

The Seven Bell Court

Drop-In Adventures & Scenario Toolbox for
Fate's Edge

The Seven Bell Court is an anthology of twelve modular adventures designed for easy insertion into ongoing campaigns set across Sihai, Nihon, and Ayokha. Each scenario highlights one or more pillars of Fate's Edge play: investigation, culture, negotiation, ritual, and cinematic conflict. All are written with the Court's core virtues in mind:

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The Book of the Seven Bell Court

Twelve Tales, Two Showpieces, and Supporting Systems for Fate's Edge

Contents

- ***Twelve Tales (Minor Adventures): quick-run scenarios tuned for 3–5 hours***
- ***Two Showpiece Adventures: multi-session arcs with deeper investigation and set-pieces***
- ***Extras: Seven Bell Court judging system, cultural deep-dives, and TAGS-based equipment***

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***Introduction: How to Use This Book**

[frametitle=What This Anthology Contains] This anthology is organized into three clearly labeled parts:

- **Part I – Twelve Tales:** 12 modular minor adventures for one session each (3–5 hours). Each Tale includes a clear premise, 1–3 signature clocks, a mechanical twist, scaling notes, and a cinematic set-piece.
- **Part II – Two Showpiece Adventures:** Duel to the Death (conspiracy tournament) and The Bridge of Three Echoes (contemplative pilgrimage). These are multi-session arcs with deeper NPC development, investigation layers, and culture-forward mechanics.
- **Part III – Extras:** the Seven Bell Court judging system, regional cultural guidance (Sihai, Nihon, Ayokha), and a curated Equipment for Contemplative Adventures section showcasing the TAGS system.

***At-a-Glance GM Guidance**

- Read the Premise box and set the stakes in one sentence.
- Pick clocks appropriate to your table's pace (resolve 1–3 per session).
- Spot the mechanical twist (e.g., Truth Duel, Split-Screen Timer, Lantern Placement) and telegraph it early.
- Use Seven Bell Court when victory should reflect Form, Spirit, and Intent, not just harm dealt.
- Signal culture respectfully: use flavor cues as gifts, not gates. Reward understanding with Cultural Edge tokens.

*Quick-Prep Matrix: The Twelve Tales @p3.2cm p3.4cm p5.5cm p1.6cm@ Title Theme Mechanical Twist Sessions

Silk, Salt, and Shadows Noir Heist Split-Screen Timer (three parallel advancing clocks) 1

The Emperor's Quiet Political Thriller Mandate Ledger (legitimacy vs expediency) 1

The Ronin's Winter Duel Arc (Nihon) Seven Bell Court judging (Form/Spirit/Intent) 1

Monsoon of Knives Navy Caper Weather Dice affect Position/Effect 1

The City That Forgets Mystic Mystery Memory Tokens + dual Truth Tracks (Boon/Bane) 1

Festival of Ten Thousand Lanterns Social Sandbox Lantern Placement drives faction influence 1

The Jade Locust Plague Investigation Dual Clocks: Civic & Personal 1

Ash at Sunrise Tactical Warfare Battlefront Clocks + morale pressure 1

The Thousand-Step Court Paradox Dungeon Trial Steps re-write Position on ascent 1

Black Powder, White Paper Tech vs Tradition Innovation Pressure vs Customary Rights 1

Court of Perfumed Knives Palace Intrigue Mask Exchanges (identity play) 1

The House that Eats Oaths Haunted Law Binding Clauses as geasa 1

***Visual Organization**

- Part headers (Twelve Tales, Two Showpieces, Extras) make prep scope obvious.
 - Minor adventures use concise boxes (Premise/Clocks/Twist/Scaling).
 - Showpieces include investigation layers, NPC webs, and end-state matrices.
- *Session Planning Minor adventures are built for a single night. Showpieces are intended for 2–4 sessions—each contains natural intermissions (rituals, court sessions, travel chapters) to pause cleanly.

The Judgment of the Seven Bell Court

In Ayokha, a duel is not merely the meeting of steel and skill. To the Celestial Order, combat without meaning is savagery. To Sihai philosophers, technique without restraint is chaos. To Nihon poets, victory without honor is an empty shadow.

