

SHADOWRUN

CORPORATE ENCLAVES™



ARE YOU READY TO SELL YOUR SOUL?

Corporate Enclaves shines the spotlight on two very different bastions of corporate power in the Sixth World: **Los Angeles** and **Neo-Tokyo**. Controlled and exploited by the iron hand of the megacorps, these sprawls are home to **corporate powerhouses**, their **political minions**, **powerful crime factions**, and plenty of intrigue and opportunities for enterprising and resourceful shadowrunners. The second in an ongoing series of themed setting books for *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition*, **Corporate Enclaves** also briefly visits the unique corporate dominions of Dubai, Europort, Manhattan, Nairobi, and Tenochtitlán, and provides guidelines for developing your own corp-controlled settings.



SHADOWRUN

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... TABLE OF CONTENTS ...

JACKPOINT LOGIN	4	LA Underworld	48	Places Of Business	84
LOS ANGELES	5	Fallen Angelinos: Syndicates	48	Businesses As Usual	84
Welcome to the		Life In The Fast Lane: Gangs	50	Grey Markets	88
City of Lost Angels	6	Friends Of Friends:		Black Markets	90
Shaken and Stirred	8	Runner Support	53	Awakened Hotspots	92
History in the Making	8	Flipside: Astral Angeltown	54	Unwired Hotspots	93
Back in the Day	8			The Wild Fringe	95
Hell Breaks Loose	9	NEO-TOKYO	56	Tokyo Underworld	97
The Pueblo Years	10	Seat of the Empire	58	Yakuza Incorporated	97
Gaea Shrugs	10	From Old Edo to Neo-Tokyo	58	Watada-Rengo	99
The Fall and the Deep Lacuna	11	The City without End	59	Wanibuchi-Rengo	101
Back to the Daily Grind	14	Edo-Syncracies: A Gaijin's Guide	59	Ingawa-Kai	103
Sunken Treasure	15	Basic Protocol	59	Free Agents	103
Seascapes:		Domo Arigato, Mr. Roboto	61	Neo-Tokyo Zoku	104
Life in the Star-Struck City	16	The Weird and the Wonderful	62	Bosozoku	104
P2.0 (or Pito)	18	The Corporate Life	63	Erekizoku	104
Teach a Man to Fish:		Bitter Satori	63	Kigyozoku	105
Higher Education	19	The Neo-Daimyo	66	Moe-Zoku	106
Beautiful Beaches: LA Sprawl	20	The Warring States	70	Minor Yakuzas	106
The Basics	21	Local Interests	73	Deniable Assets	107
LA Central	23	Nerve Centers of Neo-Tokyo	76	The View from Below	107
Inland Empire	28	The Fly-Over View	76	Local Runners	108
Orange County (Fun City)	31	Chiyoda	76	Finding Work	110
On the Outskirts	33	Shinjuku	77		
Trouble on the Horizon	34	Kanda	78	COMPANY TOWNS	112
Southern Discomfort	34	Shibuya	79	Dubai	114
The Mojave Desert	35	Minato	80	City of a Thousand	
Swimming with Sharks:		Taito	80	and One Opportunities	114
Corporate Players	37	Bunkyo	81	The Forty Thieves	114
Horizon	37	Toshima	82	Dust Devils	115
Aztechnology	44	Odaiba	82	Europort	116
Pueblo Corporate Council	46	Chiba	83	Like Clockwork	116
Other Megas	47	Yokohama	83	Meat vs. Machine	117
Showbiz	47	Sub-Tokyo	84	Masters and Serfs	117
				Rest and Recreation	118





Manhattan

Manhattan Inc	118
The Rotten Apple	119
Both Sides of the Fence	120

Nairobi

Getting There	121
Spirited Trouble	122
Out and About	122

Tenochtitlán

First Things First	124
Gran Hermano is Watching You	124
Heart Land	125
Blood Matters	125

GAME INFORMATION

Living the Company Life

Economic Neo-Feudalism	128
Corporate Culture	128
Panopticon Society	129
Politics as Usual	130
Necessary Evils	130

Los Angeles Adventures

Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?	131
Little Lost Sheep	132
Adventure Ideas	133

Neo-Tokyo Adventures

Off the Books	133
Almost Midnight	134
Adventure Ideas	136

MAPS

Central LA Map	22
LA Regional Map	12
Neo-Tokyo/Edo Map	78
Neo-Tokyo Regional Map	60

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Connecting Jackpoint VPN ...
 ... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
 ... Encryption Keys Generated.
 ... Connected to Onion Routers.
 > Login

 > Enter Passcode

 ... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
 Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>
 "A criminal is a person with predatory instincts
 who has not sufficient capital to form a corporation."

JackPoint Stats

60 users currently active in the network

Latest News

* <sticky> This private p2p MoSoSo network is still in beta-test, so pardon the mess and report any glitches to me. – FastJack
 * <021671> I'm on vacation for a week—from the Matrix. I'll be offline on a sustained basis for the first time in eons. If you need anything, ping Glitch or Smiling Bandit, they have admin status. – FastJack

Personal Alerts

* Your "xpl0it3r" agent has an [urgent message](#) for you
 * You have 1 [message](#) queued for anonymous re-routing
 * You have received an [official warning](#) to broadcast your [SIN](#) from this [node](#)
 * You have 12 new [responses](#) to your Jackpoint posts
 * Your [favorite falafel shop](#) is only 3 blocks away ([map](#))
 * Your [Ganesh virtual pet](#) has been eaten by an [opponent's LOLcat](#).

First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your **Current Rep Score:** 52
 (97% Positive)

Current Time: February 17, 2071, 0215

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae;
 your last connection was severed:
 3 hours, 11 minutes, 00 seconds ago

Today's Heads Up

Just back from a working vacation in a nice, quiet, secure, gated community? Add your experiences to this guide for megacorp-heavy zones.
[\[Link\]](#) [\[Guests\]](#)



Incoming

- * Working the black market? Wondering what the best new boomstick on the block is? Contribute to our collection of fun facts on the latest guns, toys, and vehicles. [Tag: [Arsenal](#)]
- * Ever wonder how your team's hacker kicks so much Matrix ass? Find out everything you need to know in our upcoming guide to Matrix ops. [Tag: [Unwired](#)]

Top News Items

- * Protests in Seattle turned violent today after a court ruling affirmed the right for Seattle Public Schools to discontinue bus services in certain areas. Eighteen protesters were critically injured during the police response. Said one protester: "It's racism, plain as the tusks on my face!" The debate was sparked when a bus driver was gunned down, along with several children, in a predominantly metahuman neighborhood, prompting the school district to discontinue bus services to neighborhoods with high levels of violence. [Link](#).
- * The Washington Monument in the Federal District of Colombia, UCAS, was closed today, and will remain off-limits to the public for 6 weeks. During this time the National Park Service has invited pyramidologists from the Apep Consortium to examine the monument in detail. Both agencies deny rumors of poltergeist activity. [Link](#).
- * Convicted mass murderer Snyder Lain and another prisoner escaped yesterday from a private maximum-security prison in Florence, Pueblo. Both inmates murdered a guard and used ladders to slip over a prison fence, authorities said. Police are also investigating whether the pair had outside help, noting that the prison's perimeter drones were hacked. Lain had been serving multiple life sentences for his involvement in numerous gruesome Koshari crime syndicate killings. [Link](#).

CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEHUS

SEARCH

CORPORATE ENCLAVES

Invited Guests

Alex Machine Doc Hollywood Dr. Rosemont
 J-Cruz Janus Kemuri Otaku-Zuku
 Pyramid Watcher Skinny Dipper Yankee

Posts/Files tagged with "Corporate Enclaves":

* Los Angeles * Neo-Tokyo
 * Dubai * Europort
 * Nairobi * New York
 * Tenochtitlan

CONTINUE

ADVANCED SEARCH

SAVE

Active

Complete Download

Active

Public - The Back Conference

Active

Open With Filter

On Receiving

Power Off

Excellent

Send

Active

Hidden Mode

Local Map



Alejandro sat in the backseat of the sedan and contemplated his life. From the other side of the privacy partition his driver held up his hand, five fingers upraised. Five minutes. The runners he hired would arrive with the data in five minutes.

When Alejandro had come to the Los Angeles sprawl twenty years ago, it had been with the hopes of making it big, of becoming a trid star. That dream had long since faded. Now he was working day and night—taking care of more legitimate corp business when the sun was up, then negotiating the shadows when it got dark. At sunset, the first job was always to check his P2.0 rating, calling up a simple number that showed what percentage of LA Matrix users were within two steps of his personal network.

Alejandro hovered at a very respectable 0.03 percent. Of course, many in his network were shadow scum, so his centrality values were shit. Still, there was a certain cachet with being a Johnson, and many midlevel execs attached themselves to his persona to gain corporate street cred.

Alejandro emerged from the car slowly, noting as he did that his rating was slowly ticking up. Word of his meet tonight must have spread. Users were logging onto his network in hopes of catching another legendary Aztechnology double-cross.

He chuckled to himself. They'd have to go home disappointed; these runners had done nothing to earn the ire of the Big A, and his bosses had made a messy example of another runner team just last week.

Alejandro brushed imaginary dirt from his jacket as he waited. His lip curled as he saw a small cloud of tiny camera drones filming the action from all sides. The people controlling them hoped to sell the recorded exploits to one of the hundreds of small media outfits selling runner trids and sims. People were already watching—Alejandro's rating had broken 1 percent. If they were smart, the runners might be able to reap a small profit from their encounter with him, assuming they knew how to work with a few grains of publicity.

To his side, his bodyguard suddenly stiffened, then dropped to the ground. Bright lights stabbed out of the darkness, pinning Alejandro against the sedan. Camera drones whirred as they swooped in close to Alejandro, capturing his face from all angles. His P2.0 rating continued to rise as more and more tuned in to his network to watch the unfolding drama.

The lights in his eyes were blinding. He fumbled for his link to try to summon help, but it slipped through his sweat-slicked fingers. He fell to his knees, panic surging. If he was still paying attention, he would have noticed that he was now networked to nearly eight percent of all LA Matrix users. His global popularity was approaching one percent.

From somewhere beyond the blinding lights a laser sight stabbed out and traveled up his body, stopping over his heart. Out of the night, a woman's voice called out mockingly, "Are you ready for your close-up now, Mr. Johnson?"

Alejandro's popularity peaked at 11.8 percent. For almost fifteen seconds, he was finally a star.



WELCOME TO THE CITY OF LOST ANGELS

Posted By: Doc Hollywood

• I just got back from taking the grandnieces on three days of non-stop fun, fantasy and frolicking in Fun City, LA. Hope I die before m'sister talks me into that again. While I was there, I hooked up with an old pal of mine, a fellow who really knows what's happening in the not-yet-back-to-normal City of Angels. Over a bottle of the finest whiskey—thanks, Doc, you know the right medicine for a headache—he agreed to help me out by posting this guide to the Los Angeles sprawl. Read up, enjoy, and if you decide to visit, take my advice and do not ride the “Screaming Zombie” with three kids who've just eaten their weight in soy-dogs.

• FastJack

The view most runners have of LA comes straight out of the trids. Beautiful beaches, gleaming arcologies, bleeding-edge cars, and beautiful people as far as the eye can see. That's the truth—well, minus the beaches—for a few hundred high-paid execs and nova-hot simstars. For the other 99.99 percent of Angelinos, LA is a simmering cauldron of tensions and underlying hatreds waiting to erupt, and no amount of media saturation can stop it.

For the quick and the savvy it's a place where millions of nuyen can be made in shockingly short amounts of time. It is also, and not coincidentally, the place where Horizon, the newest of the Triple-As, has set up shop. Therefore, it's where Horizon duels it out with their newest rival, Aztechnology.

Who am I to tell you about LA you might ask? Well, these days I'm a simple talent scout. I find jobs for people in the sprawl. Once upon a time I was a bodyguard for a B-list-trying-to-be-A-list simstar by the name of Gary Cline. We'll talk more about Gary later, but for now the important thing to know is that I got a front row seat to the rise of the newest, and most enigmatic, of the megacorps—Horizon.

So: What do you need to know to survive in LA?

The first thing is that what you may call LA is usually referred to by the locals as the LA sprawl, and it encompasses a whole lot more than what used to be the City of Los Angeles. As a whole, the LA sprawl stretches from Ventura and the valleys to the north all the way south to the bombed-out ruins of San Juan Capistrano, and from Catalina and the outlying raft communities in the west to Barstow in the east. If you could walk it, it would be more than two hundred kilometers on a side, but nobody, *nobody*, walks in LA.

The other thing you need to know about LA is that the “Twins,” the two massive quakes that hit early in 2069 and brought Angel Town to its knees. The magical phenomenon known to locals as the Fall and the tsunami that followed allowed the waters to claimed about 80 percent of our city.

Although huge efforts have been made to reclaim dry land, a significant portion of our city, most of the urban and industrial parts of old LA that used to run from the 10 Freeway in the north all the way south and east into Orange County, still lies ruined and flooded. Most outsiders still refer to this area as El Infierno, although the district once called El Infierno represents only a fraction of the total area that was leveled. About fifteen percent of LA's population still remains in refugee camps, and the city has made little headway towards addressing the problem. Pueblo is erecting extensive prefab

TIMELINE: LOS ANGELES

2022—Massive race riots in LA cause the creation of “El Infierno.”

2027—First of the cold fusion water plants go online along the LA coast.

2028—First of the so-called “Big Ones.” LAX destroyed.

2045 - Green Tide—an offshore reactor explodes causing a radioactive tidal wave to hit along the coast, resulting in massive toxic destruction.

2046—Hackers in LA fix the gubernatorial election, causing the CalFree government to send in troops. After several days of fighting a losing street battle in El Infierno, the government in Sacramento declares LA a free city.

2061—Another massive earthquake results in the walls going down around El Infierno, Arcology Mile, and Fun City. Looting and rioting wrack the city. Less than a week later, the Pueblo Corporate Council moves in to quell the chaos and annexes LA with the blessing of city elders.

2063—Several high-profile media and industry players in LA meet and draw up the charter for the Horizon Group. They appoint former action simstar Gary Cline as their CEO. Almost immediately they sign a lucrative contract to provide PR and media-relations services for Tír Tairngire.

2064—The Crash 2.0 takes out LA's Matrix, crippling the city for weeks, until Horizon's newly licensed wireless grids come online. Horizon becomes the wireless provider for LA and much of CalFree.

2068—Virtual World Disney is bought out by Horizon, officially making the corporation the largest in the LA sprawl.

2069—On March 8, simultaneous earthquakes from the San Andreas Fault line and the San Pedro Shelf rock Southern California. Los Angeles, at the epicenter, is especially hard hit. A major tsunami follows. 100,000 people perish as the geography of the Southern West Coast is forever changed.

2070—As reclamation and reconstruction ensues, researchers discover the presence of massive underground tunnels and chambers under much of Los Angeles, San Diego, and the rest of the coast. The tunnel network is named the Deep Lacuna and appears to be only part of a major magical phenomenon that has changed the face of the City of Angels.



blocks to house refugees. What reclamation has occurred has been driven by the corporations at the expense of the city.

Despite all our problems, tourists still flock to Fun City and Hollywood. The beautiful hopefuls still pour into our city, desperate for a chance at stardom. Regardless of how battered LA looks, Horizon continues to manage their worldwide interests from here. No matter what else is going on, the nuyen just keeps flowing.



SHAKEN AND STIRRED

The heart of the city remains Hollywood. Shaken, burned, flooded, faced with riots and disease, LA still ferociously clutches to the title of media capital of the world. Sim, trid, music, advertising, and AR design are the lifeblood of the city. Dozens of studios and distributors make their homes here, ranging from the biggest Horizon-owned subsidiaries to the smallest indies based out of someone's garage. Peel away the glitz and glamour and remember this one key: Everyone in LA is trying to sell you something.

- The good Doc asked to bring some friends along on this ride, and I said sure. Some of you will know Pyramid Watcher, Seasource's font of knowledge on all things Aztech, J-Cruz and Alex Machine are LA shadow operators, and Skinny Dipper has her fingers in a basketful of black market pies. They're my guests, so behave yourselves, boys and girls.

- FastJack

Now, we've got plenty of industries here. LA is one of the biggest cities on the West Coast (despite everything that's hit, people just won't move away). Much, if not most, of the nuyen that flows through this town is connected to the media industry. If you're planning on visiting, whether for business or pleasure, chances are you'll still wind up entangled with the media in one way or another.

Although LA is a corporate city to the marrow, it isn't a corporate-controlled city. Corporate power is localized in walled enclaves and residential areas, secure office complexes and mid-town arcologies. It is, however, felt everywhere. Too much of the place has been ravaged and flooded for anyone to try to keep the place completely secure—not that that's proved a good strategy in the past. Except for Fun City, LA is easy to get into, easy to get around (if you don't mind swimming), and easy to work.

For all I know, Horizon's been encouraging runners to come here. After all, there are pretty big bucks in those real-time runner "Me-Feeds," and I've never known megacorps to let a little detail like the law get in the way of profits. If, by some strange chance, you can't find a meal-ticket with Horizon, just turn a bit to the south—the Azzies are funneling deniable assets into Los Angeles as fast as they can find 'em. As for the Pueblo Corporate Council, the third player in LA? Well, have you ever seen that old trid where the parents are driving along in a second-hand Americar, while the two kids squabble in the backseat? The dad keeps yelling back, "Don't make me come back there and smack you." (Though by this time, the PCC might just be wishing it could dump the two kids on the side of the freeway and keep driving in peace.) Well, in Los Angeles, rather like that stupid sitcom, the PCC is rapidly losing control and everyone knows it. Makes for some pretty fun times here.

So, for those of you considering traveling here, there's plenty to do, whether you're in the mood for work or just sight-seeing. After all, Los Angeles is the Land of Opportunity—though most of the hopefuls who come here end up with their souls crushed and optimism trampled. Take some time to read through my little guide and perhaps you'll become one of the few to actually enjoy your fifteen seconds of fame.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The only constant in the LA sprawl is change. The commodities that are traded in and around LA deal primarily with media, be it entertainment, idea, information or education—everything else has had meager pickings since the Twins hit.

LA has a lock on the media and the key to that lock rests, for the time being, in the hands of Horizon. But Horizon can't afford to sit back and rest, since modern media waits for no one and the prime directive in the LA sprawl is to change, to evolve with the shifting currents, or die as one of the other big boys latches on to the next big trend first and then tears you to pieces. From its golden throne in LA, Horizon's tendrils spread all over the world seeking out the latest and greatest trend.

BACK IN THE DAY

I could take you over the last hundred years of California history, but for the most part our past has very little bearing on the present or the future, except in the extremely short term. There are some events, however, that have shaped us (in some cases literally) and thus bear mention. The first such event was California's decision to secede from the old USA. After Texas broke off, the politicians up in Sacramento started agitating for something similar for Cali. Now, as my father once told me, Californians had always fancied themselves better than the rest of the nation and saw themselves, in some ways, as carrying the rest of the country while getting very little in return. Back in those days, California's economy, if considered separately from the old US, would have ranked in the world's top ten. Even the hurdle of water supplies seemed possible to resolve with treaties to secure the needed water from its new neighbors. So a vote was called and an overwhelming majority chose secession.

- It helps if you realize that the politicians at the time made very smart micro-appeals to each of the state's constituencies. San Diego and Orange County were promised huge tax breaks and business benefits, San Fran and the Bay Area had always found large parts of US law oppressive and were promised a more socially liberal state, LA didn't really care as long as they could continue to stare at themselves in the mirror, and the survivalist crazies in the northern part of the state already considered California a separate nation, so there was no hesitation on their part.

- Mr. Bonds

Almost immediately, California started to crumble from the inside as fights sprung up between the resource-rich Central Valleys and the north section of the state, and the resource-poor, but highly consumptive south.

Other big events have obviously been the quakes that have struck the area repeatedly over the past few decades. After enjoying a century mostly free from major quakes—with the exception of the Northridge Quake in the 1990s—we should have figured we were past due for several major quakes. Mother Nature did not disappoint.

The first major seismic incident occurred in 2028 in what locals called the El Infierno quake. The epicenter was located a few short miles south of what was, in those days, Los Angeles'



major airport, LAX. The quake completely wrecked the airport and caused widespread damage over most of the LA residential neighborhoods.

The city was already in pretty dire financial straits, and the added burden of having to rebuild tens of thousands of low-income housing units was not an attractive one. So in one of their more inspired moves, the city council and mayor approved funding for a massive fence and wall to be placed around the most devastated areas to keep the undesirables penned in their cage. Additional funds were allocated to fortify the freeways that cut through the devastated areas so they could be rebuilt to rise above the devastation below. Nearly all city services were cut off from these areas, and no attempts at maintaining civil order were made.

- Why is it people always think a fence will solve their problems?
- Black Mamba

- It wasn't so much a fence around the wrecked areas as it was a fence around Arcology Mile and Studio City. Orange County built its own fence along the 22 Freeway. The LA fence around El Infierno was mostly passive stuff, you know, razor wire, high walls, and a guard tower here and there. The OC fence was another matter. Those *hijos de puta* put up autonomous sentry guns that shot at any sort of movement, and a lot of the locals got their kicks shooting at the poor people on the other side of the fence.
- J-Cruz

So this is how things went for almost 20 years. LA got to think of itself as a shining city full of highly talented and beautiful people while it practiced a type of social apartheid. Virtual World Disney merged with a number of land development corporations in Orange County and turned the entire county into one massive tumor of a planned community and theme park, a sort of nostalgic love letter to the 1950s America that only ever existed on studio back lots. The people trapped behind the walls in El Infierno got to the business of surviving as best as they could, but the pressure was building from the inside.

El Infierno became a hellish place to live. Buildings grew unstable, and the occasional temblor did nothing to help the situation. There was little in the way of law, and what law existed was enforced by street gangs whose rule never extended beyond a few blocks. The worst part was the water—or lack of. Since the water from the north had started to run dry years earlier, LA depended upon a series of coastal desalination plants that ran on fusion power. The residents of El Infierno saw none of this clean, pure water. Instead, they managed to take the run-off from the main city and run it through crude local purification filters and generate enough water to survive. Barely.

HELL BREAKS LOOSE

This changed in '45 when one of the offshore plants exploded and sent a radioactive tidal wave of toxic sludge slamming into El Infierno. Thousands died in the initial flood, and thousands more punched their ticket in the days that followed. Outside of the walls no one took notice. No crews were sent to clean up the radioactive devastation on the coast.

It's understandable, then, that El Infierno would offer a safe base of operations and shelter to a group of hackers called Magestone, who decided to teach the government in Sacramento a lesson in civic responsibility. In the gubernatorial election of 2056, all of the electronic voting data was suddenly and irrevocably wiped as it was being tallied. In what came to be known as the Lost Election, CalFree was plunged into chaos.

When the hackers were tracked to El Infierno, the state called in the California Rangers and thousands of mercenaries in an attempt to track down those responsible and punish them. The state dropped leaflets over El Infierno telling residents that anyone found wandering the streets would be shot, as would those who did not follow the orders of the soldiers. It's hard to say which move was stupider: dropping leaflets into an area that had not had basic services such as schooling for nearly 20 years, or assuming that soldiers given permission to shoot to kill at anything that moved would show any kind of restraint. Regardless, the situation quickly turned into a massacre with the troops listing the total dead at 20,000 civilians. After nearly a day of slaughter, the soldiers and mercs began deserting en masse, appalled at the carnage. LA bleated for assistance in cleaning up the mess the State had left behind and was promptly disowned by the rest of CalFree and granted status as a free city.

LA's response to all of this was, naturally, to build higher walls and pretend that those outside the economic core of the city didn't really exist. On paper the LA sprawl boasted anywhere from 1.4 to 3 million people from 2046 to 2061. This fuzzy math ignored all those outside of the walls and a fair number of those working for VWD in Fun City.

Faced with having to provide entirely for themselves, LA decided that the only option to remain economically viable was to go crying to the megacorps for assistance. In between 2046 and 2061 a number of sweetheart deals were cut between the LA city council and Ares, Fuchi, MCT, and Renraku. Since most of Arcology Mile was already heavily developed, these megas were given land to the east of the main city, out towards Ontario and Pomona.

This was the state of affairs until 2061, when Halley's comet came and once more the city tried to shake itself to the ground. While the rest of LA might have conveniently ignored what went on behind the walls in El Infierno, the residents of that benighted place had not forgotten the massacre of their people fifteen years earlier. When a massive quake hit LA in December of 2061, the walls came down, and a horde of enraged metahumanity vented years worth of bottled up hatred and resentment on the city that had tried to deny their existence. In a matter of hours, rioters were swarming over the city, no longer penned by arrogant walls, smashing, looting, and burning everything in their path. Buildings had collapsed, and many of those left standing were consumed by flame. The city appealed to the megas, but too many had decided to cut their losses. High-ranking employees, executives and security forces were leaving the city like rats jumping from a sinking ship. The city officials and the golden folk were hiding in their upland castles, desperate for rescue. Finally, a group of city elders, influential local corp leaders, and representatives of the few industries that still remained got together and sent out a plea for assistance to whomever would help.



THE PUEBLO YEARS

A huddle of men and women—who would later form Horizon—sent out a plea to the PCC. Aztlan had troops just an hour away, but none of the rich and powerful wanted the Azzie yoke. Pueblo was the quickest off the mark and airlifted a large military expeditionary force across the Mojave and into LA in a matter of hours. Within a few days, LA was pacified and the worst elements either shot or driven off. Fortunately for Pueblo, San Diego had also suffered from the massive earthquake, so the Aztlan forces weren't quite ready to roll. When Aztlan moved, they got into a couple of skirmishes with Pueblo forces but pulled back. When they did, the Pueblo occupation was a done deal

- That's only half the story, *omae*. Aztlan was actually the quickest to respond, but they were stalled by some of the elders aligned with Horizon. PCC wasn't the fastest, they just made Horizon the best offer, one that let them leech off of PCC and become one of the big boys.

- J-Cruz

- And you can bet heads rolled in San Diego for that unforgivable delay.

- Pyramid Watcher

In a matter of days, the Pueblo forces had moved in, subdued the rioting, and claimed the city. Pueblo soldiers patrolled the streets while Pueblo search-and-rescue squads made dramatic—and thoroughly filmed—rescues from collapsed buildings. Pueblo relief workers made a heroic effort to provide emergency care and shelters. Hospitals, abandoned by corporate sponsors, were staffed with Pueblo doctors. It seemed like you couldn't go anywhere in the city without seeing someone in a PCC uniform. For the most part, the law-abiding citizens of LA welcomed them.

Compared to the apathy and callousness of the authorities in preceding decades, living under the rule of the PCC wasn't quite so bad. It was at least much better than the alternative of living under Aztech rule. For the disenfranchised, it seemed a dream come true; a chance to get their foot in the door and escape the cycle of poverty. They had a new start as citizens in a country that made them all corporate shareholders and promised to bring new industry and a sense of stability to the shaken city.

Pueblo made one decision, early on, that would shape the corporate environment for years to come. They kicked Aztechnology out of the city. When the PCC troops arrived in LA, Aztlan troops were moving en-masse up from San Diego. There was a "skirmish," as the PCC labeled it, when Pueblo troops defended their turf. That skirmish flattened much of the area around San Onofre—admittedly, not too much of a loss since a nuclear meltdown had already rendered the place inhabitable in '28. After that skirmish, Pueblo officially refused to hand out business permits to any corp with the Big A stamped on their business cards, forcing Aztechnology to scramble to hold onto their interests.

The quake in '61 also reopened the sealed San Onofre plant, spilling radioactive waste down the coast towards San Diego. Licking their wounds, the Azzies put their energies towards protecting San Diego from that crisis, and they spent the next nine years building a very large grudge.

- Aztechnology is still very present in LA, they just run their biz through multiple shells. If I were to guess, I'd say Aztechnology indirectly controls over 5 percent of the "independent" businesses in the LA sprawl. Maybe a bit less after the recent destruction of so much of the industrial zone.

- Pyramid Watcher

For the next eight years, LA seemed content to make nuyen hand over fist and secure its place as the media capital of North America—holding our own against growing international competition from Mumbai and Métropole. Even the Crash of '64 was taken in stride by a city accustomed to disaster. The fledgling Horizon Group licensed the new wireless system and had the city up and running within weeks of the Crash 2.0. The rich and golden folk who ran the city grew even more complacent.

GAEA SHRUGS

The city's star seemed to rise with Horizon's, and, when that megacorp secured its place on the Corporate Court, LA basked in the shared glory.

That pretty illusion lasted until March 8, 2069. At 9:57 AM, the San Andres Fault and the San Pedro Shelf Fault decided to hit us with all their fury. Combined, the "Twins" shook the entire world—I've heard that people in Africa saw their well-water ripple—and LA, located at the epicenter, was devastated. Huge sinkholes opened up, swallowing entire blocks. While the survivors were still stumbling around, the tsunami triggered by off-coast aftershocks arrived.

No one knows how many people died as the sea rose up and claimed the city. Many who survived the initial quakes made it inland, far enough to be safe from the rising waters. Others waited out the flood in the top stories of buildings that continued to shake with aftershocks. Fires burned across the city, fueled by broken natural gas lines. It seemed as though the City of Angels had fallen into hell.

- Doc wasn't at ground zero, but I was. Twelve other strangers and I made it up to the roof of a five-story building. The initial wave shook the entire building, shearing off one corner, but the rest of it held. I saw several buildings around me collapse under that first hit, the people standing on top swept away in black water. For hours—for days—we watched the water rise, carrying bodies, broken palm trees, entire sides of buildings past us. At night, the whole city seemed to light up, fire dancing above the black water. The air was unbreathable, thick with the stench of smoke, poison, and rotting flesh. Every few hours, the world would shake again, and we waited each time for our building to finally collapse beneath the waves. There was no water, no food, and the sun was blocked out by clouds of smoke and falling ash. I thought we might be the only people left alive in the whole world, sitting in the center of hell, waiting to die. On day two, a little kid named Tommy died from injuries none of us could treat. His mother jumped into the water after that; I never knew her name. On day three, a Sioux helicopter dropped a case of bottled water and some MREs. On day seven, another helicopter, with Salish pilots but Pueblo markings, swung by and picked up me and another woman, along with her kid. I never found out what happened to the eight men we left behind on that building, but every night I see their faces, smudged with soot and sweat and despair, watching as we lifted away.

- Skinny Dipper



INCOMING FEED.....



The PCC called on treaties with the rest of the NAN and mobilized to clean up the mess Mother Nature had dumped in our laps. At last count, over a hundred thousand people died in the quakes, the floods, or from illness afterwards. I don't know the exact number. I don't think anyone ever will. I don't know that anyone ever will want to know, really.

And when the smoke finally cleared, we were left with a city that had fallen. Literally. Some places that had been 100 meters above sea level were now submerged. It took months before anyone could come up with an answer—not that what they finally came up with makes much sense. By then, most of us had stopped wondering why anyway. We were too busy just trying to learn how to swim in our strange new world.

- In the days following the quake, there was a major shedim infestation in the worst-hit areas, making rescue work even more dangerous. Hard to convince rescue choppers to pick up a group of survivors after stories spread about refugees turning on their rescuers and ripping them apart.

- Alex Machine

- The shedim made counting the dead a lot harder—city officials were in such a hurry to burn the bodies, identifying them wasn't a real high priority. "Official" counts are based on the number of SINners confirmed dead. That leaves a few thousand people labeled missing, and it doesn't come close to including all the SINless victims in El Infierno and South Central.

- Skinny Dipper

THE FALL AND THE DEEP LACUNA

Posted By: Dr. Rosemont

- Those of you who haven't visited LA lately will be hard pressed to recognize the place. Since most of the mumbo-jumbo they're using to explain away our sinking sprawl is over my head, I've pegged a friend from CalTech to explain things. Hopefully she can clear the waters, so to speak.

- Doc Hollywood.

- Listen up to Dr. Rosemont, folks. I've never met a finer parageologist.

- Elijah

- Too little, too late, Eli.

- Dr. Rosemont

- Can't blame a guy for trying to make amends.

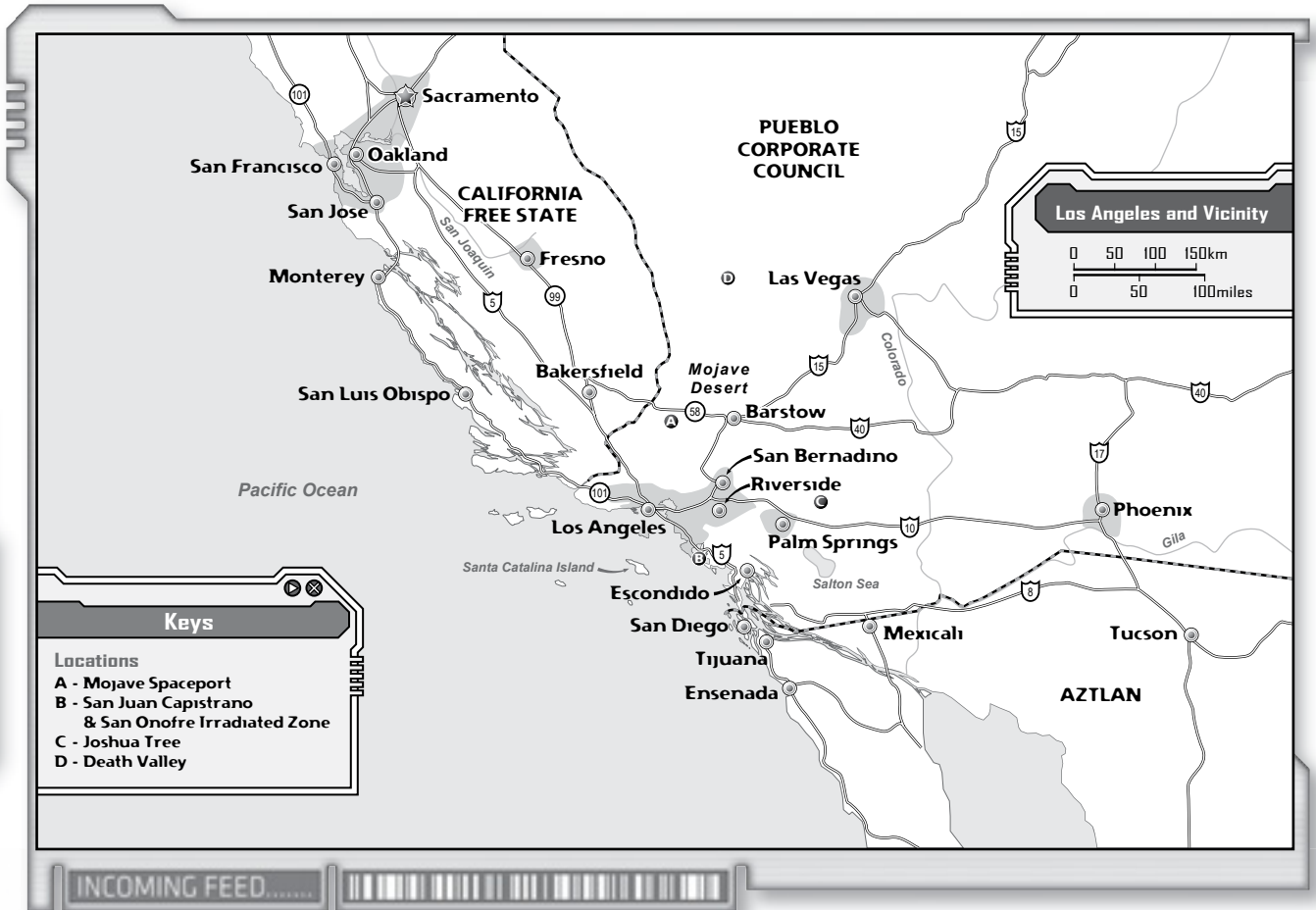
- Elijah

The Fall

In the aftermath of the two earthquakes in 2069, much of Los Angeles found itself (impossibly) half-underwater; some areas by just a fraction of a meter or only during especially high tides, with other areas falling several stories below the surface.

For the last year, scientists have been trying to decipher the puzzle of how the land changed elevations so abruptly. Conventional science dictates that a seismic event catastrophic enough to change elevations up to 150 meters in places would have flattened any standing structures for perhaps hundreds of miles around and caused planetary-scale devastation. Yet, our omnipres-

LOS ANGELES



ent freeways and towering arcologies still stand—even if they are now surrounded by water. The quakes themselves were severe—9.2 and 9.6 on the Richter scale. Nonetheless, in recent history (“recent” because we’ve only been measuring earthquakes for the last 200 years; prior to that, all evidence is strictly anecdotal), even the most devastating quakes only triggered minor geological shifts. For example, the Alaskan Good Friday quake in 1964, one of the most powerful quakes ever recorded—a 9.2 on the Richter scale—caused an on-land elevation drop of 2.4 meters.

The first clue arrived immediately following the twin quakes. Survivors reported seeing entire city blocks vanish, dropping out of sight in an instant. Some reports were difficult to verify, since many of the areas were subsequently flooded by the tsunami or the apparent rise in seawaters in the hours and days that followed. In fact, although the tsunami itself was reported to be only about five meters high, the smaller, powerful waves that followed over the next twenty-four hours caused most of the inland flooding by riding in on the previous flooding—parallels have been drawn to the North Sea Black Tide of 2011.

We were able to document the changes in elevation for various points across the city that remained above water. For example, the last topographic survey of downtown Hollywood showed it situated at approximately 100-120 meters above sea-level. After the quakes, the same area was found to be slightly below sea-level. The initial conclusion was that sinkholes of unprecedented size and depth had opened up and swallowed portions of the city.

Some of us believed it went far beyond sinkholes and that magic was the only answer to this puzzle. Indeed, recent topographic mapping has revealed that the entire city of LA has sunk, although in some areas the elevation change was much more mild than in others. This phenomenon has become known as “the Fall.”

- LA is not the first city to sink beneath the waves.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- Oh, not *that* again.
- Frosty
- Leave the man alone, Frosty. He’s on to something.
- Elijah

The second clue followed some surprising observations. Underwater salvage crews came upon a large opening a few meters under the water, which led into a large, submerged cavern. Further exploration determined this cavern to be one of many in a network of underground caves and tunnels. At the moment, exploration has confirmed this underground network of caves and caverns is present everywhere under our city and up and down much of the Southern California coast (some believe this network may even extend into Baja California, but due to difficulties coordinating research with Aztlan, this has yet to be confirmed by any reputable sources).



Theories abound as to how and why our city was so drastically changed. Some believe there may actually have been multiple levels of caves and caverns, and the sinkholes we've experienced were simply the collapse of one or more levels of these underground systems cushioned by water pressure. Another theory has it that our section of the coast is reverting to a previous "memory" of itself (or, alternatively, a future "vision" of itself). Madmen and lagoon preachers have attracted a following by saying that the most corrupt areas were struck down into the ocean by God (or gods or what have you). Some Deep Green groups have suggested that the areas that saw the most sinking were those with the most eco-damaging human presence.

- There may be something to that theory as the areas worst affected by the Fall seem to parallel locations previously associated with high-background counts and weird astral phenomena.
- Winterhawk

A coalition of scientists at UCLA, however, has put forth the most compelling theory. My colleagues believe LA has been subject to a form of alchera, and that when it fades, the city will once again be restored to its lofty elevation. Documented cases of alchera mountains materializing suggest this phenomenon may be the opposite situation. When I studied one such alchera in the form of a mountain, a few years back in Azania, I noted that the homes and settlements of the inhabitants of the area were undisturbed, although their livestock showed signs of distress for several weeks. Indeed, in one village, the inhabitants simply awoke one morning in their huts and didn't realize they had shifted from being 20 meters above sea level to being 200 meters up until they went outside and saw the view. After three weeks, the mountain disappeared, leaving the village once again on a plain. There was no damage and no metahuman casualties during either transition. I believe that, if it wasn't for the twin quakes, LA may have experienced a similarly smooth transition to its new geographic reality.

The Deep Lacuna

We've begun calling the sunken areas, caves, and caverns the Deep Lacuna. Many of the caves connect the inland lagoons and flood zones to the ocean waters, which is part of the reason why some areas remain flooded. I'd like to point out that these caverns were not present in any geological survey of the Los Angeles area that we have been able to find. It appears that these phenomena came into being during the massive quakes. Having studied various alchera at other sites, I can confidently state that these are unlike anything documented before. There are some similarities: the displacement of all existing geophysical objects previously in the same space (such as underground utilities, basements, rock, and dirt); the suddenness of the change; and the minimal disturbance of living beings and structures existing above the alchera zone. There are certainly notable differences though, not the least of which is the unprecedented amount of time the phenomenon has lasted. Indeed, while most alchera are transitory in nature, these appear to be quite stable.

- Didn't tens of thousands of people die when this happened? How is that minimal disturbance?
- Pistons

- Those casualties occurred during the earthquakes and the flooding. I should also point out that the majority of property damage occurred from the quakes and tsunami, not from having their elevation changed so abruptly.
- Dr. Rosemont

It has been suggested that perhaps the appearance of these caverns triggered the quakes, not the other way around. That is an intriguing hypothesis that I'm sure will be explored in the near future. If it proves to be even partially true, it would be the first documented case of an alchera triggering such effects in the physical world.

One of the most pressing questions we're racing to answer is whether these new elevations will remain, and if they can be considered stable enough to support reconstruction or even expansion of the buildings that are there. Many corporations are hesitant to invest any time, energy, or nuyen until this question has been answered more confidently.

I'll assume that most of you aren't interested in real estate or reconstruction, however. Doc asked me to pass along information on the Deep Lacuna, the series of caves and caverns that now riddle much of the southern coast. LA has long been a gold mine for researchers of astral phenomena, and this new one requires much more research before anything definitive can be said. I can confirm, however, that there are tunnels and caverns full of ocean water under our city. Aquatic drones have demonstrated that some of these tunnels extend for kilometers to the north and south. Some caverns and tunnels extend over 500 meters below ground; others are near the surface, running only a few meters below ground.

We've been mapping these tunnels at CalTech. (I am aware that UCLA is also mapping the tunnel complex, though I am confident that we will finish first.) Although I can't share the details of our research, I can say that most of the tunnels are at least metahuman sized. We have been aware that some very daring divers have entered the tunnels (although, as of yet, we have been unable to secure permission to do so ourselves). Many of the tunnels are linked in a way that suggests the intervening hand of something more orderly than nature. Although most of the tunnels we've discovered are completely flooded, we have uncovered a few small air pockets and dry caverns.

- Anything behind the rumors of an ancient underground city, Fiona?
- Elijah
- Maybe.
- Dr. Rosemont
- Any chance you could PM me the details?
- Elijah
- No. I'd prefer to imagine you driving yourself crazy with wild speculation. I haven't forgotten Varanasi.
- Dr. Rosemont
- Ah, sugar, are you still bitter over that? I'll make it up to you. Promise.
- Elijah

BACK TO THE DAILY GRIND

The triple disasters of the two quakes and the tsunami have wreaked havoc in and around the LA area. Many neighborhoods have completely been abandoned. The insurance hit alone was so big that it took down two A-level insurance corporations, and others have been extremely reluctant to secure land or buildings in post-disaster LA. Nearly all of the land south of the 10 and between the old coastline and 57 Freeway running west to east remains under at least a meter of water. In some areas, the water has receded, leaving islands or water shallow enough to walk through. In other spots, it's twenty meters deep.

You should keep in mind this isn't the pretty blue water you see on those trids (complete with the well-endowed lifeguards and paranormal sharks). The people of LA never cared much about what they dumped in the ocean, and Mother Earth had her revenge, dumping it all back on us. Though the waters aren't all tainted, some flooded areas wallow in a stew of toxic chemicals, radioactive sludge, and piles of debris—navigating the flood zone is hazardous, and you really don't want to try swimming in anything less than a full sterile-suit.

- And that's not just the LA Basin, friends. The central valleys were affected too, though most of them have since been drained and recovered. Luckily for them, the water was much less polluted further north. Still, it was a major economic hit. Stock prices in the agricultural industries still haven't bounced back.
- Mr. Bonds

The few people remaining in these areas have adapted by moving to the upper floors of now-abandoned office buildings or by building makeshift living areas on "islands" near the freeways. In a lot of areas, the only buildings left standing were the newer office buildings built to withstand earthquakes. Some neighborhoods were completely flattened—you'd never realize, looking out over a stretch of murky water, that there used to be a thriving neighborhood below your boat. Due to all the shifting of the earth, most underground utilities were disrupted, so the buildings that remain often have no running water or electricity. It's a lousy life to live, and the powers in the city, especially the government, haven't really paid much attention to the former residents of these areas.

- In perhaps the ultimate irony, the years and years of earthquake retrofits that had been done on the Freeways by CalTrans meant that they came through both of the big quakes relatively unscathed. Additionally the years of building them up put them well above sea level. So, even though there is nowhere to really go off the exits except into a brackish wasteland, you can get there pretty quickly.
- Alex Machine

If you talk to most LA sprawl natives, they'll tell you they navigate by freeway almost exclusively. The difference between rich and poor in LA is most easily distinguished by mode of transport: the rich travel by air, the poor travel by land, and criminals like us avoid both routes and go by water. It's not a sure bet that someone has shadow ties if they have a boat, but it's a pretty near thing. Works out pretty well, actually. City police forces are very reluctant to chase someone into the polluted waterways. Most of them would rather take a bullet than fall into the water—bullet-

proof vests are standard issue; chemical wetsuits are not. Naturally, the City health benefits aren't so great. Of course, it's an entirely different story for much better equipped corpsec units.

Tides affect some areas, changing currents and water levels at predictable times. If you're just visiting the area, I'd recommend finding a local who knows the rhythm of the changing waterways. More than one runner team has found their marine escape plans ruined when the tides changed, leaving them stranded in stinking mud until the tides come back in (or until the corporate goons stopped laughing and dropped some heavy ordnance on the idiots).

- Be careful of "smog banks." Though the flooding has reduced traffic, the old pall that hung over the city is still here. On bad days it floats down to sea-level like mist, reducing visibility and making it even harder to breath.
- Skinny Dipper

Reclamation

Although most new construction is happening inland, serious reclamation efforts have taken off in some of the flooded areas. In spots such as Santa Monica and Long Beach, wide stretches of flood zone have been walled off, drained, and new buildings are springing up faster than weeds. Construction yards—many of them floating—dot the landscape.

Of course, underworld elements such as the Mafia and Triads have already muscled into the construction industry and are making a huge profit through harassing contractors, putting pressure on city officials, helping expedite permits, and basically doing their usual job of fleecing the people working the construction yards.

Several megacorps and eco-corps have begun reclamation projects, particularly around the now-isolated Arcology Mile, but by far the most serious efforts are led by Horizon. Before any building—or rebuilding—can be started, the debris, rubble, and toxic mud must be dealt with. Underground utilities must be located and repaired, bringing water, electricity, and natural gas back online. The LA government doesn't have the funds or manpower to do this, so some promising new corporations have sprung up to fill this need. The city originally made it clear that any destroyed or abandoned area was up for grabs to anyone who wanted to put in the time, energy, and nuyen to restore it. As a result, there's been a huge flurry of claim-staking and claim-jumping, keeping runners well supplied with jobs and nuyen.

Many corporations are in cutthroat competition for the best potential rebuilding sites, using bribes, threats, or intimidation to drive off smaller competitors. In a couple of cases, one corp staked out an area that held something another corp didn't want to see come to light. After two separate Horizon-sponsored recovery projects were attacked, killing all the workers on the site, the City passed an emergency ordinance. Now, a corporation or individual can file a notice of intent, which is good for up to twelve months. It becomes permanent when 50 percent of the reclamation effort is completed. That slowed down some of the overt fighting, but don't worry—there's still plenty of opportunities for enterprising criminals. More than one corporation has some secrets buried under the collapsed buildings, toxic mud, and radioactive water. Filing a public claim to the land holding those secrets is the last thing they want to do.



- There's a lot of business available for teams who'll sort through the crap to pull out anything sensitive that may have been left behind. The pay can be great, but there are a lot of up-front costs on the right gear. Or even more profitable, dig up some secrets on your own and sell them to the highest bidder—Horizon will pay any price to get their hands on hot Azzie data or tech. Locals call it vault-diving.
- Skinny Dipper
- Yeah, but most of that junk is over a year old and contaminated. What's the point?
- Beaker
- If it isn't shiny and less than five seconds old, it's outdated, right? Kids.
- Fastjack

Most of the rebuilding is located near the standing highways or near the higher land, though dykes and seawalls are going up in several places. Some locals have taken to protesting the rebuilding—those displaced from their homes and businesses know that if a corp moves in, they'll lose their property for good. Of course, it doesn't take much brains to realize that without a clean-up, that land is worthless. Still, some people—mostly those huddling in the refugee camps of Riverside or outside Fun City—cling to the idea that someone is going to fix it all up for them and let them go back home. The rest of us have accepted our lousy lot and are moving on, best we can.

- Some eco-corps have made promises to residents that once they've rebuilt an area, they'll turn it over to the previous residents. We'll see if they keep their promise. If they do, I have no doubt it will come with a very high price tag.
- Ecotope

Also worth mentioning is the fact that Pueblo authorities are rapidly putting up prefab apartment blocks to house the refugees on some of the now-leveled areas around Pomona and Pasadena. Not everyone's happy with their new neighbors, but the PCC is getting some much needed positive PR out of it.

SUNKEN TREASURE

Posted By: Skinny Dipper

Doc asked me to give you land-lubbers a brief rundown on one of the most profitable and dangerous new jobs that's sprung up since the flood: vault-diving. So here it is.

In the devastated shallows of LA, scavengers skim the waters looking for anything valuable hiding amongst the wreckage of homes and businesses. The most desperate of scavengers wade through the poisoned waters, using long poles to poke through the wreckage. It is a career choice with a short life expectancy, taken only by the most hopeless of people. Most run afoul of the shifting tides or treacherous debris fields, or they fall prey to creatures that lurk in the shallow waters. Those that manage to survive more than a few weeks generally succumb to the flu-like illness that comes from prolonged exposure to the toxins floating in the waters. The SINless squatters living on the water's edge have named this illness La Gripe Sangrienta.

- I read a report on this from the Riverside UCLA. No signs yet that it is person-to-person contagious; rather, it appears to be a type of blood poisoning with flu-like symptoms. Still, I've heard the superstitious locals have taken to burning the infected folk, frequently while they are still alive.
- Butch

The more fortunate scavengers use jury-rigged metal detectors to scan the water and mud from mostly waterproof boats, using hooks and tools to pull out reusable metal scraps, or even occasionally finding a payload of guns, jewelry, or cyberware protected from the toxic sludge by packaging or storage materials. There's a thriving market in secondhand cyberware taken from the bodies of victims of the quakes or floods. Scavengers often fight over the decayed corpses they find, since a wedding ring or set of cybereyes can feed someone for a month. 'Course, that's assuming the corpse doesn't start fighting back. Shedim are a very real problem in LA, and most seem to lurk around the devastated flood zones. Creepy as hell, seeing a bloated corpse wading toward you in the black water, or a huddle of rotting men crouching inside a burned-shell of a building, watching you through eyes picked clean by scavengers, bones showing through ripped flesh ... Eh. Sorry. Survival on the water's edge ain't pretty.

The real payoff comes from true vault-diving. When the sinkholes opened up, entire city blocks were sucked down and buried under mud and water. Imagine, if you will, a thriving city center, complete with shops, stores, and thousands of people, vanishing before your eyes. (Y'all can imagine it. I still have nightmares about it.) Those homes, businesses, and stores were covered by, at most, a meter of mud and remain down below the water. That water can be anywhere from three to twenty meters deep. Strangely enough, the buildings that were sucked into the deepest sinkholes fared the best, and I've heard of divers swimming through distribution warehouses with merchandise still vacuum-sealed and stacked, clean as the day they packaged it, just there for the taking. 'Course, I haven't seen it for myself, so who knows, maybe it's just another urban myth. Still, it's not like vacuum-sealed and plastic wrapped goods would be affected by a little toxic salt water, and plenty of warehouses, malls, and shops disappeared under the waters along with everything else.

That's actually how vault-diving got its name: plucky salvage crews tracked down the locations of a couple of bricks-and-mortar banks, managed to get into the building, and cracked the vaults inside. Not that we ... er, they ... came away with a ton of money—who uses gold bars these days?—but small fortunes were made by picking through the safety-deposit boxes. Now, everyone talks about finding the big one—an untouched cyberware clinic, with product still wrapped in all that protective packaging; a bank, its vaults full of gold bars and sealed certified credsticks; high-end jewelry stores with boxes of uncut diamonds, just waiting to be scooped up.

The other valuable commodity hidden below our stinking waters is information. Research labs often keep back-up data locked in fire- and water-proof safes. Even if the scientists were lost, chances are someone can recover the research data. Corporations pay very well for information of this sort, provided you can get it to them fast enough. A couple of rather tangled lawsuits have sprung up over the use of proprietary data, but so



far the rules of salvage have prevailed (thank the goddess for justice and bribes). Other corporations, like, say, Horizon, employ salvage teams to retrieve valuable equipment, pushing them for fast recoveries, since cutting-edge equipment and data lose value with every passing day.

So the pay is good, but there's a few things to keep in mind if you decide you want to make an easy buck or two. First, many of the areas are affected by unpredictable underwater currents. The water, already poisoned by toxic chemicals, is also thick with sludge and waterborne debris, making visibility nil. Also, the buildings that survived aren't always structurally sound. Just rooting around in them, much less using underwater equipment, can make 'em collapse. Also, the underground tunnels, the Deep Lacuna, that allow the flow of ocean water into the inland areas and sinkholes also allow critters through. I dunno about you, but anything tough enough to swim and breathe the toxic, radioactive salt-water is something I don't want to meet. Stories about about giant sharks, man-eating squid, strange fish ... how much of it is merely rumors designed to frighten off the competition is hard to say. I've seen some pretty spooky critters down there, but nothing a good ol' fashioned flare-stick didn't scare off. Still, enough salvage crews go down and are never seen again that I personally would lend some credence to the stories. Of course, various universities and corporations are willing to pay for new specimens, so perhaps you'd like to bring back one of those bus-sized sharks? Right-o.

If you decide to take up vault-diving, you'll need fully-sealed chemical wetsuits in addition to the rest of your diving equipment. A word of caution, in case I haven't already managed to scare you off: If you don't want to find yourself coughing up your own lungs, be sure you really, really trust your supplier. If I had to choose between dying of La Gripe Sangrienta or being eaten by a shark, I'd go for the shark any day.

Oh, and if some of those researchers come asking for a guide or protection down there, just say no. Most of those blokes have about as much common sense as plankton, and, take it from me, telling their bosses that they died of terminal stupidity does not go over well. Anyhow, I hope that helps convince most of you to keep your feet dry. Leaves more profit for me.

SEASCAPES: LIFE IN THE STAR-STRUCK CITY

Posted By: **Doc Hollywood**

While half the city is neck deep in reconstruction, the rest of Angeltown is getting back to what it does best. LA is a city built around providing entertainment to the world. So, it's no surprise that the locals are constantly seeking ways of entertaining themselves—particularly in these dark days. LA may not have quite the levels of hedonistic abandon of Vegas or Macao, but we do find ways to pass the time.

Unlike other entertainment capitals of the world, LA is all about reputation and prestige. If you're looking to take your nuyen and live in opulent obscurity, then look elsewhere. If you want everyone to know exactly who you are and how much you have and why they should be kissing your ass, then LA is the place for you.

In LA, no one much cares where you came from (unless of course it's scandalsheet fodder); what matters is who you are now and how much you have to your name. Money buys reputation around here. In LA, unlike other places, reputation alone can also

INCOMING FEED



LOS ANGELES



bring money and other rewards. LA likes to think that it represents what used to be called the American Dream, that crazy idea that hard work and perseverance will pay off. Of course, in LA hard work means destroying the competition's reputations, and perseverance usually involves tailing someone who can help your career and "persuading" them to help you out. In a town like this, where everyone is willing to sell out their mothers for another fifteen seconds of fame, there is plenty of work for those of us in the shadows.

- No kidding. Easiest 5k I ever made was a job where I had to terminate some plastic princess' genemod dog. Apparently, the damned animal had cost nearly twice as much as my client's pooch. Easy money.
- Alex Machine

If there is one thing LA likes more than celebrity, it's celebrity scandal. Entertainment is business, and scandal is marketing. Savvy agents and business managers know a good scandal is the best kind of advertising, getting their client's face in the minds of the fans. In fact, many agents keep an off-the-books budget for orchestrating their stars' scandals. It's a double-edged sword, though; while stars want their names to be the brightest in the media galaxy, they have to be careful not to tip too far and damage their reputation. In other words, it is one thing to be seen sneaking out for some hot sex with a young hunk, but another thing altogether to be caught frolicking with pre-pubescent girls and livestock (yeah, that's a story for another time).

And that, friends, is where shadowsiders come in. Fabricating scandals, hushing them up, finding secrets, hiding secrets, exploiting secrets ... you get the picture. If you plan to work in LA, better brush up on who's who and make sure you know their business managers. After all, Kit McClain sure as hell isn't going to be calling you, but his manager might just need something. It really can pay to know all the people a simstar surrounds him or herself with, since those are the folk you'll be dealing with. A note on LA protocol—while those business managers and agents may want you to call them Mr. Johnson, they'll be fairly insulted if you don't actually know who they are. After all, in LA, it isn't about being obscure, it's about being recognized. Don't expect to run in the limelight here and remain unknown—if you want to work, you'd better be willing to play the game.

- Doesn't that defeat the whole purpose of shadowrunning?
- Fianchetto
- Don't worry so much. The Pueblo cops are just as into the whole game as everyone else. Hell, some cops are even runner fans! Nothing like having Officer Smiley ask you for your autograph while you're in lock-up. If you decided to go into live action (and there's plenty of reasons to do that), make sure that you negotiate at least a thirty-second broadcast delay—otherwise the sec guards might be watching your every move as it happens.
- Alex Machine
- The truth is, if you're planning something big, like, say, an assassination or some major corporate espionage, you should keep yourself out of the public eye. Bunk down in the slums, avoid nice

restaurants, don't go clubbing. Otherwise, your reputation is what'll get you work. If nobody knows you, if you aren't on P2.0 and workin' it, you aren't going to get work. Unless, of course, you use someone like me, or another reputable fixer, who's willing to put up with all the media crap on your behalf.

- Doc Hollywood

Another local custom that may come as a bit of culture shock to you out-of-towners is just how omnipresent the media is. You go to a meet and find those damn little camera drones hovering, recording everything. You go on a run, and odds are drones will tag along, selling the footage to feed armchair runners' appetite for adventure (don't worry, SOP provides you with a kickback percentage for not shooting the little buggers out of the air). The more popular you are, the more likely you are to attract the little parasites—they track you down by pinging your P2.0. Savvy runners have to toe the line—disable the little flying cameras, and you'll disappoint your fan-base, dropping your P2.0 popularity rating as people tune into someone more exciting, which is a sure career-killer. Allow the cameras to record everything, and you'll find yourself heading Most Wanted lists on the morning news.

The most successful runners combine nanopaste disguises or full altskin suits with separate IDs to create their own runner persona; a character that can attract a fan base while keeping attention away from their real identity.

Obviously a good hacker is worth their weight in gold here in LA for their editing skills alone. Hack the drones, tap into their recording system, and then edit out the faces, corporate logos, identifying details, but leave in the action, the slinking through alleyways and heart-pounding fire-fights. The more people who tune into your runs, the more popular you'll be, and the more high-paying jobs you'll be offered.

- God, you're killing me here. Tell me it's all a bad joke.
- Fianchetto
- Chip truth, omae.
- J-Cruz

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that LA remains the preeminent media center of the Sixth World and uses this to spread our culture of celebrity and scandal far and wide. Not only are the sim and trid industries still raking in billions of nuyen, but people pay absurd amounts just to keep up with the latest gossip. Wageslaves will buy anything if some celebrity tells them to. Horizon has refined this celebrity sales-power to an art, but every corporation with enough nuyen buys into it. As if using the same toothpaste as Jenna Stardust will let you flash her million nuyen smile, or buying those overpriced jeans will give you abs like Kit McClain. If it makes them money—and it does—the corporations are going to be all for encouraging the hedonistic LA glitterati. As someone I knew once put it: "We ain't in the business of making sims, we're in the business of selling crap."

So, for those of you interested in finding your fifteen seconds of fame, come on down. LA has an insatiable appetite for the new, the exciting, the exotic. The audience loves nothing more than watching punk runners die in a blaze of glory, so make sure the camera catches your good side.



LA ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE:: SEARCH :: CRIME / RUNNER / UNDERWORLD RUNNER SHOWS AND LIVE FEEDS, LA STYLE

Gang Life—The top-rated teen show on the LA scene, featuring the popular A-Kidz! Join our exclusive P2.0 member network, where we provide you with exclusive, behind-the-scenes shots, interactive blogs and fansites, and an extra hour each week of extra footage available only to P2.0 subscribers!

LA ShadowFax—Want to know who's who in the deepest shadows of LA? Subscribe to our streaming news feed, and we'll keep you up-to-date on the runners, the Js, and the secrets of the shadows in our city. Hourly updates on the most popular runners, morning and evening live events where we'll bring you in-depth exposés, even interviews, with the runners of your choice! And as always, we provide instant, breaking news coverage for when things get really hot! [Subscribe now!](#)

P2.0: Prime Runners—Exclusive to our P2.0 customers, a bleeding-edge fan group dedicated to the runners who've made it to the big leagues. No wannabees on our network. Link up with the toughest, most cunning, most powerful runners in town. If they've made it on P2.0, they've made it BIG!

Temptation Teams—A new reality show pitting runners against each other. Each week, two new teams are assembled and pitted against each other for the big payoff. Watch as they scramble to plan and execute their run before the opposition beats them. Teammates spend every moment together, and the friction can be HOT! Will they play nice ... or naughty? Cooperation ... or backstabbing? Viewer votes will determine which teams are given valuable clues leading to the big payoff, and which teams receive bad info leading to the corps, cops, or ambush by opposing teams! Your vote counts—watch now, vote often! Two hour live finale every other Friday!

- It's a joke, right? Doc's full of shit, right?
- Fianchetto
- Sorry, Fi-man. Doc's spot-on there. I've got a following, too. Fan-boys. Heh. It is possible to work quietly in the LA shadows, but it takes a lot of work and it pays a lot less.
- Alex Machine
- Alex plays the retro-40s runner thru and thru for his Pito fans: old-style flash chrome and mirrorshades. He can't visit any of the really happening clubs or bars without ten different media outlets crowding him before he kicks back his first drink. Me, I'm more the quiet sort. Harder to do business but safer too.
- J-Cruz

Urgent Message...

P2.0 (OR PITO)

By now you're asking yourself what is all this P2.0 crap we keep bringing up. As you've all figured by now, Horizon is now *the* mover and shaker in this self-indulgent city of stars. If it can possibly make you more in-tune with the celebrity firmament, Horizon sells it. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the most recent technologies introduced by Horizon. Long known to use the locals to beta-test their newest and hottest wares, be they trid programming, sims, advertising jingles, or memes, they seem to have outdone themselves this time. A few months ago, Horizon rolled out an AR software mod they have taken to calling Persona 2.0, or P2.0

- Also known to those of us on the streets and avid watchers of the service as "Pito." For those of you who are Spanish speakers the humor should be obvious, for those of you who aren't just try to imagine why all the simstars and suits want to have the biggest Pito on the block.
- Mika
- Why does it always come down to size with you guys?
- Pistons

Persona 1.0 is just plain old boring you. It says: Joe Average and non-native, it's for the wageslaves of other (non-Horizon) corps who wish they were someone. If you're still on Persona 1.0, then you are a non-person among the glitterati.

Persona 2.0 is live-networking, blogging, reputation, and sim, all in one. It tells others who you are, it constantly reaffirms your own importance, and it allows you to become a part of the glittering constellation of celebrities. Now you can become a member of what everyone else only can wish for. You can be a real person! At least that's the sales pitch.

- <gag>
- Slamm-0!
- Don't knock it 'til you try it, Slamm-0! Friends tell me it's more addictive than, er, well, all the rest of the crap they shovel in their bodies.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

P2.0 is based off a three-tier trust metric that is adjusted in real-time and designed to compute your reputation—all you need is the appropriate software and a subscription to P2.0.

The first value is your Centrality (also known as your C-rating). This is an actual measurement of how close in the network you are to Horizon CEO Gary Cline. The lower the rating, the better: personal friends and important business contacts of Cline's will have a rating of 1. However, if your daughter (1) is dating the son (2) of the guy (3) who delivers linens to the manager (4) of Cline's sister-in-law's (5) favorite restaurant, your centrality would be 5. Ratings go from 0 (Cline himself) to 8 (the theory being that everyone in the world is within 8 steps of Cline). Cline himself tends to keep his inner circle rather stable, only occasionally raising up worthy persons. There are power brokers with C-ratings of 2 or 3 who use their position to raise up and cast down favorites at a whim. Because of this, C-rating tends

LOS ANGELES



to be the least stable of the measures of P2.0 prestige. One power broker on a power trip can suddenly dump you from a C-rating of 4 down to 7. Most users have little to no control over their Centrality. Still, especially for those with a particularly low rating, it is a huge ego boost. Walk into any fancy restaurant in the city with a C-rating of 2 and you will immediately get a great table, no reservations required. Simply put, the lower your Centrality, the more known you are (or will be).

The second value is your network size (also known as your M-rating or Membership). This is the size of a person's individual network. If Centrality measures the quality of who you know, then Membership measures the quantity. The larger the network size, the more prestige a user has and the larger their P2.0 rating. Network membership is reciprocal, so both parties have to agree to being put in one another's network. Most users approve other users without a second thought, and it's not uncommon to find complete strangers on your network. This is jokingly referred to as the "who-the-hell's-Harry?" syndrome. Removing someone from your network is one-sided, so a user can evict someone with little hassle. Anyone who has a Centrality of two degrees (or more) higher than yours is likely to ask to add themselves to your network. While many users try to gain the highest degree possible, some are more selective. Generally, the lower your C-rating, the more selective you can afford to be.

- Some of the popular clubs in LA host networking nights, where you can have a nice group networking orgy.
- J-Cruz

The third measure of your rep is your Subscription value or S-rating. There are subscribers to each P2.0 participant's personal "Me-feed." The more subscribers, the greater the popularity, and the higher the rating. This ties in with the live-blogging feature of P2.0. Since attention spans in LA tend to be short, if you aren't interesting, then you'll lose all your subscribers. Network membership is required to subscribe to anyone's network with a C-rating of 3 or lower. Invitations can also be issued without accepting someone onto their network, even to non-P2.0 users, which is fairly common for some of the ego-driven glitterati who don't want to allow lowly peasants onto their precious network. Anyone can subscribe to a network that has a C-rating of 4 or above. Still, who wants to subscribe to the live-feed of an insurance salesman with a C-rating of 7?

Are U Still Having Fun?

Which brings us to our next point: gaining and losing access to P2.0. P2.0 is invitation only; you can't just buy the system. No, only the elite can be part of P2.0. If one of those elite happens to find you interesting, sexy, well-connected, exotic, or just rich enough to be invited in, then lucky you! Each user is given a half-dozen invitations upon being accepted into the network. Additional invitations can be purchased as a user's rating goes up. The purchase prices for additional invitations usually starts at the low, low price of 10,000 nuyen and goes up from there. Of course, there's a thriving underground market of accounts, many of which are designed to take your nuyen and will fail completely to connect you to the network. "Real" accounts, fully hacked into the network, often start at 5,000 nuyen or more, but they don't come with

additional invitations, and you can bet your reputation is going to be so low you'll be kicked off the network within days unless you work your ass off to improve yourself. If you're willing to shell out 15,000 or more, you can probably just buy an invitation off the black-market.

- By making it seem exclusive, it makes people want to join in more. Marketing 101.
- Dr. Spin

Losing access to P2.0 happens when your reputation drops too far down. Basically, when you cease to become even marginally entertaining, the network kicks you off. This ensures that the people that make up P2.0's network are truly the most exciting, most exclusive, most interesting people out there. Most users can manage to stay alive on the network through a high enough Membership rating, even if their Subscription or Centrality values tank. Still, if you end up with a C-rating of 8 and no one wants to subscribe to your live-blog, then you'll find that your Membership is dropping as people start to eliminate you from their network. After all, who wants to keep themselves tied to a loser?

Non-Horizon media have played up reports of P2.0-related suicides, and hearing about some poor schmuck who "Pito'd" himself is increasingly common. Like anything else, the slight sense of danger only adds to its allure.

• Since it's unlikely that any of us shadow-scum will ever gain an invitation onto P2.0, hacking the system seems like an obvious solution. Horizon, however, discourages this, primarily by utilizing their own hackers and technos to ensure the network stays online, safe and secure. So far, to the best of my knowledge, no one has successfully broken the system or managed to reverse-engineer it. You can occasionally find your way into the system by hacking the 'link of a subscriber who has invitations to hand out. It can be a pain in the arse, though, 'cause if you don't cover your tracks really well, once the subscriber complains, Pito'll kick you off, and you won't ever again be eligible for access on that ID. Of course, there are ways to ensure the person doesn't ever complain.

- Netcat

TEACH A MAN TO FISH: HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the major engines of LA's historical prosperity has been the institutes of higher education. In particular, UCLA and CalTech have provided the defense and aerospace industries with generations of engineers and scientists. Over the years, the ties between these schools and industry has grown ever tighter until the two universities became glorified corporate think-tanks and training institutes. For many years, CalTech had been ascendant, and when PCC moved in they became CalTech's default patron. Meanwhile, as part of Horizon's rise, the megacorp pumped billions of nuyen into UCLA and the branch campuses in Riverside.

Having new sponsors hasn't abated the historic rivalry between schools; if anything, Horizon and the PCC's political arm-wrestling has amplified it. The academic competition is obvious, but the real trouble—and fun—comes from the schools' Computer Science, Engineering, and Magical Studies departments. There's a long-standing tradition for the undergraduate



students in those departments to execute elaborate pranks against their rivals.

- After years of escalating magical pranks, the astral space around both campuses is unstable. It may be from the constant magical activity, it may be the result of some of the more creative pranks, or it may be something else entirely. It can make magic quite unpredictable.

- Lyran

- Heh. I heard about a certain dwarf who knocked herself out with her own stunbolt.

- Ma'fan

- Oh, shut up.

- Lyran

California Institute of Technology (Caltech)

Located in Pasadena, CalTech is headed by Dr. Maureen Jones, a pragmatic woman with close ties to the PCC. Behind her back, students and faculty call her General Jones for the commanding manner in which she took charge during the earthquakes and subsequent troubles. The city of Pasadena remains 250 meters above sea level, so, though the quakes hit the campus, it was spared the tsunami. Still, several older buildings collapsed and others were damaged beyond repair, leaving General Jones with a large rebuilding project.

With PCC backing, Caltech turned this into an opportunity. They are expanding the campus, and ground has been broken on several new buildings. The new biochemistry building and laboratories are almost complete, stocked with all the latest tech. There's also been a large recruitment drive to draw both the brightest students and the hottest researchers. Expect to see more big money flowing into that department soon, from more than just the PCC. Dr. Jones is a bright woman—word is that she's courting money from corps, both big and small. Apparently, the PCCs struggles haven't escaped her notice.

CalTech is a much smaller school than UCLA, but because of its focus and stellar reputation it holds its own. The approximately 4,000 students are fairly evenly split between undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, CalTech boasts an impressive doctoral program in the sciences, and graduates are highly desired. Most already are sponsored by one megacorp or another, but come graduation time, there's always some reshuffling as competitors try to persuade the brightest students to switch teams. CalTech also boasts one of the most respected Doctor of Thaumaturgy programs in North America, with over thirty doctoral candidates.

- The undergrad and graduate programs in Computer Science turn out some of the best programmers in the business. Every year, a couple of students decide to skip the rat-race and turn to the shadows. Professors in these departments stress practical skills, handing out better grades to kids who pull off really impressive practical jokes, and occasionally even hiring runners to come in to teach a couple of classes on combat hacking or even less legal topics.

