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JAPANESE IMPERIAL STATE

>>>> BEGIN FACTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC BOX

Japan: Jaa-pan.

Population: 143,000,000

Primary Languages: Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese

List of Prefectures: Aichi, Akita, Aomori, Ehime, Fukuoka, Fukui, Fukushima, Gifu, Hiroshima, Hokkaidō, Hyōgo, Ishikawa, Iwate, Kagawa, Kagoshima, Kōchi, Kumamoto, Kyoto, Mie, Miyagi, Miyazaki, Nagano, Nagasaki, Nara, Neo-Tokyo, Niigata, Ōita, Okayama, Okinawa, Osaka, Saga, Shiga, Shimane, Shizuoka, Tokushima, Tottori, Toyama, Wakayama, Yamagata, Yamaguchi, Yamanashi

Government Type: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

Geography: The Japanese Archipelago consists of a numbers of volcanic islands, the largest of which are the densely-populated “home islands” of Honshu, Hokkaido, Shikoku, and Kyushu, with over 3,000 adjacent islands and islets.

Bordering Countries: Chinese Coastal Provinces, Korea, Russia, Taiwan

Notable Features: Mount Fuji

>>>> END FACTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS BOX

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Japanese support of the South Korean invasion of North Korean resulted in that country launching nuclear weapons at Japan, all of which mysteriously failed to detonate. The threat spurred a political turnover, and nationalist elements overthrew the constitution imposed at the end of World War II and declared the Japanese Imperial State. The Japanese military was immediately reformed, and began an expansionist campaign to reinforce disputed Japanese territorial claims.

Massive government spending and the lifting of monopoly restrictions by the Yamato Act in 2012 facilitated a tremendous economic boom that spurred the growth of the Japanacorps. Local military and corporate interests followed each other closely, as the megacorps spread Japanese economic dominance and the Imperial Marines moved in to secure Japanacorp assets. In 2021 Japan invaded the Philippines; Japanese marines were stationed in Peru, Australia, and the California Free State to protect Japanese corporations.

Japanese response to the Awakening was mixed. The appearance of the great dragon Ryumyo over Mt. Fuji on December 24, 2011 is almost universally accepted as the beginning of the Awakening. Many Shinto and Buddhist shrines and religious figures realized their magical power and became aware of the kami (spirits) that surrounded them. Response to UGE and Goblinization was much more negative; metahumans faced widespread racism, discrimination, and in many cases, infanticide. Action against the *kararu* (changed) became official in 2027, when the Emperor Kenichi passed a law that exiled Japanese metahumans to Yomi, a prison-island in the Philippines.

Japan’s economic dominance became official when the nyuen, their national currency, was adopted as the de facto world reserve currency in 2036. Even though it meant giving up control of their national currency, the Japanese government trusted in the coalition of Japanacorps on the Corporate Court to protect their interests. However, this move also tied Japan’s economic stability to those same megacorps. In 2059 “White Monday” hit: the AAA megacorp Yamatetsu—now under the control of a Japanese ork—relocated their corporate headquarters to Vladivostok and triggered the largest drop in the Tokyo Stock Exchange in 70 years. In 2060 another AAA Japanacorp, Fuchi Industrial Electronics, officially dissolved, causing economic panic.

Change came in 2061, when a series of natural disasters struck the Ring of Fire. Tokyo was severely damaged by a major earthquake, and the majority of the Japanese Imperial family was killed in an eruption of the Unzen volcano; aftershocks and tsunamis claimed over 200,000 lives. The young emperor Tenno Heika immediately withdrew Japanese troops from abroad to deal with the disaster, leading to the Philippines regaining its independence in 2063.

The boy emperor quietly reclaimed his divine mandate and, with the support of the Shinto priesthood, began consolidating power in the Diet. With support from the pro-Imperial faction, headed by Shiawase, the Emperor rescinded the Yomi island decree and headed the reconstruction of the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan Area as Neo-Tokyo. In 2064, the Emperor married Shiawase Hitomi, and the Imperial couple gave birth to their first child, a son, in 2072.