Thus, every formal bout is overseen by the Seven Bell Court: a neutral panel of masters, scholars, and priest-judges who weigh each clash by three sacred pillars of excellence:

- *Form – discipline, precision, and mastery of technique.*
- *Spirit – composure, respect, and dignity in conflict.*
- *Intent – purpose beyond ego: protection, duty, justice, or peace.*

A fighter may fall, yet be honored as victorious. A fighter may stand triumphant, yet be judged disgraced.

The Scorecard system turns every match into a story:

- *A reckless strike might land—yet shame the audience.*
- *A humble bow might calm a volatile crowd.*
- *A moment of mercy might prevent a war.*

Use the Judges' Scorecards in tournaments, duels of honor, trial-by-combat, diplomatic exhibitions, or ritual tests of skill. When the world watches, a single point of Spirit may be worth more than blood.

Part I

Twelve Tales

Silk, Salt, and Shadows (Sihai Noir Heist)

Silk, Salt, and Shadows

Premise. Three rival crews target the same customs auction under lanternlight. PCs may steal, expose, or exploit the operation.

Setup. Start in a bustling paper-lantern market. Rumors spread that someone smuggled cursed cargo through Sihai waters.

Mechanical Twist. Split-Screen Timer: Security, Rival Crews, and Crowd Panic advance separately; PCs can shift pressure between them.

Clocks.

- *Security Alert [6]*
- *Rival Progress [8]*
- *Crowd Panic [4]*

PC Hooks.

- *Smuggler – your old rival is bidding.*
- *Runekeeper – a sealed ledger pulses with occult wards.*
- *Noble – your family's impounded cargo is on the block.*

Scaling. Add a third inspector for high-tier play; remove one rival crew for low-tier.

Likely Patrons. Maelstraeus, The Witness, Ikasha.

Set-Pieces. Silk-bale barricades, coded bidding war, bamboo catwalk chase.

The Emperor's Quiet (Sihai Political Thriller)

The Emperor's Quiet

Premise. Seven ritual days of imperial silence. Bureaucrats slip edicts through sleeping offices; PCs decide what becomes law.

Setup. A red-wax proclamation forbids public speech in the capital. Within hours, forged seals appear.

Mechanical Twist. Mandate Ledger: track Legitimacy vs. Expediency. Whichever fills first becomes legal precedent.

Clocks.

- Legitimacy [6]
- Conspiracy [8]
- Public Unrest [6]

PC Hooks.

- Lawkeeper – protect lawful edicts.
- Diplomat – prevent riots.
- Monk – preserve the purity of ritual.

Scaling. Collapse factions for smaller parties; add secret police informant for high-tier.

The Ronin's Winter (Nihon Duel Drama)

The Ronin's Winter

Premise. A legendary duelist refuses battle until someone proves what victory is for. Steel alone cannot win this duel.

Setup. Snow-shrouded bridge town. Locals whisper the ronin's name with awe and grief.

Mechanical Twist. Seven Bell Court: score Form, Spirit, Intent in all major exchanges—social and martial.

Clocks.

- Blood Debt [6]
- Clan Honor [6]
- Snowmelt [8]

PC Hooks.

- Samurai – clear ancestral shame.
- Cantor – sing the truth buried beneath the feud.
- Scholar – prove testimony was falsified.

Scaling. For lethal tone, ronin brings students. For introspective tone, he seeks a successor.

Monsoon of Knives (Ayokha Naval Caper)

Monsoon of Knives

Premise. A coastal convoy must outrun both pirates and the incoming monsoon. PCs serve as escorts, saboteurs, or double agents.

Setup. The tide is turning. Markets shutter. A crimson-sailed flotilla waits offshore, knives flashing in stormlight.

Mechanical Twist. Weather Dice: roll at the start of each scene to shift Position and threaten new hazards.

Clocks.

- *Pirate Pursuit [6]*
- *Storm Surge [8]*
- *Crew Morale [4]*

PC Hooks.