- The Smiling Bandit

University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA, UC Irvine and UC Riverside)

UCLA has come through the last few years in pretty good shape, too. With Horizon's nuyen, the schools have been transformed into the city's crown jewels. The UCLA campus is the size of a small city itself, with almost 30,000 undergrad and graduate students. The Riverside and Irvine campus, swallowed up by UCLA under Horizon patronage following the Twins, are a bit smaller, with about 35,000 students total, mostly undergraduate. All the schools are well-respected, although UCR is famed for its medical program, Irvine for its science departments, while UCLA is well known for its liberal arts programs, and has, in recent years, created a nationally envied Marketing program. In fact, enrollment at either campus practically guarantees you an internship with Horizon or a subsidiary. Horizon considers the internship to be an extended job interview, and students who don't make it are often welcomed by other corporations.

Things have been particularly hot lately at UCR, whose biomedical program specializes in nanoscience and genomics. When most of the megas bailed on LA, leaving us to our floods and quakes, they pulled funding from the UCR programs. Horizon graciously stepped in to fill the gap, and since the medical program also oversees several public hospitals serving low-income residents, Horizon came out of the deal looking like a knight in shining armor. Behind the scenes, though, it meant that a lot of research—potentially very profitable research—has fallen into their eager hands. Maybe they were being altruistic, or maybe it was a brilliant strategic move, but either way it worked out well for them.

- Evo had a lot of nuyen in some R&D at UCR. Word is they didn't pull their funding, but that Horizon made a better offer to the doctors while Evo reps were still being tossed around by the quake. Evo tried to lure some of the researchers back, but apparently the eggheads decided they liked the creative license Horizon gives them. Evo's willing to pay to bring its wayward talents back into the fold.

- Dr. Spin

- Ok, ok, but I want to hear about these famous pranks.

- Beaker

- Well, recently the CalTech kids made UC Irvine's mascot, Peter the Anteater—a 195-kilogram statue—get up and walk around. The beastie walked in and out of classes, rode a bus around campus, and ended up at a power lunch between the Chancellor and a few Horizon VPs. Apparently it used the Chancellor's table to, ah, relieve itself. The real genius was how the Comp Sci kids managed to block the incoming calls for every mage on campus so no one stopped it before it finished its business.

- J-Cruz

BEAUTIFUL BEACHES: LA SPRAWL

Battered by earthquakes, floods, fires, riots, invasions, and a (not-so) subtle war between two megacorps, the City of Angels seems abandoned by any celestial overseers. Los Angeles races to recover from yet another disaster while holding its breath in anticipation of the next cataclysm. In the shadows, a three way tug-



of-war over control of the city is being fought between the PCC, Aztechnology, and the emergent Horizon Group; the entertainment biz continues to be as dirty and machiavellian as ever; and against this backdrop, organized crime and shadowrunners play all sides for personal profit.

THE BASICS

LA has always been a melting pot for dozens of peoples and cultures. Despite its recent stirrings, nothing much has been done to change this. While some areas are more heavily skewed towards one metatype or another, for the most part, LA is not particularly racist. Instead, the lines are drawn between the haves and the have-nots—a person's bank balance and reputation matter more than the shape of his ears or color of her skin.

Infrastructure

LA is a Pueblo controlled city, and, like elsewhere in the PCC, they keep it running with smooth efficiency. Or at least as much efficiency as is possible with daily earthquakes, squabbling megacorps, and a city full of ego-maniac stars demanding attention. The highest authority is the Civil Governor designated by Pueblo, currently an increasingly beleaguered Zuni-dwarf named Pedro Escalante.

Law-enforcement is currently provided by Pueblo security forces who patrol the streets, drawing heavily on drones and automated security systems to cover the large sprawl. The worst areas are left to police themselves, although water-based units have begun patrolling the areas experiencing heavy reconstruction.

Affluent neighborhoods (like the Beverly Hills and Westside enclaves and the rebuilt areas of Santa Monica) hire their own security forces. Knight Errant, Lone Star, and Hard Corps have lucrative contracts for such exclusive neighborhoods. Of course, Fun City is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Horizon, and Horizon Security patrol the resort-town—you can spot 'em wearing their 1950s-style police uniforms, dark blue with shiny brass buttons, snappy hats, and funny looking bobby-sticks at their sides. Friendliest cops you'll ever meet—but you don't want to meet their backup.

Medical services are provided by DocWagon, which almost went under during the quakes last year—luckily they had an “acts of God” provision in their contracts that helped when so many customers sued them for breach of contract. The corp is doing fine these days, although Charisma Associates was brought on board to help their image, post-quakes.

Multiple hospitals and a plethora of private clinics serve the LA area, although if you're looking for the best, you want to go to Pomona and Westside. Several charity clinics in West Covina serve the refugee camps and are known for being less than picky about IDs, especially if you can actually pay.

Getting around town is a major pain. You (along with all the wageslaves) can still take the freeways most places or use air-taxis if you want to actually get somewhere in a reasonable amount of time. Most of the freeways in the flood zones remain standing, sticking up like soot-stained bones from the water, and portions that collapsed into the deepest sinkholes have been rebuilt, occasionally with floating bridges. Armored water-buses serve those flooded areas still populated by wageslaves, businesses, and com-



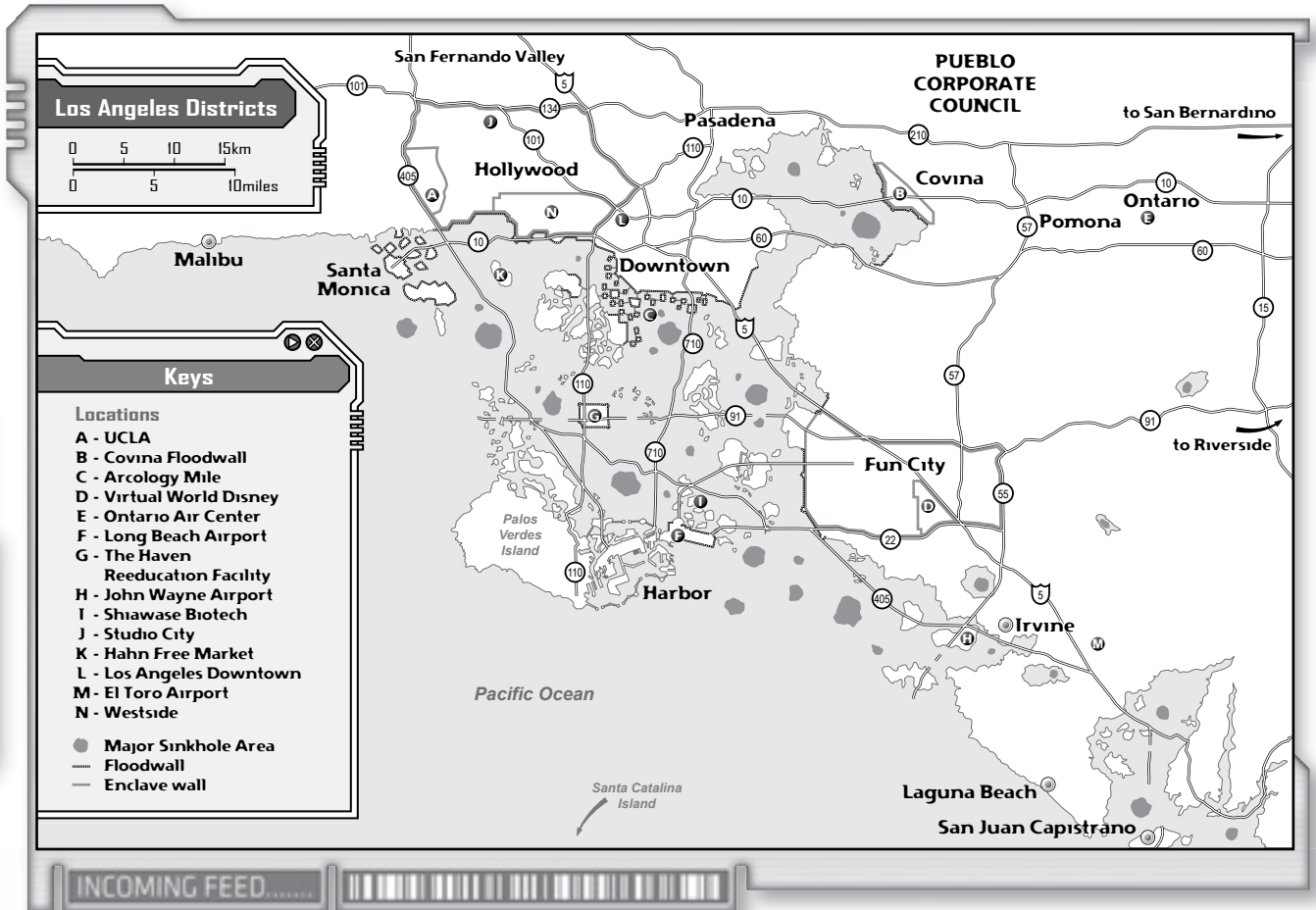
muters to the construction zones. Less picky individuals—and people who don't mind the toxic water, occasional shedim attack, or water-gangs—can use fast, flat-bottomed boats to navigate the other flooded areas.

City Elders

Even though everyone knows that the real power brokers of LA are Horizon and the Pueblo Governor, during the takeover a deal was brokered under which a series of neighborhood councils led by an “elected” mayor would represent the people as the “official” local government (answerable to the governor). In reality, these jokers' main job is to pander to the press, mouthing concern for the supposed needs of their constituents. They all serve at the whim of their corporate masters. Of course, on slow news weeks, they are also required to provide a moderate amount of scandal to round out the tabloid coverage. Generally speaking, you'd need a score card to keep track of these folks, as one or another loses their seats fairly frequently, not to mention the changes in the political landscape wrought by the geographical shifts during the quakes last year. The elected mayors for the worst-hit areas have made motions towards relief and assistance for their constituencies, but so far it's been all talk and no action. Not too surprising, eh? Those of us watching expect the city to realign neighborhoods in the near future, which means several of these politicians will be out of a job. Still, for what it's worth, here's a list of the current incumbents and who they're in bed with:

Luis Carmel (East LA): Since his area is now mostly submerged, Luis spends most of his time whining to anyone who will listen. He used to be very pro-industry, since much of LA's industrial strength was gathered in his area. Now that the corporate bribes have dried up, Luis is looking for a secondary source of





income. Most expect Luis to be out a job when the realignment happens, which isn't making him too happy.

Rafael Malaverde (South Central): Although El Infierno residents were never given a vote, the South Central neighborhood included many other areas, mostly populated by the working poor. Rafael spent most of his time trying to ignore the nobodies who'd elected him. Unfortunately, he happened to be visiting a local strip club at the time of the earthquake. Although his body was never found, he is listed among the dead.

Frederick "Freddy" Anderson (Fun City): Freddy is a good ol' boy who believes heart and soul in the illusion of Fun City. Or so he says. Rumor is that he's in bed with Humanis. I'd believe it, although he's been careful to keep himself separated from any overtly racist on-air sound bites.

Lydia Flying-Swan (Santa Monica and West Hills, incl. Hollywood): Lydia is a media darling, always ready with her signature smile or a witty soundbite. Of course, parts of Lovely Lydia's territory are now submerged, though the damage was minimal in the wealthiest areas. Apparently, the rich and famous paid God high enough bribes to escape His wrath. Lydia is smart enough to know that Horizon funds her plush lifestyle, and she is an expert at ensuring the city council keeps its decisions favorable for the megacorp.

Jack Weinberger (Inland Mountains): This area has gained significant importance following the sinking of the city. The Inland Empire, as locals call it, suffered no flooding. Since most

of the building was fairly new, the quakes caused minimal damage (compared to other areas, that is). Jack enjoys making his corporate deals on the golf course, but he is spending some time in rehab. Apparently his last drunk-flying accident was caught on too many cameras, so he's checked himself into an Evo rehab clinic.

Nisu Grey (San Fernando and outlying areas): San Fernando is a PCC stronghold, and Nisu keeps that in the front of her mind. It's rumored that Nisu is controlled by the Koshari, but so far no one has dug up proof. Which means she's either lucky or the rumor is false. Hard to say which.

- Worked for her a couple of times, and for what it's worth she seemed like a pretty straight shooter.
- J-Cruz

The Land of Fun and Sun

If Seattle is Rain City, then LA is the polar opposite. Never a place that was blessed with an overabundance of precipitation, the slow effects of global warming have further reduced what little rain SoCal gets. Annual rainfall is now at approximately 25 cm, and some years have seen as little as half of that. People tend to forget that LA is built on the edge of a desert. All the palm trees we have were brought here—they don't grow natively.

LA is heavily dependent on the desalination plants along the coast and to the north to keep the dryness of the desert at bay. Of course taking the salt out of the water isn't the only obstacle to



making it potable. The residents of the LA sprawl have never been all that careful about taking care of their environment, and the ocean waters as well as the floodwaters are teeming with parasites, toxins, and even radioactive fallout from San Onofre to the south and other offshore incidents. For the majority of city and corporate residents, clean water is the number one concern. The PCC is working on a very publicized contract with Shiawase Biotech to see if the corp can clean up the LA waters. I don't know if they can do it, but you gotta give the PCC points for trying.

And I would be remiss if I failed to mention the most noticeable feature of life in LA—the quakes. While everyone is fairly certain we won't be getting another big one for a while, no one's really willing to put money down on that. Even discounting another major quake, we still sit on a nexus of fault lines that experience a fair amount of activity. So anyone who spends any amount of time down here is likely to experience at least a few temblors. Quakes that knock objects off shelves are almost daily occurrences since '61, and every few months we get one that shakes things up a bit more, tosses people around, makes the buildings sway, and messes up traffic.

View from Heaven

It's fitting that the home of one of the world's wireless behemoths would have an absolutely gorgeous AR interface for those of you who can't quite bring yourselves to live in the mundane unaugmented world. LA downtown is done up in an AR stylized retro-scheme replicating the golden age of Hollywood. The entire downtown and most of the valleys are clad in an Art Deco motif that was popular more than a century ago. Horizon has even been experimenting with AR "skinning" commands fed to sensors in vehicles and clothing to create a more seamless illusion of Hollywood in the 1920s. The AR is amazingly realistic—Horizon has pulled all the stops here in their home city. The city council has decreed that any new buildings must reflect the golden age theme in architecture and design and be fitted with surface AR interfaces controlled by the city's AR department. As buildings are reconstructed, there is a lot of pressure to alter them to fit in.

Further south, around Fun City, the time period shifts up a few decades and the AR scheme replicates 1950s Americana. White pickets and manicured lawns of the old US of A in its glory days are the default; though areas of Fun City use different AR schemes depending on the epoch and illusion they intend to (re)create. Hell, if you've got a scent-enabled 'link, you can even smell the apple pies baking as you walk thru the corp burbs.

LA CENTRAL

Most maps of the LA area are outdated within hours of being published. Toss anything published before 2069 (unless you want to try to sell it to a collector, that is). Heck, toss anything published more than a week ago. Seawalls are going up so fast, it'd make you dizzy. There's some legal wrangling over who owns the reclaimed land behind the seawalls, but mostly it's going to whoever files a claim first. After all, even once they keep the sea out, they still have to get rid of the toxic mud, sometimes meters thick, that buried everything. Land is at a premium here, always has been, and with so much of our city destroyed, the expense of cleaning it up is worth it, to some. Here's some info on the places about town, but I offer no guarantees that it won't look different tomorrow.

Downtown and Hollywood

This old economic core of our city is where the studio bigwigs wheel and deal. The core of Downtown is the old Arcology Mile, reaching from Horizon's arcologies on the intersection of Hollywood and Highland all the way down to the waterline, the reclamation projects, and beyond where partially submerged skyscraping arcoblocks rise up from the filthy water like mushrooms, pushing above the smog level of the city. In the old days this was ground zero for LA's entertainment industry, and it still has immense historical value. Most of the gleaming steel and glass arcologies on the Mile still stand or are currently being renovated. Many of the former tenants left during one of the more recent disasters, but new tenants are never in short supply.

Horizon has been picking up a lot of abandoned real estate in Downtown, thanks to the salvage laws and recently completed seawall, as a major step in reclaiming this historic area. Within six months, the mud and debris will be cleared, and tourists will once again be able to walk in the footsteps of the stars. Or so they say.

These days, Downtown is surrounded by makeshift shantytowns where the destitute survive on the scraps and whims of the rich. Most corps and the city police have given up policing the surviving streets in this area after dark, making it into a no-man's land about an hour before sunset. Horizon has been beta-testing some automated crime-prevention systems in other areas of the city. They've announced that by the time the streets are cleaned up, the system will be fully functional and integrated into the downtown area, making it safe at all hours of the day and night.

- "Automated Crime Prevention Systems?" What's that?
- Pistons
- Full sensor units that can pick up not just pictures and sounds, but body-temps and motion sensors. Supposedly, there's a cutting-edge program that analyzes people and objects (like vehicles), identifies potential problems, and then picks a response. That response may be a verbal warning issued through speakers or AR, a police drone, a spirit or mage, or even a full SWAT team. Gotta keep your head extra-low when the fuzz is watching with ACPS.
- Skinny Dipper

The action here takes place either at the street level, if you are common scum, or high above the streets where the real power of LA makes deals and decides fates. The air traffic around downtown is a constant flow between the arcologies and from the arcologies to the new corporate headquarters in the Inland Empire.

As you move further west into Hollywood and West Hollywood, you'll find that Horizon and PCC have tried to replace some of the historic ambience of the area. Gone are the Stuffer Shacks and other chain conveniences of Arcology Mile. Here you'll find the newest posh nightclubs and the hangouts of the rich and famous. The land here didn't get inundated and, for the most part, had been reinforced against the quakes years ago. You can cruise around in your stretch limo, enjoying the towering palm trees and cascades of flowers lining the streets. During the day, the area is filled with tourists and shoppers, hoping to get a peek of a simstar or two. At night, the place lights up with the glitterati and their adoring fans.



Security is so tight here you don't want to even sneeze, but they keep it very unobtrusive. Don't want to bother the tourists, after all. Don't try to walk around armed without all the right permits; sensors will tag your weapons or cyberware before you even set foot on these sparkling streets. If everything doesn't match up to your ID (which you better be broadcasting, spam be damned), you'll find yourself being discretely escorted out. Save yourself a swim and buy the best ID you can afford if you decide to mingle with the beautiful folk.

- Hollywood and Downtown still hog a lot of the shadow action, but they're also where the media blitz is at its heaviest. You quickly learn to either play the game or get off the grid.
- Alex Machine

Knowing the lay of the land won't help you much if you don't know where to hang, pick up biz, and broker deals, so here are a few suggestions.

Diamantes is an ultra-chic Hollywood restaurant that caters to the glitterati. Entrance is invitation only; you won't get in unless your P2.0 reputation is stratospheric. And ladies, a certain amount of glitter is required. A-listers consider it *the* place to be seen. This isn't a place where you have to worry about camera-drones, as the media send actual live reporters to do the star-watching. For many in Hollywood, receiving an invitation to Diamantes is the sign they've hit the big time. The owner is a free spirit who goes by the name of Ruby, and she is quite possibly the most well informed person I've ever met when it comes to what's going on in the world of stars.

- You don't have to be famous to get an invite. Ruby's been known to send one to other people she'd like to meet, mostly visiting Awakened folk that interest her. I'm still trying to figure out how she knew I was in town, but I didn't dare say no to the invite. I never had a chance to ask; Ruby's very friendly but she talks more than ten women combined.
- Winterhawk
- Ruby's headwaiter is no other than Rebecca Constantine, cat-girl diva of the changeling fad back in the 60's. Now retired the lady still looks like a million nuyen and has a lot of close friends in the trid and sim industries. Good person to know.
- Alex Machine

Greenstreets is another must-see in West Hollywood. Packed with memorabilia, the bar is a favorite with tourists and locals alike. Gary Cline has been known to stop in for a drink, and there's a prominent AR image of him with the bar's owner, Sidney, right over the bar.

There's dozens of bars and dance clubs in the area, each competing to be *it*. There's speculation that Dante may be putting in a club in the area, making LA the fourth city to hold one of these globally popular franchises. Until then, you can visit **Electron Skies**, an AR-enhanced dance club that's all the rage with younger stars. The place is heavily biased towards beautiful people, of which there is no shortage in LA. Agents and talent scouts like to work the crowd inside, hoping to find the newest sensation, and it can be a great place to make some contacts in the showbiz world. Assuming you can get in.

10 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN HOLLYWOOD

© Vanity Fair 2070

1 :: Gary Cline (CEO with Flair)

"Chairman" Cline, Hollywood's own AAA-lister, continues to blow away the competition on our Hollywood Most Powerful list. Whether it's attending social functions, partying in LA clubs, or presiding over board meetings, the Horizon Man continues to delight and surprise his fans and confound his detractors as the head of the most innovative megacorp of the day. Cline's unflagging popularity owes much to Horizon's contributions to the reconstruction of Angel Town following the devastating quakes of 2069.

2 :: Catherine "C.C." Cassidy (Agent Extraordinaire)

Arguably the most influential woman in show-biz, C.C. is Hollywood's premiere agent. "Miss 15%'s" list of clients counts 9 Oscar winners, 10 day-time trid superstars, and such rising lights as Alexi Summer and Jacob Damon. C.C. still looks thirty despite being a Hollywood staple for more than 30 years. Despite her age, C.C. remains as ruthless and audacious as ever and wields immense clout with studios, producers, and actors. Her favor can make or break careers, and her talent scouts are always on the lookout for the next big thing.

3 :: Kit McClain (Hollywood's Highest-Grossing Star)

After two devastating years—following the untimely demise of his wife Laura in a car accident and the unsubstantiated accusations from her family regarding Kit's involvement in her death—McClain seems to have hit his stride with the blockbuster thriller *Hidden Revolutions*. The 30-year old actor appears to have found solace in his work and having just completed primary recording of the remake *Dead Air* (the '53 original starred Nicky Sitoah), McClain has already signed up for the third installment of the popular sci-fi "Nathan Never" franchise.

Continued on page 25

Jazz Nights, near Echo Park, is a personal favorite of mine. A faithful replica of an old fashioned jazz and dance club, there's live music every night of the week. The drinks are strong, the smoke is thick, and the music is enough to make even a hardened runner like me feel like getting off their ass. Certain older elements of the LA Mob tend to congregate here, but they keep business quiet, if they do any at all. Mostly, people come to enjoy the music and the atmosphere.

10 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN HOLLYWOOD (CONT)

© Vanity Fair 2070

4 :: Tam Reyes (Singular Genius)

The mind behind the Singularity success story and the fastest rising powerbroker in Hollywood, MIT&T alumni Tam Reyes is set to revolutionize the way people use the Matrix. Reyes himself drafted Singularity's mission statement to develop and implement AR and VR applications that explore the full potential of the Matrix. Multifaceted Reyes not only directs the Horizon subsidiary but personally oversees R&D—though it has been not his competency but his impending union to longtime companion David Pitt that has been filling the scandalfeeds.

5 :: Alexi Summer (Brightest Starlet)

The brightest ascending star in the LA firmament is undoubtedly blond bombshell Alexi Summer. The CAS-born singer-turned-actress is hot off the success of her latest album *Troubled Youth* and cashing in on the highest-grossing sim of 2070, the romantic comedy *Lost in Brasyl*. In a press release last week, Ms. Summer's agent confirmed rumors that the starlet has signed a two-year exclusive contract to be the face of Evo's MetaTribe fashion and accessory line.

6 :: Pedro Escalante (Pueblo Head Honcho)

Los Angeles Governor Escalante completed his third year in office just last month, and his popularity continues to ride high on the ongoing reclamation and handling of the refugee situation in the city. Escalante's diplomatic touch was also in evidence last year when he helped the city avoid an escalation of violence during the technomancer and AI scares. Rumors abound, however, that Pueblo authorities are tightening the purse strings and will be reining in Escalante's plans for the city. The political fallout from that move remains to be seen.

Continued on page 27

An upscale restaurant nestled in the shade of the Horizon arcologies, just off Hollywood and Highland, **Tedescu's** is immensely popular with high-flying entertainment biz execs, and at lunchtime it fills up with the movers and shakers in the trideo and music industry. Many a major Hollywood business deal is sealed at Tedescu's. Johann Kurtz, the manager, is a former Amalgamated Studios producer who keeps up many of his connections in the industry and has been known to act as a fixer for friends and acquaintances.

Casanova is an exclusive casino that draws the truly rich and powerful. It's an open secret that the Mafia owns it, runs it, and breaks multiple laws inside it every night. No one would ever consider busting the place, though, since the clients read like a who's who list of politicians, executives, and simstars. You won't find any AR games or noisy slot machines here. Just the sweet sound of cards whispering across a felt-covered table, the clink of real chips (you can buy 'em from the cashier), and the smell of money. You can't get in without being a member or being invited by a member. I suspect there may be a minimum bank balance just to walk in, and I know it is a black-tie only sort of place. If you can get in, go—you'll feel like you stepped back 150 years in time.

The **Daybreak Clinic** is an accessible betaware and biosculpting clinic that does a lot of confidential work for stars-in-the-making and stuntmen. As befits a Hollywood clinic, Daybreak has access to all the latest implants and gadgets. Unlike other places, the Daybreak docs aren't too high and mighty to do some work for shadowtypes when needed.

East L.A and South Central

Ever since the worst parts of LA were sealed behind the walls of El Infierno decades ago, the well-behaved poor mostly trickled down to East LA and undermined budding attempts to rebuild the area. Both areas were razed by the Twins and the flood, claiming some of the highest mortality rates of all LA.

East LA remains largely under-populated today, though several new structures have recently sprung up, reclamation projects run by construction and eco-corps—though the numerous sinkholes prove a major hazard. The waters aren't particularly deep, and there are areas of dry land, small islands with shattered skeletons of buildings, that harbor water-gangs, scavengers, and the occasional shedim or nasty paracritter. No one travels there except by boat.

El Infierno has only slipped further into hell. Decades ago, the area was walled up by a city government that lacked the resources and the will to deal with the largely poor and underprivileged residents. Over the years, it became a ghetto for all sorts of undesirables, and even though El Infierno managed to ride out the quake of '61 without too much death, the flood in '69 was another matter. Nearly seven out of every ten residents of El Infierno perished in the quake, the flood, or in trying to flee the area over the remnants of the walls and gates that had kept them penned in. In the weeks that followed, the survivors found themselves horribly sickened by the chemicals and toxic flows brought by the floodwaters.

- People in El Infierno never stood a chance. The PCC opened the perimeter gates, but it was too late for anyone to reach high ground.
- Skinny Dipper

Almost fifty years of hopelessness, rage and despair have left their mark on the astral space in and around El Infierno. The massive toxic flows haven't helped. Add in the horrible deaths of tens of thousands of people, and you've got a recipe for truly corrupted astral space. Budding attempts at rehabilitating the area have been derailed by the ongoing strings of tragedies, and many corporations are leery of rebuilding in such a contaminated astral area.

Horizon, however, has finished seawalls, drained the water in a large section, and quickly constructed a large, enclosed facility on the





site. What they were doing was pretty much a mystery until the recent announcement of their plans to open “**The Haven**,” a social reeducation facility, that will also include facilities to “rehabilitate magically and technologically awakened offenders.” I’ve heard that they already have a waiting list of so-called offenders from other countries and corporations, who generally dislike the costs inherent in keeping magicians and virtuakineticians locked up. Supposedly, the facility will be open for business in late fall, if you decide you want to, ahem, visit.

- Horizon operates several prisons around the globe, taking in criminals from other corps and countries, turning a nice profit in the process. Their facilities are very different from normal lockups. Prisoners are referred to as patients and treated as though their crimes resulted from mental illnesses, which, supposedly, the doctors and staff are there to “cure.”

I lost one of my men to one of these places outside Lisbon. He told me that they were pretty heavy into group therapy and made him go through these annoying sims constantly. Apparently they experimented with different conditioning techniques, too. Poor slob. We eventually got him out, months later, and he was never the same—just froze up on our last job together when it came time to apply some heavy firepower. I blame Horizon—I don’t know what they did in there, but it screwed up a good merc.

- Picador

- I looked up some stats on their prisons. I’m not sure what they’re doing, but Horizon releases their inmates, on average, seven months earlier than other prisons, and have a 63 percent lower recidivism rate. No one is saying anything bad about the places; all reports cite some bullshit about Horizon’s unique “multi-layered, holistic approach to rehabilitation.” I can’t even find any inmate interviews

that are negative. I’m gonna do some more research. Picador, can I talk to your friend? I’d love to get a first-person POV.

- Sunshine

- Sorry. Bert took a bullet to the head during that last op. I can forward you the notebook he kept, though. If you make any sense of it, let me know.

- Picador

Santa Monica and Westside

Lying along the coast and nearly at sea level for most of its expanse, the Westside remains underwater. Fortunately most Westsiders were able flee the tsunami wave, and the inner enclave walls acted as temporary dykes. The area around **UCLA** fared particularly well through the initial disaster and now is slowly building outwards with the help of its benefactors at Horizon.

Most of the residential and commercial areas that survived behind the now-reinforced walls have been subsumed into **Studio City**, the huge walled-off corporate enclave from which 80 percent of Hollywood’s trideo and sim production flows. Horizon and Amalgamated Studios are the two biggest players in the biz and are constantly at odds. The only reason sabotage of productions and sets doesn’t get out of hand is a strange form of détente.

The Westside waterfront wallows in a shallow toxic stew picked over by scavengers and haunted by strange paracritters—thousands of Westsiders lost their homes, and most now live in either the Fun City camps or the Riverside camps. Serious efforts are being made to clean up and rebuild, with dozens of corps claiming sections and throwing up seawalls. It’s created a hodge-podge of enclosed corporate zones, separated by the shallow waters, with little or no cooperation or planning between them. Floating construction sites move from seawall to seawall, and water buses haul construction workers to the sites. Floating roads, supposedly temporary, link dry areas, creating a tangled web of plasticrete lines between corporate enclosures. Horizon has been sponsoring much of the rebuilding, and Wuxing follows behind at a close second (while allegedly applying feng shui to realign the flow of chi and bring in more positive mana). Saeder-Krupp is also investing in the area; although the corp is wary of actually rebuilding in such a disaster-prone area, they’re subcontracting and have a lock on the heavy construction industry right now. A smaller corporation, a privately held construction and real-estate firm by the name of the Ciara Holdings, has been gobbling up land in the Westside.

I should mention that industrial sabotage and claim-grabbing is at an all time high for the LA construction industry.

- Ciara Holdings is privately held, run by a Harvard MBA by the name of Simon Ciara. They now own a sizable percentage of Santa Monica, but I’ve no idea what they plan on doing with it. If Ciara’s willing to invest, then there’s money to be made—Simon’s one of the sharpest guys I’ve ever met. I lost a bundle to him at a poker game once, but made it up ten times through some casual hints he dropped. I think I’m going to look into some rehab real estate.

- Mr. Bonds

- Is this the A-list Simon Ciara? Golden party boy? I’ll skip the real estate, go straight for the realtor.

- Kat o’ Nine Tales

- He's not your type, Kat.
- Mr. Bonds
- Tall, blond, handsome ...?
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Gay.
- Mr. Bonds
- All the good ones.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Long Beach and South Bay

Long Beach experienced a similar fate to the coastal Westside, but, due to the importance of the airport, it has been quicker to recover. The strategic value of **Long Beach's airport** and the fact that it was one of the few functioning airports in the area after LAX was leveled led to the city and the corps protecting Long Beach. After the quake that destroyed LAX, the port and air facilities at Long Beach were fortified to survive nearly anything. Even the flood barely interrupted the flow of commerce through Long Beach. I swear, new seawalls went up pretty much overnight around many of the outlying areas that were flooded.

Today, massive freeways rise up over the seawall, like white tentacles stretching out toward the core of the city. It's an eerie sight when you come by road, traveling over the stretch of murky water, rising up over the heavily-armed seawall, then dropping down into a bustling port filled with industrial port complexes, steel high-rises, and the constant roar of air traffic.

As in other parts of town, Horizon has discreetly been buying up and laying claim to parts of Long Beach, and it runs the local network. The Pueblo aren't at all happy with this state of affairs, and officials practically foam at the mouth when they have to negotiate permission to use the port. After all, having access to the Pacific was one of the major reasons Pueblo agreed to help out LA. Having to beg, hat in hand, for that access from the very people they rescued ... yeah, that's not sitting well at all.

- Trouble's brewing, but the PCC has too many pots to look after at the moment to deal with this one just yet.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

One surprisingly popular spot at the moment is the **Drowning Narcissus** nightclub in Long Island. Built on the top floors of a high-rise that sunk into one of the smaller sinkholes, it stands only five stories from the dangerous waters but is considered stable. It's been refurbished to a tropical theme and the lower floors sealed off, its relative inaccessibility (you can only get to it by boat) making it all the more popular with the in-crowd.

- "Sealed off" my shiny chrome butt—a friend of a friend on the construction told me the lower floors were waterproofed and drained to be converted to some use or another. I've a hunch there's a black clinic down there, but I haven't figured how to get in.
- Alex Machine

The Harbor remains the primary economic artery into and out of LA. If anything, its importance has increased in the months

10 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN HOLLYWOOD (CONT)

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7 :: Anthony Paredes (Billion Dollar Producer)

This talented Hollywood powerbroker has proved once again an unerring knack for the juiciest and most profitable new concepts on the trid. The third-generation of the Paredes dynasty to be involved in the sim and trid industry, his amazing eye for new formats and ideas is only exceeded by his flair for fast cars and sexual scandals.

8 :: David Pitt (Stellar Screenwriter/Director)

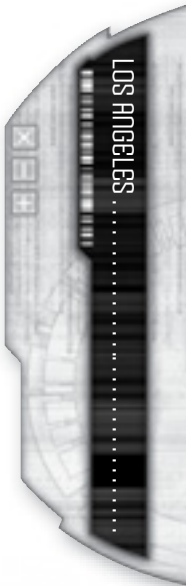
Two-time Oscar-winner writer/director of the autobiographical *Two Weeks in Portland* and sleeper hit *Omega*, David Pitt is one of the most sought-after screenwriters and directors in the sim-biz today. Following the success of *Omega*, the Tir-born mystery man has gone into seclusion to conclude his long-awaited first novel, *The Last Spire*. The camera-shy Pitt has been notably absent at social functions attended by his companion Tam Reyes.

9 :: Maria Flying-Swan (Elder Socialite)

Sister to the LA Elder, Maria Flying-Swan has become a household name and a talk-show regular. Flying-Swan's involvement in a love-triangle with trid-mogul John Cross and Orxploitation music star CrimeTime had the scandalblogs working overtime. The "Duchess" has managed to parlay her notoriety into her own clothing and accessory collection for Evos' MetaTribe brand and her own talk show (debuting this spring). Maria is a fixture of the LA social scene and nightlife; she knows everyone and anyone that's worth knowing, and her notoriety grants her access to all the best events, parties, and clubs.

10 :: Joe "The Dude" Kliebermann (Nobody PitoStar)

Actor-wannabe and weirdness magnet Joe Kliebermann first become an overnight sensation after word got round about his 24/7 P2.0 feed and people started subscribing to see if the hype was true. If you're one of the few who haven't tuned in: Joe's life would be unbelievably depressing if he didn't have the uncanny knack of constantly walk into the strangest situations imaginable on the air. Last month Joe stumbled upon an armored truck heist, smashed his beat-up Jackrabbit into Kit McClain's Saab Fury, and found out the hot girl his best friend has been drooling over is his estranged sister—and none of it staged! Boasting an enviable P2.0 following, his popularity has turned out to be surprisingly enduring.



following the quake and flood. Air traffic just can't handle the tonnage, and ground traffic is almost impossible in large areas of the city. Consequently, the first area to be rebuilt has been the Harbor, with gleaming new buildings and partially submerged arcoblocks rising up from among the ruins.

Several main roads have been transformed into canals, and stretches of heavily reinforced freeways and bridges tower above it all, connecting the Harbor to Long Beach and LA Center. Floating walkways and bridges connect busy corporate centers and air traffic darts about, shuttling VIPs to and from the Inland Empire and Arcology Mile. The Harbor has also received a fair amount of security upgrades since the only land routes into and out of it go through the reconstruction areas. Knight Errant is based out of the Harbor and provides much of the security for private corps who feel that the PCC's Security services are too focused on the mainland. MCT and Shiawase Biotech also have massive presences in the Harbor, and the latter has coordinated a highly publicized water cleanup effort out of their huge corporate complex.

South Bay also provides access to **Santa Catalina Island**, an exclusive Horizon resort and retreat. The island is heavily secured to ensure that the employees aren't disturbed during their "creative brainstorming." Cline himself keeps a house there and considers it a favorite weekend getaway.

- I've also heard that Horizon has a medical facility on the island—maybe even a delta clinic.
- Butch

San Fernando Valley

While heavily damaged by the quakes, San Fernando (SFV) saw less damage from the flood than elsewhere in LA. This is a ramshackle and neglected studio district but also the area where Horizon got their start. It still harbors dozens of smaller indie media and local entertainment corps. There is a revitalization push that is creating small high-rise hubs of pristine new construction, surrounded by rougher neighborhoods. Nicknamed "Little Hollywood," it's a hotbed of rumors, scandal, and media-fights. If you're looking for work in LA, you can't go wrong with SFV—it's a great place for new runners to build a reputation.

The majority of people who still live west of the massive **Covina Floodwall** live in SFV in dense urban housing enclaves with sprawling, low-rent apartment buildings and closely packed high-rises, their once-gleaming surfaces darkened and pitted by years of acidic smog.

- A whole lot of those small independents turn a tidy profit producing everything from porn to CalHots. In fact, several of them are in the hands of the local mob and the Triads.
- J-Cruz
- Yeah but there's quality talent out there too. David Pitt started working for Lucid and look where he is now!
- Mika

SFV has a thriving shadow community and black market trade, and here are a few highlights of the local scene:

Ferdinand's, a bar in the Sylmar neighborhood, is famous for its burgers. The owner, a short and very obese human man ev-

eryone calls Freddie, has been known to help runners find work, for a fee. Freddie also has a love-hate relationship with the runner-hungry media outlets in the area—they love him, he hates them. He's been known to offer free meals to folks who bring him the camera drones of whichever indie he hates most that week.

Marcino's Costumes is popular with the local sim studios for its wide variety of costumes and props. It's also *the* place to go if you want to create an alternate runner persona for privacy. They can get (or make) customized latex masks, nanopaste disguises, and altskin. If you don't feel particularly creative, ask for Alice and be prepared to pay through the nose. The lady can transform you so your own mother wouldn't recognize you (much less the police). She considers herself an artist, and if you're willing to pay her asking rate (no haggling allowed), she'll treat you like a blank canvas.

Hospitality Inn (Judd St) is the residence of choice for people who need a place to crash where management doesn't ask any questions. This place is one shaky step up from a coffin hotel, but privacy is guaranteed. It's smog stained, derelict, with the few windows mostly boarded up, the elevators always broken, and only graffiti for decoration. Still, there's no security cameras, check-in is fully automated, and no one blinks at a bit of blood.

Need a new ID? Hit **The Travel Agency**, a little place tucked into a strip mall in a lower-class neighborhood. During the day, they attempt to sell wageslaves cheap travel packages. After hours, the local Triads use the place to churn out fake IDs for those who need 'em. The prices are high, but so is the quality. If you need to get out of town quickly, they can set you up with a little "vacation time."

INLAND EMPIRE

As far back as the turn of the century, most of the growth in LA has taken place here, in the area known as the Inland Empire along the mountains and the edges of the high desert.

Pomona and the Covina Floodwall

The gateway to the Inland Empire, the city of Covina became a sort of breakwater for all of the debris carried along by the flood. As a result, the city of West Covina is now a sort of monstrous floodwall keeping the toxic stew of the floodwaters here out of the rest of the IE. On the east side of the floodwall lies Pomona, now populated mostly by the down and out, those too poor to move to higher ground and out of the shadow of the floodwall. Massive refugee camps sprawl out, temporary pre-fab structures rise shakily towards the sky, and bright graffiti stands out against the predominately gray buildings and residents. It is a bitter and hopeless sort of place, as the shadow of the floodwall serves as a constant reminder of LA's most recent calamity.

The Covina floodwall, practically the size of a small city itself, is a massive construction designed to filter and purify the toxic waters on the other side and pipe them to the Inland Empire. A small army of engineers and drones maintain the equipment and constantly monitor the status of the waters on the other side. The floodwall is a joint PCC and Maersk project, with Maersk providing much of the aquatech needed to run the operation. PCC forces have a strong presence in the area, and security has increased significantly after the recent bomb scare. Despite the increased security, there have been numerous raids on the floodwall in the past months. Mostly small sabotage, although a few key structural points have been targeted





Pomona and Covina are really hopping with independent assets right now. Pomona has a lot of places to hide, despite the increased security, and enough people who are too busy trying to make it through another miserable day to care about a stranger's business.

- If you're looking for work in the area, try Mitzie's Bar. The crowd is pretty hardcore, and you won't find any fancy LA drinks, just piss-poor soy-beer. The bartender, Macy, has some good Azzie contacts and will hook you up, for a price.
- Alex Machine

Ontario Air Center

Just east of Pomona lies Ontario, home to the major inland airport for the LA Sprawl. When Long Beach was shut down during the quakes and floods, most air traffic was diverted to the **Ontario Air Center**. Even now that Long Beach is functioning, Ontario still handles a large amount of cargo traffic and has added a huge cargo zepp field.

Getting cargo across the Mojave is difficult for more than one reason, and some companies find it more cost efficient to simply fly to Ontario. The airport also has reinforced seawalls around it, in case the Covina floodwall ever fails. Those seawalls are heavily fortified with automated sensors, rail drone, and sentry guns. Nominally under PCC control, all the megacorps in the area use Ontario. Pueblo has been tightening the reins a bit, however, attempting to keep Horizon from taking over like they did in Long Beach.

Pueblo also uses the Ontario airport for military purposes. In fact, most of the search and rescue operations last year were based out of Ontario. It's also staging point for patrols along the Aztech

LA SHADOWFAX INSTA-NEWS! (ARCHIVE):

Last night's discovery of a massive cache of explosives in a gang hideout up in the hills has residents terrified. The PCC says the raid was based on an anonymous tip. A PCC officer, who chose to remain anonymous, informed our station that the explosives were meant for the floodwall, and that there was enough found to do a pretty nasty job of it. City officials and Pueblo security forces have tried to downplay the incident, stating that security has been increased and that the residents of the Inland Empire are safe from terrorists. What no one is talking about is who was really behind it. The PCC's official line is "suspected gang-affiliated terrorists," but they won't confirm or deny the specific gang. Rumor is that other recent sabotage on the floodwall has been very sophisticated and probably accomplished with a thorough understanding of the inner workings of the floodwall. The rumors are also swirling that Maersk officials are investigating the PCC—perhaps they suspect something they're not saying? Here's what local runners have to say:

:: The PCC wanted to keep this quiet, but more than one indie got wind of the operation. Hell, I watched the raid on five different news stations last night, not to mention the live blog of a few Pueblo officers on P2.0.—Pomona Sam

:: I've heard that the Burning Angels were behind the recent hits, trying to screw with the PCC big time.—Paul Thunderfist

:: A friend in the PCC's bomb squad told me the explosives had Azzie military RFID tags. Now, they might have been stolen from the Azzies, but somehow I doubt it.—Lucky Lucy

Urgent Message...



border. In the area, **Buen Provecho** is a restaurant that serves a blend of southwest and TexMex styles that has become a favorite of off-duty PCC personnel.

- It's a good place to get an in with the PCC military, although you want to be discrete—tensions with Aztlan mean they tend to be suspicious of foreigners.
- J-Cruz

Pasadena

Home to CalTech, along with a passel of engineering and tech firms, Pasadena is a pristine corporate enclave with mirrored steel skyscrapers shooting up to pierce the smog layer. Palm trees line the streets, and spacious parks are filled with lush green lawns hosting inter-corporate sports teams. Corps that sponsor research at CalTech often pull that research into more secured facilities once it becomes too hot for the college. While the city itself is

fairly tame, with very low street-crime, it's a magnet for corporate runs and extractions.

Pasadena is one of the areas that's suffered the most from LA's unusual astral phenomenon—which residents blame on the CalTech kids. Whatever the reason, spontaneous spirit manifestations are a common, and every other day traffic is screwed up when some elemental decides to take a nap on the freeway during rush hour. Of all the citizens in the sprawl, the residents of Pasadena are probably the most inured to magic and the Awakened. As a result, there is a thriving changeling community and a dozen bars, clubs, and restaurants that cater to the Awakened.

The Randy Sasquatch is a favorite among Caltech's tech-heads and students. If you stop in, prepare to be entertained by all the minor magical pranks—like your beer glass sprouting legs and wandering off, or the soy-nuts starting to sing dirty little ditties—'cause there isn't any point in getting mad. After numerous complaints, the owner finally put wards around all the sanitary facilities, so if you want to conduct any business at this spot, I'd suggest using the restroom.

- The Randy Sasq is a good place to look for hackers and techies, most are amateurs but they sure know their stuff.
- Alex Machine

Riverside

In addition to providing off-campus housing for many UC Irvine students and faculty, this area hosts a large number of biotech firms and research facilities. This is also, not coincidentally, the place to go to change any physical, mental or emotional part of yourself that dissatisfies you. Not happy as a man? There are plenty of discreet facilities in this town that can help you find your inner woman, even going so far as to change your genes. Tired of being short/fat/hairy/balding/ugly? Well in LA, appearances matter. If you want to look your best, the doctors here can make it happen, providing you can foot the bill. There are cyber clinics, many which can provide higher grade 'ware than you might suppose—if you have the right contacts. For runners who are, shall we say, looking for a more "innocent" persona, whether that be a full gene-mod or just some light plastic surgery? Not every place checks for ID as strictly as some, providing the nuyen checks out prior to the procedure.

Evo has several spots in the area, including their popular Red Star clinics. For something a bit more luxurious, their top-of-the-line Evolution clinic is the company's showcase, where discretion is coupled with luxury—a must for any high-roller in LA. Their motto is "Making dreams come true," and if you can dream it, they can do it for (or to) you. If you can afford it, I highly recommend a visit. It's also a top target in the area, since it is full of blackmail material (knowing what simstar has had a mood-change, gene-mod or gone through virtual rehab there makes great scandal broth). Attached to their Evolution facility is a special area designed just for Awakened clients, where services include such exotic offerings as Aura Massage and Astral Therapy (and I'll admit, the Aura Massage was worth every cent of the 3k. Really). Correspondingly, the security is extra tight, and hackers patrol their internal and external Matrix systems 24/7.

- As a side, many LA Mr. Js will offer a day package for Evolution-LA as part of their payment to runners. Sometimes it catches out-of-towners a little by surprise. Just so you know, most runners will try to negotiate a little extra, maybe some body sculpting or the like.
- Alex Machine

- Only in LA would runners get paid with a nose job.
- Snopes

San Bernardino

San Bernardino is a rough town on the edge of the IE. It's the gate to the high desert and through the Mojave to Las Vegas. Gang activity is especially high here, with frequent clashes between the Burning Angels and local gangs, such as the Verdugos and Iron Crosses. Pueblo forces have tried various tactics to control the problem, but so far the gangs are ahead. The quakes left a lot of San Bernardino in ruins, with many building collapsed into rubble, or left half-standing, leaning precariously over rough, ripped-up roads. Since then, there's been little rebuilding as the city focuses on areas that have more economic worth. Citizens in the area, angry at the lack of aid, have been turning more and more to the gangs and criminal underworld. In response, the city has been slowly cutting down on the water that flows into San Bernardino. If it's meant to control the town, or just a response from water-managers who don't want to waste that most precious of resources on a bunch of SINless criminals, no one knows. Tension is growing among residents, and there's a lot of rumbling about becoming the new El Infierno. Most of East San Bernardino is controlled by Los Verdugos, an ork gang who wear black synthleather jackets with an image of a white noose on the back. They're particularly violent towards humans and non-Latinos, but people of all races who enter their territory had better be careful.

- Los Verdugos mark the edges of their territory by stringing up the bodies of gangers and other intruders who went where they shouldn't. If you're in the area and you come across a body dangling from a street light or balcony, hung by a hangman's noose, turn around. It makes a hell of a lot more of an impression than some graffiti.
- Alex Machine

The Iron Crosses are an old-school biker gang, all male, all Caucasian, and all human, who terrorize the old Route 66. They have ties with Humanis but are even more racist than your average Humanis scum. Part of their initiation ritual is being marked with a red-hot iron cross on the face, leaving a distinctive scar. The members also get crosses burned into their arms for every meta-human they kill; the bigger the meta-human, the bigger the cross (I've heard them joke that it takes two "halfers" to make one cross). The Iron Crosses have recently been pushing the edges of Los Verdugos territory, which has caused some pretty serious flare-ups.

- "Serious" is an understatement. I've gone through full-on military invasions that had less firepower than those "flare-ups."
- Picador



Down San Bernardino way there are a bunch of popular runner hangouts such as **Gnashers**. It's infamous for holding illegal cock-fights, devil rat-fights and unlicensed boxing. It also broadcasts Aztlan blood-sports, which are illegal in PCC-controlled territory. Once a month, the owner, Gnasher, holds a special fight-night pitting paracritters against each other. For those willing to pay the cover charge, it's a huge draw. Gnasher allegedly has some Burning Angels and Anasazi ties, and you can often find a few gangers hanging there, but on fight nights you'll see a lot of different gang-colors. Gnasher has declared his place neutral ground, and anyone who starts a brawl is likely to find him or herself in the boxing pit to settle the dispute. The crowd is often all too willing to help, and when that happens nuyen flies as fast as the blood.

- Gnasher has been known to pay well for particularly ferocious paracritters and even occasionally to hire runners to fetch him something special to drum up business.
- J-Cruz

St Bernardine's is a black clinic not too far from Gnashers' that caters to the SINless and the criminal element. To the North is the extensive **Mountain View Cemetery**, home to a pack of ghouls called the Gravediggers. The ghouls have an agreement with the hospital, so smart runners only go there if they have a chummer to watch their backs. Drs Ramsey and Swayne, the head physicians, have a reputation for being fairly honest (or at least not pushing their patients to the Gravediggers). Swayne lost his medical license a few years back for unethical conduct, but before that he was considered a premier neurosurgeon. The clinic can also install cyberware and sells second-hand wares to those who aren't too picky.

A black marketplace is located inside the ruins of the old **Carousel Mall** complex. The roof has collapsed in some areas, and in others the floor has fallen into a dry section of the Deep Lacuna, and rubble, wires, and crushed steel frames decorate the interior. You can find anything here, from highly modified weapons to rare drugs to human slave auctions. It's a free-for-all, with merchants providing their own security, and shoppers had better be tough enough not to end up as merchandise, living or otherwise. If you can handle yourself, it's a prime place to score the best tech in town.

Out east of San Bernardino there's a Horizon-controlled area known only as the **High Desert Special Research Area**. There aren't any roads linking it to the Inland Empire, and it doesn't appear on any maps of the area, it's just fenced off with five-meter razorwire and mines. Magic in the Mojave makes sat photos inconsistent, to say the least, so the fact that there's no good picture of the place doesn't mean much. Speculation runs wild about this spot, although many consider it to be nothing more than an Area 51-type urban legend. Only thing I know about it is that no one I know has seen it, or at least they won't admit it.

- Area 51?
- Beaker
- Are you for real?
- Plan 9

- Ah, my favorite subject: rumors. I've got a file going with conspiracy theories on the HDSRA. A pretty tame rumor suggests it's a small area in the Mojave where Horizon is experimenting with the unusual magical aspects of the desert. Another rumor is that Horizon keeps a huge underground facility there, completely off-line from the Matrix, where they "breed" AIs. I can just see the geeky scientists, bending over a mainframe, cooing, "who's the cutest little AI, yes you are!" There's more, but that's my favorite.

- Snopes

ORANGE COUNTY (FUN CITY)

Under Horizon's control, this former-playground-of-the-rich-turned-mega-amusement park has quickly bounced back from the quakes and floods that left swaths of Fun City in ruins or submerged. Meanwhile, parts of this giant tourist trap are slowly being converted into other highly profitable uses. For the majority of people, Fun City means one thing: a family-friendly, mammoth-sized amusement park.

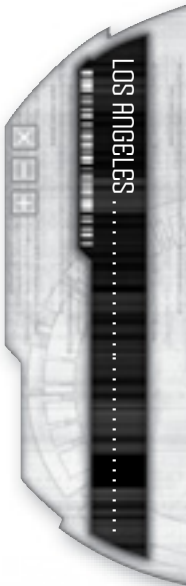
- Azzie aggression to the south has turned parts of Fun City into a military staging ground for forays into the Barren Zone to the south.
- Picador

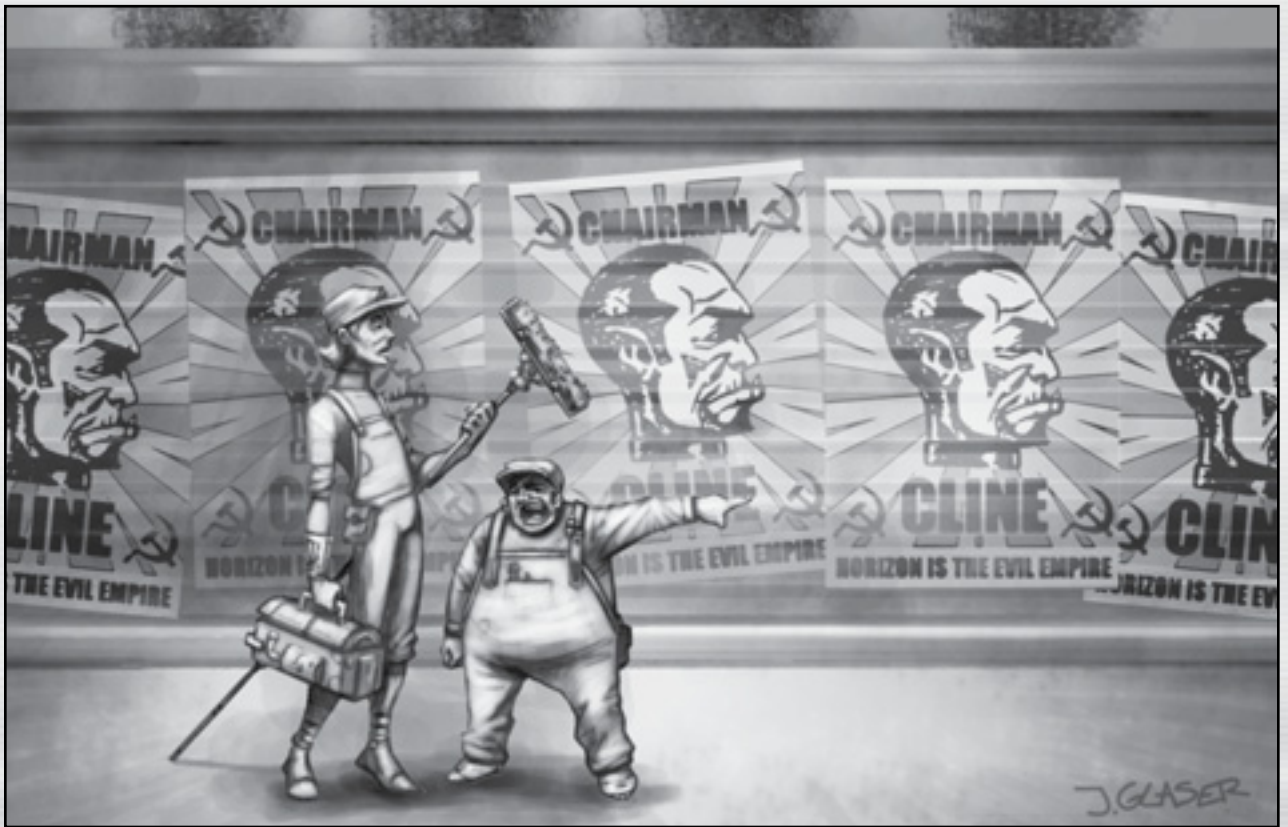
Fun City combines the most bland and sanitized elements of a planned community with a big theme park. The entire county has been converted into a giant homage to the former United States of America and a whitewashed version of California's history. There are idyllic frontier towns, charming early 20th century industrial company towns, mid-century burbs with mom-and-pop establishments; the entire scope of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries has been recreated in the most idealized way possible.

While Fun City draws millions of tourists a year, only about a third of the county is given over to the theme park elements. The rest is housing for the employees and research parks.

Since 2065, the entire ball of wax has been a wholly owned and operated subsidiary of the Horizon Group. There are constant rumors that there have been, and continue to be, high-level creative differences between the pre-'65 executives that oversaw Fun City and the new creative vision that Cline and Horizon want to follow. Additionally, some disgruntled employees have formed a protest group called the Orange County Liberation Front that engages in petty acts of sabotage and disobedience to Horizon's changes. It's hard to tell if they are more opposed to Horizon's attempts to inject "historical realism" into the park or the fact that Cline is an ork.

- These guys are hilarious. Fun City's always been a haven for Human Nation, Humanis, and even good old Anglo supremacists all the way back to the old Orange County days. These guys want to bring back their dimly misremembered glory days where Anglos and humans called all the shots. Their latest stunt is putting up these giant mural posters portraying Cline as a 20th century communist leader. The giant "Chairman Cline" murals keep springing up quicker than maintenance can take them down. The OCLF think they are making some kind of deep statement, but most of the tourists just look at them and assume they're part of the overall ambiance.
- Dr. Spin





INCOMING FEED.....

In the actual amusement parks, employees are polite, friendly, and welcoming (it can be a bit unnerving to see so many people smiling, but remember, you can't just shoot 'em). Outside the parks, in the employee housing burbs, racism is a serious problem. Horizon has initiated some mandatory diversity education programs, but that only serves to make the hard-core OCLFs more rebellious. So far, Horizon has been content to watch and let them run on a short leash. The recent massive protests against technomancers and AIs—coupled by the OCLF with anti-metahuman rallies, too, as if being a Latino ork makes someone more likely to be a technomancer—resulted in some neighborhood “reorganization.”

- I heard several OCLF bigwigs were recently awarded retreat-time for exceptional workplace performance. The men and their families were treated to a week-long stay up at the Bear Lake resort. I know I handed a couple of invitations personally. Since their return, many of these guys have certainly changed their tune towards metahumans and technos...
- Alex Machine
- Brain washing?
- Sunshine
- Or simply a gentle reminder of who's paying their bills.
- Pistons

Of course, you may actually be interested in visiting Fun City for something other than fun. In that case, take note that Horizon has been converting large portions of Fun City over to other duties. They've moved a lot of special research labs down into the areas south of the main amusement park grounds. The areas around **Tustin** and **Irvine** are crawling with new construction and high-security patrols. Word on the street says that these are the labs where Horizon is refining memetic virii and infowar techniques—me, I can't comment.

Further south, just north of the bombed-out ruins of San Juan Capistrano, you'll find Fun City turns into Armed City. This is where the PCC keeps watch on their hated neighbor, Aztlan, maintaining a heavy military presence to discourage that nation from slinking on up the coast and claiming LA. Pueblo also maintains a few merc companies here, housing them and using them to test the newest experimental gear and gadgets against the Azzies in the San Onofre Barren Zone. (If you'd prefer working for the Big A, just hop down south to San Diego and you can get the same work, different master.) Pueblo-sympathetic runners can find really good work here. Actually, any runner can, but security is tight, and the PCC has some very harsh views on spies.

- Yeah, but speaking for many covert ops, if I was caught, I'd rather take a Pueblo bullet to the brain than have my still-beating heart ripped out of my chest.
- Fianchetto

- I've heard Pueblo's having a real hard time getting their Awakened officers to go into the toxic zone, and that the PCC's been leaning pretty hard on mercs and runners to fill the gaps. Anyone know if the Azzies are having the same problem?

- Picador

- I think Aztlan mages know better than to tell their commanding officers "no." But, yeah, there's a pretty hard push for mercs south of the border, too. Slinging mojo in a toxic zone is damn tough. Unless, of course, you're a toxic shaman or the like—and after the Yucatan, even the Azzies refuse to employ toxics.

- Jimmy No

- Although a lot of Fun City consists of electronic and automated systems, they had remarkably fewer incidents than several other amusement parks in the past year. I've heard that Horizon struck bargains with a few AIs, giving them run of the place in exchange for keeping more hostile AIs (and technomancers and hackers) out.

- Netcat

- Well, with a comment like that, I've got to go visit Virtual World Disney now!

- Pistons

- I already poked around a bit, but I didn't see anything other than corp hackers and normal IC.

- Netcat

- Must not have tried to screw with any rides, then. I hacked into the control for Super-Sonic-Screaming and tried to override the speed safety stops. Almost immediately, I felt—*something*—breathing down my neck. Didn't see anything, and I got killer scansofts, but damn, it was a creepy feeling. Not really menacing, just ... *creepy*. When I got to the safety override, I swear I felt something huge loom over me, and the next thing I know, I'm at home with a splitting headache.

- Slamm-0!

If **Virtual World Disney** or one of the dozen theme parks isn't your cup of tea, here are some sites you might find interesting:

The **Toho** is a popular bar with the Pueblo officers and many of the army's combat shamans. If you have any military background at all and don't mind being part of a beta-test (which means sometimes those really great new rad-suits don't actually work), stop in. The officers know the look of runners, and generally just going in, acting polite, and keeping your commlink open to offers is enough to get you a meeting.

The old **John Wayne Airport** that served as the air transit hub for Fun City has been upgraded, and another airport has been added on the grounds of the **El Toro Great Park**. This second, smaller airport is mostly used for private flights while John Wayne handles all commercial and tourist flights. Horizon owns and operates both airports, and also owns most of the airlines through a subsidiary. If you're planning on traveling to LA by air, you may want to schedule your flight into El Toro. Since some of the flights are private, there's a whole hell of a lot less security hassle. You can go straight from your plane into your waiting car and leave the airport grounds, and no one really minds, as long as your ID will pass a cursorily inspection at the gate.

The **Sunrise Sports Bar** is a popular merc hangout. With all the tension in the area, many outfits are recruiting, and it's a good place to meet up with some officers.

If you're looking for a secure place to stay, where the hotel manager isn't going to question some of your luggage, try the **Verda Motor Inn**. It's an ugly, squat building set in the middle of a bunch of freeways, so the noise and air quality sucks—but it's fully automated, and as long as your nuyen's good, they don't check or register IDs. (Horizon's slapped them with fines for this before, but they just keep claiming computer glitches wiped the memory, pay the fine, and keep going.)

On the other hand, if you find yourself suddenly flush, treat yourself with a stay at **The Mountain**. A luxury resort/hotel, this place will provide anything you can think of to make your stay memorable. Security is through the roof and includes an on-site security force with mages and spirits to ensure your privacy and comfort.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS

There's some interesting places just outside the greater LA sprawl but close enough to matter. Whether you're passing through or there on a job, it's always good to know what's around you.

San Onofre Irradiated Zone

South on the 5 Freeway, beyond the last ramparts of Fun City and San Juan Capistrano, there's a barren wasteland. Horizon and PCC regularly commission patrols into this area from their forward base at SJC. Runners looking to get their hands on some hot new toys to play with should enquire about these duties. The area is dominated by the former nuclear power plant that was built on the beach at San Onofre on the northern edge of the old US Marine Corps training base of Pendleton. Pendleton, as well as the town of Oceanside that once serviced the base, now lies buried under several meters of toxic sludge. During the quake of '28, the reactor core at the San Onofre nuclear power plant was breeched and later sealed with concrete. In the quake of '61 the seal cracked open, spilling radioactive waste down the coastline towards San Diego. An emergency effort was made to repair the site, but it again became a full-blown disaster site in 2069 when the Twins devastated the safeguards that had been put in place.

The area around San Onofre and dozens of clicks to the south now serve as a heavily irradiated DMZ where joint PCC and Horizon mercs spar with Aztechnology's probes and advance scout units based out of Escondido.

- There was a Winternight cell operating around Pendleton in '65. Rumor has it that it evaded the manhunts and managed to slip away into the night.

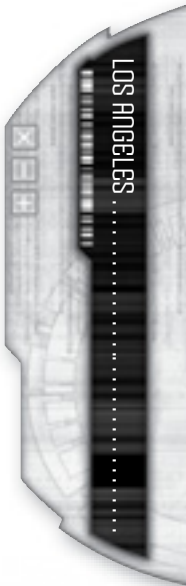
- Ethernaut

- Here 's a scarier thought: there 's no record of a Winternight op in Los Angeles during the Crash 2.0, either virus nests or nukes being discovered or defused. Makes you wonder if it might still be there in the hands of Winternighters that escaped.

- Plan 9

- That might explain why the PCC and Aztechnology keep sending mercs and military into the area.

- Picador



Now, large portions of the area lie under a few meters of water, and the ocean currents carry the radioactive pollution down towards San Diego. Aztlan, never big on the whole protecting the environment thing, is being forced to deal with this environmental crisis since it is contaminating much of their water supply.

Barstow

Once known largely as a stopover on the way to Las Vegas, Barstow deserves mention as the regional headquarters for many PCC operations. In the middle of the Mojave, it's a barren, desolate town that looks and feels like a military base. Squat brown-and-grey military buildings huddle together below scrubby brown hills, ugly and utilitarian. Because of the unpredictable nature of mana in the Mojave, it has become a very unpopular post with Pueblo shamans.

- It's also host to a small unit of Pueblo's magical taskforce, the Pathfinders.
- Pistons

Unfortunately, the Anasazi tribal shamans seem just fine with the funky mojo out in the desert, so Pueblo's been having some problems with tribals harassing the town and outlying facilities. Spirits can be very unpredictable out there, too, being very reluctant to obey, or even breaking from their summoners' control altogether. A few months ago, a desert spirit, summoned for routine patrol duty, killed the young Pueblo shaman who'd summoned him, then proceeded to lay waste to several buildings, including a cistern holding water for the base. Since then, there's been a no-summoning order in effect—for the Pueblo soldiers, at least. The Anasazi obviously missed the memo and are finding it quite entertaining to summon spirits and let them loose in the city. It's a tense situation, and anyone traveling through the town is recommended to mind their manners.

TROUBLE ON THE HORIZON

While San Francisco, Sacramento, and the rest of CalFree are dealing with their own troubles, LA under Pueblo rule faces a couple of serious problems on its doorstep.

SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT

Posted By: Pyramid Watcher

Aztechnology may not be operating in LA (on paper, at least) but they are certainly a huge presence in the area. Aztlan's border lies just to the south of the City of Angels. Aztlan grabbed San Diego in 2036 while the rest of California was being divvied up. Recently, they've made a concerted effort to claim many of the remaining cities further north. Escondido, for example, is now unofficially run by the Azzies.

San Diego is their major hub on the North American Pacific Ocean. Not only is it a huge industrial city for Aztlan, it is also home to a significant portion of their military. Indeed, most of their navy is based out of the island of Coronado. Due to the mounting tensions with both the PCC and Horizon, San Diego feels like an armed camp at the moment and is considered a prime location for assignment within both Aztechnology and the Aztlan military.

The most notable thing about San Diego is that it has turned into a city of islands. The quake hit this city just as hard as Los Angeles, and the devastation was just as widespread, even if the mortality rate was lower. Like LA, much of San Diego dropped below sea-level and was flooded by the subsequent tsunami. When things settled down, the survivors found their pretty little ocean-side city to be a series of islands separated by radioactive waters.

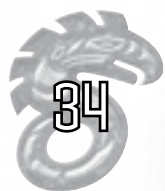
- Looking at satellite footage of the area, it is almost as striking as the changes in LA. However, while LA experienced mostly sinking, San Diego appears to have received several new small rises. Baja California has split from the mainland, leaving the former peninsula an island.
- The Smiling Bandit

If you listen to the Big A's PR machine, you'll know that, thanks to their superior planning and well-trained population, casualties in San Diego and along Baja were minimal. In fact, Aztechnology has been trading on their "success" in San Diego to market disaster planning to other communities, businesses, and even nations through their subsidiary, Seguridad Primero.

There's even a grain of truth in the matter. San Diego lies on the San Andreas fault, the same fault that runs through LA and up most of the California coastline. Unlike their Aneolino counterparts, the Azzies acknowledged the potential for major earthquakes, and buildings were constructed to withstand the Big One. All businesses, schools, and public areas had regular earthquake drills as mandated by Aztlan. Lower lying areas of the city also had a tsunami warning system. With the assistance of their military, drills and practice evacuations ran smoothly.

- If you can ever get into a major city, these drills are something to see. Entire buildings emptied, wageslaves marching in orderly lines under the watchful eyes—and weapons—of those familiar tan-and-ochre uniforms. Drones fly everywhere, recording data so they can analyze their efficiency rating. No one complains. It's frightening how docile Aztlan keeps their people.
- Marcos
- Sounds like a good time to conduct a little business.
- Hard Exit
- Heh. As long as you don't mind having all those drones record *your* efficiency rating.
- J-Cruz
- Hey, does anyone else find it disturbing that Aztechnology is providing disaster planning for other countries?
- Picador

When the earthquake hit, most major buildings held up. The tsunami actually caused more damage. The toxic water that flooded the sinkholes and low-lying areas was devastating to the environment, but many of the buildings, designed to withstand earthquakes, remained standing, surrounded by a couple of meters of poisoned ocean water. The official casualty figures were around 3,000 people, not bad for a city of almost four million. Unofficially,



the count is probably closer to 10,000. It's anyone's guess how they managed to cover that up or where all the bodies went.

- Horizon would love to get some proof of those statistics to discredit Seguridad Primero .
- Dr. Spin

If you're planning on visiting, **University Heights** is the religious center of the city, home to the second largest pyramid complex in Aztlan. It's been said before, and I'll mention it again: stay away from the pyramids. Even the most mundane person will find the hair on the back of their necks standing at full attention. The average San Diego citizen calls it proof of the priesthood's magic. Everyone else calls it creepy and avoids the place.

Another place to avoid is **Tierrasanta**, full of biotech and nanotech research labs and facilities, mixed in with Castillo, Aztlan's version of arcology-living. The sparkling clean streets are protected by seawalls, lined with palm trees that the rushing wageslaves are far too busy to notice. They probably don't notice the proliferation of police forces there, either. If you don't fit in, right down to the cut of your suit and the style of your AR glasses, those police will stop you quick.

The heavy industrial area was further south, in the area of **Chula Vista**, where they had easy access to ports and major highways and railway systems. Unfortunately, Chula Vista was flooded, destroying much of the buildings and infrastructure. Aztlan quickly put up a seawall around the area, creating a below-sea-level island, and now an ambitious recovery and rebuilding effort is underway. To the east, massive expanses of worker housing spread out, high-rise Castillo each covering several city blocks, rising up from shallow waters. You'll find no pretty palm trees there, just ugly, utilitarian buildings surrounded by mud and stinking water.

Coronado Island is the headquarters for Aztlan's Pacific fleet. The island remains above sea level and was mostly protected from the flooding by massive seawalls installed decades ago.

- Aztlan has been ramping up construction efforts for their Navy here. Among the new designs is a shallow-bottomed transport vessel that can move in less than three meters of water and carry 200+ troops. Anyone want to guess why they'd need something like that?
- Rigger X

THE MOJAVE DESERT

The Mojave Desert always has been, and probably always will be, a hotly contested piece of real estate (at least since the Awakening, that is; prior to that, no one sane really cared about a 40,000 kilometer chunk of sand, rock, and scraggly plants). The Awakening changed the fate of the desert. Life was breathed into the desert, plants and animals alike were transformed. For all you city-slickers hoping to strike it rich out here (or perhaps just praying to make it alive from LA to Santa Fe) you'd better think twice. The desert is a very unforgiving place.

There isn't much civilization out here in the desert. A few towns persist here and there. Scattered about, you'll find some corporate research facilities, although they are generally well-hidden temporary structures. One notable town—almost a city—is

Palm Springs. A wealthy corporate enclave stuck out in the desert, it provides a neutral territory for rich corporate executives, Mafia dons, Yakuza oyabans, and a well-established Pueblo garrison. At one time, Pueblo forces attempted to claim the desert through force. The soldiers that survived that attempt ended up regrouping in Palm Springs (pretty nice reward for their complete failure, getting stuck in a luxury resort town). Currently the garrison's focus is firmly to the south, sweating over the close Azzie troops. You can bet the rich and famous in the town don't want their pretty mansions and koi-stocked lagoons to become Azzie property. Under the lavish parties and multi-million nuyen deals, there's a well-hidden air of desperation.