Japan is a small, mountainous island whose steep landscape is generally unsuitable for large sprawling metroplexes. Space is at a premium, with much the population forced to occupy small apartments in skyrakers, and over time distinct urban centers have merged into dense urban cores. On the other hand, Japan carefully maintains a

number of traditional parks, buildings, and structures, often in the shadow of surrounding superstructures. The creation of artificial islands off the shore has not significantly eased the land shortage in Japan, but has provided room for Japanese industry to expand and develop.

The Yakuza, while normally considered an organized crime syndicate in other countries, are an established tradition in the country and part of the accepted social structure. This does not mean that members are not criminals, but Japanese Yakuza do not exist only to commit crimes or criminal activities, but exist to meet the needs of individuals and groups within Japanese society. As subtle a distinction as this may be, the Yakuza are often (mostly) law-abiding groups that operate quite openly in Japan, sometimes in collaboration with the police or corporate security forces.

MAJOR CITIES

Neo-Tokyo, “the city without end,” is the navel of the Sixth World, the official seat of the Japanese megacorps, and one of the largest metroplexes on the planet, whose population of 45 million exceeds that of many countries. Rebuilt by the Emperor and several geomancers after disasters had severely damaged the city in 2061, Neo-Tokyo is a postmodern wonder designed to facilitate the traffic of data, metahumans, and mana in equal measure. The emperor’s reconstruction included a massive upgrade to the city’s wireless Matrix infrastructure, setting the tone for the Wireless Matrix Initiative, and careful attention to Neo-Tokyo’s magical landscape has preserved the potency of its shrines and landmarks, such as Edo Castle, the Imperial residence in Neo-Tokyo, and the Shrine of the Silver Dragon Kami, which is dedicated to Ryumyo.

Renraku, Mitsuhamas, Shiawase, Monobe International, Sony, Yakashima, Daiatsu, and dozens of other Japanacorps have their world headquarters in Neo-Tokyo, and it has the highest density of megacorporations in the Sixth World. Neo-Tokyo citizens live in corporate enclaves within the city, and their trends and fashions set the tone for the entire Pacific Rim. The Neo-Tokyo Stock Exchange (NTSE) is one of the premier stock markets of the world,

Neo-Tokyo is organized into a series of wards, some of which are essentially cities unto themselves, but still part of the larger metroplex. Tokyo Bay has become studded with artificial islands to increase the land area available to corporations, to the point that it is no longer a viable shipping port—instead, all bulk transport to Neo-Tokyo goes through the docks at Yokohama or the islands closer to the mouth of the bay. Smaller fishing boats still sail directly into the harbor to offload their catches.

Kansai, the official designation for the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe metropolitan area, is the Imperial Capital of Japan and the city with the heaviest density of non-Japanese megacorps. Between them, the government bureaucracy and *gaijin* corporations drive the bulk of Kansai’s economy, employing about one-third of its workforce. The major employer in Kansai, however, is the geriatrics—retirement communities, nursing homes, medical providers for the elderly, and various elderly care and social support services.

Japan has one of the oldest metahuman populations in the world, with thousands of centurions. Many retire to Kansai, where the cost of living is lower, the medical support is good, and they have the opportunity to interact with people their own age. All of the Japanacorps maintain extensive nursing home and retirement facilities in Kansai. A major point of contention in local politics is the right to die, either by clinically-assisted suicide or committing seppuku with a second, and the associated legal issues of inheritance and life insurance payouts.

NeoNET has the largest corporate presence in Kansai, followed closely by Horizon. Both megacorps have research centers focused on aging, particularly its effects on memory and mental capabilities. Saeder-Krupp has a much smaller, quieter presence that deals mainly in retirement funds and financial services. Evo also has a facility there, studying the effects of aging on metahumans.

Sendai City is the largest city in northern Japan, and the capital of the Miyagi prefecture. While very small compared to Neo-Tokyo and Kansai, both in terms of area and population, Sendai City remains an important Japanese metroplex for its close shipping ties with Russia and the Evo Corporation. As a logistics and transportation hub, it receives people and goods from all over Japan on its rail lines; a large part of Neo-Tokyo’s food travels from Sendai every morning, and its non-recyclable waste makes the trip back to Sendai every night on the same trains.