- *Sailor – protect friends aboard.*
- *Merchant – your cargo is life or death.*
- *Runekeeper – sabotage or defend magical rigging.*

Set-Pieces. Rope-bridge boarding fights, burning sails, leviathan shadow beneath the hull.

Scaling. Smaller parties: reduce pirate elite. Larger parties: add ghost ship or monsoon spirits.

The City That Forgets (Sihai–Ayokha Mystic Mystery)

The City That Forgets

Premise. Memories vanish at dawn. Names, faces, debts, and crimes—gone. PCs must solve the mystery before they forget themselves.

Setup. A market square where no one remembers yesterday. Missing posters line the walls—blank where faces should be.

Mechanical Twist. Memory Tokens: spent like narrative currency, but losing them erases learned truths.

Clocks.

- *Memory Drain [8]*
- *Hidden Perpetrator [6]*
- *Identity Collapse (per PC) [4]*

PC Hooks.

- *Detective – you solved this once before.*
- *Cantor – your songs still remember.*
- *Warrior – you are certain someone died... but you don't know who.*

Set-Pieces. Graffiti that only appears at night, ghost markets, children who remember everything.

Scaling. Lower tier: memory loss is mild and reversible. Higher tier: PCs may forget each other's names and bonds.

Festival of Ten Thousand Lanterns (Ayokha Social Sandbox)

Festival of Ten Thousand Lanterns

Premise. *Lanterns rise into a sacred sky—each blessing a god, spirit, or ancestor. But someone plans to poison the winds.*

Setup. *A week of dance, food, and ritual. Foreign guests arrive. Old grudges glow beneath paper and flame.*

Mechanical Twist. *Lantern Placement: PCs position lanterns to influence factions and shift social momentum.*

Clocks.

- *Sabotage Plot [6]*
- *Faction Tension [8]*
- *Sacred Winds [4]*

PC Hooks.

- *Diplomat – prevent an international insult.*
- *Priest – restore the sacred winds.*
- *Thief – steal a lantern containing a sealed prayer.*

Set-Pieces. *Lantern parade ambush, blessing boats on moonlit canals, sky-dance duel.*

Scaling. *Add rival foreign delegates for high politics. Reduce factions for smaller parties.*

The Jade Locust (Sihai Plague Investigation)

The Jade Locust

Premise. *A plague devours harvests overnight. Glowing jade locusts burrow into grain stores—and into dreams.*

Setup. *Rice paddies gleam under moonlight. Sick fields whisper. Tunnels pulse with fungal light.*

Mechanical Twist. *Plague Dice: each scene risks contamination ; PCs must weigh speed vs. safety.*

Clocks.

- *Crop Collapse [6]*
- *Locust Swarm [4]*
- *Fungal Corruption [8]*

PC Hooks.

- *Farmer – your family's land is dying.*
- *Alchemist – someone engineered this.*
- *Monk – dreams show more than fields.*

Set-Pieces. *Burning fields, dream-ritual exorcism, fungal shrine beneath a grain silo.*

Scaling. *Smaller parties: localized outbreak. Larger parties: outbreak spreads to trade routes.*

Ash at Sunrise (Nihon Battlefield Scenario)

Ash at Sunrise

Premise. A fallen village stands between two armies. PCs choose which banners to protect—or exploit both.

Setup. Dawn fog. Scorched earth. A shrine bell tolls; the villagers refuse to flee.

Mechanical Twist. Warfare Influence Track: PCs sway commanders, alter morale, sabotage logistics.

Clocks.

- Army Advance [8]
- Villager Defiance [6]
- Shrine Fires [4]

PC Hooks.

- Archer – protect innocents.
- Strategist – tip the balance.
- Cantor – negotiate a ceasefire.

Set-Pieces. Arrow-storm duel, shrine bombardment, civilian shield lines.

Scaling. High-tier: add war machines or oni mercenaries. Low-tier: only foot soldiers and archers.

The Thousand-Step Court (Paradox Dungeon)

The Thousand-Step Court

Premise. A riddle-court where time loops, mirrors speak, and each misstep rewrites history.