The **Joshua Tree** monument draws many to the Mojave. The trees themselves could provide immensely powerful telema—assuming anyone could get it from them. Unfortunately for would-be prospectors, the trees don't like being harvested, and the Anasazi tribals (more on them below) consider it their sacred duty to guard the trees. If you can make it past the tribes, you'll meet some of the powerful spirits that guard the trees (or the spirits of the trees, depending on who you believe). I wouldn't argue with either rumor, since most who venture into the Joshua Tree territory don't come back. Those that do are rarely whole of mind or spirit.

- It's been a consistent rumor for years that the trees are able to protect themselves, to move and even to walk. No one I know has ever seen proof of this, but the rumors persist.
- Axis Mundi
- What, and you haven't ever tried just asking one of the trees?
- Snopes
- They are not particularly good conversationalists.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Skull Rock used to draw a lot of tourists. Scientists like to say that the four-story tall, skull-shaped rock was formed through water erosion; visitors with any magical talent will probably disagree. It's a matter of honor among Anasazi youth to spend a night alone at the rock. Those that survive are considered favored by the spirits of the tribes. The tribes have also started using the rock as a trial for the city folks gone native (and spirits know, enough of those inner-city gangers seem to think it's the cool thing to do). Anyone who can survive a night at the rock is guaranteed a place in the tribe.

- The Azzies are seriously enamored with the place, too. I've heard there's a lot of interest in it from some of their *nahualli*.
- Marcos

Ubehebe Crater is another mana-rich site that draws a lot of attention. A hollow remnant of an ancient volcano, the crater is a waterless, lifeless landscape of rocks and dust. What it does have are spirits. Lots of spirits. Very powerful free spirits with a strong dislike of metahumanity. Up until the comet, the spirits were known to let a select few Anasazi shaman approach if they were seeking wisdom and guidance. Something must have happened when the comet flew by, because shortly afterwards the





INCOMING FEED.....

spirits became even more hostile. Now, even the most powerful Anasazi shamans avoid the crater.

- The tribes say that the spirits guard a treasure so great no meta-human can lay eyes on it without going mad. The Draco Foundation and the Atlantean have both sent teams out, so perhaps there is something there. Neither team returned, and both organizations have been offering very large incentives to anyone who can make contact with a Ubehebe spirit for them.
- Elijah

Mojave Spaceport

Abandoned following the first big quake in '28, when the UCAS didn't have the funds to restore the facilities, this site has recently been re-commissioned as a joint project between Horizon and PCC. Currently it primarily sees use as a facility to boost communications sats into orbit. There's been a lot of launch delays due to mana storms in the area, but it remains one of the best launch sites available to the PCC and Horizon.

- More than one megacorp is willing to pay to interrupt or disrupt the launches. Aztechnology heads the list, but pretty much every other Triple A with space interests would like to see this facility shut down.
- Orbital DK

The Anasazi

The PCC claims the desert (though they haven't been able to enforce their claims as of yet), but so do the Anasazi tribes. Used to be, the Anasazi were made up of several smaller nomadic tribes each with their own agenda. The tribes—mostly anglo/hispanic in composition with a handful of natives—started out as desert nomads and modern gypsies that “went native” after the NAN coalesced, built a patchwork culture around the Anasazi tribes of legend. Fighting amongst the tribes kept them from becoming a serious threat. In the last few years, the tribes have shown signs of becoming more united. They've certainly got the mojo to survive the desert—believe me, you do not want to mess with one of their Scorpion shamans. Now they've got the firepower to match their magic, and they definitely know how to use it. No one will admit it, but it's thought that the Azzies are supplying the new bang-bangs. Traveling by one of the highways that cross the desert has always been risky. With their improved firepower, the Anasazi have really put the pressure on Corporate Council convoys. Smaller, non-Pueblo travelers might get by with paying a “toll.”

- The Anasazi seem particularly competent at knowing when Pueblo convoys carrying especially valuable goods or personnel are crossing the desert. Those convoys frequently come under fire. Since LA provides the PCC with a very useful seaport on the Pacific, you can guess that Pueblo isn't too happy about the losses their transports take trying to cross the desert.
- Picador



After the dust settled from the Twins, the local Anasazi tribes disappeared for several weeks. No raids, no caravans, no trading ... nothing. When the tribes returned to their normal traveling routes, they acted like nothing had happened. A friend of mine says the tribes all converged in Black Rock Canyon, a rocky, desolate place in the middle of the Joshua Tree territory. If anyone knows why, they're not talking. Coincidentally, all of the splinter tribes appear to have forged a truce with each other. Good news for the locals, long used to the touchy politics of tribal relations. Bad news for the PCC.

- You wouldn't find many of the locals crying a river if the PCC just packed up and went home.
- Doc Hollywood

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS: CORPORATE PLAYERS

Posted By: Doc Hollywood

Now I've taken you on a tour of the area, you'll probably be wanting the play-by-play on the local powerbrokers. Happy to oblige.

HORIZON

Horizon shocked the Sixth World with their sudden leap from near non-entity to the ranks of the AAA-elite. At least that's the story they have crafted for themselves.

Like I mentioned before, I was there when Horizon was just getting started. If I learned anything, it's that they know how to tell a good story. So allow me to take you inside the newest of the megas and peel away some of the mystery that surrounds Horizon. Maybe I can help you read between the lines of their story.

While Horizon is diversified in a number of areas, most people know them for their media, marketing, and entertainment assets. They have become masters at crafting and disseminating ideas and images, while at the same time subverting or poisoning the efforts of their opponents. Even when you know that Horizon is lying to you, you want to believe because the lie is so appealing. They've used their media savvy to edge in on a number of other markets, most notably consumer goods, an area long dominated by Aztechnology. This has only further inflamed their nearby rival.

Most runners and the average wageslave will tell you that Horizon makes their nuyen in sims and news, but this isn't even half the truth. Horizon's true business is information. Horizon has lucrative contracts with many governments, providing market and political intelligence services. Additionally, Horizon has been building a thriving side business in software coding and design, specializing in highly complex programs.

- This interest in software has inspired their support of several of the emergent AIs, and there are persistent rumors that Horizon employs several AIs, besides their friends in the Undernet Alliance.
- Netcat

In addition to their corporate holdings, current interests, and past exploits, there is also the issue of the development and grooming of the flamboyant head of Horizon, Gary Cline. Mr. Cline is a test-marketed proven commodity designed to have a broad base appeal in a number of key demographics. The smiling face of the

larger-than-life CEO of Horizon is quickly becoming a household name on the same level of NERPS.

Horizon has remained something of an enigma to the other major megas, partially due to their unorthodox operating procedures. At the top of this list of anomalies is Horizon's own internal structure. Rather than a traditional top-down corporate pyramid, Horizon emphasizes a network-based meritocratic approach where an employee's reputation and accomplishments determine job title and responsibilities. From the outside, it is confusing bordering on the unbelievable, as a project head can be suddenly demoted to another department, and the project secretary is elevated to project manager. Unorthodox as it is, you can't argue with the results, or with the firm hold Horizon has kept its Corporate Court seat.

Finally, Horizon has a unique reputation to shadowrunners. As a corporation striving to stay on the cutting edge of cultural trends and consumer needs, they realize that runners—aside from being an excellent deniable asset for ops against rivals—are inherently a hot media property and are often seen as trendsetters (witness the success of shadowrunning-themed television and movie properties.)

As such, Horizon strives to stay on the cutting edge of the shadows, keeping more company men than any other mega and often sending their Johnsons (or "Street Market Opposition Research Cadres") on runs to keep them up to date. With that in mind, the corp has an excellent reputation in the shadow community for fair dealing. Lately, however, other corporations have been exploiting this reputation by using Horizon as a false front. Horizon is striking back and appears to be taking these opportunists as personal attacks on its reputation.

- Horizon's Johnsons are pretty good to work with; they're professional and know their market (i.e., us runners) well. The ones in LA always seem very image conscious. The first time a Mr. J asked me to wear lipstick and some eye gunk for a run, I almost shot him. You should've seen the guy, with my special pressed against his forehead, sweating as he told me that "street-level research has shown a need to increase appeal in the 21-35 year old female demographic by adding some feminizing touches ..."
- Skinny Dipper
- Haze, would you like to share your fascinating experiences with the Horizon image-making machine?
- Picador
- No.
- Haze

Out of the Depths

The history of Horizon is a short and mysterious one. Prior to 2061 there was no such entity as Horizon. Its genesis can be attributed, like so much else, to the passing of Halley's comet. At the height of the comet's passing, a massive quake struck LA, setting loose all the pent up tensions simmering beneath the surface in the city. Out of desperation, several major political and corporate players in the city formed a loose alliance and sent out a plea for help. Eventually PCC answered that plea and the rest is, well, history.



What is less known is the fate of that group behind that fateful decision to call for aid. While several went their separate ways, some remained in contact with each other. Eventually those talks bore fruit in the form of the Horizon Project, a think-tank that was supposed to address some of the longstanding problems plaguing LA. In addition, it was established to challenge the entertainment juggernauts like Amalgamated Studios responsible for the stifling status quo in the City of Angels.

Employing their contacts, the Project quickly found a number of high-profile supporters and donors and created a shell corporation called the Horizon Group to conduct their business. A few short months later and they managed to use their influence to get a much-sought-after PR contract with Tír Tairngire. They followed this up by presciently entering into a deal with Transys-Erika to provide wireless Matrix access for LA with the permission of the PCC. It turned out to be one of the moves that catapulted Horizon into the ranks of the megas.

When Crash 2.0 hit, most of Horizon's internal Matrix systems were offline for the upgrade to the nearly completed WMI protocol. While the rest of the world was kicked back to the dark ages of the 20th century, Horizon and parts of Los Angeles were back and operating online only a month after the Crash. Recognizing their coup, Horizon wasted no time in leveraging their brand name into every household as it came back online.

While the other megas spent the next few months checking in on and consolidating their physical assets, Horizon gobbled up virtual asset after asset and positioned themselves strategically across multiple information streams. They began dipping their fingers into half a hundred industries and taking the global pulse. As the wireless revolution grew, so too did Horizon—providing all types of content and exploiting the potential of the technology when no one else was ready. By the time the other megas had recovered enough to pay full attention to what was going down in LA, Horizon had established itself. In a surprise move, the corporation petitioned the Corporate Court not for AA status, but for a full Triple A seat. More surprisingly it was granted a seat. How that came about remains a mystery.

Since becoming a bona fide Triple-A, Horizon has maintained its friendly relations with the newly christened NeoNET and struck up an unlikely alliance with Evo. The recent technomancer scare has put some strain on their relationship with NeoNET, while moving Evo even closer as an ally. Horizon realizes that, at least on paper, it is the weakest of the megas, but the rest of the megas realize that Horizon's info-brokering abilities makes it an immensely dangerous foe.

- By now most of the Triple-As have realized, to their chagrin, that sparring with Horizon in the public arena is always a losing proposition. With that in mind, they've taken to treading lightly around the new kid on the block.
- Sunshine
- Or so Horizon would have you believe. I don't see Lofwyr being intimidated by the upstarts.
- Dr. Spin

Corporate Structure

While Cline is often referred to as the CEO of the Horizon Group, the reality is a bit more complicated. Like all private corporations, Horizon isn't required to report its internal operations or shareholders. There are, however, several open society and open system advocates that work in positions of authority within Horizon who are more than willing to share information on the corporate structure.

While Horizon shares some elements of traditional corporate structure, it also borrows heavily from policy and marketing think-tanks. One notable aspect of this is the employee voting system, where each employee is accorded a vote on many strategic corporate decisions. A board of directors supposedly guides the company, keeping each division linked and directing strategy and growth. Each board member is promoted out of a circle of fellows maintained by each major division at the top level. The board in turn selects the CEO from its own ranks. Horizon is notable among the megas in that it has never hired a board member from outside of the corp, and even most fellows are promoted from within.

In the shadows of LA, however, it's commonly believed that the real decision-making power isn't the board of directors, or even the employee voting system, but rather someone, or something, known simply as the Consensus. There isn't a lot of information available on the Consensus, and some doubt it even exists. If the board members are a part of the Consensus, or if they *are* the Consensus, no one who knows is saying. Occasionally, I've heard someone high up discuss a radical shift in business practice and say it was a decision made by "The Consensus."

With the very liberal free rein Horizon gives to each division, some group must be coordinating and directing everything. Publicly, most believe it is the board of directors, but there's always rumors otherwise. During all my time with him, though, Cline never spoke of any Consensus—make of that what you will.

- Ok, ok, conspiracy theory time. Anyone?
- Plan 9
- I saw a very private internal memo once that referred to the Consensus. As in, "The Consensus has decided to continue to approach these entities, so treat them with respect and make appropriate offers as you see fit." Didn't make any sense at the time, but after hearing about Horizon's involvement with Pulsar, I'm wondering now if they were talking about an AI. Strangely enough the data came from the commlink of a mage who'd had an "accident" up in Snohomish. Our hacker didn't get anything else off the commlink though.
- Turbo Bunny
- I hear Consensus and I think bugs.
- Sticks
- The Tír's a bit smarter than that, I think. Remember Charisma Associates is based in Portland.
- Frosty



- Is it so hard to believe that perhaps the Consensus is simply the agreement of all Horizon employees on an issue?
- Icarus
- In a word, yes.
- Dr Spin

Specifics on individual group members who are in prominent positions is less easy to come by, though, since one of Horizon's corporate principles is to respect the privacy and private projects of its employees.

- Bullshit. What kind of mega respects the privacy of anyone? Next thing you'll be telling me they all play along like some kind of happy family.
- Beaker
- Read on my friend, read on.
- Kay St. Irregular
- The whole respecting privacy thing and their fluctuating internal structure make it a real bitch trying to pull off extractions from Horizon.
- Sticks

Using this information, I can tell you that Horizon is not organized along traditional corporate lines. The corporate culture emphasizes collaborative work and reaching consensus over internal plotting and a high-pressure, high-competition environment. Most Horizon employees are assigned to small work groups for the duration of a project and then rotated out once a project has reached completion.

This isn't to say that it's all happiness and light within Horizon. Competition to get on prestigious work groups can be fierce, and the pressure to be innovative and to create something new and unexpected is intense. Out of all of the megas, Horizon has the highest rate of employee turnover, as many are not able to take the creative pressure. Despite this, Horizon remains an employer of choice in many areas.

Horizon is also leading the charge for social integration of technomancers and citizenship for second generation AIs. They are the first (and only, so far) corporation or country to offer full citizenship to AIs; Pulsar's Undernet Alliance is making full use of their status, and protection, as corporate citizens to further their cause.

- You can make a good living coordinating the huge number of willing extractions that want to jump ship to Horizon. There's a serious brain-drain going to that corp, and the other megas aren't too happy about it.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Perhaps the other megas should try offering some of the same bennies, eh?
- Cosmo

Fluid Hierarchies

Horizon employees all use HIP, Horizon Internal Persona, an in-house version of P2.0, to track their internal ranking. It is also the means each employee uses to vote on issues relevant to their focus group and, when called for, on issues facing the entire corporation. It has a few more metrics than P2.0 but is essentially similar.

Your reputation is compiled from your peer-to-peer *network* (partially based on your degree of separation from Cline and partially based on the number of first- and second-degree contacts you have along with their prestige scores), your *prestige*, which other employees can directly affect through votes of confidence/no-confidence, and your in-house *work-credit*, which is measured by the success of various projects to which you've contributed. Individual projects, such as having a paper published in a peer-reviewed journal, can also affect your work-credit. Volunteer work, such as helping rebuild low-income housing in the LA sprawl or reading to kids at a refugee camp, is factored in with your work-credit as well. Everyone employed by Horizon is on this network, right down to the waste-management grunts, and corporate culture encourages everyone to work hard at increasing their reputation.

- You've got to be kidding me. Horizon judges their wage-slaves based on their *volunteer* work?
- Butch
- Horizon strongly encourages community involvement through volunteer projects. It increases the corp's reputation in the communities it serves and helps employees keep in touch with the consumers (or future consumers) and consumer trends. Two birds, one stone. They're not doing it out of the kindness of their hearts.
- Dr. Spin
- I don't think profit is their only motivation. I've seen Horizon volunteer groups at work in the Barrens, building homes for ork families, handing out clothes, food, even 'links and games to the homeless kids. The families and the volunteers were in tears by the end of the day. So say all you want, but I for one believe they're helping out of a spirit of kindness.
- Fatima
- Getting soft in your old age?
- Clockwork
- I'm old enough to know when someone's in it just for profit, Clockwork. Not everyone's heart is as lacking as yours.
- Fatima

There are plenty of high-profile working groups scattered throughout the organization, but the Holy Grail is being appointed as a fellow to one of the board member's working groups. Each of the major divisions has a VP on the board, and each of these board members sponsors their own pet projects. To get appointed to a board member's project, your reputation score must be *very* high as competition is fierce. Since it is an employee's peers who carry the most weight (though board members have been known to play favorites, which often rockets up a favored candidate's reputation), charisma and people-skills trump ruthless backstabbing. You can't just be well known—you also have to be liked.



- Reminds me of voting for Prom Queen.
- Frosty

• Ah, it's a bit more complicated. It isn't all about being the most popular. Publishing an article in a respected scientific journal can gain you peer recognition. Scoring a great new account gets you recognition. Being trustworthy, professional, creative, inspiring—heck, just being punctual—can increase your reputation among your peers. Remember: at Horizon, everyone is your peer. So diss the guy emptying the waste-bins, and he can pass the word to his buddies that you're an asshole. Brown-nose an executive, and the exec's staff is going to notice and drag your reputation down by labeling you as a toady. Sexually harass someone in the secretarial pool, and your HIP score will be shit by morning. So no, it isn't just about being the most popular. It's about gaining *respect*—and then not losing it.

- Doc Hollywood

- Give me a good zaibatsu any day of the week.
- Mr. Bonds

Internal Organization

Horizon emphasizes the workplace environment and has attributed a large part of their success to the way they treat employees. Employees are encouraged to balance their work and life. In fact, employees are allowed to use 20 percent of their work time to pursue their own interests, whether those interests involve an employee sport league, independent research, creative art endeavors, or furthering their own education. Horizon believes that inspiration flows more freely when employees feel connected to their coworkers and valued for their efforts. As such, employees frequently utilize Horizon retreat centers, places ranging from luxurious five-star resorts to spartan, back-to-nature artists' retreats, where project groups or even individuals go to free themselves of restraints and develop off-the-wall ideas and projects.

Unlike many other corporations, Horizon also discourages the use of telecommuting. Instead, they have large, open workspaces, designed by employee focus groups to reflect the personality of those who work there. The workspaces are meant to foster employee camaraderie and inter-personal working relationships. Horizon believes that people are social creatures and treats them accordingly, and says that the "greatest leaps of genius occur not in a social vacuum, but when we pool our creative selves together." It is a strange concept in the corporate world, where normally people are treated as numbers and assets, not as, well, people. However, Horizon has done multiple studies that show their approach improves the flow of creative ideas and increases workplace productivity.

- Group hug! Is anyone else feeling a little nauseous?
- Slamm-0!

Major Divisions

Horizon maintains five major global divisions as well as a number of special subdivisions. Each division is headed by a VP and that VP's cadre of fellows. Because of their structure, Horizon grants their regional VPs an extraordinary amount of freedom and autonomy in their day-to-day operations. Globally,



the divisions are divided by region—Horizon Europe, with its focus on real estate, AR development, and consumer goods; Horizon Asia, focusing on producing consumer goods, intelligence gathering, and a major push to extract technomancers; Horizon Africa, with its interests in pharmaceutical development and PR contracts; and Horizon SE Asia, with its large media presence, real estate development, and a significant focus on PacRim development opportunities.

Horizon Americas

Based in Los Angeles, Horizon Americas is the largest regional division. The interests of this division are widespread. Certainly one of the most profitable areas of interest is their AR and full VR technology, especially with their focus on implementing AR on a city-wide scale. HAM is also working with South American powers to find eco-friendly ways to implement AR in areas that are currently off the grid. They've gone head-to-head with NeoNET to grab some very lucrative contracts with several nations, such as Amazonia. No doubt, Horizon's success owes a large part to HAM's current VP, Mira Castillo, an elven woman of Latino descent. She's fostered particularly good relations with the Amazonian government.

- HAM has also recently announced that it will be providing similar AR services to the Mount Shasta region.
- Dr Spin

- Hmm, that puts two Greats at a first degree on Mira's P2.0 network. Any others?
- Winterhawk



- Mira Castillo has been devoting a lot of time to Horizon's Denver offices lately ...
- Frosty

Another main area for Horizon Americas is agriculture. Over the last few years, they've purchased significant portions of the Central Valleys, becoming one of the largest agricorps in the area. Although they have a full line of soy and soy-based products, they've created quite a name for themselves selling organic foodstuffs. Angelinos love the organic lifestyle (almost as much as we love polluting our air and water), and after test-marketing their Naturally Yours line of organics in our city, they've grown their logistics department to bring the line into every major sprawl in North America. The marketing campaign for Naturally Yours has been a stroke of genius, with ads targeted towards each individual's particular history and buying projections, so that a caffeine junky might be overwhelmed with the scent of real coffee thru his AR feed when that catchy little jingle plays. In addition, they've made a huge push to purchase grocery retailers and have positioned themselves as the largest grocery provider in North America (edging out Aztechnology last year with the purchase of SAMs virtual marketplaces).

HAM's third major area is pharmaceuticals. In addition to providing medical and pharmaceutical support to their various medical and cosmetic clinics, such as the A Whole New You chain, they've branched out into R&D. Supposedly they have several facilities in their Fun City enclave, where researchers dream up wild new drugs. Their most well known line of drugs has been the Tailor-Made series, a promising new field that combines pharmacopeia with nanotech to personalize drugs. The line includes everything from simple migraine relief formulas to anti-aging complexes to customized cancer and genetic disease treatments. There have also been some highly publicized campaigns to provide immunizations to the poor and the SINless children in many urban slums.

- HAM's been very busy lately down in the Awakened jungles of South America. Supposedly they're making deals for sustainable, organic coffee plantations. However, it seems like there's a lot more activity, especially involving runners, than you'd expect if they were just making agreements with the locals over growing coffee.
- Glasswalker
- Awakened drugs are the newest rage—maybe they're cutting a deal with the Cartels? Perhaps Horizon is working out some sort of agreement for black-market pharmaceuticals?
- Marco
- Not unless they send the Dawkins Group to pick flowers these days.
- Fianchetto

Horizon Transglobal

Horizon Transglobal is also based out of LA under the direction of Mark Stregatta, a dark-skinned dwarf with a Southern accent as thick as grits. Other than the accent, there's little information on Stregatta—despite the best efforts of the media and the shadow community, no one's dug up so much as his alma mater, much less where he's from or his age.

Transglobal's main focus is overseeing the satellite networks that maintain Horizon's global media presences. Informal counts put Horizon's satellite network at a few hundred active satellites, with the old Mojave Spaceport as a primary launch facility. Horizon's seat on the Corporate Court also gives them priority access to the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver, but strangely enough, they seem content to deal with the capricious temperament of the Mojave.

Transglobal also maintains a presence on several space stations (mostly Evo owned and operated), where they service the satellites in space. Transglobal is a smaller division, and with such a specific focus it wouldn't seem that it would merit a board seat. Of course, there's always the rumors that the division is really a secret spy-network, utilizing their satellite resources to scope out the secrets of other nations. After the Tlaloc incident, some started wondering a bit more about Horizon's space assets, but I haven't heard anything out of the norm.

- Transglobal doesn't contract out their sat maintenance, despite having such a small crew up here. And the techs are a weird bunch, even for spacers.
- Orbital DK
- I managed to get a peek at a quarterly budget for Horizon Group's different divisions. Transglobal had a budget far above and beyond what would be needed to maintain a couple of hundred satellites. Something titled D.A.R. took a full 30 percent of the budget.
- Mr. Bonds

The Horizon Project

Perhaps no division of Horizon is more secretive, nor more potentially profitable, than the Horizon Project. This is what the original Horizon think-tank became when the Horizon Group was chartered as a corporation. Although this division doesn't hold a seat on the board, it is rumored to be a major influence in the corporation (some speculate the Horizon Project is actually the Consensus.)

Their friendly public face has them sponsoring a lot of town hall meetings and focus groups for political and religious groups, but it's their anti-cult work that gets the most attention. The Project, as it's known, is responsible for taking the pulse of the world and for keeping track of innovative ideas and profitable new sidelines. They are also heavily involved in assisting government and political groups, especially in areas of conflict. Beyond their mediation skills and their public-opinion gathering, not much is known about the Project. There's no intel on where it is based, who is in its circle of fellows, and what their agenda is. The rumor mill suggests Cline meets frequently with the group, but I was never in on any such meetings..

- Well, it appears that Doc is going to skip the part of Horizon everyone should know about: The Dawkins Group. Allow me to oblige.

The closest thing that Horizon has to a black-ops division is The Dawkins Group. These guys are supposed to be some kind of opposition research group that specializes in memplexes. Basically, they are tasked with hunting down and disposing of potentially dangerous memplexes. This places them firmly on a collision path with a bunch of groups, since one metahuman's dangerous meme is



another's ideology or religion. Rumor has it they've already crossed swords with Winternight cells, Alamos 20k thugs, several fundamentalist Islamic and Christian groups, and a group of Dunklezahn and Ghostwalker cultists.

The Dawkins Group allegedly includes a cadre of powerful social adepts who are rumored to frequently infiltrate groups to evaluate their threat rating prior to taking action. Unlike most black-ops teams, these folk are as likely to talk their way into and out of situations as to use stealth and firepower, often preferring to destroy the targeted meme through counter-information or by destroying the propagating group's internal self-dynamic. When talk fails, however, or when they're tasked with a seek-and-destroy mission, the Dawkins Group can handle themselves. I've seen government documents putting them on par with Tír Ghosts or Red Samurai.

- Fianchetto

- The Dawkins Group does not appear on any public documents and isn't a recognized division of Horizon. For all intents and purposes it doesn't exist.

- Mr. Bonds

Pathfinder Multimedia

When Horizon first formed, they took all of their shared media assets and consolidated them under the brand of Pathfinder Studios. Pathfinder is the studio that produces most of the major trid productions that Horizon bankrolls, owns dozens of smaller music labels, and also provides news and media services for large portions of the world. Under the umbrella of Pathfinder there are the former Polyaural, New Line, and Affiliated Artists studios. Amalgamated Studios was hit pretty hard by Pathfinder, with key member studios being bought up, leaving the rest of Amalgamated floundering as a second-rate media corp. Additionally Horizon recently completed the takeover of Hisato-Turner and has added their news properties to their already-burgeoning portfolio.

- I've noticed an increasing number of runs against Ares' Truman Distribution Networks, based in LA. Could that be the next scheduled acquisition?

- Mr. Bonds

- Well, just last week Truman lost one of its most popular news reporters. This morning she popped up hosting a morning news and gossip show for Hisato-Turner, and ratings were thru the roof when she interviewed the runners who'd helped her "daring escape."

- Dr. Spin

Pathfinder is overseen by Uniqua M'tobi, a former simstar and protégé of Cline himself. Of all the divisions, Cline involves himself the most in Pathfinder, leading many to speculate that he is the real head of the division. Fun City and Virtual World Disney are also under Pathfinder direction. The Pathfinder studios are always on the lookout for new talent that'll capture the interest—and nuyen—of its audiences. Scouts keep a close eye on many of the smaller, independent studios in LA and around the

globe, using them as a screening tool for talent. In fact, Pathfinder encourages, even indirectly funds, many of the smaller LA studios, since keeping them up and running is all to their benefit.

- Pathfinder also sidelines in CalHots, and they're lobbying for legalization with governments outside CalFree. If that happens they'll take a slice of the BTL trade already feeling the crunch from SouthAm drugs in some major cities. The Triads and Mafia are *not* pleased.

- 2XL

- On any given night, you can find M'tobi and her circle of fellows out mingling with the Hollywood glitterati. I wouldn't be surprised if half the scandals and intrigue in LA originated in brainstorming sessions within her entourage.

- Kat o' Nine Tales

Charisma Associates

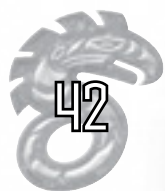
Anything from political campaigns to product buzz to damage control after a public disaster—Charisma Associates does it all. CA is, without a doubt, the single most successful PR firm in the world, and possibly in all of human history. Most of their success has been attributed to their unorthodox, anything-goes approach to problems. In the wake of their first and most publicized success in Tír Tairngire, the headquarters for CA was moved to Portland.

Larry Zincan, the sole ork on the Tír's Council of Princes, was a huge fan of Cline's back in his action sim days. When the Tír went to hell in a handbasket and Zincan assumed control of the country's new government, the first thing he did was call up his idol. It was probably the smartest step a Tír ruler has ever made. Cline and co. stepped in and, seemingly overnight, remade the image of the Tír—even to the Tír citizens. Corporate investment has skyrocketed, and perhaps even more important, Charisma Associates turned around the boiling anger and distrust that had finally toppled Surehand's regime.

I was there at the moment when the two first met, Cline put his arm around Zincan's shoulder, and said, "Larry, leave it to me. You just concentrate on staying alive for the next thirty days. I promise, by this time next month, they'll all be so fucking happy they live here they'll be lining the streets with rose petals."

Well, Zincan held on long past those thirty days, and, as you all know, the Tír now boasts the fastest growing economy in North America. Even more important, repeated surveys show that Tír citizens consider their nation to be "stable, prosperous, full of opportunities, and a place where metahumans and nature live in harmony." Outside the Tír, the country is a top-ranked tourist destination (and tourist nuyen has been a huge part in restoring the country's economy) and several of the cities, such as Portland, Salem, and Bend have held "best places to live in North America" titles for several years running now.

CA is also the go-to consultant for the rich and famous in LA. Politicians use CA to help run campaigns, simstars use the ad firm to rocket their name into the limelight, and studio heads



use them to boost ratings. Of course, this means the LA branch of Charisma Associates is a major employer of runners, since the marketing firm needs to carefully balance competing customers' accounts when they accept jobs that might conflict. If you choose to work with them, just be aware that anything goes, as far as they're concerned, as long as it works.

CA is also known for their cutting-edge research into consumer trends and their utilization of street-level research cadres. They pioneered the field of full-sensory advertising, being the first group to use all five senses in their advertising campaigns. While Charisma Associates may not have invented viral marketing, they have refined it into something of an art form. Chances are if there is a jingle stuck in your head, it had its start with a CA working group.

- I'll offer top nuyen to anyone who tracks down the fiend who thought up that damn Buster's BBQ jingle and puts a bullet in the bastard's head.
- FastJack
- Annoying (and effective) jingles aside, CA is huge in consumer tracking. If you, or any of your aliases, make a purchase at any of their clients, they'll know. Their consumer databases are a goldmine if you're looking for info on someone—or if someone is looking for info on you. They keep them pretty frozen, but info is always available for a price. You might be surprised at the sheer amount of blackmail material they've got squirreled away.
- Puck
- Just FYI—Zincan wasn't the one who called in the Horizon Group. Hestaby was closely involved in the re-branding campaign, and you can bet those Princes who "voluntarily" stepped down from the Council were pulling some strings, too.
- Frosty

Singularity

Singularity is Horizon's bleeding-edge programming studio, run by Tam Reyes, an MIT&T graduate who's been a part of Horizon since the beginning. For years Singularity has been stealing away talent from PCC and software corps in NorCal with superior funding and a more relaxed working atmosphere. If you've admired some beautiful ARO, you're probably seeing Singularity's work. Likewise, they have an entire division devoted to educational software and supporting their AR-enabled virtual schools and tutors.

Singularity is also sometimes considered Horizon's Matrix division since most of the heavy-duty online business is conducted through Singularity. In fact, many microcorps have contracts with Singularity to manage their online business. They also provide secure data storage and Matrix design for smaller corps, making Singularity one of the most widespread divisions of the Horizon Group.



Singularity's bleeding-edge software, encryption, and IC has led to rumors that they're using technomancers in their operations, and in fact Singularity has been on the leading edge in researching (and recruiting) technomancers, AIs, and anomalous programs. During much of 2070, the Horizon Group made a huge fuss about aiding technomancers and providing them with a safe haven, and Singularity seems to be it. It is believed that Tam Reyes is a techno himself, which has boosted recruiting among emerging virtuakinetics enormously. Horizon media blitz has given technomancers and AIs a very different reception in LA than in many other sprawls, and though LA isn't quite a haven for technos and AIs, Horizon still draws them in.

- For what it's worth, Horizon doesn't have any rumors of technomancer experimentation or rumors of hunting and trapping AIs. Instead, the word in the underground is that Horizon treats their technos much like they treat their magical assets—with respect and very high salaries.
- Netcat
- Probably 'cause they already know what makes you crazy little timebombs tick.
- Clockwork
- Or they could've just decided not to waste time peeling apart some poor schmuk's brain when living samples can make 'em serious nuyen.
- Pistons
- Have it your way. Don't say you haven't been warned though.
- Clockwork

Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Memes

Memes, or memesplexes, are self-propagating assemblies of cultural information or beliefs that evolve socially through person-to-person contact. Examples of memes include popular songs, urban legends, catch-phrases, religious beliefs, clothing fashion, architecture, even cultural art forms, such as Native American weaving or Egyptian pyramid building. Memes are known for their evolution and propagation much like living organisms, tending to adapt and survive through natural selection. Some ideas will spread with more or less success, becoming extinct or surviving, spreading, and even mutating.



AZTECHNOLOGY

Posted By: Pyramid Watcher

Doc Hollywood asked me to provide you folks with an update on the Big A's doings in LA and the surrounding areas. If you're planning to visit LA for business or pleasure, you should keep in mind that the Azzies are only a stone's throw away. Horizon and the PCC certainly do.

The fact that LA is a PCC-controlled territory is a constant thorn in Aztlan's side. As they figure it, when the city fell back in December of '61, they should have been the ones to scoop it up. They tried, but the city leaders had different ideas. They snubbed Aztlan for the PCC, and Pueblo moved faster than the Azzies had expected. The Aztlan troops on the move towards LA were soundly thrashed back to San Diego. That was also right about when Aztlan forces had their hats handed to them by the Yucatàn and got kicked out of Denver. With those two large—and publicly embarrassing—losses, LA was pushed to the back burner and left in peace long enough for the PCC and Horizon to entrench themselves. For now, Aztlan's border stands at San Diego.

Since Pueblo had already revoked Aztechnology's business licenses in the PCC, that meant when they annexed LA, they gave notice to the Big A's businesses and subsidiaries to vacate the city (and they wonder why there's a small army camped just under 100 kilometers to the south). At the time, so much of their property had suffered severe damage due to the quakes, floods, and rioting that it didn't seem like a huge loss. Now that LA is in recovery as the media capital of the world, being locked out just adds insult to injury for the Big A.

- Of course the whole Deep Lacuna and sunken city biz also factors into Aztech's interest.
- Elijah

Aztechnology has combated the problem by infiltrating LA through discrete shell companies. It's fairly commonly acknowledged that Diana Malaverde, the CEO of a small biotech firm based in Arcology Mile, is the head of Aztechnology interests in the area. Aztechnology has never been known for its hands-off approach to its interests, so Malaverde is one busy woman, keeping all the various operations under control while trying to distance herself from the Big A. Those various interests in LA include biotech, heavy industry, magical goods, supplies, research, and consumer goods.

The flooding of South Central and East LA was a major hit for Aztech-owned industrial facilities. The corp has responded by throwing up seawalls around some of their salvageable plants, but many were lost in major sinkholes. The Big A is discreetly sponsoring vault-diving teams, pushing to recover important tech or data before other corps swoop in to scavenge it. They also have some major chemtech and biotech R&D facilities out east of San Bernardino, in the Redlands area. The entire Redlands area is pretty much an Aztechnology stronghold, with its orderly streets and well-maintained (and even better guarded) skyscrapers and business parks, all noticeably lacking the normal Big A logos. Actually, even the security of the town is provided by Knight Errant, with many of the smaller corps hiring the private firm just to piss off the PCC.

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AZTECHNOLOGY

J. GARDNER



Even worse for the PCC, all those wageslaves working for Aztech-run subsidiaries are actually Pueblo citizens with full voting rights. There have been two votes called in the last three years trying to re-instate Aztechnology's business license. So far, they've failed. With the Ute population's citizen shares maturing on January 1, 2072, however, that vote may swing differently next time.

Aztechnology has also historically been the number one provider of consumer goods. In everything from home electronics to fast food to makeup, they convinced consumers they offered the highest quality for the best value.

- As much as I hate them, I have to admit I can't live without my Luscious Midnight Moon lipstick. Made by Tres Chic Cosmetics, owned by Aztechnology.
- Kat o' Nine Tales
- Yes, but where do you get that silver body glitter?
- Frosty
- Now that would be telling, my dear.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

Horizon is now edging in on that market, making Aztechnology fight for dominance. They are working extra hard to make sure that consumers believe that they care more, painting Aztechnology as a giant money-grubbing, ruthless exploiter. For example, last month's large scandal and subsequent recall of everyone's favorite Stuffer Shack Nuke-em burgers? Engineered by Horizon (brilliantly, I must say). Now, when your average wageslave swings through a Stuffer Shack, they'll be grabbing a Spicy Soy burger—made by Whole Foods, that wholesome, family owned cooperative of apple-cheeked farmers. Three guesses as to whom Whole Foods hired for PR.

- Hired, hell. Horizon owns Whole Foods, along with a bunch of other companies, through shells and various subsidiaries. They're smart about it, but if you're determined, you can trace the money back to them.
- Dr. Spin
- Yeah, but when you're eating dinner, do you want to eat something packaged in a dirty, automated factory that doesn't even notice when rats or the occasional metahuman falls in a vat? Or would you rather choose something hand-grown and packaged by those cute guys in their tight-fitting blue jeans? Hell, I'd like to meet some of those farmers—healthy air, healthy land really does grow them best.
- Turbo Bunny
- More Horizon propaganda. Those are actors, not farmers.
- Dr. Spin
- Propaganda or not, Farmer John looks fine.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

KNOWN AZTECHNOLOGY SUBSIDIARIES

Curious if your employer is the Big A? Here's a list of the top five corps hiring runners that we believe are Aztech owned and operated:

Nordina Biotech, (Redlands): This cutting edge biotech firm has been hiring runners to plunder rivals all around the city. The recent major data theft at the Shiwase Biotech complex in the Harbor has been attributed to Nordina. Rumor is that they're interested in any aquatic biotech out there and are paying top nuyen for data, tech, and samples.

R.D.S. (Riverside): A pharmaceutical company rumored to be doing research into some very questionable drugs. They've been known to poach from the other drug-tech companies in Riverside and have been rumored to be behind the extractions of several Horizon PhD's from UCLA-Riverside's medical facilities. They also are rumored to recruit "volunteers" from the refugee camps in Covina.

Trident Media (San Fernando Valley): This media corp puts out B-sims. Behind the scenes, they've been working like crazy to sabotage or derail Horizon-owned media projects. The corp is willing to pay for simstar extractions, industrial sabotage of rival media assets, and info regarding upcoming Horizon media campaigns.

Hanson Recovery Agents (South Bay): This is a new corp that has been hiring salvage teams to recover data and equipment from flood zones. Contacts tell me they've hired several teams to go into areas claimed by other corps and recover or destroy files and cold-storage data buried under the mud and waters. No specific links to Aztechnology, but many of the things recovered are from Aztech-subsidaries.

Sunview Industries (West Hollywood): A PR and media company with an eye on Charisma Associates. They've been known to play some pretty dirty tricks on CA to interfere with the PR engine. If you dig up dirt on anything related to CA (or any other PR firm in the city), take it to Sunview. They have a good rep within the shadow community and care less about image than results.

Aztechnology is on the defensive. It's clear that Horizon's challenge has them shaken and off-balance. Recently, we've seen evidence that Aztechnology is giving more creative leeway to their PR divisions. In addition, they're working extra hard to obtain Horizon ad campaign secrets. There's a persistent rumor that a team of Leopard Guards is in LA to coordinate extractions of high-level Horizon managers. Unfortunately, Horizon's unusual internal structure means the Azzies (and other corporations) have

Embedded File



a hard time determining just who to extract. The Big A has an advantage over their competitor here, though. LA is a lot easier to move around in than Tenochtitlán, and Horizon employees are significantly more vulnerable to extractions or assassination attempts than their Azzie counterparts. It looks like this might turn into a war of attrition for both sides.

The Hot Seat

It's no secret that Aztechnology is bitter over losing Denver and LA. The PCC is aware—very, very aware—that they are all that stands between Denver and a very large Aztlaner army. The Aztlan military (let's not get into the difference between the army and Aztechnology troops, they're all well armed, well trained and—generally—take the same orders) has a large presence in San Diego. They've also massed forces along the PCC border. Although there is a clear demilitarized zone, Pueblo has got to be sweating. Aztlan has spent the last six years rebuilding their army after the Yucatán debacle was defused.

Though Aztlan only has approximately 80,000 troops, that number swells to almost 200,000 if you add “loaned” Aztechnology units. The PCC, on the other hand, has less than a third of that number, and they're stretched thin. Very thin. There are a couple of battalions in LA, trying to keep the peace and dancing to Horizon's tune. Other troops are in the Ute, dealing with insurgents who would like nothing better than to see Aztlan come rolling in to the rescue. Of course, they are required to provide some forces for Denver and the Mojave.

Will Aztlan mobilize and move through the PCC? Hard call. Pueblo and CAS have a mutual defense pact against Aztlan aggression, and the PCC would call on CAS and the NAN for assistance. Together they might stand a chance, but the PCC is aware that by inviting CAS in, they might have a hard time getting them to leave—rather poetic justice for a country that has done just that to several other nations in the last few years.

The cold war and heavily militarized border conflict with Amazonia are sapping Aztlan's resources right now—it's a pretty big border, and the situation is even more volatile than both North American borders. Aztlan doesn't seem too eager to fight a war on two fronts.

PUEBLO CORPORATE COUNCIL

On the surface, the Pueblo Corporate Council (PCC) is riding high. They successfully came to the rescue of LA, expanding their territory to reach the Pacific Ocean. They've also absorbed the Ute nation, making themselves a regional powerhouse. They've been a model of profitable expansion. Below that surface, though, is a very, very shaky reality.

As a nation the PCC is one of the most tolerant of the NAN towards Anglos, with the attitude that skills, not skin tone, matter more. This Anglo-friendly attitude has helped Pueblo maintain a civil relationship with CAS (though some might suggest that without the shared Aztlan threat to the south, the relationship wouldn't be nearly so civil).

In Los Angeles, the coup de grâce to their Aztechnology rival, they find themselves reduced to begging for favors from the

very people who once begged them for rescue. Although they are nominally allied with Horizon in opposition to Aztechnology, in reality they find themselves pinched between the two megacorps, as Horizon and Aztechnology use LA as their own personal playground. In the Ute nation, where they expected gratitude and appreciation, the PCC instead faces an increasingly rebellious population. To the south, a very hostile neighbor is massing armed forces.

Many people thought the PCC had bit off too much when they rolled into LA. After seven years, the PCC may finally be agreeing. It has been an extremely profitable move for them, however. Access to the Pacific alone would have made it worth the cost of rescuing the city. Top that off with the highly advantageous relationship with Horizon, and you'd think the PCC should be flying high. However, it has become painfully clear that Horizon considers the PCC to be not much more than paid muscle. Pueblo officials, for their part, chafe at having to ask the upstart corporation permission to operate in what they consider their city.

Pueblo Corporate Council models their country after a corporation, with two types of stock: preferred shares (available to anyone, giving the holder the right to enter and live in Council territory, but no voting rights) and residential shares (which are only available to citizens and carry full voting rights). Through a carefully negotiated agreement, the citizens of Los Angeles were granted conditional shares of Pueblo stock. After two years of residency, those who wished to remain in LA had to apply for residential stock—thus fueling a surge of SINless squatters, people who refused to accept the PCC's authority and never applied for their residential shares. For the poor and down-and-out, however, Pueblo stock was nothing short of a godsend: they finally became corporate citizens, and Pueblo won the hearts and souls of a majority of the city with that one move. Corporations currently operating in the Los Angeles area were also granted probationary business licenses, which were made permanent after one year.

- When Horizon ascended to Triple-A status, the PCC revoked citizenship for Horizon employees. Probably a good thing for them, since otherwise Horizon would hold a very, very large chunk of voting shares in the PCC. Still, LA citizens make up a huge percent of Pueblo's population now, and voting on certain key issues has been really skewed towards results that favor the wealthy, Anglo attitudes in the city.

- Mr. Bonds

Meanwhile, Horizon was just starting out. One of the first things they did was secure contracts for rebuilding much of LA—from the PCC, of course. Thus began a slow but steady erosion of the PCC's powerbase. First, it was Horizon, asking the PCC for favors, such as the contract for rebuilding and fortifying the Long Beach airport. A handful of years later and Pueblo officials are scratching their heads, wondering why they need to ask permission from Horizon to use the airport

- Another great example: Horizon's software. Horizon originally asked the PCC to allow them to test-market their newest logistical and management software suite to a handful of Pueblo cities. Six months later, Pueblo is negotiating with Horizon to upgrade all



their cities' infrastructure with the hot software. Then, Pueblo finds themselves contracting out to Horizon to maintain that software, provide support, training ... you get the point.

- Mika
- Pueblo's got some of the hottest programmers out there. Why subcontract?
- Pistons
- Ever hear the one about selling Eskimos ice?
- Dr. Spin

The other problem Pueblo faces in LA is Aztechnology. Once they had secured the city, they kicked the Big A right out of town. Aztechnology retaliated by creating so many shell companies and sub-subsidiaries that it would make your head spin, plus they've recruited many of the more powerful street gangs to cause trouble for the Pueblo security forces. While Horizon and Aztechnology play their games, bouncing shadowrunners between them like a game of tennis, Pueblo officials are forced to try to keep the city going.

The PCC, however, boasts a few advantages. Foremost, Horizon really *does* need them, because sitting just an hour to the south is San Diego, filled with well-armed, well-trained Aztlan troops. The Pueblo forces are the only thing keeping the Azzies in check. So, as long as they have that mutual opponent, Horizon is willing to play, mostly nicely, with the PCC. It also helps that in the hearts and minds of most Angelinos, the PCC still has a great image, one that was only bolstered by the Pueblo's quick response and rescue efforts during the recent disasters. Street-level polls indicate that over 75 percent of LA residents prefer Pueblo citizenship to any other alternative, including the recent Horizon proposal to reunify with California.

This brewing situation has led the PCC to begin exploring alternatives to an LA sprawl that is dominated by two corporate powers. Realizing their position is growing weaker, the PCC has been much more aggressive lately, in and out of negotiations. We'll see if Pueblo still has enough teeth to hold onto their slice of the West Coast.

- Some of the rumors that have been floating around in the shadows say that the PCC might go to the STC or NAN for help in getting a better bargaining position towards Horizon in return for trade concessions.
- Mika

OTHER MEGAS

Horizon, Aztechnology, and the PCC may dominate LA, but they certainly aren't the only players in town. Ares has significant manufacturing interests in the IE, and their subsidiary Knight Errant is a major security provider. They also have a strong presence in the media interests in the city, producing news and family-oriented sims and trid shows.

Shiawase has their huge Biotech complex in the Harbor district and smaller R&D firms scattered about in the Riverside and Pomona areas. They also manage several offshore desalination plants, providing fresh water for much of the city. That alone makes them a major power in LA, although they aren't nearly as noticeable or publicity hungry as other megacorps.

MCT and S-K are both involved in heavy industry in LA, competing with each other in the reconstruction race. Both have heavy construction crews established in the flood zones and are raking in the nuyen as they build seawalls, repair freeways, and provide clean-up and rebuilding services to the smaller corps willing to invest in the reconstruction boom.

SHOWBIZ

Horizon might dominate the scene, but there's no dearth of other media and entertainment operations in LA. Los Angeles is full of independent studios, ranging from homemade operations running out of some guy's garage to large, multi-billion nuyen consortiums like fallen giant **Amalgamated Studios** that have managed to hold onto their independence (barely). Several of the other megacorps have significant media assets in LA, too, such as Ares' **Truman Distribution Network** and MCT's **Highstar**, which delve into the trid, sim, and music businesses. While Horizon may tolerate the other big players (at least when they don't get too uppity), it seems to actually encourage the smaller independents.

There's no official count of all the smaller studios in LA, but it seems like if you're planning a run, there's a few hundred indies who'll try to tag along to broadcast your exploits to all the armchair runners in the sprawl. A fair number are based out of the San Fernando Valley, but you can't wander far in the sprawl without bumping into one. If you're looking for employment, these indies are a goldmine of opportunities. You might provide security for some hot new talent, or perhaps be sent to smooth the way in contract negotiations between agents. Gathering intel on the competition, sabotaging a broadcast, sets, or recording equipment, digging up or planting blackmail material on talent, agents, or studio heads—the opportunities are as endless as your cutthroat imagination.

Heck, I've been contacted by some Johnsons asking for runners simply so they could get an exclusive broadcast to boost their ratings. The job specs? "Oh, we don't care what they hit, but could you make sure there's lots of gunfire? And a grenade. One of those ones that make a bright flash, you know? And if you've got a couple of trolls on call, that'd be great, but not too ugly, you know? Ok? Don't forget to dress the part!" Only in LA, right?

- I'd strongly suggest getting paid in advance when you deal with the indies.
- Skinny Dipper

It'd be impossible to list all the smaller studios in LA, but I'll list a couple of the ones that are making waves of late and might be expected to last a while longer.

Of particular interest are several small but lucrative companies that deal in the infamous CalHot sims. These sims are legal in California but considered to exceed maximum simsense output levels in most other countries (including the PCC, and Horizon has pushed hard to ensure that LA has a waiver on that restriction). **Lucid Studios** is the biggest by far of the gray-market providers of CalHot sims. Lucid consistently puts out the most realistic, not to mention the most arousing, sims on the market. Partially this is due to the, erm, caliber of their talent and partially to the fact that they are said to shoot up their stars with psychoactive stims.



Despite what you might expect from a company that specializes in VR porn, Lucid is run very professionally, and their main office, located up in San Fernando, feels rather like the office of an upscale law firm. Lucid has a profitable contract with several distributors who help take their product outside the LA area, but they also find themselves having to constantly fight those distributors to remain independently owned. Rumor is the Mob would really like to acquire Lucid, but so far the Mantel brothers, who own it, have held out.

On the other end of the spectrum is **GoldenSkies**, an extremely sleazy CalHot studio that produces massive quantities of lower quality sims that they move mainly through gang contacts. Their talent, if you can call it that, tends to be otherwise failed actors and actresses who're desperate enough for <fill in the vice> that they'll work for GoldenSkies directors. They have a habit of paying their talent in drugs or other contraband, which they trade with underworld outfits for product. GoldenSkies is also rumored to produce more fringe CalHots, dealing in subject matter that strays pretty far from even the loose permissiveness of LA counter-culture. Generally, it's really small indies that produce the snuff and kiddie-porn, so if GoldenSkies truly is involved in those, and other, markets, then they are by far the largest indie in that trade.

- A couple of do-gooder cops on the Pueblo payroll have made it their mission to shut down the places dealing with kiddie-porn and the like. Vera Fuentes is one of 'em. Vera used to be a pretty straight-and-narrow type of detective, but lately she's been willing to bend, or ignore, the law if it'll stop these studios.
- Mika
- It probably doesn't bear mentioning, but the cutthroat CalHot industry is rife with employment opportunities. The studios are constantly "exchanging" talent, and the industry itself has deep links to the shadows and the syndicates that can provide them exotic substances and toys.
- Alex Machine

Perhaps even more tasteless than the worst of the CalHot producers is the sensationalist pseudo-news outlets, such as **Scoop**. LA thrives on sex and lies, and that's Scoop and its competitors' chief commodity. Scoop is one of the largest, but there are dozens of others based in LA. Since Scoop's writers create more fiction than news, the studio employs top-notch attorneys. Someone once told me that Scoop judges its success by distribution rates and new lawsuits, and if either one falls, their news floor is whipped into even more sensational action. Scoop keeps offices downtown on Arcology row, where they can be close to the action, but they have affiliate branches in most major cities around the globe.

LA UNDERWORLD

Posted By: **Doc Hollywood**

Corporations and the media aren't the only powers in LA. Syndicates have a good understanding of all that nuyen, and the ganger lifestyle has been glamorized by the local media. Here's a brief rundown on the underworld, LA style.



FALLEN ANGELINOS: SYNDICATES

Three syndicates hold sway over LA with the Mafia taking the lion's share of the pie. The Triads and the Native American Koshari fight over the scraps and carve out their own domains in the ruined city. Notably absent is the Yakuza. Their presence in LA had been in decline for decades, and during the days of the Saito regime in the Sixties many Japanese were forced to relocate to San Fran in face of growing hostility from other Angelinos further depleting the Yakuza powerbase. Following the Twins, the Little Tokyo was flooded and now only remnants of the non-corporate Japanese community and Yak operations remain.

The Mafia

While the Cosa Nostra has always had their fingers in the LA pie, they have never had the power of their associates on the East Coast or in Chicago. Even as late as the early 2050s the LA Mafia, locally referred to as the Mickey Mouse Mafia, was seen as something of a backwater by the standards of the other families. All of this changed in the late 2050s.

When Chicago went to hell, a lot of the media business relocated out to LA and with it came some key members of the Chicago families. While the local Milano family was at first reluctant to accept their family from the Midwest, they quickly integrated them into their operations and even began to share power equally

- Ha ha ha. Yeah, "reluctant" might be one word for it. It's amazing how quickly reluctance disappears when your consigliere and several of your capos turn up as floaters. Of course, Charles Ricca, the guy leading the Chicago crowd, provided old man Milano with evidence



that his underlings had been plotting against him. Milano was smart enough not to question that evidence too closely.

- Miko

Since then the mob has taken advantage of local trouble to solidify their hold over most of the LA underworld. Rumor has it they even hired Charisma Associates to boost their image in LA as lean and mean yet traditional. Now, the Mafia enjoys an image of old-world sophistication, an organization that cherishes family values and old school etiquette. Several Mafia bigwigs are even on P2.0 and welcomed at the best parties.

On the business side of things, they offer the usual services of beetles, prostitution, protection, gambling, and discrete financial services to the studio bigwigs and a fair number of entertainers.

- And sometimes when those hotshots can't pay the Family back, they work off their debt.
- Alex Machine

Many of the smaller independents have received funding from the Mafia. After the Twins, studios and real estate were worth pennies on the nuyen. The local Mafia provided funding to a lot of people who wanted to buy into those bargains. Even if those studio heads have managed to pay off the Mafia, they still owe them a debt, and the Mafia has a long memory. As the family sees it, those investments weren't about making money, they were about gaining influence. By the same token, you'll find that many of their financial services to the upper class are at bargain interest rates. In LA, it isn't who has the most money (well, not always, at least), it's about whose ear you have.

The mob also makes a tidy profit off CalHots, internationally distributing the very, very realistic—and addictive—pornography produced primarily in our golden city. More than one small studio has found itself turning to CalHots as a profitable sideline, with the Mafiosi picking up production. Entertainers that find themselves owing the family often wind up staring in some very, very *colorful* sims. Indeed, the occasional celebrity scandal emerges when some chips turn up with some of the minor stars in LA taking a lead role.

- I've heard that the Mafia sometimes keeps this stuff as leverage, threatening disclosure if the celebrity doesn't play ball later on.
- Alex Machine
- CalHots are one of LAs top exports. Pueblo hates 'em but hasn't been able to slow the production or export. They're getting to be a real problem in some Pueblo cities such as Santa Fe.
- Mika

Prostitution is another big moneymaker for the mob. Taking a trick from the Yaks, the Mafia has set up their own version of bunraku brothels. They have their "star-pens" located throughout the city, run by profit-conscious managers. As obsessed with celebrities and plastic surgery as LA is, the popularity of these places is unsurprising. Where else can you spend an evening with someone who not only thinks he's Gary Cline, but looks like him? The most popular girls and boys are biosculpted to look like the current nova-hot stars, then fitted with a persona-fix that overrides

their mind and gives them the personality of whatever star they're imitating. These meat-puppets don't last long—a few weeks or months, in most cases—but the managers of the pens charge top nuyen while they last, making a tidy profit. There's always a need for new meat, and the Mafia doesn't care if they're willing or not. Of course, it's easier (read: cheaper) if the puppets share some basic features with their new persona, such as height, body build, and gender. There's a thriving business in recruiting new talent, for those who don't mind the work.

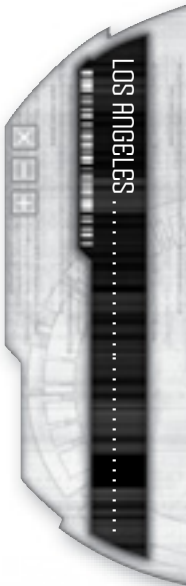
The Mafia also provides cozy and plush secret casinos for some of the bigwigs in the city. Although technically illegal, the influential patrons provide a shield from the law. After all, what Pueblo cop wants to be the one to bust Mark Stregatta, a popular Horizon board member, while he tosses the dice with Alexi Summer, LA's hottest starlet? In fact, to most people in the sprawl, entry to these casinos is a sign that you're part of the in-crowd. Many B list stars and wealthy celeb hounds would kill for an invite. Those damn drone-cams swarm around the outside of those places, snapping pictures for the gossip-rags, but once inside you're promised peace and quiet. Security is unbelievably tight, and many of the movers and shakers of LA use these places to hammer out back-room deals. If you're lucky enough to be invited, go—and please share all the details with the rest of us nobodies later.

- These types of places ask you to check your bodyguards at the door but promise to provide complete, unobtrusive security. That way, some of the most heavily guarded folks in the city can have a breather from being surrounded by a wall of flesh. It ensures that the secrets that start there, stay there. Not that any of you would ever masquerade as a bodyguard just to pick up a little intel, right?
- Mihoshi Oni
- Nah. You can pick up so much more by being a waiter or blackjack dealer.
- Haze
- Our friend Doc has left out another important part of the family's business: vacations. With LA being prime tourist site, the Mafia runs a very tidy business controlling resorts (even if most of the beach-front ones were destroyed) and providing vacations to other Mafia families. Palm Springs is truly a neutral ground for many of the crime syndicates. Fun City is also very popular, and many of the old-school Mafia believe it fits in with their special values.
- Traveler Jones

The Triads

Historically, most Japanese immigrated to San Francisco after the occupation, while LA maintained a large and thriving Chinese community. As a result, there is something of an understanding between the Yaks and the Triads. The Yaks get San Fran, which suits them just fine, and the Triads get LA.

Unfortunately for the Triads, they've had to settle for the scraps left by the Mafia. The mob has been around longer and has more influence, particularly with the corps and what passes for law enforcement in LA. The Triads have found themselves fighting for a slice of the underworld pie but seem to be focusing mostly on gambling and BTL dealing. Their gambling dens lack the luster



of the fancy, celebrity-packed Mafia places. Still, they provide all the same sins (if with less glamour) and charge significantly less. The Triads have carved out a niche for themselves by focusing on Asian games. They're also raking it in providing black-market goods, weapons, and drugs within refugee camps where well-to-do made men wouldn't be caught dead.

The LA Triad's new *Shan Chu*, a fairly creepy man who calls himself Wing, has been pushing hard to take more of the market share. The recent deaths of three Mafia capos are believed to have been a warning that the Triads won't be pushed around any longer. Most believe Wing ordered the hits himself, but so far there's been no retaliation. Until that, the hits had been fairly minor, but expect things to be heating up soon.

- Since the Triads came out of the floods spread around town and without a specific territory, they tend to hide their operations away in less-rundown districts and backstreets. They seem to have a truce or arrangement with the bigger gangs like the Ancients and Burning Angels to supply some of them with PacRim black-market sources.
- J-Cruz

Koshari

For non-natives, the Koshari are a tribal crime syndicate that's pretty widespread in the Pueblo. After the PCC moved into LA, it was only a matter of time before the Koshari moved in as well. While they have established a foothold for themselves, mainly on the outskirts and suburbs, they still trail behind the Mafia and the Triads in terms of influence in the LA underworld.

Primarily, that's because the Koshari have been focusing on Las Vegas. They've seen the most success operating around PCC arcologies and the administrative districts. In those places, with the relatively higher percentage of Native Americans, the Koshari have a thriving trade in racketeering, prostitution, and gambling. The Koshari also control a significant percentage of the black-market talislegging trade.

With existing smuggling pipelines from Pueblo-controlled territories, they can provide the materials for those of us without the IDs to purchase the goods legally. They also can provide the really good stuff that would be illegal for anyone outside Pueblo security personnel or corporate wagemages.

- Pueblo shamans, even the legit types, are known to get their material from the Koshari. Frankly, they have better sources. PCC businesses recognize this and often look the other way, or even provide a "resource allowance" to their employees.
- Mika
- The Koshari are constantly butting heads with the Anasazi and their friends the Angeles Ardientes over the talislegging trade and the Mojave smuggling routes. Things get bloody often and it's not unusual for the Angeles to hit Koshari operations in the sprawl while the Anasazi collect scalps of any Koshari trespassers in the wilderness.
- J-Cruz
- If you're in LA, visit the Black Snake Shop. It's a tiny hole-in-the-wall place, almost impossible to find, over in Covina. The proprietor,

Peter Blacksnake, has a few Koshari connections and can generally hook you up with prime material for anyone, shaman or mage. PM me and I'll be happy to provide a reference.

- Lyran
- Word on the street is that the Koshari are pushing some new designer drug on the LA scene. Now, everyone knows that the sim-starlets and media moguls have always been willing to sniff, chew, or inject anything into their systems that'll get 'em high. Lately I've heard rumors that there's something new. Supposedly it's some sort of Bio-engineered Awakened Drug (the kids call 'em BADs) that seems to be popular at some of the private parties, since it lets even mundanes tune in on other people's auras. I keep hearing it's the next big thing, that it's really addictive and gives an awesome ride. I still haven't heard where it's from or who's producing it. My guess is the Koshari; the deserts have some pretty amazing things growing out there.
- Butch
- I've heard rumors of something similar here in HK. But it was one of the Triads here.
- Jimmy No
- Funny, I came across something similar at a rave in Seattle. The guy passing it out was definitely an Komun'go thug-Tempo, I think it was called.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

GANG LIFE IN THE FAST LANE: GANGS

Los Angeles is home to a thriving gang culture that has not diminished one bit with the cataclysms that have redrawn the city map. Some of the names are familiar, others are new, all are dangerous.

Los Angeles Ardientes (The Burning Angels)

These days you see a lot of gangs in the Barrens of LA sporting supposedly authentic Anasazi tats and packing enough heat to invade a small country. The top dog of these gangs is the Burning Angels, a Latino gang that claims much of flooded East LA as its turf, along with major parts of Downtown. The Angels have some Anasazi ties, and it's suspected that they provide a smuggling route into the city for weapons, gear, and drugs distributed by the desert tribe (or maybe it's the other way round—you never can tell with them).

Recently the Angels have been hitting an awful lot of Horizon establishments and messing with the PCC and Koshari operations something fierce. They've become a real thorn in Pueblo's side. Unlike most go-gangs, who get their kicks harassing commuters and making occasional smuggling or drug-trade side-trips, the Angels appear to be thinking through their hits. In addition to the mil-spec weapons, they seem to have someone providing some military brains, too.

Although much of the violence seems to be random, some of us in the shadows have begun to see a pattern. You can bet the PCC and Horizon see the same pattern, but the gang seems to be operating with some superior intelligence and has (so far) managed to cause a whole hell of a lot of damage without significant reprisals.



- Let me guess—Leopard Guards.
- Fatima
- That's one possibility
- J-Cruz

The Angels were traditionally based out of El Infierno. With the flooding in that area, the gang has spread out around the city, although their stronghold is still in the flooded zone. Small hills, higher elevation plateaus, even taller buildings have been transformed into hundreds of small islands surrounded by poisoned waters. The Angels have made their homes on these islands, claiming territory and ruling over other survivors of LA's worst hell. The PCC leaves them alone, realizing that it would take a full military action to attempt to confront them. They've adapted well to the half-submerged city, utilizing fast, shallow-bottomed boats and waterscooters much like other go-gangs use motorcycles.

The gang follows Sage, a black-haired, black-eyed human woman who flaunts massive scars on her right arm and legs. Sage has made it a fashion for the Latino city gangers to become Anasazi tribal members. She was one of the first to go out to the desert tribe and return, marked with an eight-sided star on her cheek, major scarification, and acknowledged as a true member of the Anasazi tribe. Since then, other gangers have made the trek out into the Mojave, trying to survive the rituals (and the desert itself). Not everyone tries it, and most who do go don't survive, but the ones that return with that particular tattoo are highly regarded. 'Course, that could be because they are lethal and crazy SOBs.

- A few of these psychos are Awakened. If you run across a ganger with Anasazi tats and colors, check for the funky star on their left cheek. If it's there, tread lightly.
- Skinny Dipper
- If it's that big a deal, probably every other ganger's copied those tats by now.
- Turbo Bunny
- Well, I've heard that the real gangers tore a few kids up who were showing the tat without having done the whole desert pilgrimage thing. And when I say "tore," I mean they used their hands and teeth. Seems to have had a discouraging effect.
- Alex Machine

In addition to general chaos and some very profitable gun-running, the gang is also a main pipeline for telesma gathered from the Mojave. The desert Anasazi guard the Mojave, so for the most part the only telesma leaving the desert runs through their channels. There's a high demand for the raw materials, but the real market seems to be the shaman's potions. Using ancient knowledge (so they say), the Anasazi have created some humdinger magical compounds that'll let you feel, act, and fight like a juiced-up adept. They also have some very lethal poisons they distribute, although those are harder to find.

The Ancients

Although it's assumed the Burning Angels are getting Aztechnology backing, it's far less obvious who's sponsoring the

Ancients the days. The local chapter of the elven go-gang has long been a presence in the City of Angels, focusing primarily on smuggling, protection rackets, and sidelining as security for small companies. Although they are a slightly smaller gang than the Angels at about 75 members, they used to have the advantage when it came to weapons, gear, and tactics. They also had an advantage over most other LA gangs in that they were organized nationally, so although they had smaller numbers, in a serious situation they could call upon a small army to back them up.

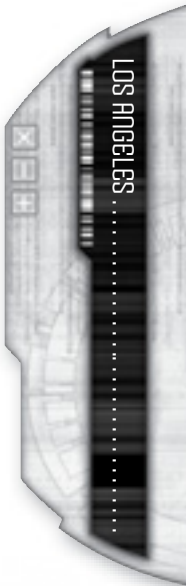
Regardless of their size or organization, the Ancients hold a special place in the LA sprawl, mostly because the gangers are just so damn photogenic. So many trids and sims feature the leather-clad, bike-riding elves—with their classic bad-boy good looks or trumpy biker-chic fashions—that they're almost a symbol for the city's underworld.

- Whether the Ancients play this up by stocking their gang with more attractive boys and girls, I don't know, but I've had some suspicions.
- Alex Machine

Since one of the Ancient's main smuggling goods is weapons, it should come as no surprise that the elven gang often faces off with the Burning Angels. These confrontations tend to be loud and deadly. The strange part is that each gang has pretty clearly defined territory, but they frequently meet outside their territory to clash. Recently, Angel bikers were attacking a small studio in Riverside that produced poor-quality porn, torching the place and shooting up the employees that attempted to flee the burning building. Cameras caught the action when a second group of bikers, wearing the green-and-black jackets of the Ancients, rode up and open fired on the Angels. It looked, from the trid footage, like two small armies clashing. Interestingly, the Ancients seemed to be providing cover as many of the employees escaped.

Pueblo sec forces took their time responding (who can blame them, as the gangers were having fun whittling down their numbers). The building was trashed, but most of the employees survived. What's weird was that the place wasn't in either territory; both gangs had a fair commute just to get there. The Ancients seem to have an agenda and some good intel—otherwise how would they have known to be in that particular place at that particular time? As to who is feeding them the intel, that's something everyone has a guess on, but nobody has an answer.

- There's a reason no one seems sure: Horizon doesn't want to sully its image by consorting with low-life gangers. They're the ones playing up the possible Aztechnology-Angeles connection, but they block any media coverage that might link them to the Ancients. If Horizon needs something done that's particularly violent or gruesome, they rely on their pet gang.
- Dr. Spin
- Can you back that up with any proof? Or is it just your normal anti-Horizon bullshit?
- Kay St. Irregular
- I didn't think so.
- Kay St. Irregular



Other Gangs

There are a lot of other gangs shooting up the LA shadows. No wonder, of course, since the City of Angels has always attracted the devils and demons. A lot of the smaller gangs have been wiped out by the recent disasters, but more seem to spring up everyday. I'll mention few of the larger gangs who've survived long enough to be noteworthy.

The **Steppin' Wulfs** are a small gang, about 30 members strong, of complete and total psychos. Hyped up on a combination of drugs, cyberware, and bioware, these guys are lethal and completely insane. They appear to enjoy combat for combat's sake, but in reality they've got a (truly) mad street-doc/scientist running the show, a guy they call Seymore the Invincible. He uses the gang as guinea pigs, trying to create the most dangerous creatures out there. The gang usually runs in groups of five or six, and members have been known to turn on each other if they lack other victims. After the flood, they claimed new territory in the slums of West Covina, where they mostly rip apart SINless refugees and each other while Seymore takes notes for his research.

- Some of these gangers are rumored to be cyber-zombies. Seymore the Mad is a fucking genius, but bat-shit crazy.
- Butch

The **Artificial Kidz**, or **A-Kidz**, are stars of the hit show *Gang Life* and high-rating P2.0 personalities. Like the Steppin' Wulfs, these kids are a booster gang. However, unlike the Wulfs, the A-Kidz are not insane or psychopathic. Just the opposite, in fact. They're corporate brats and rich-kid runaways, scions of LA's gliterrati who put together a booster gang and sold the concept of an ongoing reality show to Horizon. The show (and gang) is a mix of mild gang mayhem mixed in with a heavy dose of soap opera-ish drama. It's a huge hit with the teen demographics in LA, and Horizon has recently begun airing episodes in test markets like Seattle and New York. As an initiation rite, each member takes a street name and a theme and then gets augmented with cyber and bioware to fit his or her theme—"Wallcrawler," "Timberwolf," "Kid Savage," and "Brainiac" are top gangers this season. Horizon foots the bill for the augmentation, and in exchange the gang members are implanted with simsense recording gear and accompanied by camera drones 24/7.

The **Mongols** are a former heavy-biker go-gang that has adapted to their new aquatic world. Instead of moving when the floodwaters destroyed their territory, they swapped out their bikes for boats and juiced-up wave runners. These guys get their kicks out of terrorizing the few people that remain in the inner city, extorting nuyen and stealing the meager resources the survivors have. They've caused some problems for some of the smaller eco-corps' rebuilding efforts, but they avoid the larger corporations like Horizon.

WHO'S WHO IN THE LA SHADOWS

Paul Thunderfist is a troll Hopi adept from the PCC who relocated to the LA shadows after a "Pueblo Fuck-Up," according to his blog. He's got a serious issue with Pueblo now, and it shows in the jobs he takes. He runs with a half-mask hiding his face, so his real identity remains a mystery for now. He also prefers to run alone, although he's been known to help out teams who need extra muscle or an expert sharpshooter if the run hurts Pueblo interests.

Little Sam is an oversized ork who's the nominal spokesman for the Laguna Beach Collective and a very talented technomancer. Part fixer, part runner, Little Sam hires muscle to protect the Collective and is also known to do some combat hacking for local runner teams. He generally refuses payment in nuyen, taking his payment in goods useful for the collective instead.

Sonora is a mage with ties to Aztechnology, although she's been known to do runs for a variety of interests. She has a very capable team and accepts high-profile jobs. Sonora is also a favorite on the P2.0 network, although it's commonly believed that she utilizes an Altskin disguise to hide her real features. Her recent romance with a major Latin music star has boosted her P2.0 ratings immensely.

