:** Spirit Challenge, Investment

**Description:** The fox can create a spiritual bond with a target by touch. Once this bond is made, the fox may draw essence from the target, replenishing herself, or may breathe essence into the target, restoring him. When the bond is first created, the target feels an intense physical reaction: If the target was willing, this manifests as a burst of pleasure, while if the target was unwilling, he feels unbearable agony. This intense experience fades gradually when the fox is not invoking this Ability, but returns each time she draws or grants essence.

**Mechanics:** When first invoking this Ability, the fox touches the target. If she is successful, the victim gains the "Vessel" Ongoing Condition. From that point on, the fox may invoke this Condition as a Complication or as an Opportunity. As a Complication, the kitsune may draw one Attribute Point from the target, recovering two of the same Attribute herself if the target was willing or one if the target was unwilling. If invoked as an Opportunity, the fox may sacrifice her own Attribute Points, granting them to the target to restore his Attributes.

## *Seduction*

**Breeds:** Yakan, Zenko  
**Cost:** Cunning Challenge, Optional Story Point, and Investment

**Description:** The fox entrances or bewitches a target animal or person by meeting her gaze. While the fox maintains this Ability, he may hold the person in place or direct her to follow simple commands. The fox may also cause the victim to feel whatever emotions the fox wishes her to feel. The victim has dilated pupils while under the influence of this power.

**Mechanics:** The fox meets the target's gaze and invokes this Ability. If successful, the victim suffers the "Seduced" Scene-Specific Complication. The fox may make this Ability Ongoing by spending a Story Point before rolling the Challenge and investing the Cunning used for this Ability.

A sudden shock or damage (such as from a slap) will awaken the victim if the Ability is not Ongoing, leaving the victim confused. The fox may decide whether or not the victim is aware of her surroundings while Seduced or whether she will forget what happened after she has recovered.

The victim of this Ability will often simply stare out into space, frozen in place until directed by the kitsune. When commanded, the victim may act as directed. Common pranks include causing the victim to act like a fox or to cut her own hair. The victim need not remain close to the fox to remain Seduced, but commanding her requires that the fox be able to communicate with her, or at least meet her gaze again.



If desired, the fox can cause the victim to feel specific emotions, reacting as if the emotions were her own. The fox decides if these emotions linger once the Seduction has ended.

## Shape Shifting

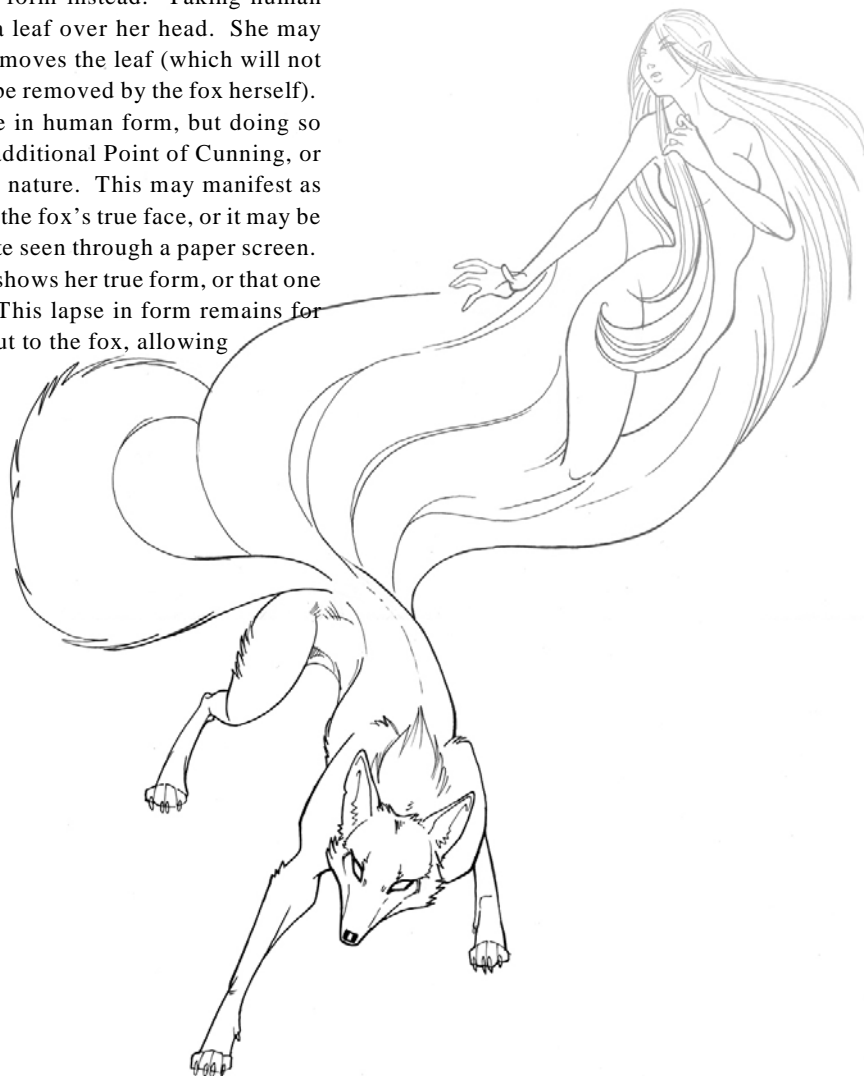
**Breeds:** Shakko, Tenko

**Cost:** Cunning Investment

**Description:** The fox is capable of changing her shape. The fox gains the human form, the jujin form, and the yokai form. She learns one additional human form for each tail she possesses. The age of each form is for her to decide, though each different age of the same shape takes up one of the learned “forms” she knows.

**Mechanics:** The fox gains the “Shape Shifted” Ongoing Condition, which may be negated by the use of Faith (page 28), though losing this Condition by faith does not inflict “Faith Struck.” If forced to revert from human form, the fox may accept transforming into fox form or may spend one point of Cunning to take jujin or yokai form instead. Taking human form requires the fox to place a leaf over her head. She may remain in this form until she removes the leaf (which will not come off accidentally – it must be removed by the fox herself). The fox can use Abilities while in human form, but doing so requires the expenditure of an additional Point of Cunning, or the fox reveals hints of her true nature. This may manifest as a reflection in a mirror showing the fox’s true face, or it may be the fox’s jujin or yokai silhouette seen through a paper screen. It may be that the fox’s shadow shows her true form, or that one or more tails become visible. This lapse in form remains for the Scene unless it is pointed out to the fox, allowing her to correct her appearance.

While in jujin form, the fox may speak and use her hands but does not need to spend extra Cunning when using Abilities: The fox is obviously not normal, so attempting to conceal her true nature is useless. When in yokai form, the fox cannot speak with mortals unless she has Speech (page 27), and she does not have hands, though she appears imposing and is obviously a powerful kami. The fox gains the “Kami” Ongoing Opportunity while in this form, increasing the fox’s ability to inspire fear and awe. This Opportunity can also be used to represent greater ability to engage in combat.





## *Speech*

**Breeds:** Byako, Genko

**Cost:** Wisdom

**Description:** A fox automatically speaks and understands the language native to the region the fox lived in when she awakened, and she can speak that language when in human or jujin form. With this Ability, the fox can communicate with and be understood by any mortal and can choose to communicate with others telepathically.

**Mechanics:** Regardless of the current form the fox is in, she is capable of speaking with any mortal. The mortal hears the language he is most comfortable with, while the fox understands the language the mortal speaks in return. This ability does not require invocation; it is an automatic effect that the fox can benefit from. Alternately, the fox may invoke this Ability to speak telepathically for the Scene. If the fox has used any Ability on the target, this ability may be invoked regardless of whether the target is visible, and the fox gains the “Telepathy” Scene-Specific Opportunity with the target, allowing her to send thoughts, but not to hear them in return.

## *Spirit Form*

**Breeds:** Kuko, Reiko

**Cost:** Spirit Investment

**Description:** The fox learns how to shed her body, leaving it behind to explore the physical world as a disembodied spirit. Most individuals will not be able to see the fox while she is in this form. The fox may also house herself within a mortal host, allowing her to conceal her true identity from curious onlookers.

**Mechanics:** The fox may divest herself of her physical body, becoming a ghost of sorts, passing through physical objects without difficulty (though magical barriers such as wards or seals will block her). She is immaterial, untouchable by any object which has not been blessed or infused by magic. The fox may choose to be invisible or may manifest as an idealized version of herself. She gains the “Spirit Form” Ongoing Opportunity, and while she is in this state, she is not subject to

any Conditions which are physical in nature. In this state, the fox leaves behind her physical body, which stiffens and loses colour until it appears to be nothing more than a statue. In most cases, the fox’s body will be overlooked, but the fox may wish to find a good place for storing her body while she is gone. If the body is moved while the fox is in spirit form, she remains in this state until she can find her body again. If the fox’s body is slain, she is permanently trapped in spirit form. The kitsune may not deliberately lose this Ability, even if she loses a tail: Spirit Form may not be chosen for removal. A fox who is in spirit form and is affected by Faith (page 28) is thrust immediately back into her body, regardless of where it is. If she does not have a body to return to, she is immediately Defeated and Faith Struck.

## *Suspuration*

**Breeds:** Kuko, Zenko

**Cost:** Spirit Challenge, Optional Story Point

**Description:** The fox is able to connect to the energy flows of the land, drawing strength from them. In addition, the fox may help a person or region to flourish, or may cause the land or a person to stagnate and sicken, either deliberately or accidentally.

**Mechanics:** Once per Story, the fox may invoke this Ability to draw from the Location without doing harm. The fox recovers one Attribute Point to each Attribute if she succeeds. If she fails or invokes the Ability a second time on a Location, the region and anyone within it suffers the “Infertile” Ongoing Complication. Crops suffer, animals and people sicken, and children grow weak. This persists until the Complication is removed. If the region had the “Fertile” Opportunity, the fox may instead remove the Opportunity without damaging the region.

The fox may choose to invoke this Ability and spend a Story Point. If successful, the fox may remove the “Infertile” Complication from a Location or a person, or if the target is not Infertile, may instead grant them the “Fertile” Ongoing Opportunity, creating a healthy, growing region or promoting good health in the target.





## Rare Abilities

Some Abilities are notably rare, but still found among the kitsune from time to time. These Abilities require that the fox find a mentor to teach him the principles and expand his knowledge of the world.

### Faith

**Breeds:** Byako, Genko

**Cost:** Spirit and Story Point

**Description:** Almost unheard-of among foxes, Faith is the purview of humanity. The Fortunes may disallow this Ability to foxes. This very dangerous ability is more often found in the hands of the extremely pious, such as the rare temple priest and other people of faith and wisdom. Faith is detrimental to the tricks and illusions of foxes and other obake. It can cause insanity or even death.

**Mechanics:** Invoking this Ability creates the “Faith” Scene-Specific Condition. While the user has this Condition, he cannot see illusions and is immune to Kitsune-Tsuki and Seduction as well as other forms of control or possession. Faith may also affect other Abilities (per their descriptions). If the user sees a fox who has Shape Shifted, he sees the true form rather than the shapeshifted form, unless the fox is possessing a target.

The Condition may be sacrificed while confronting a target who has an active Ability upon himself requiring Spirit to invoke. The user must perform a Wisdom Challenge; and, if successful, all Spirit Abilities are purged from the target. A fox whose Abilities are negated in this fashion is crippled and “Faith Struck,” and if the fox was already Defeated, he immediately dies.



### Magic

**Breeds:** None

**Cost:** Special

**Description:** It is rare, but possible, for a fox to learn magic. Magic is versatile, but the fox must choose one style of magic from the following list and can *only* use that style of magic. To learn an additional style, the fox must find another teacher and must take this Ability an additional time for each style available to him. Magic is much more than casting spells: It is a gift from the kami, allowing the sorcerer to harness his chi and draw upon it. A fox who learns magic is very respectful of the forces he uses – he may still use it to play tricks or to punish the wicked, but such is done with the deepest respect for the spirits and powers who grant him these gifts. Kitsune do not gain a discount when invoking magic.

#### “Faith Struck”

Faith Struck is an *Ongoing Complication* which kitsune may suffer when exposed to the power of faith. A fox defines herself by the illusions she creates and by the blessing of the gods who rule over her. Those blessed with faith are immune to the illusions and trickery of the fox, and the very presence of the faithful may shatter any illusion touched, wreaking havoc on a kitsune’s sense of self. When invoked to remove a fox’s influence from a target, the gods turn their wrathful aspect towards the kitsune, terrifying and humbling her. Invoking this Complication forces the fox to suffer the madness or terror of the experience.





*Akashic*

**Cost:** Spirit Challenge, Optional Story Point

**Description:** The fox can harness the energy (“chi”) of the world, letting it flow through him and then out as a magical effect. The fox has learned to harness the elements, drawing from the wind, from the earth, from fire, from water, and from the void itself. Each element grants the fox the means to disrupt or heal the essence within another and command the elements themselves.

**Mechanics:** The fox may control one element when he learns this style of magic. For every two additional tails the fox gains, he gains control of one additional element. Each element is associated with an Attribute, except for Void. The fox must choose from Earth (Wisdom), Fire (Skill), Water (Spirit), Wind (Cunning), or Void (Conditions). If the fox learns the Chinese elemental styles, you may replace Wind with Wood and Void with Metal.

The fox invokes the Element and touches a target. If he cannot touch the target, he may spend a Story Point to perform magic at a distance. If successful, the fox may choose to either heal the target’s Attribute, increasing it by two Points, or disrupt the Attribute, decreasing it by one Point. The fox does not gain or lose these Points. If the fox is using Void Magic, the target loses one Condition of the fox’s choice (either an Opportunity or a Complication).

Alternately, the fox may invoke this Ability and grant himself the “Elemental” Scene-Long Opportunity. He chooses the Element he is using when he invokes the Ability and may then invoke this Opportunity to direct and control the Element in question. The fox may attack or defend with the Element as it manifests around him. A fox may invoke multiple Elements, but the cost for each must be paid individually.



*Mahou*

**Cost:** Wisdom Challenge, Investment

**Description:** The fox has learned how to speak with the spirits of the dead, using the bones of the ghost he wishes to speak to. If the fox has the skull of the target, he gains the “Skull” Scene-Specific Opportunity for using mahou on that particular ghost. Most foxes are a bit uneasy about using this style of magic, though reiko kitsune are notably less squeamish about it.

**Mechanics:** The fox invokes this Ability to call upon a ghost. If successful, the ghost manifests and allows the fox to Name it, controlling it for the Scene. If the fox fails, the ghost becomes a yurei, Named and controlled by the Fortunes. Ghosts have a number of Abilities equal to the summoner’s tails. The fox may call on a ghost to plague or bless a living descendant. The fox invokes this Ability, and, if successful, the recipient gains the “Ancestor’s Gaze” Ongoing Condition to represent the ghost’s influence. The fox may invoke this Condition as an Opportunity or a Complication when he has the Tempo.

A fox who has Shape Shifting and understands mahou may use a skull to shapeshift into the likeness of the deceased. If successful, he transforms and may appear to be any age up to the death of the subject.

If the fox has onmyodo (page 30) and mahou, he can make prayer strips which allow him greater control of ghosts and people. By affixing the prayer strip to a corpse, the fox may perform a Skill or Wisdom Challenge. If successful, the corpse is animated and under the command of the fox as a Named person. This provides the “Corpse Puppet” Ongoing Opportunity. The fox may, instead, affix this prayer strip to a person who has not been Named yet, and if the Challenge is successful, the fox may choose to have the victim possessed by a yurei or to have his inner soul enraged, transforming the target into an oni. The victim gains the “Possessed” Ongoing Complication and becomes a Named person under control of the fox until the Complication is removed. Most foxes disapprove of this kind of magic.





### *Onmyodo*

**Cost:** Skill Challenge, Investment

**Description:** The fox has learned the secret of paper magic. Paper is fascinating to foxes and paper magic is very popular. A person who has learned this style of magic is called an onmyoji. The fox learns how to make paper charms and wards and to craft simple illusions using paper as their foundation. Onmyodo is a very versatile form of magic, but it also suffers a great restriction: It requires the physical presence of paper and ink.

**Mechanics:** Onmyodo can be used for many things, but is well known for making wards and seals. A ward is used to prevent something from passing into an area, while a seal is used to prevent something from leaving an area. The onmyoji writes a paper charm and names what it wards against, or he prepares five paper charms to be laid out. A successful invocation prepares the paper charms for use, granting them the “Paper Charm vs Type” Ongoing Opportunity. The “type” may include menaces such as demons, ghosts, possession, and other ill effects. When the paper charm is invoked, the fox affixes it. It may be attached to a door or window frame or to a person’s forehead, or it may be laid out in a five-pointed star on the ground to designate a protected area. If successful, the fox has created either a ward or a seal, as he chooses. If an attacker would be subject to the ward or tries to pass through the ward, the attacker must succeed in a Spirit Challenge or suffer the “Warded” Ongoing Complication and find herself unable to continue. If the subject is inside a seal designed to contain her, she may attempt a Spirit Challenge to leave. If she fails, she suffers the “Sealed” Ongoing Complication. The Sealed subject may not leave the sealed area or use Abilities or Magic while inside it. These restrictions persist until the Complication is removed.

The fox may make simple illusions by cutting out tiny paper dolls or folding the paper into origami. By invoking this Ability, the fox crafts an appropriate illusion around the paper. If successful, the paper gains the “Paper Illusion” Ongoing Opportunity. The illusion will remain active until the fox ends it or the illusion is touched, causing it to vanish and revealing the paper charm or origami. These illusions can talk and appear to act, behaving as appropriate for whatever they are an illusion of. The illusions cannot, however, interact with solid objects. If banished by Faith (page 28), the onmyoji will not suffer the Complication “Faith Struck.”

The fox may make a death ward: a paper doll with kanji of protection written upon it. If the fox is successful in invoking this, the paper gains the “Paper Shield” Ongoing Opportunity. If, at any point, the ward’s owner is injured or slain, he may instantly invoke the ward and sacrifice it, instead. The owner disappears, having been only an illusion, and the broken paper doll is left behind. The owner is no longer in the Scene, and must wait until the next Scene to rejoin the group. A person may only have one Paper Shield active at a time.



Finally, the onmyoji may create paper warriors. A fox may control a number of these warriors equal to his tails for each invocation used. The fox can see through a warrior and may direct it as needed. The warrior can fly, allow the fox to use Abilities through it, and attack (causing paper cuts). While a single paper warrior is not very dangerous, an entire army of them can make short work of an opponent.

### *Shugenzo*

**Cost:** Cunning Challenge, Investment, Optional Story Point

**Description:** The fox has trained in the mountains to call upon the kami. A person who has learned this style of magic is called a shugenza. The fox knows how to call upon elemental spirits, petitioning them with prayer and invocation so that the spirit may come to the shugenza’s aid.

**Mechanics:** The fox invokes this Ability. If successful, he gains the “Spirit Ally” Scene-Specific Opportunity. The fox may call upon the summoned kami, which possesses one Ability appropriate to the type of spirit called. The spirit is considered Named and controlled by the fox, and has a number of Attribute Points equal to twice the tails the fox has. These Attribute Points may be sacrificed for additional Abilities.

All kami have *Spirit Form* (page 27), but they may create bodies for themselves at will and do not need to be concerned about their bodies being stolen: They may dissolve those bodies back into spirit matter or craft new ones as needed.

A shugenza can summon elemental spirits, but he may also contact other kami and is fully capable of awakening the spirit of a region, home, or object. At the end of the Scene, the spirit falls quiescent once more, but if the shugenza summons the same spirit on repeated occasions, the kami may truly awaken and remain active for longer. Deliberately awakening a kami in this fashion costs a Story Point, otherwise it becomes the purview of the Fortunes to decide when this happens. The kami will be generally well-disposed to the fox unless it was mistreated.

## *Other Abilities*

A fox may discover uses for magic which are not presented here, or he may combine his magic and Abilities to create new effects. Anime and manga are both excellent sources of inspiration, and, if desired, the fox may attempt to experiment with what he has to produce new effects for the Story. The Fortunes have the final say on what can and cannot be done, but the examples scattered through the Abilities descriptions should give you some ideas.





*Chapter Three*  
*Mechanics*



# Mechanics



The mechanics of *Fox Magic* are flexible, designed to allow the game master and the players as much latitude as they need. While most games focus on combat in incredible detail and leave everything else as roleplaying, *Fox Magic* puts equal emphasis on all aspects of the game.

## The Story

A *Story* is an adventure run by the Fortunes, divided into *Scenes*. The game master prepares the Story, choosing its goals and deciding what Scenes will be important for directing the players towards those goals. Because of the interactive nature of *Fox Magic*, the Fortunes will want to have multiple contingencies planned, since it is very likely the players will not follow an expected path and may end up taking the Story in unanticipated directions. Unlike other roleplaying games, the game master in *Fox Magic* does not have absolute control over the setting. The game master must contend with the players adding their own personal touches to every Scene, and it is the players who decide what is important to them over the course of the Story. The Fortunes are there to act as a guide, not as absolute master of the game world.

## The Scene

At the beginning of the game, the Fortunes describe the opening Scene. The Scene is described based on the understanding of the foxes, not the players. The Fortunes may describe the world as the foxes know it, the events that have led up to the current Story, and other important information that the game master believes the foxes would know. Once the scene is described, the players gain control of the setting, and the game begins. The Fortunes should prepare each Scene in such a way that the foxes have an idea of what is present in the scene with them, while the game master has enough leeway to introduce whatever may be needed to direct the players. Ultimately, it is the players who drive the game forward.

When preparing a Scene for the players, the Fortunes must describe the current environment, beginning with what is around the foxes. Once the game master is done, the players begin to describe what they are doing in the current Scene and how it affects the Scene itself. At the very minimum, the Fortunes must provide the players with three Aspects for each Scene: the current *time*, the current *location*, and the *people* who are present. The Fortunes may also declare a Scene as *Critical*. Usually, there is only one Critical Scene in each Story, though the game master does have the means to declare additional Critical Scenes if necessary.

## Time

The game master describes the current time as the foxes understand it. For the opening Scene, the Fortunes may include the season or month; though, at the minimum, she should include the time of day or the week. The level of detail will usually depend on how educated the foxes are, and if they understand the concept of *hours*, that may be provided too.

## Location

The Fortunes describe the location where the foxes find themselves. This may include the proper name for the city or country if it is important and the foxes know what the area is – otherwise the game master may restrict the description to the local vicinity. Important objects and landmarks are included here, along with other details which may attract the foxes' attention. Depending on what the Fortunes wish to accomplish and how educated the foxes are, descriptions may be specific or vague when it comes to the objects present.

### Example Scenes

It is the first dawn on the first day of Spring (time). You find yourself behind a house, looking at a curious table: The frame is metal, but stretched across the top is a piece of fabric with some spring in it (location). Looking at you from inside the house is a woman carrying a strange item. She holds it up to one eye, watching you through it (people).

It is early morning, and today is the first day of school (time). You and your siblings are just entering the school yard in your human forms. The school is white washed, the paint still fresh from being applied over the summer (location), and the students are slowly gathering to enter their home rooms. No teachers are about, but Ken, the third year bully, is already there and causing trouble (people, including one Named individual).

## People

The game master describes the people within the Scene. Any person introduced into a scene will either be a *named character* or an *extra*. Named characters are given greater emphasis and are key individuals, and are automatically under the control of the Fortunes. You may not dictate the actions of a named character, nor can you take control of them. Extras are

characters who are present in the Scene, but are less important to the game master. Extras may become named by the Fortunes or by players at some point during the Scene if necessary. If you spend a Story Point to make an Extra into a named character, neither the Fortunes nor other players are allowed to dictate that Extra's actions.