Setup. An impossible staircase rises into the clouds. Every hundred steps, a different reality.

Mechanical Twist. Paradox Tokens: earned by breaking logic; spent to bend reality.

Clocks.

- Paradox Collapse [6]
- Court Judgment [8]
- Memory Fracture (per PC) [4]

PC Hooks.

- Scholar – unlock ancient truth.
- Duelist – defeat your mirrored self.
- Outcast – rewrite your past.

Set-Pieces. Mirror duels, time-loop diplomacy, staircase that bites like a serpent.

Scaling. Add guardian spirits for martial groups; increase riddles for social/investigative play.

Black Powder, White Paper (Sihai Tech vs. Tradition)

Black Powder, White Paper

Premise. A printing guild and gunpowder foundry strike an illegal pact. Revolution whispers on the page and the barrel.

Setup. Pamphlets scatter across market streets. Fireworks burst—not celebratory.

Mechanical Twist. Tech Track: PCs choose to accelerate or suppress invention; society reacts.

Clocks.

- *Public Uprising* [6]
- *Gunpowder Accidents* [4]
- *Guild Conspiracy* [8]

PC Hooks.

- *Engineer – protect innovation.*
- *Magistrate – quell sedition.*
- *Journalist – publish the truth.*

Set-Pieces. Printing press siege, fireworks duel, gunpowder river barge chase.

Scaling. Low-tier: pamphlets only. High-tier: cannons and experimental explosives.

Court of Perfumed Knives (Ayokha Palace Intrigue)

Court of Perfumed Knives

Premise. A masked ball where every dance is a duel, every toast a negotiation, every mask a lie.

Setup. At midnight, the palace doors close. No one leaves without losing face—or blood.

Mechanical Twist. Mask Exchanges: trade masks to steal identities, obligations, or secrets.

Clocks.

- *Mask Misrule* [6]
- *Noble Scandal* [8]
- *Silent Assassins* [4]

PC Hooks.

- *Noble – reclaim stolen legacy.*
- *Spy – steal a royal seal.*
- *Healer – cure poisoned wines.*

Set-Pieces. Dance-fight duels, silent toast assassinations, balcony chase.

Scaling. Expand noble families for large parties; narrow to a single feud for small groups.

The House that Eats Oaths (Haunted Legal Horror)

The House that Eats Oaths

Premise. *Breaking promises empowers a hungry house. Walls whisper names. Signed contracts appear in dreams.*

Setup. *An abandoned magistrate manor, windows boarded from the inside, legal scrolls nailed to the gates.*

Mechanical Twist. *Broken Oath Clock: each lie or failure empowers the house and manifests spirits of judgment.*

Clocks.

- *House Hunger [6]*
- *Oathbinding Spirits [8]*
- *Structural Collapse [4]*

PC Hooks.

- *Lawyer – prove the house wrong.*
- *Thief – you were paid to seal it.*
- *Monk – set the bound spirits free.*

Set-Pieces. *Contract-binding spirits, courtroom nightmares, collapsing archive hall.*

Scaling. *High-tier: house begins rewriting reality. Low-tier: simple haunt with legal curses.*

Part II

Two Showpiece Adventures

Duel to the Death: Wu-Xing vs. Ninja

Conspiracy of Shadows and Elements

Adventure Overview

Premise. *An “honorable” martial arts tournament between Sihai and Nihon masks a joint conspiracy by corrupt merchants from both nations. The real prize is control of the Ayokhan spice routes, not the public trading post. Two legendary champions are being used as pawns, and their duel could trigger war.*

Stakes. *PCs must uncover the scheme before the finale, prevent an international incident, and decide whether to expose the truth (risking war) or defuse it without igniting hostilities.*

The Conspiracy Unveiled

The True Players *The Crimson Merchants’ Guild*

- **Membership:** *Corrupt traders from Sihai and Nihon.*
- **Leadership:** *Merchant Lord Zhao (Sihai) and Daimyo Kuroda (Nihon; secretly a merchant in disguise).*
- **Goal:** *Monopolize Ayokha’s spice trade by eliminating legitimate competition.*

The Plan

1. **Manufacture Conflict:** *Staged incidents inflame Sihai–Nihon tensions.*

2. ***Heroic Distraction:*** Famous champions become unwitting figureheads.
3. ***Economic Warfare:*** Corner markets while eyes are on the tournament.
4. ***Political Manipulation:*** Orchestrate “outrage” and sell themselves as the cure.