Hawthorne is a popular fixer for Horizon. She's been known to hold her own on runs, and is a very fair (although demanding) employer. If you take a run from her, you don't have to worry about a double-cross, but you had better pay close attention to your clothing, hair, and makeup, as all her runs have a full video rights clause.

Gustaveus is a fixer who operates out of SFV. He's rumored to have ties to the Azzies, the mob, the PCC, and a couple of megacorps. Which rumors are true or false, no one seems to know. He specializes in finding new teams and helping to manage their careers, bringing media fame and fortune to the more talented ones.

- This query has been tagged by someone in your network
- Accessing Tag ...

- Excuse me, Doc, aren't you forgetting someone?
- Alex Machine

• Oh, fine. Alex Machine is an annoying smart-ass street sam with a huge P2.0 following. His popularity ensures he always has high-profile jobs, and he's made a career out of knowing the right people, attending the right parties, sleeping with the most popular simstars, and having the most fashionable armor in the city. Hard to believe he can fit all that ego into his 5'9" frame. Does that make you happy, Alex?

- Doc Hollywood



FRIENDS OF FRIENDS: RUNNER SUPPORT

If you're running the shadows it's always good to know what the local support structure is like, where to pick up work, who to see for gear, where to fence loot, and all that jazz. Here's a brief rundown of some popular and well-connected runner hangouts.

Escondido

A small town nestled in valley just south of the San Onofre Irradiated Zone, Escondido is a major merc hangout that Aztechnology uses as an unofficial staging area for ops further north. Many of the so-called mercs are really Aztechnology assets, but the city is pretty welcoming to more independent assets as well. As long as you know who's footing the bill and are willing to put up with the overbearing superiority complex from the real Azzie boys and girls, you'll find some excellent opportunities in Escondido. Just make sure you keep your eyes (and ambitions) aimed firmly to the north.

Since this town is accustomed to mercs, carrying weapons in public or having obvious cyberware isn't frowned upon. In fact it's pretty much self-policing, and the sheriff's office is for show. If you do decide to use your toys, though, expect a very quick response. Aztechnology has an uneasy truce with the indie mercs in the town and needs 'em to help harass Horizon and the PCC, but they won't take crap from them so they keep a close eye on the freelancers that come through. Mercs get paid premium wages (as long as they survive the Zone) and get to test all sorts of new toys for the Big A.

If you're looking to pick up work, stop in at the **Casa Lilás**. The owner, Violeta, is a petite human woman who looks like you could knock her over with a hard word. You'll notice, however, that all the heavily armed mercs in her place treat her with the utmost respect. Take the hint. Act politely and speak Spanish, and if she likes you, she'll hook you up with work. If she doesn't like you, well, **MedíCarro** (Aztlán's version of DocWagon) recently opened a clinic in Escondido.

Another fun note is that Escondido is home to a very large wildlife reserve. The park covers seven square kilometers. The outer edge of the park is bordered with two electrified fences, razor wire, regular patrols, automated tranq sentryguns, and enough drones to make a rigger cry. This is mostly designed to keep the critters in. I guess the park managers figure that if you're stupid enough to want to break in, you deserve to get eaten. At one time the park was open to the public, but it's now an Aztechnology research facility. New awakened critters from around the globe are brought to the reserve so that Azzie scientists can observe them in their natural environment.

- The Azzies aren't observing—they're breeding the beasties. There's a huge market for paracritters to be used as security, research, and magical supplies. This park is a cash cow for them.

- Ecotope

- If you're planning on slipping into Aztlán, Escondido or some of the other border towns make a pretty good stepping stone. The hills that surround the town are a smuggler's paradise. For the right price, they'll take you further into Aztlán. I'd recommend the Steelsky group, a family of orks who've been in the biz for a generation or two now. Drop me a line and I can hook you up.

- Sounder

Laguna Beach Collective

Once a lovely beachside spot, this town is now little more than a floating huddle of ships. Boats are strung together haphazardly, each connecting to two or three others, like a floating tangle of sea-wreckage. Some of the boats are large enough to serve as central meeting points, while others are little more than a slab of plastic set atop some floats with a tattered tarp to shelter the miserable person huddling below.

The Laguna Collective grew out of a tribe of technomancers who took to the toxic waters for protection during the craze last year. They also count several normal hackers and a few dozen normal humans. If you need to know something, no matter how obscure, the Laguna Beach Collective can dig it up for you—they specialize in datasearches and their boats are decked with SOTA grids and satellite hookups. Paranoia runs high in and around the collective, understandably enough. Surveillance drones and hidden eye cams watch for miles around, so if you go out there, they'll be expecting you. Rumors are that more than one bounty hunter has been found in the morning tide after trying to collect one or more members for a pretty cash payment. Why Horizon hasn't tried to pull the members into their fold, I don't know, but I do know that the corp has a strictly hands off policy regarding the group.

- The really paranoid even say the Beachies got their hands on some prototype shark biodrones and have them patrolling the waters.

- Plan 9

- And you would know this how?

- Netcat

- Ear to the ground and all that.

- Plan 9

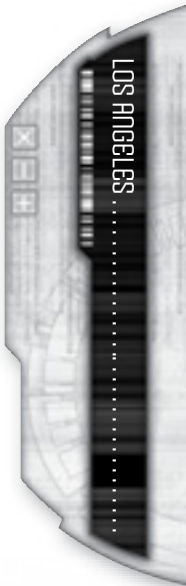
- If you decide to visit, the Beachies will be much more welcoming if you bring a gift. New tech is always welcome, but potable water is even more precious. Don't bother going armed, and I'd STRONGLY recommend you be very careful of your cyberware.

- Skinny Dipper

Hahn Free Market

In the middle of the brackish, deep waters of central LA rises a large island. For whatever reason, the old Kenneth Hahn Park didn't sink, though the land around it did. The island quickly became a tent city, as El Infierno refugees huddled on its shores. The largely SINless squatters on the island were low on the city's priority list, and left to their own devices, the squatters formed their own community.

The heart of the island has become a sort of perpetual open-air market. For the SINless and street-level criminal, this is *the* place in LA to buy and sell hot goods, get a quick tip, or find a job. If you want to buy it, you'll find it here, in a stall or on a table. Vault divers display their treasures here, hoping to score enough nuyen to survive another day. Gangs do quick business selling imported drugs and fencing their loot. Fixers scout the crowds, looking for new talent. You'll even find the occasional Johnson out here, sitting in one of the makeshift restaurants built with scavenged plastic and supplies.



Hahn Island is one of the few places in LA where you can escape the omnipresent camera drones—any drones that show up are quickly knocked out, scavenged, and resold by the entrepreneurial residents. Since access is only by boat, there are several makeshift docking areas. The second you step on the island, you'll have gangs of kids offering to give you a tour or take you to whatever place you're looking for. Toss one of them a bottle of water or a couple of soybars and the kid will take you to who or whatever you're interested in finding.

The island isn't too large, but the terrain is steep and the trails confusing, so I'd recommend using a guide (and be prepared to walk everywhere). If you're looking for magical goods, ask for Soot, an odd-colored changeling who buys and sells all sorts of magical paraphernalia. If you want to rent a boat, with or without a captain, check out the northern piers—a skinny ork named Roberto can hook you up. If you're looking for work, try the **Picnic Tables**, an open-air restaurant (I use the term *very* loosely) where fixers tend to congregate. If you eat anything there, best be sure you've got a cast-iron stomach. The liquor, though, tends to be top notch—the owner, Sal, buys a lot of scavenged bottles of hard alcohol that the vault divers bring up. Who cares if the cups ever get washed? The whiskey kills any germs. For a price, you can stay at one of the many tent cities that dot the island, although consider yourself lucky if you actually get a tent. The only amenity a stay there includes is the lack of police or corporate presence. Bring your own water, food, and T.P.

If you're looking for a place to sleep where you might wake up in the morning with all your gear and clothes on, ask for La Señora. She runs a tent camp in a small ravine, and she looks out for the island's kids and metahumans, providing them with a safe place to stay. She's protected by a small gang called **Los Desamparados**, which includes a few changelings and Awakened teens, that roams the island protecting kids and metas from attacks. It's more of a neighborhood protection association than a gang, but don't underestimate those kids—the island spirits respond very quickly to their summons.

FLIPSIDE: ASTRAL ANGELTOWN

Posted by: Winterhawk

Just stepping in here, since some recent work of mine took me to LA for a couple of months. While there I became well-acquainted with the particularities of the local astral scene and I thought I'd better share my experiences.

Los Angeles has long been infamous for strange magical and astral phenomena and the Fall has only taken things up a couple of notches. The phenomena date back as far as the Thirties, possibly even earlier, and there are even a couple of instances of spontaneous mana voids on record. Then in '61, the astral space grew even more unstable. During the so-called year of the comet the area was lashed by freak mana storms and unpredictable ebbs, more common in the Mojave than the coast—several scientists claim the phenomena was behind the higher than average incidence of SURGE in Southern California.

Over the next few years the situation stabilized, it didn't get better but it didn't degenerate either. Then came the Twins and the Fall—the unprecedented manifestation of a city-wide alchaera—a situation that's destabilized the local astral plane even further. While the situation has drawn droves of scholars and

researchers, and infused new energy into UCLA's and Caltech's thaumaturgical departments, working magic in the central LA sprawl has become dangerously unpredictable; spells fizzle, spirits are summoned at unexpected strength, aspects change, all sorts of weirdness.

- Spirits seem to dislike and avoid the area entirely. Those few who've talked of their aversion say the balance in the area has been breached. The only spirits that seems to like the state of things are the shedim that infest some of the abandoned flood areas.

Dual-natured animals also seem to have extreme reactions. Some are repelled by the astral taint, while others seem to be drawn in

Nobody's even begun to figure out why.

- Ethernaut

- It may have something to do with how a particular Awakened critter's channels ambient mana. If the local astral "flows" repress or boost paranormal abilities or senses the animal might feel disturbed and nervous. Or it might be something like the "earthquake" sense many animals exhibit, warning them that something bad is coming.

- Nepheline

- Alternately it might be down to how finely tuned its senses are to the astral plane—consider how a dog might react to a particularly ultrasonic noise humans would be oblivious to.

- The Smiling Bandit

The smog that used to smother the city may have diminished, but the astralscape of Los Angeles is shrouded in an astral pall of hazy psychoactive residue, negative emotions, astral pollution, and strangely aspected mana emanating from the Lacuna—constantly ebbing and surging with no discernable rhyme or reason. At its worse, one astral traveler I'm acquainted with described the experience as psychically exhausting at times—like being in a storm at sea, buffeted by waves and lashed by unrelenting downpour.

Polluted and toxic areas abound with their dangerous and tainted mana flows slowly contaminating the surrounding areas. Little or nothing has been done to cleanse these areas yet, even when reclamation projects are underway. Obviously, things are worse out in the floodlands of El Infierno and South Central, where the death and devastation was most extensive, but there are odds spots too like Mulholland Drive, the UCLA campus, and Arcology Mile. Deep ebbs can become voids without warning and areas suffer mana surges unexpectedly where the ambient mana interacts with the strange flows emerging from the Lacuna sinkholes and pits.

Localized micro-manastorms, a couple of hundred meters in size, sometimes erupt where toxic flows interact with the aspected mana rising from the Lacuna, leaving astral space disturbed for weeks.

- Some Angelino magicians I know claim it gets worse at some times of year. They say the astral smog in places is so thick and cloying that sticks to your aura and it takes days to get rid of the taint.

- J-Cruz



INSIDE THE LACUNA

As has been said above, the Deep Lacuna is a unique magical phenomenon—seemingly a materialized alchaera of unprecedented size, a gargantuan complex of caves, chambers, and tunnels reaching for hundreds of kilometers under the earth and centered on Los Angeles. For those who've become accustomed to the chaotic nature of the astral plane on the surface, the Lacuna is deceptively placid, but it too has its surprises and dangers.

As anyone who's approached it on the astral will tell you, the Lacuna appears to be a unique astral construct. Theories abound on whether or not it was man-made, though on the astral some of the cave walls exhibit radiant symbols in an unknown language and carvings in vaguely Mesoamerican-style that has not been positively identified. The waters that fill the chambers and caves glow with mana currents of their own, that seem to rise from the deep; the astral space in the watery depths has a viscous cloying quality I've never encountered before and the whole area possesses a perpetual fluctuating background count.

- It's been mentioned but it bears underlining: be careful around those sinkholes. When the Lacuna flows interact with the tainted mana on the surface things can get seriously strange. Mana surges, micro storms, rifts, spirit and ghost sightings... you name it. Only been through LA once since the Fall and don't plan on returning soon.
- Jimmy No
- Dr. Rosemont mentioned the Fall didn't cause any known me-tahuman victims, but there's been repeated glimpses of survivors wondering lost in some strange landscapes during those flare-ups. Nothing's ever come of it, but it makes you think.
- Skinny Dipper

There seems to be no science to the mana variation and astral flows through the chambers except that the deeper you go the higher the ambient mana levels. Several reports have surfaced—if you'll pardon the pun—of major astral constructs in the deeper caves, man-made buildings, possibly an entire city several hundred meters down. Nearer the surface only a few remnants and artifacts have been found—most of which defy traditional archeological classification and have offered contradictory carbon-dating results.

Location hasn't been substantiated or else it is being kept under lock and key by the powers-that-be, but there's no doubt its one reason for Aztechnology's interest in LA. Everyone from the Draco Foundation and the Dunklezahn Institute for Magical Research to the Atlantean Foundation and the Astral Preservation Society have petitioned the Pueblo authorities for clearance to explore the Lacuna—but so far everyone but the UCLA and Caltech have been turned away.

- And don't go thinking you're all on your lonesome down there either. Between research teams, vault-divers, Pueblo and Azzie astral scouts, SoCal smugglers using the cave system to run to San Diego, and the dangerous inhabitants of the depths that have been drawn by all the activity there's all kinds of trouble you can run into.
- Skinny Dipper

- I'm wondering about those rumors of air-filled caverns and tunnels. Anybody confirm that?
- 2XL

- I've only ever found a couple and they were quickly taken over by heavily armed smuggling bands as stashes. There might be more deeper in the network, but it's dangerous down there. Not only are there toxic waters down there, but strong currents in places which will drag you out to sea. And then there's the marine life that's moved in... anything that can survive down there is bad news in my book and most tend to be territorial.
- Skinny Dipper

- More dangerous than the wildlife are those "heavily armed smugglers" who have been busy charting the larger tunnels up and down the coast using mini-sub. They don't like intruders on their turf either.
- J-Cruz

- True, but more than one of those crews has gone MIA. If it isn't the wildlife acting up, I don't know what it might be.
- Skinny Dipper

- Smugglers aren't the only thing going missing. I know that spirits sent down too deep have been disrupted; and Caltech and UCLA ritual teams have sent down some darn powerful spirits to do some scouting. None ever comes back. Have to wonder what's actually down there.
- Winterhawk

- I don't know if there's any truth to this, but I hear the UCLA team Dr. Rosemont was talking about recovered a body from a deep cave expedition. According to accounts it was a fair-skinned elf of all things, dressed in some strange fabrics and ritually tattooed—all extraordinarily well-preserved in a little cul-de-sac flooded side tunnel about 120 meters down.
- Skinny Dipper

- Nothing like that's hit any network I frequent, but I'll be keeping an eye out for news. Rosemont's not answering my calls, but that might not mean anything.
- Elijah





Jiro is nothing. He does not belong.

"Did you expect you would work there forever?" The man's icy voice has a mocking lilt. "Part of one big corporate family, 'til death do you part?"

Noboru grins down at him, steel teeth glittering like a dozen mirrors. In his shame, Jiro came to him for help, and he cannot leave. He has nowhere else to go.

"It is all I have ever known. My father lived and died a Shishi man. I was meant to do the same."

"Your father died a dragon's slave. You are the lucky one."

Anger dances behind Jiro's eyes for just a moment as he meets Noboru's gaze. He says nothing, hoping to save face.

"I can find you work, but I cannot give you back your life."

"I cannot do that. I could never betray my family."

Noboru laughs, idly rubbing the dancing dragon nanotattoo that snakes up his forearm.

"Your family? You have no family. They are slaves to the very company that cast you out. You are anathema to them now. *Gaikokujin*." Noboru savors the word.

"They lie to you. The megacorporations lie to us all. Look at you, asking me to get you back in the fold, to shackle you again. Fool! You are still a slave. They need free agents such as us. We are their invisible cogs in the machine keeping their empire running."

Anger and embarrassment burn behind Jiro's face. "What use would I be to the shadows? I am not a thief or a gangster. I was a sarariman, an office drone."

"You have what is most vital: information. You know those whom it is important to know and how these people expect to be treated. The quiet hobbies, the rumors, the names of their children and the times they leave early to pick them up from school. These are the things they tell people like you. They tell you because you are insignificant to them. A faceless servant of the zaibatsu. In the hive, what matters a single drone? Certainly nothing to the bee-keeper." Noboru paused to sip his tea, his eyes never releasing Jiro. "This is what I need from you. To be the drone, to live and work in the hive with open eyes and open ears."

In a sudden gesture of affection, Noboru reaches out and grabs Jiro's wrist. Animated dragon scales bunch and coil on unmoving skin.

"Come work for me, brother. There can be a life for you yet."

The former Shishi man nods, dusting the tears from his eyes.





SEAT OF AN EMPIRE

Posted By: Traveler Jones

Two millennia ago, the proverb said that “all roads lead to Rome.” Not only was it largely true, but along those roads Roman trade, culture, science, and military might spread across the known world. Today, all roads lead to Neo-Tokyo. Nearly every nation on earth trades in the nuyen, which helps ease the transport of Japanese-made goods from one end of the Earth to the other. Japanese culture reaches everywhere, from the Zen-inspired boardroom to the slang on the streets of the Barrens. It’s no surprise that Japanese linguasofts outsell all others. Breakthroughs in the fields of cybertechnology, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and computing are often born in Neo-Tokyo labs. Japanese Imperial soldiers are stationed at bases all over the planet, and Japanese spy satellites circle above it. Japan dominates the Sixth World stage and Neo-Tokyo sits at its center.

- I was going to argue the Japanese jingoism here, but then I realized that as I am typing, I am eating a bowl of flash-noodles I picked up for a couple nuyen from the local *GO-JIRA!* foodstop while listening to the latest robopop track from the Takitaki Hive Mind.

- Haze

- For this little outing to the land of the Rising Sun, Mihoshi and Rigger X asked me to invite a few friends to help out. So I’ve obliged with temporary privileges for some folks: Janus, whom some of you may be already know since he’s been running the PacRim shadows for long enough; Yankee, a gaijin-friendly fixer who has graciously agreed to lend a hand; Otaku-Zuku, the (in)famous Undernet Prophet guru himself; and Kemuri, a well-connected former policeman paying off a *giri* debt to Mihoshi.

- FastJack

FROM OLD EDO TO NEO-TOKYO

Not since the Meiji Restoration has Tokyo been such a hotbed of shifting power and allegiances. The right-wing nationalists who have held power in Japan for over six decades are losing ground to the most unimaginable of upstarts: a young man unexpectedly thrust into the role of Emperor. In Japan, where overt use of power is reserved for foreigners, Tokyo has become a metropolis steeped in subtle struggles and dangerous, but immensely profitable, shadow operations.

One should not be so hasty, however, as to count out the Old Guard. The Divine Heritage Party has been the heart of the Japanese imperialist movement since the turn of the twenty-first century, when they consisted of young, conservative idealists heady on a domestic shift to traditionalism and a successful foreign policy that ousted the communist North Korean regime. They went from a regional success story to a worldwide phenomenon soon after when Japan launched a constellation of solar energy transmitter satellites. Japan beamed cheap energy to struggling nations in Asia and South America, nations who cared little about the Imperial Marines ostensibly sent to guard the facilities. Those nations hardly blinked when they became colonies of Japan’s new empire.

- What choice did they have? Japan brought affordable energy and stable governance; they all knew that if Japan pulled out, their nations would collapse into violence and poverty.

- Johnny No

TIMELINE: NEO-TOKYO

2006—An ascendant nationalist government announces the creation of the Japanese Imperial State at the Kokyo Palace in Tokyo.

2011—Commuters on a bullet train witness the first great dragon of the Sixth World, Ryumyo, as they pass Mt. Fuji.

2012—The Diet passes the Yamato Act, strengthening Japanese imperialism.

2036—Japan grants monetary policy control of the nuyen to the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank, establishing it as the de facto world reserve currency.

2039—The Tokyo Universal Matrix Specifications Conference, sponsored by Fuchi Industrial Electronics, establishes the standards for the worldwide computer network.

2059—“White Monday”, the largest single-day drop in 70 years, strikes the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

2060—Fuchi Industrial Electronics officially dissolves.

2062—Fourteen-year-old Yasuhito, the only survivor in the Imperial Family following the eruption of the Ring of Fire, is named Emperor.

2063—Solidifying his power base, Emperor Yasuhito merges a number of neighboring prefectures into Tokyo prefecture, creating Neo-Tokyo. An ambitious Tokyo restoration plan is announced, with the Shinto priesthood and local kami spirits taking an unprecedented supervisory role.

2064—Transys Neuronet unveils the plan for a downtown Neo-Tokyo wireless Matrix overlay, the predecessor to Neo-Tokyo’s wireless augmented reality grid.

2070—The Diet passes legislation requiring the testing for technomantic abilities in school-age children, adding to the existing required testing for magical aptitude.

The nationalists became stars on the world stage, but their policies were not as adept at addressing domestic concerns. Deregulation of business led to shifts in manufacturing towards the new colonies and forced the Japanese working class into more desperate employment contracts. Heavy investment in the military and nation-building efforts abroad left little in the tax coffers for Japan’s crumbling infrastructure and aging population. From the outside, Japan looked invincible, but on the inside the masses suffered quietly.

Under the gaze of an auspicious comet and amidst the eruption of the Ring of Fire that had killed his family, a quiet, bookish boy named Yasuhito was swept into the unlikely position of Emperor. The people saw something in Yasuhito that the pundits dismissed, but now at only twenty-three years old he has dramatically shifted the political winds in Japan. Yasuhito’s populist agenda has recalled Imperial soldiers from far-flung colonies and set them to work rebuilding and restoring Japanese cities. He has shifted investment into social programs and away from overseas gambits. He has repealed sections of the Yamato Act and abol-

Urgent Message...



THE YAMATO ACT

In the chaos of VITAS and the Awakening, the rest of the world scarcely noticed when the Japanese Diet passed the Yamato Act in 2012, which would become the lynchpin for the nation's sustained imperialism. On one hand, the Yamato Act repealed nearly all government regulation of Japanese corporations, allowing the nascent megacorps to swallow up smaller businesses and become legal monopolies. On the other hand, it encouraged protectionist policies towards Japanese corporations, hindering foreign competition. It also set the nuyen as the official Japanese currency and empowered a joint government-corporate council with setting its monetary policy, eventually handing that responsibility over to the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank.

In addition, the Yamato Act empowered the Japanese government to interfere with foreign governments as a basis for its own security. Japanese-backed nation-building efforts sprang up all along the Pacific Rim, spearheaded by Japanese megacorporations and Imperial Marines. Further, it granted the Japanese government broad powers to monitor and enact laws specific to the newly-appearing UGE (Unexplained Genetic Expression) babies, laws that would later pave the way for draconian reactions to metahumanity.

ished the practice of “quarantining” metahumans on the island of Yomi. With the Diet Building and Stock Exchange within eyeshot of his palace on a clear day, he has made Neo-Tokyo the frontline of a silent revolution.

- It has been no easy task, either. The Emperor is a symbolic power only, though Yasuhito has capitalized on his popularity with the people to push a number of Diet members seeking re-election into backing his reforms. Not only did most of new supporters win another term, but many political newcomers riding on Yasuhito's coattails toppled incumbents in the last election. The Divine Heritage party still holds the most seats, but the slim margin means they have had to form a coalition government with more moderate parties.

- Kemuri

- Things aren't all rosy within the Imperial Household either. Most of Yasuhito's proposed reforms didn't even get to a vote in the Diet, never mind making it into law. The changes he's managed to push through are dramatic, but some of his supporters have grumbled at the repeated failures and political quagmires like the Yokohama rebuilding.

- Fianchetto

SEASOURCE FASTFACTS**NEW QUERY :: Japanese Diet**

The National Diet of the Japanese Imperial State is the nation's primary legislature. It is composed of two houses: a 256-member House of Councillors and the more powerful 490-member House of Representatives. The two houses collectively elect and are led by the Prime Minister.

THE CITY WITHOUT END

Neo-Tokyo's limits were expanded in 2063 by Imperial decree, a crafty decision that widened the influence of the Imperial Household while weakening a number of local politicians and critics of the young Emperor. It has since picked up the nickname “the city without end,” a reflection of the mega-sprawls endless horizon of urban expansion. Within the Greater Neo-Tokyo Area live forty-five million people, thirty percent of the entire Japanese population. Within the central region of Neo-Tokyo—the proper core of the city—dwell twelve million souls. Nearly every available space has been urbanized; even Tokyo Bay has been filled with artificial islands as far south as Yokohama.

- By day, Neo-Tokyo can look a little ugly with its endless expanses of concrete, steel, and glass. But by night, the darkness is filled with blinking lights from the skyscrapers, towers, and commuter helicopters. It looks as if the stars have inverted themselves and heaven has come down to Earth.

- Picador

- A heaven that can be hot as hell. If you visit Neo-Tokyo in the summer, stay indoors. Its subtropical climate makes it muggy, and all the concrete trapping the heat makes it worse. With the artificial islands and arcologies crowding Tokyo Bay, the coastal winds never reach the heart of the city. On the plus side, the winters are mild and the buildings are all climate controlled.

- Mihoshi Oni

- If there's one thing that can beautify Neo-Tokyo it's the cherry blossoms. Get there in late March if you want to catch them at their peak.

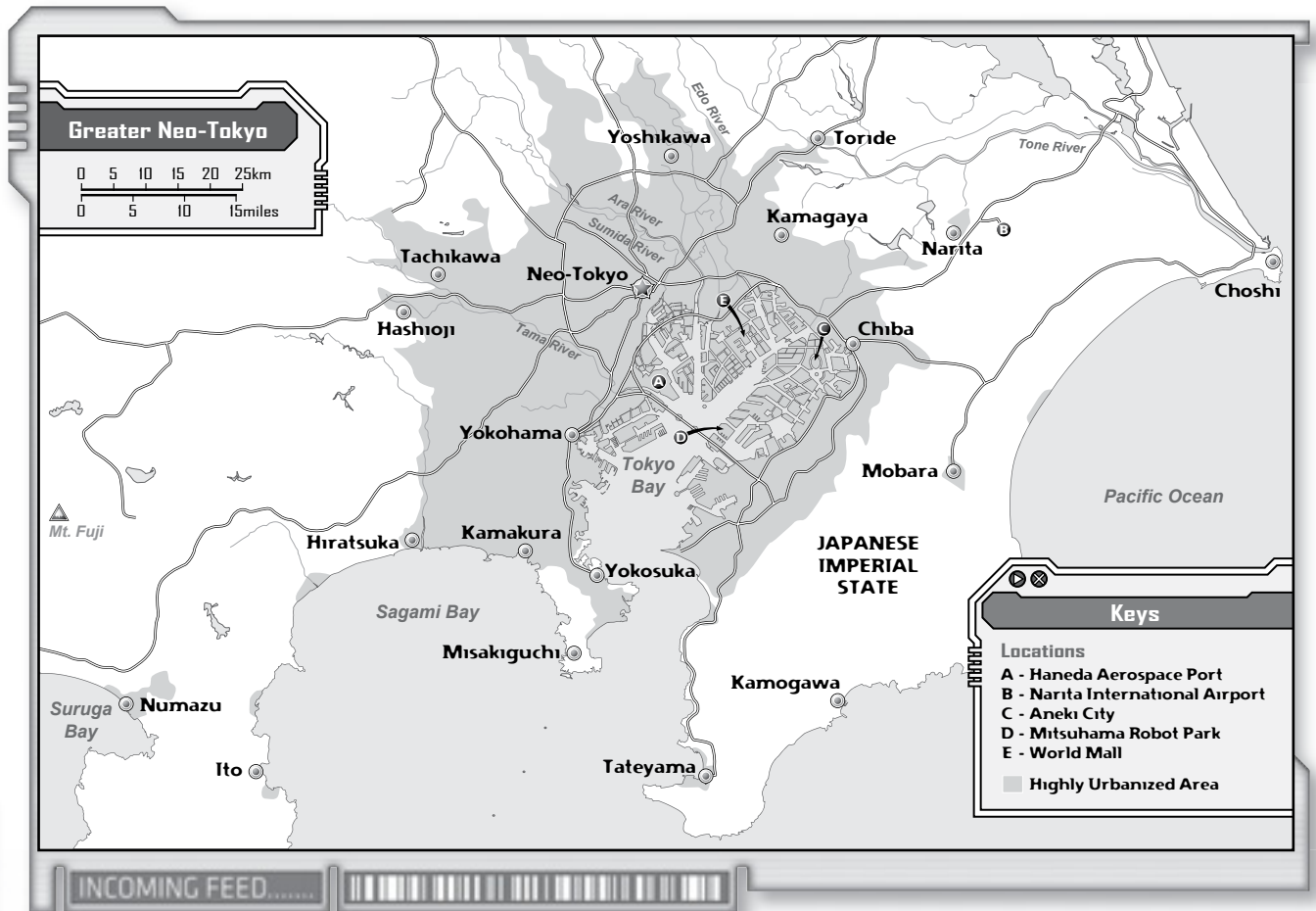
- Kemuri

EDO-SYNCRACIES: A GAIJIN'S GUIDE

This is a quick-and-dirty guide for the bare-minimum essentials to remember when you visit the navel of the corporate world. There's no substitute for genuine research (or, failing that, downloading the appropriate skillsoft), but keep in mind that thanks to the Japanacops, a lot of the little tidbits about how to act in Neo-Tokyo are applicable all over the world.

BASIC PROTOCOL

In a city of 45 million people (official people, that is—I hear it's more than 50 million if you count the SINless and critters not yet recognized as sapient under Japanese law), etiquette isn't just



a good idea for the SINners, it's a necessity. If you don't have the time to get a course in Japanese etiquette or upload a skillssoft prog-
gie, you'll insult the wrong people very, very fast.

Giri, Face, and Honor

The values of *giri*, face, and honor are pervasive throughout Japanese society, particularly among the older generation, and you'll experience these at practically every social level. Kids are ingrained with them growing up, and everybody expects them. Some people have lucrative careers just talking about them.

Giri is the self-sacrificing devotion to duty and obligation that fuels Neo-Tokyo. When a wageslave refuses to drink anything but his megacorp's beer, or your server at the local cyberclinic practically falls over themselves being formally polite to you until you feel like they're being a wiseass, or the bag runner for the local *gumi* pulls one more job after being on his feet for eighteen hours straight, that's *giri*. It's giving a hundred percent, all the time.

Face is both social perception of a person's prestige and public confidence in a person's character—sorta like street cred, but more formal and pervasive. What this basically means is that if you bring up something embarrassing about someone in front of them, you're challenging their authority; gossiping about them behind their back can affect their social standing with their peers (which can sometimes make legwork difficult). Face is taken very seriously, so be very careful if you're starting a smear campaign against someone, or if it looks like someone is doing the same to you.

- "Polite lies" are acceptable and even expected, mainly to let people save face. For example, instead of your fixer saying that he can't get your Ares Alpha, he'll say that there's been a delay and it'll take him a little while longer to get it. A native understands that the fixer's just trying to save face, but a stupid *gaijin* might get stuck waiting for weeks thinking their guy is going to pull through when he can't.
- Yankee

Honor is tightly tied to *giri* and face in Japan. A significant loss of face and/or failure in *giri* can cause a person to lose their honor. *Seppuku* (suicide) is accepted as an honorable and dignified passing that can make up for significant failures, though some street samurai may seek death in combat instead, since that is also seen as an honorable and dignified passing. Particularly renowned street sams are sometimes hired to act as seconds to ensure an individual can commit *seppuku* properly.

- *Giri* and honor are very big in Japan and it can get nasty, but it isn't always as extreme as Jones paints it—sometimes falling on one's sword is figurative, like a straight-shooter taking the fall for a superior's fuck up. Right, Kemuri?
- Mihoshi Oni
- I was honor-bound then as I am now to repay you for your role in clearing my family name. Without honor, without respect, we are animals.
- Kemuri

ONI AND KOBOROKURU

Japan is home to two unique metahuman subspecies, or metavariants. Oni are a form of metavariant ork characterized by bright orange, red, or blue skin; large, pointed ears; slightly protuberant eyes; and twisted horns on their forehead similar to trolls. Koborokuru are metavariant dwarfs, typically shorter than average, and with extensive body hair.

Oni and koborokuru metahuman expressions are very rare—perhaps one in one hundred dwarfs is born a koborokuru, and one in one hundred orks are born an oni. Cases of Japanese humans Goblinizing into oni at puberty are extremely rare. Like with normal orks and dwarfs, there is no such thing as a half-oni or half-koborokuru—either the individual is a metavariant or they are not. Because of their appearance, many oni and koborokuru face prejudice from other metahumans in addition to the biases of racist Japanese humans.

Bowing

If the other person offers to shake hands, then do so. Otherwise, bow when you meet someone and bow when you say goodbye. Bowing is typically done from the waist, avoiding eye contact, legs straight. The deeper you bow, the more respect you show for a person. Judging how far to bow is a tricky business, and bowing too deep or not deep enough can be an insult. The best rule of thumb I can offer is to bow as deep as the person bowed to you, or a hair deeper—unless it's a big shot like an oyabun or megacorporate president (in which case you'd better bow very deep indeed), or you're purposely trying to piss somebody off (a head nod can start a fight in Roppongi).

Drinking

In Japan, there is not much social stigma attached to getting truly shitfaced. In some cases, it's even expected. This doesn't extend to drinking on the job, however, and it really doesn't apply to street samurai—if you're too drunk to defend yourself, your rep's going to take a hit (or if you mess up too bad, *you* might have to take a hit). Basic rule when drinking at a business meeting or with friends: never pour your own drink, always pour someone else a drink, leave your glass full if you can't drink anymore, and always let the oldest guy or gal drink first.

Racism

Discrimination and prejudice are a fact of life in Neo-Tokyo, though it has gotten a little better over the last few years. Westerners are tolerated well enough for the most part—except for a couple places where they'll kick your head in unless you're pure, ethnic Japanese. Expatriate Chinese, Koreans, and Filipinos make up fairly large ethnic minorities, and they have their own neighborhoods and gangs. The Koreans and the Filipinos especially deal with a lot of hate crimes and abuse, and they're treated nearly as badly as metahumans in most parts of Neo-Tokyo (Ghost forbid you're a Korean or Filipino metahuman!). The discrimination is

mainly economic and social: the targets have to work menial jobs, if they can find them, and many are politely asked to leave nicer stores and restaurants or are ignored until they leave. A few of the more vicious youths get their thrill victimizing immigrants—rapes are rarely reported by their victims, and murder cases usually find that the assailant was “only defending himself.” This explains why a lot of outsiders prefer to live in Sub-Tokyo.

Finally, there are the *kawarubito* (“changed persons”)—metahumans. UGE and Goblinization didn't go over very well in Japan, and for a long time metahumans were effectively second-class citizens; trolls and orks in particular had a hard time of it. At one point it was government policy to ship metahumans out to a prison island in the Phillipines nicknamed Yomi. The Emperor's reforms ended this practice in 2063, but the memories and resentment still linger among humans and metahumans alike. Elf-poseurs, ork-poseurs, and other transmetatics are regarded as perverts by many.

- The ingrained “culture of shame” in Japan means that many metahumans are deeply self-conscious of what they are—so much so that many of them undergo cosmetic surgery to appear human, or live reclusive lives within their homes.
- Mihoshi Oni

• The whole damn city's built to a breeder's scale. I got a whopper of a crick in my neck 'cause I had to stoop the whole damn time. Lucky me there's a couple massage parlors in Roppongi that cater to sumo wrestlers and trolls.

- 2XL

DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOTO

A legion of robots services Neo-Tokyo's every need, creating a subculture unlike anything in the Sixth World. Municipal drones clean the streets and remove garbage. Police drones wait for activation inside ubiquitous *mini-koban* hutches, construction drones build skyscrapers downtown, robot pets follow children on their way to school, and caretaker robots watch over the elderly.

- Yeah, wonderful. Metahumans are finally free of being sent to Yomi camps and now they live on the streets of Yokohama, all their jobs taken by fuckin' drones.
- Mihoshi Oni

• Let's face it; the Japanese are more comfortable with a robot picking up their trash than they are with a troll doing it.

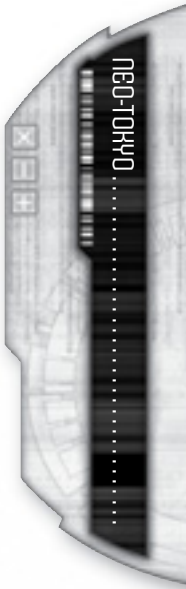
- Fatima

• The panic over virtuakinetics and artificial intelligences could change that.

- Plan 9

• Don't count on it. The panic wasn't nearly as bad in Neo-Tokyo as elsewhere in the world. Instead of lynching technomancers, the Japanese look at them as freaks and social misfits, content to shun them and look the other way as the Japanacorps have their way with them. As for the AIs, there is a real fascination about them in Japan, and neither the Second Crash nor the technomancer scare was enough to diminish it.

- Otaku-Zuku



- It helped that Empress Hitomi set up public support programs for AIPS sufferers *before* the technomancer incident in Hong Kong. The Japanese tend to see the violence and chaos in other nations in reaction to technomancers as evidence of their failure to be socially responsible and enlightened.

- Puck

- Enlightened, my ass. They may not be hunting technomancers in the streets in Neo-Tokyo, but they won't lift a finger when the corps come around to snatch us in the night. When AIPS patients disappear, the common reaction is to say they must have been unable to cope with society and run away. The people stick their heads in the sand while the corporations experiment on us.

- Netcat

- While testing for technomancer abilities in grade school children is the law in Japan now, neither technomancers nor artificial intelligences are required to register for any special identification in Japan, which has made Neo-Tokyo a haven for them. A haven with a downside, of course.

- Otaku-Zuku

- Isn't it strange that the Japanese are more comfortable with robots than they are with metahumans?

- Icarus

- Not when you remember that the robots are happy to do all the things that Japanese don't really want to do. It will be interesting to see how they feel when the digital intelligences start seeking equal representation in Japan.

- Glitch

- That may be sooner than later. Word is that at least three artificial intelligences have set up shop on the Akihabara grid.

- Kemuri

THE WEIRD AND THE WONDERFUL

Japan tolerates a wide range of seemingly extreme behaviors. The constant stress from work, school, and extreme politeness while living in tight quarters means they understand the need for release. The Japanacops have hordes of wageslaves whose sole release from a fifteen hour work day might be their hobby, their fanclub network, the manga they download to read on the can, singular fashion, or a sexual fetish.

That's not to say Japan is a nation of kinky sexophile workaholics—despite what non-Japanacorp propaganda might lead you to believe—but this is a nation of enthusiasts whose idea of a socially acceptable good time is very different from other cultures. That's changing some as the Japanacops continue to export Japanese trends and blitzfads on a global scale. I can't begin to go over all that's new and hot in Japanese pop culture, but there are a couple of long-lasting trends that you might come across—if not in Japan, then in a sprawl near you.

Kaodachi

Kaodachi are collectable, blobby little proto-agents loaded with specific personality traits and some very basic programs—like a calendar for appointments, a recipe index, a calculator, etc—that essentially act as cheerleaders. These buggers surround you in AR, letting you interact with your little invisible friends. Personally, I think they're annoying as all hell, but the kids—and a fair number of adults—love 'em.

- These things are a racket! Renraku's IdeiaFix brought out the first batch six months ago. The damn critters can be "evolved" by using them to play in Matrix games, and one of the Korean Jo-pok Matrix gangs is busy pumping out bootlegged versions for the NAN.

- Slamm-O!

- Renraku slipped an itsy-witsy data bomb in these things, just enough to discourage amateurs from trying to crack the code—one mistake and your kaodachi goes boom, and you have to go buy another one to crack.

- Glitch

Little Sister I-Adore-U!

The majority of the Japanese engage in long-term Matrix roleplaying games and multi-POV simsense—usually realistic and romantic rather than fantastic as a form of entertainment and escapism. Of these, the most popular usually involve little brother or little sister simulation programs. Real aficionados can purchase personalized versions of these programs that follow you around in AR and act like a sibling, using some sort of complex mimetic algorithm to schedule dynamic plot arcs when you're less busy or to cheer you up when your biometrics indicate boredom or depression.

- These things took a serious dive in popularity during the whole technomancer fearcraze. A couple of buggy ones started acting weirdly possessive and usurping other program functions on commlinks. They traced it back to a fan and amateur hacker, but the damage was done and everybody thought the thing was an AI. Idiots.

- Dr. Spin

Mushisushi

Initially evolving as a valuable source of protein in the diet of the destitute and SINless in large urban areas, especially trolls and orks, dining on insects became briefly popular during the Orxploitation craze of the mid 2060s. The large number of soy-based food allergies now appearing in the 2070s, however, along with improvements in corporate insect farms and special breeds (such as Ecuadorean honey ants), contributed to the re-introduction of insect cuisine as a crunchy, healthy snack food to the mainstream Japanese pop market, with Evo's "Mushisashimi" vending machines leading the charge.



THE CORPORATE LIFE

Posted by: Kia

Let's look at the daily life of a Neo-Tokyo sarariman for a moment. Five days a week (at least), he is roused from bed by chirping pop music spontaneously generated by his Sony Home Management Suite, which has put together a sugar-sweet tune based on today's weather data. Rubbing his eyes, he stumbles into the kitchen to fumble for the cup of Peruvian bio-engineered coffee imported by Yakashima, already brewed and steaming thanks to that Sony software watching his every morning move. As the caffeine awakens his brain, the Mitsuhaman-brand display walls come to life with today's news, tailored for personal preference by Renraku LifeSmart software. He numbly soaks in the headlines while he pops open a meal of instant-hot eggs and rice, an east-west breakfast engineered by another Yakashima subsid for businessmen on the go.

The world business report on HTB Channel 22 displays on the wall of his shower stall, periodically interrupted by a patriotic imperial message delivered by cheerful animated characters. Out of the shower, he throws on a no-wrinkle Hideo-Tato suit, a fashion line pretty much required for Renraku middle managers. His tie is a predictable grey monogrammed with the Renraku logo. He grabs his Renraku Sensei commlink and heads out the door, leaving himself enough time to make the next train, which Shishi Operational Mechanics always has running on time.

- So the corps rule his ass. What's different between this poor bastard and his Seattle counterpart?
- Beaker
- The devil is in the details. Our Neo-Tokyo sarariman is ruled by Japanacorps; foreign brand names are still pretty rare in the Japanese lifestyle. Second, the Japanese love their corporate brands; nearly everything is decorated with a stylized logo or animated character. They are actually proud of their brand-name enslavement—it's part of their cultural identity.
- Janus

Like the sarariman, Neo-Tokyo lives for the Japanacorps. They are everywhere, and their presence trickles into every aspect of life—there are shrines to corporate CEOs turned kami, the media are saturated, and an unrelenting fascination with neons and ARs ensure corp iconography is never far from sight.

If you're running in Neo-Tokyo, you're always running for or against the Japanacorps every time you take a job, even if it is not for a corporate Johnson. If you are going to survive to make a few nuyen, you need to know how the system works and who the players are.

BITTER SATORI

It's a great time to be a runner in Neo-Tokyo. With the Emperor and the corps at odds and the gumi at each other's throats, there is a great deal of opportunity to build a life in the shadows here. Change is coming hot and fast to the world's business capital. Neo-Tokyo is a place of rising powers; though the corporations have long reigned on this soil, the Emperor has carved out a niche, the religious groups have gotten a voice, and the number of emer-

gent technomancers and artificial intelligences journeying to the Neo-Tokyo Tower rises every day. Old alliances have become fluid and new alliances are forged every day, and there is an ever-present demand for independent and deniable assets.

Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Nemawash

Business terminology for the informal process of laying the foundation for any major change, this term has been coined by headhunters and fixers alike to indicate the legwork involved in preparing a major run, such as an extraction. A runner team has to dig around the roots when extracting a high level corporate employee, which may mean staging a series of consecutive runs during which the executive's closest aides, secretaries, personal assistants, and often their families must be extracted before the executive is capable of working for his new employer.

The Corporate Mind

Neo-Tokyo is mostly a Data Age economy, with the majority of products and services dealing with the access, manipulation, and distribution of information. The overabundance of data management and white-collar careers is why Neo-Tokyo is sometimes called the Land of the Sarariman. Few physical products not destined for internal consumption are produced within the limits of the megaplex. Instead, a tremendous wealth of human and information capital moves between the various corporations. When you take an asset from another corp, that asset isn't always willing or able to work for a new employer.

Standard operating procedure after an extraction is to send the new employee to an "acquisitions deprogrammer." I got ahold of a training memo distributed by NeoNET TransAsia's senior deprogrammer. Reading it was like pulling the back the curtain and catching Mr. Oz in an adult diaper. Check it out for yourself.

// **Begin Text File Attachment** //

// **Uploaded by user Kia - 02/02/71** //

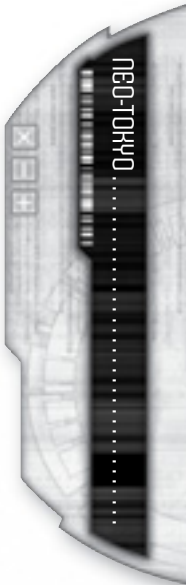
TO: DL_Acquisitions_All

FROM: Futoshi Takase, Senior Acquisitions Deprogrammer

So many of us do not understand the importance of the job we have been asked to carry out. Over the last six weeks, two newly acquired employees have been declared unfit to work. Both expressed deep regret for leaving their former employer, so much so that one of the two attempted to take his own life rather than work for NeoNET TransAsia.

This is our failure.

Belief in the corporation is the underpinning of our society. The corporate womb is constructed to make you feel as if you can belong nowhere else. I once thought I did not believe in religions—even the free-wheeling kami and their plug-and-play rules of spirituality was too unrealistic for my state of mind. Religion was a thing for the weak. In my heart I felt that real people did not need such crutches. Yet, I was leaning on a higher power. My crutch—my religion—was Yakashima.



When I was extracted from the corporation it felt like I was being torn away from everything I had ever believed in. My father was a sarariman for Yakashima, and I had lived my entire life under the watchful gaze of the corporation. When I was stolen away, a pawn in a game to win my father, the guilt of my role nearly overwhelmed me. Every moment I breathed was a betrayal to Yakashima. You see, as churches give meaning to the spirit, corporations give meaning to the lives of the workers and their families. We live for the corp. Some of us even die for the corp. Worker productivity is enhanced by this doctrine. Your corporation comes before your government, before your family, even before your own life. In essence, the corporation is the higher power you serve as a member of its flock.

Your role as a deprogrammer is to give our subjects a new God and a new flock. You are to show them that their internal doctrine is our internal doctrine; that what they have been taught to believe meshes with our beliefs, only that ours follow the pure form and their former flock offered a corruption of the fundamental need to belong to something worthwhile.

To fail in this task is to fail the corporation that clothes us, feeds us, and protects us from the foreign wolves at our doorstep. We must honor the corporation with success. We must not fail again.

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- Strong words, but mostly hot air. It fits with what the older class of Japanese people feel, but the new youth entering the work force doesn't always agree. Some youngsters will go through shadow channels to have themselves extracted so they don't have to work for the corporation that's surrounded them for their entire lives.

- Kemuri

The Takase memo embodies the principals of the corporate belief system.

Neo-Tokyo is a peculiar mix of nationalism and cultish ideology. They are so deeply entrenched in this stuff that it has become real; some corp folks actually retire as gods, kami that are worshipped in shrines across Japan and corporate enclaves around the world.

Against All Outsiders

Anywhere else on the globe, if a corporation starts hemorrhaging money, a feeding frenzy begins. If they are lucky, they survive by selling their soul to a white knight. If they aren't, within months they have been purchased, dismantled and resold.

That's not exactly how things work in Japan. Above the desires of capitalism, there is a desire to keep Japanese corporations in the hands of the Japanese. Without certain protections, vulnerable Japanacorps could be taken over by foreign investors, who would then have access to immense influence in the Japanese Imperial State. This fear has created a complex web of protective traditions between the Japanacorps, all brokered and maintained by the powerful Pacific Rim Bank.

Sometimes the problem is external, where a foreign corporation is attempting a hostile takeover of a Japanese corporation. In this case, the Pacific Rim Bank will lend money to another Japanese corporation (often at no interest), and that second Japanese corporation will use that money to outbid the foreign corp's takeover offer. The understanding between the Japanese megacorporations

SEASOURCE FASTFACTS

NEW QUERY :: The Reformers // Japan // Current

Over on the left-wing of Japan's power struggle are the Reformers. They function as a mirror image to the Imperialists; they are just as ruthless and will fight just as dirty to come out on top. They also favor a Japan that is regionally dominant and a world economic power, but they favor scaling back Japan's military presence and ramping up its diplomacy. They take a soft-power approach, establishing Japanese dominance through economic power and cultural reach. They are social progressives, accepting those that the Imperialists have shunned, including metahumans, technomancers, and the Awakened.

The head of the Reformers is the **Emperor Vasuhito**, though he has the full backing of the entire **Imperial Court**. His popular support has empowered the opposition **New Progressive Party**, the second-largest party in the Diet. Corporate allies of the Reformers include **Shiawase, Evo**, and the Horizon Group's **Hisato-Turner Broadcasting**, as well as several minor corps wooed over from the Imperialist faction by lucrative Matrix 2.0 contracts. Because of its more accepting view of metahumans, some "New Way" Yakuza gumi like the **Wanibuchi-gumi** are also believed to support Reformer goals.

- This query has been tagged by someone in your network
- Accessing Tag ...

- The Reformers have been wooing the Shinto priesthood by involving them and the kami in Japan's rebuilding. But Shinto has always been the state religion of Imperial Japan, and many of the Shinto old-timers have not been willing to turn their backs on the Imperialists who brought them to power.

- Axis Mundi

- Ryumyo is also noticeably missing from both camps. He has publicly honored the new Emperor while also criticizing Vasuhito's involvement in Japan's economy. For the most part, it appears he is staying out of the fray, but with great dragons we never know the whole story.

- Lyran

is that once the foreigners back down from the raising takeover price, the Japanese bid will be withdrawn and the original corporation can survive intact.

- Of course, every once in a while, the implied understanding in this sort of white knight exchange is broken. A good example is what happened with Shibata Construction and Engineering. Originally a Mitsuhamma subsidiary, it came under a takeover attempt from Ares. Yamatetsu came to the rescue, outbidding Ares and forcing the Detroit corp to back down. Only when it came time for Yamatetsu to withdraw its bid, they didn't, which made them the single largest shareholder of Shibata and a pariah to Mitsuhamma—not that they were friendly to begin with.

- Mr. Bonds



Tokyo Financial Times Query: Keiretsu vs. Zaibatsu

The Japanese market has promoted a number of business models, some more successful than others. Of these, the two most famous are the keiretsu and zaibatsu, which are attributed as keys to the continued success of the AAA Japanacorp. The zaibatsu is a traditional Japanese business model—a family-owned corporation—that is exceedingly rare today, with the notable exception of Shiawase and some of the corporations owned by members of a particular Yakuza clan.

Keiretsu, by comparison, are much more common and resemble the conglomerates more familiar to Western business models. Typically, a keiretsu begins when several investors with holdings in the same companies decide to combine their disparate investments into a single corporation, typically built around a central bank or other financial institution for stability. Depending on the setup of the megacorp, a keiretsu may be described as “vertical”—the typical centralized management structure most people imagine when they think of corps—or “horizontal,” where the individual businesses retain their own management for the most part. In the 2070s, it is increasingly common to find management structures that combine aspects of both types of keiretsu at different levels.

Sometimes the problem is internal, where a Japanese corporation’s own business failures leave it vulnerable to outside threat. In these cases, the Pacific Rim Bank usually starts by injecting low-interest loans in the struggling Japanacorp, but if that is not working, they offer to buy out the struggling corp. Unlike a foreign takeover, the owners of the bleeding Japanacorp are expected to make the transition easy for Pacific Rim in exchange for the understanding that the bank will later sell back the shares to the original owners once the corporation is back in the black. As the new boss, the Pacific Rim Bank appoints a new board—often made of officers from other Japanacorps—to steer the ship back to profitability.

- That’s the warm and fuzzy version. In reality, sometimes the Pacific Rim Bank uses these puppet corporations as pawns in the bigger game of Japanese protectionism. Aikawa Heavy Mechanics is an example: bailed out of near bankruptcy by the Pacific Rim Bank, Aikawa was approaching profitability when the Emperor’s rebuilding contracts came down the pike. PacRim used Aikawa as a tool to fight foreign corporations, unprofitably underbidding NeoNET TransAsia on a series of contracts. They won the contracts at a business loss, which simultaneously hurt NeoNET’s influence in Japan and also kept Aikawa in the Pacific Rim Bank’s hands a bit longer.
- Janus

It goes without saying that the impregnable stronghold of the Japanacorps is in fact under siege. Despite the rampant protectionism, the system has its loopholes and failings—no megacorporation can afford to ignore one of the wealthiest and

SEASOURCE FASTFACTS

NEW QUERY :: The Imperialists // Japan // Current

On the right-wing side of the fence are Japan’s Imperialists, who favor the way the Imperial State has been doing business for decades. They want a Japan with a dominant economy and a powerful military as well as regional control over the Pacific Rim. Socially, they are conservative traditionalists, some taking it as far as being racist against metahumans. They tend to favor regulation of the Awakened, technomancers, and artificial intelligences.

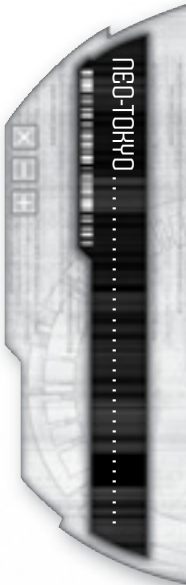
Most of the Japanacorps fall into the Imperialist camp, led by **Mitsuhamu, Renraku, Yakashima, and Monobe**. In the Diet (Japan’s legislature), the majority **Divine Heritage Party** backs an Imperialist agenda. The **Tokyo Metropolitan Government** is also Imperialist, including Neo-Tokyo’s governor **Saburo Koga**. The powerful **Watada-gumi** Yakuza can also be called on to support the Imperialists, and the **Japanese Imperial Military** has a pro-Imperialist stance.

most stable consumer markets on the planet, and many are willing to fight the uphill battle to gain a foothold. Success stories are few, but they are growing in number—a sign that not all is well with the old status quo in the Land of the Rising Sun.

The Silent War

Though a battle is raging between the Emperor’s reformists and the Japanacorps’ imperialists, you will only hear the echoes of the struggle on your newsfeed. Overt war is highly undesirable to the Japanese public, and when all is said and done, the Japanese public is what both factions are fighting to control. So while open conflict is out of the picture, every other front is wide open, whether it is economic, social, or legal. The intrigue and lobbying around the Diet is just the tip of the iceberg—nobody sees the whole picture.

- Bullets aren’t the way to take out an opposing player in this battle—shame is. Reveal something shameful about your enemy and not only will their public image take a nosedive, but they’ll be forced to withdraw from the big game by social obligation. The blackmail biz—professional or personal—is good, on both the revealing and hiding secrets ends.
- Baka Dabora
- The whole reconstruction affair is just another front in this war. The Emperor has shifted money to pet corporations that now owe him favors. When one of these corporations is out there rebuilding Japan, their public image goes up. Of course, a few well-placed sabotage runs can ruin a corporation’s rep and hurt the Emperor in the process. Look at Yokohama for an example of the system failing.
- Ma’fan
- The way the Imperialists and the Reformers fight doesn’t just affect the runs we get, but also how they go down. For example,



take Japan's social and legal restrictions against firearms. Armed police are rare and possession of weapons carries stiff punishment; even the corporations don't brandish firearms when they step off extraterritorial property. That doesn't mean that corporate security or shadowrunners go to work unarmed; concealed weapons are all the rage, especially those concealed in cyberlimbs.

- Mihoshi Oni

THE NEO-DAIMYO

It should come as no surprise that the AAAs have extensive influence throughout Neo-Tokyo and the Japanacorp AAAs—Mitsuhamas, Renraku, and Shiawase—are the most pervasive. The other megacorps aren't non-entities, however, and all of the Big Ten have their puppet companies, divisions, and interests in the megaplex. Besides their economic, military, and political influence, these megacorps (and, by proxy, their corporate officers and citizens) are given greater social status within the Japanese cultural paradigm.

EVO CORPORATION

Ten years ago, Yamatetsu was an established Japanacorp faced with severe problems: a board divided between pro- and anti-metahuman factions, and increasing economic and legal complications from the national government. In the end, the corporation turned its back on Japan and took nearly all of its Japanese assets to Russia, establishing a new corporate headquarters in Vladivostok as both a strategic economic move and a symbolic protest to the blatant prejudices which prevailed at the time. Thousands were left with the choice of leaving the Japanese Empire for a backwater Russian port or facing unemployment, one of the most shameful situations a modern Japanese citizen could face. The move poisoned Yamatetsu's reputation both among the Japanese populace and its fellow Japanacorps.

Now a decade later, with a new name and an ally in a sympathetic emperor, Evo Corporation is returning home to claim a place for itself. The assets that Evo left in Japan were largely autonomous subsidiaries that continued to succeed largely because no one associated them with their parent corporation. Unsurprisingly, these subsidiaries were also staffed by many bitter Japanese loyalists that Evo could not easily place in the newly re-imaged corporation. Evo is faced with the tough reality of having to rely on these rogue subsidiaries to take care of business.

- Meetings between Evo directors and the local Japanese managers are colder than a Siberian winter.
- Red Anya
- Notably absent from Japan, after acting as the Emperor's advisor during the reconstruction years, is the kami Buttercup. I keep hearing rumors that she's active in Tokyo, but none of my sources has actually seen her in months—at least in her girly form. With spirits you never know.
- Kemuri



To complicate the situation further, many of these Japanese Evo subsidiaries are among the more meta-friendly corporations in Japan. This has divided metahumans within Evo, some of whom think that these Japanese subsidiaries are helping the image of Japanese metahumans far more than Evo's Vladivostok assets could do from a distance. Evo can't crack down on subsidiaries that are employing Neo-Tokyo's downtrodden metahuman population without looking like hypocrites in the process.

- These fringe Evo subsidiaries have a real chip on their shoulder, but now they also have money and influence from rebuilding contracts the Emperor awarded them for Neo-Tokyo's metahuman-friendly infrastructure. The struggle on the board is really between the Japanese ultranationalists and the more international-minded faction in Vladivostok. Both are fairly progressive with metahuman hiring standards, but the nationalists pretty much dictate how Evo operates in Japan—if upper management tries to ram their policies through, the entrenched Japanese divisions have a thousand tricks to make them fail. The bigwigs can't simply fire every troublemaker without shooting themselves in the foot.

- Yankee

Evo is practically synonymous with metahuman-friendly products in Neo-Tokyo, and their Yaguyagu Construction subdivision is responsible for practically all of the dwarf and troll-scale apartments and facilities in Minato and Yokohama wards, while the Shibanojuji Orbital Resort remains one of the most popular vacation destinations for up-and-coming corporate executives.

- It's not talked about that openly, but Evo's Red Star clinics do a brisk business in cosmetic and implant surgery, primarily to allow metahumans to pose as Japanese humans. Most of the patients are actually children brought in by their parents.

- Mihoshi Oni

- They also rake in plenty from the cyberfetish crowd. Cosmetic and cyber mods are all the rage among the too-rich corp brats. As soon as they hit majority they start plugging their bodies with 'ware on their daddy's credbalance.

- Janus

HISATO-TURNER BROADCASTING

There was a time when no one would have used the word "edgy" to describe the Japanese half of Hisato-Turner Broadcasting. They were the suit-wearing conservatives in a stodgy media conglomerate kept going by the posthumous paranoia of a wealthy visionary. Then the Horizon Group quietly purchased HTB and everything changed. Lifetime executives producing shows with flagging ratings were tossed on the street and replaced with young, media-saturated Japanese mavericks who suddenly and repeatedly challenged Japanese social taboos.



- And it's working. Not only have the Japanese youth latched onto HTB's flood of manga, anime, trideo, and sims, but the older Japanese who are fascinated by their own youth have started tuning in.

- Baka Dabora





INCOMING FEED.....

- Their *Live Action Anime* is something to behold. Syndicated in 124 countries.
- Slamm-O!
- That's the kind of reach that gets the old guard quaking, both in the government and the corporations. HTB throws out stuff that promotes strong female characters, equality with metahumans, free and creative (read: not corporate) lifestyles, and anything else to shake up the status quo. Even NewsNet Japan, a Hisato-Turner division, has broken with every single existing precedent and started embarrassing Japanese officials on the air.
- Sunshine
- Then there's HTB's support of technomancers and AIs. The tempered media coverage coming from the lords of hard-hitting news alleviated some of the hysteria in Neo-Tokyo, and since then they've gone so far as to highlight technomancers and AIs in their programming. It's taking the steam out of politicians who want to regulate and monitor us.
- Netcat

Armed with the phrase "social responsibility," the corporate-backed Diet and the Imperial Ministry of Internal Affairs has fined and punished Hisato-Turner for some of their content, but so far the corporation has not backed down. In response, the Imperial Ministry of Justice has threatened investigations and trials.

- It looks like HTB has decided to court every kind of trouble they can find. They've been repeatedly fined for broadcasting simsense feeds that exceed legal standards—not BTL-level, but much higher than normal. Their adult programming also exceeds normal standards; the popular *Tentacle Hour* simsense series is notorious for being poorly protected from underage subscribers.
- Rigger X
- Hey, I love that show! The only freaky weird part is the Kobayashi Kalamari commercial they pop in the middle.
- Slamm-O!
- News flash: Six employees of Channel Two's "Tokyo Metro Talk" have been arrested on charges of endangering public security. Their story on the military's treatment of metahumans in Yokohama incited riots that led to the deaths of ten people.
- Sunshine

While the government threatens HTB with its laws, the corporations have taken the fight behind the scenes. Horizon is a foreign company, and the Japanacorps do not want it controlling the mainstream media. The shadows have gotten thick and downright dirty against HTB, including sabotage and kidnapping.

- The whole thing makes Hisato-Turner and Horizon out to be the good guys, but since when is any corp looking out for anything

NEO-TOKYO

besides themselves? Horizon wants control of the Japanese media because, between Japan and California, they'd have two-thirds of the world's entertainment production locked up.

- Baka Dabora

MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

No corporation symbolizes Japan's political, economic, and military might better than Toshiro Mitsuhamas's corporate goliath.



Gargantuan MCT mining drones tear mineral wealth from the earth in Japanese colonies, MCT smart-tanks fly the Japanese flag overseas, MCT automated streetcleaners clear Tokyo streets at night and press outlets spew little more than Japanacorp propaganda. As a result, no corporation was more insulted by—or stood to lose more from—Emperor Yasuhito's policy of economic and social reform than Mitsuhamas. As Japan softens its militarism, Mitsuhamas loses contracts, and when Japan loses colonies, Mitsuhamas loses money.

- Mitsuhamas is all business. Renraku's disagreements with the Emperor are largely cultural and philosophical. For Mitsuhamas, Japanese imperialism is just part of the bottom line.
- Rigger X

Mitsuhamas is so deeply entrenched in the Japanese imperial military that it's almost impossible to separate the two. Many of Mitsuhamas's executives are retired generals, and most of the Diet's right-wing nationalists go into lobbying for Mitsuhamas when their terms are up. Mitsuhamas is the most blatant force opposing the Emperor: backing opposition Diet candidates, running negative political campaigns, and even assassinating vocal supporters of the Emperor (if the rumors are to be believed) are all part of their efforts.

- Mitsuhamas will use the Yaks or deniables to take out the Emperor's friends and allies. But for the rare hard target, deeply secretive military operations have been arranged, led by Mitsuhamas company men. I'd be surprised if they haven't already drawn up fifteen different scenarios on how to take Japan by military coup.
- Yankee
- Mitsuhamas's ties with the Yakuza go a lot deeper than just using the Yaks as street muscle. More on that later.
- Mihoshi Oni

Half the drones and vehicles (what's the difference these days?) you see on the streets of Neo-Tokyo are made by Mitsuhamas, as is the most cheap and popular commlink for kids, the most popular search engine, and practically any focus or fetish you see a wagemage sporting.

- And they're pushing to be the number one cyborg company. They've announced a new iteration of their Otomo anthroform drones and their cerebral containment unit technology. The cyborg technology is still only open to limited markets with huge bank accounts, but the Imperial Military is already the largest customer and has at least one Cyborg Tactical Unit.
- Sounder

NEONET TRANSASIA

NNTA is a focused effort to gain a foothold in the Asian markets, a new division overseeing hundreds of subsidiaries and investments but not yet ready to be on its own.



NeoNET TransAsia is still overseen by NeoNET Seattle's Samantha Villiers, though she has entrusted its day-to-day operation to an old college friend. Jennifer Sung is Korean-born, Boston-educated, and runs NeoNET TransAsia's operations, all of which make her unpopular among the Japanacorp executives in Neo-Tokyo. However, she has a quick wit, a sharp tongue, and a good eye for opportunity, plus she has kept her head afloat in shark-infested business waters.

- The male-dominated business culture in Neo-Tokyo often underestimates Sung, which works to her benefit. She's sealed more than one deal that the opposition never saw coming.
- Mihoshi Oni

NeoNET TransAsia continues to maintain and upgrade the Neo-Tokyo wireless Matrix that it inherited from Transys-Neuronet, but beyond that, its Japanese holdings are few. Its commlinks and wireless devices struggle to sell alongside local powerhouses, but it has had some luck partnering with local Matrix design studios and AR-based software studios to produce specialized AR tool packages for highly technical professions. They are still in a very tenuous position, however, and the Japanacorps would love to see NeoNET TransAsia fail.

- The Japanacorps know that NeoNET TransAsia's success or failure depends on two people: Jennifer Sung and Samantha Villiers. Dozens of runs have attempted to target the two women in one way or another.
- Yankee
- Until NeoNET can establish some trusted fixers in Neo-Tokyo, Cara Villiers is handling the hiring of shadowrunners for these jobs. With all the jobs lining up here, it's a good opportunity for a runner to make a name for herself with NeoNET.
- Pistons
- Or a good time to end up dead.
- Hard Exit

NIPPON CREDIT AND TRUST

Foreign corporations operating in Japan are typically desperate for capital and face Japanese investment banks that are loathe to aid foreign competition. Seeing an opportunity, Saeder-Krupp purchased Nippon Credit and Trust and set it to the task of investing in foreign corporations looking to enter the Japanese market. For S-K, it's a win-win situation: they get to invest in businesses that weaken the Japanacorps on their home turf, and they get influence within the many cash-hungry smaller corporations.



- The labyrinthine nature of S-K's ownership of the bank makes it difficult for the Japan to consider it a foreign bank, which helps



immunize Nippon Credit and Trust against many of the restrictions that face foreign banks operating in Japan. Still, what can't be accomplished in the legal system can always been done through shadowruns, and the Pacific Rim Bank makes sure that NC&T has a hard time operating in Neo-Tokyo.

- Mr. Bonds

Nippon Credit and Trust's board is staffed by an experienced crew of lawyers, economic theorists, and savvy businessmen. Saeder-Krupp has ensured that NC&T's leadership knows every possible trick and loophole, because they need them to survive in the Japanese marketplace. So far the strategy appears to be working: NC&T's investments have outperformed expectations.

- NC&T's brain boys might be too smart for their own good. From what I hear, they have the books cooked eight ways to Sunday in order to pull off their money magic in Japan. If the Corporate Court or the Japanese Imperial Ministry of Finance were to figure it out, it could rock the global market.
- Janus
- Neither the Corporate Court nor the Imperial Ministry of Finance frightens the NC&T leadership. Lofwyr does.
- Icarus
- Wonder why Ryumyo's letting this invasion of his territory go unchallenged? Lofwyr is pissing in his koi pond.
- Frosty

PROSPERITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Prosperity Development Corporation, a real estate conglomerate with Wuxing as its majority owner, has jumped all over opportunities in Japan and the Pacific Rim, turning volcanic ash-zones into strip malls and former military bases into luxury condos.



- Wuxing owns fifty-eight percent of Prosperity Development Corporation, but they aren't the only major player involved. Aztechnology owns a thirteen percent share, and the Horizon Group owns another eleven percent. All three are plenty interested in owning and developing land in the Japanese Imperial State.
- Mr. Bonds

Prosperity's success hasn't been without controversy, however. In Japan locals are resistant to foreign ownership, and political pressure has forced Prosperity to bow out of some deals that were politically sensitive. In the Philippines, the corp is seen as no better than a puppet of the former Japanese occupation, especially since Prosperity Development Corporation has its headquarters in Neo-Tokyo.

- Sometimes the locals are skeptical for a good reason. The Triads have been using some Prosperity Development Corporation development projects as fronts, allowing the tongs to establish beachheads in areas where they were previously unable to operate. With the Triads come violence and the BTL trade, often poisoning the communities that are being developed.
- Black Mamba

CORPORATE KAMI: INAZO ANEKI

The founder and longtime CEO of Renraku Computer Systems has assumed an almost mythical status in the echelons of Neo-Tokyo's business elite. Idolized by Renraku employees and young corporate officers throughout the world, Renraku schools and popular media present their corporate founder as a ruthless businessman who founded one of the greatest megacorps in the world, a visionary scientist who predicted the advent of true artificial intelligence, a patriot and strong supporter of the emperor and the Imperial Japanese State, and as a devoted Buddhist who made pilgrimage to Tibet in his declining years.

On his death, the Renraku Board of Directors retired the position of CEO, which they feel Aneki continues to hold as the guardian kami of the corporation. Shrines and endowments to the deified CEO are especially common in the Chiba streets that his corporation transformed.

Urgent Message...

- That's not the least of it. The owners aren't happy that the Triads are using Prosperity as a front. But if any of them try to clean the Triads out or bring in competition, violence could tear the corporation apart.
- DangerSensei

RENRAKU COMPUTER SYSTEMS

Renraku manages the data that allows Neo-Tokyo to function; the corporations and government exchange data that Renraku stores over the back-end telecommunications hardware that Renraku owns, sifting through it with software Renraku developed. Then there is the cutting-edge nanotechnology and cybertechnology being tested in Chiba, new 'ware that won't hit the streets for another decade.



- Renraku compiles and analyzes most of the data collected by Neo-Tokyo's swarm of RFID tags. If I weren't totally paranoid about my tags, Renraku would probably know when I woke up this morning, what I ate for breakfast, and what clothes I'm wearing.
- Axis Mundi
- Don't be ridiculous. Everyone knows MCT is the primary harvester of personal and consumer data in Neo-Tokyo.
- Baka Dabora

Renraku is easily one of the most visible of the Japanacorps, with its logo displayed prominently on the hundreds of millions of tags throughout Neo-Tokyo, and a very subtle but ideologically aggressive ad campaign centered around its support of Japanese religion, culture, and education.

- Don't forget youth culture. Renraku has pioneered datajacks and commlinks for kids as young as six years old, and consistently has three to five entries in the top twenty Matrix games.
- Clockwork



As a megacorp, Renraku maintains a conservative business culture. Anyone who is not purely human, purely Japanese, and male fights an uphill battle within the corporation, and loyalty to superiors is extreme and unwavering. The progressive, populist agenda of the Emperor chafes against Renraku's ideals, which has led to Renraku quietly backing opposition to the throne in the Japanese Diet.