When you take control of a named character or extra, you may use them as another character, performing any Challenges that are necessary for that person's actions. Rather than adding Attributes to any character who is under a your control, the Fortunes may assign a Challenge Pool. This rating will usually be from 1 to 9, and is determined by how skilled and experienced the game master thinks the person is. When you use this character and a Challenge is required, you roll dice equal to the current





Challenge Pool of the character used. Each time this is done, the rating for that character is reduced by one, much like how a fox's Attributes will degrade after a Challenge. If you keep control of the character into the next Scene, they may recover one point to their Challenge Pool. You may also spend a Story Point between Scenes to have the person fully recover.

You may not invoke a Named Character controlled by another player or the Fortunes. You may act against her, but this character's reactions are decided by the person who has Named her. If you wish to Name a character present in the Scene for yourself, doing so costs one Story Point and allows you to use the character to act. The character may invoke each Aspect in the Scene once, just like your fox can, giving you a little more leeway in controlling the Scene. The Named Character may invoke your fox as a Person in the Scene.

## Starting the Scene

Once a Scene has been described by the Fortunes, the players gain control of the Scene. By default, the fox with the highest number of tails goes first, gaining control of the *Tempo*. The Tempo should be represented by a token or other marker so that the players know who has it at any given time. If multiple foxes share the same number of tails, the players may decide which of these foxes goes first. The exception is when the Fortunes declare a Critical Scene. In this case, the game master acts first, rather than the players.

## Invoking a Scene

Once the game master has laid out the Scene for the group, you must decide what your fox will do. When you describe your fox's actions or the actions of a Named Character you control, you must also decide how it will affect or use the Scene. When declaring an action, describe how it affects the time, location, or people that are in the Scene. This is called *invoking an Aspect*, and you are limited to invoking each Aspect only once during a Scene. If you have control of the Tempo and must act, you can choose to either *relent* and pass the Tempo to someone else, or you may spend a Story Point to be allowed to invoke an Aspect an additional time. If you *relent*, you may choose who gains the Tempo.

## Rewards

If you are particularly evocative when you perform an action, the Fortunes may reward you with +1 to +3 dice as a bonus to any Challenge that you are forced to make. If the Fortunes reward you a +3 bonus, you may sacrifice it for a Story Point instead. Rewards are given for clever, humorous, or dramatic actions which further the Story and entertain the players and the game master.



## Challenges

When you declare an action which has a chance of failure, or which another player wishes to contest, a Challenge may be made. The players always have first choice on whether or not to Challenge your action, and the players Challenge each other or the Fortunes in the order of highest number of tails to lowest. If more than one fox wishes to call a Challenge simultaneously, it is up to the players to decide who issues the Challenge. If no player is Challenging the action, the Fortunes may choose to Challenge instead.

## When to Challenge

Not every action should be Challenged. The questions to ask before issuing a Challenge are "would failure make the Scene *interesting*?" "would simply succeeding make the Scene *boring*?" and "Is there something to gain from issuing the Challenge?" The game master may Challenge an action because she feels something may be gained by the action's failing or because she thinks that the action is particularly dangerous and you've put your fox at risk.

If a player is unchallenged, he is assumed to succeed as if he rolled an 11 on the action. You would think that foxes with the same motives or allegiance would refrain from Challenging one another, but there are times when you will want to Challenge each other during a game. You may have noticed that, without a Challenge, players cannot gain or grant *Conditions* without spending Story Points, and Scene-Specific Complications must usually be invoked if you wish to remove them.

## Preparing for a Challenge

When someone declares a Challenge against you, the game master will advise you which Attribute you will be using. If you are using an Ability which calls for a Challenge, the Attribute will be listed with the Ability.

You begin with a number of twelve-sided dice equal to your current rank in the Attribute needed. If you have invoked a Scene and the Fortunes reward you, you may gain an additional +1 to +3 dice to the roll. If you invoke an Opportunity (*Conditions*, page 35) you gain additional dice from it. If an opponent invokes a Complication, you will lose dice. Regardless of penalties, you will always roll at least one die, and if the Attribute is your *Strength*, you cannot roll fewer than two dice. Once you have determined how many dice you will be rolling, you reduce your Attribute. In most cases, you will only sacrifice one Attribute Point, but invoking an Ability may force you to sacrifice two or more Attribute Points. Once the dice are rolled, you select the *highest* die rolled. This is your *result*. If the result is 7 or higher, the action was successful, while if the result was 6 or less, the action failed.





## Success and Failure

If you succeed in a Challenge, you keep control of the Tempo and describe how the action has concluded. You then may choose to perform another action or hand the Tempo to someone else. If you fail in a Challenge, the Tempo is given to the person who Challenged you. The person who gained control of the Tempo describes how your character failed and continues from there. If you declare an action, and no one Challenges it, the action succeeds automatically as if you rolled an 11, but you must hand the Tempo to someone else of your choosing. The person holding the Tempo now describes how your action played and or its consequences, and continues over from there. You do *not* get to decide the consequences of your actions unless you are Challenged and win.

When a player is offered the Tempo, he may refuse it. This effectively grants the player offering the Tempo an additional action immediately, rather than waiting until someone hands her the Tempo back. This is a benefit if you already have another action in mind which may help the group, but the price is that you will run out of actions more quickly in this fashion.

## Altering the Scene

When the Fortunes gain control of the Tempo, she may describe the actions of any characters in the Scene she controls and may also choose to alter the environment. She may also decide to change the Scene to reflect events that are occurring. You may challenge the Fortunes, or you may accept these events as they occur and allow the Fortunes to hand the Tempo to someone else. If you challenge the Fortunes, your fox must have a means to influence the event. If you wish to alter the Scene, you may attempt to do so by spending a Story Point. Altering the Scene may include adding new people to the Scene, having time pass, or changing the location as the foxes travel.

## Intervention

A player may inadvertently be disruptive to the game, attempting an action which is inappropriate to the Story or which may cause problems for the other players. If the game master does not approve of the action, she may *intervene*. The Fortunes take control of the Tempo, and negate the action completely. The Fortunes may grant the Tempo to another player, or if the Scene is Critical, may simply keep control of the Tempo until it is taken from her. If you lose control of the Tempo due to the Fortunes' intervention, you may *not* make Challenges until either the Fortunes or another player grants you control of the Tempo once more.

## Etiquette

Remember, you may not declare what action another player's fox performs, nor can you declare the actions of a Named Character controlled by someone else. You may describe your

fox's actions, and you may describe your Named Character's actions, but if the action involves another fox or Named Character, you should restrict yourself to declaring what the *intention* of the action is and wait to see if you succeed in a Challenge before describing the *outcome*.



## Wagers: An Optional Rule

Rather than allowing Challenges to be invoked for free, the Fortunes may wish to have all Challenges become *wagers*. When you Challenge an opponent, you must describe how your character is interfering with the action being Challenged. Once the game master hears the Challenge, she decides which Attribute you and your opponent are risking. If your fox is not directly involved in the Challenge, you must wager a Story Point instead. The winner of the Challenge keeps his Attribute Point, while the player who lost the Challenge loses her Attribute Point. As normal, a Fortunes-controlled character always wagers a point of her Challenge Pool.

**Example:** A hunter is attempting to shoot at a fox, and the fox's player Challenges it, describing how he is using the trees for cover and misleading the hunter to a more dangerous region. The Fortunes decide that the fox is wagering Cunning against the hunter's Skill. If the fox wins, the hunter loses a Skill Point, while if the hunter wins, the fox loses a point of Cunning.





## Results of a Challenge

When you are Challenged, you risk losing the Tempo and gaining Complications, but you also have the chance to gain Opportunities, keep the Tempo for an additional action, and grant others Conditions appropriate to the action you are performing.

### Roll

12  
10 to 11  
7 to 9  
4 to 6  
2 to 3  
1

### Result

Absolute Success  
Success  
Partial Success  
Partial Failure  
Failure  
Absolute Failure

If the roll is 7 or higher, you keep the Tempo. If the roll is 6 or less, you lose the Tempo to the Challenger.

**Absolute Success:** The fox succeeds beyond her wildest dreams. You keep the Tempo, and can choose to either add or remove a Condition from any character in the scene. Alternatively, you may choose to keep the Attribute Point you would have lost as part of the Challenge. If the Wager option rule is used, you can instead choose to gain an Attribute Point.

**Success:** The fox succeeds, but must work to gain any benefit from her efforts. You keep the Tempo, and may choose to benefit from the Challenge by spending a Story Point to grant or remove a Condition from any character in the Scene.

**Partial Success:** The fox succeeds, though any benefit gained is only through sheer luck, and in fact the success may come with a cost. You keep the Tempo, but the person who made the Challenge may spend a Story Point to grant a Condition to the fox, either giving a reward or adding a complication.

**Partial Failure:** The fox fails, though she may recover some advantage even as she fails. You lose the Tempo to the challenger, but may spend a Story Point to grant a Condition to a character present in the scene.

**Failure:** The fox fails miserably, and suffers a setback from this failure. You lose the Tempo to the challenger, who may then choose to spend a Story Point to give the fox a Complication or give his own fox an Opportunity.

**Absolute Failure:** The fox suffers a terrible failure from the Challenge. You lose the Tempo to the challenger, who has the choice of giving the fox a Complication. If the Challenge was initiated by the Fortunes during a Critical Scene, the Challenge Pool is increased by one.

### Examples

Leaping across a chasm, you roll a 12. You succeed, and can inspire someone who was reluctant to make the leap. (Grant an Opportunity).

You strike at an opponent, and roll a 3. The opponent sees an opening and spends a Story Point to slip past your guard and injure you. (Receiving a Complication).

### Optional Rules - Successes System

An optional rule that the game master may wish to use is the *successes system*. This system makes the game somewhat more heroic than the normal rules, at the expense of adding some complexity to the game. When a Challenge is rolled, the highest value determines the *base result* of the roll. For each die that rolled the same value, the actual result is increased by one (to a maximum of 12). Thus, if a fox rolls 2, 5, 6, 6, and 6, the total result is 8, rather than 6.

### Conditions

A *Condition* is a circumstance which affects the ability of the character to perform. *Fox Magic* uses this system to provide creative ways to determine what effects are hampering or aiding the characters in the game. Rather than simply keeping track of wounds, the players can describe the injuries that they inflict and have inflicted upon them in a manner which furthers the Story. Conditions are divided into standard Conditions, *Opportunities* and *Complications*. Conditions in and of themselves are neither good nor bad, they can be used either way – you may invoke them to gain a benefit, but someone else may find a means to use them against you. Opportunities are things which regularly prove beneficial to you and will almost never be disadvantageous. Finally, there are Complications, which hinder you and can rarely be used as an advantage. Conditions may be either *Scene-Specific* or *Ongoing*.

### Sacrifice

You may invoke a Complication to grant yourself a penalty, knowing that it will prevent someone else from using the Condition against you later in the Scene. Doing so is called performing a *sacrifice* and grants you one Story Point, regardless of how many Complications you invoke at once.

### Scene-Specific Conditions

Scene-Specific Conditions are those which will affect the fox during the course of the current Scene. These conditions are stronger and more immediate than ongoing conditions, and provide a larger bonus or penalty because of this limitation. When invoked, a Scene-Specific Opportunity provides a +2 bonus to a Challenge, while a Scene-Specific Complication provides a -2 penalty. Invoking a Scene-Specific Condition also removes the condition.





## Ongoing Conditions

Ongoing Conditions will continue after the Scene has ended, remaining with the fox into the next Scene and perhaps through the entire course of the Story. Some Conditions, depending on the will of the Fortunes, may remain over multiple Stories as well. An Ongoing Opportunity provides only a +1 die bonus to a Challenge, while an Ongoing Complication imposes a -1 die penalty. The Condition is not removed when invoked unless the Fortunes indicate this is the case.

### Standard Conditions

Some Conditions are neither negative or positive – they simply exist and may be used as either an Opportunity or as a Complication. When invoked, they follow the normal rules for Opportunities or Complications, depending on how they are being used.

### Reversing Conditions

It is rare and difficult, but possible, to take an Opportunity and use it as a Complication or take a Complication and use it as an Opportunity. The effectiveness of a Condition used in this manner is reduced by one, so a Scene-Specific Condition provides a +1 or -1, and Ongoing Conditions provide no benefit at all. If you are clever, however, the Fortunes may provide you with a bonus when you declare your action.

#### Example

A disguised fox possesses the “Street Gang Allies” Scene-Specific Opportunity for the moment and needs to talk with a security guard to find directions. The Fortunes invoke the Opportunity against him, saying “there has been a report of someone with your description seen with some gang members,” and imposing a -1 die penalty to the fox’s Challenge.

### Invoking Conditions

When you use a Condition, you are said to be *invoking* it, much as you invoke a Scene. In a Challenge, you may invoke an Opportunity your fox has to gain a bonus, while an opponent may invoke a Complication you possess to impose a penalty. If you are the target of an opponent whom you are Challenging, you may also invoke Opportunities you possess to impose penalties on your opponent, while they may invoke Complications you possess to gain bonuses on the Challenge. Regardless of the number of Complications invoked against you, you may never roll less than one die, or two dice if you are rolling the Attribute which is your *Strength*. You may invoke a number of Opportunities for yourself equal to the number of tails your fox possesses.

## Removing Conditions

You may spend an action to attempt to remove a Condition you possess, or you may attempt to remove a Condition that belongs to someone else. If you are unchallenged, you may spend a Story Point to remove the Condition, though the Fortunes may waive the Cost if you provide a good explanation for the Condition’s removal.



#### Example

A fox has been thrown into a fire and is currently burning. He has the “Burning” Ongoing Complication. He decides to spend an action to put out the flames by throwing himself into a lake. He is not Challenged, and the Fortunes rule he does not need to spend the Story Point to stop burning, since it would make sense for the lake water to put the fire out.

While in possession of the Tempo, you may grant it to the Fortunes as a *Gift* in exchange for the removal of one Complication from your character sheet. Choose the Complication, and if the Fortunes accept this, they gain control of the Tempo.

### Which is it?

When a Condition is granted, the person granting it also decides whether it is Scene-Specific or Ongoing. The Fortunes have final approval on this matter, but the way the Condition is described will usually make its duration clear. Is it something which would provide only a brief benefit, or is it something which would be with the fox long-term? It is a calamity which can be overcome or something which will linger for a while?

#### Examples

##### Scene-Specific Opportunity

Half-Eaten Sandwich  
Helpful Stranger  
Hiding in Shadows  
Luck of the Fortunes  
Mistaken Identity

##### Ongoing Opportunity

Ancestral Katana  
Blessing from Inari’s Shrine  
Bodyguard  
Kept as a Pet  
Well Dressed

##### Scene-Specific Complication

Annoying Hiccups  
Hanging on Cliff by Fingertips  
Just a Flesh Wound  
Sprained Ankle  
Tripped Up

##### Ongoing Complication

New In Town  
On Fire  
Persistent Enemy  
Poisoned  
Seduced





## Ending the Scene

Your Attributes and Story Points will often drop during the course of a Scene, due to invoked Abilities and Challenges you perform. By ending the Scene, you will have a chance to recover some of what you have lost.

### Relenting

*Relenting* determines whether the players or the Fortunes have the upper hand in the Scene. Either the Fortunes or the players may relent, thus ending the Scene. If the players relent, the Fortunes decide how the Scene ends, making preparations for the next Scene and tying up loose ends. If the Fortunes relent, the players have the chance to describe how the Scene ends. Of course, the Fortunes may still choose to intervene, so it is best to be reasonable when describing how things wrap up. If you control the Tempo and the Fortunes relent on the Scene, you may add one Condition to the next Scene after the Fortunes describe it. This Condition must be appropriate to the Scene, and may be invoked by the players, each gaining advantage from the Condition once. This grants the players an advantage for the scene, although the Fortunes must agree on the Condition introduced before it is used. This Condition is not expended when it is invoked. If the Fortunes control the Tempo and the players relent on the Scene, the game master gains the opportunity to declare the next Scene a *Critical Scene*.

### Defeat

Another reason to relent is to avoid suffering *Defeat*. If you are Challenged, but cannot pay the Attribute cost to perform the action needed, you must concede *Defeat*. You gain the “*Defeated*” Condition, which remains for the Scene. This condition may stem from wounds, or may be from some other event decided by the Fortunes. You lose the Tempo to the Fortunes when you gain this Condition. While *Defeated*, our fox cannot gain control of the Tempo for the Scene via Challenges, but may be given the Tempo by another player or the Fortunes. Any Named characters you possess who have not been *Defeated* may still act.

If you gain control of the Tempo, and your defeated character is Challenged, the *Defeated* Condition may be invoked. This does not modify the die roll. Instead, if you gain a new Complication, the person who has Challenged you may declare your fox *Slain*. Being Slain in this fashion cannot be prevented or overturned. Alternately, an opponent may decide to remove you while you are Defeated. This may only be done in a *Critical Scene* and requires the expenditure of a Story Point.

You may not Challenge this action, but others present in the Scene can do so. If the opponent succeeds in the action well enough to gain an Opportunity, the character is *Slain*.

Named Characters may also be slain in this fashion, but this does not require the expenditure of a Story Point.



### Injury

It is very difficult to kill a fox in *Fox Magic*. First, it requires your fox to have one or more Attributes which have run out of points to sacrifice. Second, it requires you to declare an action which is appropriate to the emptied Attribute pool. Third, it requires you to be Challenged. *Fox Magic* was designed in this fashion specifically to allow for the game to be light and relaxed, allowing you to take great risks without worry about your character’s well being. The optional Wagering rules (page 34) increase the danger, because Challenging an opponent carries with it the risk of losing your own Attribute Points.

During a Critical Scene (page 46), Complications created from a Challenge may result in an *Injury*. During a Challenge in which actual harm is possible, you may attempt to *Injure* your opponent. To do this, the roll must produce a result which would allow you to inflict a Complication, and your enemy must already have a Complication which would facilitate inflicting this wound. If these conditions are met, you may sacrifice both Complications to reduce an Attribute by one. If this would reduce the Attribute to 0, the enemy is *Defeated*, and if the injury would reduce an Attribute below 0, the enemy is *Slain*. You choose which Attribute is reduced, not by the game master or the victim, though the Fortunes may require you to explain how it is appropriate. You do not have to win the Challenge to inflict an Injury, as long as you are able to inflict a Complication, an Injury is also possible. This means that even if you win the Challenge, you risk suffering an Injury if you do not roll well enough.

For example, a fox is engaged in a ferocious fight with a tengu. The fox has already been sliced by the tengu, who has inflicted the *Wounded Ongoing Complication* on the kitsune. The tengu goes for another strike, and the fox challenges the tengu. The Fortunes say that the tengu intends to *injure* the fox, and the roll is made. The tengu wins and the Fortunes notice she can make an additional Complication. She sacrifices both that Complication and the *Wounded Complication* to reduce the fox’s Skill by one.

Using the previous example, the fox voices his intent to Injure the tengu if at all possible. The tengu wins the Challenge, but the fox’s player notes that he is allowed to add a Complication by spending a Story Point. The tengu already has the *Fatigued Scene-Specific Complication*, and the fox decides to sacrifice that plus the Complication he has just earned, stripping a point of Skill from the tengu. The tengu strikes the fox, only to suffer a vicious bite for her troubles.

During normal Scenes, a Defeated fox has a form of script immunity. As long as you are not Challenged (and if using Wagers, do not Challenge anyone else), you can rest and recover by the next Scene. An opponent attacking you may





heap a number of Complications on your character, but if you do not Challenge the attacks, you risk nothing. During a Critical Scene, however, those Complications may be used to inflict Injuries, and a Defeated fox can be killed even if you relent and do not Challenge the attacks made against you.

If a slain fox loses enough Stories, she will also lose a tail, and lose the gained Abilities and Attribute Points that also came from having that tail. For more on losing tails and the repercussions associated with it, see page 17.



### *Slain*

A fox who is slain loses a Story, weakening her accordingly. The fox may then be re-introduced in the following Scene, when you first regain the Tempo. The fox appears in the Scene, perhaps a little weaker than before, but has recovered and may rejoin the group as normal. If your fox loses her last Story (and her last tail), she is forever lost.

The point of a Scene is not to win, but to achieve the objectives that the Fortunes have in mind for you. As such, any actions taken by the foxes in a Scene should be geared to showing the personalities and goals of the foxes, and to move the Scene forward so that the Story can be told. Attempting to “win” each and every Scene is a good way to suffer serious losses to your Attributes, and risk being Slain when a Scene becomes Critical.





## Example of Play



GM: The game master.  
B: Betty, playing a Byako Kitsune  
G: Gail, playing a Genko Kitsune  
K: Kyle, playing a Kuko Kitsune

GM: It is a warm spring day in Tokyo, and the sky is clear. You are resting under the eaves of your temple in the heart of the city, listening to the traffic come and go as the kindly monks tend to the daily chores, leaving you to enjoy yourselves. As always, food has been left out for you, and the tranquillity of the temple brings a sense of ease to you. Your morning rest is interrupted by the sight of a middle-aged man coming up to the temple. He performs the necessary rituals to be allowed entrance, and kneels at the altar of Inari. While there, he bows his head and prays solemnly for aid. He tells Inari that his son had gone on a trip with his classmates to Aokigahara forest the day before, and none have returned.

*Since all the foxes have one tail, nobody automatically goes first. The players decide to roll, and Betty gets the highest result. She goes first – meaning she has the Tempo, an indication of whose turn it is.*

B: I slip closer under the floorboards to hear the prayer, as quiet as a mouse. What do I know about Aokigahara?

GM: Hmm. You have a choice, you can roll Skill or Wisdom.

*Betty knows nothing of the Aokigahara forest, and isn't sure how much her character would know. She could decide to make something up entirely, but that could be risky. If the game master doesn't agree with what she makes up, it could be denied, and she would lose her turn. If the game master finds it questionable, it could be Challenged, and would cost her. If the game master likes it, she might go along with it, and Betty would be fine. Since Betty asked the game master rather than just make something up on the fly, the game master is giving a Challenge. A much safer path when you're in doubt is to ask the game master for assistance.*

B: I'll go with Wisdom.

*Betty has three dice for Wisdom and rolls, getting a 3, a 5, and a 10. The highest die is 10, so Betty's result is 10. She then reduces her Wisdom temporarily to 2. With a result of 10, you may spend a Story Point to gain an Opportunity. Since Betty won her Challenge, she keeps control of the Tempo – meaning it is her turn still. Betty decides to spend the Story Point and gain an Ongoing Opportunity, 'Knowledge (Aokigahara)'. Since it is Ongoing, she may use the Opportunity multiple times, through the course of the Story. This may be useful later, since she doubts she'll be using it during this Scene.*

Apparently I know about the area, having listened to the monks speak about the place often. What do I know?

GM: The Sea of Trees is a huge forest that lies at the base of Mount Fuji. The region is covered in caverns and the forest has a historic connection to demons. People disappear in the region all the time, between sixty and eighty a year.

*Since Betty decided to use Wisdom, and not Skill, the game master gives some information related to the mythology of the region, rather than facts that normal people might know.*

B: Whoa, that's pretty serious. I wait until the man leaves, and slip up to the statue of Inari. I offer for the den to come to the man's aid, and recover his son. Can I invoke *myobu* to get Inari's blessing?