The Champions: Pawns in a Larger Game

Master Li Wei (Sihai) — *The Honorable Warrior, Blind to the Truth Background.* A disciplined warrior-monk convinced he defends Sihai's honor and safeguards trade for common folk.

Blind Spot. Unaware his patrons are manipulating him; holds a personal vendetta against Kage after a humiliating past encounter.

Personality. Noble, doctrinaire, believes in Sihai philosophical rigor; wavers when Kage's unconventional methods blunt his forms.

Shinobi Kage (Nihon) — *The Pragmatic Killer with Hidden Honor Background.* A veteran shinobi who believes he serves national interest, though cynically aware of political rot.

Blind Spot. Respects Li Wei despite animosity; underestimates the conspiracy's scope.

Personality. Dry, professionally proud, grudging respect for Li Wei's skill.

The Tournament Structure (Facade)

Phase 1: The Gathering Storm *Delegations arrive; tensions and odd incidents mount.*

PC Roles. Participants; staff (healers/smiths/cooks); journalists; diplomatic observers; mercenary security.

Phase 2: Trials of Elements *Showcases of styles and traditions; sabotage attempts increase.*

Phase 3: The Final Duel *Li Wei vs. Kage — engineered as a flashpoint for staged “outrage.”*

The Web of Deception

The Poisoned Chalice

- *Banquet fare laced with truth-serum and loyalty binders.*
- *Used to extract intel and nudge behavior.*

The Shadow Network

- *Bribed Ayokhan officials look away.*
- *Merchant ships rerouted to dodge legitimate tariffs.*

The False Evidence

- *Forged documents “prove” the losing nation's aggression.*
- *Timed discovery just after the finals to justify sanctions.*

Mechanical Framework

Investigation Clocks

- *Uncovering the Conspiracy [8]*
- *Political Tensions [6]*
- *Tournament Integrity [4]*
- *Champions' Relationship [6]*
- *Conspiracy Clock [6] (advances when PCs fail with cost or the champions' relationship worsens)*

Key NPCs & Secrets *Merchant Lord Zhao (Sihai) — Embezzling from the Imperial Treasury; needs spice profits to plug theft; arrogant.*

Daimyo Kuroda (Nihon; actually a merchant) — Illegitimate lineage; assumes false identity; paranoid about exposure.

Governor Priya of Ayokha — Aware of the scheme, blackmailed; values citizens' safety; family held hostage.

Champion Character Sheets

Master Li Wei (Sihai Wu-Xing Master)

@IX@ Attributes Body 3, Wits 2, Spirit 4, Presence 2

Skills Melee 3, Arcana 3, Athletics 2, Insight 2

Talents Caster's Gift; Elemental Harmony; Perfect Timing Way; Transcendent Harmony

Approach Dominant/Standard for elemental arts; Desperate/Great when emotionally compromised

Shinobi Kage (Nihon Shadow Warrior)

@IX@ Attributes Body 2, Wits 4, Spirit 3, Presence 2

Skills Stealth 4, Melee 3, Deception 3, Survival 2

Talents Shadow Dance; Backstab; Deathblow; Conditioning

Approach Dominant/Standard in shadows; Dominant/Limited when exposed

Adventure Hooks by PC Type

Participants *Opponents seem pre-briefed; prize money trails to shell accounts; bracket manipulation.*

Hook Roll (Insight + Notice vs. DV 3): Success reveals patterns; Partial sees "something off"; Miss leads into a trap.

Support Staff *Overhear collusion; restricted shipments; preferential treatment.*

Hook Roll (Stealth + Survival vs. DV 4): Success gains intel; Partial raises suspicion; Miss compromises position.