- Investment firms take the place of major shareholders in Renraku. The shares are spread thin among many people (which is why Renraku is sometimes called "the People's Megacorp"), but the firms often represent large chunks of shareholders and have enough influence to speak their thoughts to the board. Sadly, most of the shareholders have no clue what message their firm is taking to the board, and they don't tend to care unless their shares drop in value.
- Janus

Private Message...

FROM: Hard Exiit
RE: THE RED SAMURAI

If you're planning on running against Renraku, you need to keep an eye out for these guys. The Red Samurai started out as Aneki's personal guard, with NeoFeudal personalized security armor, equipment, and training that outstrips the Japanese Special Forces. The crimson demon-mask armor makes for a very high-profile when guarding some Renraku big-wig, but the ones to look out for are the so-called "Red Ninja"—plainclothes social chameleons trained in stealth and assassination with implants or magic that allow them change their appearance as necessary.

SHIAWASE CORPORATION

Shiawase is Japan's classic zaibatsu, the eldest of the megacorps controlled by Japan's most powerful family. After the second Crash, the players may have changed, but the game remains the same: making ridiculous sums of money. Shiawase proved that an old dog can learn new tricks when they recently pulled a complete reversal; first standing fiercely opposed to the Emperor's reforms and now strangely standing alongside him. But as Shiawase's main three divisions—Envirotech, Biotech, and Atomics—rake in billions of nuyen on new government contracts, one is left wondering who is pulling whose strings in that new relationship.

- When the younger Shiawase clan ousted their elders in the 2064 Coup and Empress Hitomi took over as Chairman of the Board, the typical Japanese mindset assumed the Emperor had orchestrated the maneuver. But if you ask me, it's the other way around. Shiawase gained more power over the Emperor than he gained over Shiawase, and Empress-turned-Chairman Hitomi Shiawase now has immense influence over the Japanese government.
- Baka Dabaka



- With the elderly Korin Yamana as Shiawase's new CEO and largest shareholder, his wife, the young Mitsuko Shiawase, stands to gain a great deal in the inevitable future. There's no love lost between Mitsuko and the Empress, so expect some shadow action soon.
- Snopes

In perhaps one of the greatest corporate ironies, Shiawase promotes a strong sense of family values throughout Japan, recruiting, retaining, and raising entire extended families within the corporate culture. They take care of their people better than any other corporation in Japan, but they also expect the most devotion from them. The extended Shiawase clan is treated as royalty by devoted wageslaves and gossipsites who treat every rumor (as long as Shiawase Mediatech hasn't decided to quash it before it gets out) as gospel truth. Meanwhile, each splinter of the shattered clan struggles for power amid the upper echelons.

- One thing to remember about Shiawase is that the corporation is not what it seems. Its intrigues and dirty secrets are hidden behind layers of distraction, and its true intentions are masked with deception. No corporation is to be trusted, but at Shiawase subterfuge and betrayal are two of their major products.

- Icarus

THE WARRING STATES

Beneath the megacorporate giants with seats on the Corporate Court are the AA corporations, which range in power from those barely above nationals to massive transnationals only a shade smaller than the Big Ten. In fact, the constant struggles amongst themselves to break into the Big Ten have given rise to their nickname: the Warring States.

- Ratings don't always give a fair estimation of influence; many members of the second tier have more local influence than the AAAs, even if they cannot match the larger corporations' resources on an international scale.
- Mr. Bonds

EASTERN TIGER CORPORATION

It is hard to be Korean in Japan. It's even harder to be a Korean corporation in Neo-Tokyo. Still, Korea's premier heavy-industry corp maintains a divisional headquarters in Neo-Tokyo and is often awarded government construction and maintenance contracts for the poorer or more dangerous sections of the megaplex. Media allegations that Eastern Tiger uses substandard materials and illegal immigrant labor haven't done much to improve its reputation or land it more lucrative contracts.



- The corporation bought the Hanshin Tigers baseball franchise last year as one more move to increase local acceptance of the corporation. But the corp drove fans away when the team suffered a humiliating defeat to Monobe's own Yakult Swallows ball club. The Tigers are itching for a rematch next season.
- Traveler Jones





INCOMING FEED.....

Eastern Tiger continues to thrive financially, thanks in part to subcontracts and partnerships with Hisato-Turner Broadcasting and the Prosperity Development Corporation. Most of the corporation's interests in Neo-Tokyo lie within the development of the land itself, above and below ground. Thus far their real estate acquisitions have been limited to Minato, where a new transplastic materials factory is under construction, which promises jobs for hundreds of workers making plascrete and plassteel, but they've made bids for other "underdeveloped" lots outside the so-called foreigner's district.

- The animosity between Korea and Japan dates back about as far as you care to trace—at least a couple thousand years, though most people point to the wartime atrocities a century or two ago. Eastern Tiger's difficulties are as much a reflection of that deep-seated distrust as they are of Japan's longstanding policy towards foreigners.
- Rigger X
- Yeah, it has nothing at all to do with Eastern Tiger's deals with the Triads to bring in illegal Korean immigrants to use as cheap labor, or their continued use of Plasteel-7, which is known to be defective.
- Baka Dabora

MONOBE INTERNATIONAL

Renraku might have the best neurosurgeons and cyberclinics in Chiba (and when I say Chiba, I mean the world), but the best bio-ware comes from Monobe's clonal vats. While technically based out of Matsuyama, the corporation's extensive Neo-Toyko business makes it a major player in the local corpo-political scene. There is a lot of national pride wrapped up in the corporation as well; Monobe is one of the most extensive and venerable AAs in the world, with corporate holdings rivaling Horizon or Wuxing,



- Monobe has been trying for years to wrestle a council seat away from one of the Megas. They've made and broken alliances with half the corporate council in a maddening ploy to work their way in. So far all they've managed to do is to make a lot of enemies.
- Janus
- A few friends too. It used to be there were five Japanacorps on the Corporate Court, but Fuchi self-destructed and Evo betrayed them. The three that are left would like nothing better than to see another AAA replaced with one of their own.
- Mr. Bonds



Like a true megacorp, Monobe has its hands in everything, though its primary interest is biotechnology. Monobe relieved Evo of its emergency medical services contracts in 2069, the latest salvo in a bitter war between the two corps. Diet officials cited “poor response time” as the reason why CrashCart was canceled, but Monobe claims it received the contract because Neo-Tokyo wanted its services run “for the people and by the people.”

- Famously, Monobe has stayed out of the control of the Yakuza. Scuttlebutt says that CEO Toshio Mitsukuri was part of a street gang in his youth and was denied entry, and he won't hire ex-Yaks or stand for the usual sokaiya tactics.
- Mihoshi Oni

PACIFIC RIM BANK AND FINANCIAL SERVICES CORPORATION

The PacRim Bank is to the Japanacorps what Zurich is to the rest of the world. The bank is wholly owned by a council of Japanese corporations that includes most of the ones I've named here. To give you an idea of the influence corporations have in Neo-Tokyo, the Diet used the PacRim Bank's bylaws as the basis for its new laws governing financial institutions last fall. Currently Hideo Yokogawa, a representative of the Yokogawa Corporation, sits as the board's CEO.



- The Corp-That-Would-Be-Evo was asked to divest its PacRim shares when they were preparing their move to Mother Russia in '59. They refused, sparking a blow-out between Yamatetsu CEO Yuri Shibanokuji and Inazo Aneki that's become legend.
- Red Anya
- Even though they haven't lost their shares, the bylaws of the council state that non-Japanese entities (i.e., those whose main headquarters are located outside of Japan) cannot vote, so Evo's seat at the table is just a place to listen to what everyone else is doing.
- Mr. Bonds

The Pacific Rim Bank is also known for its protectionist behaviors to deter foreign competition. One well-documented strategy is investing heavily in local corporations, sometimes gaining a controlling interest in these corps and replacing the board of directors with a group of seasoned corporate officers that can steer the corporation into the clear. Often when the corporation reaches a point where it can steer itself, the bank will sell back control to its original owners.

- The bank has been known to “protect” companies that don't buy into the council's plans. They find a way to leverage a buyout and then alter the way the corporation does business in order to better suit the needs of the corps on the council.
- Baka Dabora
- It also works to keep protectionist laws in play, and that, my friends, is where the real money is. Forget that sneaking-around-in-the-dark and doing-dirty-deeds stuff. There's more money to be made out in the open, working the angles on the Diet and the members of the

Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Sokaiya

The Yakuza are well-known for a specific form of protection racket known as a sokaiya, where Yakuza members who are minor shareholders in a megacorporation arrive at stockholder meetings and disrupt the proceedings—seriously embarrassing the company, which cannot eject its own stockholders—unless and until the gumi's demands are met (often a specified fee to keep troublemakers out of the meeting). In this way, the Yakuza also gains important information on the health of the corporation, its assets, and its officers for later white collar crime projects, fraud, and blackmail.

corporate council. If you have enough dirt on someone to make them lose face, they're bugged unless they pay your ransom.

- Mr. Bonds

SONY CORPORATION

In Japan's cutthroat technology market, Sony Corp. stands out as a lean survivor, continually keeping one step ahead by making innovation their ultimate strategy. They take chances that megacorps don't, sometimes failing spectacularly but sometimes paying off big. For example, they recently took over the struggling Chrysler-Nissan Group, paring down its automotive production to a small niche market while converting many of the factories to drone manufacturing. They still put out compact and micro-compact, high-efficiency automobiles under the Chrysler-Nissan name, but they've been making big strides with Chrysler-Nissan drones and Sony-brand micro-drones.



- Sony has a weird relationship with Mitsuhamma. They compete against MCT in some areas—like the hot one-metahuman-vehicle (OMV) field—but in others the two are in partnership, with Sony designing drones that Mitsuhamma manufactures under the MCT brand. So far this “friendly competition” has kept Mitsuhamma off Sony's back, but if Sony keeps growing in the drone market, eventually Mitsuhamma is going to turn on them.
- Mr. Bonds

Sony's robotics and automation business has also led to research in artificial intelligence. They have coined the term Responsive Subsentient Software Companions (RSSComps) to stress that they focus on sophisticated software that enhances peoples' lives. Their subsentient pets, smart commlinks, and elderly-assist robots are huge sellers because of the software's natural ability to work with people.

- Sony's AI research is very specific to certain tasks, as opposed to the more freely adaptable AI research that corporations like Renraku are doing. They also tend to be bound to hardware devices or robotics, though these devices are almost always net-capable. The operative word, natch, is “subsentient”—the anti-independent AI meme is still pretty strong in Neo-Tokyo.
- Pistons



- I've heard that Sony is looking into subsentient agent headware that assists a person's own thought processes with a virtual advisor—a widget that not only takes on some of the neural processing, but also helps you reach decisions. An encephalon with a personality sounds pretty creepy to me.
- FastJack

It helps that Sony is a market mainstay in stable fields like appliances and consumer electronics, making it a household name and giving the brand omnipresent visibility, which enhances the profile of its riskier ventures.

YAKASHIMA CORPORATION

Like Monobe before it, Yakashima sits on the threshold between being an AA and true mega. Based in Yokohama, away from the skyrakers of Nishi-Shinjuku, Yakashima is a spotlight corporation. They host the annual world conference on genetics, which attracts top scientists from universities and corporations alike. They also own several Neo-Tokyo landmarks, including the Neo-Tokyo Contemporary Art Museum and the Neo-Tokyo Botanical Gardens, which is known for its awakened flora. For a time Yakashima was called the Blue Rose Corporation in commemoration of their early breakthrough work in agricultural reengineering. The ag-bio and pharmaceuticals corporation has moved on to trying to genetically engineer awakened flora.



- I thought Awakened plants couldn't be genetically engineered.
- Sticks
- It's not that you can't, it's just that mucking with metagenes tends to be difficult and the results are often nonviable. Yakashima's trying to isolate the parts that make those plants Awakened. In the meantime, they get around the problem areas by applying old-school low-tech methods like crosspollination and grafting to produce novel plant products.
- The Smiling Bandit

Yakashima is a family-owned zaibatsu run by Hiroshi Yakashima. He's getting on in years and there is some question as to who will take over the corporation when he passes. The clear frontrunner is Hiromi Yakashima, one of two daughters and the youngest of his seven children. She's been the COO for the past four years and shows the business acumen to lead the corporation. However, her brothers have used both her gender and sexual orientation as reasons she shouldn't be in charge.

- The youngest of the boys, Kisho, shunned the spotlight for membership in the Shotozumi-rengo. He still keeps in contact with his sisters, but the decision to lead a life of crime drove a wedge between him and his brothers.
- Mihoshi Oni
- I've heard rumors that Kisho and Dai have a particularly ... close relationship.
- Baka Dabora

DAIATSU CORPORATION

Little known outside of greater Asia, Daiatsu should be instantly familiar to anyone who has had the pleasure of dealing with a vending machine in Neo-Tokyo or gazing upon the artificial islands dotting the bay. The principle business of Daiatsu is earth-moving machines and construction, which in Neo-Tokyo primarily means turning “wet” real estate into “dry” real estate, which it further develops or sells for a mint.



- There's still some erosion and tsunami issues, but Daiatsu's islands are pretty sturdy, typically built around a network of plassteel-reinforced plascrete columns pounded down into the bedrock. Their biggest competitor is Evo, who would prefer to use the space for its own aquadomes and aquaculture projects.
- Sounder
- Don't forget GreenWar. They've staged protests about pollution and the damage being done to the local ecology.
- Aufheben
- I love how those guys dropped the cancer-ridden, three-day old dolphin carcass on the sushi bar at the board of director's meeting.
- Baka Dabora

DaiatsuCorp is also the nation's leading provider of vending machines. As it stands, Daiatsu offers a huge array of products from customizable meal centers to portable AR-guided cosmetic enhancement packets. The latest buzz is that Daiatsu is updating its vendor interface with a variable-gender AR anime construct which can interact with customers on their way to the machine (providing alternate routes depending on traffic, product availability, and local conditions), thus eliminating long waiting times.

- Daiatsu has become heavily invested in AR technology since the Matrix 2.0 rollout. Some of their technology is so bleeding edge that it almost seems to have a mind of its own.
- Snopes
- Maybe it does.
- Puck
- Dammit, can't the icon directing me to the nearest condom machine be accurate and cheerful without being a bloody AI?
- Slamm-O!

LOCAL INTERESTS

Besides the big boys, Neo-Tokyo also plays host to hundreds of national A-rated corps—the type that AAAs can and do buy, sell, and destroy without overextending themselves. That said, I've picked out some of the local players to keep an eye on—some of them, if they haven't been bought or bulldozed in the next couple of years, might be poised to become AAs, while others produce products of particular interest to shadowrunners.



IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD AGENCY

With the eyes of the corporations on the Emperor, who watches the corporations? That task falls to the Imperial Household Agency, an independent agency of the national government organized and run as a corporation. Headquartered in Neo-Tokyo, the IHA is essentially an intelligence and security outfit that operates to inform and protect the Emperor and the Imperial Family. Rather than passively wait for potential dangers to manifest, the IHA actively looks for points of contention and attempts to defuse situations ahead of time. In such a capacity, the Imperial Household Agency is sometimes referred to as the Emperor's Left Hand.

- The IHA has grown substantially in power and influence since the first days of the Imperial Japanese State, and with the current state of affairs between the Emperor and the megacorps, that means the IHA spends a lot of time making back room deals and trying to work out compromises before they become public issues. As a government agency, the IHA has a lot of intel resources to work with: a list of all corporations operating in the Imperial Japanese State (all corporations claiming extraterritorial status in Japan must register to fall under the Business Recognition Accords), backup records of dual Japanese-corporate citizens' SINS, reported taxable income, you name it. Without the IHA, the Emperor would be facing a whole lot more opposition than he currently does.
- Janus

KOMATSU, LTD.

Eizo Kobayashi has been riding a wave of good fortune since the late sixties. His corporation, once a bit player in the biotech and chemical engineering industry, struck gold with a non-mammal-based orthoskin variants. Since that innovation put it back on the map, the corporation has been moving aggressively to carve out a niche in xenomorphic bioimplants and industrial chemical products, including their now-famous non-toxic blister packs.

They have been working hard to recruit new talent, culling students from Neo-Tokyo University and promoting their bioware products by offering free models to local celebrities, charity auctions, and game shows.

- Komatsu is making a run on the employees a couple of the local big boys. I've personally been tagged to do preliminary recon on two Mitsuhamas scientists. They don't have the capital to enter a bidding war with the larger corps for talent so they have to get it the old fashioned way.
- Yankee
- They've been working hard to look like a green corp, especially with their industrial chemtech that focuses mostly on ecofriendly manufacturing processes and cleanup. They do a lot of business in the proper disposal and recycling of used batteries and the like, but lately they've been working on using plants to leech contaminants out of the soil—heavy metals and the like.
- Nephrine
- Really? I heard they were using the plants to try and restore negative background counts in polluted areas. Think it could be both? Bring some life back to the area while removing the source of the taint?
- Winterhawk

Much of Komatsu's new biotech research focuses on enhancing animals for security or entertainment. The miltech biodrones they're working on with Shiawase and Ares are very hush hush, but public backlash and legal ramifications of "guilt-free pleasure pets," which are so highly augmented that they are barely recognizable, means that this remains one of Komatsu's most low-key divisions—though sales and awareness in the international marketplace is soaring.

- What the hell is a pleasure pet?
- Riser
- Tell me you didn't just ask that question.
- Mika
- Any truth to the rumor that they plan on extending their security line of bio-modifications to humans?
- Nephrine
- Not that I'm aware of, but they did just snag a burned-out bio-drone researcher with some questionable personal habits from UniOmni.
- The Smiling Bandit

SHISHI OPERATIONAL MECHANICS

You cannot escape Neo-Tokyo without mentioning the local dragon's corp. The big wym in this part of the world is Ryumyo, who is very nearly a national symbol of Japan's Awakening, and who is considered by Shinto to be an incarnate kami. ShishiOM makes the most of this reverence, assuring local businesses that all operations are carried out with the appropriate rituals and blessings. Competing corporations take offense with this philosophy, arguing that since they don't play with the mystic dragon lines that crisscross Neo-Tokyo, Ryumyo shouldn't dabble in corporate politics. Nevertheless, Shishi remains a force in local translogistics and construction.

- Shishi received the dragon's share, if you'll pardon the pun, of the rebuilding contracts. This may not have anything to do with the dragon, as other companies he has his hands in were left out in the cold.
- Kemuri
- It makes sense. The Emperor, on the advice of every local priest and magician in Japan, agreed that it's in everyone's best interests not to meddle with the delicate forces of the dragon lines. Ryumyo, as the resident great dragon and a skilled geomancer, is best equipped to direct construction around magically sensitive areas without causing problems.
- Jimmy No
- Of course, Ryumyo might also have his own plans for the dragon lines in Neo-Tokyo. Assensed his shrine lately?
- Frosty

Locally, Shishi is responsible for the daily operation of the monorail system, though Yakashima has been trying to win that contract away from them for a decade. Shishi holds on to the city contract thanks to their unquestionable quality of service. Shishi trains are never late.





INCOMING FEED.....

- That flawless service has degraded over the past few months. Trains running along the Marunouchi line have been reporting power outages between stations. These outages have forced the trains to increase their travel speed in order to stay on schedule.

- Kemuri

Shishi dabbles in ecofriendly infrastructure, like the design and installation of back-up or supplementary power cores for buildings. The designs for these power cores are highly sought by other power management companies such as Shiawase Atomics—they are far cleaner than comparable models and cheaper to maintain, even if they cost three times as much. Shishi is also a leader in developing self-contained, energy efficient urban structures and recyclable systems—including extensive use of nanobots.

- Yeah, “clean” as long as you don’t crack one open. They use low-grade spent uranium as a catalyst for the reaction.

- Orbital DK

YOKOGAWA INCORPORATED

Yokogawa Inc., which is an automation, security, and transportation corp, is the result of a merger between Honeywell Inc. and the Yokogawa Security Corporation. Yokogawa houses its world headquarters in Nishi-Shinjuku, a sprawling arcology that lights up the skyline. The company’s crown jewel is its automated services division. Yokogawa operates parking lots, traffic flow

monitoring and management software, heating and cooling systems, and automated commercial securities across the world. In Neo-Tokyo however, they are better recognized for the large number of automated parking lots, homes, and coffin hotels they run throughout the city. Automation is second nature in Neo-Tokyo, and Yokogawa is on the frontline. From police drones to apartments that respond to voice commands, Yokogawa has its hand in every crevice of that particular cookie jar.

- Surprisingly enough, their Matrix security division is weak. They’ve had to outsource the majority of the network security projects to Renraku. Given their proficiency at building network accessible automation features, you’d think they’d have figured out how to protect them.

- Slamm-0!

- The outsourcing is more political expediency than necessity. By allowing Renraku to carry their water, they can focus more on the hardware side while building an ally who has plenty to gain from Yokogawa’s profits.

- Pistons

- Until Renraku decides to gobble them up and keep all the profits for themselves.

- Janus

NEO-TOKYO



NERVE CENTERS OF NEO-TOKYO

Posted By: Rigger X

Welcome to Tokyo, the city I was born in, exiled from, and have recently returned to. I'm going to be straight with you: there's no way I could give you the full scan on this city. The Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Area—known more commonly as Neo-Tokyo—is an urban megasprawl covering more than twenty thousand square kilometers, and it's home to nearly a third of the entire Japanese population. It is an urban sea that has swallowed cities respectable in their own rights and incorporated them into its larger metro-mass.

I simply can't cover all of it. But what I will do is give you the details on the more important parts of it, the core cities that make up the real power centers in the capital of the Japanese Empire. When I say "cities," I'm being accurate: each of these municipal wards has its own government, including its own mayor and assembly. Sprawl-wide services are managed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which today exists only to hand over contracts to the corporations. There will be more on that later.

THE FLY-OVER VIEW

Modern Neo-Tokyo grew out of a flood plain, a swampy convergence of rivers emptying into Tokyo Bay. The rice paddies have since been replaced by skyscrapers, and the capital has stretched out in every direction to absorb over thirty other cities. A massive civil engineering miracle under the city keeps the floodwaters out, and many artificial islands fill in Tokyo Bay across to Chiba and as far south as Kawasaki.

Super-expressways cut wide arteries through the urban jungle, threading into a dense multi-level network of urban streets. But at its heart, Neo-Tokyo remains a city centered around railroad lines. The earthquakes of the last decade forced Tokyo to bring its train system above-ground, but a busy monorail station is still the central fixture of every ward. Thanks to the Neo-Tokyo Restoration Act, subways are out and elevated maglev is in. Dozens of elevated maglev rails circle and crisscross the city, and computerized, rapid-acceleration trains have cut commute times in half. Many elevated station platforms can be reached from street level by escalators, but some are located inside skyscrapers and arcologies.

From the air, it appears as if the train stations have created islands in a sea of concrete; dense ranges of skyscrapers have built up around these focal points of public transportation. Those are the concentrations of Japanese people and power that I'll be covering here.

- The Japanese obsession with trains has allowed them to conveniently forget some of the deadly disasters that took place during Crash 2.0. There were more than a few train collisions, and in some cases faulty safety locks sent trains careening into the streets below.
- Yankee

CHIYODA

The ward of Chiyoda (literally "field of a thousand generations") is the center of not only Neo-Tokyo, but also of the Japanese Imperial State. Blue-suited bureaucrats in black limousines are the dominant species in Chiyoda, most of them employed by

the Imperial ministries or by corporate lobbying organizations. The Japanese concepts of politeness, formality, and honor are in overdrive here, as the slightest misstep could insult the wrong person and end your career (if not your life). Civil service is not the punchline to a joke as it is back in the UCAS; here in Neo-Tokyo, civil servants and bureaucrats are deeply respected, even if everyone knows that they live at the beck and call of the Japanacorp or the Emperor.

The Emperor's reforms are clearly visible in Chiyoda, especially in the cranes and construction crews hard at work remapping this ward. The Restoration Act has required wider boulevards, more public space and greenery, and visible shrines to the local kami here. The politics of national and municipal interest have started to overlap with spiritual politics as developers and politicians wrangle with local kami through Shinto and Buddhist official intermediaries. If anything, it has increased the power of the religious priesthoods in the ward and made adherence to the national religion of Shinto even more fashionable.

- Not only are development projects finding themselves sometimes stymied by magical "accidents," but some spirits are competing for turf and forging mortal political allies to give themselves an advantage over each other.
- Axis Mundi

The central fixture of Chiyoda is **Edo (Kokyo) Castle**, the home of the Imperial Family. The castle sits at the center of one of the largest green spaces in Neo-Tokyo and is surrounded by inner and outer moats that weave around the grounds in a spiral path. With the increased importance of the Emperor has come less public access to the Imperial grounds, and the gates and bridges that cross the spiral moats are now guarded by a special detachment of Imperial Marines—a surprising number of which are magically talented.

- The guards at Edo Castle aren't just handpicked for magical talent, but they are also selected for their lack of ties to any of the megacorporations. The Emperor is no fool: he knows that most of the Imperial Marines are corporate loyalists, and he also knows that many of the corps would like to see him go away.
- Picador
- Good luck with that. Those loyalties tend to run very deep—I'd be surprised if the Emperor could find a single Imperial Marine without connections to a Japanacorp.
- Kemuri
- Edo Castle is a powerful magical domain, fed by mana lines that run along the spiral moats, focused on the castle itself. Not only is this domain aspected towards Shinto magic, but it's a magnet for spirits. The Imperial Court is always having audiences with one spirit or another.
- Ethernaut
- Everyone knows the story of how, at the Emperor's command, the kami of the Imperial Household protected Tokyo from Winternight's nuclear strikes back in '64—further fueling the young Emperor's popularity among the masses.
- Janus



South of Edo Castle are the neighborhoods of **Nagatacho** and **Kasumigaseki**, which combined make up the epicenter of national power in Neo-Tokyo. Nagatacho, with its imposing gray monumental architecture, is home to the Diet Building, the Prime Minister's residence, and the Supreme Court. Kasumigaseki is where all of the Imperial Ministries are located. As can be expected, security is airtight in these two neighborhoods, supplemented by the private security forces guarding the ever-present corporate lobbyists in this area.

Kojimachi, a neighborhood just west of Edo Castle, is where the most elite politicians of the Imperial Government live. Senior ministry officials and high-ranking diplomats enjoy large mansions in this neighborhood with unimpeded views of Edo Castle, which they may or may not appreciate depending on how they feel about the Emperor's reform agenda. "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer" would be an apt motto for this area.

- The Kojimachi estates that now belong to the senior politicians once belonged to Edo-period samurai. In a way, the vibe in this neighborhood still reaches back to that time.
- Fianchetto
- Kojimachi is crawling with spies that serve the Emperor and the Japanacorp, each trying to uncover the agendas and the dirt on the Imperial ministry officials. The teahouses in the area are hotbeds for intrigue.
- Kay St. Irregular

Kudan, northwest of Edo Castle, is the home turf of Japan's staunchest imperialists. The Emperor's reforms are not popular here, and the World War II memorial at Yasukuni Shrine sometimes acts as a staging ground for protests against the Emperor's agenda. Many of the imperialists are linked to the headquarters for the Imperial Army, which sits just over the river in eastern Shinjuku.

- The Nippon Budokan is another gathering spot for the imperialist partisans. It's a large arena in Kudan used for martial arts competitions, which grew in popularity after the Awakening and the appearance of physical adepts.
- Janus

Nihonbashi was once part of the Chuo ward, but that ward was dissolved as part of the Restoration Act, and now this neighborhood sits in Chiyoda, east of Edo Castle. Nihonbashi enjoys a long history as Tokyo's financial district, which could be said to stretch back as far as the Edo Period, when this area was renowned for its merchants. Dozens of banks have skyscrapers in Nihonbashi, including the global headquarters of the Pacific Rim Bank, the primary moneylender for the Japanacorp. The world's largest stock exchange, the Neo-Tokyo Stock Exchange, stands over Nihonbashi. It could easily be said that most of the world's nuyen has flowed through this neighborhood at one time or another.

Southeast of Edo Castle is **Ginza**, a premiere shopping district that rivals the most famous shopping locales of New York City and Paris—all the designer labels and nanofax boutiques

included. Ginza caters only to the most wealthy, the type of people who will spend a small fortune for the most exquisite Aztlaner chocolate encased in a hand-folded origami box and wrapped with silk ribbon from a rare species of Awakened silkworm. The Japanese elite are willing to pay for the little details, and that's what Ginza is all about.

- Don't let the seeming lack of body armor fool you. Corporate security forces are all over Ginza, dressed in designer ballistic threads and ready to escort out anyone who doesn't look like they belong.
- Mihoshi Oni

SHINJUKU

Among the Japanese, Shinjuku is called a *fukutoshin* or "secondary heart of the city." While Chiyoda is seen as the center of power for the Japanese Imperial State, Shinjuku is where Neo-Tokyo is run. It is the home of the salaried men, who work hard in the corporate towers by day and play hard in the bars and nightclubs nearby by night. Shinjuku is the beating heart of the Japanese economic miracle, which has been the engine of the global economy for the past century.

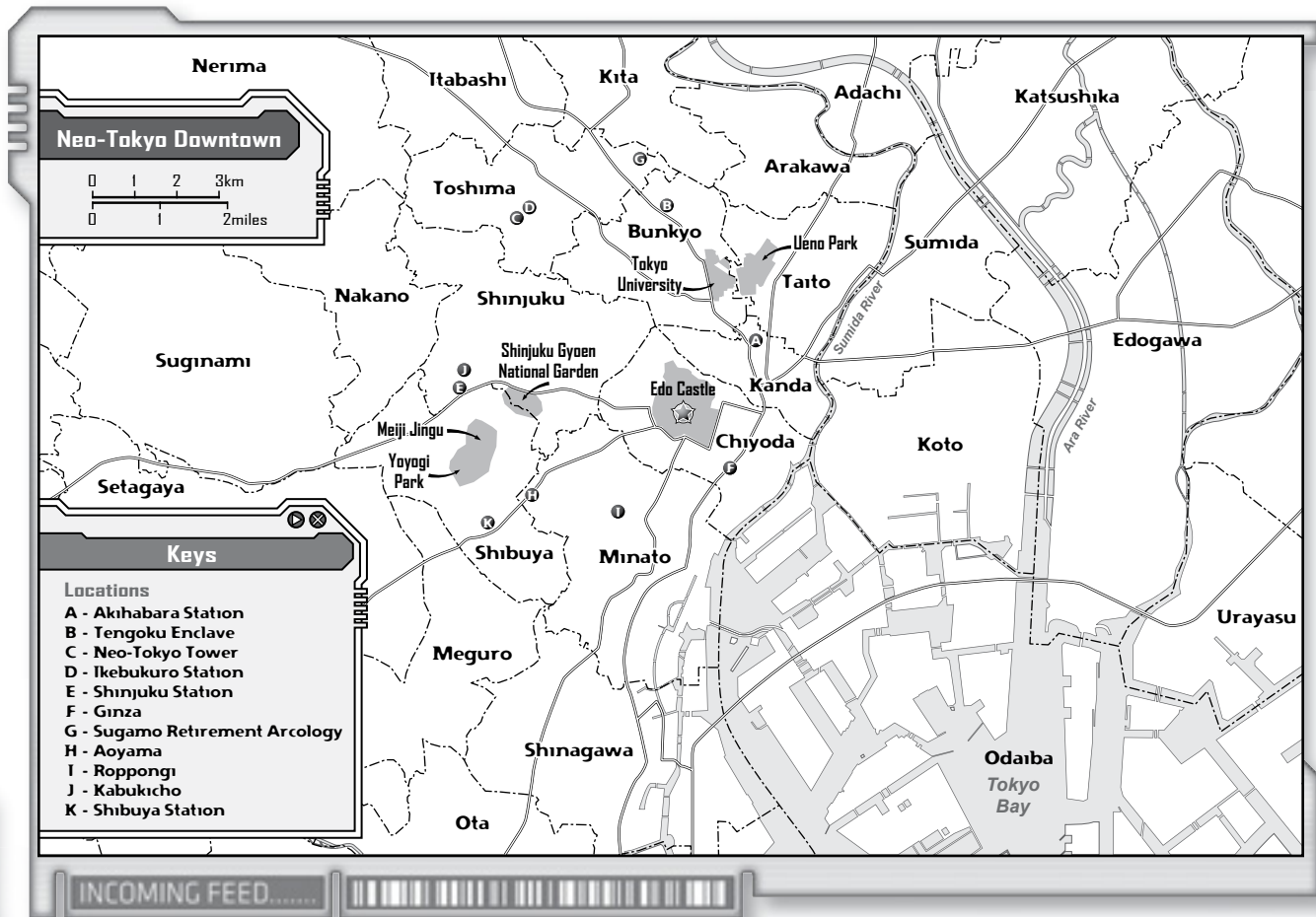
Shinjuku is divided up into two halves, which literally divide up work and play for the Japanese businessperson. The western half of Shinjuku is **Nishi-Shinjuku**, a towering range of skyscrapers belonging to the most powerful Japanese megacorporations. It is easy to imagine a trip into Nishi-Shinjuku causing a foreign executive's blood to run cold, as each corporate tower seems designed to be more imposing than the one next to it. It is clear that Japan means to send the signal that it not only means business, it means dominance.

- Chrysler-Nissan, Komatsu Limited, Sony Corporation, and Yokogawa are all AA-rated corps that have their global headquarters in Nishi-Shinjuku. Mitsuhamma, Shiawase, Monobe, and Daiatsu have their headquarters elsewhere in Japan, but all four own impressive buildings in this enclave. Even though Renraku's global headquarters are across the bay in Chiba, it still owns the old Fuchi Tower here, which it uses as the base for its Fuchi Corporate Services division. Nishi-Shinjuku no doubt has the highest density of corporate skyscrapers on the planet.
- Yankee

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building is also located in Nishi-Shinjuku. Once upon a time, the Metropolitan Government ran citywide services from here, including all of the things that the individual wards couldn't handle, like the water supply and firefighting. The rise of the Imperial State, however, also brought mass privatization of city services, and today the metropolitan government simply selects and oversees which corporation will run which service.

- The governor of Neo-Tokyo has a serious chip on his shoulder about the Emperor. When the Emperor started giving out contracts for the restoration of Neo-Tokyo, he went right over the head of the governor. And when most of the governor's corporate buddies were left out in the cold, they made sure he heard about it.
- Fianchetto





The eastern half of Shinjuku is the red-light playground of **Kabukicho**, where the collective steam of thousands of hours of indentured cubicle servitude is let off. Digital pachinko parlors and flashy arcades chime and glow while bars and nightclubs open their doors to a steady stream of suited men and women. More illicit fun is never hard to find; host and hostess bars offer companionship while you drink and chat, and love hotels serving every conceivable fetish (and willing to work to discover new ones) are just around the corner. Don't head here if you're a foreign runner in town looking for some fun, though. Kabukicho is mostly off-limits to foreigners; it is a place for Japanese to unwind without having to maintain appearances for non-Japanese.

KANDA

Kanda, as a self-governing ward, is only a few months old, the result of student uprisings and protests against the treatment of technomancers and artificial intelligences. Public fear of technomancers and corporate interest in their abilities led the Tokyo Metropolitan Police and corporate security forces into neighborhoods like Akihabara, Jinbocho, and Ningyocho, where technomancers were believed to gather. Many people were rounded up, and most were never heard from again. Word spread like wildfire through these inclusive communities, and soon the quiet crowds here were doing something no one expected: assembling and protesting against the government. Clashes with the police became violent, not to mention very embarrassing for the metropolitan government. The Emperor

found himself losing support in an area that had strongly backed him, and he pressured the city government into establishing Kanda as its own ward in order to temper the conflict.

- Nice story, but while the defense of Kanda may have come from the Emperor's mouth, it was the Empress whispering the ideas into his ear and pulling the support together behind the scenes. Kanda has Hitomi Shiawase to thank for their new self-governance.
- Mihoshi Oni

Kanda is a wedge-shaped ward north of Chiyoda, bordered largely by Expressway Number Five to the south and the Kanda River to the north. It's largely a high-tech commerce and residential area with a high student population. At the western tip of the wedge is the neighborhood of **Jinbocho**, known throughout Tokyo for its student population and for its love of the printed word. In this digital age it is hard to imagine a neighborhood so devoted to books and magazines, but visitors come from all over to visit Jinbocho's tiny, cramped bookstores. The crowd this neighborhood attracts is as varied as its selection of books: students from the local universities search for literary classics next to otaku snatching up armfuls of paperback manga while magicians and priests search for rare manuscripts next door.

East of Jinbocho are the twin neighborhoods of **Ochanomizu** and **Ogawamachi**. Both of these neighborhoods cater to the local student population in particular ways. Ochanomizu is famous for

its music shops that proudly show off replicas of the latest star rocker's synthaxe or a popular deejay's mixer rig. Students and young people gather in Ochanomizu to try out the instruments and swap music with each other over their commlinks, sharing their opinions of the next novastar hit. Ogawamachi fills a similar niche, but this neighborhood caters to sporting supplies, especially for whatever extreme sport is popular with the university students this season.

- I have to grab a new snowboard for my trip to Niseko before the flakes start to fall and the shops are mobbed.
- Netcat
- Pfft, snowboarding. Magspotting is the real krash, omae. Calibrate your magnetic cyberlimb implant just right and you can glide right down a section of maglev rail. Just make sure not to fall off or hit a power rail.
- Slamm-0!

Further east, bordering on the Sumida River, is the neighborhood of **Ningyocho**, a very popular spot for tourists looking for traditional Japanese gifts or magicians looking for foci and alchemic materials. Ningyocho is an artists' enclave, where many crafts are made the same way they have been for centuries. You can pick up a bag of *ningyo-yaki* (sweet cakes molded in the shapes of popular local deities) and go from one handicrafts shop to the next.

- The artists' talents aren't limited to tourist kitsch and magical goods, either. There are a handful of artists in Ningyocho that cater to Akihabara's drone-makers, crafting one-of-a-kind drone chassis. There are a couple of artists famous for creating skin-shells and faces for anthropomorphic drones.
- Clockwork

Akihabara lies across the Kanda River on the most northern tip of the ward. An otaku's heaven on earth, the district contains a chorus of chirps and hums rising from the thousands of robots and drones wandering the sidewalks and heavily built-up streets, dancing in shop windows, or gliding overhead. Tinkerers and hackers fill the streets of Akihabara, crowding the floors of the electronics megastores or haggling at the side-street stalls specializing in oddball parts and vintage gizmos. Theme cafes lure in awkward geeks with cutesy fads. I think the latest one might be coffee shops where you are served by girls pretending to be drones.

- I always get goose-bumps when I'm in Akihabara, like I'm constantly being watched. I think it's just the feeling caused by all the remote-controlled drones, virtual tourists, and zoned-out hackers. But it freaks me out.
- Ma'fan
- Or it could be the artificial intelligences that lurk in Akihabara, fascinated by the crowds of obsessed otaku.
- Puck
- I don't know about artificial intelligences, but semi-autonomous personal programs are extremely common. Not having half a dozen of them active in AR around you instantly marks you as a tourist.
- 2XL

- Technomancers go to ground in Akihabara. All the background noise makes them hard to pick out from the crowd, but the locals tend to know who they are. But instead of worrying about the locals turning them in, technomancers carry a sort of folk hero status around here. They even get poseurs and fanboys.
- Netcat

SHIBUYA

Shibuya is Neo-Tokyo's shrine to youth. The low birth rate in Japan was a cause of national anxiety in the Imperial State, until a baby boom in the last few decades turned that around. This new bountiful generation crowds Shibuya, which is a nexus of shopping and entertainment for the under-thirty crowd. All of Neo-Tokyo's famous fashion designers have their studios in this ward (and nearly all of them are corporate sponsored), and chic outlets sell their designs to style-hungry teenagers. When shopping wears them out, they stop at a nearby café and enjoy an overpriced coffee drink under blazing AR displays. When the sun goes down the crowd gets slightly (but not much) older, and the bars and nightclubs take over the streets and skies with alluring visuals and thumping beats.

- The mushisushi craze has taken over Shibuya, with "bugbars" popping up overnight. Some have cute themes like glowing AR butterflies fluttering through the dining area while others make you feel like you are sitting inside the belly of an insect spirit.
- Janus
- Don't forget the Ryumyo stores, selling every possible thing you could imagine branded with cartoon images of Japan's favorite great dragon.
- Traveler Jones

Harajuku sits farther north from the main shopping strips of Shibuya. Most of the shopping in Harajuku seems to be small, indy labels and fashion, some of it crafted right on the spot—there are even a couple of Evo MetaTribe nanoboutiques. The main goal of Harajuku denizens is to be seen; Japanese teens in outrageous fashions loiter and stroll through Harajuku and the nearby Yoyogi Park, orbiting together in trend-tribes (intently watched by corporate scouts for the next big thing).

- One of the latest trend-tribes is *Moho-ku*, an exaggerated Native American fashion statement. It consists of lots of silver, turquoise, and leather fringe, not to mention the sparkling warpaint and absurdly large feathers.
- Netcat
- The kids in Harajuku don't stop at stylizing themselves; they also go all out on their AR personas. Half of the interaction in Harajuku is virtual, so making a statement in augmented reality is just as important as physical reality. There are dozens of small Matrix iconography art-houses in Shibuya that sell entirely virtual fashions.
- Puck

The area is also home to the huge simsense and gaming market (which generates as much money as the sim industry) and hosts a handful of ARcades and game halls showcasing the latest, greatest releases with cutting edge tech to enthralled audiences.



MINATO

Cornered between Chiyoda, Shinjuku, and Shibuya, Minato is the foreigners' ward. Japanese social formalities are relaxed in Minato and mix with Western customs, forming a buffer zone where East meets West on an equal footing. The neighborhoods of **Akasaka** and **Azabu** make up the majority of the Minato ward; these are the residential neighborhoods where Neo-Tokyo's expatriate community lives. Embassies line nearly every street in these two neighborhoods, adding to the international feel.

- Entire blocks of Akasaka and Azabu belong to various foreign megacorps, who keep them as extraterritorial enclaves for their overseas executives and managers in Neo-Tokyo.
- Janus

The tree-lined streets of **Aoyama** sit near the border of Shibuya and are home to Neo-Tokyo's wealthy creative class. Authors, actors, and professors keep their families in Aoyama, where they can separate themselves from the grind of Neo-Tokyo and live peacefully in safe estates guarded by private security. Serenity hangs over Aoyama; even the Aoyama Cemetery is a beautiful place for a stroll among the cherry blossoms. Besides some of many popular contemporary artists, the area is home to several experimental artists like genecrafter Haruki Ayame (creator of the rainbow chihuahua and the cookie monster) and stellar AR-designers like Hajime Watanabe and Mamoru Hamiyomo.

- Almost immediately after taking power, Emperor Yasuhito ordered the bodies of buried Westerners in the Aoyama Cemetery exhumed and cremated in Buddhist burial custom. The fact that they did it without informing the families caused a good bit of scandal, but shedim are virtually unknown in Neo-Tokyo and Japan.
- Ethernaut
- Quiet rumor is that some of the graves were already empty when the Buddhist priests arrived. If the shedim got there first, they've been very discreet ever since.
- Axis Mundi

Roppongi sits in the center of Minato ward and is nicknamed the "Nightless City," because it is an around-the-clock playground for the foreign community. Japanese exoticism is played up in Roppongi, and Japanese formalities are virtually non-existent. The daytime tourist fare is tame, including the regional headquarters and showrooms for many foreign corporations and a full-sized mockup of a Shogun-era village staffed by historically accurate costumed actors.

When the sun goes down, the neon turns on and inhibitions go out the window. Prostitution is legal in Roppongi, and sex tourism is a major draw for this neighborhood. Soapland massage parlors, geisha sake bars, and fetishized love hotels are common. Even young Japanese are known to flock to Roppongi at night because it's one place where you can be completely liberated from the social expectations of Japanese life.

- Yakuza keep the street violence low in Roppongi (it's bad for tourism, after all), but extortion and blackmail are not unheard of. Since

they run the Roppongi bunraku parlors, they have endless opportunities to gather dirt on businessmen.

- Baka Dabora
- If you're a metahuman, Minato ward is the best place for you. Racism isn't absent by any means, but it's one of the few places in Neo-Tokyo you'll see other metahumans walking around, a side effect of the international presence here. Unfortunately, all too many Japanese metahumans find themselves working nights in Roppongi as exotic and objectified playthings.
- Mihoshi Oni

TAITO

Emperor Yasuhito's reforms have transformed the Taito ward into a sanctuary for cultural preservation and religious observance. Grants for the purchase of land for shrines and temples have caused a construction boom, though each new building needs to conform to strict standards so as to minimally impact the magical and spiritual character of the ward. In the process, Emperor Yasuhito has ushered in a new power structure in Taito made up of Shinto and Buddhist priests, who loyally back his reforms. The crafty Emperor built a power base in Taito under the guise of encouraging the Japanese national religions.

Ueno Park, which makes up the westernmost section of the ward, is one of Neo-Tokyo's largest green spaces and is unique in the sheer amount of cultural institutions it hosts. Five museums, one zoo, a festival hall, a concert hall, and an art gallery stand in Ueno Park, not to mention the massive Shinobazunoike Pond and the rows of spectacular cherry blossom trees that paint the Park a soft pink during the late spring. As part of the land grant agreement, the local Shinto and Buddhist priesthoods maintain the Park and its cultural buildings.

- The temples also run shelters to take in the homeless that used to build tent cities in Ueno Park.
- Fatima
- No, that's just what the priests tell everyone. In reality, they simply forced the homeless out of the park and into the abandoned underground tunnels under Neo-Tokyo. It's so much cheaper to sweep them under the rug.
- Janus
- There is another reason why Emperor Yasuhito put the priests in charge of Ueno Park. Ueno Hill was the site of the last stand of the Tokugawa Shogunate against Emperor Meiji in 1868. About two thousand rebellious soldiers were killed there by the Imperial forces, ending the Shogunate once and for all. Since the Awakening, there are rumors that their hungry ghosts haunt the park, desiring the defeat of the Emperor, even if it's Yasuhito now and not Meiji. The priests constantly placate the ghosts with offerings, which is about the only thing that keeps an army of angry spirits out of Edo Castle.
- Axis Mundi
- That sounds like another tall tale to prop up the importance of the priesthood.
- Snopes





INCOMING FEED.....



On the eastern side of Taito, along the banks of the Sumida River, is the traditional residential and commercial district of **Asakusa**. This neighborhood has historically been a blue-collar area, but the influx of temples has given it a very spiritual overtone. Now the little shops selling Japanese souvenirs are joined by actual talismonger shops selling authentic trappings of Shinto and Buddhist traditional magic. Shinto torii gates and paper lanterns identify temples and shrines standing next to the simple traditions of feudal Japan that are still in favor here, like *onsen* hot spring baths and sumo wrestling matches.

- For whatever reason, whether it's the simple nature of the people here or the presence of the priesthood, metahumans tend to run into less discrimination in Asakusa.

- 2XL

- And if you're a troll, the sumo-scaled furnishings in some places are the best accommodation you'll find in the entire sprawl.

- Mihoshi Oni

BUNKYO

Bunkyo is a sleepy residential ward dotted with public parks, schools, and walled-in corporate housing complexes.

Corporate loyalty is strong in Bunkyo, and family life tends to revolve around one's lifetime employment contract. The parents of each nuclear family push their children to ascend higher on the corporate ladder than they did, and each corporate community

tries to paint itself as harder working and more devoted than the competing community the next block over.

Three sprawling locations in Bunkyo are worth noting. The first is **Tokyo University**, the most elite university in the entire Japanese Imperial State. The campus and its extended holdings have continued to grow; it now controls nearly a third of the entire Bunkyo ward, and the university trust is an A-rated corporation. Tokyo University provides Japan with most of its leaders; the vast majority of Imperial ministry officials, prime ministers, and diplomats are Tokyo University alumni. This puts increasingly more pressure on the children of Japan's bureaucratic class to get into the university, despite the difficult entrance exams.

- Every year there are stories of teenagers who just burn out or snap trying to get into Tokyo University. It usually results in suicide, but violence against others as a result of this stress is on the rise.

- Haze

- I was once hired to extract the son of a Ministry of Transportation official. Turns out it was the son who hired me, in an effort to get away from the pressure of trying to get into Tokyo U. I hear the kid runs the shadows now.

- Rigger X

- I've heard you tell that story before, Rigger, and I can't help but think it's auto-biographical.

- Sounder

NEO-TOKYO

Another major location here is the two hundred square kilometer **Tengoku Enclave** in the Koishikawa neighborhood of Bunkyo. The entire complex is owned by Shiawase and serves as exclusive corporate housing. It is an environmentally friendly housing complex in natural surroundings, a paradise in the expensive urban jungle of Neo-Tokyo. The corp's creed says that "residents engage in many wellness programs and cooperative activities to build community awareness and appreciation." What Shiawase doesn't tell them is that the whole thing is a human ecology experiment. Not that many of the residents would care anyway.

- There's more to this story. Rumor has it that genetic samples are taken from the residents and used in a secret Tokyo University eugenics program.
- Sticks
- Oh come on. I know the Japanese Imperial State is everyone's favorite bogeyman, but now they run eugenics programs too?
- Ma'fan
- The professor linked to the research is Dr. Nagataka Uba, who was once involved in an earlier government program to "educate" promising future bureaucrats through psychotropic and psychosomatic conditioning.
- Sunshine
- It's worth mentioning that Dr. Sherman Huang, formerly of Renraku, once studied under Dr. Uba.
- The Smiling Bandit

Finally, there's **Shirow Row**, an entire neighborhood of converted warehouses devoted to Matrix game and AR design studios that thrives on the immense cashcow that is the Asian market. Many of the resident coders, developers, and producers are treated on par with international simstars and live in comfortable mansions in neighbouring Tengoku.

- Though a surprising number seem to prefer their old cramped flats full of anime plastic models, sim-chips, and joydolls. They just don't see the point of ostentation, since they spend most of their time in the ever-more-wondrous AR environments anyway.
- Janus

TOSHIMA

Toshima is a working-class ward, the source of most of Yokogawa's employees. These are the folks who keep the sprawl running: the firefighters, sewer workers, transit administrators, and so on. They live in plain apartment blocks in the neighborhood of **Ikebukuro**, often called "Train City." The reason for this is the massive Ikebukuro Station, which has become the primary hub connecting Neo-Tokyo's elevated maglev system to the larger railroad network traveling to other cities and towns in Japan. An ozone smell charges the air here, a combination of the convergence of highly-charged maglev rails and the infamous broadcast antenna that rises nearby. The Neo-Tokyo Tower is the tallest of its kind, broadcasting the majority of the city's wireless simsense signals across the city.

- The current Neo-Tokyo Tower is the third incarnation of the famous broadcast antenna. The first used to stand in the Minato Ward, and then was replaced by the New Tokyo Tower in Sumida Ward in the early twenty-first century. The Neo-Tokyo Tower became the city's new broadcast tower during the rebuilding following the second Crash.

- Puck

- The Neo-Tokyo Tower attracts technomancers like moths to a flame. Though the locals in Ikebukuro remain very suspicious of their kind, forcing them to meet in secret.

- Hannibelle

On the easternmost end of Toshima ward stands the **Sugamo Retirement Arcology**, the world's largest assisted living facility. This highly automated arcology cares for corporate retirees who have no family to look after them. Computerized systems carefully maintain their routine lives while unique drones provide them with company and conversation.

- The Sugamo Arcology holds about fifteen thousand elderly retirees. Unsurprisingly, news of the Renraku Arcology incident never reached those residents.

- Sunshine

- The drones used in Sugamo are shaped like small domestic pets but are capable of speech and a moderate amount of machine intelligence. They work so well as companions that they became popular toys for children.

- Rigger X

ODAIBA

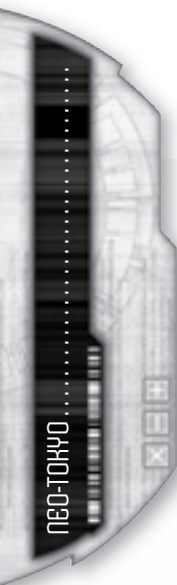
The name Odaiba comes from the Japanese word for "battery" and originally referred to a number of artificial islands constructed in Tokyo Bay by the Tokugawa Shogunate to act as port defense batteries. In the booming years of the Japanese Imperial State, many more artificial islands were constructed in the bay, some stretching as far east as the coast of Chiba and others as far south as the coast of Kawasaki. In recent years even more islands of varying dimensions have been added.

- Because of the crowd of artificial islands in the bay and the expressway/maglev bridges that connect them to each other and the mainland, Tokyo is no longer a shipping port. All shipping flows through Yokohama and the islands closer to the mouth of the Bay.

- Sounder

Many of the islands are extraterritorial showrooms for Japan's most powerful megacorporations, a public face to maintain good relations with the people of Japan. For instance, **Mitsuhaman Robot Park** is an entirely automated factory, museum, hotel, and expo center. The only living staff work by telepresence, rigging into the island's systems from Mitsuhaman locations all over the globe. Security on the island is also automated, aside from bound spirits on patrol.

On another island off the coast of central Tokyo stands the **World Mall**, a twelve-story shopping mall and amusement park



where each floor is devoted to a particular international theme. One floor looks like the crowded streets of Hong Kong, while another looks like the Amerind streets of Sante Fe. Each floor sells products related to the part of the world it represents and has numerous restaurants specializing in that culture's cuisine.

Aneki City is a recently opened Renraku showroom island off the coast of Chiba, named after the late Renraku CEO. The island is a nightlife resort full of shopping, nightclubs, bars, and arcades, all of it networked into an intelligent computer system. The system can analyze a tourist's personal tastes and make suggestions where they should visit, purchases they might like to make, or even people with similar tastes on the island they might like to meet.

- Aneki City is huge with the singles scene, especially in Neo-Tokyo, where people rarely have time to make romantic connections the old-fashioned way.
- Haze

Although there are dozens of other islands I haven't mentioned, the **Haneda Aerospace Port**, just south of Odaiba proper in what used to be the old Ota Ward is worth a notice, since that's how most foreign runners find their way into Neo-Tokyo. The old off-shore Haneda Airport was renovated, expanded, and finally reopened in 2058, able to accommodate international semiballistic and suborbital flights.

CHIBA

Until the 2030s, Chiba was a quiet seaside suburb across the bay from Tokyo, but that all changed when Chiba-born corporate raider Inazo Aneki came home with his newest acquisition, a company named Keruba International. The world would know it as Renraku Computer Systems. Setting up Renraku's global headquarters on the Makuhari waterfront of Chiba revitalized the area and brought in money, employment, research, and business. By the time Chiba was officially integrated into Neo-Tokyo in 2063, it was already a thriving city on the cutting edge of technological and medical research.

- Aneki is a hometown hero in Chiba. After his death, the city put up a statue of him looking out from Makuhari towards Tokyo Bay. Ritual offerings are constantly at the base of the statue, and rarely does the corporation have to put them there.
- Puck

Renraku made its fortune rebuilding the global communication networks following the Crash of 2029, which led to dozens of smaller telecommunications and computer technology start-ups springing up in Chiba. But Inazo Aneki himself always had a deep interest in psychology, medicine, and cyberotechnology, and he funded the Kyoko Aneki Medical Center, named after his wife (who is a successful psychotherapist in her own right). The Medical Center became the axis of a successful biomedical and cybernetics research community in Chiba and produced some of the most state-of-the-art cybersurgery clinics in the world.

- No doubt Chiba has some of the best surgeons anywhere, but it also has some of the biggest wash-outs. The ones who can't

cut it end up running Chiba's infamous black clinics, where you can get just about anything installed, no questions asked and no paperwork required.

- Butch
- Renraku runs a delta-grade cybersurgery clinic somewhere in Chiba too, possibly capable of cybermancy. Where it is, no one is quite sure, but it is definitely not inside the Medical Center.
- Clockwork
- The clinics in Chiba spare no expense for those who can afford to go to them. They are on par with the fanciest surgical recovery spas in Miami, Los Angeles, and Geneva.
- Dr. Spin

YOKOHAMA

Yokohama, Japan's second largest city and busiest seaport, was a thriving international metropolis until October 27th, 2061. When the Ring of Fire erupted on that day, Yokohama was struck by a 7.2 Richter earthquake that tore open the chemical plants and industrial sites near the seaport and started fires that raged in the city for two days straight, choking the air with toxic fumes. Japan pulled back its troops stationed abroad to assist Yokohama, but the damage had been done. Over five thousand people were dead and the city was in ruins.

Imperial soldiers struggled to keep order in a city that had gone to hell. The Diet promised aid, but Japan was still reeling as a nation and the aid was slow in coming. The Emperor brought Yokohama into the Neo-Tokyo prefecture in 2063 with promises of immediate rebuilding, but political wrangling has stymied the progress. Somehow, the people of Yokohama carried on.

- The Emperor assigned management of the reconstruction contracts to the Shinto priesthood, which has been unprepared to deal with the task. The kami in Yokohama have been no help since many are toxic or mad, and the foreign corporations called in to assist have been blocked by the influence of the Japanacorp. The Emperor may be forced to bow to the Japanacorp and grant them the contracts if he wants the reconstruction to go anywhere.
- Kia

It has been ten years since the earthquake, and Yokohama still has a long way to go. The port terminal has been rebuilt and is accepting ship traffic, but the industrial yards are still a burnt-out toxic wasteland. In an attempt to clean up the pollution—the Japanese have a cleanliness thing—alternative terminals have sprung up on Obaida's artificial islands and Tateyama across Tokyo Bay as well, handling much of the steel, automobile, and industrial cargo. Aside from Imperial soldiers, most of the Japanese residents of Yokohama have fled elsewhere, leaving foreigners and metahumans to scratch out a living here because they face discrimination elsewhere. The Chinese of Yokogawa Chukagai (Chinatown) manage the port now; they keep the trade moving and the supplies coming in, but Triads that have moved in with them skim some off the top to feed the black market. A motley crew of metahumans of mixed descent—Japanese, Russian, Filipino, and more—works to rebuild the shattered seaboard while the Imperial soldiers occupy the rest of the city inland.



- Some of the metahumans in Yokohama are survivors of Yomi, freed when the Emperor shut down the prison island in 2063 but shipped to Yokohama upon their release. They've traded one hell for another.

- Black Mamba

- At least here they have some semblance of freedom and an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

- Fatima

- It sure isn't easy for them though. The Imperial troops stationed in Yokohama carry old prejudices and frequently roll into the metahuman shantytowns armed to the teeth, demanding a share of the supplies to distribute elsewhere. In the past, the metahuman communities have capitulated, but word is that the Triads are supplying them with weapons now. Things might get real ugly soon.

- Mihoshi Oni

SUB-TOKYO

Though few know it, beneath the surface of Neo-Tokyo is a maze of tunnels, some critical to the functioning of the city while others sit abandoned. In this subterranean maze, civil servants fight to keep the critical tunnels functioning while the shunned and forgotten seek refuge in the tunnels left behind.

When the nearby Yokohama earthquake in 2061 damaged the subway tunnels running underneath Tokyo, the Emperor opted to move the city's train system above ground. Some of the old subway tunnels were used to run utility cables under the earth, where they were less likely to be damaged by earthquake debris. Other tunnels were ordered sealed off, though with civil engineers focused on rebuilding elsewhere in Japan, most of these tunnels were poorly sealed or forgotten.

- The old subway tunnels have become a sanctuary for Neo-Tokyo's shunned people. There are entire metahuman neighborhoods in the subway tunnels, living down there because they are accepted among their own kind. But there's also shame at their own nature that drives them to live out of sight of human Japanese.

- Janus

- Shame, my ass. Why should a two-and-a-half meter tall troll be ashamed of himself? To hell with those self-righteous breeders.

- Fatima

- That may be the attitude in Seattle, but it's different in Neo-Tokyo. Being a part of the group is important here, and being different often carries a sense of shame. When you are as visible and permanently different as metahumans are, it's natural to hide from the embarrassment you feel among humanity.

- Mihoshi Oni

- It isn't just metahumans living in the abandoned subway tunnels. The homeless also carry heavy burdens of shame in Neo-Tokyo's work-fueled lifestyle, and the surface Tokyo-ites would rather forget the homeless exist than help alleviate the problem. They have been shoved out of every place they could find to sleep, so they have come underground.

- Traveler Jones

Further below, beneath the subway tunnels and utility shafts, there is an extensive flood prevention system under Neo-Tokyo. The paved-over sprawl can't absorb floodwater and the filled-in bay can't take in as much run-off, so Neo-Tokyo's engineers have come up with another solution. Deep under the city are massive downshafts and reservoirs that collect excess water from the surface. As these massive underground basins begin to fill, side shafts divert the water towards Tokyo Bay, where powerful pumps force the water safely out.

Lately, however, teams sent deep into the flood basins and downshafts to check for earthquake damage have not returned. Accidents aren't unheard of that far below the earth, but fifteen workers have gone missing in the past five years. Those are just the official numbers; many believe that more have gone missing that have not been mentioned.

- The Sub-Tokyo metahumans claim that shokushiki live in the deep tunnels and come up to hunt. Shokushiki, for the uninformed, is the Japanese term for ghouls.

- Sticks

- I fear the shokushiki themselves flee from something far worse. The spirits too cringe and warn that from beneath you, it devours.

- Arete.

PLACES OF BUSINESS

Posted by: Janus

This is not a tourist guide for clueless gaijin. While many of you spend some time in Japan, Neo-Tokyo is my home. It is impossible to put into words the proper sense of alienation foreigners feel when you come here—there are many places that are weird beyond your experience for such things, while others are deceptively familiar. No matter how common a place may seem, please remember that the rules and protocol of your home sprawls do not apply in Neo-Tokyo. Money cannot excuse a lack of manners, nor purchase respectability.

BUSINESSES AS USUAL

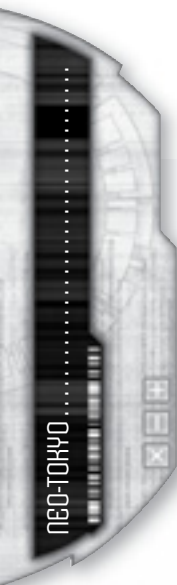
First and foremost Neo-Tokyo is about business. The mega-corps are here for business. The Yakuza are here for business. The Russians, the Chinese, and the Koreans—many of them hate the Japanese, and they all come here for business. Foreign shadowrunners, when they come here, come for business or it follows them soon after they arrive. If you are going to operate in Neo-Tokyo, you need to understand that everyone, at some level, is involved in business.

CrashCart Prime (Minato)

Evo didn't move all of its assets when it left Neo-Tokyo, and the primary remaining subsidiary was CrashCart, which provides most of the medical care for the Greater Neo-Tokyo area—to the point where “ambulance” is basically synonymous with “CrashCart” for most of the citizens. CrashCart Prime is both the principal hospital, the ambulance vehicle fleet servicing facility, and the world headquarters of CrashCart.

- Which means if you have medical data taken at your local CrashCart Clinic in Hong Kong or Seattle, it's probably backed up at CrashCart Prime.

- Butch



NEO-TOKYO METROPOLITAN POLICE

Despite the massive megacorporate influence in Neo-Tokyo, the city uses a regular metropolitan police force rather than contracted security like Lone Star or Knight Errant. Partly this is to prevent the sort of corporate infighting and one-upmanship rife among North American contractors, but mostly it is because the Neo-Tokyo Metropolitan Police are a point of pride for the local citizenry. In addition to being more highly trained than your local Lone Star officer, the NTMP are equipped with top-of-the-line gear from megacorporate donations, and each one is incredibly loyal to the metroplex and the Japanese Imperial State. It's small wonder that Neo-Tokyo has a much lower crime rate than Seattle despite having a police force of comparable size.

Of course, that's glossing over some of the finer details. The NTMP makes extensive use of drones and robots for routine traffic control and other routine duties, and a state-of-the-art communication and surveillance system (POLNET) allows police riggers to oversee and direct officers from the distinctive beehive-shaped police stations in each ward.

In addition, the police commanders have extensive dealings with the local community, particularly local priests, heads of corporate security, and Yakuza oyabun. The police respect megacorporate extraterritoriality, the sanctity of shrines and temples, and the *nawabari* of the Yakuza *gumi*. In exchange, the corps are very good about exchanging prisoners and respecting local jurisdictions, the priests lend mystical expertise against Awakened threats, and the Yakuza cooperate to capture violent criminals in order to save face.

Of course, things aren't always perfect. Sometimes the Yakuza go to war and the streets run with blood, or escalating conflict between competing megacorps leads to high-profile extractions and murder. In many such cases, the NTMP steps in as an arbiter for the dispute, attempting to reconcile both sides. More often than not, they are successful at keeping the peace.

THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

Japanese citizens are forbidden to privately own firearms; only the police, the military, and megacorporate security have such privileges, and even they rarely wear firearms. However, in the interests of public safety, adults may bear any form of bladed weapon so long as it is not concealed (this includes cyberimplant weapons).

In many circles, it is considered quite chic to wear a tanto at your belt, and many people don't blink at seeing a cheap katana banging against a wageslave's knee. Of course, owning a weapon and knowing how to use it are two completely separate things, and most Neo-Tokyo citizens bearing a blade would be more of a danger to themselves than a potential attacker if they actually drew their weapon.

- Kinda sucks if you have a DocWagon contract, though.
- Sticks

- Not really. CrashCart has a supplementary medical care contract with Neo-Tokyo; if somebody hits the PanicButton, a CC ambulance will take the injured to the hospital and perform basic medical services on the spot. Of course that comes with caveats: they'll charge you later for anything they do, they're not going to come in guns blazing to rescue you, and if you have any bullet holes expect to talk to the cops *tout de suite*.

- Mihoshi Oni

Compared to other CrashCart outfits, Prime's main drawback is its slightly humancentric and Japanese bias. Hisato-Turner news channels have made a major issue of the length of time that metahumans have to wait when compared to humans, and Japanese citizens versus gaijin. The primary issue seems to be the reticent "home guard" who haven't been enlightened to Evo's new metahuman-friendly image just yet. With the recent shift of municipal contracts to Monobe, CrashCart Prime management has been backed into a corner.

- Funny enough, they have a large staff of dwarf nurses and orderlies—their innate resistance to disease and hardy constitutions are perfect for handling sick patients. Of course, the administration is very strict about personal body and facial hair standards.

- Baka Dabora

The Cube (Shinagawa)

Neo-Tokyo originated the concept of the coffin motel, but it took a shady entrepreneur from Vancouver to perfect it. The result is the Cube. At full capacity, this five-story open-frame coffin motel by the Neo-Tokyo International Aerospaceport has room for up to 15,000 guests. This motel was designed from the ground up to facilitate the movement of guests into and out of the motel as quickly as possible, offering the widest possible array of cheap, completely automated services to suck as much nuyen as possible from you in the process.

- This place has a permanent population of about 3,000 people that live in the coffins. Creepy.

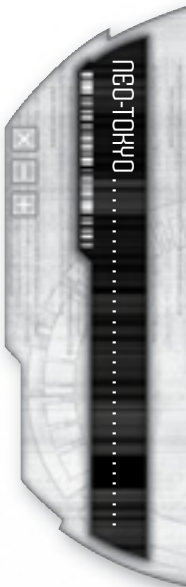
- Traveler Jones

- Good way to keep off the grid, though. Use a certified credstick with a decent fake SIN, hunker down with the mob and lie low for a couple weeks.

- Sticks

GameNation (Shibuya)

A converted municipal sports arena, GameNation is Neo-Tokyo's premiere temple to AR gaming, where teens and tribes flock to show-off their skills in one-on-one competitions, free-for-alls, and championships. Players bring their own equipment, but GameNation provides a closed grid to work with. Run by a small clique of retired and well-off game designers, GameNation also hosts first-showing parties, beta trials, and premieres of new releases for all the big studios. The facility can fit 10k crowds, and it's become *the* hang out for many teen gangs and tribes.



It also provides cover for a hard-core group of Matrix wizards called the Shichinin-shu, and a number of hackers are known to operate exclusively out of the GameNation grid using the large crowds as cover. Whether or not they do so with the knowledge of GameNation's owners is debatable.

Daiatsu Macroforge (Toma Island, Neo-Tokyo Bay)

The latest and most state-of-the-art jewel in Daiatsu's crown, the Daiatsu Macroforge can produce macroscale nanotech products, such as carbon nanotube vehicle frames, square kilometer lightsails, and the massive cable-links necessary for a space elevator or other macroscale project. Many of the newest superskyscrapers being built in Neo-Tokyo use the products of the Daiatsu Macroforge in their construction.

- The Macroforge also serves as one of the primary recycling centers in Neo-Tokyo; Daiatsu buys the best garbage from the individual vendors and has it shipped to Toma-jima on barges to be picked apart in their dissembler pits. You'd be amazed how many valuable metals and even radioactive materials they end up with; selling the refined and recycled products to the other megacorps more than covers their costs.
- Kemuri
- Of course, what you have left afterwards is an incredibly toxic sludge of half-dead dissemblers and the crap even they can't eat. Where do they dump it?
- Ecotope
- Y'all are forgetting the most important question: can you dump a body there?
- Kane

Gotoku-ji Temple (Setagaya)

This traditional Shinto/Buddhist shrine is the legendary birthplace of maneki neko, the one-paw-raised money cat statues that can be seen in sprawls throughout the Sixth World. Renraku is a famous sponsor of the shrine, its corporate officers having endowed dozens of *torii* (ceremonial gates) to commemorate their retirements and hundreds of *en-nichi* (festivals). The shrine itself has been greatly expanded from its original parameters, the grounds containing elegant statuary and augmented reality projections of the famous maneki neko in ten thousand different forms. Many sararimen enjoy taking their children to Gotoku-ji for holidays and festivals, while many Neo-Tokyo schools plan field trips to the shrine to learn about Japanese religion.

- They've got a terrific giftshop too. Renraku doesn't make a nuyen off it—all proceeds from sales go straight to the temple.
- Traveler Jones
- Besides tradition, Renraku's investment in Gotoku-ji helps promote its popular image.
- Dr. Spin
- It's more than that. When a Japanese child is born, the local shrine records the child's name and records it. Every Renraku compound of any size has a local shrine that it maintains,

and Gotoku-ji is the official shrine for every Renraku family in Neo-Tokyo. That means somewhere on or under the shrine is a database with the genealogy of every Renraku corpfamily in Neo-Tokyo. Powerful paydata.

- Baka Dabora

The House of Green Leaves (Chiyoda)

Lady Tomoe runs one of the few traditional geisha houses in Neo-Tokyo, the House of Green Leaves (formally known as Yagou Aoba-rou.) The first thing you need to remember is that a geisha is not a whore. I don't know how to compare them to anything else in the Sixth World, but they're not that. A geisha is a companion, an entertainer. When you're together, she waits on you. She smiles, and she means it. Every move she makes is graceful, from pouring the sake to lighting your cigarette. But you don't pay her for sex.

- For all you round-eyes out there, geisha is one of those inherently Japanese things so complicated, ritualized, and tradition-bound that even most Japanese don't rightly know all the details. A lot of prostitutes (the illegal ones, anyway) like to dress themselves up as geisha, but a true geisha won't sell herself like that, on a street or anywhere else.
- Baka Dabora

Promising young children, male and female, are taken in and apprenticed, typically with a wealthy corporate businessperson as a sponsor. The training lasts several years, and the House of Green Leaves is an accredited institution equivalent to a private college.

- Janus might be trying to deemphasize the sexual nature of geisha, but it's a damn fact that most of the "sponsors" expect to take the virginity of their wards as a return on their investment.
- Fatima

It's fashionable for upper-level businesspeople to hire geisha for meetings, dinners, tea, and other social get-togethers with people of similar level. More likely than not, your chances of taking the place of a geisha to get close to somebody important are minimal—the makeup, hairstyling, and dressing takes hours, even with the special training. You also generally can't bribe them, but you might be able to sneak a bug into their gear, or trace them to where the meeting is being held.