An academic city, Sendai has a large number of universities and tertiary education facilities relative to its size. Many visitors have remarked that Sendai is the most tolerant Japanese city with regards to women, metahumans, and Japanese citizens of Korean, Chinese or Polynesian heritage, and has attracted a large metahuman population as a result. The lower costs of operating out of Sendai also encourage Japanese start ups and unrated national corporations to operate in the city, at least until they can afford to move to Neo-Tokyo, and the city maintains some of its college-town atmosphere, with a wide variety of unique shops and products provided by these small corps.

Hiroshima on the Seto Inland Sea, is most famous for being the first city attacked by nuclear warfare. These days, it is also the military nerve center of Japan, host to the Imperial Fleet, the Imperial Marines, and the Emperor Kenichi Training Base. This location gives the Japanese military easy access to the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea through the Korean Strait, and the rest of the Pacific Ocean through the Philippine Sea.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Mount Fuji is one of Japan’s Three Holy Mountains and an active volcano on the Ring of Fire, but is currently most famous as the location where the great dragon Ryumyo emerged during the Awakening. Ryumyo still

maintains a lair in one of Mt. Fuji's eight peaks, and the other peaks remain accessible to climbers and tourists. The paths to Ryumyo's lair are reputedly guarded by a pack of icedraka; though how they find enough to eat so far up the mountain is a mystery.

The size and excellent symmetry of the cone have made Mt. Fuji a symbol of Japan, frequently depicted in art and literature—and visible from some of the tallest buildings in Neo-Tokyo on a clear day. The mountain's slopes are reputedly an excellent place to gather natural refined or radical mineral reagents, and the Japanese park service has imposed a limit on how much tourists can cart away from the mountain.

The **Aokigahara** forest at the base of Mt. Fuji is famous for its suicides, attracting up to a hundred people a year—though these days the dangerous paranimals and spirits dwelling there are as likely to kill the individual as they are to take their own lives. Intermittent shedim infestations, though curtailed by local priest-magicians, add to the wood's ghostly legend.

Ise Jingu, the most sacred shrines in Shinto, is a temple complex on the Shima Peninsula. The most powerful Awakened site in Japan, the site is located on a network of manalines connecting the Ring of Fire to the mainland. Every twenty years, the priests tear down the wooden shrines and relocate them according to exact instructions—based on the last time this was performed, the reconstruction appears to coincide with regular shifts in the manaline network, ensuring that the shrines are always on the most powerful nexi.

Visitors to Ise Jingu have not been allowed since an unidentified eastern dragon attempted to burn down the shrines early in 2066, which was only stopped by the timely arrival of the great dragon Ryumyo and three other, unidentified adult eastern dragons. Ryumyo's flight of dragons chased off the interloper, who disappeared in the direction of Korea. Talks for an animated feature of Ryumyo's *Dragon Force X* are currently in the works.

New Japan is a small residential area in Evo's permanent base on the planet Mars, seceded to Japan by Evo as a gift on the occasion of the birth of the new prince. The "colony" is the first national territory on the red planet, and currently has a permanent population of three Japanese citizens. An exceedingly popular trid showed New Japan's pressure-suited first resident planting the *Hinomaru* on the top of New Japan's geodesic dome.

The permanent residents of New Japan star in their own reality trideo show, which is primarily unscripted and centers around the love-triangle between Uteno Kenji (male/bisexual/Renraku/xenogeology), Motomoto Iwao (male/heterosexual/Shiawase/electrical and computer engineering), and Tomoko Akemi (female/bicurious/Evo/space medicine). Subtle political undertones, stress and division from corporate loyalties, [and the occasional explicit sex scene \(including the memorable ménage a trois in a zero-gee shuttle\)](#) has made New Japan a real hit.

> It should be no surprise that the Yakuza are the major criminal syndicate in the JIS. For all their talk about serving the community and acting openly, they engage in plenty of completely illegal (and highly profitable) behavior. The most prominent Yakuza organization is the Watada-rengo, which has member organizations throughout Japan and the world. Neo-Tokyo in particular is the Watada-rengo's headquarters and Yak central.