*Betty invokes Location, and since she is essentially committing her character to the adventure, the game master allows this and grants her a two die bonus for good roleplaying. Betty rolls her Wisdom and gets a 2, 3, 7, and a 10, another success. Because she is using an Ability, she does not get to spend a Story Point to gain an Opportunity, she only gets what the Ability provides – the Ongoing Opportunity: Inari's Blessing. Now her fox's Wisdom is reduced to 1. Betty decides to spend her last point of Wisdom to invoke *myobu* again. This allows her to recover two Attribute points if she's in a shrine to Inari. Since she is, she boosts her Wisdom up by two (raising it to two).*

I head back to the den and share what I've learned with the others. I think I'm done, who wants the Tempo?

*Gail indicates she'd like to have the Tempo. Betty could have kept it for another turn, but decides to let someone else have it.*

G: I heard the man pray to Inari. I can't refuse such a plea, so I join my sister at the shrine, and petition Inari as well.

*Genko kitsune can not refuse a plea for aid, and Gail decides to play this up. Normally, the request must be made to the genko, but this is a fair interpretation. The game master waives the necessary Challenge to invoke Inari's blessing, and allows the genko to recover two points to their Wisdom if Gail wishes.*

I don't think any of us can take human form, so I think we need to hurry. One of the monks, a kindly soul named Kento, has heard the prayers, and is heading to the woods to pray for the lost. I say we slip into Kento's rickety old truck, and get a free ride into the woods. The back is open, and we can hide under the empty rice sacks until he's stopped. Is it a plan?





*Gail spends a Story Point and invokes People, creating a Named Character which Gail now controls. Nobody sees fit to Challenge this, and the game master lets it slide, giving the monk a Challenge Pool of 3. Gail writes this down on her character sheet – Kento may come in handy later on. Since nobody Challenged Gail, she has to give up the Tempo. She decides to give it to the game master to gain a Story Point.*

GM: The trip to the Sea of Trees is about half an hour. It is still early in the day when you arrive, and the sky is a touch overcast. It smells like rain might be coming soon. Does Kento get out of the truck and make preparations? (*Gail nods, and the game master continues*) The woods are dark, the upper branches almost a canopy, letting very little light through. They're also spaced out, with a lot of dead leaves and pine needles scattered beneath them, brown with age. The soil is rich in some places, but stones jut out sporadically. The great spirit of Mount Fuji still rests peacefully, and you sense the faint presence of lesser kami in the region. They seem disturbed, and perhaps scared.

*The game master spends a Story Point to do a transition, altering the Scene without actually ending it, using Kento as the focal point for the Scene. Changing the Scene would have given Betty back an Attribute point, but the game master decided that enough hasn't been done to warrant an actual shift. She hands the Tempo to Kyle.*

K: I slip quietly out of the back of the truck with the others, and head into the woods?

*Kyle is asking the group if this is suitable for everyone. Agreement is given by the others, so the game master accepts that the foxes are moving into the woods as a group. When it would speed up play, speaking for the group is acceptable, though if anyone wished to remain behind, Kyle would have no say in the matter.*

I sense the unease in the woods, and slowly approach one of the small tree spirits to speak with it. I am unthreatening, showing that I am there as an ally, not as an enemy. Once I've approached it, I ask it what has disturbed it.

*Kyle could use Cunning, but since the fox is communing with the spirit and not trying to use trickery, the game master allows Kyle to roll Spirit instead, giving Kyle a one die bonus for invoking People. Kyle has a Spirit of 4, and rolls 1, 3, 4, 4, and 7. Barely a success. The game master spends a Story Point to give Kyle the Ongoing Complication: Uneasy. Since Kyle won the Challenge, however, he keeps the Tempo and can describe how things played out.*

The spirit tells me that a group of young people passed into the woods, but one of them went exploring into the caves and disturbed one of the wards there. Now, a dark spirit has slipped free, and has guided the people deeper into the woods, losing them so they can be picked off one by one.



*Kyle, of course, is making this up since he won the Challenge. Since this description does not disrupt the game, the game master shouldn't veto Kyle's description.*

I return back to the others, and tell them what is going on, then start tracking the scent of the students through the woods, trying to find them. I come across a lost wallet, which gives me a stronger scent to use.

*Betty issues a Challenge on this, pretty sure the game master will if the players do not. She wants the players to keep control of the Tempo, moving it between the players instead of having the game master gain control of it, and the best way to do this is either to work together or Challenge each other for the Tempo. The game master rules this is a matter of Skill, and Kyle's character has a Skill of 2. The game master awards a +1 die bonus for invoking the Place. Kyle rolls a 1, 2, and 3. A failure. Betty chooses not to spend a Story Point to inflict a Complication, and Kyle loses one point of Skill. In addition, Betty gains the Tempo.*

B: The wallet's old, and the scent isn't fresh, so it doesn't belong to any of the students. I approach it and study it for a moment, then see someone in the distance. I give a soft bark to alert the others, and head towards the person, finding a lost straggler from the group!

*Betty is spending a Story Point to add a person to the Scene she wants to control. The other players don't Challenge it, but the game master does – she wants control of that person, as it gives her the means to guide the adventure to some extent. Betty is told to roll Wisdom, as the game master has an idea. Betty has a Wisdom of 3, and rolls a 1, 3, and 4. This is a partial failure, meaning Betty loses the Tempo, but can spend a Story Point to gain an Opportunity. She keeps her Story Point for now, in case something comes up – and gives the game master the Tempo. Her fox loses a point if Wisdom as well, bringing it down to 2. The game master wants this to be a new Scene, and asks the players if they're willing to relent. Curious, the players decide to accept this. All Attributes recover one point, allowing the foxes to be better prepared for what is to come, and the game master has the Tempo.*





GM: This is a Critical Scene. You head up the shallow incline, and the morning sun's light dims through the trees. As you approach the location, you see a girl moving through the woods, oblivious to your presence. She wears a white, tattered uniform with blue skirt, her hair shaggy and unkempt, hanging long. As you get closer, you see her skin – too pale, and her features are sallow. She turns at the sound of your approach, and her eyes are deformed, making you think of something like a goat's eyes. She gives a low, croaking sound as she begins to approach, and you feel a powerful malevolence emanate from her as she attempts to curse the group!

*The game master spends 1 Story Point to take control of the girl and declares her a Yurei, turning her into a ghost! She decides the ghost will invoke a curse on the foxes, and sets the Challenge Pool at 6 – a dangerous threat for the foxes. The game master rolls six dice, scoring a 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 10. This is a success, so the game master keeps the Tempo, and reduces her Challenge Pool by one. While the game master could use an actual power for the curse, she decides to keep things simple, and just give the foxes “Cursed” as a Scene-Specific Complication.*

You feel a nameless terror come over you as the girl slowly stumbles towards you, her eyes fixated upon the group as she moves with deliberate steps. She reaches out towards the group, giving that steady, low croaking sound. Another movement catches your eye – a hiker stumbles from the underbrush, pale with sunken eyes, wordlessly reaching for the byako!

*The game master spends a Story Point to introduce another enemy, and is challenged by Betty, who wants to get the Tempo back from the game master and also wants to keep her fox from getting injured. The game master rolls five dice, gaining a 2, 3, 4, 4, and 5. A failure. The game master spends a Story Point to add “Numbing Chill” as a Scene-Specific Complication to Betty's fox. Since this is a Critical Scene, the game master removes both the Numbing Chill and the Cursed Complications from the fox to reduce the fox's Skill by one – an Injury. The game master reduces her Challenge Pool to 4, and hands the Tempo to Betty.*

B: I feel the girl's frozen grip around my leg and give a yelp of pain before pulling myself free. The limb feels a bit numb, making it hard to move. Noticing that we are beginning to get outnumbered, I suggest we make a run for it, and bolt, trying to lead the way to a cave I've heard about in the area. I bet there's a shrine there we can use for safety.



*The players do not Challenge this, but the game master does. She chooses Skill, knowing that the fox is already down one point. Betty's current Skill is 2, but she invokes her Ongoing Opportunity, “Knowledge: Aokigahara” to gain an additional die. She rolls a 4, 6, and 12! This is a success, and allows her to keep the Tempo and also inflict the Scene-Specific Complication, “Divine Misfortune” on the ghost. She explains that, with Inari blessing the group, the Fortune has placed his wrath upon the ghost for harming one of his blessed foxes. The game master accepts this. Betty's fox is down to 1 Skill – a dangerous prospect. She hands the Tempo over to Gail, not wanting to risk further injury.*

G: We get to the cave, and notice prayer strips along the edges and a shrine inside. From the look of the cave it seems to be a passage to the Underworld. I turn at the entrance, and as I see the dead girl approach, I call upon the kami of the shrine to punish her for her misdeeds. I bet she has a special tie to those she's harmed, and if we defeat her, the others will know peace! “Two can play this game,” I say, “Let's see how you like a taste of your own medicine!” I use *bachi*.

*Gail decides to dress up the cave some in her description, and the game master gives her a bonus two dice for using the fox Ability ‘Bachi’ on the ghost. The game master then invokes the Cursed flaw on Gail in the hopes of causing her to fail. Her fox only has a Spirit of 2, but with the two extra dice and then the Complication, she rolls only one die. Gail rolls a 10. More than enough to be able to put the ghost in her place. The ghost gains an ongoing Complication from the curse, and the fox pays one Spirit point and one Story Point. Gail decides to inflict an Injury back, and the game master rules that if the fox keeps the Investment, it won't be lost when used for Injuries. The game master then loses one point from her Challenge Pool, reducing it to 3. Gail keeps the Tempo, but asks the game master to give the ghost's response since it is a Named Character. Gail no longer has the “Cursed” Complication.*

GM: The yurei feels the wrath of the spirits assail her, small motes of green-white light flickering about her. She bats at the lights, trying to drive them away as the dead hiker stumbles towards the cave entrance. He can't seem to cross though, and you are protected inside.

G: Makes me wish I picked *Kitsune-Bi*. I leap at the hiker, trying to clamp my jaws around his neck and pull him off balance, tumbling him into the cave. I'll ask forgiveness later, but for now I want him on sacred ground so we can banish him. Kyle, if I pull this off, you do the prayer!





Kyle gets the idea, and Challenges Gail's action, hoping she'll roll well. The game master declares this a contest of Skill, and gives one die for the plan. Gail rolls five dice, and gets a 3, 5, 7, 9, and 12. The Challenge is a success, and the hiker is pulled into the cave. Gail inflicts the Scene-Specific Complication of "Holy Ground" on the hiker, then hands the Tempo to Kyle.

K: With the hiker grappled by Gail and the girl helpless to stop us, I'm going to use a prayer at the shrine. The hiker is going to be my link to banishing the girl, sending her back to the underworld, and releasing anyone else she's cursed.

Kyle does not have the Faith Ability, and is not a Myobu like the other two foxes. The game master could outright deny his fox from succeeding, but decides that having lived in a temple, the foxes should know a number of rituals that the monks and miko use there. She decides not to give the fox a bonus, and instead inflicts the "Cursed" Complication that Kyle currently has. Kyle uses the "Divine Curse" Complication the yurei has to gain one die. Kyle's fox has a Spirit of 4, and with the penalty and bonus is reduced to two dice. He rolls a 2 and 11, which is enough to succeed, and spends the Story Point to apply a Complication to the yurei. The ghost now has two Complications, and Kyle invokes it to create an Injury, reducing the game master's Challenge Pool to 2. Kyle no longer has the "Cursed" Complication, and thus can use more dice to repeat the banishment ritual. Kyle is also out of Story Points.

Kyle keeps the Tempo to press on, hoping for a good result, and the game master allows him to roll again. With a Spirit of 3, and gaining one die for the Divine Curse on the yurei, he rolls four dice. He gains a 3, 3, 8, and 12. Another success! Kyle inflicts another Injury on the yurei, reducing the game master's Challenge Pool to one. Kyle's Spirit is now 2. He doesn't have any Story Points to spend to get rid of the last of the game master's Story Pool, but since he still keeps the Tempo, he has a plan.

K: I'm giving the Fortunes the Tempo, so that I can have a Story Point, and want to spend the Story Point to get the Complication for succeeding the Challenge, and inflict another Injury.

The table is silent as the game master considers this. After a pause, she grins and accepts.

GM: The banishing ritual complete, the ghost screams and fades away, pulled into the Underworld. The undead hiker collapses, also fading away, leaving nothing behind. The area is silent, but you feel a sense of peace from the shrine and the kami in the immediate vicinity. The threat has passed. Shall we start the next Scene, or is there anything more you wish to do?





## Questions



**Q:** How do you run *Fox Magic*?  
The players keep adding to the scene and making it hard to control the game.

**A:** *The game is not meant to be “controlled” like most other games. Instead, the game master is meant to act somewhat like a referee and guide. If the players are enjoying themselves, it means you are doing well.*

*You should focus less on the specifics of a scene, and instead aim for one or two specific “goals”. When you want to add one of the goals to the scene, try to get control of the Tempo, either through Challenges or by offering Story Points in exchange for the players giving you the Tempo specifically.*

*Once you have attained your goals, allow the players to do what they wish with the Scene, and inform them you’re ready to move to the next Scene when they are. You don’t need to have control of the Tempo at the end of the Scene unless the next Scene is supposed to be dramatic, allow the players to give themselves an edge from Scene to Scene.*

**Q:** Why would a player want to Challenge the Actions of another player? Isn’t that hurting your own group?

**A:** *It is usually better for a player to Challenge another player before the game master does. By Challenging each other, the players keep the Tempo “in the group” rather than risk having the Fortunes gain it when a player fails in a roll. If the player succeeds, she keeps the Tempo. If she fails, the challenging player gains the Tempo instead. You can also choose not to inflict a Complication on the player if she fails, whereas the game master would probably choose to do so. Another benefit is that the player has the chance of rolling a 12, and thus gaining free Opportunities that they can use later.*

**Q:** Who controls the non-player characters in each Scene? Can I make them do anything I want?

**A:** *Any person introduced in a Scene is fair game until they are Named. This means any player can control and interact with the characters in any way they wish. Once the character is Named, however, they become sole property of the person who named them. The Fortunes, of course, have the right to Challenge or outright deny any action declared for a character if she feels they are being abused.*

**Q:** I know that, with the *Awakening Ability*, a fox can give someone else the ability to become a fox. What about the characters themselves? Would they have been awakened in this fashion, or did they awaken on their own?

**A:** *A fox can be awakened under her own power, though it is also possible for her to be awakened using this Ability. That provides a good opportunity for there to be a “mentor” for the group. Whether the fox awakened on her own or was awakened by someone else (or even by a kami or one of the gods) is entirely up to you.*

**Q:** A fox is able to make an Illusion, as long as she has an object to construct the illusion out of, and it seems to be real, but how real is the illusion? How filling would food be if it were only a leaf or twig? Would a sword made from a twig hold up against a real katana in a fight?

**A:** *Illusions are complex, rule-wise. A house made of illusion will keep out the rain and keep you dry. Food made of twigs and leaves would be just as filling as real food. These are considered minor things and don’t normally involve Challenges.*

*The sword is a different problem. Because you’re very likely to use this sword in combat, Challenges are going to get involved. For most unnamed opponents, there isn’t going to be a Challenge, and your foes will drop, as they think they’ve been sliced to ribbons by a sword. However, if you’re Challenged, your opponent might see through the illusion – in which case, he’s safe.*

*Some groups may be fine with illusionary swords killing people. Others may see the sword as making the person “dead” until the illusion ends, the victim only knocked unconscious by the horror of thinking he’s been split open by a sword. How effective an illusionary weapon is depends on the group and the type of game being played.*

**Q:** How long does a kitsune live? I’ve heard of immortal foxes, and I’ve also seen stories of “old foxes”.

**A:** *This would depend on the needs of the Fortunes. A good rule of thumb is that a fox can normally live up to 12 years. For each tail a fox gains after her first, she gains another 12 years to her life span. Thus, a nine-tailed fox can live to 108 years of age. According to some legends, a fox who reaches a hundred years of age becomes immortal, and thus stops aging.*

*If you follow this method, the fox will only age one year after a number of years have passed equal to the her tails. A kitsune who gains tails quickly will usually look younger than one who has gathered tails slowly. And if a fox loses a tail and is older than what can be supported, she may only have a year left to live!*

*Some Fortunes, however, may prefer to just let the fox be as old as she wishes to appear, and not actually worry about how old she is. This is entirely understandable, and works well for some stories.*





*Chapter Four*  
*Fortunes*



# Storytelling



Taking on the role of the Fortunes means taking on the responsibility for running *Fox Magic*. It is the role of the game master to lay out the adventure that the players will develop their Stories with, and it is also your role to design the challenges and conflicts the players will attempt to solve. You are not the *adversary* of the players – you are not trying to “win.” Instead, your goal is to work with the players to create the type of adventure that they are looking for without making things too easy for them.

## The Story

The goal of the Story is to provide a challenge for the foxes, allowing them to develop as they try to grow and gather more tails. Each Story should have an opening to give the players a feel for what the Story is about, a series of challenges that the characters must overcome, a climax to draw everything together, and a resolution where the characters have a chance to reflect on what they have learned.

Remember, each fox also has a *ban*. To draw a character into the Story, you may wish to find a way to introduce the ban into play. A fox who must come to the aid of another should see the opportunity present itself, drawing him into assisting someone who needs it. It is even better if the ban is invoked when the fox has pressing matters or a dire need, forcing the fox to decide between fulfilling the ban or ignoring it. This kind of tension helps develop the personality of the characters, the choices they make shaping who they are and how others see them.

## The Scene

A Scene can stand alone on its own merits or be a part of a larger series of plots which create your Story. Each Scene must provide players with the time, the location, and the important people that are present. These three Aspects allow the players to understand what is available for their use and allow you to provide bonuses for them when they are Challenged. While it may be tempting to control the Scene and tell the story *you* want, it is better to know when to allow the players to “win.” Relent when the point of your Scene has been played out, rather than trying to dominate each Scene.

### Example

The point of a Scene may be to introduce a villain and give the foxes a reason to dislike the fellow, without confronting him yet. You will want to gain control of the Scene at least once, to allow you to introduce him as a Named Character, but you will need one or two Named Characters to play off the foxes beforehand so that you can Challenge them, get control of the Tempo, and drop hints as to who the person is.

## Story Points

You begin play with a number of Story Points equal to the total number of tails possessed by the players in the game. You do not gain additional Story Points in the same way the players do, instead gaining one Story Point each time a player spends one.

Like the players, you may spend a Story Point to grant Complications during Challenges, but you may also spend a Story Point to invoke a *shift* in the Scene. This may be to introduce new elements or to change the Scene in some significant way. Of course, this should be done in a manner which makes sense, but it gives you a lot of flexibility when it comes to controlling the Scene. Remember not to use your authority to railroad the players: They should have enough control to direct the Scene the way they wish. Your role is to help guide them along the course of the Story itself.

When a player helps the game – whether he’s being dramatic during an action, being helpful to the other players, or finds something which helps further the story – grant him a Story Point. This point does not come from your pool, so you are not punishing yourself by being gracious.

## Challenges

Challenges are a little more complex when you are playing the Fortunes. Challenges are used to add some tension to the game and to provide the chance of failure for important actions. They help you and the players to build up Conditions which can be used either in the Scene itself or further into the Story. They are also allow you to try to take control of the Tempo.

For simple actions, a single Challenge is issued to determine whether or not the fox succeeds. If the resolution is inconclusive because the fox has a complication which has prevented a true success or because the action being taken has multiple steps, additional Challenges may be made.

Challenges weaken the characters, each one requiring the sacrifice of an Attribute point, so you should be careful not to issue so many Challenges that the players do not have the resources to continue through the Story.

Always remember, your goal is to guide the players to the appropriate part of each Scene. Once they have accomplished what you wanted them to (or if they’re so far gone that they





may never get to that point) feel free to Relent, and prepare for the next Scene.

## Rewards

While the players may wish to increase the number of tails their foxes have, there are other rewards you can give the players as well. Most rewards will be Ongoing Opportunities that the fox may use later in the Story, or even over the course of multiple Stories. A “Blessed Sword” is a good example of an Ongoing Opportunity that can be granted to a fox, or the “Kami’s Blessing” which may be invoked once, representing the good will that some spirit has granted. Another fox may gain a “Wise Mentor” who can teach the fox magic.

Some rewards may grant additional Abilities that the fox can use. These Abilities may be granted as actual Abilities or may be placed as Opportunities that the fox may use later. As shown in the Abilities Chapter, an Ability will usually provide an Opportunity and may be invoked for a separate effect, not just to provide a bonus to a roll.

### Example

For example, a fox may use the *Seduction* Ability to enthrall someone. This not only provides a bonus when invoked, it may also be invoked for a secondary effect: commanding the target. As the Fortunes, you may provide the foxes with these kinds of Opportunities.

A fox gains “Blessed Sword” as an Opportunity. The Fortunes inform the player that he may permanently expend the Opportunity to banish an oni, returning it to Yomi. This removes the blessing from the sword and will make it simply a normal sword.

## Critical Scenes

A Critical Scene is one which you marked as important to the Story. This may be the Scene where the evil villain has prepared a trap for the foxes, a hungry ghost has manifested in a house to terrorize a family, or any number of other critical or important events. When you prepare a Story, you should have at least one Critical Scene, and at most two Critical Scenes, because when you invoke a Critical Scene, you are taking control away from the players.

In a Critical Scene, not only do you describe what is in the Scene to be invoked, you are the one who begins to describe what happens within the Scene and are the first person to declare what anyone in the Scene does. In many ways, this acts like a “cut scene” in a video game: The opponents act and there is little the heroes can do to stop the action.

Be careful not to abuse Critical Scenes: The point of them is to give you enough control to begin the action promptly, but not so much as to ruin the fun of the players. However, if you

have control of the Tempo when a Scene begins, you are allowed to declare an additional Critical Scene. These additional Critical Scenes are used to represent the foxes’ being at a disadvantage. If the foxes are chasing a gang, and the gang is victorious and then runs off into the night with the foxes giving chase, you can designate the next Scene as Critical to represent the gang’s being aware of the foxes and having set up an ambush. This puts the advantage immediately in the hands of the gang. If the foxes had control of the Tempo, they could ambush the gang before their trap was in place, giving the advantage to the foxes. Control of the Tempo, and of Critical Scenes, is a tool for setting the pace of the Story.

## Challenge Pools

Each Scene, decide how difficult the opposition may be (if there is any) or how difficult the obstacles are to be in the Scene. This “Challenge Pool” should begin with a number of points equal to the number of foxes in the Story, with an additional amount that is determined by the difficulty of the Scene. This difficulty should range from 1 (for something very simple) to 10 (where the foxes face insurmountable odds).

Each time the foxes Challenge you directly, or Challenge a character you have present in the Scene, the Challenge Pool is rolled. Much like the Attributes of the foxes themselves, each time you roll, the Challenge Pool is reduced by one. This pool is meant to represent all challenges present in the Scene that you control as the Fortunes – from mortal adversaries that may be on the trail of the foxes, to the powerful demons that the foxes may face. To strengthen or weaken specific characters in the Scene, you should grant tailored Conditions which provide bonus dice or penalize the character appropriately.

Some opponents have Abilities, which may represent either exceptional talents or supernatural powers. If you need a character to pull off a “magical effect,” you can simply spend a Story Point to alter the Scene, representing the character’s using “strange magic.”

For the players to defeat an opponent, they must allow you to act – thus reducing the Challenge Pool you possess, and eventually overcoming any obstacles in their way. In the case of Dramatic Scenes, this will become even more important, since they cannot give an enemy the *Defeated Complication* until you have completely lost your Challenge Pool. When the pool is finally emptied, any enemy the foxes are facing is immediately *defeated*.