- A very, very few geisha are a little less traditional and a lot more dangerous. Some are very subtly augmented, either through implants or magic, and they act as bodyguards for their clients. Then there's Ghost Face Woman, an ex-geisha who hires herself out as a freelance assassin.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Didn't you have a thing with her last year?
- Baka Dabora
- Yeah. Bitch gave my client a tracheotomy with her bamboo flute. Never would have happened if the stupid bastard had let me in the room. I did get a piece of her on her way out. I wear it on a chain around my neck.
- Mihoshi Oni



In the past, the House of Green Leaves has catered to megacorporate CEOs, members of the Diet, Yakuza oyabun, the great dragon Ryumyo, and even the Emperor. The security is normally ramped up a few degrees past subtle at that point; the guards at the door double and look more menacing, dark-side hackers patrol the Matrix, and the crawling Awakened ivy that gives the House its name is backed up with hired wagemujen or astral adepts. Lady Tomoe herself rarely entertains these days, though it is said she answers the occasional request from the Emperor.

Maneki Yadorigi (Shinjuku)

After trading hours, the Maneki Yadorigi is wall-to-wall suits as far as the cybereye can see. It's a business bar a block from the NTSE, where the corporate raiders and money men go to celebrate, drown their sorrows, and talk shop. It's not uncommon for traders from other exchanges to drop in via virtual reality and have a quiet chat. Because of its clientele, Maneki Yadorigi is only open from 1500-0900. After 2100, first shift leaves and the second shift (which includes strippers and exotic dancers) comes in and runs the place until 0600, when the third or "short" shift comes in. Maneki Yadorigi sees a certain volume of informal (and occasionally unlicensed) trading. It's a good place to pick up stock tips or quietly convert a load of stock into cred.

- The Aneki has a nice selection of synthahol, real alcohol, snuff, push, corpcandy, and long haul for sale at the bar. I've also seen a couple dealers cruising through selling packets of novacoke and betameth inhalers, and the bar sells antidotes for whatever it pushes. It's illegal to be ripped to the gills when making trades, nod wink.
- Mr. Bonds
- Unsurprisingly, the number of metahuman staff increases as the night goes along. The first shift is almost entirely human with a discrete ork bouncer; the second shift usually has a couple of elves and orks among the dancers and wait staff and a troll bouncer to make sure the girls are relatively safe—pawing is pretty common, but no hitting or sex on stage. Once 0600 rolls around—well, they don't call it the short shift for nothing. It's made up almost entirely of dwarves, with an oni serving as bartender. It's shit work, but at least they can eat.
- Mihoshi Oni
- It's also a draw for other Japanese metahumans, especially runners and those with an allergy to sunlight. Take Ono, a private Mr. Tanaka who sits in the corner smoking those foul Hong Kong black cigarettes most early mornings.
- Baka Dabora

Neo-Tokyo International Aerospaceport (Ota)

Also known as Haneda Aerospaceport, NTIA is one of the two sub-orbital terminals in Neo-Tokyo. The other, Narita International Aerospaceport, also handles a limited number of launches and re-entries from megacorporate and national spacecraft, particularly Evo's Shibanojuji orbital resort.

- Security at Narita is a bitch compared to Haneda—makes traveling harder, but the pay for extractions is higher.
- Traveler Jones

Neo-Tokyo Stock Exchange (Chiyoda)

This is the largest stock exchange in the world, and it acts as a model for stock exchanges across the globe. From the virtual trading floor, the icons of stock brokers dicker and jive almost without pause. The Neo-Tokyo Stock Exchange corporation is owned almost entirely by Evo Corporation, Mitsuhama Computer Technology, Renraku Computer Systems, and Shiawase Corporation, and as such features the most advanced computer system (and defenses) of any stock exchange in the world, capable of handling up to three billion trades per day.

- Last May they reopened the actual physical trading floor, using augmented reality to integrate it into the virtual trading floor.
- Mr. Bonds
- I hear they've raised security a couple of notches on all off-site connections during trading after they heard some of these new digital intelligences are playing havoc with the stock market.
- Clockwork

Nippon Credit and Trust Building (Shinjuku)

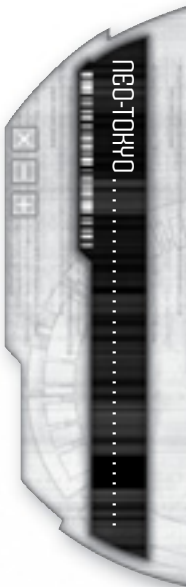
This is the actual physical bank that houses NC&T, one of the backbones of Japanacorp dominance. Most of this modest 16-story building is taken up by data processing and customer service, but the ground floor presents an austere and affluent image crafted in whorled red marble and polished shakudo. The rumored "vaults" in the substories actually house the bank's databases and servers. NC&T holds the dubious honor of Neo-Tokyo's oldest private corporate security force, and they have had generations to plan out the defense of their company's assets.

- There is a small vault that holds lock boxes for particularly valuable long-term customers—the type of old Japanese men and women with P.O. boxes on Zurich-Orbital.
- Orbital DK
- NC&T's security force is a quasi-independent corp; they run an armored car service for some of the other banks and corporations in Neo-Tokyo. They've been known to hire outside talent for particularly dangerous runs, either to man dummy cars or to map out the route. Nice work if you can get it.
- Mihoshi Oni

Pachinko Street (Bunkyo)

It would be a bit of an understatement to say that the Japanese love gambling. This is unfortunate, because there are very strict rules against gambling for money in Japan. So your average Japanese citizen has to go around the law. Anyone employed by an extraterritorial megacorp doesn't care; they gamble in corporate casinos as much as they want, as do a number of regular citizens. Virtual casinos are technically illegal, but no one is prosecuted so long as the casinos aren't in the Japan Regional Telecommunications Grids. On the other side of the fence are illegal casinos, physical and virtual, run by the Yakuza and various gangs.

- The Yakuza stay competitive by offering better odds—after all, any hacker can script some code to mess with a virtual slot machine, but it's harder to cheat at rolling dice or playing cards.
- Mihoshi Oni



- Which is probably why the Yakuza and their customers are particularly unkind to people they think are cheating.
- Sticks

Somewhere between legal and illegal are pachinko parlors. It works like this: you buy a number of pikuredu from a vendor (typically an AR construct), pay the pikuredu into the pachinko game of choice, and if you win, you get paid in more pikuredu.

- Pikuredu, or the equivalent game-only currencies, have been around for nearly a hundred years. Now that financial theory has marked out the tell-tale indicators when a game currency might cross over to become a legitimate currency—by being exchanged for legitimate currency in two-way transactions—gamecorps have been very careful to limit their gamecreds to prevent dilution of the global currency market.
- Mr. Bonds
- Or, in some cases, to take advantage of such conditions to make a quick wad of cred by selling thousands of worthless gamecred to players in exchange for their cold, hard nuyen.
- Slamm-O!

The current Data Age pachinko machine encompasses a wide range of virtual games, halfway between slot machines and arcade games. No matter how good you actually are at the games, of course, your chances to win are determined entirely by a random number generator stuck behind some IC in the code—but a lot of kids and teenagers like to go for high scores and get their names listed. Pikuredu can be turned in for prizes, like maneki neko statuettes, a liter of beer—even nuyen in some places, though exchanging pikuredu for “real” money is technically illegal.

- To continue with what Mr. Bonds was saying before, there’s no essential difference between pikuredu and any other “legitimate” currency, except of course it’s illegal to exchange gamecred (pikuredu) for realcred (nuyen). Not that there aren’t people perfectly willing to do so.
- FastJack

Pachinko Street is three kilometers of winding pedestrian-only traffic, with pachinko machines and virtual tellers where you can buy more pikuredu on every corner and in every alley and store. Every business on the strip, from the laundromat to the bars to the grocery store and StufferShack, accept pikuredu for certain items. Weekends are the worst, when thousands of low-level wageslaves come in to “do the street,” starting on the north end and working their way down, playing every pachinko machine and buying at least one item in every store. It’s a golden opportunity to make friends or kidnap a secretary, a janitor, a data entry clerk or any other nobody that has a pass to the building you want to get into.

> Keep in mind the Yakuza runs Pachinko Street and keep the peace. If you are going to extract someone make sure you’ve gone through the appropriate channels. One word: Nemawashi.

- Mihoshi Oni

Shiangiri, Inc. (Chiba)

If the entire world looks to Chiba as the standard for the state of the art, then Chiba looks to Fujimi-bou. It is, simply, the very finest metahuman augmentation facility I know of. They never work with any implant less than delta-grade, and they are fully equipped with the latest nanocybernetic advances and extensive genotech facilities. The corporation is more open-minded than most, and it has multiple deals, partnerships, and projects with corporations like Universal Omnitech, NeoNET, and Zeiss; they are willing to trade their surgical expertise for the latest research. Fujimi-bou is owned by a board of investors taken from the majority stockholders of multiple Japancorps—especially Renraku, Evo, and Shiawase—that helps the clinic by providing access to the latest technology from multiple corporate R&D labs.

- Not to mention the unofficial agreement to leave the place alone. None of the big boys want to risk this particular prize in an intercorp contretemps, so they’ve agreed to play nice here. Not that there hasn’t been a little shadow-action now and again, but nothing major.
- Mr. Bonds

• Fujimi-bou is serious about maintaining its edge at any cost; they’ll steal people, personnel, and prototypes if they have to. They usually offer a discount or pay in kind, which is a great way to get that little bit of ‘ware you’ve had your eye on.

- Butch

• Of course, the serious question is: what are the limits? Can I go there for cyborgization or cybermancy?

- Hard Exit

GREY MARKETS

Beyond the legitimate businesses are the quasilegal operations that skirt the edge of the law. These places can be very useful to shadowrunners, and Neo-Tokyo has many of them. Unlike normal business operations, the fact that grey markets skirt around laws and dwell in legal grey areas or disputed jurisdictions makes the owners and operators demonstrably nervous. Essentially, the lack of legal certainty on profits adds an edge of criminal paranoia.

27 Okosu Road (Yokohama)

If this place ever had a name, it doesn’t have one now. People like me find out about it through word of mouth. Essentially, it’s a low-frills motel turned illegal brothel run by this scary-looking retired Yakuza that everybody calls Three-Two. The meat is all exotic—foreigners for the most part, and more than half are underage runaways or illegal imports from Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Their whores have a pretty steady rotation; a couple move in every week, spend a few days turning tricks, and then move on or (if they don’t give Three-Two his cut or pay for their rooms) disappear.

- Why do they call the guy Three-Two?
- Slamm-O!

• He fucked up really badly. In atonement he had to cut off the pinky, ring finger, and trigger finger on his right hand. “Three down, Two left.” The name stuck.

- Mihoshi Oni





Three-Two also offers a very useful service for shadowtypes: rooms to let, paid for on a daily or weekly basis, no questions asked. As far as anyone's concerned, you're one more whore passing through to earn your nuyen before moving on. Foreign runners fit right in, and it's a nice place to lay low and bask in anonymity.

- Yeah, unless Three-Two sells you out. But who ever heard of a pimp putting money before principles?
- Baka Dabora

The Brazilian Market (Yokohama)

Japanese-Brazilian expatriates make up a sizable ethnic minority in Neo-Tokyo. A mass exodus of Japanese nationals and their descendants occurred back when Amazonia formed, and a lot of them settled on the edges of Yokohama. The J-Bs have their own little subculture that sets them apart, including a half-dozen Japanese-Brazilian restaurants, brightly colored shirts, cross-cultural artwork, and a lot of Amazonian imports from their families back in Metropôle. They've also become the number-one source for Awakened drugs in Neo-Tokyo.

- Awakened drugs are so new that many governments and municipalities don't have any laws regarding them yet. That doesn't mean the cops won't try to take them away from you just on

principle, but they currently occupy a grey area. Many people can't tell the difference between Awakened drugs and traditional Amazonian medicines.

- Butch

The Amazonian Yakuza (the Komata-kai) are on tenuous ground, owing allegiance to the Mita-gumi but facing increasing opposition from the Ghost Cartels and the Amazonian government. The demand for Awakened drugs really hasn't hit the locals yet, so the Amazonian Yaks don't deal in bulk—I'd be surprised if there were five keys of toadstone in all of Neo-Tokyo.

- That'll change soon. I hear a mule for the Black Chrysanthemums was caught carrying a couple keys of scarlet bliss.
- Nephrine

The Amazonian Yaks work through South Sea Imports, Ltd., a small shipping company that normally handles real wood furniture. They also do a limited amount of smuggling from Metropôle. If you set up things well enough in advance—it takes about six weeks to cruise from Amazonia to Japan—you can have a contact buy what you'll need as far as drugs, guns, and gear in Metropôle, then pay a couple hundred nuyen to smuggle it through with a load of wicker chairs for you to pick up at the South Sea warehouse when you get in Neo-Tokyo.

Private Message...

FROM: GLASSWALKER

RE: SOUTH SEA CONTACT IN METRÓPOLE

I've attached Don Hoji's commlink number. He uses a routing service, so it might take a few seconds to connect. He can be trusted to obtain and transport the goods to Neo-Tokyo. Viya con dios, companero.

<< Scan Attachment Y/N - Download Attachment Y/N? >>

Comprachico Clinic (Toshima)

A couple decades ago, Sorayama was the greatest cybersurgeon in Chiba, possibly the world. He approached cybersurgery as an art, shaping men and women as others shape bonsai trees. His infamous "Ultra" series still ranks among the most bleeding-edge augmentations ever produced, many of them unique and worked up entirely from plans he made himself—custom implants from the days before anyone on the street had ever heard of delta-grade. He was a genius and an artist.

His first stroke came sometime in '56, but not his last. It took millions of nuyen to piece his nervous system back into some semblance of working order, and by the time he was done, the state of the art had left him far behind. Nowadays, Sorayama works out of a small, nondescript cosmetic surgery clinic, removing tattoos with lasers and patching up street samurai that leak into his office. Even in his diminished circumstances, Sorayama maintains a web of contacts from his better days—enough to locate any augmentation you're looking for, if you can pay the price. He's also earning a steady income from letting Spinrad market their new cybersuites under his name.



- You're way off. Sorayama actually designed the suites years back, and technology's only just caught up with his designs.

- Yankee

- Sorayama didn't fall behind the bleeding edge—he blew past it. He spent his roll on some experimental Renraku skillwire system and it had some teething problems—hence the strokes—but now he's on stipend to three different Chiba delta clinics researching manatech implants and combining different approaches to augmentation—cyberware, bioware, genetech, nanotech—into comprehensive implant systems. Just you wait and see what he comes up with next.

- Butch

- Take it from me, Butch: don't self-medicate.

- Nephrine

- I don't know if Butch is on her meds or off, but the most important parts of what Janus says are true: Sorayama is a reliable street doc that can get you whatever you need.

- Mihoshi Oni

BLACK MARKETS

It should come as no surprise that Neo-Tokyo has institutions for the sale of nearly everything—even, and sometimes, especially the forbidden. Sometimes finding something illegal (or legal but obtained illegally) is as easy as visiting the local gumi, but those of you who would find it uncomfortable dealing with the Yakuza should be happy to know that other channels are open and ready for your business.

The Foundry (Ikebukuro)

Except for a few areas and certain people such as licensed security officers, there is no right to bear arms in Japan. Hell, the Yakuza aren't very keen on letting common criminals carry guns. So if you're feeling a little naked without your usual bang-bang, you come to the Foundry. The front is an upper-middle class antiques boutique that deals in fairly high-quality reproductions of antiquated military hardware—katanas, laquered samurai armor, World War I & II military equipment, AK-47 model kits, EuroWar insignia, etc. Japan has a sizable population of miltech fetishists and collectors, so this is actually pretty unassuming.

- You can always try to smuggle weapons in on suborbitals—the collector angle is a good cover, though you'll need some fake documentation on your commlink—but security is a pain in the ass, and if anyone gets suspicious they'll have security waiting for you as soon as you hit Japanese soil.

- Traveler Jones

- That depends on who you bribe.

- 2XL

If you impress the guy behind the counter (or give the pass phrase) you'll be ushered into the back room, a “collector's market” that deals in authentic gear: stripped Uzi-IVs, actual conversion kits for AK-47s, bins of tarnished ammunition in all sizes and calibers, some second-hand miltech, and a few flashy collector's edition models of the Ares Predator series. It's a nice place to

browse and talk shop, but you need a permit to buy most of it. If you flash a serious cred balance, one of the guys hanging around will take you behind an armored door and into the Foundry.

- In case it hasn't come across yet, the criminal fraternity of Neo-Tokyo is pretty damn close-knit. Most people worth dealing with want to work with someone they've met before, which means you need to get a local runner or hood to make an introduction. There are fixers who specialize in that sort of thing, and your own fixer can get in touch with them, for a price.

- Baka Dabora

This heavily guarded room is the personal workspace of three professional armorers, all ex-corporate and Desert Wars veterans. They've got a desktop forge that can make you almost anything you need and modify it to your specs, and they'll charge you the going rate—you don't like it, you go somewhere else. They're fair, but they have steady business and don't need to haggle. They'll also buy weapons and armor and may give a better cut if they come across something unusual. On the rare occasions you need to deal in bulk, whether buying or selling, you have to talk to the boss: Ichi “Icky” Yoshida.

- I've never heard of these guys. What gumi do they answer to?

- Mihoshi Oni

- They don't. The Foundry is independent and plans to stay that way. They don't deal with Yakuza, and if there's any hint the Yaks are on to them the whole operation moves.

- Kia

- Bullshit. I can't believe an operation of this size is independent. Not in Neo-Tokyo. They answer to somebody.

- Mihoshi Oni

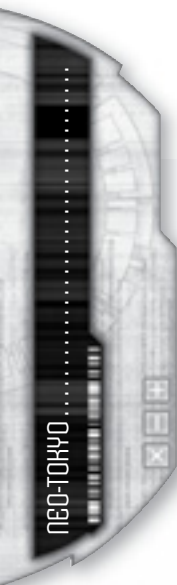
The Black Shogun (Usually Minato, sometimes Odaiba)

Easily the most famed of Neo-Tokyo's virtual bars, the Black Shogun shifts to a new virtual address in the Neo-Tokyo grid every night, sometimes materializing in AR over a local bar whose system has been hacked, other times staying entirely virtual. According to the trid, the police think the owners or operators just hack in wherever they can and move before they get caught. A few have advanced the theory that technomancers may be the malfeasants running the Black Shogun.

- I don't think so; this sort of thing has been going on for longer than technomancers have existed. Probably a hacker gang backed by one of the syndicates (and this being Japan, guess which one?)

- Pistons

The décor changes frequently, but the Black Shogun maintains a consistent theme as Dark Country bar, with fractal hay-and-sawdust floors, strands of rusted barb wire, walls covered with black-and-white photos of rural poverty, and a number of virtual topiary sculptures made from bleached skulls and wild kudzu. The bar is a pile of roughly fashioned child's coffins stacked three high, behind which are rough shelves of unlabeled half-empty bottles and an old African gentleman in a black cowboy outfit



serving as bartender. Like most virtual bars, you can buy a number of mindbender programs, from simsense programs of alcoholic drinks to low-level BTLs of more potent drugs.

- The house specialty is White Lightning, a one-minute high-quality BTL of someone slamming back a shot of 175-proof homemade ethanol. Naturally, the icon for the proggie itself looks like a shot glass-sized mason jar. Not bad for twenty nuyen. Each shot is different, too, like they got a couple dozen people to do shots and recorded them all.
- Danger Sensei
- That's actually a randomizer option; something new that's been coming up lately. Keeps the same old BTL from becoming boring.
- Pistons

If gambling's your speed, the Black Shogun has faro, blackjack, and poker tables. You'll have to trade in your nuyen (or whatever) for chips first, so go see the cashier hanging out in the corner booth under the teepee. In the Black Shogun, normal currency shows up as gold nuggets, rough trade bars, or sacks of gold dust, while the poker and faro chips appear as round gold coins with square-cut holes in the center.

- The Black Shogun gets some great music. Their house band is Hoodoo Tucker and the Obeah Boyz, and they synth in live five nights a week. I drop in every Friday just to hear them play.
- Danger Sensei

What most of the patrons don't know is that the Black Shogun serves as cover to one of the best illegal currency exchanges in Japan. It takes less time to show you how business is done than it takes to tell it.

<< User Janus Enters Teepee >>

Cashier: What can I do for you tonight, sir?

Janus: Black chips.

Cashier: What kind?

Janus: Renraku corporate scrip.

Cashier: And how will you be paying?

Janus: Nuyen.

>> Cashier sets a scale on the table. The teepee flap closes.

[[Security Level 2 Enabled]]

Cashier: Please place your gold in the left pan.

>> Janus drops a handful of gold nuggets on the pan

[[4,000 nuyen transferred from certified commlink account]]

>> The scale adjusts as the Cashier adds iron weights to the right pan, then stills

[[Processing complete]]

Cashier: Red yen is at one for three point five eight ought eight nuyen. House commission fifteen percent.

Janus: Deal

>> Cashier hands Janus a pile of black chips

[[Transfer complete | 950 Renraku corporate scrip deposited in certified commlink account]]

>> Cashier hands Janus a pile of gold chips

[[50 1-nuyen Black Shogun tokens have been credited to your account]]

Cashier: Compliments of the house. Will there be anything else?

Janus: No, thank you.

>> The teepee flap opens

[[Security Level 2 Disabled]]

<<User Janus Exits Teepee>>

The commission might seem a little heavy, but the Black Shogun can handle anything—nuyen, corporate scrip for the Big Ten and most of the AA Japanacorps, pesos, you name it—and the cred you receive is laundered. It's generally a good idea to buy a couple gold chips while you're there and play them on the tables as a cover for seeing the cashier; faro gives the best odds.

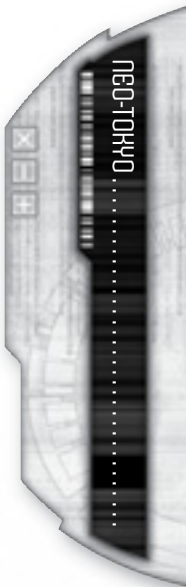
- You can try to haggle if you want to get a better exchange rate, but I've never gotten anywhere with it.
- Mr. Bonds
- Like any good bar, the Black Shogun has its bouncers: a couple middleweight combat hackers sporting tarnished Lonestar badges on their icons and (if the shit hits the fan) agent programs in black samurai armor.
- Mihoshi Oni

The Bleeds (Chiba)

If Sorayama or Fujimi-bou is where to go to get something done right, then the Bleeds are where you go to get something done cheap. It's the poorest section of Chiba, occupied by all the doctors that screwed up. Most of the resident physicians are on probation, pending investigation, or unlicensed. Some are simply disgraced. No matter why they're on the outs—accidentally prescribing the wrong medication, fucking their patients while they're knocked out for the operation, performing an illegal procedure, selling medical supplies—they usually end up here doing back-alley surgery with used parts.

The Bleeds is, to put it mildly, fucking scary even for us natives. You don't want to go alone, and you always go armed. I swear I've taken a friend in to get a new kidney and the doctor excused himself, left for a couple minutes, and came back blood-spattered and with a nice warm kidney bagged in his hand. After he took a minute to catch his breath, he asked whether or not my friend needed to be sedated for the operation.

- Jeebus. These guys make you sound good, Butch.
- Hard Exit
- Compared to these ham-fisted goons, I am a fucking goddess. I've seen some of their handiwork: a guy came stumbling off a suborbital and into my office with a 106-degree fever and a 24-hour migraine headache; they'd drilled a hole in his skull to install a datajack and never bothered to clean the drill.
- Butch
- It's not a bad place to get rid of a warm corpse, though, and there are some reliable docs.
- Mihoshi Oni



Chosun Alley (Sub-Tokyo)

This is where the Korean gangsters sell their pirated data and software, Matrix gear, and BTLs. They set up in the tunnels and move around a lot to avoid the police and the Yakuza. There's also a fair selection of Korean-style magical goods. The Yakuza really want to shut them down because the Yaks are a bit behind on the latest hacker markets.

- It's not much to look at, but you can find some good deals. A couple of the Korean hackers manage to get shipping manifests, passcodes, appointment books, and personnel files from A and AA Japanacorps.

- Kia

- I stopped by a couple weeks ago to pick up something special when my passport didn't let me into Korea. The mudang talismongers are pretty good with magical compounds, but apparently they don't like the kami-rebuilt parts of the city. Never thought I'd see the day when even the spirits go racist.

- Lyran

AWAKENED HOTSPOTS

With the presence of magic corporations like Mitsuhama, the high density of shrines, and the rebuilding efforts of the kami, Neo-Tokyo has something of a reputation for magic. Like any other resource, the Japanese recognize magic both as a fact of life and something they can profit from, spiritually and financially.

The Golden Palace (Shinjuku)

Acclaimed as the single finest Chinese restaurant in Neo-Tokyo, the Golden Palace occupies the top three floors of the Nissan building and caters to the elite among the government and corporate crowd. The decor is straight out of the Forbidden City at its height, with dozens of servants in full dress catering to the diner's every need and multicolored curtains separating rooms (and concealing the sophisticated anti-surveillance equipment).

- The Golden Palace earns every one of its five stars. Their Peking ravioli is to die for.

- Traveler Jones

Besides its 1,000-nuyen-a-plate dinners, the Golden Palace is most famed for its fortune cookies. Master Chef Wen is an adept who specializes in both cooking and aleuromancy, the divination of the future through patterns in flour. Wen provides personal fortunes for his diners (already included in the price of their meals), which are delivered at the end in fresh-baked fortune cookies.

- Wait a mo', didn't the Americans invent fortune cookies?

- Haze

- Yes. Of course, the really funny bit is that aleuromancy is actually an ancient Greek magical tradition.

- Elijah

The superstitious or magically-inclined officers of many corporations, particularly MCT and Wuxing, dine regularly at the Golden Palace. Many attribute their success at business or life to

the predictions of Master Chef Wen, while others simply desire the occasional insight offered into their personal dilemmas.

Ipissimus (Odaiba)

In May 2071, Mitsuhama opened its first—and so far, only—megastore. Open 24/7/51, this monster mart has five fully-stocked enchanting shops for rent and five floors of magical goods open to the general public, one of which is dedicated entirely to manatech. There are over ten thousand foci stocked and available for sale in the vaults, and weekly magical demonstrations and classes.

- Holy Gaia. How can there be enough magicians in the sprawl to make this place profitable?

- Fatima

- 1) There are a little over half a million magicians of various ability in Neo-Tokyo and the surrounding area. 2) MCT has spent the last twenty years muscling and buying out independent talismongers in the Greater Neo-Tokyo area. 3) With this single centralized operation, MCT has cut expenses across the board and can afford to sell at a discount, undercutting everybody else by about 5 percent.

- Mr. Bonds

- 4) They don't just sell magical goods; the store has its own animated avatar, Meiji Maho. Meiji has her own series of trideo cartoons, live-action simsense, Matrix games, AR-skins, clothing, techtoys, and a shitload of all else. I bet MCT makes as least as much cred off the hordes of under-twelves as they do actual magicians.

- Traveler Jones

- I've played one of those Meiji Maho games (strictly for research, of course) and I think it incorporates the basics of a magical aptitude test. It's not complete in and of itself, but it would flag users who merited additional testing.

- Winterhawk

Most of the selection is biased towards native Japanese magical traditions—after all, that's what most of the population is familiar with. So you have a fair amount of Shinto shrine-kits for magical lodges, Buddhist scrolls and figurines, herbs and mirrors for Wuxing practitioners, and adept gear based on traditional Japanese weapons and Zen teachings. Even a lot of the stuff more recognizable to Westerners has a distinctive Eastern character—assaying kits based off Daoist alchemy, Hermetic texts inspired by Confucian writings, Ainu-style necklaces for shamans, incense for spirit binding materials, and so on.

- So while you can buy a kilo of radical tiger penis reagents at 0300 if you need to, you'd be hard-pressed to find a single John the Conqueror root. Where do you go if you need something for a non-local tradition, like voodoo or wicca?

- Lyran

- Someone like you.

- Winterhawk

Ipissimus also has a powerful wireless presence in the form of the Arcanum, a massive online catalogue of spell and focus formu-



lae; tutorsofts and knowsofts on various aspects of magical theory; and metamagic theses, including a complete collection of everything ever produced by Pentacle Press and Ambrose Publications. Through the Arcanum, potential customers throughout the world can visit Ipissimus' sales floors in virtual reality, and loyal customers who are out of town can purchase the formulae they need and download them directly into their commlinks.

- If you need something restricted, like a fetish for a combat spell, your licenses and permits better be in order. There's nothing in MCT corporate law against selling you something on MCT property (which Ipissimus most definitely is), but the second you step out the front doors you're back in Neo-Tokyo and the police can grab you at any time.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I'm amazed no one's knocked this place over yet. It would be like breaking into the datamint where the make nuyen.
- Sticks
- Someone tried once to steal a shipment of reagents as they were being unloaded. I'm not sure if the drones or the guardian spirits got them first, but one runner had to be identified by the serial number encoded in her muscle augmentation implant.
- Baka Dabora

Shrine of the Silver Dragon Kami (Ueno)

During the reconstruction, Ryumyo took the opportunity to build a shrine, the *Ginryu-Jinja*, dedicated to himself as a kami on a particular junction of dragonlines, which he uses as a lair while staying in Neo-Tokyo. It has a reputation as a powerful manasite, and occasionally hosts visitors from the Yakuza, local corporations, or Shinto priests who have business or seek audience with Ryumyo.

- Ryumyo built the lair after the discovery of remains from an ancient pre-Edo structure on the site while clearing away the lowest levels of rubble.
- Elijah
- Oh yeah? Then why isn't this place as potent as it should be? To hear some of my wujen friends tell it, Ryumyo could have made the site much more potent if he'd taken a more active claw in reconstruction.
- Baka Dabora
- I think I can answer that. The Emperor called on a number of geomancers, including Ryumyo, to submit designs and suggestions. According to my geomancer contact, the great dragon met with the Emperor and made only a very few, very specific recommendations. As far as I know, they were all accepted.
- Jimmy No

For those of you unaware, some of the Shinto religion see Ryumyo as an embodied kami—a spirit being—similar to how the Emperor himself is considered divine. So far, Ryumyo has respected the people's beliefs without attempting to twist them to his own ends. A few Shinto magicians even claim the silver dragon as their patron kami.

UNWIRED HOTSPOTS

Neo-Tokyo has the distinction of the oldest modern-style WAR in the Sixth World. As such, our grids are choked with all manner of Matrix phenomena and businesses. The recent revelation of technomancers and artificial intelligences has caused a bit of media uproar and a spotlight on some of the more egregious broaches of Matrix law, but Matrix commerce is universal in Neo-Tokyo. Business is business, after all.

Ranken-Ryu (Bunkyo)

The Ranken-Ryu is a private martial arts academy immediately opposite Tokyo University. Dedicated to preserving the skills and knowledge of master Japanese martial artists, unlike the belt-factory corporate McDojos and scams set up by "grandmasters" teaching "secret hidden lore," the staff of the Ranken-Ryu is a mix of old-fashioned and state-of-the-art. It does not teach martial arts for exercise, or as a means of meditation, or as an art form; it teaches budo, the practical skills used to incapacitate, injure, and kill others handed down from the days when samurai regularly ran around wearing swords, plus about a century of dedicated development. Physical sparring is limited, because that's when people get hurt. There are no belts—when the instructors think you're ready (usually after three to five years), you go through a weeklong testing process. If you are judged worthy, they present you with a certificate showing you have graduated from the Ranken-Ryu.

Sounds like a lot of hassle, right? But it's worth it. The Ranken-Ryu has skillsoft, knowsoft, and tutorsoft recordings from some of the greatest Japanese martial artists of the last four decades. Corporate sponsorship from Renraku has equipped the Ranken-Ryu with state-of-the-art augmented reality sparring programs as well as more traditional dojos and training areas. The Ranken-Ryu instructors have been recognized as a national treasure, and the school has the only special dispensation in the country allowing the limited use of p-fixes for the purpose of assuming the personality and skills of past masters to train the next generation.

- What does Renraku get out of this, you ask? They get to send the top recruits from their Red Samurai Academy in Kyoto to the Ranken-Ryu every year for intensive individual training. Also, Renraku is the only corporation licensed to produce and sell products from the Ranken-Ryu database.
- Hard Exit

The Ranken-Ryu has a slight preference for mundane applications. Many adepts realize the importance of AR sparring given their potentially more deadly magical abilities, but the programs have a difficult time adapting to certain adept powers. Technomancers, on the other hand, are completely forbidden. The instructors don't want technomancers anywhere near their school or the virtual representation of it, for fear they'll queer the sparring programs or try to hack the database.

- They shouldn't worry about the database. That thing is a chip of black diamond. This Miyamoto Musashi-looking agent destroyed two of my sprites and gave me a cut I felt across my forebrain (never mind that that's impossible, I felt it). Never again.
- Netcat



Amenohoakari (Geosynchronous Orbit)

In the first decade of this millennium, the new-born Japanese Imperial State launched a fleet of solar power satellites, forestalling the looming energy crisis in Japan and enabling Imperial expansion. The Crash 2.0 brought this fleet of aging powsats out of orbit, where they burned and left nearly a quarter of Japan blacked out.

- It wasn't that bad. The blackout lasted for a couple days before the power grids were repaired and connected to Japan's state-of-the-art fusion power plants. If the Crash 2.0 hadn't screwed up the software and blown a couple junctions, the switch would have happened in an hour. The powsats were old, expensive to maintain, redundant, fully depreciated, and due to be decommissioned in 2066 anyway.

- Mr. Bonds

One of the satellites didn't fall and remained in orbit. A grassroots campaign raised support for the surviving craft, and Renraku claimed a public relations coup by donating the funds and materials to relocate the satellite above Neo-Tokyo and upgrade it as an urban planning satellite. In a trideovised ceremony, the Emperor re-designated the eye in the sky as Amenohoakari.

- There's hardly anything of the original sat left up there. The solar panels were replaced with new nanotech lightsails, the computer guidance and control system was scrapped for a SOTA maser operating/power system (the old one was a dinosaur from the first days of optical chips), and the chassis and microwave array were expanded considerably to handle all the new sensors and equipment.

- Orbital DK

- Maser? Tell me Renraku doesn't have an energy weapon pointed at Neo-Tokyo.

- Plan 9

- Maybe they're worried about Gojira.

- Sticks

Amenohoakari handles a lot of traffic, and reserving time on it generally costs 300 nuyen a minute. The sat can generate three-dimensional maps of Neo-Tokyo down to bedrock and fault lines; trace traffic and atmospheric patterns; monitor the temperature, speed, and density of water in the bay and the surrounding coast; and record high-resolution trideo footage (how high res? It can tell the brand and size of shirt you're wearing by reading the tag sticking out of your collar).

Kuromaku (Neo-Tokyo Grid)

Japanese for "black curtain," the name of Neo-Tokyo's most prominent shadow-node comes from kabuki. In principle, Kuromaku is a network to communicate potential job offers and information in a secure environment. As such, it has far less of the "community" feel typical to foreign shadow-nodes like the various Shadowland sites. Foreign runners need a member hacker to introduce them—attempting to hack your way in is a breach of both security and etiquette, and such actions will not earn you any respect or cooperation.



- So that's what I did wrong. I thought they just didn't like girls.

- Pistons

- Think of Kuromaku as more along the lines of an exclusive club. Admission means extensive networking possibilities and good prospects, but you're expected to acknowledge and respect senior members. It's not a good place to talk about your runs, though—half these guys are ex-corporate, and the other half is ex-Yakuza.

- Mihoshi Oni

Neo-Tokyo Tower (Toshima)

Actually the third and tallest such monument ever erected in the city, Neo-Tokyo Tower is a combination broadcast tower and amphitheatre whose design was inspired by the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France (though, as many Japanese like to point out, their tower is fifty meters taller). Neo-Tokyo Tower was the heart of the early WiFi network in Neo-Tokyo, and it remains a significant broadcasting station. It's a nice public place for a meet, any time day or night.

- Technomancers I've known have described being near the tower as a powerful experience, as if your whole body is an eye and you're staring straight at the sun.

- Puck



- And I've heard it said that the signal creates a blind spot where technomancers have a hard time using their abilities.
- Netcat

Directly beneath the tower is an amphitheatre, with twenty-seven rings of seats descending to a two-meter orchestra pit and finally a stage. Neo-Tokyo Tower is favored by the Japanacorps for promotions, as the performances on the stage (which is frequently a combination of live action, augmented reality, holograms, and other special effects) can be simulcast in the Matrix and throughout the PacRim.

- Foreign acts have a harder time playing the tower, and you can't be said to have "made it" in Japan 'til you've played there at least once. Immaculada Aglipay, the Aidoru, is set to do a big hologram-and-AR production next month.
- Dr. Spin

Palimpsest (Toshima)

This one-kilometer wall running through Ikebukuro is an attempt by the city government to discourage random AR graffiti by providing an outlet for expression to the beleaguered populace of Train City. Anyone can come along and modify the AR appearance of the wall without censorship, record, or special permission. Many famous artists have taken the time to paint intricate murals which last until the next group of people waiting for a train add their own doodles or plaster AR advertisements on top of the artwork. The end of the wall nearest the train station usually features more manga from several local artists, some of whom achieve wider recognition as their work develops. Palimpsest is also an excellent place to drop anonymous messages to your team or arrange a meet.

THE WILD FRINGE

I'd like to end this section with a taste of the truly weird. I can't track the nanosecond changes in fashions and subcultures that define themselves in Neo-Tokyo, but there are a few places that by their very nature are strange—even by native standards.

Facility 342 (Odaiba)

MCT originated the concept of the zero-zone: zero incursions, zero survival. It's a corporate facility so tight that no one can penetrate it; if anyone does, they don't get out alive. Most people consider zero-zones to be an urban legend, but I know at least one exists in Neo-Tokyo: Mitsuhama Computer Technologies Facility 342, the original zero-zone. As far as I know, its reputation remains intact.

- Ooo, scary.
- Slamm-0!
- You better believe it.
- Rigger X

Physically, the site is imposing: the facility covers a square half-kilometer of real estate, including a completely bare paved thirty-three meter "killing field" extending from the street to a five-meter-wide, five-meter-deep ditch at the base of a twenty-

meter high densiplast "smartwall." There is one gate, which is large enough to drive a standard truck through. Every exposed surface is covered by a layer of reactive nanoweave—if your shadow falls on the killing field, a rigger inside can feel it.

- I've taken a couple stabs at this place. The security you don't see is even more impressive than what you do see. There are drones, autoguns, and rigged monowire traps ensconced throughout the facility. I've never seen anything, not even a bird, touch down on the smartwall. The thing's swimming with sensors and antipersonnel devices. The facility is on a completely separate grid, completely cut off from the Matrix. I tried piggybacking in by rigging a microdrone and attaching it to one of the external drones, but when they realized it was compromised the drone self-destructed.

- FastJack

- I'm told the astral security is pretty damn impressive too—the whole damn place is a mana void, yet they still ward the walls and have a couple spirits patrolling the area.

- Mihoshi Oni

Ironically, no one knows what goes on at Facility 342, though several people would pay very well to find out.

- Once, I got part of a file off an improperly erased optical chip. Provided it didn't come from somebody's BTL, I think Facility 342 is primarily devoted to storing MCT prototypes and "unique artifacts."

- FastJack

- I swear to Ghost, MCT owns everything within a block of this place. I was subcontracted once for some recon by a merc group that was going to make a run on this place. I rented a couple rooms in an office building facing the gate and camped out for a week of round-the-clock surveillance with my partner of the time. Three days in the toilet backs up and I had to go down to the Chinese barbecue on the corner. When I got back, my partner is dead and three of the cleaning staff was zipping him into a body bag. I booked it immediately to get to the elevator, and the delivery guy from the same restaurant I just left is there with an MCT-issue Ares Alpha knock-off. I barely got out of there alive.

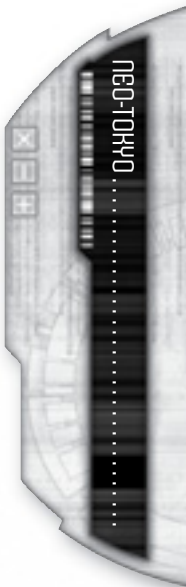
- Kia

- I heard they've shielded this place from satellite surveillance, there's an on-site fusion reactor to prevent black-outs, all the systems are EMP-shielded, a radio-activated cortex bomb is mandatory for all the guards, and they have earth spirits patrolling underneath to prevent tunneling. Pretty much whatever people remember from their last simsense release. This place is runner-bait, pure and simple.

- Snopes

Tako-shoto (Sagami Bay)

Yakashima's primary installation in the bay is a ring of artificial coral two kilometers in diameter surrounding a geothermal tap that provides power to the facility and keeps the waters within the ring unnaturally warm year-round. Officially, Tako-shoto is dedicated to the design and testing of new breeds of algae, fish, and synthetic coral for aquaculture and underwater breathing.



Unofficially, it houses a specialized genetech clinic and produces aquatic biodrones for the Japanese Imperial Marines.

- The Neo-Atlanteans are genecrafting metahumans who undergo environmental microadaptation and transgenic alteration to survive and operate in an underwater environment for extended periods. Yakashima is currently being contracted by the Atlantean Foundation (hence the name) to perform the necessary procedures on their personnel and get them acclimated.
- The Smiling Bandit
- This might just be wild speculation, but it could be the AF has their eye on creating a self-sustaining aquatic colony.
- Plan 9
- Or maybe Yakashima wants to expand their undersea mining operations to compete with Shiawase.
- Sounder

Takonashi (Kanda)

For a lower-upper crust establishment, this 30th-floor restaurant is almost prosaic, which can be a bit disturbing when you realize the house specialty is metahuman placenta.

- No fucking shit cabron. I walk in expecting to see Draculas and a lot of morbid emogoth freaks, but it was just a nice mid-size eatery with a bunch of normal-looking people dressed in nice clothes eating real food, with maybe three ghouls (in very nice suits and make-up) alone in the corner using a knife and a fork. It could be any good place to sit down and have a glass of wine and a steak. Except that they serve metahuman flesh. Creepy.
- Marcos

Placentaphagy was imported to Japan from abroad and remains a rarity, but it's perfectly legal and has attracted a small but dedicated following, in addition to the "tourists" that want to try anything once. Unsurprisingly, Takonashi is popular with the more intelligent and financially well-off *gaki*. If you need to

Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Gaki

The Uko metavariant of the Krieger strain of HMMHV is responsible for the creation of *gaki*, an Asian version of ghouls most widespread in Japan, Korea, the Chinese states, and the Phillipines. The primary differing characteristics are a stronger allergy to sunlight and mildly fluorescent eyes, and there are mixed reports about astral projection. Most Japanese are oblivious to the differences between various expressions of the HMMHV virus and refer to ghouls, *gaki*, vampires, wendigo, and all other expressions collectively as *shakushiki*.

contact or locate vampires, ghouls, or wendigo in Neo-Tokyo, a little legwork here can go a long way.

The owner is a guy named Jose Jesus "J.J." Hernandez-Lei, who started the restaurant with a loan from Yakashima, the same AA company that bought out the Bahay ng Isa seafood restaurant chain in the Philippines a few years ago. (I checked and no, Bahay ng Isa doesn't serve placenta. It's just this one place.) J.J. buys fresh placentas from new mothers (provided they're clean of HMMHV and the like) for about 50 nuyen a pop. I know more than a couple poor ork mothers who were grateful for the cred.

Personally, I think Yakashima is checking the profit margins on a chain of similar eateries. It's no secret they've been working on synthetic flesh for ghouls for over ten years now.

- How expensive is it? I might want to stop by if I'm ever in town.
- Hannibelle
- Entrées go for about 200 nuyen. Don't expect to get out of there for less than 250 nuyen, counting the tip. Before anyone asks, I didn't try the placenta. It was a bodyguard gig.
- Mihoshi Oni
- I've heard of J.J. before on MagickNet. A Half-Aztlaner/half-Chinese theoretical thaumaturgist, and a worshipper of Xiuhtecuhtli. Wrote a bunch of articles trying to reconcile wujen magical theory with Aztlaner mythology, and subscribes to the theory of pre-Columbian contact between the Chinese and South America. Interesting guy.
- Jimmy No

Private Message...

FROM: MIHOSHI

RE: YOMI

I don't like to talk about it, but I have been to Yomi, both before and after they officially stopped sending metahumans there. I wasn't there at the beginning, but apparently things started off pretty uncivilized and went down from there. Food and water shipments were scarce, clothing and medicine even worse. I had to fight my way through rape gangs and cannibals. Most of the elves didn't last very long. Cholera and scarlet fever were rampant—hell, getting a cut meant you were going to die. I think that's why the rates of HMMHV infection were so high. When you're starving to death and going to die of an infection anyway, what does it matter if you become a *gaki*?

I know for a fact that all of the ghouls and dzoo-noo-qua were left on the island after the pullout, and it's been six years since then. They had to deploy laser weapons and mines to keep the wendigo from trying to swim away. Maybe they ate each other until the last one starved to death. At least I hope that's what happened.



TOKYO UNDERWORLD

Every city has its dark underbelly and its criminal element, and Neo-Tokyo isn't an exception. As you'd expect the Yakuza rule the roost, but the status quo is less monolithic than gaijin expect with the players profoundly divided among Old School and New Way. I've invited an acquaintance to fill in the blanks on the current underworld situation.

YAKUZA INCORPORATED

Posted By: **Otaku-Zuku**

- The enemy of my enemy is my friend. With their recent infringement on cyberspace, the Yakuza is certainly my enemy. Save for Mihoshi Oni, many of you have an equally unpleasant relationship with the organization. The Yakuza treats shadowrunners in the same manner that it treats metahumans. Recent upheavals have done much to repair old animosities, but these changes have also sparked a shadow war between what can be described as the old and the new Yakuza. To complicate matters, this dichotomy is fueled by the split between Ryumyo and his once-ally spirit Jurojin. To learn more, I purchased an agent in the Wanibuchi-Rengo. I will not share his name, but I will share what he learned.

- Otaku-Zuku

- This little exposé is going to make Otaku-Zuku Mr. Public Enemy in Neo-Tokyo. I can't imagine he thought the Yakuza won't find out about this file.

- Kat o' Nine Tales

- Of course he knew. If he wanted to make himself a target he would have posted this file on Undernet Prophet. He put it here so the Yakuza would know how he felt without forcing them to lose face.

- Mihoshi Oni

- The linguists among you will have noticed that most translation software bungles the use of "gumi" when referring to a Yak clan. In Japanese "gumi" is correctly used as a suffix, otherwise a Yakuza clan is correctly referred to as a "kumi."

- Fianchetto

RECENT HISTORY

I don't pretend to understand what goes on in the mind of a dragon, but Ryumyo has to be seriously pissed off. By 2070 he had all but a handful of the gumi under the control of the Watada-Rengo. Fast forward one year and a sizeable chunk have pledged themselves to the Wanibuchi-Rengo, drawn in by a new way of doing business. However, the Old School Yakuza haven't gone away quietly. As you'd guess, this ideological rift between the two sides has led to violence. That split has trickled down into the shadows creating more bloodshed than opportunity. Though they are too proud, too professional, to ever let the public know it, the Yakuza are at war. Each side is concerned with reining in the unaligned gumi in order to have the upper hand in a conflict that is much larger than a disagreement on how to do business. It turns out that the upstarts broke away from the Watada-Rengo with a lot of help from Jurojin. If rumors are true, the free spirit is still pulling strings behind the scenes, helping the Wanibuchi Rengo push large amounts of South American drugs onto the street.



Got your scorecard? As it stands there are three sides to the Neo-Tokyo Yakuza scene: the Old School, the New Way, and the Unaligned. Between these groupings there are rifts, blood feuds, power plays, backchannel alliances, even an illicit marriage to complicate things. But it all started with the long-awaited death of Akira Watada and the short lived ascension of Hitori Hanzo.

After Hitori Hanzo quashed the Shotozumi uprising back in the early 60s, it became a waiting game of when Watada was going to die and Hanzo was going to take over. It finally happened in 2067. Akira Watada had become too ill to continue serving as Oyabun, and Hanzo was appointed acting warboss. He was still answerable to Watada, but everyone understood that Hitori Hanzo was in charge.

- The Shotozumi massacre let everyone know that Hitori Hanzo would not permit anyone standing in the way of his success. It should have sent up red flags that this was the way that he intended to do business.

- Kay St. Irregular

By 2068 the Watada-rengo was in a period of rapid expansion. Hitori Hanzo began consolidating the position of the Watada-rengo throughout Japan by coercing—and in some cases, forcing—independent Yakuza organizations to join. Under the direction of the oyabun-no-oyabun, the members of the Watada-



rengo displayed unprecedented cooperation both in business affairs and in forcing independent organizations to submit. This historic joining of the gumi was supposed to make business easier for all of us, but we already had our chosen, and sometimes contested, nawabari, which often pressed up against each other creating conflict in the spaces in between that nobody really owned. Battles were still being fought between the various gumi but now they were by proxy through street gangers desperate to become kobun themselves.

None of this quiet infighting bothered Hanzo. He was making us look good from the outside by increasing our stranglehold on criminal operations in Neo-Tokyo. By '69, other local organized crime syndicates weren't present beyond the gang level, or were fringe groups like the Snake Head Triad and the Bratva (a branch of the Vory v Zakone) who are only represented by a handful of members. The policing of these organizations was left to our discretion, especially in the poorer neighborhoods where citizens are more likely to turn to a local kobun than a cop.

- It is important to note that Yakuza members see themselves first and foremost as businessmen, not criminals, and the local community and police work with them to a great extent. While the police and national law enforcement agencies crack down on Yakuza for a number of operations—especially dealing in illegal substances—the groups cooperate to limit random violence and street crime. If violence breaks out between two Yakuza groups, the chief of police will often attempt to mediate the dispute first before arresting the individual members.

- Janus

Hanzo had tasted fame and already turned his eye towards reigning in the international gumi, thereby legitimating the title oyabun-no-oyabun. Meanwhile, his lieutenants, particularly Maasaki Watada and Tomu Wanibuchi, were left to the business of keeping the gumi in line. Watada and Wanibuchi had vastly different ways of carrying out their duties. Watada was insistent on sticking to the principles of the old way, while Wanibuchi was New School. He was willing to let the gumi experiment with new operations, especially when it came to the Matrix. Hanzo was a bottom line man, so when Watada and Wanibuchi had a disagreement about how business should be handled, Hanzo sided with the choice that would bring him more profit. That generally meant siding with Wanibuchi. This would have gone on for years if not for the arrogance of Hitori Hanzo.

Watada died in his sleep March 18, 2070, and the following day Hanzo was invited to a special session with Ryumyo. That is where all the trouble started. The story of his death was told to me as follows, and based on his behaviors up till the end I'm willing to believe it. Ryumyo sent Jurojin to request a meeting with the new oyabun-no-oyabun to discuss infighting that had broken out between the Mita-gumi and the Watada-gumi during Neo-Tokyo's reconstruction, which ended with the capitulation of the Mita-gumi and the death of the former Mita oyabun, Hoshi Mita. Ryumyo was concerned with Hanzo's refusal to recognize thirteen-year old Hiroshi Mita as heir to the Mita-gumi. Hitori Hanzo turned Jurojin down flat.

Not to be denied, the dragon showed up on Hitori Hanzo's doorstep in human form, posing as one of the human agents the

dragon often used as a go-between and asked why Hanzo had refused to meet with the dragon. At that time Hitori Hanzo informed Ryumyo that the Yakuza was no longer under the influence of the dragon and drew his trademarked matched pair of blades to cement his point. Unfortunately for Hanzo he picked the wrong fight.

- No way a dragon gets his hands dirty like that. I bet Hanzo got offed by the Shotozumis or someone else who could bankroll ninjas to do a revenge killing.

- Winterhawk

- True or false, Hanzo was found decapitated in his home. How he got that way is anyone's guess. According to the police report, there was no sign that anyone other than him had been in the house.

- Snopes

- Sounds like ninja work to me. Word is Ryumyo retains a group of adept ninja he calls Shuriken. These are precisely the kind of silent killers he could have used to do the job if he felt that he was about to lose influence over the Yakuza.

- Danger Sensei

Private Message...



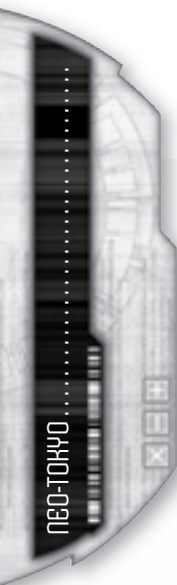
FROM: Mihoshi Oni

RE: Yakuza or no? Who am I dealing with?

Neo-Tokyo rule number one: Stop and think before you hit. Just because the fingers are all there doesn't mean your target is not part of the club. More than likely he's wearing a removable prosthetic—it's all the rage among kobun to wear a fake finger and then remove it when in the presence of a higher level member of the organization. Of course, any ganger can wear a suit and carry a couple sharp or pointy objects around to scare people with. Good indications that your suspected Yak is the real deal include possession of quality implants, firearms, Mitsuhama corporate scrip, and of course clothing bearing the emblem of the local gumi. A better way is to keep an eye out for their irezumi, a type of traditional Japanese tattoo. Senior kobun typically have a complete body suit—irezumi on the back, chest, arms, and upper legs with a blank strip down the center of the body—while younger members have only partial suits, paying for sessions with the horishi, or tattoo artist, as they can afford it.

Ironically, tattooing is so often associated with criminals in Japan—and the Yakuza in particular—that a small number of Yakuza avoid irezumi. Most Yaks will still have the emblem of the organizations they are a member of somewhere accessible—the wrist, below the hairline on the neck, or along the collarbone—for easy identification in a tight spot.

At any rate, it's better to be safe than sorry, so if you can, avoid crossing paths with him again. Yakuza or no, he's bound to take the beating you gave him as a grievous dishonor, and in traditional Japanese fashion he'll probably be looking for a little payback. — M.O.



The chaos that ensued left us where we are today. Maasaki Watada was named as Hanzo's replacement, much to the dismay of the Wanibuchi-gumi. All of the business practices they'd enacted under the New Way were immediately rescinded, and yabitsume (finger cutting) was demanded from Tomu Wanibuchi himself. Wanibuchi refused to succumb to the Watada rule and escaped from the ceremony in a gun battle that left many senior kobun dead. That was the end of the oyabun-no-oyabun. Wanibuchi's supporters split to pursue their New Way while the traditionalists started picking up the pieces of their syndicate.

- This is where Jurojin re-enters the picture. Though it is unclear how it happened, he is no longer bound to the dragon, an action that seems to have fueled the Yakuza splintering. He convinced several of his pet gumi to leave the Watada-rengo and join with Wanibuchi. He also remains as Wanibuchi's chief advisor behind the scenes. How that affects his relationship with Ryumyo is not truly known.
- Frosty

WATADA-RENGO

The structure of a rengo changes according to who sits at the head of the table. The Watada-rengo is so well respected amongst the gumi because virtually nothing about the fundamental way they do business has changed since it was created well over a century ago. By definition that makes them Old School. The gumi that clung to Watada, and by default Ryumyo, did so more out of tradition than any particular loyalty to the rengo. Wanibuchi was pushing for too much change too fast, and this made many of the oyabun very uncomfortable. These traditionalists see themselves as a part of the local community and form a bond with it, and they're highly discriminatory against non-japanese, women, metahumans, and the Awakened in the organization.

- The Watada-Rengo led the way in the great purges which ejected Korean blood from the Yakuza in the early 21st century. They're still rabid about ethnic purity.
- Yankee
- That's not to say you won't ever see a female troll working for the Old School Yakuza, but you can be sure she worked her pretty little ass off and was six times better than anyone else.
- Mihoshi Oni

The Watada-rengo has a loose hierarchal structure: the oyabun of the Watada-gumi serves as the head of the organization, and all the other oyabun and kumicho pay him a small percentage of overall profits. In return, the rengo is obligated to aid the members,

providing oversight for international operations, organizing additional support from members when violent conflict threatens, and mediating disputes between members, among other duties. In short, the Watada-rengo is a parent company, an international alliance of affiliated crime syndicates under the leadership of the oyabun.

Maasaki Watada sticks to tradition when it comes to discipline (and everything else for that matter). He allows members to settle disputes among themselves, only stepping in if requested or if the dispute causes difficulties with other operations and relationships. To date, this has only occurred once when Chiaki Saitoh, daughter of Oyabun Masakazu Saitoh fell in love with the wife of a Mita wakagashira-hosa, or mid-level boss, named Natsuko Anzai and became her lover. When the two were discovered, Oyabun Saitoh accused the Mita-gumi of attempting to dishonor the Saitoh-gumi. Watada settled things over yabitsume, acquiring the fingers of Natsuko and her husband as a fair trade for dishonoring Chiaki Saitoh by lying about her sexual preference and virginal purity.

- It didn't end there. The Saitoh-gumi received a small piece of the Mita-gumi's nawabari for a period of three months, at the end of which the Saitoh-gumi offered up several of their top recruits to become kobun in the Mita-gumi. This is the type of stuff that's supposed to happen in board rooms and sporting leagues, not in organized crime.
- Mr. Bonds

As an umbrella organization, the Watada-rengo's territory is the sum of territories claimed by its members. Watada-rengo leaves the defense, expansion, and policing of its territory to its member groups, again unless a member asks for assistance. But asking for assistance in this fashion, as with asking for assistance in settling a dispute, means losing face. Most members avoid it because it makes you appear weak to the other gumi. This is one of the fundamental problems of the Old School gumi—they don't really have the structure to play off of each other's strengths. Instead, each of the Neo-Tokyo gumi claims its own territory, designated as a nawabari or "roped off area." These areas have been clearly defined, and in many cases they are clearly marked with AROs in augmented reality, a process first established by the Matrix-savvy Wanibuchi-gumi. AR marking for the rengo consists of watermarking the rengo's symbol into the fabric of the gumi's digital mark or AR color code, depending on the gumi.




The Watada-rengo does not engage in any particular legal, quasi-legal, or criminal operations as a group, but its existence aids and abets many such operations among its members. In particular, the Watada-rengo is responsible for the merger of several independent unrated Yakuza businesses owned by disparate members, and it is complicit in attempts to streamline international smuggling on several fronts.



Urgent Message...

GUMI OF THE WATADA RENGO (TRADITIONALISTS)

Gumi	Location
Watada-gumi	Neo-Tokyo, Chiba
Mita-gumi	Neo-Tokyo, Old Tokyo
Kihara-rengo	Nagasaki
Yamaguchi-gumi	Kobe



WATADA-GUMI

The Watada-gumi is neither the oldest nor the largest Yakuza organization in Neo-Tokyo, but by virtue of its position in the Watada-rengo it is the most influential across the globe. This is the type of Yakuza organization you used to hear about on the Sunday morning trid flicks—old, suit wearing businessmen who challenge you more often with a stare than with a sword. For several generations, the majority of the members of the Watada-gumi have been university-educated scions of Yakuza families; newer members are rarely initiated unless they possess outstanding skills, demonstrate unshakeable loyalty, and serve unquestioningly for years.

Organization

The Watada-gumi is a tiered hierarchy with the Oyabun, Hanzo Watada, at the top. You can bet your last nuyen that Ryumyo is in the chain of command as an informal advisor, followed by Watada's wakagashira, Ken Muratomi, and his senior kobun. These underbosses in turn have kobun under them overseeing specific aspects of Watada business and operations, either in Chiba or abroad. These “younger brothers,” or lieutenants, are in charge of the least-ranked kobun (senior enlisted men or those with special skills) and the kumi-in, or rank-and-file enlisted men.

Territory

The Watada run Chiba, and have done so for longer than I've been alive. Watada House is the public face of the gumi in the district, and handles most of the gumi's legal and quasi-legal activities. It isn't surprising to see government officials streaming in and out of the restaurant located on the ground floor.

Principal Operations

The Watada-gumi pretends to be legitimate and believes their own lie. Their ill-gotten assets are invested in legitimate corporations and businesses, mostly medical technology providers and implant research in and around Chiba, with substantial holdings, suppliers, transportations, and secondary markets worldwide, approximating a vertical monopoly of these goods in Neo-Tokyo. All of the senior kobun hold positions as CEOs, CFOs, COOs of unrated holding firms and micromanufacturing companies.

They take great pains to obfuscate their illegal cash cows, but look no further than the organ harvesting labs on Aiko Street for proof of their metahuman and organ-trafficking operations. They dabble in industrial espionage and limited white-collar crime—especially medical and life insurance fraud—to support their legal and quasi-legal activities.

With their resources, the Watada-gumi possesses the largest and most well-equipped non-megacorp- or government-affiliated black clinics in Neo-Tokyo, able to produce and install beta-grade bioware and cyberware. This pervasive control and availability of high quality implants benefits the Watada-gumi in other ways: a near-lock on the implant technology used to transform prostitutes into “dolls” for bunraku parlors, and a larger percentage of heavily augmented members—resulting in an escalating “Chrome Race” as rival Yakuza factions try to match the quantity and quality of augmented Watada.

Citizens of Chiba continue to rely on the Watada-gumi for traditional quasi-legal Yakuza activities, including protection (street crime in Chiba is far lower than white collar crime or industrial espionage), gambling, and financial aid in times of distress.

MITA-GUMI

The largest and oldest organized crime syndicate in Neo-Tokyo, the Mita-gumi has suffered considerable setbacks in the last few years. As a member now of the Watada-rengo, the Mita-gumi are reasserting themselves on the streets of Neo-Tokyo, recruiting new members to replace those lost in the Yakuza War and seeking new opportunities to expand.

Organization

Thirteen-year-old Hiroshi Mita is the heir apparent to his father's place as oyabun of the Mita-gumi, a position he will assume when his guardians, the Great Dragon Ryumyo and the dragon's ally spirit Jurojin, determine his education is complete. Until then, his father's wakagashira, “Uncle” Hiro Yamajima, acts as kumicho (head of family).

Traditionally, the Mita-gumi has a council of twenty-three wakagashira-hosa, senior kobun who administrate the gumi's operations in individual prefectures of Old Tokyo, under the direct supervision of the oyabun and the wakagashira. Many of the wakagashira-hosa were assassinated during the Mita-Watada War, and Kumicho Yamajima, a graduate of Harvard Business School, has spent the last year re-organizing and staffing a new twelve-member board of directors, promoting younger members of Yakuza families and even senior kumi-in to fill positions if they possess the skills to get the job done.

Kumicho Yamajima has also begun a recruiting drive, competing with corporations for promising university graduates and scouring the street gangs of Neo-Tokyo for experienced criminals to fill out the ranks of his gumi.

Territory

The Mita-gumi's nawabari covers nearly all of Old Tokyo, but they don't currently possess the membership to adequately manage this much ground. Since the split they've been losing territory to both the Wanibuchi-gumi and Kodachi-gumi.

Principal Operations

The Mita-gumi is one of the most recognizable Yakuza organizations in Neo-Tokyo, a fact that Kumicho Yamajima has capitalized on. Men and women throughout Neo-Tokyo can be seen wearing clothing, toys, and accessories branded with versions the Mita-gumi's symbol. “Mita-brand” goods are popular, and conditions appear to be favorable for continued marketing, especially to the 19- to 25-year-old demographic.

The Mita-gumi puts a legitimate face on everything from quasi-legal forms of prostitution operating under the fronts of massage parlors, bath houses, online dating services, strip clubs, and the like to the repackaging and selling of cheap optoelectronics. They also front investment bankers in order to engage in loansharking and use sokaiya to blackmail smaller corporations.

The Mita-gumi formerly had a lock on the distribution of BTL chips in Neo-Tokyo, but their production and distribution facilities were prime targets during the Yakuza War, and the lack



of funds left the Mita-gumi behind the technology curve. Rather than rebuild the chip trade, Kumicho Yamajima is expanding the gumi's international smuggling operations, particularly in Latin America through expatriate Yakuza in Peru and Amazonia, to join the Wanibuchi-rengo in the trade of Awakened drugs and illegal magical compounds.

Background

For over a hundred and fifty years, some incarnation of the Mita-gumi (not always under that name) has been present in Tokyo. Oyabun Hoshi Mita was liked and respected by many senior oyabun for his power, independence, and the fierce loyalty he inspired. His closest personal friend and advisor was Jurojin, the ally spirit of the Great Dragon Ryumyo.

The Mita-gumi fought on the losing side of the Yakuza War against the Watada-gumi from 2066 to 2068. Oyabun Watada offered the Mita highly favorable terms of accord, including five million nuyen in reparations for damages. Hoshi Mita agreed to the terms, despite the protests of his kobun and kumi-in, and committed seppuku shortly thereafter, with Jurojin acting as his second and delivering the mercy stroke. This is why it was so surprising that Hoshi's son, Hiro Mita chose to remain with the Watada-rengo when Jurojin's band of supporters broke away. I have no proof of this, but I think that there is more to this puzzle than we are seeing.

- Beyond the rank-and-file gumi are four tangential players that control precious little by way of illegal operations but still have a stake in how things are run. The story's a little complex, but about 45 percent of MCT is actually owned by four Komon: Samba Oi (13 percent), Shin Yuruyasu (11 percent), Saigusa Oguramaro (10 percent), and Uehara Akae (10 percent). These old men went from being Mita syndicate under-bosses to some of the richest metahumans on the planet practically overnight, but they still have their giri, or obligations, and so could not cut all their ties with the Yakuza. These men have no interest in kowtowing to either rengo but have on occasion provided assistance to both.

- Mihoshi Oni

NEW SCHOOL

The Yakuza I joined is not the same organization that our fathers used to speak about with such reverence. The "New Way" consists of the younger and more rebellious Yakuza. Our new evolution of the Yakuza tradition is innovative, aggressive, and willing to take risks in order to turn a profit, while also being willing to include those who are not like us. The fledging Inagawa-kai is an example of how we have begun to embrace the disenfranchised into the fold.

WANIBUCHI-RENGO

Working with the Wanibuchi-Rengo feels more like a fraternity than the top tier of a multinational criminal organization. At the head of the table sits Tomu Wanibuchi, Odaiba native and general asshole. Despite this obvious personality flaw he maintains control of the gumi through, believe it or not, democracy. Unlike the Watada-Rengo, the heads of the gumi under Wanibuchi form a kind of board of directors with each member getting a vote to determine the future actions of the Rengo.

Though smaller than the Watada-rengo, our rengo acts as one. Even in terms of nawabari there is great room for overlap as different gumi have different strengths. We will allow another gumi to operate in our territory so long as they are operating within a market that is our weakness and their strength. This is no truer than in AR crime where the Wanibuchi-gumi controls most of Neo-Tokyo.

The Wanibuchi-rengo actively recruits the disenfranchised, including women, metahumans, technomancers, and the Awakened—even half-breeds. Disappointingly, many of our New Way gumi don't maintain the same respect for the community the traditionalists do and tend toward displays of violence.

- One of the sore points between the two rengo right now is the Emperor: both the New Way and the Old School Yakuza are highly nationalistic, but while the New Way are extremely supportive of the Emperor's progressive agenda, the more conservative Old School is displeased by the disruption of the status quo.

- Janus

WANIBUCHI-GUMI

One of the youngest and most modern of the Yakuza syndicates operating in Neo-Tokyo, the Wanibuchi-gumi have adopted many tenets of the New Way while focusing on non-traditional business methods to further their interests. This combination of youth and audacity has been both highly criticized and praised by senior kobun in the Mita- and Watada-gumi.

The Wanibuchi fortune came from a consortium of software companies backed by Mita-gumi money. In 2050, Tomi Wanibuchi split amicably from the Mita-gumi to form his own syndicate around the corporate islands in Tokyo Bay. Initially focused primarily on international financial dealings, Wanibuchi seized the opportunity presented by the Crash 2.0 to establish itself as the premiere Matrix syndicate in Neo-Tokyo by recruiting heavily from the surviving Matrix gangs and redistributing corporate assets to Matrix service and technology. We provided essential services to the other Yakuza in Neo-Tokyo in the years following the Crash 2.0 and continue to do so within our rengo and outside of it.



Urgent Message...

GUMI OF THE WANABUCHI RENGO (NEW WAY)

Gumi	Location
Wanibuchi-gumi	Neo-Tokyo, Odaiba
Kodachi-gumi	Neo-Tokyo, Yokohama
Inagawa-kai	Neo-Tokyo, Harajuku
Tsukigata-gumi	Shikoku






Organization

My organization is the smallest gumi in Neo-Tokyo, counting less than a hundred kobun acting directly under Oyabun Tomu Wanibuchi and his wakagashira (and wife) “Kinky” Kiku Wanibuchi. Outside of the Inagawa-kai we count the most diverse membership in the metroplex, including a number of women; even a few koborokuru and oni, though no gaijin or half-breeds. Oyabun Wanibuchi employs a number of non-members through three separate computing firms; these wageslaves handle the bulk of our legal and quasi-legal operations.

- Less than 100? Hmmm ... piece the clues together and we might be able to figure out who this guy is.
- Slamm-0!
- You’re assuming this report comes from a real person and not something else. Otaku-Zuku is a technomancer guru, and everything I’ve seen so far could have been culled from Matrix surveillance. It’d be one hell of a fuck-you to have the Yaks digging through their people looking for a mole when none exists.
- Clockwork

Territory

Oyabun Wanibuchi has claimed the Odaiba district as the gumi’s physical nawabari, but we operate much more extensively throughout Neo-Tokyo’s Matrix and augmented reality, which I consider our “virtual nawabari.”

Principal Operations

Quasi-legal Matrix activities occupy the bulk of the operations, including a series of offshore online casinos and virtual banks that facilitate large-scale money laundering and international currency exchanges, the sale of bootleg copies of programs and Matrix tech copyrighted in other countries, virtual sex clubs such as the Moonlight Hentai Garden, and information brokerage.

To our credit we have also extended the traditional Yakuza protection rackets into the virtual marketplace, offering increased virtual security to a number of businesses and individuals within their purview. In order to show the need for protection we regularly engage in data piracy and breaking copyright locks. We also dabble in creating and distributing BTL programs. Our principal competitions in these areas are independent hackers and the Matrix-oriented Korean Jo-pok.

KODACHI-GUMI

The Kodachi-gumi are one of the most feared Yakuza syndicates in Neo-Tokyo. They prefer to maintain their control with a heavy hand and are sometimes singled out by the police and megacorporate security forces for the excessive violence they use in their standard business practices. The Kodachi hold the dubious distinction of the greatest influence in Japan’s penal system as a result. In a very nontraditional fashion they celebrate their jail time by having a pearl inserted on the underside of their penis—one pearl for each year served. The worst of them, a group of assassins called the Red Pearls, have been collectively held responsible for the deaths of a dozen businessmen. The true number is probably twice that.

Organization

Kumicho Yusaku Sato leads the Kodachi-gumi. Oyabun Sato is SINless, and there is no record of the Kodachi-gumi before 2058, when the Kodachi began a sudden and violent campaign against the Yakuza in Yokohama. What I know is Oyabun Sato is the illegitimate child of a Watada-gumi kobun and his mistress.

- His story is close to legend among the brotherhood. Unlike the gumi that existed there before him, Kodachi culled an army from the local street gangs and *bosokuku*. Since taking control of the Yokohama nawabari, they’ve resisted intrusions from the Chinese Triads and Russian Vory v Zakone.
- Janus

His wakagashira Masuke Ono is currently serving a five-year sentence in the Canton Confederation and is due out in 2072. Each of his kobun is the leader of a gang in Yokohama, which oversees protection and operations in their territory.

Territory

The Kumicho-gumi claims all of Yokohama as its nawabari, but they have been pushing into the red light district of Shinjuku where they have been feuding with the Mita-gumi for control of the prostitution rings and BTL distribution.

Principal Operations

The Kodachi-gumi deals in protection rackets and smuggling, both of which it tries to disguise under the front of legal or quasi-legal security and import/export businesses. More recently they’ve slipped into blatantly illegal activities such as kidnap-

Urgent Message...

MEGACORPORATE RELATIONS

Yakuza Group

Watada-gumi
Mita-gumi
Wanibuchi-gumi
Kodashi-gumi

Megacorps

Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies, Renraku Computer Systems
Evo Corporation, Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies, Shiawase
Angel Telecom, Hisato-Turner Communications, Mangadyne, Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies
Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies, Yakashima Corporation

ping high school and university students for prostitution, sweat shops full of SINless immigrants pumping out bootleg versions of popular brand-name merchandise, and gambling, especially violent pit fights.

These operations are highly contested by non-Yakuza organized crime interests in Yokohama, particularly members of the Snake Head Triad and the Bratva.