> Mihoshi Oni

> From what I've seen, most of the Japanacorps have arrangements in place with the Yakuza that keep the worst of the gangsters from interfering with their business. On the other hand, the corps aren't above using the Yaks to do things they don't want to dirty their hands with, like blackmail, intimidation, murder, and dumping shoddy or expired products on the market.

> Rigger X

> It's also worth mentioning that Ryumyo is said to have his claws in the Watada-rengo, though not so firmly that he can be said to actively pull all the strings.

> Kia

> The wizworm is a figure of veneration in Japan, almost considered a symbol of the nation itself. If the conservative bastard snake wasn't quietly opposed to the Emperor's reforms, they'd be selling little plushies of him on the slopes of Mt. Fuji.

> Netcat

> Give it time. They just released some concept art for Ryumyo's *Dragon Force X*—it looks like one of those mixed-media simsense productions, and they've got a couple drakes that are going to star as the metahumans.

> Slamm-0!

> Now would probably be a good time to remind everyone that Japanese society operates off of different lines than what you might be used to in the West. The culture focuses around the virtues of *giri*, face, and honor.

Giri is self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, and obligation—the loyalty and drive that makes Japanese wageslaves sacrifice their lives and their health to further their parent corp’s goals. Face is both social perception of a person’s prestige and public confidence in a person’s character—sorta like street cred. If you have to fuck somebody over, giving them a chance to save face will be the difference between grudging respect and making an enemy for life. Honor is both how you are perceived (face) and how you perceive yourself (shame), and is generally a matter of how well you have fulfilled your *giri*. Substantial failure or perceived failure can make the Japanese fall on their swords—literally, to commit *seppuku*, ritual suicide as a method of atonement.

> Baka Debaka

> Besides the Yakuza, the main game in Japan is the Japanacorps. As the home nation of three AAA megacorps and over a dozen AA megas, with a steady influx of foreign megas, the whole island is rife with corporate intrigue, espionage, sabotage, and various other shenanigans. Neo-Tokyo is the place corps go to show off, to premier their hottest new products, and to compete for face time with the public. If you can sell it in Neo-Tokyo, you can sell it anywhere in the world, or so it goes—and the same’s true for shadowrunners.

> FastJack

> Of course, you’ll find things a bit easier if you get some Japanese eyes and a linguasoft first.

> Sticks

> Speaking of which, Japan is the augmentation capital of the world. Chiba in Neo-Tokyo can install anything, with the latest nanosurgical techniques. Cybermancy, cyborgs, genetic enhancement—anything is possible. I’ve seen things that came out of Chiba that no longer looked metahuman.

> Butch

> Be fair now, Butch. Some of those things might not have looked metahuman going in. Non-metahuman sapients are pretty rare in JIS, but Chiba’s one of the few places that you can get delta-grade centaur cyberlegs damn near off-the-rack.

> Plan 9

> From a magician’s perspective, Japan is dominated by Oriental traditions—you can find suitable formulae and materials for Hermeticism too, but anything farther afield like druidic or voodoo is gonna be pretty hard to come by. Either you make do with what they’ve got, or bring your own.

> Winterhawk

> Ah, c’mon `hawk. You can download any of those spells from the Matrix, for the right price, and a fetish is a fetish is a fetish. Well, unless it’s a blood fetish. Or the formula calls for bone from a black cat shot at midnight in a graveyard with a silver bullet. And, well, most ingredients for magical compounds that I can think of. Okay, so maybe you have a point.

> Lyran

> Since no one else has mentioned it, Japan makes it illegal for private citizens to carry firearms, and they will bring the hammer down on you for it. But any type of sword or blade is cool to carry, so you’ve got plenty of wageslaves dressed in their cheap suits with cheap katanas attached to their belts.

> Sticks

> Never bring a sword to a gun fight.

> Hard Exit

> Unless you’re a kensei adept, in which case let me know in advance so I can sell tickets.

> Haze