# Play

What kind of campaign are you going to run? This chapter discusses the setting itself, how to set up the game and what kind of game you may wish to run. In addition, we will discuss Japan as a whole, looking at what the nation and culture is like, and what traditions exist that stand out from the West. We will also touch upon the Shinto faith, and how you may wish to integrate it into your game.

## Setting

Before your first session, you should decide what kind of game you wish to run. Designing a campaign can be as easy as letting the players have their head and running the game by the seat of your pants, or it can be as complicated as laying out a detailed setting that the players can explore and discover a little bit at a time, full of complicated plots and story threads woven by the game master's desires and the actions and input of the players.

## Restrictions

Before characters are designed, you should decide what limits are going to be put on the campaign. Do you want the story restricted to a specific Breed of foxes? Would you rather everyone play a myobu or a nogitsune, or would you rather the foxes remained divorced from such things? Do you want everyone to be able to take human form, or would you rather they all remain restricted to fox form? Are there any Abilities you wish barred, or is everything open? If you wish an Ability to be mandatory for the game, you may want to consider making it free, granting it to the foxes without it taking up one of their beginning Abilities. This way, in an all-*myobu* campaign, the foxes can all serve Inari without it restricting their other choices. If you wish all the foxes to be able to take human form, you can either grant them free access to the Ability *Shape Shift*, or you can simply rule that all foxes can take human form, and *Shape Shift* allows them to take *other* forms.

## Theme

The first step to designing your campaign is to determine what kind of theme you wish. The focus will, of course, be on the foxes and what they do, but an important question to ask yourself is what the central conflict of the campaign will be. Conflict does not have to be combat or violence, but it should be something the foxes must confront that challenges them in some fashion. It may be a challenge to their beliefs, or it could be a challenge against something they hold dear, or it could be a threat to their duty or faith.

## Fox Versus Fox

While it may be nice to think that all kitsune get along as one happy, extended family, the reality is that foxes have their own minds and goals. While their duty is ingrained into them, this does not mean that a fox has to play nice with her fellow kin. Using this theme, the foxes must confront their own, pitting them against their own kind in a battle of wits or magical power. This can be played seriously, where the consequences are a matter of life and death, or it could be played lightheartedly, where the competition is more of a friendly rivalry.

- A den of myobu are confronted by a rival den of nogitsune. The rivals have decided the myobu are too soft on humanity, and have taken it upon themselves to exact justice for even the slightest wrong-doing. The players must decide how to confront the nogitsune and how to protect the people in the region. Will they petition the gods for intervention? Will they drive the nogitsune away? How far will they go to protect their charges?
- A fox has infiltrated a local school and has been making it her personal playground, creating a cult that answers to her every whim. The mother of one of the boys who has joined the cult has prayed at the shrine for his freedom, and the den has been charged with breaking up the cult. Will the foxes take human form and try to join the school themselves?
- A fox has been corrupted by dark forces and has become a threat to the harmony of the region. He has sinister and strange powers that none have ever seen before, and commands minions in the name of his dread master. The foxes have been tasked by the Jewel Maiden to hunt him down and destroy him, then to find the source of his power and put an end to it as well.
- The den has been a victim to a string of minor misfortunes and annoying pranks. They know another den is somehow involved, but are not sure which or why. The pranks are never harmful, and the misfortunes are more often than not just a nuisance. How do the foxes find out who is responsible, and what will they do to the other den when they find out? Perhaps they can reverse the situation and begin tormenting the rival den?



## *Fox Versus Man*

While foxes may watch over humanity, that does not prevent humans from being a threat. While foxes are vulnerable to sword and bow, they also need to watch for fire, or in more extreme cases, mortals wielding magic. Mortal society is complicated, and a fox must be exceptionally careful each time they deal with humanity. Encounters with humanity may involve the foxes resorting to trickery, or facing a hostile group wishing to inflict injury.

- The foxes discover a teenage girl with the potential to become a powerful miko (temple priestess). The foxes may need to join her school to keep an eye on her and protect her from amorous students or strange events, or may face sinister magicians who wish to use her potential for themselves. This may be played as a high school comedy or as a dark and serious campaign.
- In feudal Japan, a group of foxes find the temple they serve is threatened by an invading army. The foxes must join the human conflict, defending their temple and home, while pushing back the invading forces. Or, the foxes may be able to convince the invading bushi that the temple is off-limits, and that the foxes will not get involved if they are left in peace and respected.
- The den has tended to an abandoned local shrine for generations, only to find it is going to be taken down as the local town expands. How will the foxes protect their shrine from human incursion, or will they have to move and abandon their home?
- An onmyoji has discovered the foxes, and wishes to befriend them. While it may be useful to have a mortal sorcerer as an ally, what ulterior motives could this magician have?

## *Fox Versus Supernatural*

Depending on the style of game being run, the foxes may never encounter another supernatural threat. Some groups may decide to play up the foxes interacting with humanity while other groups may have a “creep of the week” approach to the campaign. Considering that the foxes are supernatural, there is a chance they may cross paths with other kami or monsters which they will have to confront and deal with in some manner. As servants of the gods, the foxes have at least some degree of authority over lesser creatures, but their authority will not always be recognized or appreciated.

- The foxes become aware of a powerful curse growing in the region, causing a number of people to die, their ghosts adding to the curse and creating a greater threat. It all seems to originate with a single girl, who now has an entourage of ghosts who will murder on

her behalf. Is she aware of this curse? Does she control the ghosts or do they act without her knowledge? How can this curse be broken?



- A number of powerful bakemono have come into the region to hold a contest, and the foxes have been asked if they would like to join, or perhaps supervise, the event. The competition will take place in a month’s time, but until then the foxes have to govern a growing number of enthusiastic monsters who drink and fight too much. What happens if some of these demons start their battles early? How do the foxes keep the humans from seeing the mystical powers being thrown about? And what if one or more of the foxes wants to take part?
- A Fortune approaches the foxes with a sealed relic, asking them to deliver it to an ancient spirit. The foxes must protect the relic, take it to one of the holy sites, and transfer over to the spirit world to carry it to the kami. Why were they chosen? What is the relic? Who is it for? And what happens if it is unsealed?

## *Style*

Along with the theme you will have for your campaign, you should decide on the campaign style as well. Foxes exist in a variety of stories, from gruesome horror stories to light hearted comedies. In some stories, the foxes are known and accepted as part of everyday life, while in others they exist in secret, blending in with humanity. Finally, the purpose behind a faction’s actions may come into question. Some foxes serve as tricksters, while others are guides. Some are protectors, while others exist as a scourge upon humanity. Decide on what kind of game you wish to run, and the feel of the campaign, and let the players know ahead of time so they can plan their characters accordingly.

## *Recognition*

How aware is humanity that the foxes exist? In Japan, with the Shinto tradition, respect is paid to the kitsune, and shrines to Inari are more common than any other shrine, but how would your average person react to the presence of an actual fox who is more than willing to speak to them and show true magical power?

- The mortal world is completely ignorant. While lip service may be paid to the Shinto traditions, most people simply dismiss the idea of spirits and ghosts. The foxes are expected to remain hidden while performing their duties, and may be expected to take drastic measures if they are discovered, be it memory loss or even murder, depending on the individual den and their traditions.





- The mortal world is ignorant for the most part, but there are a few people who know the truth, and who have access to powers themselves or are more than willing to pay the proper respect to the kami. The foxes are expected to remain hidden from the public eye, but may have mortal contacts and assistants who are more than aware of what the foxes truly are. Some mortals may be a danger, and actively oppose the foxes themselves.

- Mortals have a strong degree of faith, and some mortals are recognized by the public as blessed with faith or magical powers. While a person may not *expect* to see a fox with magical powers as part of their everyday routine, after the initial surprise a mortal will accept the fox's presence and pay proper respects. The foxes are expected to perform their duties, and do not need to take great pains to conceal themselves unless necessary.

- The mortal world is well aware of the supernatural, and see enough of it that most are relatively unfazed. Any active supernatural effect will be treated like any other event, with people responding appropriately to the threat to themselves or others. Mortal mystics, martial artists, or psychics exist and may in fact be common, and the foxes may act openly and blatantly, without most people reacting at all to their abilities unless necessary.

## Integration

How well have the foxes integrated with society? In some stories, a fox may be the person next door, while in others the foxes live in the world, or at an abandoned shrine at the edge of town. This decision may relate to the den itself or to foxes as a whole. Are foxes allowed to integrate with humanity, or is this a taboo? For that matter, are foxes allowed to fall in love with mortals, or is mingling with mortals in such a manner against the rules?

- The foxes are confined to the spirit world, and expected to remain there unless their duties specifically send them across to the mortal world. In most cases, the world of the foxes and the human world are separate, and the foxes may only pass through using shrines or sacred locations. Foxes are often confused by cities and the behaviour of humanity, and try not to think too much about civilization.

- The foxes live on the outskirts of humanity, living in the wilderness or in abandoned shrines. The foxes may observe humanity from afar, imitating what they have seen but not truly understanding the complexities of the world. Foxes may live in a normal fox den, or burrow under a summer cottage, or may disguise

themselves as monks while tending to a shrine which is almost never visited.

- The foxes have integrated with the fringes of society, serving at a shrine at the edge of town, or living with a human family on a farm, or even have their own simple home in the countryside. The foxes have access to humanity frequently, and may even have falsified identities. These foxes are used to a more sedate lifestyle and may be overwhelmed by city life, but they understand humanity relatively well.

- The foxes have delved deeply into human society, and can pass as a normal human family. They may have used this ruse for generations, allowing them to have legitimate identities. The foxes use their mortal status to assist in their duties, and have temporal clout when necessary. Such foxes are savvy, and can blend their sacred duties with their mortal life, or may have to balance their duties with keeping their true identity a secret to friends and colleagues.

## Purpose

What purpose do the foxes serve? In some stories, foxes are tricksters, tormenting people for slights real or imagined, while in others, the foxes act as guides and protectors. In other tales, the foxes are there for people to witness and wonder about, while in yet others they are secret lovers and confidants. What purpose does the den serve, and is this true for all foxes in the campaign?

- The foxes are guardians of humanity, keeping them safe from the spirit world and the creatures that lurk among them. The foxes patrol the region, finding ghosts, bakemono, and kami who have become troublesome, fighting these creatures so that humanity can live untroubled. Leave mortal problems to the mortals, the foxes have greater things to deal with.

- The foxes stand in the middle between the spirit world and the physical world. They ensure that mortals do not stumble upon things they have no business dealing with, while ensuring the spirit world does not intrude on mortal society. These foxes are aware of and respect ancient traditions forgotten by humanity, ensuring the peace between both sides. Those who break such traditions, whether they be spirit or mortal, are punished.

- The foxes are charged with witnessing the deeds of humanity. They rarely are expected to police the spirit world, such things are a part of the natural order of things, and it is the deeds, good or bad, of humanity which influence the spirit world. As such, the foxes find those who stand out among the mortals, and at turns punish the wicked or reward the pure. Some foxes test mortals who draw their attention, to judge





the moral character of those who have drawn the fox's eye. Such individuals are met with greater rewards or punishments once the tests are done.

- The foxes have no direct duty, and instead act as they please, governed by their own traditions and rituals. Only foxes called by Inari or Tamamo no Mae hold to higher ideals, while the majority of foxes live their own lives as they see fit. Mortals and spirits alike are victim to the whims and caprices of the foxes, and may have to go to a higher power to protect themselves from a fox's unwanted attentions.

## Genre

*Fox Magic* was designed to be flexible, allowing you to choose from a number of genres and campaign settings, tailored to your personal tastes. Stories involving foxes have ranged from humorous children's stories to fables of horror, and run the gamut from historical to urban fantasy. When preparing a *Fox Magic* campaign, you should decide what kind of genre you wish to use. Of course, you are not restricted to using only a single genre at a time – you could blend a number of genres together to make something truly unique.

## Historical

Legends about foxes have been told throughout history. Abe no Seimei, a legendary figure in ancient Japan, was said to have fox blood, and the war that the legendary fox *Genkuro* took part in was a real historical event. Using actual history as a backdrop for a campaign helps to immerse the players into the events of that time, providing a solid foundation for you to draw events from. You are not restricted to ancient history, either – more recent events can be used, allowing for the foxes to be involved behind the scenes.

- In 1853, an American fleet helped end the Sakoku – the policy of seclusion the Japanese used to restrict trade and contact with foreign nations other than the Dutch, Chinese, and Korean nations. Bombardment by the American battleships showed the Japanese they could not resist foreign incursion any longer, and Japan finally opened their borders to other nations. Foxes in this time period would have to begin dealing with foreigners who know nothing of tradition and custom – how do the foxes deal with these new people, and what new rules may be required for interacting with them?
- In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Meiji Restoration began. The nation began to modernize, and during this period, the influence of the samurai caste began to wane, as the middle class grew in power. Trains and other marvels flooded Japan, and there was a strong shift in culture. What do the foxes do when faced with progress and a loss of tradition?

Will they adapt with the changing times, or hold to the old ways?

- In World War 2, Nagasaki and Hiroshima were destroyed by atomic weapons. The death toll was staggering, and the radiation left behind tainted the land for some time. The Emperor was forced to denounce his divine lineage, and Japan's psychology was forever changed. This is a period of great upheaval, and in the heart of it, the foxes must face war, loss, and change on a scale never witnessed before.

## Fantasy

A *Fox Magic* campaign obviously has fantasy elements already. But you can decide whether or not the public is aware of the supernatural, or whether they are seen as legends. You can decide whether mortals have access to magic, or if it is seen as something blasphemous. Fantasy does not just mean medieval fantasy – it includes any period of time where you invoke a strong fantasy element. An urban fantasy campaign may have the supernatural right outside your front door, placing the foxes in conflict with sorcerers and ancient powers in the middle of downtown Tokyo.

- The Temple of Light has been spreading throughout the nation of Naipon, stamping out faith in the Old Gods. The foxes are hunted by armoured knights and strange beings they have never seen before, while the people they have sworn to protect turn against them. Can the foxes find a way to restore humanity's faith in the old ways, and why do the Old Gods no longer speak?
- The den has followed a mortal family across the ocean to Los Angeles. After settling in, the foxes have begun to explore their new domain, and have come across countless other spirits and beings from around the world, who have made a society for themselves hidden behind the scenes. Do the foxes wish to join this new culture? What traditions exist, and how will the foxes adapt to living in a new country?
- In the heart of ancient Kyoto lies a secret – twelve powerful spirits, each tied to one of the signs of the Chinese Zodiac, are bound in a string of prayer beads. A young girl stumbles back in time, and accidentally frees the spirits. The den of kitsune who once protected the beads must now assist the girl in finding and binding those spirits once again.





# Chapter Five

*The World*



# The Gods



These are some of the more important gods of Japan. The more tails a fox possesses, the more likely she is to attract the favour or wrath of these gods. You may use these powerful figures to grant boons to the foxes, provide rewards, or punish them when they forsake their duties. Do not use the gods often or blatantly. It is not likely they will directly intervene in an *obvious* fashion: They have their own agents and *kami* to work on their behalf. The Fortunes themselves are usually agents of the gods, and even these figures tend to conceal themselves as normal people when they wish to provide aid, acting as mentors or random passers-by when they wish to help, rather than as powerful divinities. The game is about the foxes, not about the gods behind the scenes.

## In the Beginning

... there was Nothing. This Nothing was called Amatsu-Mikaboshi, and it existed before there was the universe. It reigned for eternity, alone in absolute darkness and control. Then, without warning, there was a change. Some say Mikaboshi became aware of itself, and with this awareness came *identity*. This awareness shattered the darkness, creating the universe and change: the chaos of life. While Mikaboshi was shattered, it was still aware, becoming the god of the stars, especially the North Star. Mikaboshi also lurks within the heart of all life and is said to be the source of all dark passions. Mikaboshi is the antithesis of the purity of the Shinto faith and is a force of absolute domination.

From the creation of the universe rose Takamagahara, or the "High Plain of Heaven," the home of the kami. Here were born the five forces of the universe: Amenominakanushi ("Central Master"), Takamimusubi ("High Creation"), Kamimusubi ("Divine Creation"), and later came Imashiashikabihikoji ("Energy") and Amenotokotachi ("Heaven"). These five forces divided, transforming into the *tenzai shoshin* ("heavenly kami"). Two of these gods are well known, for their actions helped define the Court of Heaven.

## The First Heavenly Kami

Izanami no Mikoto ("Exalted Female") and Izanagi no Mikoto ("Exalted Male") were the first husband and wife. Their every action created new ideas, and with every idea, a new kami was born. Their union brought into being the Japanese islands and many of the lesser gods, until one day, Izanami died in childbirth. Lost without his wife, Izanagi descended into Yomi (the underworld) to find her, only to discover she had eaten the food of the underworld, and so could never leave. Finding the realm of the dead to be too dark, Izanagi created a torch, and saw the true horror of Izanami's transformation by Yomi. He fled, and she pursued him towards the surface, where he sealed her to prevent the land of the dead from spilling into creation. Trapped in Yomi, Izanami vowed that if he abandoned her, she would slay one thousand people per day, and Izanagi vowed to see fifteen hundred people born in response. Izanami no Mikoto became the goddess of death, served by her eight *shikome* ("foul women of Yomi"), hags of the underworld who fulfil her oath to Izanagi.

Izanagi left Yomi and cleansed himself, ritually purifying himself to be rid of the touch of death. While cleansing himself, he created many new gods, but the three most important were Amaterasu Omikami from his right eye, Tsukiyomi Okami from his left eye, and Susano-O from his nose.

## Amaterasu Omikami

Izanagi granted Amaterasu rulership of the heavens, where she became the incarnation of the sun. She became the goddess from which all light emanates and shows warmth and compassion to all who worship her. She is the ruler of Heaven, the goddess to whom all other gods answer.

## Tsukiyomi Okami

Izanagi granted Tsukiyomi control of the night and the moon. Tsukiyomi was prideful, and when his sister sent him to attend a feast in her honour, he was dismayed at the method used by Uke Mochi (see Inari) in creating the food for the banquet. Impulsively, he slew Uke Mochi. Amaterasu was shocked at his actions and refused to have any further dealings with him.

## Susano-O

Izanagi granted Susano-O rulership of the seas. He became the god of storms and the oceans and is impulsive and destructive. He feuded constantly with his sister, Amaterasu, and one day took his rivalry too far, slaying one of her handmaidens. Susano-O was then banished from Heaven. In his travels, he encountered an old man and his wife, sobbing. They explained to him that they had lost seven of their eight daughters to the Orochi, the eight-headed and eight-tailed serpent.

Susano-O recognized the couple as related to Amaterasu, so he offered an exchange: He would defeat the serpent if he were allowed to marry the eighth daughter. They agreed, and Susano-O devised a cunning plan. He succeeded, and defeated the Orochi, severing each of the heads and each of the tails but one. Within the last tail, he discovered a magical sword. He gave it to Amaterasu as a gift: the Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi ("Sword of the Gathering Clouds of Heaven").





## Ame no Uzume

When Susano-O slew Amaterasu's handmaiden, the goddess of the sun was angered and fled into the depths of a cave, covering the world in darkness.

The gods pleaded with her, trying to coax her back, but she refused each in turn. Ame no Uzume, the goddess of merriment, came up with a plan. She placed sparkling jewels and a mirror before the cave, and then dressed herself in leaves and flowers. Ame danced for the gods until her clothing fell from her, provoking cheers and laughter, and coaxed Amaterasu from her cave to see what was causing this celebration. Seeing her reflection in the mirror, she was entranced by her own beauty, and the gods sealed the cave, preventing her from returning to it. Seeing the celebration about her, she agreed to stay, and her light once more returned to Heaven. From then on, Ame no Uzume became the goddess of the dawn and mirth.

## The First Emperor of Japan

Amaterasu ordered her grandson, Prince Ninigi, to rule over the islands of Japan, making him the first Emperor. As a symbol of his divine rule, she granted him three treasures: The magatama necklace and the bronze mirror which were used to draw her from her seclusion and the sword Susano-O granted to her. These three items became the Imperial Regalia of Japan. With these gifts, Prince Ninigi descended from heaven and began his rule.

## The Seven Gods of Fortune

There are countless other gods and goddesses in Japan, including those that arrived with the coming of Buddhism. The most obvious of these gods are the Seven Gods of Fortune, who are considered the gods of good fortune and prosperity. The Fortunes are known to slip in among human society, providing guidance and aid to those they deem worthy. Each Fortune is said to have two aspects: a *benevolent* aspect when the Fortune is pleased and a *wrathful* aspect when the Fortune is angry. While there are more than just these seven Fortunes, these seven are recognised as a group, and so are presented here together. Often associated with the Seven Gods is the Fortune Jurojin, god of wisdom. In some regions, he (rather than Kichijoten) is revered as one of the Seven Fortunes.



## The Spirit World

Every object, creature, and concept in the world has a kami to represent it. When a child is born, her name is written at the local Shinto temple, so that upon her person's death she may join the kami and thus become a blessed ancestor. Beyond just the kami, there are special *types* of kami, each with their own purposes and names. Below are some descriptions of the other realms that the foxes may visit, and the creatures which can be found there. For more information on these creatures, consult the following pages.

### Ashihara no Nakatsukuni

Ashihara no Nakatsukuni may also be known as "The Middle Kingdom" and is the world between Heaven and the Hell. This is a mythic realm which overlays the physical world that humans live in. The Middle Kingdom looks like an idyllic mirror of Japan, where the lesser spirits (miko kami) reside, visible to those who can see such things.

### Takamagahara

Also known as "High Heaven's Plain" this region is the dwelling place of the kami. It is connected to the world by the bridge Ama no Uki Hashi, or the "Floating Bridge of Heaven." The kami may enter into any shrine dedicated to them through this bridge, manifesting in the world.

### Yomi no Kuni

The Japanese underworld, filled with horrible creatures according to Shinto mythology. This realm is where the dead go to dwell and rot indefinitely. Once someone eats food from Yomi, it becomes impossible to return to the land of the living. The realm of the dead continues from the realm of the living, neither heaven nor hell. Here, the dead continue as in life, in a shadowy realm where they mirror their actions in life. Yomi no Kuni exists "beneath" the world, with a number of caverns which allow those who travel into them to find the entrance to the underworld. Yomi no Kuni is ruled by the goddess of death, Izanami no Mikoto. The most famous entrance to Yomi is on the slopes of Yometsu Hirasaka, found in Izumo province, which was sealed off by Izanagi no Mikoto.

### The Seven Gods of Fortune

<b>Benzaiten</b>	Goddess of knowledge, art, beauty, and music. Sometimes called <i>Benten</i> .
<b>Bishamonten</b>	God of warriors and warfare. Sometimes called <i>Bishamon</i> .
<b>Daikokuten</b>	God of wealth, commerce, and trade. Sometimes called <i>Daikoku</i> .
<b>Ebisu</b>	God of fishers and merchants.
<b>Fukurokuju</b>	God of happiness, wealth, and longevity. Sometimes called <i>Fukurokujin</i> .
<b>Hotei</b>	God of abundance and good health.
<b>Kichijoten</b>	Goddess of happiness, fertility, and beauty.





# Creatures



The nation of Japan is filled with strange creatures, some far more unusual than others. From the creatures of the spirit world who were never mortal to begin with, to the awakened servitors of the gods themselves, Japan is home to thousands of yokai. The creatures listed below are a sample for enterprising Fortunes to use in their game, listed with a relative Challenge Pool and Abilities. The number listed for the Challenge Pool should be added to the number of foxes in the Story.