- The Sea-Tou or Snake Head Triad deal predominantly in the flesh trade and metahuman smuggling. They specialize in importing bodies from impoverished areas in China and Korea into Japan. The people work off their debt to the Triad in a few years, save up for a couple more, and then try to get back home if they can. The dominant prejudice is such that few choose to stay on in Japan.

- Kemuri

INAGAWA-KAI

The Inagawa-kai appeared on the scene soon after the split. They began cutting a bloody swath through Yokohama clashing with the Kodachi, and then moving into Chiba where they crossed swords with the Watada-gumi. After joining the Wanibuchi-rengo, the Inagawa-kai moved their operations into Mita territory to take advantage of the perceived weakness of that gumi. The choice to let a metahuman gumi join our rengo met with a lot of resistance, but Wanibuchi has been very supportive of the organization.

- Of course Wanibuchi signed them up. The Inagawa-kai are deadly, fearless, and out to prove that a meta can play Yakuza just as well as anyone. It's like releasing a trained dog on your enemy.

- Fatima

Organization

The group is led by Michizane Oi, an elf who spent the last three decades in Newark working for the Green Serpent Guard of the Nagato Combine—Honjowara-gumi. Despite the obvious stance on race in the Yakuza, the Inagawa-kai is a very traditional group. They follow all the old structures for respectfulness and organization. Where they differ from the pack is their war party structure. The Inagawa-kai almost exclusively uses ninja to carry out their operations against other groups. Most higher-level kobun are trained as ninja, a fact that becomes obvious if you try to deal with them head on. The training and the symbolism the group uses leads me to believe that they were born out of the Oni do kai, a school of ninja (in)famous for being the only one to train metas.

- Oi is the son of Samba Oi of Mitsuhama. Samba offered his son to the Green Serpent Guard as a way to get him out of Tokyo during a time when having metahuman offspring not only meant the end of your career but jeopardized the future of your family name.

- Mr. Bonds

Territory

Harajuku is home to the Inagawa-kai. Once the domain of the Mita, Harajuku has embraced the weirdness of its new syndicate. In an area where it is common to see someone sporting leopard spots and a tail, an ork is still out of place, but not so much as in the rest of the sprawl.

Principal Operations

The Inagawa-kai are into protection rackets and street level sokaiya. They use their race as a weapon, sending troll kobun to company shareholder meetings to sit down and vote the gumi's shares. Companies would rather pay than lose face by having a troll in the shareholder meetings. These operations are highly contested by non-Yakuza organized crime interests in Yokohama, particularly members of the Red Dragon Triad and the Bratva.

- The syndicate has come under heavy fire from the traditionalists and even some of their own rengo mates. Not everyone is ready to see an elven oyabun sitting at the table.

- Baka Dabora

FREE AGENTS

Not everyone is on the side of the new or the old. Gangs, ninja, and even some of the smaller Yakuza outfits haven't decided where they fit into the puzzle. Here are a few players still holding out for a team.

Ninja Organizations

Ninja and Yakuza are not synonymous but we do a lot of business together. Yakuza are hesitant to hire runners, especially gajjin, so when delicate work needs doing a ninja group is often contacted first.

- This is true of the old-school way of thought. The more modern gumi are eager to use deniable assets such as shadowrunners. We're cheaper and harder to trace back to any specific employer.

- Riser

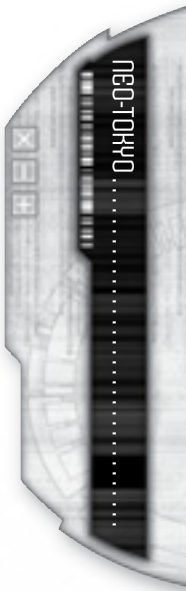
These organizations are extremely secretive and selective with their clients. The only group I have dealt with came during my time with the Mita-gumi prior to the split. On several occasions I was asked to deliver digital payments to the Oni do kai for services rendered. I've only seen the results of their bloody handiwork, which they mark by leaving their *daimon* at the scene. Extreme prejudice doesn't begin cover it.

Megacorps

Nowadays every Yakuza organization has members that own significant stock, liens, mortgages, bonds, or other financial interest in a number of businesses. Mostly these interests stem from traditional underworld activities—loansharking, fraud, money laundering, and investing in legitimate businesses to conceal taxable sources of income. Some Yakuza members are more heavily leveraged into the corps and may be operating as moles for a corp and being paid off in stock.

- In fact, the majority of Yakuza organizations in Neo-Tokyo are old and well-established, with the bulk of the members successfully pursuing legal and extralegal activities simultaneously. To this end, many senior kobun and oyabun are university graduates, investors, and property owners of note, and officers on the boards of corporations. Occasionally, a rengo will pool these resources through the incorporation of new companies, mergers, and friendly buy-outs. The most successful of this type of "Yakorp" is Mitsuhama Computer Technologies because of the four Komon, but most such conglomerates are at most A-rated.

- Mr. Bonds



Certain companies also maintain discreet agreements with the local gumi to facilitate their business practices or to carry out extralegal activities requiring deniable assets, such as surveillance, arson, money laundering, espionage, extortion, legbreaking, kidnapping, or murder. In return, the megacorp repays the gumi either in currency (nuyen, corporate scrip, bonds, or even stock), services (access to corporate clinics, employment for gumi members, and sometimes arranging the release of imprisoned gumi members), or some other form of compensation. A partial list of the megacorps involved with the Neo-Tokyo gumi is included below:

NEO-TOKYO ZOKU

Posted By: Haze

Neo-Tokyo's cultural paradigm doesn't typically lend itself to the North American/European gang model. What it has instead is a social grouping system the media likes to call *zoku* (tribes), which is more like a given subculture within the greater Japanese ethnic macrocosm. People drift into the zoku that match their interests, often joining associations and organizations associated with those zoku—such as trend tribes linked to various fashion-zoku. When people talk about gangs in Neo-Tokyo, what they really mean is one of these zoku groups, often the most clannish and criminal-minded ones.

Most of Neo-Tokyo's gangs start out in schools, but there are clubs and fraternal organizations and associations at every level of society. Formal or informal, they all share a similar hierarchy: it is the duty of younger members to respect and obey older members (those who have seniority), and the older members are in turn obligated to aid and protect the younger members. Some groups work under more democratic paradigms, but the quasi-feudal duty/obligation relationship is integral to most gangs.

- What it means is, if you've been a loyal and respectful member of a gang or society, they will feel obligated to come to your aid (provided you haven't done anything to shame the group). There are exceptions, but they get a very bad reputation very quickly.
- Mihoshi Oni

People spend lifetimes analyzing and cataloguing the zoku, so I'm just going to touch on some of the most prominent zoku that are most likely to impact the shadowy side of life and give a few groups associated with that zoku that you're likely to run into on the streets.

BOSOZOKU

The "speed tribes" are one of the longest-lived cultural phenomena in modern Japanese history. In an island where space is at a premium, few people bother with the expense and hassle of owning a car, but motorcycles, trikes, and other bikes remain extremely popular. Individually, bosozoku range from informal racing clubs (perfectly legitimate if they bother to get the right permits) to go-gangs engaged in criminal activity for profit or just hellraising. Street races, whether legal or otherwise, are hugely popular in Neo-Tokyo—the kind of thing that has the corp drones gawking out their windows and placing bets—and the bosozoku run practically all of them.

- The bosozoku are strongly tied to Neo-Tokyo's courier culture, and the couriers often end up smuggling or dealing performance enhancers. Good way to get in contact.
- Traveler Jones

701 Club

The term 701 denotes a modified version of SK's G-700 series of motorcycle engines, a popular choice among local bikers. The 701 Club is a combination of bosozoku and their hanger-ons. They call their leader Ojiiichan, slang for "grandpa." The club began as a Ueno Park bike club and quickly became one of the largest gangs in the area, but lately they've decided to relocate to Minato.

- More like they were forced out. Ojiiichan and the other top brass bolted as soon as the Yakuza War started heating up around there.
- Baka Dabora

A large percentage of the club consists of organ couriers in Chiba, who pay the gang a cut in exchange for protection. Couriers that don't pay often find themselves waylaid, their packages and their bikes stolen and sold to organleggers and Yak mechanics, respectively. Naturally, the 701s have an arrangement with the Watada-gumi to operate in their turf for a percentage of any action.

- I've heard tell that out in the bay there's a bosozoku-esque jetski gang that does a little smuggling on the side. Anybody know the truth of that?
- Rigger X
- Yeah, they exist. The Blue Crab Association. They got in a pissing match with a Maori whale-rider a little while back and an orca ate their gang leader. A contact of mine sold the footage to Hisato-Turner Johnson and they used it as a blooper reel. Hear they've been kind of quiet ever since.
- Dr. Spin

EREKIZOKU

To the media, erekizoku (Electric Tribe) is a catch-all for the AR Generation, everything from code phreaks to high school gamer guilds. You still get the occasional obsessive hermit-figure that tip-toes through the Matrix, avoiding the light of day and the barest hint of social contact, but it's kinda hard to remain in your little pillow fortress of solitude when using the greatest socialization tool in the history of metahumankind.

A lot of hackers and top programmers get their start in the erekizoku comparing their favorite synth-metal artists or posting AR scrollwork for fellow Afroflash enthusiasts to download and use in their dashikis. The GameNation arena is the place to hook up with many of these guys. More than a few move past gaming and casual coding and become genuine hacking threats.

Bakuto no Bakuta

The B'n'B's are riggercentric group closely tied to the bosozoku. They reflect a growing trend in the Japanese culture to veer towards the Matrix and AR, establishing themselves as legitimate





INCOMING FEED

contenders in an emerging field. B'n'B members are normally recruited from Matrix and AR game enthusiasts who build mods and patches and make a name for themselves in elaborate AR graffiti (they once had nine life-size golden dragons flying through Neo-Tokyo's AR skies), custom bike modifications, vehicle, drone, and robot theft, and "ghost riding," or hacking the encrypted simsense feeds on corporate racers and combat bikers to share the thrill of pay-per-view events without paying for the privilege.

When taking a group action, either in the Matrix or on their bikes, the B'n'B's rely on tactical software and game-honed reflexes to outflank and outthink their opponents. The B'n'B's are one of the little Matrix gangs that have prospered while the Yakuza has been busy, and thus is one of the few criminal groups on the grid not under an oyabun's thumb.

- Of course, no one's asking how this group could afford the tactical gear and proggies. Funny, that.
- Pistons
- Who cares? I got my hands on an MCT K-23 combat cycle through these guys! I haven't ridden one of these in years.
- Rigger X
- Wait, isn't the K-series their experimental prototype designation? Maybe these guys *do* have Yak connections.
- Mihoshi Oni

KIGYO-ZOKU

Megacorporate citizens identify with their corporations almost as strongly as they do their nationality. They get paid in their corp's scrip, spend it in their corp's stores, and wear their corp-brand clothes to their corporate schools. Even those not fortunate enough to work directly for a megacorp are bombarded and seduced by constant commercials, corporate sports teams, and corporate theme parks and trideo shows. It should come to no surprise, then, that Neo-Tokyo is rife with Kigyo-zoku (corporation tribes).

Most Kigyo-zoku start in high school or younger, as children and young adults associate with the children of their parent's business associates or with other children whose parents work for the same megacorp. Teenagers profess their loyalty by shopping in their corp's stores and wearing their fashions, or may be sponsored by the megacorporations themselves. The megacorps often encourage these "fan clubs," and competing megacorps have been known to strike out against kabozoku to cause their rivals to lose face. By the same token, Kigyo-zoku's relations with each other are dependent on the perceived relationship between their corps. Most of the low-level "gang violence" in Neo-Tokyo is actually Kigyo-zoku quarreling over news reports of corporate espionage, defections, or a drop in stock price.

- Something like 60 percent of all megacorporate officers were in a Kigyo-zoku during their school-age years. Many still retain the old

ties with their former gang-mates and do a bit of social networking to help each other up the corporate ladder. Naturally, they encourage their kids to join too.

- Kia

Mitsuhamas Forever

Officially sanctioned by MCT, this gang has claimed allegiance with the corporation for over three decades, with its home chapter located in Odaiba. Mitsuhamas Forever takes brand loyalty very seriously—members have been known to pick fights with anyone who enters their turf wearing or using products from an MCT competitor. The gang has a long-standing feud with Evo supporters, and clashes between the two have become commonplace in Neo-Tokyo's public high schools.

Unofficially, Mitsuhamas Forever serves as a prime recruiting pool for both the Yakuza and Mitsuhamas, with the toughest and brightest being awarded scholarships to local universities or vocational training schools. Leadership of different chapters throughout the city changes hands yearly as teenagers and young adults transition from high school to college. Members usually proclaim their allegiance by branding the Mitsuhamas logo on the inside of their left wrist on their sixteenth birthday.

- Former Mitsuhamas Forever members typically apply to the Mitsuhamas Yukyu Kai (Mitsuhamas forever fraternity)—there are chapters throughout the world, including Washington University in Seattle.
- Cosmo

Red Ronin

It is unclear whether the Ronin were actually formed by an authorized Renraku officer, or if corp brats just clumped together on their own, trying to find a way to make a name for themselves. This group came together in the mid '50s as a direct response to the emergence of Mitsuhamas Forever. Since that time the Red Ronin has changed as their leadership changed. The current head is Miko, a hot-tempered teenage adept who wears a mask to hide her true identity

- Unlike other youth groups, most Ronin try to hide who they really are. If they get in trouble with the law it is their parents, who usually work for the corporation the gang fronts, who will lose face. Plus, the masks add to their mystique.
- Mihoshi Oni

MOE-ZOKU

Japan is known for its obsessive subcultures focused on technology, fashion, anime, WWII military gear, and everything else under the sun (and a few things that aren't). These individual hobbies and social groups are often grouped together as Moe-Zoku, though properly speaking each individual fan-following has its own specific name and trends. There are shadowrunner fan-cults (Kagezoku), fashion trend tribes (fashionzoku), ethnic Japanese magic study groups (Mahozoku), and even collectors of obsolete Matrix tech (Otakuzoku). While many of these groups' interests border on the esoteric and the arcane, the fanatics they comprise are often specialists in their particular fields of endeavor and fairly free with their knowledge.

MINOR YAKUZAS

The closest thing Neo-Tokyo has to traditional street gangs typically organize themselves along the lines of minor Yakuza, forming in those parts of the sprawl where one of the major gumi's don't reach or don't pay as much attention to. More than anything else, minor Yakuza are known for their extremely violent and non-traditional methods to maintain control of their territories and operations, since they don't have the size and history of the larger gumi to fall back on. The bigger and more organized Yakuza groups may get absorbed by the larger gumi or petition to join them, but the real dream of every ten-nuyen oyabun is to gather enough power to force recognition from the other Yakuza.

Boryokudan

The Boryokudan is a mixed race Yakuza led by an elf called Ako that apes Yakuza customs and traditions without really understanding the honor or principles behind it. Their name, "Violent Ones Association," reads more like a motto, and in a very real sense it is. You can only become a member by killing someone in cold blood. Killing is part of how they rank themselves. Each kill earns a tattoo, which they refer to as blood tattoos. In traditional Yakuza fashion, they seek to get full "suits" of these tattoos.

In Yokohama, the Boryokudan is known for excessively violent crimes, especially kidnappings and hold-ups. The Neo-Tokyo police and corporate security forces have lost over a dozen officers in attempts to infiltrate and break up the group, but to no avail. The Boryokudan believe they are an organized crime syndicate that has a right to control the protection operations in Yokohama. Many think the group is engaged on a terror campaign in an effort to embarrass and weaken the Kodachi Gumi.

- Or maybe they just like to kill. I'd maintain a low profile around these guys. I've only had one run in with them, and once the fighting started they wouldn't back off until I'd put all three of them down for good.
- Janus

Yomi Ryu

A metahuman Yakuza largely made up of orcs and trolls living in Sub-Tokyo, the Yomi Ryu was formed by metas who attempted to join the Yakuza but were denied, purportedly on racial grounds. Many of them are the Goblinized children or grandchildren of Yakuza members, though a few of the higher-ups are said to have been Yakuza kobun themselves before they changed. The Yakuza have left them alone mainly because the group was beneath their notice, but the Yomi Ryu have begun to attract attention from both the Kwaru-gumi and Maasaki Watada. Whether the Yomi Ryu will survive this interest remains to be seen.

- Unless my guess is off, this group could have aspirations of becoming their own syndicate. They already control the protection money down below and now they've been cutting a niche for themselves in the Sub-Tokyo smuggling industry.
- Kia
- Members of the Yomi Ryu have been receiving combat training from the Oni-Do which is helping them hold their own against the Yakuza.
- Mihoshi Oni



- Does this information come from personal experience? Are you taking shots at your own kind, or are you training them?
- Ma'fan
- I'm a businesswoman, Ma'fan. I go where the nuyen takes me.
- Mihoshi Oni

DENIABLE ASSETS

Posted By: Mihoshi Oni

When I first came to Neo-Tokyo, being a shadowrunner in Neo-Tokyo meant you were a free agent—either a former company operative or retired from one of the crime families. You became a runner when your corporation no longer had a use for you, or if you washed out of the Yakuza. The ex-corp runners got the majority of the work, of course, with Yakuza jobs parsed out by the gumi to the old soldiers. Women, metahumans, and gaijin worked little, if at all.

But as the Confucians say, “A round egg can be made square according to how you cut it.” There’s a lot more talent in Neo-Tokyo from far more diverse backgrounds than there used to be—the upheavals in the corporate and underworld hierarchies mean there are a lot more “orphans” around, and of course all the new work going around means that there aren’t enough operators to handle the workflow. Being an outsider still isn’t that great, but there are more opportunities to get your foot in the door, especially if you understand who’s who in the runner scene.

THE VIEW FROM BELOW

Neo-Tokyo is a culture of compliance. Knowing how and when to acquiesce is what makes you employable. The latest skill-softs will show you how deeply to bow, where to sit when at a meet, the right software to load into your commlink to take AR business cards. Gaijin or not you are expected to know proper behaviors. I’ve seen some of the best shooters I know go jobless for months because they didn’t know how to act during a meet. Others have had contacts dry up because they didn’t behave themselves on a run. Your average “Mr. Tanaka” expects runners to act like corporate employees. As an employee you show deference to your employer and speak only when invited to do so. Above all else you are expected to act as a representative of your fixer and client. Your failure is their failure. Remember these four simple rules and you’ll do just fine.

Be Polite

Etiquette is crucial in day-to-day operations, as you are a reflection of the people who hire you. Runners who gain a reputation of being brackish in public don’t work very long. This goes for to your personal life, as well your methods of negotiation. Seattle rules do not apply. If you’re dealing with someone from a local gumi, you don’t talk to his boss in order to negotiate a better deal. Likewise, don’t go fixer shopping once you’ve agreed to do a job for one.

- Etiquette isn’t just about knowing how deep to bow and what not to say, it’s about saving face, either yours or somebody else’s. A lot of the more industrial sabotage runs in Neo-Tokyo involve protecting or trashing the image of a certain corp, corper, or Yakuza. Plus, if you can help somebody save face, they owe you one.
- Dr. Spin

Always Use a Fixer

In most sprawls, the fixer is a go-between, putting the right people together to make a deal and getting a cut off the back end. In Neo-Tokyo, it’s the fixer that deals directly with the Mr. Johnson, and then the fixer turns around and hires the shadowrunners. Few clients will run the risk of brokering a deal without a fixer in the middle, and many shadowrunners work almost exclusively for a single fixer. The system works on the reputation of the fixer: the client can rest assured that the fixer will find someone with the right skills to do the job, and shadowrunners know that a fixer they’ve done work for in the past is less likely to betray them. All parties know that if the terms of the agreement are not adhered to, word of the offense will spread, and the fixer’s reputation will be ruined.

- Contract negotiation is one of the offenses Mihoshi is talking about. Asking for more money at the meet is considered an insult. Any negotiations should be handled by the fixer prior to the runners having a sit down with Mr. Tanaka.
- Rigger X

Some employers won’t even risk getting their hands dirty—the shadowrunners get the job and the pay directly from the fixer, never meeting the client. On the other hand, I’ve known an employer or two who bypass tradition and contract with the shadowrunners directly. The pay is higher because they’ve eliminated the middleman, but the risk is higher as well. Without the protection of a fixer, the employer could be sending you on a one-way mission.

- Hell, I’ve had that happen to me and I *have* a fixer. What’s the bloody difference?
- Winterhawk
- In Neo-Tokyo you work for a fixer—not Mr. Johnson. Johnsons come and go, but your reputation depends on what the fixers are going to say about you. So long as you stay in our good graces you’ll get work. If they *do* try to send you off on a suicide mission, spread the word and you’ll ruin them.
- Yankee
- It’s not always that way. Foreign corps have foreign Johnsons, which can give them bad reputations in the local runner scene, but they are easier for foreign runners to understand. A foreign corp is also far more likely to bring in outside talent to handle a problem, sometimes setting up cover identities by bringing runners in as workers from an out-of-country subsidiary.
- Baka Dabora
- Matrix jobs are also very different. As long as the job doesn’t call for your physical presence, a hacker can work from the other side of the planet or low-earth orbit for all the Tanaka cares. In such cases, the fixer typically handles all of the details of the virtual meet and negotiation.
- Pistons
- I know at least one technomancer living in Neo-Tokyo that makes a living pretending she’s an out-of-town hacker. There’s still some



prejudice against technomancers (and women, metahumans, Koreans, gaijin, drekcetera.)

- Netcat

The single best advantage to using a fixer in Neo-Tokyo, especially for foreign runners, is that they can usually guess what you need for equipment and have it ready for you ahead of time—complete with whatever special permits, fake SIDs, transportation, and specialized gear you'll need. Keep in mind that anything you get from the fixer is inevitably coming out of your cut for the run, but since they're personally invested in the operation, fixers have been known to bend over backwards to get you what you need to finish the job.

Understand Nemawashi

This aspect of shadowrunning rarely shows up anywhere else in the world, so it is easy for newcomers to make mistakes. Nemawashi is basically an extended form of legwork and preparation for a shadowrun, and it involves a lot more talking, cajoling, and exchange of favors than some may be used to. It's not enough to accept a wetjob and then gun somebody down in the street. Depending on who the target is, you have to clear the job with the local Yakuza boss or have a discreet luncheon talk with a city official. There aren't any unions in Neo-Tokyo, but there are plenty of associations, clubs, officers, and clergy with vested interests—some of which may be only tangentially related to the actual matter at hand. I've know more than one foreign runner working with an established crew that nearly went insane with what he saw as the pointless time wasting invested in nemawashi.

- The truth is, nemawashi can be waste of time. Sometimes people cannot help, or are unwilling to help for a reasonable price, or the job is just too high profile, or news of the run spills out through the contact and you have to scrap it. On the other hand, nemawashi can be outstanding. All of your obstacles move out of the way, the job gets done; and afterwards the heat is a lot less. Plus, everybody knows you can play the game, and your reputation goes up a notch.

- Kia

- Naturally, interfering with nemawashi—either that of a rival shadowrunner or anyone else making a play in Neo-Tokyo—really makes life hard for people. Pays pretty well too.

- Baka Dabora

Avoid Collateral Damage

Running in Neo-Tokyo is a matter of precision. There are more bodies per square inch here than anywhere else in the world, making it difficult to carry out a run unnoticed. People are packed so tightly that it leaves very little margin of error. Standard mandate is no collateral damage unless specifically approved.

- Tattoo that backwards on your forehead so you can read it in the mirror. Collateral damage can include people, augmented reality constructs, vehicles, or product, and the powers-that-be take a very dim view of waste. If you jack a load of Renraku Sensei com-

minks off a truck and off the driver, you don't only have the police looking out for you; you have the local Yakuza after you too. Worse, the Yakuza and the police will actually *cooperate* to track your mangy ass down, which is pretty easy if your fence is also backed by the Yakuza—and most of them are.

- Rigger X

- Unless, of course, the point is to cause as much collateral damage as possible. A corp that can't protect its assets or its citizens suffers a major loss of face.

- Dr. Spin

- Accidents generally don't fly as an excuse in Neo-Tokyo: melee weapons usually don't lend themselves to unintentional woundings ("I didn't mean to stab him, but he was standing right behind the security guard"), and getting firearms (not to mention the related permits) is such a bitch that random shootings remain very rare.

- Sticks

LOCAL RUNNERS

Nearly all of Neo-Tokyo's native runners have megacorporate, Yakuza, or government/military backgrounds, and these are the people that you're going to meet, deal with, possibly even work with (or against) while you're in town. Even most of the fixers come from one of these three backgrounds. It's important to understand where these people come from so that you know what they might be capable of, who you might piss off by dealing with them, and how they work.

Something to keep in mind: everyone has one group, one organization, one culture, one *something* that they belonged to

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BIREI

Don't let the aidoru good looks fool you, Birei is a serious negotiator connected in all of the megas. What really sets him apart is his ability to negotiate a fair price. Truthfully, the price is probably fairer to him than it is to you, but even after he's taken his slice of the pie you don't have to live off of recombinant krill for a while. Birei's one weakness is his fondness of hostess clubs—particularly the ones with younger girls—which are where most of his earnings end up.

DATENSHI

A Shinto priest with a taste for nuyen and real tobacco, Datenshi's extensive network of contacts in all levels of society make him ideal for complicated or difficult nemawashi jobs. Datenshi can also arrange to hide shadowrunners and move them out of Neo-Tokyo through his connections with the local shrines, but he charges dearly for the service. Metahumans especially need to be careful, as Datenshi has a couple leads into the darker and more

Continued on page 109

Urgent Message...



arcane Shinto sects, including ones that feature rituals where oni (or, depending on supply, orks, and trolls) are cast as demons. I don't credit the blood sacrifice rumors myself, but always be careful in your dealings with him.

SAKURA

The geisha circuit is a great place for runners new to the city. You can make a name for yourself taking light security work from someone like Sakura. She's been in the shadows for a couple decades now and is tied to all of the major geisha houses. Sakura is a former geisha herself with ties to the Yakuza and has entertained for most of the AA megacorps. Almost all of her meetings are arranged to take place in a geisha house, where Mr. Tanaka and the runners can enjoy an hour or two of fine entertainment before the girls and boys are sent away and business can begin.

SHINJUKU-TAIHU

Don't confuse geisha gigs with actual redlight work. Geisha aren't sex workers, but the people Shinjuku will hook you up with are. Where Sakura would ask you to tread lightly, Shinjuku wants you to bust heads. She works mostly for independent pimps, because the Yakuza police their own. Shinjuku rarely goes up against the Yakuza, but her runs often involve the police, some of the toughest gangs in Kabikicho, and encroaching Russian or Korean outfits. Oddly, the Yakuza sometimes hire Shinjuku to handle small problems when their attention is elsewhere. If that kind of work doesn't inspire you he can always use more collection agents for her Friday night mahjongg games and panchinko parlor.

MABOROSHI

B&E jobs are a staple of the industry and Maborishi, the Phantom, was one of the best. When he retired he'd racked up a string of 73 B&E jobs (I pulled the number from a Yak fence's records) and had never been compromised. He tells me that the secret is in the planning, and that is why he only hires runners who think through what they do. When you've gathered a bit of a reputation, you might be able to wheedle an introduction. Believe me, it's worth it.

INOSHISHI "THE GOBLIN"

A useful troll to know if you want to get in good with the metas, Inoshishi is well liked among the Yomi ex-pats. He's very rough around the edges and treats etiquette as if it were a bad word—though he's the second-most polite troll I know, after Mihoshi Oni. Inoshishi can get you good work, so long as you're willing to get your hands dirty. The Goblin does business for the anti-corp element—the Anarchist Black Cross, a few political clubs, a number of foreign governments, even a spot or two for the Emperor's people if you believe what they say. The pay is better than anything else I mentioned so far; this is serious black ops work. In my experience, the work generally involves sabotage and making it look like someone else did it.

TSUCHIGUMO

One of the prime fixers for the Wanibuchi-gumi, Tsuchigumo is big on getting you jobs in the underground—tapping lines, falsifying authorizations for power grid upgrades, and so on. Most of the work he books requires a competent hacker so get to know one or bone up on your own skills. Lately, Tsuchigumo has been feeding me a lot of work dealing with the Triads. I'm starting to believe that the rumors of the tongs trying to take advantage of the rift within the Yakuza are true. Be aware, if people catch on that you're working for the Wanibuchi, you'll be unable to work for the other Yakuza. They'll expect you to double cross them, and they'll probably kill you before you get the chance.

KURO-FUUGA

The dwarf is hiring non-metas again. The last time he did that was because of a falling out he had with the troll community after he sent Mihoshi Oni on a suicide job. I don't think he's gotten anyone killed this time—this time, he's working for the corps. Kuro-Fuuga deals in death. He hires for the kind of wetwork where it doesn't have to look like an accident. The jobs I've done for him all involved prepwork for canceling someone who was about to be extracted by a rival corporation; that sort of thing sends a message to others who are anxious to jump ship. In the past he has asked me to take contracts on runners who crossed a Mr. Tanaka in some way. It isn't the type of thing that I'm normally willing to do, but if you need the nuyen he always has a list of jobs available.

OTOME

Whether she really is a fourteen-year-old school girl or her attire is an eccentric fetish, Otome's connections to the youth market are undeniable. Otome fronts a number of jobs for affluent Neo-Tokyo youth. Most of the work is sabotage and surveillance—social engineering and positioning runs. The pay is low but consistent, and if you get in good with her she can be your link to climbing the social ladder. The prime work I get always comes from private parties, corp executives trying to maneuver a deal off the books. I think she has access to these players through the club scene, but I'm not sure. A lot of runners started out running errands for her before moving on to bigger and better things.

YANKEE

There are a handful of gaijin fixers that function well in Neo-Tokyo. Yankee (named for the worn-out baseball cap he wears on most occasions; he's actually half-Japanese and was born in Hawai'i) is probably the best. Although he has some ties to NeoNET TransAsia, Yankee brokers shadow work for a number of foreign corporations. He tends to hire for wetwork, extractions, surveillance, and data theft, and he often tips successful runners with access to a Beta-grade shadowclinic on the edge of Chiba. March through October you can find him in Bunkyo watching the Yomiuri Giants play.



before they joined the shadows, and those people were their family. No one is born into the shadows.

- Speak for yourself.
- Slamm-0!

Former Company Men

Just as a majority of Neo-Tokyo works for the megacorps, a majority of the shadowrunners and fixers used to work for the megacorps. Some of them still do. Like any other body, megacorps have their share of scapegoats, wash-outs, failures, retirees, and up-or-out policies in their various security, military, and intelligence branches. For the average corporate citizen, Goblinization and UGE is as good as death sentence for your career. Lacking other skills or experience, many of these individuals end up in the shadows.

Many megacorporations prefer to hire former company men and women for their shady labors. A former company man is a known quantity, and many times retains a modicum of loyalty to their former employer—or at the very least has friends and family to use as blackmail material if things go south. More than one senior corpsec has resigned in “disgrace” to save the corporation face after some security disaster, only to end up as a rich and well-connected fixer managing the corporation’s deniable assets—all while pulling down a corp pension!

Former company men generally like to work with those they can relate to, which means other former company men.

- Particularly loyal and effective shadowrunners are sometimes put under contract by the megacorps; the corp provides a permanent lifestyle, gear, and support, and in exchange they practically own the runner.
- Yankee
- Yeah, and you have two new exciting career options: cyborg or cyberzombie.
- Baka Dabaka

The Emperor's Men

A number of military officers and policemen resigned in silent protest when the young Emperor began enacting his new policy, following an old and established tradition in Japan. Men once used to beating metahumans on sight were now tasked with training them for combat and police work, and they couldn’t stand the shame of treating these kawaru with respect. It was mostly a media ploy. For every real officer that resigned in shame or protest, three were deficient or delinquent in some fashion and were encouraged—subtly or unsubtly—to leave. The resignation provided an honorable way to be removed from duty, and for some an opportunity to slip into the shadows. Resignation in protest continues whenever a scapegoat is needed, except, of course, when the poor bastard is asked to commit suicide instead.

Many of the ex-government runners you encounter will be male, early-twenties to late forties, and in decent shape. Former government workers still have a sense of national pride about them. It is rare that you will find them running against the Emperor. Government agencies like NAPPO and the Imperial Household Agency retain shadowrunners to set up backchannel lines of communication within the megacorporations and as disposable, deniable assets.

Lost Dragons

Yakuza can be “orphaned” in a number of traditional ways: losing a gang war, faking your death and changing your identity, retiring from the life, falling out with the boss after a truly monumental fuck-up followed by a face-saving request to leave, that sort of thing. Ex-Yaks have an advantage over others with established connections to the criminal underworld, but generally bring their past associations with them as well: old feuds with other gangs, old bosses you’ve pissed off, old cops that know your face. Because of this, ex-Yaks are more willing than others to hook up with people of different backgrounds.

I have reason to believe that the Great Dragon Ryumyo prefers former Yakuza when hiring shadowrunners, but I can’t confirm that.

- Contrary to popular belief Ryumyo isn’t the only game in town. The Great Dragons Lung and Masaru have been more active lately, hiring shadow talent to pull jobs around the city.
- Ma’fan
- Lung and Ryumyo are playing a game that it would take a lifetime for us to understand. The relationship with Masaru is more complex, but rumor has it that the Filipino Wyrms is currently apprenticed to Lung—a position once held by Ryumyo—and will be for the next couple of centuries, if all goes well. Be careful when dealing with dragons; they are generous when they can afford to be, but they don’t forget who works for them or against them. Ever.
- Frosty
- Isn’t there a saying about never dealing with ... oh, never mind.
- The Smiling Bandit

FINDING WORK

In Neo-Tokyo, there is a system of working your way up and earning your place in the shadows. You may start off as a muscleman, small time courier, or the like, showing fixers how your etiquette holds up during the simple stuff. By the time you pull your first big job, your skills will be well documented. Nobody is willing to risk their position by putting a serious job into the hands of an unproven asset.

- Though sometimes that’s precisely what a corporation is willing to do in order to make it look like the job was done by a gaijin corporation to discredit a rival. A company like Monobe will bring in gaijin runners to do a delicate extraction job against Renraku. When the smoke clears it looks like Ares or some other gaijin corp did the job, because Monobe knows better than to hire unskilled labor.
- Baka Dabora

Employers hire workers they believe can be trusted with the job. Generally, they are more likely to hire someone with a background similar to theirs. For example, a corporate Tanaka prefers to hire former company men because they understand how to run in the corp environment. Corp work is the standard in Neo-Tokyo, the bread and butter of every shadowrunner, but getting work from the major players can be harder than advertised—fixers like to start new shadowrunners out with smaller corp gigs before moving them in to the big leagues.



- A popular myth is that the Japanacops refuse to higher metas, even for shadowruns. This is of course untrue. The myth works to distract targets from who the actual employer is. If a group of trolls knocks down your door they can't be working for Renraku, can they?
- Kemuri

If the work doesn't go to former talent then it trickles down to the Yakuza. Organized crime is deeply embedded in the local corp scene. Often giving work to a certain gumi can be a way to repay a favor. Shadow work trickles down to the independents last. Even then reputation makes the run. The better known you are the more likely you are to get work, although this is a double-edged sword. Become too popular and a corporation may be hesitant to hire you, as the act of hiring you can become a statement of the importance of the work that needs to be performed.

- Working for the government is a great way to procure passes and permits. Government fixers are often willing to work in favors instead of creating an electronic trail of credit transfers.
- Kia
- Shadowruns are how the government does real business of the sprawl. Corporations and government alike are so concerned with saving face that many of the negotiations necessary to keep the city running have to be done away from normal channels.
- Kemuri
- That's been my experience too.
- Yankee

Working for a corporation often involves nawabari, nema-washi, and shanai-kekkon. Nawabari requires a high degree of etiquette, which tends to leave out most runners. Nema-washi running, where you begin laying the groundwork for extractions and other large scale operations, is where most of us fall in. Often several teams will be working on the same extraction at once. One team might be serving as the organizers, coordinating the whole operation while another is preparing a plan to snatch the target's family. Yet another team could be working on a redirection; planning a cover-up to make it look like some other corporation ordered the extraction.

- A common nemawashi job is the bait and switch. Let's say a corporation wants to make sure they put the low bid in on a project, but they don't know what their competitors' bids are going to be. So maybe they decide to hire a team to snatch the employee responsible for making the bid prior to the bid being posted. But that's no good—once one drone is gone, the corporation just replaces him with someone else and changes their bid, leaving everyone with no more information than they started with.

So you do a bait and switch instead. Let's say we've got some runners moving against Corp X. They do a little of this and a little of that, actions that lay the groundwork for Corp X to need to have services performed by whomever the runners represent. The team might, say, be asked to sabotage a power plant, laying the groundwork for Corp X to install new equipment. Meanwhile a second runner team infiltrates Corp X to retrieve the employee information that a *third* team needs to pull off their part. The third team is the

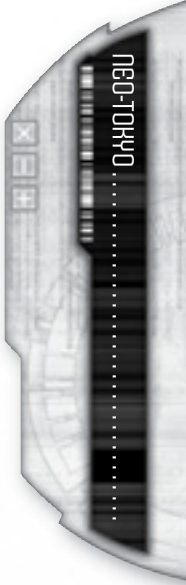


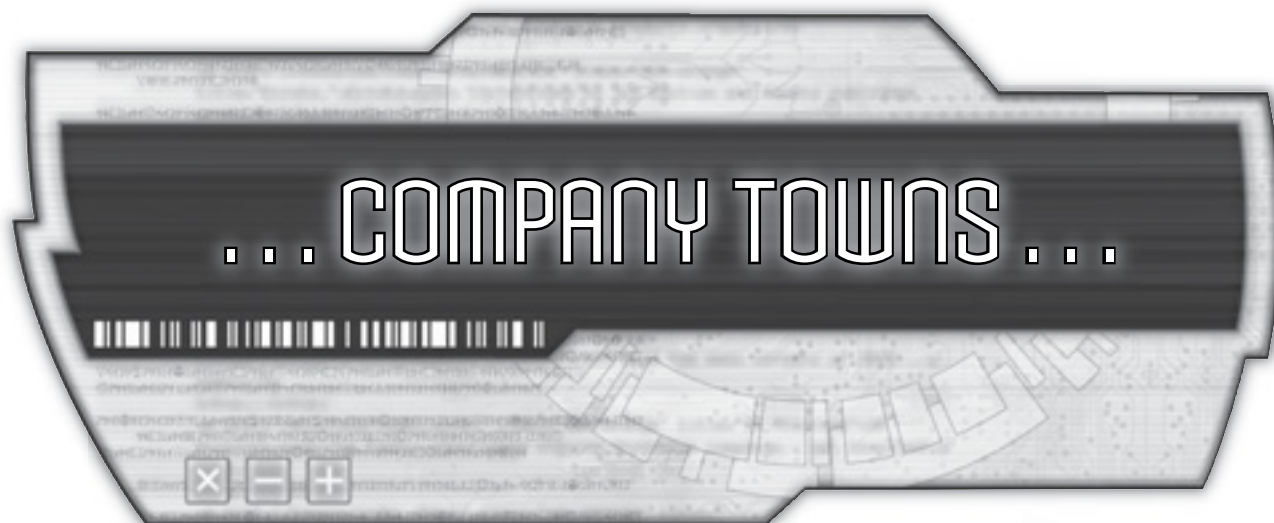
face of the job. They approach competing corporations pretending to be brokers for Corp X. They receive bids on how much it would cost to install a new power plant so when Corp X, or any other company looking for the same level of services, is ready to bid, the employing corp can bid just below them.

- Yankee
- With a good fixer, the teams working a job are only told their part in it. It is left up to the fixer to coordinate the actions of all the teams.
- Baka Dabora

Shanai-kekkon (arranged marriage) is a common way to build political allies and is often used to deflate growing conflicts (not to mention employed as a cute metaphor for corporate mergers). It is, for example, unlikely you will have someone killed if he is married to your cousin. Occasionally the person betrothed is already attached to someone else. In cases like this the attachment must be severed.

- The Empress is a fine example of shanai-kekkon. Despite the hopes and dreams of schoolgirls across the nation, the Emperor did not marry Hitomi out of love. He was probably too young to understand what love was when he was betrothed.
- Kia





From the comfort of her window seat on board the Hughes Emblem, Louise Brooks looked out on the overcast Manhattan skyline at dusk. The day's dying light sliced under the darkening cloud cover, the glass and steel spires look ominously blood-tipped to her eyes. The shuttle wove past the last couple of Manhattan skyscrapers and settled into an orbit waiting for clearance, down below a filigree of halogens and neons at the bottom of glass-walled canyons.

Seven hours into her journey, twenty minutes from the airport, minutes till she was confined to yet another gilded cage. Her window was vanishing and her hopes with it. Something had gone wrong. As the shuttle descended towards the flashing lights of the landing pad, she peeked out of the rain-tracked window. Through the downpour she thought she could see small groups gathering behind the glass of the rooftop viewing room.

The pilot touched down with barely a jolt and her fellow passengers began collecting their affairs. Louise checked her messages one last time for signs of contact. Taking her time to the exit hatch, she folded up the faux-fur collar of her coat and was the last to descend the steps onto the tarmac into the freezing rain lashed into a tornado by the shuttle's rotors.

Her heart sank as she saw the long-coated Japanese man and black-clad security goons emerge, weapons in hand, from the curtain of rain. The leader extended a hand, a stone-cold smile on his Japanese features. She disliked him immediately. As his IntSec ID flashed up on her AR display, he shouted over the wind, "Dr. Brooks? I am Major Hatami. We have reason to believe you may be at risk. I am here to escort you to a secure location. Please follow me."

The oh-so-prevalent arrogance of the spook spilled off him like the November rain off his trenchcoat—one of many reasons she was eager to leave Mitsuhamma. Louise's mind raced. How did he know about the extraction? Was he being disingenuous? Did he know she had initiated contact?

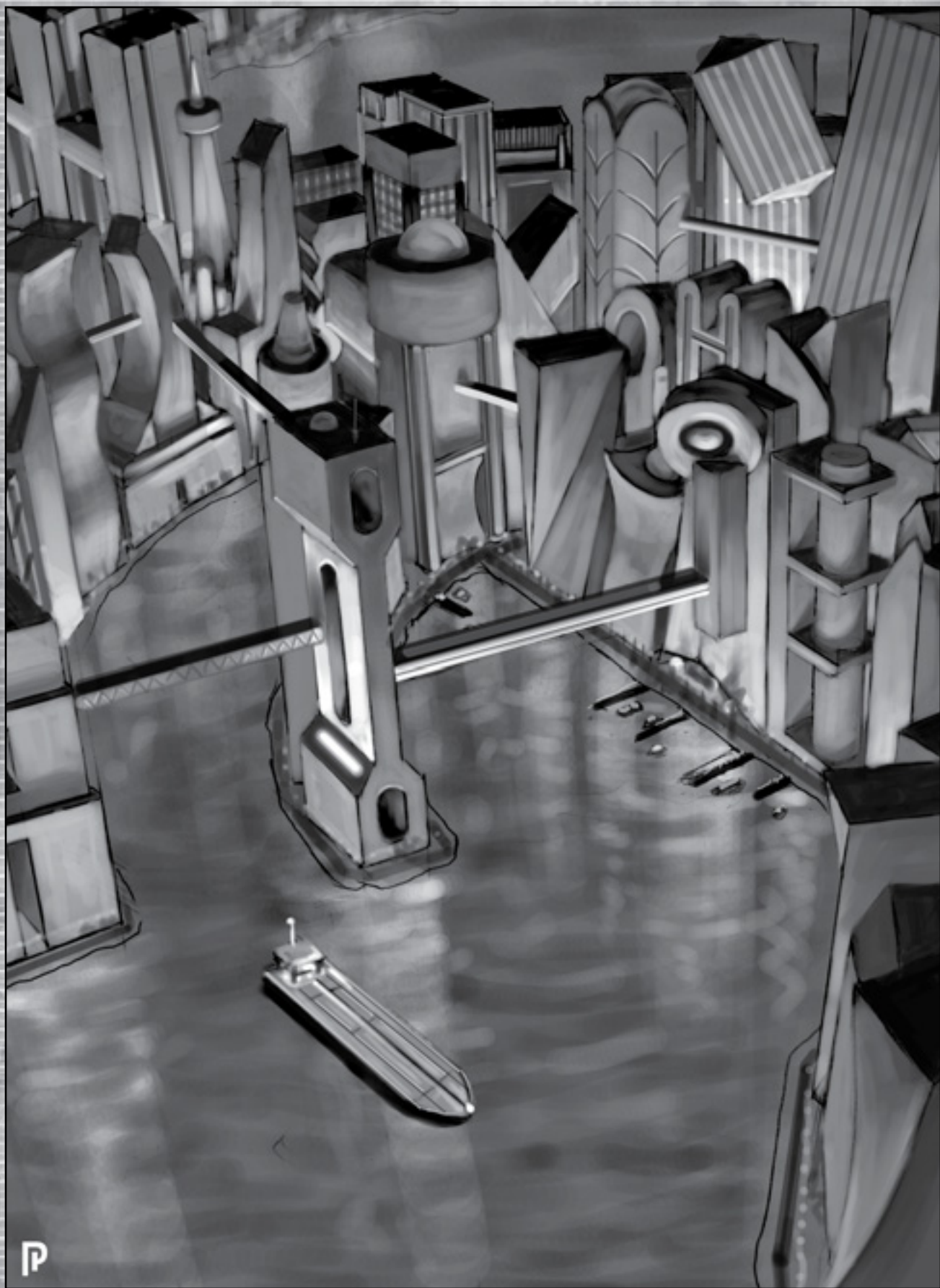
She wrestled with her panic, as he barked orders to the security guards. Two took positions behind her, while Hatami sent a third guard scurrying to retrieve her luggage. Hatami led the small group off the roof and through the waiting room. He must have wired a command because an elevator door opened as they approached. This was a security elevator, no buttons, manual controls, or surveillance, perfect for discreetly moving and removing "problems" from the Tower—Louise thought her knees might betray her.

As the armored guards came in, the Major scowled as he and Louise were unceremoniously shuffled to the back. As the elevator started to descend, Hatami barked out a reprimand in Japanese. One of the guards muttered a formal apology—said it was too tight a fit with the luggage to move around.

Hatami wasn't pleased, he pushed forward, "Get to the back! Didn't you hear me? Who do you think you are?"

An elbow pad flashed up and smashed Hatami in the face. His nose spurted blood and he looked slightly bewildered as he crumpled to the ground.

"What an asshole! I've been itching to do that all afternoon." The security guard unfastened his helmet and visor, taking it off, revealing a rugged American face and short cropped blond hair, "Hello, Dr. Brooks, my friends and I are here to take you to your new home. We have a car in the basement and with Major Hatami's security passes, we should have you out of harm's way in twenty minutes. By the way, you can call me Hard Exit."



P

• Now we've had a look at the two diametrically opposite corporate enclaves, here's a peek at other significant company towns around the globe. For all the power and big brother tactics the corps wield in their own backyards no two sprawls are alike, so keep that in mind and make sure you've got the intel before making a field trip to Corpville.

• FastJack

DUBAI

Posted By: Traveler Jones

Pearl of the Gulf. Corporate oasis. Home. That's what millions in the Middle East call Dubai these days. It is the holy city of every corpster in the region, the Mecca of nuyen.

CITY OF A THOUSAND AND ONE OPPORTUNITIES™

To visit Dubai is to visit a vision of the future—or at least the future dreamed up by the suits from marketing and sales. It's daring, over-the-top, and a monument to human hubris rising like the shards of a shattered diamond from the desert.

For the better part of a century this urban utopia has teemed with activity day and night, unperturbed by the chaos in the region. As an Arabian crossroads of old, Dubai has something for everyone: bankers close meganuyen deals, construction cranes erect the next wonder of the world, Nicamax cargo leviathans wait their turn at the **Jebel Ali port**, decadent partygoers enjoy the Emirate's tolerant and liberal attitudes, tourists crowd sprawling duty-free malls, and in the **Jumeirah** commercial district, gamblers cheer their favorite horse at the racetracks. While traditional *souks* (markets) and high-tech bazaars buzz with the sound of haggling. It's dizzying at times.

Dubai has changed more in ten years than most cities have in a century. It is the Vegas of the Middle East. That impressive skyscraper you targeted for B&E a couple of years ago? Gone now, replaced by something post-Persian, outlandish, and extravagant. Lyrical, the nightclub you visited on one of the artificial islands? Turned into a golf course mere weeks after it stopped being hip—drop by “Italy” on the **World Archipelago**.

Why should you care about all this? First, when in Dubai, update your mapsofts regularly or you're just asking for trouble at the worst possible moment. Second, the construction boom keeps the real estate market in ferocious competition, which is good news for people like us.

I miss that nightclub, though.

• The unforgiving heat means service and delivery drones are common enough to go unnoticed, making them potential avenues of insertion.

• Rigger X

• Just about every corporation with an interest up in the Final Frontier or communications has facilities in the Dubai Aerospace Complex, near Jebel Ali. The raw processing power available could make an AI salivate.

• Orbital DK

Dubai is an exceedingly safe place too (more on this later), especially when compared with some Middle East hellholes. Most

people in Dubai only know war from trid and AR newsfeeds, but that doesn't stop the city from making a profit out of it. Hundreds of miltech corporations and vendors diligently troop to the annual **International Defense Exhibition (IDEX)**, making it one of the largest arms fairs in the world. The parades, air shows, and mock combats are massive crowd magnets, but the real action takes place in private parties. That's where lucrative contracts are inked with paranoid despots, coup-prone generals, insurgent groups, merc outfits, and yes, even legitimate governments and other corps.

Predictably, shadow activity jumps through the roof while IDEX is going on, and there just aren't enough runners in town to meet the demand. If you have the right contacts and don't mind the overseas trip, it's a great opportunity to make some nice cred. Despite the oppressive security, rarely a year goes by without a couple of assassination attempts and a prototype theft or two.

• Freelance security is in high demand, but industrial espionage and sabotage are also pretty common. Grabbing a prototype on show can earn you a cool mil.

• Rigger X

While doing biz at the IDEX or anywhere else, bear in mind that haggling runs in the blood here (yes, even in your underworld contacts), and you'll come off as a crude outsider if you don't give it a try.

That offer at the **Gold Souk** might look like an absolute bargain, but you could shave twenty or thirty percent off the initial price. Be careful, though: the place has a well-earned reputation as a gold smuggling haven and money laundering center, with everyone from terrorists to intelligence agencies keeping an eye on the gold trail. Cross the wrong people here and you'll die—but not before they torture you for every single piece of information in your head.

• Interested in orichalcum, ancient scrolls, or the latest manatech? Then the talismongers of Souk al-Tariqa are a must. You just have to find the place first...

• Am-mut

• There are other, less-known souks in Dubai, catering to the rich's less-than-legal needs: drugs (much preferred over BTLs), bunraku meatdolls, freshly harvested body organs ...

• Pistons

THE FORTY THIEVES

Once you're done gawking at the city, you might wonder about the authorities and those pulling their strings. Look no further than the **Dubai Financial Market** and the forty members of its executive board. No single corp is truly dominant here; the sands shift constantly, and yesterday's alpha male could be today's roadkill. The board is rife with internal struggles and petty intrigues, but no one dares to upset the status quo—those who do soon learn what “peer pressure” truly means.

Dubai's ruling families pay lip service to the Caliph in Riyadh, but everyone knows their true loyalties lie where the money is. Corps use them to bypass the Arabian Caliphate's strict regulations, treating the city as their own sandbox. Riyadh grumbles



but looks the other way as long as the infidels keep bringing their money here. It doesn't matter what happens or who's in charge, though, because Dubai persists and prospers.

- All that said, Dubai is very much an Islamic city. While there's condescending tolerance for bumbling foreigners, showing disrespect toward the local customs or religion will land you in a *Mudaween* jail. Women, orks, and trolls should take particular note. Women better cover up and should never take the lead in a conversation with the locals. Orks and trolls face a lot of prejudice and open hostility if not violence; some places will refuse to serve you, others will ask you to leave. Stick to the tourist concourses, where the locals will at least put on happy faces.
- Goat Foot

Another sign of this pragmatic stance toward business is that Dubai hosts Israeli interests in the area, even though relations between the Arabian Caliphate and the Jewish state are frosty at best. Little-known Olive Holdings employs nearly all of the city's few Jews (mostly *dhimmi* families who have lived there for centuries), as well as a number of Israeli diplomats that keep back channels open with Riyadh. This open secret annoys some hardliners in Riyadh, but OH gets away with it because it worships the almighty nuyen as strongly as anyone in Dubai.

- Ezra Kasem is the brains behind Olive Holdings. Slick, charming, and well informed, he's rumored to be either a Mossad agent or a Druze mystic. Me? I'm betting on both.
- Fianchetto
- Olive Holdings has a standing policy of hiring every single technomancer it can. Many of those who sought refuge in Dubai are now working for the company.
- Netcat

Nothing Personal, Just Business

What's really changing Dubai is the ongoing fragmentation of family loyalties. Entire family clans used to side with a single megacorp, but this is quickly becoming a thing of the past. The trend began in 2064, when Global Sandstorm took over several corps mauled by the Crash, thus creating a veritable diaspora of people who were fired or didn't see eye-to-eye with the new management. Family allegiances are not going to disappear anytime soon, but they're definitely taking a back seat to corporate allegiance these days.

Speaking of families, the al-Shammar deserve special mention. Their control of regional powerhouse Global Sandstorm and marriage ties to the Caliph give them immense clout throughout the Middle East. It also puts them in direct competition with Saeder-Krupp and just about anyone else with a stake in the region.

- There's no lack of nicknames for Aziz Ibn Yusuf al-Shammar, the family's patriarch: Arabian Shogun, Muslim Borgia ... you get the picture.
- Cosmo

SCANDAL SHAKES DUBAI

Dubai (GulfNews) - The body of a senior Daiatsu VP was found at the Sheikh Zayed Hotel today, with initial evidence suggesting suicide. Mr. Salim al-Radadi (52) had disappeared two days ago after the Arabian Caliphate's Islamic-Corporate Coordination Board accused him of attempting to bribe officers at the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA). It is uncertain whether the ICCB investigation will continue, and a government spokesman has refused to comment on this issue.

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- And in *totally* unrelated news, Global Sandstorm's Euphrates Solutions secured the contract for DEWA's new water-purification plant, beating a rival bid from Dowdell Water Technologies, a Daiatsu subsidiary.
- Sunshine

Urgent Message...

DUST DEVILS

The dark side of Dubai is kept away from the coast and in the middle of the desert. Here, you find the overcrowded, low-cost housing projects where migrant workers live. Most are Muslims from poorer countries, lured by Dubai's prosperity, but soon discovering that the best they can hope for is a life of indentured servitude. Most are trapped in these townships, unable to afford returning to their home countries

- Bedouins can take you anywhere, and for a fraction of what the other smugglers ask.
- 2XL
- Anywhere inside the Caliphate, of course. For someone from Karachi, Yakarta, or the Balkans, they're not really an option.
- Traveler Jones

These satellite towns feature row upon row of drab prefab tenements geometrically aligned along asphalt grids and interspersed with the occasional mosque or park that barely break up the bareness. Each is linked to the city where the migrants work in menial jobs by regular bus and maglev routes.

It's no surprise that this is fertile ground for criminals, fundamentalists, and activists. Both the militant New Islamic Jihad and the moderate Islamic Renaissance Movement are popular in the camps, butting heads from time to time as they struggle for greater influence. There's a myriad other factions, but generally speaking they don't matter squat in the grand scheme of things. On the other hand, they can be valuable allies when you need to hide from someone.

COMPANY TOWNS

- At least one group is nothing more than a façade for Saeder-Krupp's talent scouts. Lofwyr likes to get runners while they're young and gullible.
- Haze

- Though the IRM's political progressivism is a headache for the authorities, all eyes are on the NIJ. Striking a blow against Western decadence in Dubai would be a major coup for them.
- Goat Foot

Trust Me, Honey

The government's not-so-secret weapon against any rabble-rousers is Dubai Police. It's what you get when you mix Big Brother's wet dreams with the best PR money can buy. The Trustworthy™ provide a visible, friendly face, reminding everyone that it's in their best interest to report any oddities. You'd be surprised to know just how many people fall for the propaganda.

The other, less visible face of Dubai Police is anything but friendly. Monitoring hidden cameras, eavesdropping for interesting conversations, milking informants, and using good ol' torture are some methods used by the group. They also have a close relationship with the Caliph's *Mudaween* religious police, who are more than eager to help hunt down the illegally practicing Awakened. Better still, Dubai Police shares its information with the Corporate Court. Ain't that lovely?

- Jones has it wrong: Dubai Police *belongs* to the Corporate Court.
- FastJack
- Well, that certainly explains a lot ...
- Traveler Jones

EUROPORT

Posted By: Cosmo

Europort is the prototype of an industrial mechanopolis and quite different from most Data Age corp-controlled megacities. Laid out as a sophisticated harbour complex on some corporate drawing board, the construction plans for Europort were finally realized when Rotterdam was consumed by the Black Tide of 2011. Home-grown multinational Royal Dutch Joint Enterprises (now Regulus JI) stepped in to shape Europe's most vital commercial hub on the urban cadaver of the former seaport.

- Outsiders tend to think that Europort is bigger than it is, because it's one half—the *Zuidvleugel* (South Wing)—of a larger conurbation called the *Randstad* (lit. "fringe-city") that includes the northern metroplex of the Hague. Europort itself encompasses only former Rotterdam and its immediate vicinity, including the subsumed cities of Dordrecht, Vlaardingen and Schiedam.
- Ecotope

A vital milestone for Europort was hosting the 2062 summit between Europe's leading 15 corporations, where the New European Economic Community was birthed. Ever since *Manhattan aan de Maas* has become a battleground for corporate, economic and political intrigue between the Eurocorps and the massive influence of the Triple-As, their subsids, and proxies.

JACKPOINT DATACACHE // PROFILES // CORPS
NEW QUERY :: REGULUS JOINT INDUSTRIES (summary)

<last update 21-11-70 :: user: Mr.Bonds ::>

President/Chairwoman of the Board:

Princess Juliana-Marie of the Netherlands

CEO: Richard Heckmeyer, Jr.

Corporate Status: Public / ZOG Rating: AA

World Headquarters: Royal Dutch Business District (Europort) / Angel Towers Arcology, London (UK)

The merger of two industrial AA multinationals—Royal Dutch and British Industrial PLC—two years before Crash 2.0, Regulus Joint Industries exploited the economic chaos to its advantage. By acquiring of a number of former UNL public enterprises that were privatized to compensate for Crash losses, as well as several German and British companies, Regulus consolidated its AA status in Europe. Economically invigorated, they relocated their Dutch head office back to Europort in 2068 and have taken a more active role in the super port's matters since.

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- Though not publicly known, Regulus shares a long and unpleasant history with Saeder-Krupp that nearly cost them their AA status back in the Sixties, when the United Netherlands' government (in Lofwyr's pocket since the mid-Fifties) relinquished several Royal Dutch's exclusive service contracts. The relocation of their head office and the strategic alliance with the Oranje dynasty by admission of Princess Juliana-Marie of the Netherlands (who disfavors S-K) as Chairwoman of the board, have been regarded as a direct challenge to S-K's stranglehold on local power.
- Mr. Bonds

LIKE CLOCKWORK

Trillion nuyen pan-corporate investment has force-evolved the artificial enterprise zone that is Europort into an automated industrial moloch. Fully half the sprawl is taken up by the **Portoplex**, a vast superport complex incorporating a plethora of docks, dry docks, harbour facilities, chemical plants, refineries, steelmills, multi-level container parks, warehousing and logistics centers, all interlinked by an adaptive web of rail lines and robotic cranes. The entire port infrastructure—roads, rails and waterways—is reconfigurable and mechanized. Even the docks and waterways using Proteus and Mærsk designs are adaptive, combining floating docks with adjustable pillons and mobile locks to configure themselves to different sizes of vessels, from local barges to cargo whales and behemoth freighters from all corners of the globe.

- They've given up on estimating the tonnage that goes through

Europort yearly, the numbers are so mind-boggling. The sprawl links up to all the main maglevs and superhighways into Europe, and from Europort shipments make their way to virtually anywhere in the NEEC in less than a day.

- Mr. Bonds

- One of those xenosapient AIs set up shop in one of the Proteus Aqs drydocks, but nobody has bothered to oust it since the output has gone up 50% since it moved in. It doesn't talk to anyone and doesn't seem to communicate with anything besides the facility's robotics.

- Puck

Aside from heavy industry, Europort handles transshipment and logistics on a bigger scale than any other known seaport. Multi-million tons of cargo are loaded, unloaded, stored and moved around to ship to its final destination across Europe on a 24/7/365 basis. Operations are streamlined, supervised and strictly controlled since delays equal loss of revenue for somebody—unacceptable in just-in-sequence logistics and demand-driven economics—efficiency is the byword and the Portoplex runs like clockwork in more senses than one... Machines are preferred over humans in many functions and the level of automation is scary—an armada of drones works the port.

- Yeah, the astral is as bleak and ravaged as you would expect. Mana ebbs and background counts are the norm, since the new sprawl was built directly on the toxic remains of the Black Tide.

- Ethernaut

MEAT VS. MACHINE

While drones, machine and metahuman, of different shapes and sizes drudge in the Portoplex to manage the high-throughput, “meat” is generally considered less reliable than automated robotics. Robotics are cheap, lift more than any dockworker, come customized with arms, tracks, wheels or even airborne-capacity if required, and can labour all day with minimal downtime. Automated expert systems (boasting unimaginable numbers of software agents) control the phalanxes of automats in active service, line up task lists, and keep them updated. Meat just couldn't handle it even if every metahuman cog worked at 100 percent, where and how it was supposed to.

- Human drones are forced into weekly 14-18h working shifts by their employers to compete with their machine-made counterparts. With labour being not well paid anyway they eke out their miserable existence with working and sleeping without any time free time to spare.

- Goat Foot

- It is exactly how the corps like their slaves. Tired enough to keep them from thinking.

- Aufheben

That said, metahumans are employed in minor supervisory capacity, emergency, repair, and clean up crews, though a number of cranejacks and spiders were recruited from other ports after the



technomancer and A.I. scares of recent months. Human network admins, sysops and techtypes are also in high demand as security is higher than ever.

- The local meshwork is a fucking Gordian Knot. Europort was hard hit by the Crash 2.0, and corps took it upon themselves to rebuild their own networks even before the M2 protocols were enacted. The wireless density in this port is scary and nobody's taking chances, meddling could be catastrophic in such a complex interlocked system.

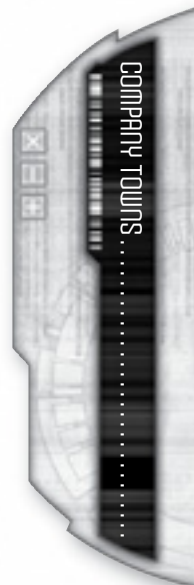
- Pistons

- The docklands see a huge amount of gray and black market smuggling. Drugs, beetles, arms, and other trafficking are so profitable it is in the syndicates best interests to ensure that metahumans are never taken out of the equation. Where there's humanity there's crime.

- Red Anya

MASTERS AND SERFS

Officially, the city is governed by the Europort Administrative Ruling Council (EARC), an administrative apparatus that consists of the biggest local corps that shaped the city in the last decades and which supports both its economics and infrastructure finan-



cially. Maintenance contracts for the artificial dikes that protect the city from the toxic North Sea, power, public works, sanitation, security and public transportation—like the above-ground maglev train system that interconnects shopping, apartment, and corporate districts with the **Oude Centraal** and the **Portoplex**— are outsourced to local corps and supported by tax funds raised from the city’s registered residents (>80 percent corporate affiliation).

To keep all communication channels as short as possible, the administrative bodies are clustered around central **De Kop van Zuid** (“the Head of the South”), Europort’s *de facto* cerebellum where all corporation’s representations including Regulus’ HQ are located.

Surprisingly, the Eurocorps cooperate extremely well, with Regulus functioning as an arbiter in disputes. Although rumors abound that some of the Eurocorps (those with long standing grudges like Mærsk, Spinrad Industries or Z-IC) have forged an alliance with Regulus to keep Saeder-Krupp in check.

- The dynamic Eurocorp situation is applied wolf pack social behaviour. Rank fights are a frequent and though the wolves may howl together and follow the alpha male, the betas are just waiting for a chance to climb up the ladder.
- Mr. Bonds
- De Maas Waker Politie, Europort’s private police organization (owned by Regulus now) is on the EARC’s payroll. An independent intercorporate taskforce is usually detached for special missions.
- Danger Sensei

Europort’s remaining ten districts, all laid out by corporate architects, are divvied up by function; work and leisure kept strictly separate—most are simply dormitory areas that orbit the bustling Portoplex. Contrary to what you might expect the worst places are the desolate residential areas for metahuman workers and their families around **Vlaardingen** and **Schiedam**. No matter how the corps spruce them up with AR and colorful paints—they always feel lifeless and desolate. The soot, grime, and vague chemical smells that permeate the sprawl don’t help either.

- While the vast automated docklands render the astral lifeless and sterile, the negative emotions bleeding off dehumanized individuals treated as cattle are enough to choke you in other parts of town.
- Ethernaut

REST AND RECREATION

Vice and leisure also have a place in Europort, a red-light halo around the **Oude Centraal** known as the **Reefer district** where stivadores and suits rub shoulders and blow off steam. Originally home to a number of up-and-up recreation and leisure businesses the area has seen better days. In many areas of the Reefer, legitimate casinos, nightclubs, and Dutch “coffee shops” have given way to gambling dens, fight clubs, brothels, table dance clubs or virtuaporn cafés in many parts. The *Dutch Penose*, the local syndicates, run and supply a lot of the operations but they’re not the only ones profiting in the shadows and backstreets. Freelancers and sometimes even influential corporate types also have their own operations.

Since the corporations look dimly on excessively influential organized crime, smaller underworld entrepreneurs proliferate.

EUROPORT ADMINISTRATIVE RULING COUNCIL

Zeeland Chemtech (AG Chemie)
 Ares Macrotechnology
 Heineken Liquors (Aztechnology)
 ESUS
 DeBeers-Omnitech (Universal Omnitech)
 Mærsk Sealand & Kvaerner-Mærsk
 (Mærsk Incorporate Assets)
 Lusiada
 Proteus AG
 Regulus Joint Industries
 Saeder-Krupp / Ætherlink
 Total-Elf (Esprit Industries)
 World Wide Shipping (Wuxing)

Urgent Message...

Like the Ghanaian/Ashanti *Adinkra*, that have strong ties to the African blood diamond, ivory and tesma trade, or the *Sesmarias*, a Amazonian ex-pat outfit that distributes BADs and lesser drugs.

An interesting phenomenon are corporate “cliques” recognizable by their own distinctive corporate style or behaviour that stroll around the bars and clubs and which form from different ranks in the corporate hierarchy because a common interest (even it is just rebelling against the corporate establishment). With nearly no or only few lower echelon SINless in Europort these *zoku*-like clique have occupied the social niche of gangs in the urban microcosm. Many are adapt in doing small time felonies like robbing apartments, blackmailing for corp script, prostituting classmates, or organize fight club events or hacking corporate vaults from the inside.

MANHATTAN

Posted By: Axis Mundi

Manhattan is the corporate citadel of the Western world, where the Corporate Court sits on a gilded throne and the robber barons of the Manhattan Development Consortium keep the wage-serfs happy through rampant consumerism and omnimedia saturation. While Neo-Tokyo evolved from the organic sprawl of Tokyo, the plasticrete and glass canyons of Manhattan were rebuilt from the cemented ruins of the *Quake* of 2005 as a corporate dream city.

The city has come a long way since those days, when an American government deep in debt, depleted by the Resource Rush and paralyzed by incompetence, could not deliver on the rebuilding of a ruined Manhattan. Instead, they expropriated the island and sold it to a group of corporations who promised to restore the city to its former glory. The rebuilding was a painfully long forty-year process, but today the city’s scars have been almost completely hidden under the plastic surgery of retro-modernist architecture and corporate social engineering. Almost.

MANHATTAN, INC.

The Manhattan Development Consortium—or Manhattan, Inc., as it is sometimes known—is a private real estate investment trust with a fixed membership of thirteen shareholders. Through

MANHATTAN DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM MEMBERS (CIRCA 2071)

Ares Macrotechnology
Aztechnology
Citigroup
Horizon Corporation
NeoNET
NYPD, Incorporated
Prometheus Engineering
Renraku Computer Systems
Saeder-Krupp
Shiawase Corporation
Sony Corporation
Spinrad Industries
TransOrbital

Urgent Message...



the MDC, these thirteen shareholder corporations effectively own all the land on the island of Manhattan. They lease it out to developers of their choosing and collect part of the rent; funds which were originally intended to go fully into the redevelopment of the quake-battered city but have been going into the pockets of the member corporations for decades now.

- A Consortium member can be ousted by a unanimous vote of the other twelve, but in order for that to happen, a buyer for the outstanding shares must be already lined up before the vote. The founding edicts require that there must always be thirteen shareholders, each owning approximately 7.6923 percent of the MDC's stock.
- Mr. Bonds

The other major power in Manhattan is the Corporate Court, which maintains its terrestrial headquarters in Lower Manhattan. Probably containing the single highest density of corporate lawyers and economists on the planet, these offices also host meetings where the staffs of each Justice regularly meet with representatives from corporations interacting with the Court. Ancillary offices, administrative services, AA-delegates, and firms of lawyers and lobbyists occupy every useable building in a radius of several blocks. Zurich Orbital may be where the decisions are made, but New York is where it all comes together.

- The Corporate Court moved into the former Fuchi towers on the old World Trade Center site when the Japanacorp went under. It's fitting the way the triad of 250-story black skyscrapers looks down on the entire city.
- Haze

THE ROTTEN APPLE

Manhattan is strictly divided along class lines, a social hierarchy enforced by an invisible cage of RFID tags, SINS, and metropolitan passes. The city layers various levels of access passes onto every resident or visitor's SIN, which are read by the millions of verification sensors dotting the island. For instance, a Personal Vehicle Pass is required in order to drive a car on the island, and these passes are



Urgent Message...



"Fuck the feeds! Kill the cameras! Turn off and wake up, New York. We are Big Brother. Manhattan is a police state and we are our own jailers. Life is meant to be lived, not viewed over the feeds by an audience. Security is not staring over the shoulders of our brothers and sisters, waiting with bated breath to catch their faults and indiscretions, anxious to turn them into a public spectacle. You are all pets, pets of the corporate thieves high up in their Midtown towers. The tastemakers, the influence peddlers, the high society who make you dance on strings that they pull. Cut the strings! Bring down the surveillance network! Take back New York!"

—Neo-anarchist speech at the Post in Terminal, March, 2071

usually reserved for VIPs only. An Authorized Commuter Pass is required to use the elevated trains and automated buses that run uptown. Many upscale stores and restaurants limit entry to holders of particular passes, a social guarantee that their posh clientele won't have to rub shoulders with lesser citizens.

- If you're SINless, good luck. The only places you won't be hassled

COMPANY TOWNS

are Terminal and the Lower East Side. You can't own a car, and you can only ride the Midtown/Downtown subway system. Many doors won't open for you—literally. If you're a SINless shadowrunner, make friends with a good forger or make sure your Johnson supplies you with a fake identity.

- Fatima
- If your run calls for having a vehicle, a good way around the driving limitation is to get a forged or stolen Commercial Vehicle Pass. These are often available to companies maintaining large drones that need to use the roadways, like trucking, construction, and garbage collection corporations.
- Turbo Bunny

The ubiquitous web of surveillance is natural to Manhattan residents, many of whom clung to it early as a security blanket against the violent chaos that followed the *Quake*. Today it is embraced, and the lack of privacy is almost celebrated. Manhattan residents broadcast their lives openly over “Me-Feeds,” sharing news of their daily lives or even sensory data straight from their point of view—no doubt one of the inspirations for Horizon's P2 technology. Everyone tries for the fifteen minutes of viral fame that can make their Me-Feed a hit and have the entire city tuning in.