## Definitions

Below are some basic definitions to keep in mind when dealing with the creatures of Japan. Most entities fall under one of the titles given below.

### Obake (Obakemono)

An obakemono is a yokai which has learned to change her shape. An obake will be a yokai or kami who can disguise herself as something else, usually a person. Foxes who learn how to shape shift are obake.

### Oni

An oni is a type of ogre or demon. The oni are powerful creatures, capable of great destruction. Most carry giant clubs and are the embodiment of overkill. Most oni punish the wicked who are sent to Yomi in the afterlife, though those who find themselves on Earth often live in remote regions. Some oni take human form and enter society. Special rituals can be performed upon a person, drawing out the soul's inner darkness; when this is done, a person can be turned into an oni for a period of time.

### Yokai

A "spirit", "demon", or "monster" with supernatural powers. In most cases, a yokai is a powerful creature, with magic or supernatural gifts that set them apart from other kami. Foxes who gain a number of powers are considered to be yokai.

### Yurei

A yurei is a type of ghost which is incapable of passing into the afterlife because she was not given proper funeral rites. In most cases, yurei have white clothing, long black hair, hands which hang limply, and no feet. Some yurei are also accompanied by hitodama – ghost flames which float about the ghost.

### Awakened Animals

Any animal can awaken as a kami, but some are much more famous than others. Foxes may encounter an awakened animal on their journey. The animals listed below are but a small sample of what is available.

#### Hebi

The snake. A symbol of danger, the hebi may be used to give a warning to the foxes, or to indicate that something is very wrong. The snake may also be used as a warning that there are other, powerful yokai present that the foxes must watch out for.

#### Koumori

The bat. A symbol of chaos and disharmony, the koumori may symbolise that harmony in an area has been disrupted and that the foxes are needed to restore order.

#### Kumo

The spider. A symbol of industriousness, the kumo may be used as a sign of how well the foxes are doing. A completed spider's web may be a sign of a job well done, while a spider still working on her web may be a sign that the foxes have more work to do.

#### Nezumi

The mouse (or rat). The nezumi act as the messengers of the gods, going back and forth between Heaven and Earth. A nezumi may be used as a guide, bringing the foxes someplace where they are needed, or may carry a message from the gods to the foxes in a subtle manner. A dead nezumi may be the sign that there is a bakeneko or nekomata in the region.

#### Usagi

The rabbit. The symbol of self-sacrifice. The Jade Rabbit in the moon is said to pound rice cakes to be given to sacred shrines, and is said to create potions of longevity for the girl in the moon. An usagi may be used as a sign that the foxes may need to visit a shrine, or be used as a symbol that someone in their care is safe and will have a long life, allowing the foxes to tend to things elsewhere. A fox may make an offering to an usagi in the hopes of bringing good health to another.

### Ama no Jaku

"Heavenly Evil Spirit"

**Challenge:** +2 to +4

The ama no jaku is a lesser oni, able to see into the heart of others and learn their darkest desires. The oni can provoke a person to act upon these desires, causing them to perform wicked acts. This demon is known to kidnap people, flaying their skin from their bodies, then wearing the skin so that they may transform into the victim after devouring the body.





## *Ao-Andon*

“Blue Andon”

**Challenge:** +1 to +3

The demon of a hundred stories, the oni manifests at the end of a Hyaku monogatari Kaidankai game. A hundred candles are lit in blue paper lanterns, and each person present tells a scary story, then snuffs out one of the candles. Once the hundredth candle is put out, the oni appears. It has a human-like appearance, but has blue skin and two long, spiralling horns, with a mouth full of sharp teeth. In *Fox Magic*, the Ao-Andon may simply enjoy scaring people, or this may be an innocent children’s game that takes a very bad turn at the end, as popularized by modern J-Horror.

## *Baku*

“Dream Eater”

**Challenge:** +3 to +5

The baku is a chimera, appearing in many different forms, few of which agree with one another. It may have the head of an elephant and the body of a lion, or it may have the body of a horse, the legs and feet of a tiger, and the head of a lion. Other descriptions give it a pig-like face or a long, tapering snout, and the creature is usually black or pink. The baku wanders the realm of sleep, finding bad dreams to eat. Often, it will do this without any help from those suffering nightmares, but at other times it must be called. Those whose dreams are eaten by the baku may find themselves rewarded by the baku with good fortune in return. A baku may be summoned to eat *all* the dreams of a victim, leaving them restless and exhausted the next day. A fox may need to deal with a baku who has been summoned for this purpose, or may need to find a baku themselves to punish an enemy.

## *Futakuchi Onna*

“Two Mouthed Woman”

**Challenge:** +1 to +2

The futakuchi onna is a woman with a mouth in the back of her head, and whose hair can snake out like a pair of serpents. She is not actually a hostile yokai, but a woman afflicted with a curse. She suffers from a great hunger, and her hair will snake out to grab as much food as it can, feeding the mouth behind her head. If not fed, the second mouth will screech and scream obscenities, and bring the woman great pain.

This yokai is not dangerous, but may be a burden on someone who has brought her into his house (perhaps as a new wife). It may be up to the foxes to determine why this woman has been cursed (often it is the side effect of living in a home with a miser, and not being able to eat often, but there are other reasons as well).



## *Goryo*

“Honourable Soul”

**Challenge:** +5 to +8

The goryo is the vengeful ghost of a powerful lord, often one who has been martyred. This ghost is able to wreak horrific damage, summoning typhoons and earthquakes, or destroying crops. Such spirits are very hard to defeat, requiring the aid of a yamabushi or a fox with Faith. Such ghosts can be appeased, either by restoring their honour or rewarding the great deeds of their life. In some cases, erecting a shrine in their honour and allowing them to be worshipped as a minor Fortune or as lesser god will placate them.

## *Harionago*

“Barbed Woman”

**Challenge:** +2 to +3

The harionago (or hari onna) is a ghoul, an undead creature with the appearance of a beautiful woman. She always has extremely long hair, which is tipped with thorn-like barbs. The harionago can control this hair, causing it to move and lash around with a thought.

She is known for wandering the streets at night, in a constant search for young men. When she finds her prey, she will begin to laugh, and if he laughs as well, her hair begins to animate, and she will attack.

The harionago is a dangerous enemy for foxes, as her hair is long enough to give her an advantage of reach. The foxes will need to attack her from a distance, or brave coming into her clutches and risk being ensnared.

## *Hitodama*

“Human Soul”

**Challenge:** +0 to +1

The hitodama appear as small motes of light, usually blue in appearance, but sometimes green, and may have small tails of light that trail out behind them. Both kitsune-bi and oni-bi can mirror the appearance of the hitodama.

The hitodama may be found near cemeteries and in the deep woods. They may also manifest above those who are dying, fading away or slowly descending into the ground afterward. Some hitodama lead people astray, taking them deep into the woods or into the graveyards, only to fade off and leave the person lost.

## *Inugami*

“Dog God”

**Challenge:** +5 to +8

The inugami are powerful and dangerous dog kami created through cruel methods. They act as spirits of vengeance and guardians on behalf of inugami-mochi (or “dog god owners”). The inugami do not have to be beholden to their owners, and





are known for turning against their masters and also for possession.

Only an onmyoji is capable of making an inugami with any real chance of safety. This involves binding a dog on a leash and placing food outside of the dog's reach. The dog will eventually starve to death, and during this process, the onmyoji tells the dog that its pain is nothing compared to that of the master's. When the dog has died, the onmyoji performs a dark ritual, calling the spirit of the dog from the body. The onmyoji lays food out for the spirit dog, placating it and binding it to the new master. An inugami-mochi has natural good fortune, often blessed with wealth and success. Those who perform favours for the master may meet with greater fortune in return. As an ultimate act, an inugami may possess the master, making them both greatly more powerful.

The inugami is capable of terrifying enemies to death, possessing mortals, and tearing most lesser kami to shreds. A fox must be wary of the inugami, as it could be called the natural enemy of the kitsune.

## *Ittan Momen*

"Ghost Cotton"

**Challenge:** +0 to +2

The ittan momen is a ghostly creature which appears as a ten-metre-long length of white cloth. It drifts through the air, and may land on the unsuspecting. If threatened, it may coil around the victim, covering the nose and mouth and suffocating them, but if treated well, can become something similar to a familiar, and act as a protector for the person they have attached to.

## *Jorogumo*

"Prostitute Spider"

**Challenge:** +3 to +6

The jorogumo is a giant spider that can often take the shape of a woman. The jorogumo lives near lakes and waterfalls, and can snare people with her silk threads, pulling them into the water for the greater creatures of the water.

Not everyone is in danger from the jorogumo. It is possible for one to take a liking to a mortal, and offer a favour. The condition for this favour is usually that the mortal does not speak of the event to others, on pain of death. If the mortal can keep his promise he is safe, but if he tells others of the meeting, he will die in his sleep.

## *Kami-Kiri*

"Hair Cutter"

**Challenge:** +0 to +1

The kami-kiri is a ghostly spirit, appearing as a huge humanoid with a crow-like head. The kami-kiri is known to appear

behind an unsuspecting person, then cut off their hair without them realising it. This is, while distressing, not a malicious act – the kami-kiri is known to do this to delay a person from marrying a yokai – a situation known to cause much grief. As an attempt to prevent the wedding, or to give a sign that something is wrong, the kami-kiri hopes that the victim will have the opportunity to find out their betrothed is not who they seem.

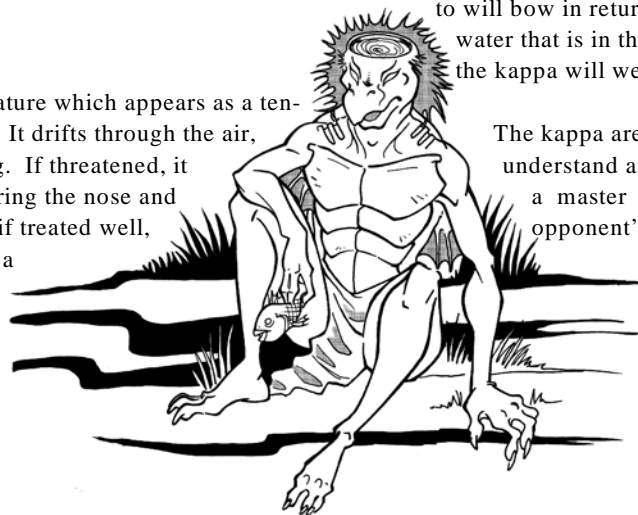
## *Kappa*

"River Child"

**Challenge:** +3 to +5

The kappa is a small yokai, or river god, usually no larger than a child or young teenager. The kappa has blue, green, or red skin, usually a slight beak, and a large turtle shell on the back. On the top of the head is a depression, filled with water that provides the kappa with strength and vitality. Kappa have long arms and legs, with webbed fingers and toes.

The kappa has a deep sense of etiquette, and if bowed to will bow in return – even at the risk of spilling the water that is in the kappa's head-bowl. If emptied, the kappa will weaken, and may even die.



The kappa are curious about humanity, and can understand and speak Japanese. The kappa is a master of wrestling, and can crush an opponent's bones with their techniques.

These martial arts can be learned by those who befriend or impress the kappa.

The kappa are fond of pranks, ranging from the mild and innocent if the kappa is fond of the region, to the dangerous and deadly if the kappa has been angered. At the mildest, the kappa will do no more than startle women or scare people, but at the worst they will steal crops, kidnap and devour children, or assault women. If given gifts and offerings of cucumbers, the kappa can be appeased – they are more fond of cucumbers and eggplants than they are of devouring children.

The kappa, once allied, is a loyal companion, and are unable to break an oath they have given. They are skilled farmers, masters of medicine, and fierce guardians. There are many shrines and temples to the local kappa across Japan.

## *Kashambo*

"Travelling Water Imp"

**Challenge:** +0 to +2

During the autumn, the kappa removes its





waterproof skin, transforming into a small creature about the size of a six-year-old child. The kashambo wears a blue cloak and heads into the mountains for the winter, tossing stones into the houses of

those it passes to inform them the kashambo are migrating.

Some kashambo like to play tricks on people, hiding in their homes to cause mischief. If left to their own devices, the kashambo will look after the home, with only the odd prank to make life interesting over the winter months. If treated poorly, it will inflict a mild sickness on family members or their pets, caused by the kashambo's saliva.

## *Kodama*

“Tree Spirit”

**Challenge:** +0 to +2

The kodama are the kami of old, large trees, and are not normally visible to the mortal eye. If their tree is injured or chopped down, the kodama brings calamity or misfortune to those responsible. Such blessed trees are marked with a sacred rope wrapped around it, called a shimenawa. A kodama may move to another tree, especially one born from the seed of the first.

The kodama are wise and peaceful, but those who do not respect the land are plagued with whispers and voices in the forest – thus giving the kodama the nickname of *echoes*.

The kodama can take many forms, looking as terrible or as beautiful as they wish, transforming into human form or appearing as small, shadowy figures if they so desire.

## *Kuchisake Onna*

“Slit-Mouth Woman”

**Challenge:** +1 to +4

The kuchisake onna is the vengeful spirit of a woman whose mouth was slit from ear to ear before she died. This terrifying ghost manifests as a woman wearing a surgical mask over her mouth (a common trend in Japan for those who are sick).

When the spirit encounters a young student or child, she will ask, “Am I beautiful?” in a shy voice. If the answer is “yes”, she will remove her mask, showing her terrifying visage, and then ask, “Even like this?”

If answered “no”, the spirit slays the person there. If the answer was “yes”, the spirit will follow the person home, slicing their neck open at the doorstep. If the answer is “average” or “so-so”, the spirit pauses and wonders how to respond, allowing the victim the chance to escape with their life.



## *Mokumoku Ren*

“Silent Group”

**Challenge:** +1 to +2

The mokumoku ren are a simple yokai, and appear as pairs of eyeballs, sitting in the white spaces of shogi screens that have been neglected and damaged.

These yokai are usually harmless, a simple indication that the place you are in is in disrepair, but they may also be a warning that other yokai are about. The mokumoku ren swarm into areas, filling the shogi screen (or in some cases, the tatami mats) with dozens or scores of eyes, which blink and follow those who wander near them.

## *Mujina*

“Badger”

**Challenge:** +0 to +2

The mujina are badger yokai who enjoy playing tricks on the wicked by instilling terror in their targets. Not actually malicious or violent, the most common trick played by the mujina is to remove their face, leaving it as smooth as an egg while in human form. Stories about the mujina have also begun to appear in Hawaii and the Philippines.

## *Neko*

“Cat”

A cat can awaken to become one of two types of yokai, the bakeneko or the nekomata. Usually, an awakened cat is seen as a bad omen, though not always. To ensure that a cat will not become a nekomata, superstition says that the owner should cut the tail off.

## *Bakeneko*

“Ghost Cat”

**Challenge:** +1 to +4

There are many ways for a bakeneko to awaken. The most common methods includes the cat living for a long period of time, especially if it includes outliving the owner. A cat can become a bakeneko if it owes someone an important favour, causing the cat to awaken and gain the ability to repay the person it feels obligated to. Bakeneko usually have one, three, or seven tails.

Cats may develop supernatural abilities much like foxes do, including powers such as taking jujin and human form. Other cats can enter a person's dreams, altering them to create pleasant dreams or nightmares.

While some stories tell of bakeneko who take the form of their owner then devour them, there are just as many stories telling of loyal cats who defend and watch over those who have cared for them, even if it involves the cat's death. Such cats have such a fierce loyalty that they will even protect their owners after being killed, their spirits acting to guard their owners.



*Nekomata*  
“Forked Cat”

**Challenge:** +3 to +8

The nekomata is a cat who has grown to the size of a large dog or even a towering ogre, and who can stand on their hind legs. These cats are much more deadly than the bakeneko, and are known to be more hostile in nature, punishing those that the cat thinks has wronged them. To become a nekomata, the cat’s tail splits into two near the base. Strangely, this cat enjoys singing and dance.

Nekomata are skilled necromancers, and can animate a corpse by leaping over it, transforming it into an undead under the control of the cat. In addition, the cat can create ghost light around it, mirroring the fox power of kitsune-bi. Fortunately, nekomata are not known for being able to take human form.

*Ningyo*

“Mermaid”

**Challenge:** +0 to +2

The ningyo appears like a fish from the waist down, with shining golden scales, and has the body of a woman from the waist up. Her mouth is filled with small, sharp teeth, and she has a singing voice much like that of a flute. The ningyo live in the ocean, and have a complex society there, where they study magic and the healing arts. Catching a ningyo in your net is said to bring storms and bad fortune, while finding one stranded on the beach is a bad omen, and is often a sign of impending war or some other great disaster.

The blood of a ningyo can cure any wound, no matter how severe it is, while eating the flesh of the mermaid will bring immortality, allowing the person who ate it the ability to survive any injury and to never age. If the flesh and blood are taken without gaining the mermaid’s consent, however, a terrible curse or some other horrible consequence may fall upon the person.

*Noppera-Bo*

“Faceless Ghost”

**Challenge:** +0 to +1

A noppera-bo is a type of ghost that can take the form of any person they wish. Some tanuki and mujina can also mimic the abilities of the noppera-bo, which may cause one to be blamed for the activities of the other.

The noppera-bo enjoy scaring people, often working together for greater effect. One may crouch by the side of the road, weeping, only to lift their head up when approached, revealing no features at all – their face as smooth as an egg. When the terrified victim runs to tell the story to someone else, that person will listen, then run their hand down their face, only to wipe their face away, leaving it blank and scaring the victim even further. Beyond terrifying people, the noppera-bo are fairly harmless.



*Nue*

“Nightmare Chimera”

**Challenge:** +6 to +8

The nue is a terrible creature, thought to have no true form. It takes the form of storm clouds, and has a cry which sounds like that of a thrush. The nue prefers to lurk in cloud form, drifting through the region and bringing terrible dreams and sickness to those who get too close to it.

When attacked, the nue reveals itself and transforms into a terrible hybrid monster made of mis-matched parts. In some records, it has a monkey head, a dog’s body, tiger limbs and claws, and a snake for a tail, while in others it has a bird’s body and a human head.

*Nuke Kubi*

“Detachable Neck”

**Challenge:** +1 to +2

These yokai appear to be normal people by day, but it is possible to identify them by the faint red symbols around their neck. At night, the nuke kubi detach their heads, which fly off to hunt prey. Their victims hear a terrifying shriek, and while frozen or running in fear, the yokai swoops down and bites them. If the body is destroyed or hidden and the head can not find it by sunrise, the nuke kubi will die.

*Nure Onna*

“Wet Woman”

**Challenge:** +2 to +4

The nure onna appears to be a snake of up to 300 m in length with the head of a woman. She often has snakelike eyes, sharp fangs, and long, luxuriant hair. The creature is incredibly quick, capable of catching her prey in her coils, rendering them immobile so she can slowly drain their blood using her long, forked tongue. More powerful nure onna can draw the blood from a victim at a distance.

The nure onna can transform into human form, and is often found washing her hair by lakes and rivers, and, if someone comes close enough, can grow long, cruel claws to attack with, or will take her true form. The strength of the nure onna’s coils are enough to crush oaks. Some nure onna also carry small bundles which are disguised to look like a baby. She will ask her prey to hold the bundle, and if the victim does not show the utmost care she will attack them. The bundle grows increasingly heavier over time, until the victim is trapped with it, allowing the nure onna to ensnare them in her coils.

*Nurikabe*

“Plaster Covered Wall”

**Challenge:** +0 to +3

The nurikabe is a yokai that manifests as an invisible wall during the night, impeding and





misdirecting the people who encounter it. It blocks all attempts to get past it, trapping victims in a maze of alleys and other streets, barring the victim from getting by.

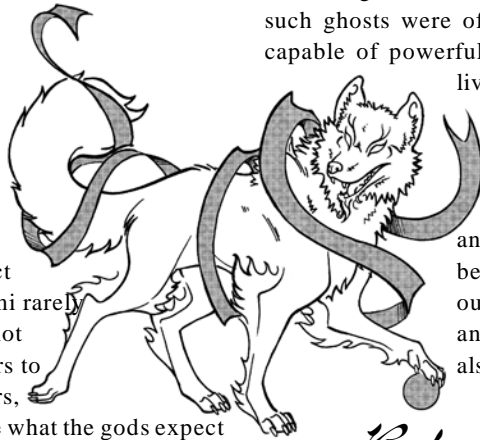
To get past the nurikabe, the victim must knock on the bottom half of the barrier, in which case it will let them pass.

## Okami

“Wolf”

**Challenge:** +3 to +5

The native wolf is thought to be extinct in Japan, but there are rare sightings every few years. The okami acts as a representative of the gods, or as a powerful avatar, and represents the direct influence of the god on Earth. The okami rarely changes form, and when it does so it is not to deceive or bewitch. The okami prefers to be honest and open as it deals with others, and will tend to deliver a message or state what the gods expect of the person it visits. The okami, being a servant of the gods, is more than capable of awakening the *kami* of another, and thus could awaken a kitsune or other yokai if necessary to aid in its duties.



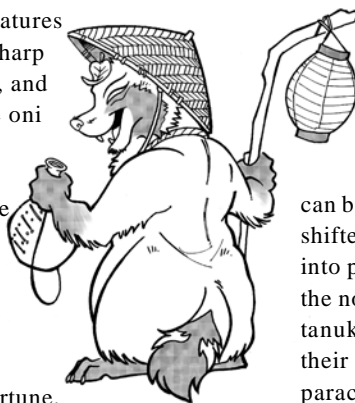
## Oni

“Ogre, Demon”

**Challenge:** +0 to +10

The term “oni” covers a gamut of creatures in Japan, from invisible demons who pester people, to powerful giants who terrorize whole villages. The majority of oni that foxes will encounter appear are ogres: hideous, large creatures that have a wild hair, horns, and maw full of sharp teeth. These oni tend to have red or blue skin, and often carry a huge club called a *kanabo*. Some oni have a third eye, though this is uncommon.

More dangerous oni are those who do not have a form which can be seen. These are the demons, which can cause disasters and sickness. These oni are invisible, and can take on a variety of forms, devouring people whole or laying entire crops to ruin and villages to waste. These oni may bring bad fortune, and a skilled onmyoji may be needed to banish them.



## Onryo

“Vengeful Ghost”

**Challenge:** +2 to +5

The onryo are one of the more dangerous breed of ghost to be found in Japan. Onryo are influenced with powerful emotions, usually jealousy, or hatred, or sorrow, but positive emotions like love may cause an onryo to manifest and punish the one who brings harm to those the ghost lived in life. While alive, such ghosts were often powerless, but after death, they are capable of powerful curses and terrifying effects upon the living.

These ghosts often appear as women dressed in white, with long black hair that hangs in front of their face, and either white or indigo skin. Onryo may be defeated by one with Faith, though finding out who has wronged or angered the ghost, and attempting to prepare atonement may also help to appease the vengeful spirit.

## Rokuro Kubi

**Challenge:** +0 to +2

By day, the rokuro kubi appears to be a normal woman, though she can be identified by faint stretch marks along the base of the neck. At night, she can extend her neck out to impossible lengths, and uses it to startle people or to play pranks. While a rokuro kubi does not normally try to inflict harm, she will usually have the urge to cause mischief, especially to startle the impious.

## Tanuki

“Raccoon Dog”

**Challenge:** +1 to +5

Sometimes called a “raccoon”, the tanuki is a breed of wild dog that is found in Japan, and is a distinct figure in Japanese culture.

The tanuki, while not as cunning as the fox, can become a powerful sorcerer, and is a master shape shifter, able to transform into inanimate objects, or into powerful ogres, or can even imitate the pranks of the noppera-bo. The most famous transformation the tanuki are known for is the ability to grow and alter their testes, using them as nets, tents, clubs, parachutes, and picnic blankets. The tanuki has a great love of alcohol, and many bars have will have statues of the tanuki outside their door as a good luck charm.





## Tengu

“Heavenly Dogs”

The tengu is a yokai that appears to be a combination of a person and a carrion bird, most commonly a kite. The tengu are capable of crafting illusions and can entrance people with delusions, which are called tengu-kakushi. Many tengu are masters of the sword and can transform into yamabushi. They punish the vain, annoy the powerful, and reward the humble.

### *Suitengu*

**Challenge:** +4 to +8

The most powerful of the tengu are called daitengu, with each ruling over a single mountain. These tengu are capable of telepathy, and can teleport over short distances, while the more spiritual are capable of entering into the dreams of others. Some of the greatest warriors, ninja, and priests are said to have been trained by a noble tengu who took them in. They are also fond of writing and hearing poetry.

### *Hanadaka Tengu*

**Challenge:** +2 to +6

This type of tengu often have bright red skin and long noses, and red wings when they appear in their yokai form. They often possess leaf-like fans which create powerful winds, picking up anyone and transporting them where the tengu wishes. Many hanadaka tengu practice shugendo. These tengu are sometimes referred to as goblins, but are respected and have a number of shrines dedicated to them.

### *Karasu Tengu*

**Challenge:** +4 to +6

This breed of tengu is very dangerous, tempting people away from the path of virtue, leading them astray and into a life of conflict and strife. The karasu tengu are thought to be phenomenally strong, and can possess terrible claws as well as the swords that most tengu carry. The karasu tengu can create ghost lights much like foxes can.

## Tsukumo-Gami

“99 Year Old Spirit”

**Challenge:** +0 to +4

A tsukumo-gami is the spirit of an object once it has reached a hundred years of age. Rather than being a “magic item”, this item is awakened, and is a yokai in its own right. The tsukumo-gami vary drastically from item to item, each type having individual names depending on the item that was awakened. Most modern items cannot become tsukumo-gami, as it appears that electricity hinders the awakening of the spirit (or repels them), and because most modern items simply cannot survive and function for a hundred years.

## Ubume

“Childbirth Woman”

**Challenge:** +0 to +1

The ghost of a woman who has died in childbirth, or the ghost of one who has left her children behind, the ubume appears clothed in white, with long, unbound hair. If her children have not been found and tended to, she may lead living people to them, in the hopes that they will find a good home. If she has no child of her own, she may buy sweets or other food for other children she comes across, with the money used later turning into dead leaves.

## Yama-Uba

“Mountain Crone”

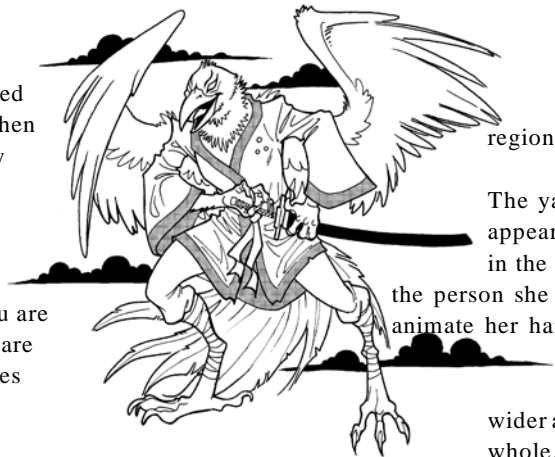
**Challenge:** +3 to +6

A yokai who lives within the deep forests surrounding the mountains, the yama-uba appears as an old woman with long white hair. She is usually dressed in a tattered red kimono. She often owns a small hut in the region where she lives.

The yama-uba can transform herself, often appearing as a young or elderly woman lost in the woods, or the lover or companion of the person she encounters. If approached, she can animate her hair, capturing her victim to devour – growing a second mouth at the top of her head, or splitting her mouth wider and wider so she can devour the victim whole. If needed, her hair can transform into serpents to better capture and eat her prey.

In some cases, she will not immediately attack, and may lead her prey deeper into the woods, or even to her hut, where she will feed and fatten her victim up before devouring them. If offered a good meal, however, the yama-uba cannot decline, and if the victim shows a harmony with nature and respect for her, she may show her gentle side. She has been known to raise orphans, training them to be heroes, and will act as a loving mother to those under her care.

The yama-uba is skilled in the arts of sorcery, and can make a variety of potions and poisons. She will trade her knowledge, but often exacts a harsh price in return, requiring the person to perform a terrible act or to sacrifice someone else to the yama-uba in their place.





## *Yuki-Onna*

“Snow Maiden”

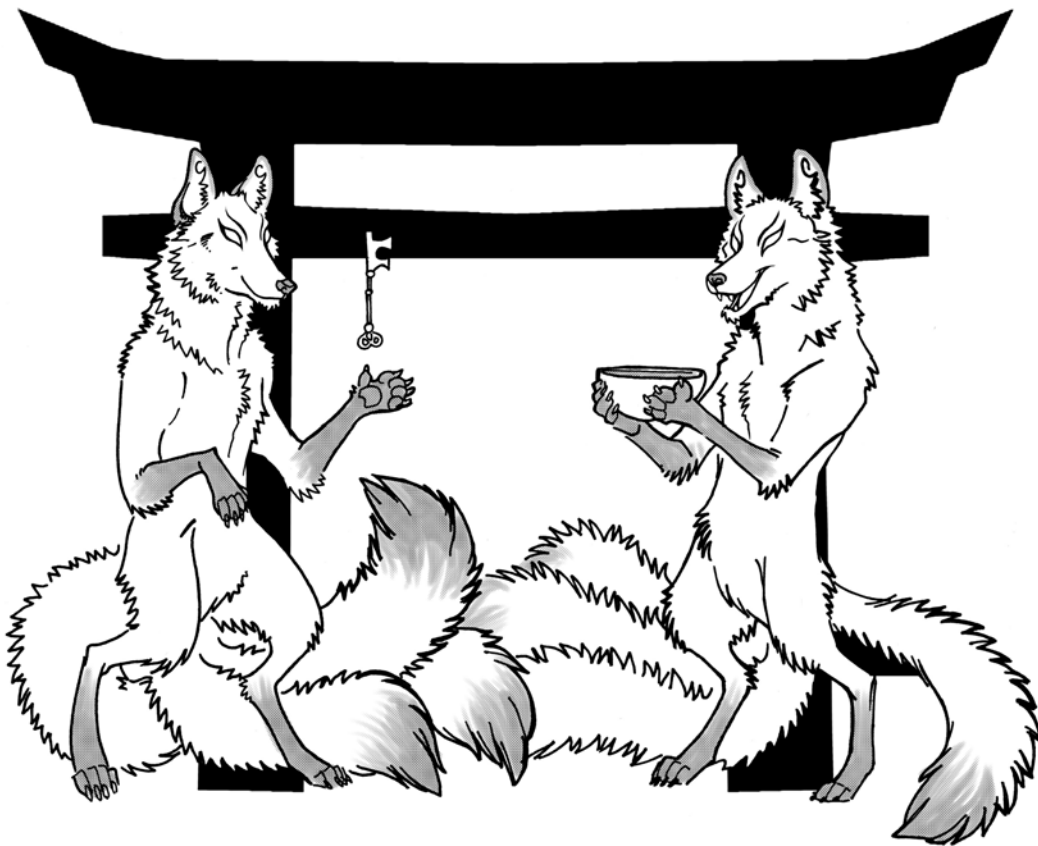
**Challenge:** +2 to +6

The snow maiden is a spirit of the snow and winter, and has pale, almost translucent skin.

She may wear a white kimono, or may walk nude through the snow and blizzards that surround her, with only her long, black hair and her eyes standing out.

The yuki-onna can command the wind and snow, and her gaze can inspire terror in those she meets. If she finds travellers in the snow, she will usually approach them, offering a kiss which freezes the victim to death in an instant. She may also carry a bundle in her arms, and offer it to those she meets. If the victim takes the bundle, they freeze to death immediately. If invited into a person’s home, she may visit while the inhabitants sleep, the wind and snow blowing in to freeze them to death.

The yuki-onna has a softer side, however, and may spare those she encounters, with the promise that they must never tell anyone of the event. In such cases, the yuki-onna may approach the victim in mortal form, marrying him if and when he comes of age. As long as the victim holds true to his promise, he enjoys a long, happy life with the disguised snow maiden, and will have strong children who may have a natural gift for magic. If the victim does tell anyone of the yuki-onna (including the yuki-onna herself), she will reveal her true form, and may kill the victim for breaking his oath. Other times, she will simply leave, swearing vengeance if her children are harmed, or may simply melt away.



## O-Inari and Tamamo-no-Mae

The foxes of *Fox Magic* serve either O-Inari or the Jewel Maiden: The two most famous figures in kitsune legend. Neither of these figures are given attributes or abilities – they are gods in their own right, and are far beyond the need of such things, much like any other god and Fortune.

### O-Inari

Inari is the Fortune of Rice and Foxes. The symbol of Inari is the red torii gate, with the image of two white foxes, or a white fox and a black fox, standing at either side of the gate. Usually, one fox holds a bowl, while the other fox holds a key. These foxes are the messengers of Inari, and shrines to this Fortune can be found in nearly every village, town, private manor, garden, or geisha house. In a large number of Inari's shrines, smaller shrines have been set up specifically so that people can come and pay respect to the foxes who serve the Fortune.

Inari may manifest as male, female, or androgynous. When manifesting as male, Inari usually appears as an older man carrying a bag of rice. If Inari manifests as a woman, she usually appears as a young goddess of food, and often goes by the name Uke Mochi. Inari is sometimes portrayed as a fox, and in some legends, has taken the shape of one of the celestial dragons.

Inari is a very popular deity, and has shrines and temples all throughout Japan. More than one-third of all official Shinto shrines in Japan are dedicated to Inari. This number includes only those shrines with full-time resident priests. If one were to also include private shrines, such as those found along roads and fields, shrines kept in homes or offices, those shrines which do not have full-time priests, and Buddhist temples, the number of shrines to Inari would very likely increase by at least an order of magnitude.

The entrance to a shrine of Inari is marked by one or more red torii, and by statues of kitsune. These statues are often adorned by red yodarekake (votive bibs) by worshippers as a show of respect. The colour red has become associated with Inari.

The main shrine is the Fushimi Inari Shrine, in Kyoto, which can be found at Mt. Inari. At the bottom of the hill is the main gate and the main shrine. The path to the inner shrine goes up

the mountain, and is marked by thousands of torii, which eventually lead to tens of thousands of mounds which are all used for private worship.

The kitsune statues are sometimes taken to be the form of Inari, and are typically found in pairs, representing Akomachi and

Ososuki. These statues hold a symbolic item, either in their mouths, or under a front paw.

The symbols usually are a key and a jewel, but other items such as scrolls, a bowl or sheaf of rice, or even a fox cub are all common. Nearly every shrine will feature these statues, either marking the entrance of the shrine or flanking the altar itself.

Those who wish to appease the myobu or who wish to have the kitsune speak on their behalf bring offerings of rice, sake, or food to be given to the shrine. Inari-zushi, a sushi roll made of fried tofu, is a popular offering. Fried tofu is considered to be a favourite food of the kitsune, and the fact that the corners of the sushi roll are pointed to resemble fox ears reinforces the belief. Shops that line the approach to the shrine often sell fried tofu for devotees to grant at the altar.

In more extreme cases, fox statues are offered to the shrine by worshippers. Some temples were home to live foxes that were venerated, and while this is not a current practice in real life, it can easily be seen as a custom in *Fox Magic*.

Inari's traditional festival day is the sixth day of the second month of the lunisolar calendar. In some parts of Kyushi, a festival or praying period begins five days before the full moon of November, and will sometimes last an entire week. This is accompanied by offerings given to the shrine each day, at which time the worshipper receives a o-mamori (a charm of protection) in return.





## Tamamo-no-Mae

The story of Tamamo-no-Mae stretches from India through to Japan. It begins with a king named

*Pan-Tsu*, who ruled in the western edges of ancient India. He was not a very wise king, and one day presented a new consort to the people, who was named *Hua-Yang*. He was obviously infatuated with her, though none knew who she was or where she had come from.

She was loved by the king, and even the princes who visited his court declared that she was obviously divine. She was soon showered with gifts, as many came to try to earn her favour. It was not long, however, before she grew listless. Her king approached her, asking what he could do to see her smile. She asked him to perform wicked and cruel torments upon his people. Rather than disappoint his beloved consort, he complied, demanding horrible punishments and tortures upon his own people. Eventually, the people could no longer bear the torments that king *Pan-Tsu* had inflicted upon them. King *Pan-Tsu* was slain, and his kingdom fell, but of the mysterious *Hua-Yang*, there was no sign.

The story continues in the lands of China, during the time of the *Shang* dynasty. Within these lands ruled the tyrant Emperor *Chou Hsin*, and within his harem was the lady *Pau Shih*. It was not long before her beauty drew the attention of her lord, and he had an elaborate garden crafted for her. Within this garden, the lakes were filled with wine, and the trees bore baskets of delicacies.

*Pau Shih* became the darling of Emperor *Chou*, and the two were soon married. He sensed a kindred spirit within his new wife, and for her amusement, he ordered the ladies of the court to dance naked among the flowers her garden. They refused, and so he had a pit filled with vipers and bees, then had them thrown in. As they screamed and writhed, *Pau Shih* admitted that they danced quite well. The Emperor devised more cunning and horrible torments to inflict upon the court for his wife's amusement, and once again the people rose up, destroying the Emperor and his wife. *Pau Shih* was cremated, but from the ashes rose a white fox with uncountable tails. The fox vanished, racing towards the east. The *Shang* dynasty was no more.



The story ends in Japan, in the court of Emperor *Konoe*, who ruled from 1142 to 1155. There, a lovely woman who called herself *Tamamo-no-Mae* was introduced as the Emperor's most favoured courtesan. She was thought to be the most beautiful, most intelligent woman in Japan – no hair was out of place, and no dirt dared to stain her clothing.

When attending court, she would show her knowledge to entertain the guests. Any question asked, she would answer, whether it was about music, philosophy or astronomy. She was named the *Jewel Maiden*, and soon became a darling of the court, and gained the love of the Emperor himself.

After a short time had passed, the Emperor grew mysteriously ill. The healers of the court did not know what to make of this sickness, but *Abe no Yasuchika*, the Emperor's *omnyoji*, sensed that *Tamamo-no-Mae* was involved. *Yasuchika* devised a trick, presenting a mirror to the young woman. In the reflection, her true nature was revealed, and she quickly fled, disappearing from the court in a flash of white light.

The Emperor ordered his two finest warriors and their armies to hunt down and kill the fox. The hunt took them into the plains of *Nasu*, where time and again the fox evaded her pursuers. Then, one

evening, the archer *Miura-no-Suke* had a dream. In it, *Tamamo-no-Mae* appeared, informing him with deep regret that he would kill her on the following day. She begged for her life, but he refused. The next day, the armies entered the plains of *Nasu*, and the archer slew the fox. As the armies approached, the spirit of the fox fled her body, possessing a large stone nearby. The stone radiated foul odours, and slew any that approached it. The stone became known as *Sessho-Seki*, "The Stone of Life Destruction". The fox spirit renamed herself *Hoji*, and haunted the stone.

She remained in place until a Buddhist monk named *Genno* came to rest near the stone and was warned away. The monk remained, speaking with the stone, and begged for the fox spirit to accept spiritual salvation. Eventually, she relented, the kindness of the monk helping her spirit to rise from the rock and ascend.



## Dedication

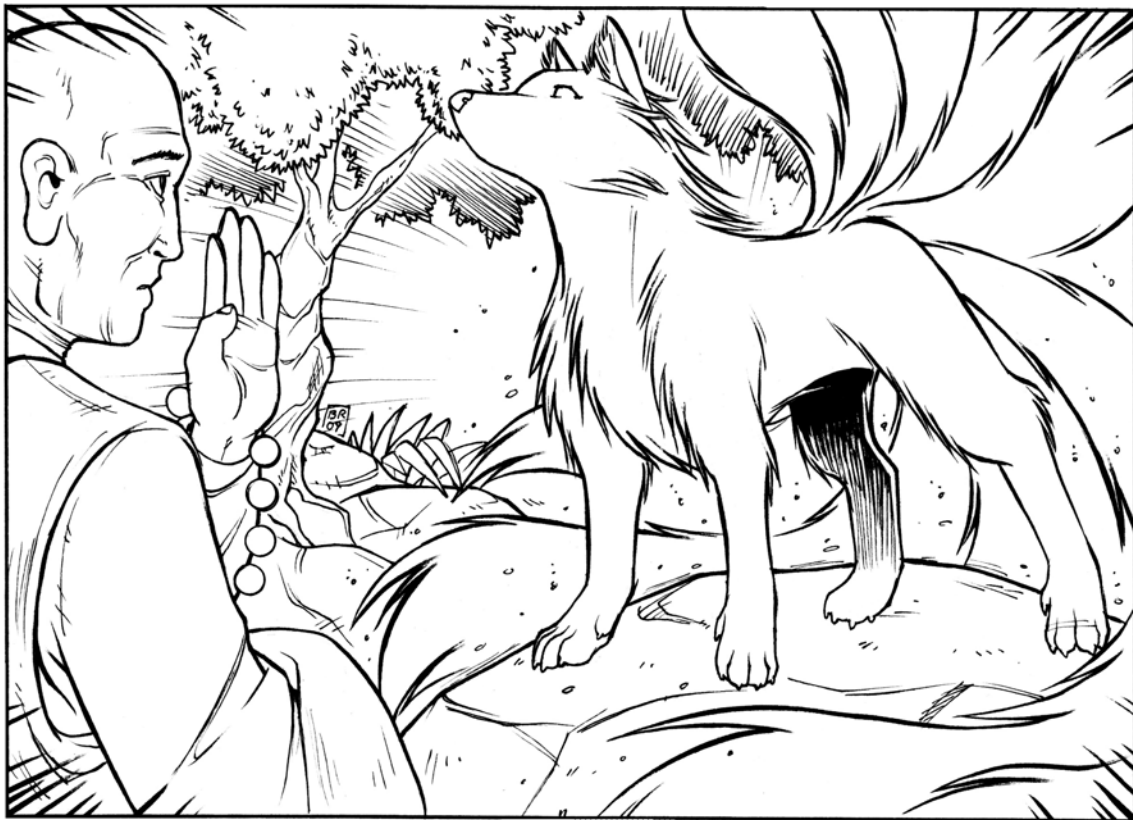
A fox may choose to dedicate himself to serving Inari or Tamamo-no-Mae. Once the fox has sworn his loyalty, he may then choose to take either the Myobu (page 24) or Nogitsune (page 25) Abilities. He may not take both.

A fox who becomes a myobu is following in the footsteps of Akomachi and Osusuki, serving Inari from one of her many shrines. Such foxes act as protectors of the people, ensuring that harmony is kept. Inari is the Fortune of fertility, wealth, and rice, and is even considered the Fortune of business, and as such many come to the shrines, asking for Inari's blessing.

A fox who becomes a nogitsune follows in the tradition of the Jewel Maiden. It is custom for such a fox to go from place to place, taking on various guises and names so that he

can infiltrate and ingratiate himself into society. Such foxes often seek those who are not in harmony with the world around them, then drive such people onto a path of self-destruction. These foxes will usually depart before the consequences reach them, allowing the victim to face punishment for her own misdeeds.

In all things, however, there is balance. While the most powerful and cunning nogitsune could tear apart whole families or even bring down cities or kingdoms, if a myobu is petitioned for intervention and the request is granted, even the most callous nogitsune will yield, out of respect for the monk who showed mercy to their patron.



# Chapter Six

*Nihonjinron*





Hokkaido

Honshu

Shikoku island

Kyushu island

Okinawa



## Geography and Culture

Although the characters of *Fox Magic* are kitsune, their actions and challenges occur in a particular setting bound by space and time. A story gains a greater immersive quality when there is at least an attempt to roleplay the thinking and perceptions of characters in context. Whilst the Kitsune are certainly independent of most cultural contexts, values, norms and mores, at least some of the time they must make a pretense of adhering to them, especially when in human form and interacting with people. They certainly don't have any choice when interacting with the physical environment! Although the following is written for Japan (Nihon), the default setting for the game, as the introduction makes clear, *Fox Magic* can be played in Chinese, European or other settings. While obviously the Japanese-specific material that follows would not apply, both the principles of immersive play and the elements listed below would.

### Geography, Environment and Demographics

Japan is a country defined by four main and some three thousand other stratovolcanic islands of note, stretched parallel to the east Asia coastline. The distance between Japan and the Korean Peninsula, the nearest point on the Asian continent, is about 200 kilometres. The largest island is Honshu. North of Honshu is Ezo, or in modern times, Hokkaido. South-east of Honshu is the smallest of the main islands, Shikoku, and south of Honshu is Kyushu. Combined, these islands make up 97% of the land area. Around each of these main islands are numerous smaller islands, the most significant being Oki and Sado on the west coast, the chain of islands north of Ezo and the collection in the strait between Shikoku and Honshu. The total land area is approximately 375,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with almost 35,000 km of coastline. There are small deposits of coal, iron ore and oil, as well as a ready supply of wood and fish.

As a whole, Japan is mountainous and cool, with a significant rainfall and many natural ports and lakes. The land is dotted with some 150 volcanoes, about a third still active, taking up a quarter of the land. As one would expect, the country is earthquake prone as a result, with some 1500 recorded annually. Only about one-sixth of the land is relatively flat, typically around the coastal regions. Almost 75% is mountainous, with Mt. Fuji reaching a height of 3,776m. A central chain ranging from 1500m to 3000m runs down the middle of the archipelago, with the steepest side facing the Pacific. The modest availability of land helped encourage the development of terrace farming and land reclamation. The short but swift-flowing rivers provided an excellent source of hydroelectric power in more contemporary times.

The eastern coastal plains are the centre of human population and agriculture. These regions – especially in the south – are particularly affected by typhoons, warm tropical storms with strong winds gusting up to 150 km/h and more, in the autumn months. Midwinter daylight is approximately from 7am to 5pm and midsummer daylight from 5am to 7pm. Temperature highs are approximately 30°C in midsummer and 10°C in midwinter along these regions and annual precipitation is approximately 1500mm. Remember that the mountains will be 15-25°C cooler, and that thermal inertia means that the coolest months is one after midwinter, an additional 5°C cooler and the hottest month is the one after midsummer, an additional 5° hotter. With a wide

latitude, the northern regions are significantly cooler than the southern. The island of Hokkaido has long winters with significant snowfall and very mild summers, at best. The relatively dry central highland region has very significant temperature differences between the seasons and even between night and day. The Ryukyu Islands are subtropical climate, with warm winters and hot summers. Rainfall is heavy and typhoons are common. As an overall statement, the summers are oppressively hot and humid, the winters biting cold, and the autumns have furious storms.

In the rapid economic development after World War II, environmental concerns were neglected, leading to significant pollution issues in the late 1950s and 1960s. The establishment of an environmental ministry in the early 70s, and rising oil prices, led to an emphasis on efficient technologies, such as hybrid electric vehicles, and with advocating international political solutions, such as hosting the 1997 Kyoto Protocol conference. Despite these initiatives, pollution remains a significant issue and Japan is ranked 30th best in the world in the Environmental Sustainability Index.