Midtown is where a lot of the corp types gather for recreation and socializing. The crowds are too fashionable and bizspeak for my taste, but the partying at the hot clubs like Matador and Wright's tends to be powered by quasi-legal fixes handed out by corp-sanctioned pharmacists.

Crime is low in many upscale neighborhoods in Manhattan, partially because everyone is watching their neighbors constantly through feeds and cameras, a super-localized neighborhood watch reality show. Anything that gets away is subject to the security drones that loiter high above, continuously scanning the streets.

• Security is so tight that pretty much any vehicle or equipment you use has to be expendable or hot so it won't be backtracked to you. Don't forget to tack the extra expense onto your fees.

- Glitch
- There's a strong neo-anarchist subculture in New York City. It grew out of the displaced masses shoved into Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx and spread to Terminal and the Lower East Side on Manhattan. These guys are classic neo-a's, the true old school that helped build the early shadownets. Tearing down the structures of control that the corporations have put in place in Manhattan is their favorite pastime. They can also be a runner's best friend, assuming you haven't cozied up to a corp.

- Marcos
- While organized crime stays white collar in Manhattan, a few small-time outfits eke out a living selling BTLs and gray market goods in back alleys and corners. Smuggling people and goods onto the island is highly profitable, and if you need a backdoor into corp central, look for the Rat Pack or the Janeski vor in Queens.
- Hard Exit

BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE

Manhattan may be kept safe by its absolute corporate control, but so many corporations on one small island means an endless

supply of work for shadowrunners. But just as Manhattan is cleanly divided between the haves and the have-nots, the shadows are divided also. Every shadowrunner operating in Manhattan confronts a choice: face the difficult life of a SINless freelancer in a city of constant surveillance or sell your soul to a megacorporation for easy access to the city as a company man.

• Becoming a company man may feel like selling out, but it offers a SINless runner a way out of the hard life on the streets. There aren't many other options out there.

- Mihoshi Oni
- It feels like selling out, because it is! Corporate lapdogs make me sick. They think the company will take care of them, but the corps will hang you out to dry without the least bit of hesitation. I prefer real friends.
- Black Mamba

- Then you should work on making some.
- Ma'fan

Freelance shadowrunners operate out of the few places in Manhattan where they won't be given a hard time, largely the Terminal Z-Zone around Port Authority and Penn Station and the Lower East Side in Downtown Manhattan. Cops stick to the fringes of those neighborhoods, and SIN scanners are torn down as fast as they go up by the local neo-a's. Aside from extractions that require high deniability, freelancers are more likely to get jobs spawned by internal corporate rivalry, the type of stuff that Mr. Johnson's boss can't find out about. Blackmail, self-extractions, and even wetwork are common gigs for freelancers. But because there's no corporation backing you up, you often have to steal or forge enough of a legal identity to operate in the places where the run needs to go down.

• The place to be seen if you are a freelancer is the Post, the old General Post Office near Penn Station. The steps are chock full of junkies, thieves, and couriers, and the big ol' columns are plastered with neo-anarchist creed. It's the most alive place in all of Manhattan—but don't wave a credstick around or you might get shived.

- Slamm-0!

Company men are shadowrunners who have been taken in by a patron corporation and put on retainer. They are given a steady line of credit that is adjusted as necessary when jobs come down the line, and they are supplied with a solid cover identity (or identities) built by the corporation's hackers. Despite all this, they will never appear on a company payroll and the company will never officially acknowledge their existence. Company men must also take the jobs they are given without question; only freelancers have the freedom to turn down work (if they can afford to). A team of company men usually has a regular Mr. Johnson who acts as a handler for the group, and the jobs are typically runs against competing corporations.

- Be wary if you're a company man and your jobs start looking like inside work. C-men can get pulled into dirty internal politics, and when that happens it is almost always very bad for the little guy.
- Cosmo





NAIROBI “GATEWAY TO SPACE”

Posted By: **Black Mamba**

There’s one big business in Nairobi: space. And it’s a damn profitable one, too. Like any place there’s profit to be made, you can expect the shadows to be nice and thick.

A few centuries ago, Nairobi was just a watering hole for some Maasai goats. Then it became a layover city, a place where tourists on their way to watch lions could wait for their next flight. The city’s main claim to fame was its brutally high crime rate. For runners, the best part about Nairobi was that no one much cared who you were or what crimes you’d recently committed. They’d be happy to knife you regardless of your reputation.

But that’s all changed. Since the mass driver went up on Mt. Kilimanjaro, real estate in Nairobi shot up sky high.

From the violent backwater and tourist trap to fast-track corporate boomtown in less than a decade, Nairobi is the last stop on the way to the final frontier. There’s plenty of business there, if you’re good at picking up the local rhythms. And if you aren’t ... well, there’s other work. Corporate presence has brought a lot of interests together, from insurgent tribes to spirits evicted from the sacred mountain and their supporters, to merc units and poachers; you name it, Nairobi’s got it.

Just don’t say I didn’t warn you if you end up caught in the middle of a huge clusterfuck.

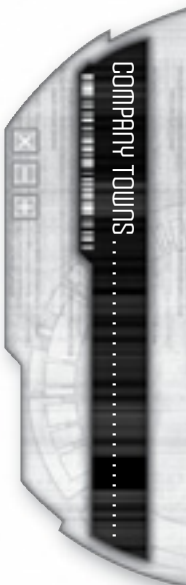
- Don’t always see eye to eye with Mamba, but that’s Nairobi down to a tee.
- Picador

Getting There

Pretty much everything—and everyone—that goes up the well comes through Nairobi first. The upgraded Nairobi International Aerospaceport can handle everything from the huge super-cargos to frequent suborbitals, and it boasts the second biggest cargo zepp park in the world. The smaller Wilson Airport juggles overflow air traffic, generally regional flights. Corps use Wilson to move cargo when customs might be too much of a hassle at NIA. If you haven’t got a corp-sponsored ticket into Wilson, a bush pilot with the right connections can set you down in one of a dozen unsanctioned landing strips outside the sprawl limits.

Otherwise you’ll have to drive. Mombassa is the nearest seaport, and there’s a spanking new highway and rail line that runs directly to Nairobi. You’ll want to watch out for the Digo tribesmen if you travel by road; they’ve got an initiation ritual for their young men that involves “catching” a moving vehicle on the highway.

- If you speak Chidigo or Kiswahili, you can hire a guide from one of the families that live in Mombassa and save yourself a lot of hassle.
- Traveler Jones



SPIRITED TROUBLE

I'm sure everyone's heard about the Corporate Court's altercation with the native spirits up on Mt. Kilimanjaro. It took months and several hundred lives to clear out enough of the spirits to build the space-shooter, and they certainly didn't get rid of all of them. What most people don't know is that the turning point in the battle for the mountain came when several powerful shamans broke from their tribes, lured by promises of corporate nuyen.

Many of the tribes around the mountain now mourn the "corruption" of their sacred ground. For now, the spirits seem to have abandoned the mountain, bringing the fight to Nairobi.

To make matters worse, with the defeat of the spirits the tribes have lost the unity that fighting to protect Mt. Kilimanjaro once gave them. They've returned to fighting amongst themselves. Some tribes, like the Luhya, have decided to actively support the corporate interests, seeing their corporate masters as a ticket out of abject poverty. Others have joined together under commands from ancestor spirits or even their god, like the Gikũyũ, Maasai, and Kamba tribes. Still others, like the Luo, seem to be following a totally different agenda, attacking both corporate interests and free spirits alike, for reasons apparent only to them.

I'll leave the ethics of the situation to people who care. My opinion? The corps are making nuyen hand over fist off the Kilimanjaro mass-driver. The spirits may have the moral high ground, but when morals and nuyen clash ... well, we all know which side comes out on top, don't we?

OUT AND ABOUT

Downtown Nairobi is kept fairly secure by the work of the joint-security forces, but the neighboring districts are targeted almost daily by pissed-off free spirits and shamans.

Nairobi is the capital of Kenya, a nation that couldn't hand over the city fast enough when the corporate moguls flashed their nuyen. Technically, there's a president and an elected National Assembly housed in Downtown Nairobi. The reality is that the government officials come to town when called, faithful hounds for their corporate masters. The corps gave the city a facelift, and it's a strange mix of urban tribal and corporate chic, with many outlying areas still looking (and feeling) like social housing.

The true heart of the city is the **Corporate Court's Nairobi Complex**, surrounded by new towers for all the Big 10. Security is provided by Corporate Court joint security forces, which means the men and women may wear different uniforms, but they all have the same heavy-handed approach to keeping downtown safe. You won't find a lot of mages in the security, but they're paranoid enough that every patrol has at least one adept specializing in spotting—and fighting—spirits. If you wander downtown, you better look like one of the wage-slaves and carry the ID to back it up. If you're Awakened, you may want to avoid the whole area. Security is so jumpy right now that the mentality is shoot first, apologize later. Consider yourselves warned.

A lot of resources have been spent trying to eradicate the "terrorist" problem, but the spirits learned their lessons on the mountain. They've started using runners to help them hit sensitive areas they can't reach, including communication and transport hubs. The recent sabotage of three high-speed freight trains cost AresSpace over 150 million nuyen. No one claimed responsibil-

ity, but there's a rumor that a Maasai lion shaman named Laibon is leading these new attacks. Ares and other corps are willing to pay damn good money to specialists who can help them with the "terrorist problem".

The Kibera slums are a haven for the insurgents, but teams sent into the shanty town rarely make it back out. Rumors are flying that Ares is looking for a more permanent solution to Kibera, but short of burning the slum down, I'm not sure what that would be.

- Laibon is actually a traditional Maasai title for an elder shaman. Good luck to the suckers who try to track that one down.
- Elijah
- If you've been a spirit hunter in the past, be aware that you'll be on the top of every spirit's shit-list in Nairobi. Consider this a warning.
- Axis Mundi
- No one should be surprised when the slave turns on the master.
- Man-of-Many-Names

If you're sightseeing, watch out for the **River Road** area—the entire strip is a heavy spam zone. Touristy shops and overpriced restaurants line the road. It's also a popular spot for rail crews—as the mass driver techs are known—to hang out on downtime where they can safely sample some local "culture" at the open air markets, buying fake ivory and bad Cape Town afroflash knockoffs from women wearing kitenge, the colorful fabric that can be worn as a sarong, headscarf or even skirt. Bootlegging and software piracy also have their niche if you know where to look. Discreetly ask around for Rud, Marriott or Mugembe—all are reliable fixers with good contacts all over the region.

The Thuku bar and club is a popular place to meet corporate Johnsons. The place is painted an ugly yellow, the bands play the worst Benga music in the city, and I wouldn't recommend actually eating anything there, but it's a good place to pick up corporate work.

- If you're interested in a great meal, try the Carnivore on Langata Rd. The place serves all sorts of unusual meats, such as crocodile, zebra, and hartebeest. If you have the right connections—and enough nuyen—the chef will prepare even more exotic fare. Personally, I recommend the honey-glazed eland. And if you sit by the front windows, you can watch the protestors clash with the high-rollers' security teams. Dinner and a show, all for one price.
- Traveler Jones

OUTSKIRTS AND BEYOND

Kibera, to the east, is one of the largest, nastiest slums in Africa. A heavily secured triple fence keeps it from contaminating the city proper, keeping the mostly SINless population away from the shiny streets and corporate citizens. Densely packed shanties and non-existent roads make the place a nightmare for corporate security teams. That, combined with the lack of wireless coverage, make it a great place to disappear for a while—just take care you don't disappear permanently. There's a small market near the center (don't bother asking for directions—you can either find it or you can't) where a Gikũyũ fixer by the name of Nguru hangs out.



He's a really creepy old man who wanders around the market wearing only a tattered green kitenge skirt, but he's rolling in nuyen if you're willing to do his work.

In Kibera, word is that the Gikûyû tribes have finally allied with the Maasai and the Kamba under the direction of Ngai, their god, to take the fight to the corp overlords. God or not, based on the jobs and the nuyen, I'd guess the old man's got backing from some of the anti-corp groups out there.

- Man might not be the right word.
- Axis Mundi
- Way I hear it, the Kamba aren't really buying whatever Ngai is selling. They're playing along, but the tribal chiefs are firmly in the corporation's pockets like the Luhya.
- Picador
- That's as it may be, but there's a growing grassroots movement reuniting the tribes in urban areas.
- Black Mamba
- Home sweet home, eh, Mamba?
- Ma'fan
- Why don't you come visit and see? I'm sure your pretty face would really brighten things up—for the nanosecond you survived.
- Black Mamba

To the north and west are expansive corporate estates, along with the nicer neighborhoods that attract middle managers and better paid wageslaves. **Uplands** is popular with the Japanacorp employees and is full of high-rise apartment buildings and fully sterile indoor parks. **Westlands** is a predominately Ares and NeoNET suburb, with manicured lawns, lush greenery and well-patrolled neighborhoods. Many of the estates feel like miniature wildlife sanctuaries, with giraffes and zebras walking around like overgrown pets. The thriving forests that edge these estates are full of high-tech sensors and well-trained security personnel, but false alarms are common with all the native wildlife drawn to the area.

- Troops of Awakened Vervet monkeys have established themselves in Westlands. The little buggers take great joy in triggering alarms and watching security scramble around. They also seem to be able to tell when there is astral activity nearby and will scream a warning. Damn pests.
- Picador

Southern Nairobi is an area of sprawling industrial complexes and warehouses. Corps in this area provide their own security, unlike Downtown, but pretty much every place is struggling with magical security for the time being.

Industrial sabotage and data thefts provide a hopping business for both local and out-of-town runners. If you're looking to pick up a job and are new in town, visit the Hillock Club. It's popular with several of the local fixers and they're always looking to refresh their talent pool. Of course, the fact that they constantly need to take on new runners should tell you something about the working conditions there.



TENOCHTITLÁN

Posted By: Marcos

When Hernán Cortés put old Tenochtitlán to the sword in 1521, he never imagined that the Aztec Empire would return with a vengeance one day. From the ashes of a Mexico City savaged by anarchy and VITAS, Tenochtitlán was reborn in blood to all its past glory and power. Today it is the capital of Aztlan and the shining headquarters of Aztechnology's global empire—the heart of darkness.

What you are about to read is just an appetizer, not the main course. I had a friend who didn't do his own legwork before trying his luck in Tenochtitlán. Last time I saw him, he was about to be sacrificed atop the temple of the Tezcatlipoca Templo Mayor—primetime bread and circus for the masses. Remember that and do your homework.

- Shadowland's compilations are still a valuable source of information, even if somewhat outdated: *Aztlan* gives you the nuts and bolts of the country, while the elusive *Shadows of Latin America* compilation paints a broader picture of the region (and no, it ain't a nice picture).
- Fastjack



First Things First

Nineteen million wageslaves can't be wrong: bring a fucking breather. Tenochtitlán's air pollution and high altitude are a murderous combo, especially if it's your first visit and you've never experienced *El Humo* (The Smoke). Predictably, fashioncorps have turned a necessary inconvenience into a fashionable accessory, with the trendiest designer breathers reaching insane prices. Keep that in mind when socializing with the locals—they're judging you based on the appearance of equipment you may think of as simply utilitarian.

The air isn't the only that's tainted here either. A Catholic priest I once met swears by the Virgin of Guadalupe that the city's astral space is even worse. For what it's worth, my cousin and comrade Benito agrees with the man—and they *never* agree on anything. Magicians beware.

- The Azzies put out a lot of PR noise about hybrid trees they've developed to combat The Smoke, plants that are remarkably similar to prototypes that Genesis "misplaced." These days the *autoroute* leading to the Juan Azcapotzalco Aerospaceport is flanked by them.
- The Smiling Bandit
- As if a few hundred trees are going to save this city from itself.
- Marcos

LIFE UNDER THE AZTEC SUN

Four decades into the Aztec Revival and Aztechnology is still actively pimping the old ways, making them not only new but downright trendy and even patriotic. The Big A pulls out all the stops when it comes to inflating the Revival as a source of national pride and cultural unity movement—any PR the national megacorp gets by association is a bonus. The people on the streets lap it up.

The bywords for Azzie style are "recombocultural trends" that play off the Aztec heritage: pseudo-Zapotec prints, Pueblo Yaya music, Nuevoaztec architecture, court ball stars cum media darlings. Hell, they've even invented a pidgin language that's all the rage: *Nuevo Nahuatl*—or as we like to call it *Espanáhuatl*—a bastardized hybrid of modern Spanish and ancient Nahuatl.

- For something this popular, Nahuatl linguasofts are hard to come by. Aztech is keeping a lid on them and making a big thing of Aztlaners making the effort to pick up the lingo as a patriotic statement, a tribute to the nation's true cultural heritage. Heh!
- Dr. Spin

Gran Hermano is Watching You

Aztechnology's dominion over Tenochtitlán is undisputable. Sure, there's a city council to keep the charade of civic oversight, but all government services are run by the corporation: security, communications, health and welfare ... even DocWagon's local franchise, MediCarro, belongs to the Big A. Think about that next time you need medical assistance.

Outside the *Zócalo*, Tenochtitlán's personal weapon laws are relatively lenient. Pissing off the *Policía* can be a short-lived mistake, though. Aztechnology Corporate Security provides backup and packs enough heat to make UCAS Marines whimper—by law, any collateral casualties these trigger-happy jerks inflict are *your* fault.

- Some good news is that most gangs and neotribes have a machismo thing going. Bladed weapons are the weapon of choice, and they will only escalate if you do.

- Hard Exit

- The corporation also controls the city's (legal) drug trade, selling all kinds of chemical delicacies in its boutiques. Quality is mind-blowing so long as you don't mind the extra "happiness inducers" added by the corp.

- Glasswalker

Keep in mind that while Aztechnology has a certain reputation in the shadows, the Aztlaner masses are oblivious to this. Even non-affiliated Juan has a certain pride in the corp that's showing the world Aztlan is a true world power.

There are—count 'em—sixty thousand priests in Tenochtitlán alone, handling everything from education indoctrination and marriage counseling to social rehab and ritual sacrifices at the major *teocallis*. There's even an automated e-prayer service run by Aztechnology so you can tell the corp every dirty little secret you wanted to share with the gods. Children start using it as soon as they enter school under the caring guidance of a priest. The oligarchs' spin machine is extremely effective at hiding and manipulating the truth with religious indoctrination and media

POLITICAL PARTIES IN AZTLAN

Azatlán Party: Aztechnology's yes-men have been in power for more than half a century, and it doesn't look like things are going to change in the near future—not while the Azzies run the online electoral system, at least. Far from being a well-oiled political machine, though, petty rivalries and corruption are the norm within the party. Jobs aplenty, if you don't mind getting dirty.

Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN): The largest opposition party keeps close ties with the banned Catholic Church, and in return gets far more than spiritual support. If you need to contact the Catholic Underground, these are the guys you talk to.

Frente Democrática Nacional (FDN): The closest thing the country has to a leftist party, the FDN is a haven for activists and *mestizos* who want to make a difference in Tenochtitlán. They never last more than a few weeks before disappearing.

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI): The party is little more than a useful façade for corporate espionage, having completely whored itself to foreign multinationals. These keep a nominal presence in Aztlan and do their real business through the PRI.

Urgent Message...

propaganda—no need for New York’s high-tech surveillance when people willingly do the dirty work for them.

- The Azzies never cease to amaze me. Children trained to rat on their own families as show of faith—how insane is that?
- Jimmy No
- Remind me again, how is that different from other megas?
- Aufheben

URBAN RENEWAL

For the past ten years, the Aztech has injected countless billions of pesos in the **Ciudad Satélite** urban renewal project, with the purported goal of recreating the long-lost glory of ancient Tenochtitlán—save for a few obligatory Colonial-era tourist traps and the sports stadiums, of course. I have to admit at first sight they’ve done a damn good job, particularly in the outlying districts (like Iztacalpa and Cuauhtemoc.)

But after the umpteenth glyph-bedecked, terraced-step pyramid, the novelty wears off and you realize that a *castillo* is still a *castillo*. What is a *castillo*, you ask? It means “castle,” and it’s also slang for corporate condoplexes in Azzieville. For the wage slaves it means secure communal dormitories and apartments, shared in-house services and crowded cantinas, authorized media feeds only (courtesy of a Televisa-Sol Media partnership), etc. All accessed through fingerprint ID or RFIDs, so only a loyal, law-abiding corporate citizen can get things done.

Depressing and soul-sucking as that is, the non-corporate—and much poorer—workers of Tenochtitlán have it far, far worse. As the Ciudad Satélite goes up, down comes social housing and traditional lower class neighborhoods. Look under the raised highways that crisscross the city and you’ll see what I mean: row after row of ramshackle huts, built with discarded materials.

- The government claims that there is less poverty in Tenochtitlán now than five years ago, but that’s because they’re shipping hordes of disposed to repopulate the pacified Yucatan border.
- Fianchetto

Heart Land

The richest folks live in luxury *castillos* near the **Distrito Federal** and the central **Zócalo** district.

The Zócalo is the heart of the city, both the seat of national government and where Aztechnology has its global headquarters, and you can practically *breath* the Aztechnology way of life (that is, if *El Humo* doesn’t eat your lungs first). Pretty much every government ministry, national corp, and subsidiary has offices somewhere here. I have to admit the Azzie *cabrons* outdid themselves with the AR here too. Rivera-inspired murals, pseudo-Aztech iconography and ARO figures of the Azzie gods watch over the *teocalli* (temples).

The Zócalo square fills up every morning as diligent corp drones stop on their way to work to perform mass prayers to greet the sun before the Temples of Quetzalcóatl and Tezatlípoca—complete with the symbolic blood offering.

As you can imagine, security around the Zócalo is tight, but that shouldn’t keep you away. Special permits are required for cars

and vehicles during weekdays, though a vast Metro network and moving sidewalks make moving around the heart of Tenochtitlán a breeze. If you look the look and talk the talk, this is where you’ll get the best-paying jobs in Tenochtitlán. Office backstabbing and intra-divisional feuds are the norm, but there are certain jobs that will keep you awake at night for months. Trust me.

BLOOD MATTERS

In Tenochtitlán, metatype takes a backseat to blood. Period. The city is dominated by *peninsulares* stinking rich bastards that proudly trace their lineage back to the Iberian conquistadores. They want nothing to do with hard-working *mestizos* like me, who make up most of the population. Mesoamerican natives living on subsistence farming on the outskirts are at the bottom of the social pyramid. No one, and I mean *no one*, gives a shit about them these days. They don’t give a shit about us either, so we’ll call it even.

If you think navigating mainstream Azzie culture is complicated, you should get to know some of the strangeness on the fringes of Tenochtitlán society: illegal Catholic cults, Marxist guerrilla collectives, underground anti-establishment groups—many discreetly monitored and infiltrated.

- Don’t forget the hardcore Mexicans who refuse to identify themselves as Aztlaners. Or the Colombian nationalist cells, or ... well, you get the idea.
- Traveler Jones

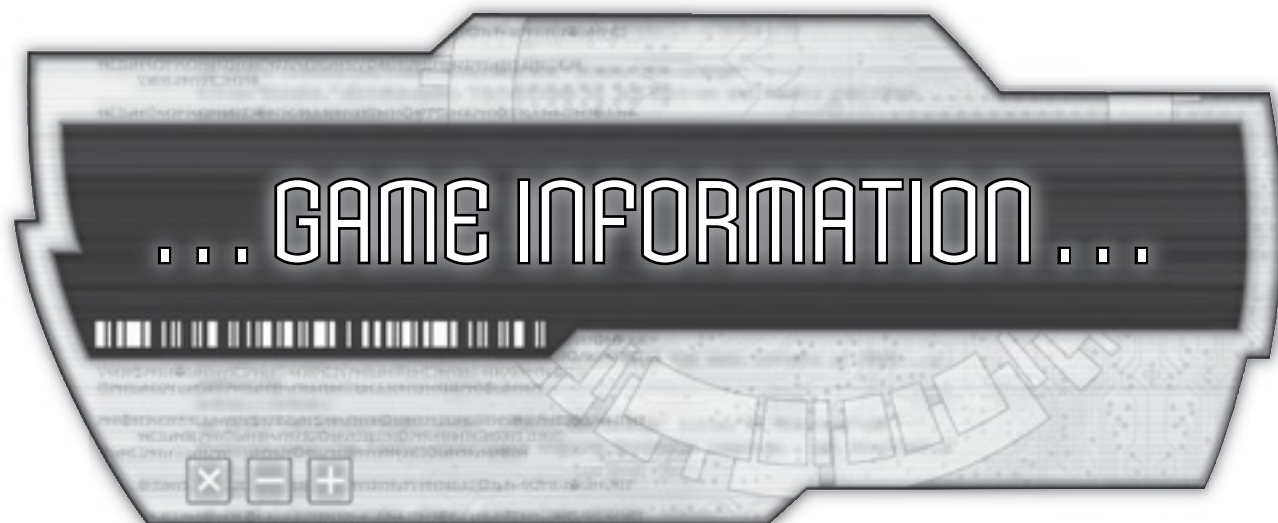
There are only two things that can unite everyone, if only for a brief time: football (that’s soccer for you gringos) and Aztec court ball. Both sports enjoy massive following everywhere, and no one works when there’s a big match, not even in the shadows.

- Do they still sacrifice the winning captain in court ball?
- Snopes
- Officially? Absolutely not: Aztlan is a modern, civilized nation. Unofficially? They all die in messy accidents within a year of their victory.
- Elijah

The locals have a long, distinguished history of disliking gringos (hello Texas!), which has only grown with the nationalistic Aztec Revival, and the shadows are not immune to this. Sure, there’s an expat community doing biz just like Seattle or Neo-Tokyo, but the local talent barely deals with them. The latter do business through completely different channels, and that’s how they like it—they don’t need any dirty immigrants stealing their jobs.

- Contrary to what Marcos believes, you *can* earn the locals’ trust. It’s not easy, though, and most expats don’t make a real effort to begin with.
- Sunshine
- Bottom line: Learn who you need to deal with, and stick to them.
- Haze





In the last vestiges of twilight, two figures broke and ran from the cover of the mosque, sprinting across the street to lose themselves in the welcoming alleyways, racing down the shadowed streets, fleeing the sun and the Dubai Police. Goat Foot had no reason to think she'd tripped an alarm, but it was better to put some distance between themselves and the scene anyway.

They didn't stop to catch their breath until dawn began to break. Stopped in a cul-de-sac, drenched in sweat and trembling, Goat Foot gulped arid air that scraped her throat. Pharisee stumbled over against a wall, retching until her stomach was empty. Then the *adhan* began, calling the faithful from their beds to prayer; the distant noise of the *muezzin* broadcast throughout the city across all public channels.

The women waited with bated breath until a sudden explosion from the direction of the mosque silenced the signal just the *iqama* began. In moments, the automatic back-ups came on line and the calls finished. Goat Foot knelt and prayed; Pharisee reached up to hold the blue amulet shaped like a hand that dangled from her neck. Mission accomplished, time to get paid. The technomancer closed her eyes as she dove into the Matrix.

"The thing is done." Pharisee messaged the fixer.

"Indeed," Balaam replied. "I have already credited your account. News of the loss of the Apep Consortium's regional manager in the unfortunate terrorist action has already caused their stock price to slip three percent on the Neo-Tokyo exchange. You are an excellent tool, little Isisite."

The technomancer bristled. "You knew?"

"That you are a member of the Cult of Isis? Of course. I would never have hired you otherwise."

Pharisee's icon made a particular hand gesture. Balaam snorted.

"No, I am not affiliated with your group." At her silence, Balaam continued "Has it never occurred to you, little Isisite, that the Apep Consortium only allows your cult to persist because its masters find it useful? For the past three months, Global Sandstorm has been quietly purchasing Apep Consortium promissory notes and corporate bonds, part of a plan to deplete the corporation's liquid assets in preparation for a takeover. Your very public terrorist attack, however, means that the regional manager's shares will revert back to the consortium, and the drop in stock price will allow them to purchase enough shares to block the Caliphate's pet corporation from achieving majority ownership."

"And of course" Pharisee finished for him "since the Apep Consortium is very publicly opposed by the Cult of Isis, no one would guess that they set up the hit on their own."

Balaam's icon simply smiled and logged off. Pharisee opened her eyes and saw Goat Foot waiting there, her prayers ended.

"How'd it go?"

"About as we figured. He didn't mention the insurance policy on the target, which means he doesn't know we switched the beneficiary to the Islamic University of Cordosa-Dubai. At least," she smiled, "not yet."



LIVING THE COMPANY LIFE

A corporate enclave is a sprawl dominated in all meaningful ways by megacorporations, or in some cases by a single megacorporation. The laws, institutions, population, and resources of the city are essentially there for the benefit of the corporations; they provide an infrastructure that allows the corporate powers to drive their agendas and keep their citizenry happy and productive. Given the megacorporate presence and investment, such sprawls inevitably become regional or international economic and financial hubs, drawing attention not only from other corporations but also from various political, criminal, and social actors—though, with a few notable exceptions, these never wield the influence and clout they do elsewhere. Such sprawls often also nurture smaller enterprises and second-tier companies that contribute to form an intricate web of alliances, competition, and enmity.

Corporate Enclaves explores a series of such sprawls, each one a bastion of corporate culture, capital, and control manifesting its own unique atmosphere and peculiarities. Whether it's Neo-Tokyo with its intercorporate machinations and constant flare-ups or Tecnochtitlán with its stable, despotic Aztechnology overlords, each, in its own way, is a case study of corporate lifestyle and ideals. Gamemasters should feel free to use the sprawls presented in this book as they stand or adapt them to better fit with their campaign styles; alternately groups may want to explore another corp enclave using other *Shadowrun* source material as basis for developing a future city of their own. Whether your choice of setting is a decadent, polluted industrial megalopolis or a Data Age service economy megaplex, the following sections are designed to help out by outlining some basic aspects and elements that most corporate domains share.

ECONOMIC NEO-FEUDALISM

Corporate enclaves range from single-corp company towns such as Ares' Detroit or Saeder-Krupps' Essen to thriving sprawls such as Seoul and Mumbai-Bangalore-Chennai Axis where influence and power are divided among dozens of corporations of all sizes. The defining factor is power; in other sprawls, power is divided among a number of blocs—government, corporate, criminal, and more—but the tell-tale sign of a corporate enclave is that power is held by a single block: the corporate sphere, be it one corp or many.

An ever-shifting balance of jurisdictions, compromises, and staked-out territories on all levels defines the status quo—much like the intricate web of power, wealth, and influence of Middle Ages feudalism. This form of economic neo-feudalism also means that there is constant jockeying and maneuvering among corporations for a larger piece of the pie. Unlike other sprawls where plays for dominance can be public and even violent, enclaves where many corporations co-exist and share power place a high priority on maintaining the outward appearance of security, stability, and organization. While competition and rivalry are not only expected but fostered, the emphasis on maintaining a prosperous social and economic environment means such disruptive and public clashes are frowned upon and pushed to the background—they are no less dirty and deadly than elsewhere, just more discreet—and collateral damage is discouraged.

With so many powerful players concentrated in one place and so much of a company's interests riding on its executives' performance, peer pressure, internal feuds, and clashes are almost as regular as conflicts between different corporations—making corporate enclaves the preferred territory for ambitious corporate sharks and ladder-climbers.

The typical corporate citizen is generally oblivious to how deep the tensions actually run, and that's how those in power want it.

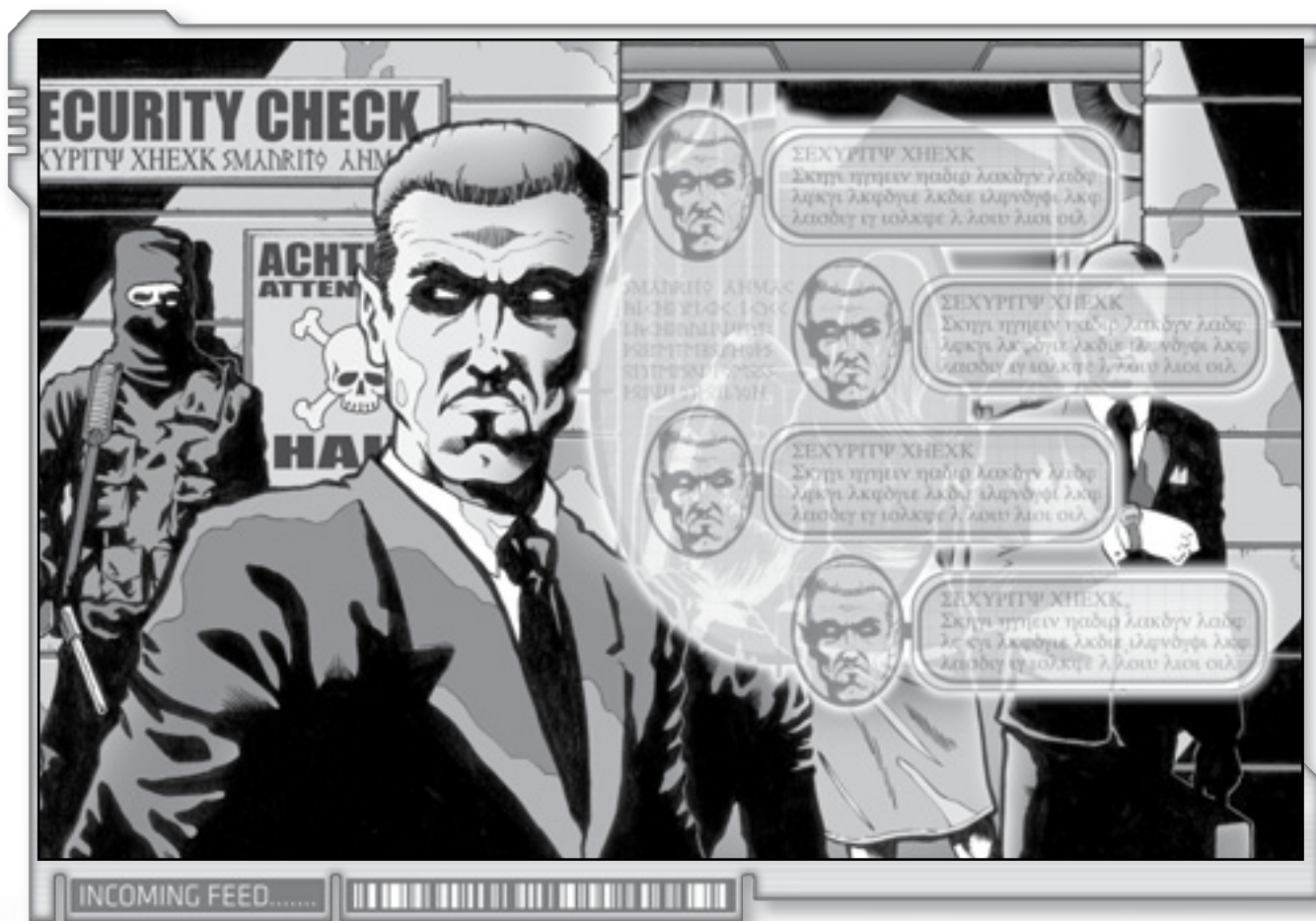
CORPORATE CULTURE

Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of living and operating in a corporate enclave is the omnipresence of corporate culture in all its forms. This includes the prevalence of corporate imagery and propaganda—the media is saturated with advertising and publicity, corporate brands and logos are omnipresent and even considered fashionable, and wireless networking and Matrix-based services are everywhere (to the point that remaining off the grid immediately marks an individual as an outsider). Corporate malls, chain stores, subsidiaries, and services marginalize smaller commercial enterprises and dominate the main streets. Despite the competition between brands, the overall market is less diverse and (with few exceptions) tailored to the “average consumer”—the corporate sarariman.

Everyday life is molded by the twin corporate mores of consumerism and capitalism. The rat race and corp hierarchies replace traditional social classes and classism. In this regard, the media is undoubtedly the most powerful tool at the corporations' disposal. More so than in other sprawls, media in all its forms is ubiquitous and content is designed to further corporate agendas and ideals. For instance, the Los Angeles chapter showcases the pervasive influence corp culture (in this case Horizon's) can have on the population.

This level of corporate dominance impacts mentalities and the way individuals look upon their corporate overlords. In most corp enclaves, a significant portion of the population is employed and loyal to one megacorp or another. In these corporate domains, individuals are expected to toe the party line, to be productive and active members of society, to be upholding citizens, and to perform their civic and corporate duties.

While it's unsurprising that corporate citizenry is expected to abide by corporate doctrine while being actively indoctrinated in those ideals and goals through the corp-owned media, in corporate enclaves this policy extends to the hearts and minds of the general populace. In Neo-Tokyo, the Japanese corporate culture that is often so restricting, impersonal, and overly formal to Westerners is the norm for society at large. There is little (if any) distinction between the public and corporate culture—the two are so meshed that individuals are hard-pressed to distinguish a corporate creation from a genuine independent concept, trend, or product. In Tenochtitlan Aztechnology is omnipresent, and the corp and Aztlan's own national identity are profoundly entwined. Fueling this is the fact that Aztech, its subsidiaries, or subsidiaries' subsidiaries run almost all city services (electricity, Matrix, water, gas, police, trideo, etc.) that they care to. They also own extensive assets throughout the city, and city government might as well be a department of the corporation. It's no wonder that so many locals see it as their duty to aid and abet Aztech's agents with information and assistance when possible.



Gamemasters interested in underlining this feature of corporate enclaves may choose to explore any one of the following options:

- Underscore the pervasiveness of corporate culture by regularly name-dropping corporate franchises, sponsorships, brands, and imagery while describing locations.
- Illustrate the importance of wireless social networking and communications within corp enclaves by making it ubiquitous and making mandatory “open commlink” areas much more common.
- Showcase the difference in attitudes and public reactions when it comes to supporting law enforcement (often corporate) and keeping the peace.
- Undercover operations and stings might require characters to wear the shoes of wage slaves for a while and get a feel for how the other side lives and thinks.

PANOPTICON SOCIETY

Corporations value productivity and efficiency first and foremost. Safety and stability are the bywords in the environments they control, so that workforces, from proles to high-flying executives, remain focused, productive, and able to enjoy the fruits of their labors without worrying about the darker elements of 21st century society. Consequently, another factor that distinguishes corporate dominions from other sprawls is the increased (if unobtrusive) level of security and mass surveillance.

Obviously, the amount and diversity of data that can be compiled on individuals through the same means used to keep them “safe” is not lost on the powers-that-be.

Though the degree to which a vast arsenal of surveillance technologies are employed to protect dwellers and visitors varies considerably from city to city, generally speaking corp enclaves are more secure and law enforcement is more watchful and efficient than in other locales. Corp security and police services have a variety of surveillance and intelligence-gathering resources as well as the support of a pliable and loyal population.

Whereas in Seattle or Hamburg the average man on the street will only grudgingly (if that) assist private security forces or privatized law-enforcement, the residents of corp enclaves like Tecnochtítlan, Neo-Tokyo, or Dubai (and most corporate citizens) are brought up to believe this is part of their civic duty.

Performing shadowruns and other illegal activities in such a “panopticon society” poses a unique set of challenges to characters and gamemasters alike. The skills of competent hackers and technomancers are essential to maintain cover and deniability. The following are some elements gamemasters should keep in mind while developing this aspect of their own corp enclaves:

- In many central areas active “open” commlinks are the default. Operating a commlink in hidden mode is seen as bad manners at best, suspicious at worse.
- Downtown and most major arteries of corp enclaves have reliable camera surveillance and possibly drone coverage. Corporate

- security can and will coordinate passive surveillance with active pursuit to backtrack intruders to safe houses or staging points.
- More than in other sprawls, behavior and fashion is normalized to mainstream corporate styles and tropes, and non-conformists stand out far more easily.
- Commlinks running “alias personas” (false IDs) are a common means of hiding in plain sight.
- Though security is unobtrusive, security checks in and around high-traffic areas and on jurisdiction limits are more common and treated as standard protocol.
- The SINless in general, and shadowrunners in particular, have particular difficulties surviving in Data Age societies that promote personal information awareness, networking, and constant Matrix interaction.

POLITICS AS USUAL

In other parts of the world, economic and political power enjoy an often promiscuous relationship, but in corp enclaves the two are completely incestuous and inseparable. Though criminal elements and other forces have some influence on politics, this is but a shadow of the power resident corporations wield over the political apparatus. Control of the political institutions ensures that corporate activities remain unfettered by legal and financial restraints imposed by government, thereby maintaining the privileged status companies enjoy.

The local political sphere is largely in the hands of the megacorps that effectively govern the sprawl and run its privatized utilities, services, and systems. Any democratic façade is maintained simply to maintain protocol, to ward off fears of totalitarianism, and to ensure deniability.

In cases where the corp enclave happens to also be a focal point for national political institutions—such as Neo-Tokyo and Tenochtitlán—the influence of the corporate block is manifest in lobby groups, political party financing, political infiltration and subversion, and a number of other methods of political and social engineering at which megacorporations. In some countries, this state of affairs ensures that the corporations holding sway over government have been able to implement protectionist policies over the market, thereby limiting external competition and reinforcing hierarchies of power within the local corporate sphere. When markets are attractive enough, such policies result in tension and friction between megacorporations who want a piece of the local pie and those who want to keep it for themselves. The political class, particularly legislative branches of government, is often the target of influence-peddling and strong-arm tactics from all sides.

Some political elements gamemasters should keep in mind when developing their own corp enclaves include:

- The effects on the urban and cultural landscape of corporate dominance over local politics and the economy (i.e., walled-off worker ‘burbs, closed-environment arcologies, housing projects to segregate the indigent, etc).
- The combined effects of unfettered corporate rivalry and competition to control key political figures in the establishment.
- Overt and covert corporate machinations to ensure favorable legislation and regulation as well as to claim-stake profitable city services and utilities as a result of wide-scale privatization.
- Potential conflicts between otherwise cooperating corps when issues of jurisdiction and territory infringement arise.

- The overall social impact of dominant corp-think regarding important issues such as racial and ethnic prejudice, classism, counterculture, and radical ideologies (i.e., metacism and prejudice against foreigners from many Neo-Tokyo residents).

NECESSARY EVILS

Crime, organized and not, is as integral to the fabric of life in a corp enclave as anywhere else in the Sixth World. Where there is underhanded profit to be made and potential vices to exploit, there will always be a place for criminals, and even prosperous corp enclaves have their Barrens, rundown blue-collar ‘hoods, and red-light districts to harbor the interests of syndicates, gangs, and small-time crooks. In fact the megacorporations of the world have long recognized the need for the type of services criminal operators provide, and they turn a blind eye to certain criminal activities as long as they don’t affect the bottom line or disturb the status quo.

Several factors distinguish how these criminal elements operate in a corp enclave when compared to other sprawls. White- and blue-collar crimes are much more dominant than elsewhere—money laundering, illegal gambling, computer crime, loan-sharking, etc. Violent crime and bloodshed is usually frowned on since it brings unwanted attention from the authorities—unless, of course, it is sanctioned by those authorities in some way.

The criminal underworld and the dominant syndicates are also typically tightly knit and quite hierarchical, their operations and support networks working discreetly and efficiently—sometimes going so far as to blackmail or strong-arm corporate personnel or managers to discreetly subvert corporate assets for criminal purposes. In this regard big, established crime syndicates like the Yakuza, the Mafia, Vory v Zakone, and the Triads have an edge over smaller players. They not only have bigger bankrolls and are better connected, but they also find it easier to interact with corporate agents and officials who see them as more respectable businessmen than the representatives of small-time syndicates and gangs. The tightly organized underworld offers less options than one finds in cities where different factions compete openly and hold more sway over the powers-that-be.

Another peculiar aspect is the fact that many syndicates choose to erect a corporate façade over many of their legitimate activities, going so far as to create or buy up corporations and companies to do so. This legal veneer often conveniently provides a logistical umbrella for smuggling, black-marketeering, and counterfeiting operations. For instance in New York, where the Manhattan Development Consortium has near-oppressive control of Manhattan, even the criminal syndicates have become incorporated companies in order to persist.

Despite the restriction on open violence and asset destruction, deniable assets and mercenaries see no less demand in Neo-Tokyo, Los Angeles, and Dubai than they do in Seattle or Hong-Kong—the rules may be different, but the game is ultimately much the same. A gamemaster developing a prospective locale should carefully consider the presence of major syndicates and the exact form their operations take, including the following elements:

- Bigger syndicates assuming the façade of a smaller corporation to circumvent more restrictive regulations and gain some legitimacy when interacting with powerful corporations (i.e., Yakuza gumi possess offices in some wards of Neo-Tokyo).

- The incestuous and quasi-formal protocols established to allow the peaceful and profitable co-existence of major syndicates, police forces, and corporations.
- The focus of many criminal enterprises on non-violent white-collar or blue-collar crime such as money laundering, loan-sharking, gambling, prostitution, and distribution of controlled substances (which typically include BTLs and drugs but could also mean something like alcohol in the Caliphate).
- The survival measures taken by gangs, small crime syndicates, ethnic mafias, and independent operators in the shadows of corporate goliaths and much more efficient law enforcement.
- The form and logistics of any gray or black markets operations (particularly those involving the controlled technologies and arms that deniable assets need).

LA ADVENTURES

The following section features two adventure frameworks and a handful of adventure seeds that utilize the material in the Los Angeles chapter of this book. All are intended to be adaptable to most playing styles and easily plugged into an ongoing campaign.

QUIS CUSTODIET IPSOS CUSTODES?

Alexi Summer, a popular simstar, has been receiving disturbing death threats from an obsessed stalker. Her security chief suspects the threats are related to Alexi's upcoming project, a highly controversial trid that casts her as a beautiful technomancer on the run. Although the security chief has counseled Alexi to stay secluded at her Beverly Hills estate until the stalker is caught, she insists on living her life without interruption. Exasperated, the security chief hires the runners to provide beefed-up security for a press conference being held the next day. Unknown to the security chief, the death threats are part of a plan by the star and her PR agent to create buzz about her upcoming media project. The highlight of this propaganda project will be a mock kidnapping at the end of the press conference.

Setup

The runners first have to deal with the paparazzi and normal day-to-day concerns of providing physical security for a VIP while trying to get to the bottom of what's going on. The security chief is quite clear in his instructions to the runners when it comes to their appearance, manners, and etiquette, but he allows them to judge the best way to protect Ms. Summer as long as they don't interfere with her daily routine. The security chief explains that after the press conference, Ms. Summer will be flying to the secluded filming location, and so the runners will only be needed for the next 24 hours.

Event 1

Things go quietly at first. Alexi spends her day shopping at some high-priced shops, lunches with several other simstars at Tedescu's (an extremely popular restaurant), then spends her evening club-hopping at a couple of the local hotspots. Everywhere she goes, the media follows, and the runners find themselves on multiple newsmagazines and celebrity gossip blogs as the media goes wild speculating on the deadly stalker. The first day passes without incident though, unless the runners mistake some of the ever-present paparazzi as threats, in which case the media becomes

even more infatuated. The next day, shortly before the morning's press conference, the runners are approached by the PR agent who explains the plan to stage a fake kidnapping on his client. The PR agent insists on providing the team with more photogenic weapons and assures them that the "kidnappers" will only be firing blanks. The kidnappers will arrive as Alexi is escorted to her Horizon-provided helicopter and attempt to grab her. The runners' job will be to fire upon the kidnappers, making as much noise as possible, and to make it all look real. The kidnappers will then retreat, and Alexi will be swept away by the Horizon chopper. Smooth as silk, no problem.

Event 2

As the press conference is winding down, the scene is set. As the runners move outside towards the waiting helicopter, however, a group of masked men enters from the back, surprising the PR agent, the security chief, and the runners alike. The runners should quickly realize that while their guns are firing blanks, the kidnappers' guns are not. Apparently, the opposing runners hired for the kidnapping received a better offer, and the kidnapping has become real. And since they've had all the previous day to watch Alexi's new bodyguards (thanks to the constant media coverage), the kidnappers have made sure they'll have superior numbers and arms. The kidnappers take Alexi and disappear, keeping the runners pinned down under fire as they retreat. The media is in an uproar, and suddenly all of LA is tuning in to the drama—with the runners as the stars.

Event 3

How will the runners deal with the press and publicity that follow them around as they try to set things right and rescue their employer? If the runners question the PR agent away from any cameras or media drones, he admits to hiring the opposing team at Ferdinand's, a bar in San Fernando Valley. If the runners go there and offer a sufficient bribe, the bar's owner, Ferdie, identifies the kidnappers' photos. Ferdie heard that one of the runners is dating an Anazasi lieutenant, a tough woman named Taaho. More research does not uncover any significant revelations, but the runners can track Taaho to a local Anasazi hangout where she's watching the breaking news with several other gangers. Since she's watching the news, she knows the runners have tracked her down, and she and the other three gangers put up a fight. If the runners can subdue the gangers, Taaho tells them about meeting her boyfriend at an abandoned ranch out in the hills. If the gangers are all killed, the runners can find the ranch's address on Taaho's commlink.

Climax

The kidnappers are holed up in a half-collapsed old barn, waiting anxiously for their Johnson to pick up the hysterical simstar, who they've left tied and gagged in the hayloft of an old barn. To prevent tracking, they've turned off their commlinks, so the runners should be able to surprise them as long as they arrive before nightfall. The kidnappers are well armed and put up a good fight if cornered. However, the barn is full of dry hay and broken wood and surrounded by tinder-dry scrub-brush, and sparks from a gunfight or grenades can quickly set the place ablaze. If that happens, the kidnappers flee, leaving Alexi alone in the burning

barn. The runners can attempt to locate her through the flames and smoke, but the building quickly becomes engulfed in flames. Camera drones are everywhere the whole time, filming the action from all angles (tech-savvy runners can attempt to hack one or more drones filming inside the barn for a tactical advantage).

Sequels

Runners who fail to arrive before nightfall (when the Johnson was scheduled to pick up the simstar) have their names drug through the mud and quickly find all their jobs drying up, especially when Alexi appears later that summer in a highly successful Aztechnology-produced film. If Alexi dies in the fire, Hollywood immortalizes her, and films of the runners' heroic but vain rescue attempt are broadcast around the world, leading to some problems if the runners are wanted by any authorities. If the rescue is successful, the runners quickly find themselves portrayed by the media as heroes and find themselves with several new, high level contacts in the media world. They should enjoy their 15 seconds of fame.

LITTLE LOST SHEEP

A field trip gone wrong results in the runners being brought in by UCLA to find students lost in gang territory. Things take a turn for the worse when it turns out that one of the students is on the loose with a big secret—a secret that Horizon will take extreme measures to keep covered up.

Setup

The runners are contacted by their fixer with an urgent job that must be done under the radar. A busload of UCLA students has gone missing, and the dean wants them found before the media gets hold of the news. The Riverside Medical College students were returning from a practical midterm at a Pomona medical clinic, where UCLA provides free medical care to refugees. However, it appears that one bus, instead of returning to Riverside, followed the 10 into San Bernardino and disappeared from the gridlink system. Complicating the matter, all students were required to hand their commlinks over to the exam proctor, who still has the 'links in Riverside. The dean is frantic that the missing students be found and returned safely to the Riverside campus before anyone else realizes they're missing and tells the media.

Event 1

The dean has provided the last known coordinates of the bus and a list of the thirty-eight missing students with names and recent photos. Shortly after leaving the Pomona clinic, all the students on the bus nodded off, and the bus's autopilot system was overridden and given new directions to take the UCR students into San Bernardino. When the kids wake up from their magically induced nap, they find themselves on the edge of the Los Verdugos territory, with a disabled bus, no commlinks, and no idea where they are or how to get home. Frightened, they argue and eventually break into two groups, one heading north (thinking they're heading back towards the freeway, though they're actually moving in the opposite direction; see below) and the other east, directly into the Los Verdugos territory. Scavengers observing the students' departure quickly moved in to disassemble the bus. The first group of students doesn't make it far before being cornered in an alley by three gangers. When the runners arrive (assuming it doesn't take

them too long), the gangers are simply playing with the kids, and no one is seriously injured. The gangers then ignore the students in favor of attacking the runners, but while the gangers are armed, it shouldn't be much of a challenge for a decent team to wipe them up. When the action is over, the runners have seventeen hysterical college kids on their hands. The scavengers have taken enough of the bus to render it inoperable, so the runners better have a good plan for getting the kids back home.

Event 2

The second group of students has traveled several kilometers away in the wrong direction and has decided to hole up for the night in a crumbling old warehouse. This group included several from the UCR's Awakened-pre-med program, and although none of them are particularly powerful, they have managed to summon several low-level spirits to help guard them. A good thing, too, since the warehouse they're in happens to be the site for a major drug deal tonight. And when a large group of Los Verdugos arrive to secure the place, the gangers quickly find the intruders. Thankfully, the gangers don't have any magical support of their own, so the spirits are able to hold them off.

The runners should arrive to find a standoff between the gangers and students. The gangers are willing to negotiate with the runners if it'll get the kids out of the place before their drug meeting. They're also perfectly willing to fight if the runners attack or appear hostile. In addition, the spirits consider the runners a threat and attack if the runners attempt to approach the students. Once the runners manage to get to the kids, they still have to escort the twenty freaked-out college students out of San Bernardino—the roughest area in the LA sprawl.

Event 3

Oops. Did they only count twenty kids? Weren't there twenty-one still missing? A check against the dean's list shows that the missing person is one Amanda Bryerly, a 21-year-old shaman enrolled in the pre-med program. Amanda engineered the bus mishap, then took advantage of the general chaos and arguing to slip away unnoticed. She is carrying a small disk with some very damaging information on a Horizon research project. The supposed intent of the project is to research ways to help trauma victims cope with post-traumatic stress syndrome, but the project has been unethically using refugees to test out new subliminal technology—and the lead researcher is Amanda's father. Furious with him for his ethical lapse, Amanda decided to run away. She's been contacted by a shaman from the PCC, who promised her a new home in exchange for the incriminating information. She's supposed to meet the shaman at Gnasher's that night. Once she arrives at the bar, she sticks out, and rumors about her start flying. If the runners have been searching San Bernardino, they hear the rumors—and so does a Horizon security team dispatched by Dr. Bryerly. Gnasher's is a rough place, and there's all sorts of trouble a pretty, young corporate shaman can get into there.

Climax

The PCC shaman has no intention of offering shelter to the young Horizon girl. He's only interested in the disk. Amanda, realizing she's about to be hung out to dry, refuses to give it to him. They're arguing when a couple of Burning Angels decide to take her side against the Pueblo shaman. When the runners ar-

rive, a full-blown bar-fight is imminent. Gnasher insists they take it outside or into the pit. Meanwhile, the Horizon security team is waiting outside with orders to get the disk and eliminate the girl and the PCC shaman. The Horizon team attacks whichever of their targets emerge first, including the runners if they accompany either target. No matter when the Horizon team makes their move, the gangers subsequently join in (pretty much for the fun of it all), and the runners could find themselves in a three-way fight. If the runners successfully extricate Amanda from the area, she'll beguilingly plead for their help in running away, promising to trade some valuable information as payment.

Sequels

If the runners return the runaway and the disk to the dean, the entire matter is hushed up and the runners find their reputation increased, with future job offers coming from both UCLA and Horizon. Amanda is placed in her father's care and returns to UCLA a few months later, content with her studies and with no memory of the runners or her brief taste of freedom. If the runners help Amanda leave the city and sell the info on the disk (any number of corporations or independent media outfits would pay a good price for the info), they later hear some Horizon spin about the corp firing a "rogue scientist" who was secretly on Aztechnology payroll and performing unethical experiments.

No criminal charges will be brought, however, and within weeks, Dr. Bryerly re-commences his work in a lab in Africa—and the runners will have made some highly placed enemies within Horizon. Depending on their actions in San Bernardino and at Gnasher's, the runners may also find themselves with valuable gang contacts—or enemies.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The following ideas are very basic adventure plots designed to be used as one-shot stories or to be developed into full-blown plots by enterprising gamemasters:

- A feral AI mysteriously manages to "seal off" a public AR site, somehow trapping personas inside—users are unable to log out. The owners of the site (a Horizon subsidiary) hires the runners to pose as Matrix terrorists in a desperate PR job while they contact the Undernet to deal with the AI.
- Caltech labs have misplaced (or, more precisely, a professor sold it to cover his gambling debts) an expensive series of lab samples: three refined uranium reagents. Unfortunately, the news exploded when traces of one of the reagents were discovered used as depleted uranium in two rounds of homemade armor-piercing bullets used in a Mafia hit. Two days later, another of the reagents was used to burn through a safe. The runners are given a Geiger counter and hired to recover the third reagent.
- The team is hired by Amalgamated Studios to extract a genial simsense tech working for a Horizon studio—the target is working late waiting for them. The extraction coincides with an attack on the studio complex by the Burning Angels. To complicate matters further, the Ancients show up to intervene.
- A thief has broken into a penthouse suite and stolen a small sculpture. Evidence at the site shows the thief was augmented, as she broke in by secreting nanotech dissemblers from her hands and feet. The runners have to track down the thief and recover the goods.

- Horizon is quickly tiring of Aztech's interference and wants to ascertain whether or not an undercover unit of elite Leopard Guards is active in Los Angeles; if it is active, they want it eliminated. Horizon's only lead is the fact that the Burning Angels seem to have a pipeline to Aztechnology.
- Horizon is facing a problem: Ballistic, one of the A-Kidz and the stars of their multimedia hit *Gang Life*, has developed cyberpsychosis and has become a dangerous loose cannon threatening the franchise and his fellow gang members. The producer wants him to leave the series with a bang and wants the runners to play the bad guys in this particular episode.
- Billy Doyle, one of Gary Kline's many unacknowledged offspring, has run away from home in Sacramento to LA looking to meet up with daddy dearest. The mother, Maggie Doyle, is seriously worried about how Kline will react to a kid he knows nothing about showing up on his doorstep, so she hires runners to bring Billy home before he gets himself into trouble. What kind of trouble the runners will get into when they find out about Billy's identity is another story entirely.
- The Laguna Beach Collective is hiding a secret: they are the heart of an underground railroad for technomancers trying to escape Aztlan. The Collective uses a mini-submarine and travels through a relatively safe route they have mapped through the Deep Lacuna to perform pickups in San Diego. Unfortunately, contact with the sub has been lost on the return leg of an extraction, and the Collective needs help for a rescue operation.

NEO-TOKYO ADVENTURES

This section presents two adventures in outline format and several adventure seeds that draw on the setting material and information presented for Neo-Tokyo. Gamemasters can use these adventures as presented to introduce their players to Neo-Tokyo or as inspiration when designing their own shadowruns.

OFF THE BOOKS

Corporate security types are wageslaves just like anybody else—except for the top field agents who are "off the books," working undercover and intelligence operations while being paid through secret accounts and having their SINs stricken from the list of corporate citizens they are sworn to protect.

A couple years ago, one of Mitsuhama's off-the-books personnel slipped his leash and skipped town during an undercover assignment. Now word on the street has it that the prodigal employee—still operating under his mission alias, "Rigger X"—is back in town. An MCT Johnson contacts the team to quietly apprehend and escort the errant agent alive and as intact as possible for debriefing. What the MCT Johnson doesn't know is that the return of Rigger X is part of a larger game being played by the powers-that-be in Neo-Tokyo, and members the Watada-gumi are looking for Rigger X as well. Caught in the crossfire, the runners have to make hard decisions with the possibility of nasty consequences all around.

Setup

A fixer sets the shadowrunners up to meet a Johnson in a small pilots' bar near the Neo-Tokyo International Aerospaceport. The man offering the job is dressed for the place; his slate grey business suit is the bastard child of a dress uniform and a flight

suit, and his graying crew cut puts the subtle scars from old surgery around his eyes and the datajack at his temple into relief. After they get their drinks, Johnson fishes out a palm-sized device and shows the runners a five-second trideo loop of a standing man shooting his prone victim in the head. This is the latest image they have of the target, taken from an ocular drone a couple hours ago. The shadowrunner's job is to seek and subdue—find the man and bring him to the arranged drop-off, an office building in Shinjuku. He won't go quietly, but Johnson needs him breathing. After the shadowrunners accept, they can bargain over payment; when a price is agreed upon, Johnson stands up, finishes his drink, lays a certified credstick for ten percent on the table, and walks out the door.

Event 1

Step one for the shadowrunners will be detective work. This can be as easy or as difficult as the gamemaster wants to make it; creative approaches are just as likely to yield results as old-fashioned legwork, and the runners are likely to hit a number of dead ends. Any contacts that the runners make can point out possible approaches the players haven't tried or considered yet.

Event 2

Whether the runners are initially successful in their attempts or not, they find themselves the target of unwelcome attention from the local Yakuza. A group of kumi-in, who outnumber the runners two to one and are wearing black-on-black suits and hard-liner gloves, interrupt whatever the runners are doing (violently, if necessary, to get their attention). A middle-aged kobun introduces himself as Ino Daikate of the Watada-gumi, and he politely requests the runners cease their efforts. Any sarcasm or lip is met by immediate violence. A refusal, polite or otherwise, is likewise grounds for a fight. If the runners stay quiet or agree to stop, the Yakuza depart without incident.

Canny runners may make use of the fact that the Daikate knows more than they do to draw information out of him through conversation—or they may rely on the simple expedient of tracking down one or more of the Yakuza group and beating the information out of them. This won't earn them many friends, but it is a fairly reliable technique. If the runners still don't know where Rigger X is holing up, have one of the contacts (or, in extremis, Johnson) call them up and report that their target is on the 1st floor of the Cube, room 2099.

Event 3

The Cube is a slab of solid darkness against the neon-lit Neo-Tokyo night. At this point, the shadowrunners should be in familiar territory; they know what their objective is and where to get it, the only remaining questions are when and how. As they approach a public facility with fully automated services, the runners don't have to worry about staff, only the building's minimal security defenses (cameras and locks, mainly) and potential witnesses (very few, with the least number in the early hours of the morning). On the other hand, they're also dealing with one of their own, a paranoid shadowrunner at least as skilled and experienced as they are. Feel free to set up a few nasty traps for the incautious runner: a frag grenade set to go off if the door to the cell is opened without disarming it, an eyeball drone mounted on the ceiling that can scan the hallways, or a hidden firearm concealed in

the public bathroom down the hall if Rigger X suspects someone is waiting for him.

Whether or not the shadowrunners are successful in the initial attempt to catch him, Rigger X has nowhere to run, and the shadowrunners should have a much easier time tracking him. Outnumbered and outgunned, he eventually goes down.

Climax

The hand-off is set for midnight. Rigger X is secured and Johnson is waiting with six guards in light security armor with stun batons. Cagey players may be expecting (or planning) a trap or doublecross; let them try to make whatever preparations they feel necessary. Unless the shadowrunners begin violence, Johnson simply collects Rigger X and pays the runners in certified cred sticks. Immediately after the hand-off (or, if the runners attacked Johnson and his crew and it looks like one side is winning), the six guards do a macabre dance to the chattering tune of silenced sub machineguns. Over a dozen Yakuza stride openly toward the group, weapons ready, led by an older man. If unopposed, they take Rigger X—and only Rigger X—and leave without further violence. If the shadowrunners so much as twitch, the Yakuza attempt to subdue them, using their weapons as clubs in melee or firing bursts in ranged combat.

Sequels

The fallout from this adventure depends largely on how the runners played it. If they bungled the job, MCT doesn't pay and attempts to set the shadowrunners up to fall on a later run. Should the shadowrunners have killed or injured any of the local Yakuza, they've just made several enemies that may come back to haunt them at some point, or perhaps insist on repayment in the form of a job or a duel. Rigger X won't hold anything against the runners personally—hey, a job is a job, we're all professionals here—unless the runners disrespect him, kill people unnecessarily, or injure him out of spite (like cutting his Achilles' tendons to prevent him from running away), but their street rep might suffer for turning in one of their own. Letting Rigger X go would make him a loyal contact for the team, but it also counts as bungling the job.

If, however, the runners manage to get through the job without killing any of the Yakuza or maiming Rigger X, they walk away without any real enemies. Johnson knows the shadowrunners are competent and reasonably loyal to a contract, and the Watada-gumi and Rigger X won't hold any grudges. In fact, MCT and the Watada-rengo might decide to employ the runners in the future.

ALMOST MIDNIGHT

Midnight in Neo-Tokyo. A hit goes down as a storm begins. Clean, quick, and quiet. The target: Kitsune. Astral rockstar, magician, fox shapeshifter. Now a very pretty corpse with a nine-inch silver-coated stiletto lodged in the base of her skull. Unfortunately for the hitman, Kitsune astrally projected right before the fatal attack. Now she's stuck in astral form, and she only has twelve hours before that dissipates and she's dead forever. There's nothing she or anyone else can do about that—but she wants to get the bastard that killed her first.

Setup

It's 0100 Neo-Tokyo local, and the rain and thunder isn't all that's keeping the runners awake. A loud and insistent call comes in from Take Ono, a local Johnson that works out of Maneki Aneki



INCOMING FEED.....

and possibly the only unoccupied Johnson awake and working at this hour of night. Even with the AR off, you can almost smell the nasty black cigarettes he's chain-smoking. Ono makes it quick and to the point: wetjob, with a time limit, starting immediately, a big payoff at the end and one nasty condition—the money wants to ride shotgun. There's little time or room for negotiation, and at best Take Ono agrees to lower his finder's fee (not below ten percent). It may be a dirty job, but the price is right. If the runners want in, they have to head to Neo-Tokyo Tower immediately.

Event 1

Neo-Tokyo Tower is the scene of the crime. It figures that on a night like this, you're headed for the biggest lightning rod in the megaplex. Ono is there, wearing an inscrutable frown with a two-inch ciggy hanging out of the corner of his mouth, leading the way to a service elevator and explaining the situation. At the top floor, the door opens and you see the body. A woman's body in a brown synthleather trench coat lies on the deck, the hint of a bushy red tail peaking out from underneath, her long red hair sticky with blood, a handle sticking out of a skull. The translucent image of a fox stands over the body: its fur is the same color as the woman's, its tail the exact match, and an identical handle sticks out of the back of its head, right above a jeweled collar. Meet your employer.

Kitsune will fill the runners in on what happened as Ono turns the body over and begins stripping it of jewelry, commlink, and personal items. The runners may also wish to examine the body for clues. As Ono said, Kitsune is going to be tagging along with the runners; if the team doesn't include anyone capable of astral perception, Kitsune will manifest her astral form, that of a Japanese red fox. She can assist the runners with a variety of tasks, but keep in mind her astral form is fairly fragile—she's sustained a horrific injury—and she cannot perceive or interact with augmented reality.

Event 2

Kitsune is able to track the murderer herself using her Perception and Tracking Skills, but the players are welcome to use their own abilities to speed things up. Surveillance cameras in and around Neo-Tokyo Tower have been damaged to cover the hitman's tracks, but a skilled hacker could correlate the feeds from traffic cameras and drones in the surrounding area to figure out who the assassin is and where they went. A magician could summon a spirit with the Search power to locate the culprit, provided she has a mental image of the assassin (this could be provided by Kitsune using a Mindlink spell). The murder weapon could also be a clue, as not many armorers in Neo-Tokyo stock silver-plated blades. A few questions down at the Foundry should provide a lead in the right direction.

Event 3

The team may know where the hitman is, but getting there is another matter. It'll take hours to track him on foot, and accidents from the storm have left several blocks of Neo-Tokyo impassable to vehicle traffic. Even air traffic is grounded until the wind and lightning ease up, and technomancer-inflicted glitches have stalled Neo-Tokyo's famed trains and subways. The runners, with Kitsune in tow, have to dodge ambulances, the police, and even Yakuza emergency service technicians trying to get a junction box for a blacked-out local building fixed.

Climax

Finally, the shadowrunners arrive at their destination: 27 Okosu Road in Yokohama. The hitman, a wiry oni, is busy with a human whore when the shadowrunners arrive, but not completely unprepared for a confrontation. Still, unless the runners create ungodly amounts of noise or otherwise alert him, their target should be naked and distracted when they make their move, leaving him to defend himself with only his cyberimplant weapons. The fight should be quick and bloody, but ultimately one-sided. As long as the hitman dies in the end, Kitsune is satisfied, and Ono contacts the runners to disperse their booty, including Kitsune's Power Focus (the jeweled collar on her neck).

Sequels

What Kitsune hasn't asked herself is who would have her killed and why. The only one who might have the answers is her own assassin; if she or the runners think to ask him, it turns out that Kitsune's own record label, ManaSonic, contracted the hit. Further investigation into the tawdry world of astral rock (music played live by Awakened musicians) reveals that the owner of ManaSonic, Jubei Takeshi, was hoping to cash in from the star's death and to pin the blame on her competition, Astral Rockstar Mistah Skelington and the All Ghoul Review. Needless to say, Mistah Skelington would be pleased to prove his innocence.

Nosing around a murder scene is a good way to leave incriminating evidence, and if the runners aren't careful they may be dragged in by the Neo-Tokyo police for questioning in regards to Kitsune's murder. Even worse, the case attracts the attention of the local media. Even if they are released, the runners might find their faces plastered on trideo screens from Seattle to Sydney.

Finally, one of Kitsune's kits—the survivor of a litter she had several years ago—might track the runners down and ask a few pointed questions, especially if one of them is wearing her collar.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following are relatively simple adventure seeds that can be easily integrated in most campaigns or developed in more complex plots.

- Welcome to the other side, wage slaves. As part of an info-gathering op, the runners are issued corporate IDs and given jobs according to their skills at the DataBank (a Renraku subsidiary). They must keep up the façade for a week or two while they attempt to identify which of four mid-level managers owning company stocks is being strong-armed by the Yakuza to perform

a *sokaiya* during the next shareholder meeting. They must stop him from doing so without breaking cover and tipping off his Yakuza handlers.

- The Mita-gumi has a line of designer synthsuede commlink jackets and purses, laser-engraved with their own Yakuza emblem, fresh off the assembly line and ready for the eager hordes of consumers. Unfortunately, the dye used in the synthsuede gives off a toxic gas when heated. The runners are hired by a Yakuza middle manager to flood the warehouse the shipment is in (using a block of C-12 and a convenient sewer junction) to destroy the toxic goods and claim the insurance. What the runners and the middle manager don't know is that the warehouse is a front to smuggle a shipment of Laesal wine into Neo-Tokyo.
- Yokita Oshii, the elderly head of Shiawase Biofoods is not, as he appears, human. He is an ork posing as human with the aid of cosmetic surgery. Unfortunately, he is a) dying of leukemia and b) has a rare blood type. The good news is he can be saved with a bone marrow transfusion, but only from another ork with the same blood type. The runners are hired ostensibly as security to escort him discreetly to the House of Blue Leaves, from which they have to smuggle him into the Bleeds for the operation. Then they must extract and deliver a young secretary working for Evo, whom Oshii's investigators believe is a match for his blood type. If he survives, Oshii will be very grateful.
- MCT wants it to appear that a top researcher has been extracted, ostensibly to throw off their rival corps. In reality, the Intel division wants the theoretical thaumaturgist, Yngvi Olafssen, and is forcibly extracting him from the MagicSec division. The extraction goes down at Ippissimus, with the runners providing support (look-outs, distractions, discreet take-outs of guards, etc.) with no collateral damage. To cover their involvement, the shadowrunners are paid with an MCT employee discount of 25 percent at Ippissimus for the next six months.
- The runners are hired to retrieve all copies—Matrix archived and on chip—of the trid recordings from a private “first viewing” party held by Hisato-Turner at Klub Mirage in Akihabara. When the runners dig deeper, either by analyzing the club's Matrix logs or directly questioning staff that was on that night, they'll discover the party never happened, and a detailed analysis will reveal that the recovered trideo material is a clever fake. What exactly are the runners caught up in and who stands to gain?
- A female Orbital Station commander for Evo is being blackmailed with an unknown heir—the clone of a fetus (the result of an extramarital affair) that she had aborted years ago. Unknown to the blackmailers, said corper caught a solar flare during a spacewalk and is now sterile, and she wants the baby delivered to her alive. Can the runners deliver the goods?
- Old school gangster Three-Two has a plan, a classic and violent raid on a Watada-rengo coin collectables store that's actually a front for a money-laundering operation. The runners do a smash'n'grab up front, taking the outmoded currency while Three-Two raids the databanks. Three-Two pays a cut to the runners, and they get to keep all of the loot from the shop as well. Of course, fencing it may be a problem ...