In general kitsune will most probably be found around the borderlands of agricultural and forested regions. Forests vary from subtropical broadleaves in the southern islands, to central deciduous in the main islands, to coniferous evergreens in the north. Japanese Red Foxes have solitary territories from 10 to 50 km<sup>2</sup> depending on food supply, with pairing in winter. Given that foxes hunt grain-destroying rodents, they are perceived to be messengers from Inari, and peasants tend to be very sympathetic to the fox, even turning a blind eye to or aiding suspected kitsune in traditional times. In more contemporary settings, with a more rational-scientific outlook, this will not necessarily apply. Although Japanese are rated the highest in the world in terms of rational-secular worldviews according to Inglehart Valuation, there was still a very significant drop in birthrates in 1966, a “fire horse” year in the Chinese horoscope.

It is generally believed that the population of Japan was approximately 300,000 at the advent of common era reckoning, 1.5 million by 400 CE, between 4.0 and 6.0 million by 800 CE, between 6.0 and 7.5 million by 1200 CE, between 8.0 and 12.5 million by 1400 CE and around 28.5 million by 1700 CE. Following the Shimabara Rebellion, many daimyo required





individuals to register at temples in an attempt to restrict Christianity. As a result a reasonably accurate census system was taken, which suggests populations of 25 million by 1750 CE, a figure which remained mostly static until after the 1850s.

With the advent of Japan's modern period, the population of Japan jumped to approximately thirty-five million (1873), comparable with other powers at the time; the United Kingdom was c30 million, France c38 million, Austria-Hungary c38 million, the United States c38 million). Rapid population growth followed with the first national census was conducted in 1920 indicating c55 million, and an urbanization of 18%. By 1945 this had increased to c72 million with an urbanization of 23%; at this time Tokyo's population was 2.77 million.

As of 2009, Japan's population was 127 million, making it the tenth most populated country in the world. For the past decade, Japan has actually suffered a gradual population loss, due to a lack of immigration and falling birth rates. Some projections suggest will drop to c100 million by 2045, c60 million by 2080 and 45 million by 2100. Currently, Tokyo-Yokohomo has a population of over 35 million, making it the world's most populated city. About 62% of the population live on the eastern coastal region of Honshu. Japan's population distribution is aging, with low birthrates and increased life expectancy. Life expectancy at birth was 76 years for males and 82 years for women in 1993, the highest in the world. By comparison, in 1945 the expected life span, for both males and females, was 50 years.

## *Social Formations and Timeline*

Like any other culture broad categories of social formation can be described as Primitive, Traditional and Modern. Discussions of the former case mostly center on the Ainu, the original inhabitants of the island, gradually forced northwards following colonization from at least the fifth century BCE onwards. It is characterized by an attachment to a mythic mode of thinking, absence of central governance, and small communities engaging in hunting, gathering, small-scale agriculture, and fishing and the dominance of wooden, stone or bone technologies. Traditional Japan includes the Kofun Era (c250 CE) all the way up to the opening of Japan to foreign visits (c1850s) and the establishment of the Meiji Constitution (1889). This is a period dominated by religious and metaphysical thought, specifically Buddhist, Shinto and Taoist, the establishment of a hierarchy of governance and the state, with larger communities based around agriculture and artisanship, and the use of metal technologies. Modern societies increasingly tend towards rational-secular thought, the constitutional state, and high levels of urbanization and industrialization. Due to the combination of being an island culture and from an extended period of politically-enforced isolation, Japanese culture is often described as being "more unique" than others.



The timeline of Japan can be broken up into broad periods; prehistory (to CE), Classical Japan, the Feudal Period, and Modern Japan. Prehistoric Japan includes a paleolithic period ending with the last ice age and the foundation of the mesolithic to neolithic Jomon culture around 12,000 BCE to about 300 BCE. This largely hunter-gatherer culture was responsible for some of the world's first pottery. It is believed that the Ainu are descended from the Jomon. Following this the Yayoi culture existed from 400 BCE to 250 CE, which included weaving, agriculture and metal-working (bronze and iron). According to Chinese historical texts of the time, the Yayoi were ruled by a shaman-queen who had a federation of some thirty tribes.

The Classical period consists of the Kofun period (250 CE to 537 CE), the Asuka period (538 CE to 710 CE), and the Nara period (711 CE to 794 CE). The Kofun period was marked with the establishment of military states, clans, and the beginning of the imperial lineage. During the Asuka period there were moves towards a centralized state, and codified laws, including a 17-point constitution. Buddhism was also introduced during this time and a nascent Japanese nationalism is also evident. During the Nara period, the Empress struggled with rising clan power, but more so with Buddhist monks and their supporters, in what would be a repeat tension between "church" and state throughout the medieval period. It was during this time that the imperial family established a mythology of their own origins.

The Heian period, lasting from 794 to 1185, is the first of the medieval periods. It is considered the peak of the Japanese imperial court and noted for its art, especially in poetry and literature, and included the peak and fall of Chinese influence over the country, following the end of the Tang dynasty. This is the point where Japan becomes distinctive from continental Asian cultures. The end of the period correlated with the rise of military clans, civil war (the Hogen and Heiji Rebellions), and the Genpei War and the political power of the Shogun. This was followed by the Kamakura period, 1185 CE to 1333 CE, defined by the rule of the Kamakura shogunate, the establishment of Japanese feudalism, and the relegation of the central imperial government to that of ceremonial functions. Attempts by the Mongols to invade Japan in 1274 CE and 1281 CE were both repelled (assisted by a kamikaze, or "divine wind"), although the invasion attempt mortally weakened the Kamakura shogunate, leading to the Muromachi period (1336 CE to 1573 CE), ruled by that shogunate. It included a period (1336 CE to 1392 CE) where the Imperial Court was split in two, and was also marked by the Sengoku, or "warring states" period of intense civil conflict and contact with Portuguese and Dutch traders, Christianity, and guns. The Sengoku came to an end with the reunification by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. After reunification, Hideyoshi attempted twice to invade Korea and China but was forced to retreat in 1598.





The Edo (location of contemporary Tokyo) or Tokugawa period (1603 to 1868) was the last and greatest of the medieval ages. The Tokugawa clan held the position of Shogun, but shared power with over two hundred largely autonomous daimyo, who were nevertheless given a large number of responsibilities by the central government. It was during this time that the samurai class were granted legal power above the commoners. Wood-block print was established during this period, and along with it an explosion in the arts. This was also the period of deliberate isolation from, and to, foreigners, starting with a persecution of Christians (popular amongst the peasants), leading to rebellion (the Shimabara Rebellion), leading to the isolation of the Dutch and Chinese to small trading outposts. Russian pressure from the north led the shogunate to extend direct rule to Hokkaido, Sakhalin and the Kuriles in 1807.

The modern period begins with bakumatsu, or the end of the policy of isolation. In 1853 Commodore Perry arrived with four warships and displayed their power. The following year, he returned with seven, and ensured the Shogunate signed a diplomatic treaty with the United States – literally, gunboat diplomacy. Within five years, other treaties were signed with various European countries. These treaties gave various western powers control over tariffs on imports and extraterritorial legal protection to visiting nationals. Soon after the Shogun resigned and the imperial government was restored, engaging in many modern reforms; the abolition of feudalism, the modernization of the military, the implementation of a civil legal system, parliament, and a constitution. Moving rapidly, Japan removed the unequal treaties and sought a policy of “forward defence”, leading to successful wars with China (1894-1895 CE) and Russia (1904-05 CE). The first established Japan’s credentials as an eastern power, the second as a world power. As a result of these wars, Japan had control of Korea, the Pescadores, Formosa, and parts of Manchuria. Through the Anglo-Japanese alliance, of 1902 CE to 1923 CE, Japan engaged in World War I on the side of the allies, seizing a number of German Micronesian outposts. Japan was one of the major powers of the Versailles Peace Conference and was granted a permanent seat on the Council of the League of Nations, making it a “great power” in the international arena.

The prosperity of the 1920s was supplanted by increased militarization during the Great Depression. Party politics became unpopular as it was perceived to express division when national unity was required. The major parties chose to dissolve themselves in 1940 and were absorbed into a single party, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA). Staged sabotage (Mukden) and baiting (Marco Polo Bridge) incidents provided the pretext for a full-scale invasion of China by Japan in 1937 CE, and was followed by Japanese participation in the second world war as an ally of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Japan’s actions in China (e.g., the rape and massacre of Nanjing) became notorious and are



widely recognized as some of the most serious war crimes of history. In 1940, the Empire then invaded French Indochina, after which the United States placed an oil embargo on Japan. In 1941 CE, following an increasingly tight embargo on Japan, the country engaged in the attack on Pearl Harbour, declaring war on the United States. Following a conclusive naval defeat at Midway, and the destruction of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic weapons, Japan sued for peace in September 1945 CE.

After the war, Japan was placed under international occupation led by the United States. Supporting the U.S. in Korean War, and in the cold war against the eastern bloc nations, a range of political, economic and military reforms were undertaken, including a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy, site-rents for public income, and a restricted military. Sovereignty was re-established in 1952, although with many pre-WWII possessions lost, including Korea, Taiwan, and a number of Pacific Islands. Strong foreign relations were established with the United States through the Japan-United States Mutual Security Assistance Pact. Relations with the Soviet Union remained problematic, and (technically) to this day Russia and Japan remain at war. The leading political party (the conservative Liberal Democratic Party) was in governance for most of the subsequent four decades with two major opposition parties (the Socialist Party and the liberal Democratic Party) being in second-place for most of that period. Japan was admitted into the United Nations in 1956.

## *Economy and Infrastructure*

Japan’s economy correlates strongly with its social formations; in the earliest times it was a hunter-gatherer economy. With the establishment of the State, metal-working, etc., it also developed larger scale agricultural production capable of supporting a class division of labour, whereby commoners like merchants, peasants, and craftsmen, along with lower class eta workers (butchers, gravediggers, etc.), supported a ruling class of nobles, warriors and priests (the latter nominally “outside” of the class system). This economic organization remained in place for well over 1500 years.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the modernist Meiji engaged in a programme of economic expansionism, adopting free market capitalism and industrialization, rapidly leading to Japan becoming the most economically powerful and technologically developed nation in Asia. This, however, was increasingly directed to militarization with the Sino-Japan war and the Japan-Russian war, and eventually in World War I. Both during and after that war, Japan expanded its economic and political influence over China and the Pacific islands, massively expanding its exports. However post-war industrialization was increasingly coupled with aggressive nationalism and eventually a war economy.

After the second world war, much of Japan’s industry and areas in the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” was in ruins. In the decades after occupation and the re-establishment of





sovereignty a combination of technological investment, highly efficient productive practises, lifetime employment, and government financing systems aimed at encouraging productivity, led to an average growth rate averaging 10% in the 1960s, 5% in the 1970s, and 4% in the 1980s, reaching the position of second-largest economy in the world by nominal GDP and third largest in purchasing power parity although only holding tenth position according to the Human Development Index, despite having the longest life expectancy and the third lowest infant mortality rate. The first major post-war recession occurred in the 1990s, known as “The Lost Decade”. Real estate and stock prices were radically inflated, reaching unrealistic heights between 1986 and 1991; in 1986 Tokyo prices for some properties reached around \$1 million USD per square metre (dropping to 1% of this value in 2004).

Japan is particularly well-known in steel manufacturing (e.g., automobiles, where it is the largest producer in the world), transport, construction, and electrical goods and the fourth largest exporter (the United States, the EU, China and South Korea) and fifth largest importer (China, the United States, the EU, Saudi Arabia, UAE). The finance, insurance and administrative sectors are also major industries, with 75% of economic activity occurring in the service sector (even with a relatively small government sector), with the third largest research sector in the world. Japan also has a productive agricultural sector, and fishing accounts for nearly 15% of the global fish catch, second only to China. Energy production is mostly from petroleum, but with a quarter from nuclear power and a fifth from coal.

In traditional Japan, travel was no simple affair. Only bushi, or those with special privileges, could use horses. Dirt roads (terrible during rainfall) connected the major regions and were patrolled according to the local daimyo. Travellers were required to present identification papers at checkpoints (often taxed), whose number could vary greatly. Way-stations could be found approximately every thirty kilometres, and post-stations with horses every one hundred and twenty kilometres. The contemporary road network is 1.2 million kilometres, but car travel makes up only 50% of the total distance travelled with a highly significant rail network and 173 international airports.

### *The Ryukuan, Ainu, and others*

Japan is often described as ethnically homogenous with Nihonjin making up 98.5% of the contemporary population, Chinese and Korean approximately 0.5% each, and the remainder “other”, including numbers of Brazilians and Filipinos. However, this does not include the 300,000 U.S. soldiers based in Japan, which would make up approximately 0.2% of the population in its own right. The statistic does not include the Ainu (officially 25,000) of the northern islands, the Ryukyuan of the southern (officially 1.3 million), or ethnic Koreans and Chinese who have adopted Japanese citizenship. It is plausible that kitsune characters are actually Kumiho or

Huli jing. There are repeat cases of explicit cultural and often governmental systematic racism against Zainichi (permanent residents), especially those who are Chongryon (north Korean).



The Ryukyuan people were an independent kingdom until the Japanese took control in 1609, and remained relatively autonomous until 1879 when the island chain became part of the Okinawa prefecture. The Okinawan language is related to Japanese. Culturally, Okinawa has been significantly influenced by its proximity to southern China with whom it has extensively traded over hundreds of years. Ryukyuan cuisine is noted for being balanced and rich in vitamins and minerals, probably contributing significantly to the extended average lifespan. Rice, seaweed, and fermented soybean are staples, with pork, black sugar and a native bitter melon, goya, also featuring prominently in the cuisine. Religious worship is centred on the family home, with three key shrines; a closet for ancestor worship, a spirit of the hearth, and a spirit for the toilet. The religion is a combination of spiritual ancestor worship and natural animism, with input from Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shinto and a limited contribution from Christianity. There is a belief in the spiritual superiority of women over men, allowing for priestesses and yuta (female shaman). Their artistic expressions include preference for the sanshin, a type of lute, and martial arts; contemporary karate originated from the Ryukyuan.

“The Ainu lived in this place a hundred thousand years before the Children of the Sun came.”

The Ainu are an indigenous ethnic group of Japan. Although physically larger than the Japanese and with pale skin and “rounded eyes”, the Ainu are not a Caucasoid “race”, as many texts state. Their closest genetic relations include members of the Russian far east indigenous populations (e.g., Nivkhs, Oroks). Their name translates as “human” in clear juxtaposition to the “kamui”, or divine beings. Due to “Ainu” being used as a derogatory term in the past, many Ainu today prefer the term Utari (“comrade”) to refer to their ethnicity. The Ainu language is isolated and, with the exception of loanwords, has no connection with Japanese. There are currently less than 100 living speakers. There was no written form, although in contemporary times Japanese kana, Russian cyrillic, and more recently, Latin alphabets have been employed. Cultural myths were expressed in yukar, a form of epic poetry with melodic spoken components and music (the zither and harp).

Men, never shaving, have thick beards, and women tattoo around their mouths and forearms. Hair colour is dark and eye colour ranges from light brown to an unusual golden colour. Traditional dress was a robe spun from the bark of the elm. In winter animal skins (especially deer) were worn, with boots from dogskin or salmon. Both sexes sported earrings. The cultural means of production was





hunter-gathering and fishing, although farming was developed from the 13 century CE onwards. Their religion was based around natural phenomena and the kamui spirits, with grandmother earth-fire dominating, and then the kamui of the mountains, those of the sea, then everything else. There were no priests; rather, the village chief provided the leadership of religious ceremonies. The traditional diet consists of the meat of bear, fox, wolf, ox, horse, and badger, as well as the less surprising fish, fowl, millet, vegetables and roots. Meat was never eaten raw. Traditional housing consisted of reed-thatched huts. The legal system was based around agreement from the community; there was no capital punishment, although mutilation of some criminals did occur.

In the last years of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, the central Japanese government engaged in a policy of assimilation of the Ainu. The Ainu were forced to learn Japanese, take Japanese names, and have their religious practices curtailed. It was not until 1997 that the Japanese government recognized the existence of ethnic minorities and not until 2008 that the Ainu were acknowledged as the aboriginal people of the land.

### *Language and Artistic Expression*

As with any culture, the most obvious form of cultural expression is through the shared symbolic values broadly called "language". The Japanese language is highly isolated and has an independent grammatical structure and lexical corpus, both rich and flexible in connotative structures. In most cases during the traditional period languages can be considered dialects, although in some extreme cases they were not directly mutually intelligible. It is an agglutinative (words combined through morphemes) language with a particularly complex system of honorifics, with verb forms and even vocabulary indicating the relative status of the speaker, the listener, and persons involved in the discussion. Discussion between classes can be so different to even be considered as dialects. Japanese vocabulary has significant loanwords, firstly from Chinese, a handful of words from the Portuguese and Dutch (16th and 17th centuries respectively) and English from the late 19th century onwards.

Traditional Japanese is written with three scripts; hiragana, derived from the Chinese cursive script; katakana, derived as a shorthand from Chinese characters; and kanji, also imported from China. Hiragana and katakana are both kana systems, in which each character represents one mora (syllable weight); they are both considered simple, with children being taught katakana and then hiragana. Hiragana are used for words for which there are no kanji characters. Sino-Japanese numerals are also used. Modern Japanese also makes use of the Latin alphabet, romaji, especially in the post-WWII environment, along with Hindu-Arabic numerals.



Ink and wash painting (sumi-e) of scenes or objects has been an means of artistic expression for close to two thousand years in Japan, while Chinese papermaking was introduced around the 7th century CE. Washi, Japanese paper originally from the paper mulberry, was developed later. The aesthetic expression in painting uses the same technique as in calligraphy, and indeed calligraphy (shodo) itself is considered an art form with extensive effort often taken to produce but a single character. In the latter period of traditional Japan woodblock prints (ukiyo-e) were mass-produced.

Sculptures typically consisted of Buddhist images; the oldest sculpture in Japan is a wooden statue of Amitabha at the Zenko-ji temple and there is a massive bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana in the Todai-ji temple. Wood is the traditional material for sculpture, with added lacquer, gilding, or painted surfaces. Where available bronze and other metals were also used.

Traditional Japanese theatre is expressed in four schools: noh, kyogen, kabuki and bunraku. Noh combines music and dance and is characterised by graceful gestures. Kyogen ("mad words") is a humourous type of theatre, typically performed during the intermission of noh performances. Kabuki originates in the Edo period (c1600 to c1870), and includes many dances of the time. Kabuki uses significant makeup, especially for historical plays. Finally, bunraku is Japanese puppet theatre. In most of its history theatre has been performed entirely by men, due to prostitution of actresses. There have been recent attempts to reintroduce female actors with some opposition from conservatives.

Japanese architecture was initially highly influenced by Tang-dynasty Chinese architecture. The pagoda is an iconic Japanese style. Many buildings are constructed with traditional gardens, others with special buildings for the tea ceremony. On a related subject, the cherry blossom is considered particularly symbolic among samurai, as it does not wither, but rather falls whole, indicating the degree of loyalty a samurai should show their daimyo. Used within the home, and more uniquely, is the Japanese art of flower arrangement (ikebana). Used to express the seasons, it makes use of colour and design to create a symbolic narrative of the represented time.

Japanese music has borrowed instruments, scales and styles from neighbouring cultures. The stringed koto, for example, was introduced from China, and the guitar-like shamisen came from the Ryukyuan in the sixteenth. Western classical music, introduced in the late nineteenth century, was modified to a Japanese style. Post-war Japan has been heavily influenced by American and European popular music, leading to the development of its own forms of contemporary popular music known as ryukoka (Japanese jazz and blues, 1920s-1950s), kayokyoku (up to 1980) and J-pop (thereafter). The Japanese popular music industry is the second largest in the world. Karaoke is a widely very popular cultural activity, perceived as a great a cultural leveller.



Literature begins with the compilation of ancient poems from c350 CE to c750CE in the Man'yōshū.

Other classic texts include a biting and wry collection of observations of the Heian court, *The Pillow Book* (1002 CE), and *The Tale of Genji* (c1020), often described as the world's first novel. *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* (10th century), is considered proto-science fiction, with a journey to the moon. Medieval Japanese literature emphasizes the development of a warrior class and the virtues that they embody, an example is the epic *The Tale of the Heike* (1371). During the Tokugawa or Edo period, literature became popularised with *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1702), a travel journal, being particularly representative. One modern critic commented: "it was as if the very soul of Japan had itself written it". In the early modern period, authors grappled with European literary traditions, incorporating them into Japanese contexts, especially with the expression of the author and their own subjective expressions (the "I-novel" movement).

## Religion and Values

The major religions of traditional Japan are Buddhism, imported from China in the sixth century, and Shintoism, a home-grown, post-animistic faith. Most Japanese are adherents of both faiths, and find no great contradiction when, for example, the Emperor (revered as a divine kami) decides to retire as a Buddhist priest. Typically marriage and the naming of children are carried out according to Shinto rites, and burials according to Buddhist rites. Early Buddhists of the tendai sect argued that the various kami are, in fact, various hotoke (Buddhas). People will often have a public religion that differs from their private religion, or even lack of religion. Pilgrimages are common.

Shinto ("The Way of the Kami") is reverence and worship of the spirit world, which includes natural formations (mountains, rivers), animals, ancestors, ghosts, etc. Particularly powerful kami have a polytheistic pantheon, headed by Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. Shinto has no scripture and no official moral code, rather a code of traditional practices. It is forbidden to depict the kami, except in the written word. A Shinto priest is known as a kannushi, or "kami-master". Every village will have a Shinto shrine, and every shrine will have three openings, one to warn off any person defiled by blood, illness or mourning, as these displease the kami. Devout Shinto worship on the 1st, 15th and 28th day of the month.

Buddhism originates in India in the 5th century BCE and spread to Japan in the 500s via China and Korea. The basic teachings are that life is suffering, and the relief of desire is the pathway to inner peace. Once an individual is relieved from ignorance, greed and passion they will become enlightened and enter into Nirvana. An unenlightened spirit is trapped within the cycle of reincarnation, conditioned by accumulated karma which can last generations. For example, lovers will express their commitment over generations and opponents will curse each other likewise. Buddhist temples are typically made of dressed timber with tiled roofs, with graveyards nearby. The

entrance to the temple has two statues of the guardian spirits and paper lanterns hang over the gates. The temples were often used as centres for learning for commoners and may have a registry of births and deaths. Devout Buddhists worship on the 8th, 18th and 28th days of the month.



The other major religions in Japan are Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity and Shingaku. Taoism is an elemental philosophy, in which all the world is made of interactions between fire, water, soil, wind and void; its ethical system emphasizes compassion, moderation and humility. Confucian sages were in high demand at the imperial court for their abilities at divination. Christianity first made its appearance in the 17th century, near the end of the warring states period and grew very quickly. It was suppressed and then made illegal (1606-1873), however, under the Tokugawa Shogunate. It is assumed that readers are aware of the basic credo of Christianity. Shingaku, incorporating elements of Confucianism, Shinto and Buddhism, was founded by a merchant, Ishida Baigan, in c1729.

Loyalty is considered significantly more important than honesty, although lying is considered dishonourable and oathbreaking especially so. People are expected to lie to protect their relatives and clan. Filial piety is rated extremely highly, with great devotion given to ancestors. A married woman is expected to show piety to her husband's family. Students are likewise expected to treat their teachers like their parents.

Cowardice is treated with a special loathing in traditional Japanese society. Everyone is expected to be brave, at least publicly, even when faced with death. Suicide is thought to be an altruistic and honourable action, especially as a means to apologise for failure or to resolve an irreconcilable problem. It was, until banned in the latter period of feudal Japan, considered to be a way to follow one's clan lord after their death. Samurai killed themselves with their sword – seppuku. Noblewomen cut their throats – jigai. Commoners would usually hang or drown themselves. Kitsune, being outside of human moral codes, will not commit suicide, but may engineer the appearance of suicide to ensure that their secret identity remains intact.

There is a great emphasis on refinement – in skill, in presentation, in manners – with a consistent drive towards excellence and flawlessness. The emphasis on politeness is reflected in language, with most verbs having a normal and polite form. Titles are typically used instead of names. In some contrast to this quest towards excellence and refinement, there is also a strong fatalistic streak among the Nihonese, who can blame both good and bad fortune on unknown karma from past lives. Boasting was also common and expected among the samurai; combining this with refined politeness is challenging.





Failure in the above (e.g., loyalty, bravery, refinement) results in internalized shame. It is important to note the subtle differences between shame and guilt. In the latter, social norms are reinforced

by expectations of punishment and can be exonerated through confession and atonement; there is a strong association between guilt and moral statements. With shame, the breach is not moral but rather a failure of duty and position, and cannot be relieved – thus the use of suicide as an honourable attempt to relieve one's shame.

Even in contemporary times suicide remains a significant problem in Japan, at least from the perspective of outsiders. Japan has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and certainly the highest for an advanced economy. Rates of suicide are significantly correlated to economic conditions with sudden increases when businesses fail or unemployment rates increase. Most (over 70%) of suicides are male, with suicide being the leading cause of death for people in their thirties. The most common contemporary methods are jumping in front of trains or high places, hanging, and overdosing on medication.

In old Japan, as with most other traditional cultures, marriage was a financial arrangement recognised by law; it had little to do with romantic love. It was typically arranged between families by a marriage-broker, who was responsible for the dowry terms and for resolving any future problems up to, and including, divorce. On her wedding day the bride wears white, the colour of death, representing that she is dying from her family, and upon marriage she removes the white kimono to reveal a red one, symbolizing being born into the new family.

A child legally became an adult anywhere between 13 and 20; bushi marked this event with the gempukku ceremony, where a young man takes a new name to mark the occasion. Youth is deemed to last until 20, middle-age until 40 and old-age after that. During this last period it is expected that a man of this age (inkyō) consider becoming a priest in preparation for the next life; this is treated with great respect, especially from those with rank and power.

## *Caste and Class*

Traditional Japanese society had a very strict vertical political class structure and an equally strict division of labour. The concept of a highly ordered society with a single emperor was inherited from China, but was not subject to the variations that occurred in the Asian continent. The supreme clan, the Yamato, are considered direct descendants of the Goddess Amaterasu, and the Japanese word for government equates to “Shinto ceremony”. The traditional government, rather like the European equivalents, could be considered somewhat theocratic. The Imperial Court in central Honshu was often considered by all to be the cultural and intellectual capital of the nation.



Nevertheless, behind this facade the true rulers of the country were the clan lords, or daimyo, and their warrior-retainers, samurai. Nearly every Emperor of traditional Japanese society was subject to the unofficial approval of one or more powerful daimyo. For almost seven hundred years (c1192 to 1868), the Emperor was effectively controlled by the Shogun, appointed from the Minamoto clan. During the Ashikaga Wars of Succession (1467 to c1600) the Shogun's power was weak, with greater power in the hands of the clan daimyos.

The Imperial court, the daimyo, and samurai made up the highest social class in traditional Japan – the bushi, or warriors. This also includes samurai without retainers (e.g., due to the death of their lord), or ronin. After the bushi were the heimin, or commoners. Most important among them were the farmers (hyakusho), on the grounds that they were responsible for produce – and therefore including fishermen, woodsmen and hunters. After the farmers were the artisans (shokunin), creators of useful objects. Least among the commoner class were the merchants (akindo). Although legally and spiritually considered the lowest members of class society, the merchants had enormous political power due to their wealth (bushi considered monetary concerns beneath them and would not haggle). Wealth also made merchants a common target during riots. Heimin could not travel outside of their lands without special permission from their daimyo.

Below the commoners were the hinin (“not persons”), which included the eta, who had “unclean” jobs (e.g., butchers, tanners, gravediggers) as well as those who had fallen to such conditions (e.g., survivors of suicide pacts, beggars, exiled criminals). This status was accorded from Buddhist prohibitions against killing and Shinto notions of pollution. Hinin lived outside the traditional village and had their own magistrates. It is notable that even in contemporary Japan the jobs normally assigned to eta are treated with some disdain and command lower wages. Even today the “Hisabetsu Buraku”, or discriminated communities, often find themselves living in urban ghettos or in exclusive rural hamlets.

Outside of the class system, but treated with the sort of respect normally commanded by the bushi, were Buddhist monks and priests, Shinto masters (both called gakusho) and “accepted” sorcerers (shugenza). Also outside of the class system, but in a different way, were the Yakuza and Ninja, although both were often largely derived from the hinin. Leaders have specific titles: a yakuza leader is an oyabun and the subleaders are chunin. Members are referred to as kobun. Ninja operated within clans with elders having the title of jonin, subleaders having the title chunin, and members, genin.

With the advent of a modern outlook, Japan quickly adopted its own version of the industrial and post-industrial class system, albeit with some of its own characteristics. Desired employment in larger companies was modelled on the traditional daimyo-samurai relationship and the Meiji public



service, featuring lifetime employment and substantial employer-provided benefits at a cost of expectations of long hours, demanding work, modest direct remuneration, participation in after-hours socializing with company-sponsored events (nomikai), and promoting a very strong sense of corporate identity, with company songs, shared credit, etc. Japan is unique in having its own word for death from over-work (Karoshi): typically heart-attacks caused by stress. In the post-industrial environment the well-known “salaryman” (sarariman) became especially prominent. The sarariman is a member of the new middle-class (replacing store owners and farmers), a white-collar worker highly dedicated to their corporation: diligent and obedient, but of limited creativity and initiative. Depression-prone, sarariman are correlated with suicide or escapism from the corporate treadmill (datsasura), in favour of lower-paid but more fulfilling work. In recent years some attention has been given to the phenomenon of “otariiman”, the sarariman during work hours, but a private member of the alternative manga, anime and video-games subculture. “Otaku” refers to any hobbyist interest; it can have negative, positive, and self-deprecating connotations.

## *Law*

Although traditionally derived from Chinese law, an independent legal system developed in the Edo period. While an imperial bureaucracy was appointed by the Emperor, the administration of provinces was the responsibility of the daimyo’s samurai, who acted as tax collectors and distributors of low justice. Each village had a magistrate, again supposedly appointed by the Emperor, but in reality subject to the implicit approval of the local daimyo. The magistrate had a number of lesser samurai to assist them in investigations, while heimin acted as patrol officers. The traditional Japanese legal system is based on conviction through confessions. As a result, great effort was made to capture suspected criminals alive. If a suspect was killed by an officer of the law, or committed suicide, or died for any other reason (e.g., natural causes), neither the suspect (obviously) nor their family could be punished. Once captured, however, confessions were extracted by interrogation, beatings and torture.

Capital crimes included patricide, arson, poisoning, forgery, robbery and adultery, but also seemingly less serious crimes like avoiding border guards, or petitioning outside the recognized channels of authority. The death sentence was applied not only to the person committing the crime, but also to their wife and children (excluding daughters who had married into other families, and sons who had become Buddhist priests). Arson was considered such a sufficient danger that a person convicted of it was burned alive. Other capital punishments were usually carried out by crucifixion. Treason against the Emperor or Shogun resulted in the death of the criminal and their parents and servants, the banishment of grandparents, grandchildren and brothers, and the confiscation of all family property. Other, lesser crimes, resulted in fines, cuffing, lashings, home arrest and the like.



If a samurai committed a capital crime, they were usually not sentenced. Rather opportunity was provided for them to commit honourable seppuku and notice of their crimes was sent to their daimyo. Likewise, a priest’s crimes were sent to the head priest, a daimyo’s crimes to the Shogun or Emperor. Obviously an Emperor, being divine, could not commit such crimes.

Only bushi had the right to carry katana, the Japanese arming sword, and they would almost always carry the wakizashi shortsword as well. Bushi also had the right to kill heimin, for crimes as trivial as rudeness. Anyone could kill a hinin and receive only a fine; as a not-person their death was not considered murder. If a student killed a teacher, it was considered to be a type of patricide.

The word of relatives did not constitute evidence in a law case. Upon marriage, papers were filed transferring a bride to her new family, that of the groom. A Japanese family required a son to pass on the family name and own businesses; if a couple did not have a son, they would adopt – usually the adopted son will marry the oldest daughter of the family. Parents had the legal right to order a daughter-in-law out of a family; any children were left behind, as part of the groom’s family. Typically such women had few options; they might be accepted into a Buddhist temple, or, more probably, they became a companion to a hinin.

In the late nineteenth century Japanese law became increasingly based on modern civil law systems, particularly the French and German. Statutory law originates in the legislature (the Diet), with rubber-stamp approval by the Emperor (who lacks the specific power to reject legislation). The court system is in four tiers, the highest being the Supreme Court. The main body of Japanese statutory law is a collection called the Six Codes.

A particular feature of lasting debate in contemporary Japan is the interpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution, which states that armed forces will not be maintained and the country will not engage in force to settle international disputes. Instead, a National Police Reserve was established and renamed the Japan Self-Defence Forces, still technically part of the police with items such as tanks renamed “special vehicles” and a naval police force superior to many navies of neighbouring countries. During the 1980s Japan’s defence budget was the third highest in the world, after the United States and the Soviet Union.

## *Homelife and Units of Measurement*

Traditional housing consisted of small, wood-framed buildings with plaster exterior. Walls, when they existed, were often made of paper or wooden lattices. They were typically raised from the ground to





allow air circulation and during summer months all doors and windows were opened. Flooring was hardwood covered with rice-straw mats. The entranceway of a house would have a space to remove shoes and a rack for weapons. Wooden clogs were available for those who needed to go outside for brief periods or for bad weather.

Traditional clothing consisted of a waist-length kimono and a divided skirt with sash for noblemen, with an additional vest with the clan's herald (mon) for formal occasions. Noblewomen had a floor-length kimono, and often wore them in layers. Their sash was usually tied into an elaborate bow. Jewellery was virtually unknown with the exception of the comb and fan. Wet weather may have necessitated the use of a straw raincoat. Samurai would often shave the front of their heads to give the appearance of balding and wear their hair long at the back, tied into a topknot. Boys would leave their forelock, which was cut at their coming of age.

Traditional education largely followed the Chinese model, including an imperial examination system. However, the rise of the bushi military class ensured that many titles remained family positions rather than the result of an educational meritocracy. At best, the educated could hope for bureaucratic positions. By the beginning of Japan's modern period approximately 50% of the male population and 20% of the female population had some degree of literacy. Contemporary education in Japan is compulsory and free at the elementary and lower secondary levels, with about 95% all students progressing through the voluntary (and fee-paying) upper secondary level. Approximately 99% of primary education is public, 95% of lower secondary education, but only 55% of upper secondary.

The day was measured in twelve hours of 120 minutes, split between "lesser" and "greater" periods of sixty minutes each. Their times and names are as follows: 5am to 7am (Hare), 7am to 9am (Dragon), 9am to 11am (Serpent), 11am to 1pm (Horse), 1pm to 3pm (Goat), 3pm to 5pm (Monkey), 5pm to 7pm (Cock), 7pm to 9pm (Dog), 9pm to 11pm (Pig), 11pm to 1am (Rat). The Chinese lunar calendar was used: odd months had 29 days, even months 30 days. The week was ten days long. The full moon always appeared on the 15th of the month and the new moon on the last night. An extra month was added to the 3rd, 6th, 9th, 12th, 15th, 17th, and 19th years. The year cycle followed the hours; Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Serpent, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Cock, Dog, Pig. The months and their seasons were Mutsuki (Spring), Kisaragi (Spring), Yayoi (Spring/Summer), U-tsuki (Summer), Mi-na-zuki (Summer/Autumn), Fumi-zuki (Autumn), Tsuki-mi-zuki (Autumn), Kiku-zuki (Autumn/Winter), Kami-na-zuki (Winter), Shimo-tsuki (Winter), Shiwasu (Winter/Spring).

Holidays, as is normal elsewhere, typically follow religious festive days (e.g., Buddha's birthday, ancestor's day) or equate with the seasons



(e.g., spring equinox).

Rice fields are ploughed and planted in spring, and tea plants are harvested. Trees are milked in the mountains for lacquer. In summer, silkworm eggs are hatched and fed, and their cocoons unreeled. A month later, tea plants are harvested again. Main fields are plowed, terraced, dammed and flooded. Rice seedlings are transplanted to the main fields. In late autumn, rice is harvested, assuming that locusts, droughts or typhoons have not killed the plantations. In winter rice is threshed with a portion given to tax collectors. Winter crops (barley, wheat, millet) are planted and alternately harvested.

The traditional monetary system was based on the koku, nominally the amount of rice to feed one person for one year, roughly 5 five bushels. Currency consisted of the mon, a copper coin with a hole in the centre, the bu, a rectangular silver coin, and an obun, a rectangular gold coin. Traditionally 25 mon equalled one bu and 40 bu and 1 obun. The value of koku varied according to the rice harvest; on average 1 koku equalled 20 bu. An outstanding crop would see the price fall to 13 bu and with a crop failure the price would rise to 30 bu.

The modern currency is the yen, introduced by the Japanese at the start of the Meiji period, indirectly derived from the circulation of silver Spanish dollar coins, quickly replacing the Tokugawa coinage. The new currency had the advantage of using a decimal system and for a while, the sen (1/100 yen) and rin (1/1000, yen) were also in circulation. The yen was originally defined on a bimetal (gold and silver) standard. Today, the yen is the third most-traded currency after the U.S. dollar and the Euro, and is often used as a reserve currency (after the U.S. dollar, the Euro, and the pound Sterling). Large quantities of yen are often counted in multiples of 10,000.

A bushi would carry their clan name and personal name. They would refer to heimin by a physical or occupational characteristic ("fat merchant", "old fisherman") rather than their proper names. Among themselves, and in rare formal occasions, heimin would use their full name. A commoner, or a bushi in a formal situation (which was almost all the time), would refer to another bushi by their title.

Common traditional recreation activities included archery, poetry and horsemanship in festive situations, and of course, sumo wrestling (which was originally part of a fertility rite). Modern sports and recreation, in order of popularity, include baseball, soccer, sumo wrestling, golf, boxing and motor racing. Soccer and martial arts (especially karate) are probably the most popular in terms of participation. Go and shogi are popular two-player strategy games. The tea ceremony, an elaborate and strictly defined ritual for making tea, is another recreational activity designed to quiet the soul. Traditional arts and crafts still prevalent in contemporary times include origami, dolls, lacquerwork, and pottery, as well as various forms of theatre and dance. A combination of woodblock





printing and Western art led to the creation of manga, the modern Japanese comic book, with its equivalent style expressed in televised format (anime). Japanese-made video game consoles proved popular locally and internationally since the late 1970s.

The modern Japanese addressing system starts with the largest geographical feature and works down to the smallest, opposite to the western conventions. They begin with the largest division of the country, the prefecture, followed by the municipality, the ward, district, block, and finally the house number. Street names are seldom used in postal addresses; most Japanese streets do not have names.

Units of distance and their approximate metric equivalents include sun (3cm), sho (10 cm), shaku (30 cm), ken (2 m), jo (3 m), ri (3.9 km). Units of area include the tsubo (3.3 sqm), se (99.17 sqm), tan (991.7 sqm).

Units of volume include go (0.18 l), sho (1.8 l), to (18.04 l) and koku (180.4 l). Units of mass include momme (3.75 g), hyakume (375 g), kin (600 g) and kan (3750 g).



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*Sample  
Characters*

**Concept:** Temple Oracle  
**Breed:** Byako Kitsune  
**Strength:** Wisdom  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** If asked a question, must truthfully answer, or instead provide a riddle or question.

**Cunning:** 2                      **Skill:** 3  
**Spirit:** 3                      **Wisdom:** 3

**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**                      **Cost**                      **Special**  
Myobu                      1 Wisdom                      Challenge, Investment  
Speech                      1 Wisdom                      None

**Background:** As a young fox raised in the temple of Inari, she found the prayers of the monks soothing. When she was chosen by Inari and her spirit awakened, it seemed only natural that she would join the monks and provide her aid. That she could speak came as no surprise to the temple monks, and they soon allowed her to stay indoors, giving her food and shelter. In turn, she gave what wisdom she could, using her connection to the spirit world to provide aid and insight. It has been some years now, and she wonders what lies beyond the borders of the temple.

**Concept:** Vengeful Spirit of the Woods  
**Breed:** Kuko Kitsune  
**Strength:** Spirit  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** Cannot abide the sound of a holy bell or gong, or the sound of taiko drums or religious chimes.

**Cunning:** 4                      **Skill:** 2  
**Spirit:** 4                      **Wisdom:** 1

**Story Points:** 1

**Abilities**                      **Cost**                      **Special**  
Illusion                      1 Spirit                      Investment, Optional Story Point  
Suspire                      2 Spirit                      Challenge, Optional Story Point

**Background:** It was never supposed to end this way. She could hear the trees scream as they were cut down, and could hear the animals cry as they were forced from their homes. She does not know what did this, but she does know she was chosen for a reason. Her forest is gone, and the spirits of the trees have fled and died. Where she was once just a fox, she has become more. She will bring her forest back, and she will track down those who took it from her. And there will be a reckoning.

**Concept:** Black Fox of Ill Omen  
**Breed:** Genko Kitsune  
**Strength:** Skill  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** Must come to the aid of others when called upon.

**Cunning:** 2                      **Skill:** 4  
**Spirit:** 2                      **Wisdom:** 3

**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**                      **Cost**                      **Special**  
Bachi                      1 Spirit                      Challenge, Story Point, Investment  
Myobu                      1 Wisdom                      Challenge, Investment

**Background:** Raised in captivity, this young fox has seen the cruelty that can be inflicted by humans. When he awakened, he never forgot the things he had seen from inside a cage. Now, while he serves Inari and acts as a messenger, he also searches for those who have spurned his master's gifts and who would harm the temple he now serves. Upon those, he is more than willing to inflict his wrath. The curses he lays tend to be vicious and humiliating, and it is only the mercy of the temple's byako that will convince him to remove a curse he has chosen to inflict.

**Concept:** Ghost Hunter  
**Breed:** Reiko Kitsune  
**Strength:** Spirit  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** Reflection shows the fox's true form, and any shadows caused by natural flame will also reveal the fox's true shape.

**Cunning:** 3                      **Skill:** 2  
**Spirit:** 4                      **Wisdom:** 2

**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**                      **Cost**                      **Special**  
Kitsune-Bi                      1 Spirit                      Challenge  
Onmyodo                      2 Skill                      Challenge, Investment

**Background:** Once, he was a person. This all changed one day, when his friends invited him to join them in a haunted house. He didn't believe in ghosts, but went along for the fun. Unfortunately, the ghosts were real, and his friends died. So did he, tormented and plagued with horrible visions of blood and pain. But at the last moment, as his breath was about to leave him, a strange girl came to his rescue, and gave him a second chance. He has become her apprentice, and now hunts evil spirits in the name of his lost friends.



Tenko

Kuko

Genko

Reiko

**Concept:** King of Games  
**Breed:** Shakko Kitsune  
**Strength:** Cunning  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** Cannot resist a challenge of wits or intellect. If presented with a puzzle or a test of wits and skill, the fox must strive to prove themselves.

**Cunning:** 4      **Skill:** 3  
**Spirit:** 2      **Wisdom:** 2  
**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**      **Cost**      **Special**  
Den      1 Cunning      Investment  
Shape Shifting      1 Cunning      Investment

**Background:** Awakening was a joyful experience, as the confusing world that lay outside the forest suddenly began to make sense for the young fox. He slipped into the suburbs, studying the humans as he chose a form to blend in, and soon found himself enrolled in school at the wishes of his father. Since then, he's joined the Go Club and has taken great pleasure and proving his talents and wit, excelling at Go, Shogi, and any other game of skill he can find.

**Concept:** Ancestral Guardian  
**Breed:** Yakan Kitsune  
**Strength:** Cunning  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** The fox is obsessed with order and must organize and sort anything that is spilled or scattered.

**Cunning:** 2      **Skill:** 3  
**Spirit:** 3      **Wisdom:** 2

**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**      **Cost**      **Special**  
Offerings      1 Spirit      None  
Speech      2 Wisdom      None

**Background:** It is nice to be respected and revered, and the young fox enjoys the attention he's recently earned. What began as a practical joke to torment a family became a position of honour when they granted him a shrine, and the fox is not quite sure how he got into the role of the family's protector. He doesn't mind, though – they give him rice and udon, say prayers to him, and in return he keeps the family safe and hunts down those who would bully or torment the children. He still gets to play tricks, but now they are directed at the family's enemies.

**Concept:** Street Vigilante  
**Breed:** Tenko Kitsune  
**Strength:** Wisdom  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** Must punish a wrong-doing done against the fox with a greater wrong, and must reward a kindness done to the fox with a greater kindness.

**Cunning:** 4      **Skill:** 2  
**Spirit:** 3      **Wisdom:** 2  
**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**      **Cost**      **Special**  
Kitsune-Tsuki      1 Spirit      Investment  
Nogitsune      2 Cunning      Challenge, Investment

**Background:** She awakened to the sound of someone in pain, crying out to the gods for help. The woman lay in an alley, robbed and beaten, and the fox swore vengeance on the attacker. It was a long ordeal, but it ended with the thug walking off a pier, entranced by the fox. Now, the fox scours the city, listening for the prayers and calls of those who have none to protect them.

**Concept:** Secret Foxwife  
**Breed:** Zenko Kitsune  
**Strength:** Skill  
**Tails:** 1  
**Ban:** The fox dislikes clutter, and must clean up any stains, spills, or clutter in the area to make the place neat and tidy. The fox is obsessed with cleanliness.

**Second Ban:** The fox has taken an oath of secrecy. If a mortal declares her true nature in her presence, all her Abilities are negated, and she cannot use them in the mortal's presence.

**Cunning:** 3      **Skill:** 4  
**Spirit:** 2      **Wisdom:** 2

**Story Points:** 2

**Abilities**      **Cost**      **Special**  
Fox Wife      1 Skill      Investment  
Seduction      1 Cunning      Challenge  
Shape Shifting      2 Cunning      Investment

**Background:** She did not mean to fall in love, but it happened anyway. The young man was alone and heartbroken, and she felt herself drawn to him. Being only a fox, she swore an oath to the gods in exchange for being able to take mortal form, but the price was higher than she expected. Now, she does what she can to make her lover happy, knowing that he can never learn what she is. If he finds out, she will once again be just a fox, and what good is that to a mortal man?



Yakan

Zenko

Shakko

Byako



# Fox Magic



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_\_\_

Bar: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

	Current	Maximum
Cunning:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skill:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

	Current	Maximum
Spirit:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Wisdom:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Story Points	<input type="text"/>
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Ability	Cost	Attribute
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Condition	Type	Length
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## Invocations

Location:

Time:

People:

Others:

## Tails

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