Journalists *Assigned puff piece; conflicting tips; cross-border sources disagree.*
Hook Roll (Sway + Lore vs. DV 3): Success uncovers contradictions; Partial reveals spin; Miss gets discredited.

Diplomats *Protocol manipulation; coded dispatches; access to intel networks.*
Hook Roll (Command + Insight vs. DV 4): Success IDs conspirators; Partial shows pressure; Miss triggers an incident.

Mercenaries *Conflicting orders; ignored breaches; pressure to silence witnesses.*
Hook Roll (Athletics + Survival vs. DV 3): Success exposes sabotage; Partial notes payments; Miss makes you accessories.

Key Investigation Scenes

Scene 1: The Poisoned Banquet *Reconciliation dinner; detect serums, observe odd champion behavior, avoid being dosed.*

Investigation (Lore + Insight vs. DV 4):

- *Success: Identify serum ingredients; note odd behavior.*
- *Partial: Detect tampering; not specifics; champions act strangely.*
- *Miss: Dosed; reveal sensitive info; GM spends 2 SB (compromised leverage).*

Alternative (Stealth + Survival vs. DV 3):

- *Success: Avoid food; observe reactions.*
- *Partial: Small dose; notice taste, muted effects.*
- *Miss: Fully dosed; act against interests next scene.*

Scene 2: The Sabotaged Dojo *“Accidental” facility damage; trace conspirators; prevent repeats.*

Investigation (Craft + Investigation vs. DV 4):

- *Success: Trace tools/materials; identify fingerprints.*
- *Partial: Know it's sabotage; source unclear; prevent immediate repeats.*
- *Miss: Blamed; Tournament Integrity +1; GM spends 1 SB (suspicion).*

Repair (Tinker + Athletics vs. DV 3):

- *Success: Restore facilities; +1 Position for training.*
- *Partial: Temporary fix; risk later collapse.*
- *Miss: Worsen damage; training blocked; GM spends 1 SB (schedule hit).*

Scene 3: The Midnight Meeting *Eavesdrop leaders' huddle; or survive a honeytrap.*

Infiltration (Stealth + Deception vs. DV 5):

- *Success: Full conversation; key players and plans.*
- *Partial: Fragmentary info; suspicion rises.*
- *Miss: Discovered; combat/rout; GM spends 2 SB (capture risk).*

Social (Presence + Sway vs. DV 4):

- *Success: Invitation secured; inner circle access.*
- *Partial: Limited access; curated info.*
- *Miss: Outed as impostor; become target; GM spends 2 SB.*

Scene 4: The False Evidence Plant *Catch the forgery room; weigh truth vs. protecting innocents.*

Detection (Insight + Notice vs. DV 4):

- **Success:** Identify operation; gather evidence; find originals.
- **Partial:** See forgeries; originals missing; risk being framed.
- **Miss:** Framed; Political Tensions +2; GM spends 3 SB (arrest now).

Analysis (Lore + Craft vs. DV 3):

- **Success:** Prove forgery; ID methods/forgery.
- **Partial:** Inconsistencies noted; proof lacking.
- **Miss:** Accept as genuine; investigation misled; GM spends 2 SB.

Climax: Multiple Paths

Path 1: Prevent the Final Duel *Sway both champions; handle fallout of a canceled bout.*

(Sway + Insight vs. DV 5):

- **Success:** Both unite against conspirators.
- **Partial:** One convinced; internal rift.
- **Miss:** Both distrust PCs; GM spends 3 SB (hostility).

Path 2: Let the Duel Proceed, Expose the Truth *Keep honor of the ring; unmask plot at peak.*

(Wits + Athletics vs. DV 4):

- **Success:** Perfect timing; max impact; minimal collateral.
- **Partial:** Good timing; some bystander risk.
- **Miss:** Poor timing; confusion/casualties; GM spends 2 SB.

Path 3: Turn the Tables *Run a sting during the finals; high risk to bystanders if timing slips.*

(Command + Tinker vs. DV 5):

- **Success:** Flawless execution; conspirators caught.
- **Partial:** Some escape; evidence compromised.
- **Miss:** Plan fails; innocents endangered; GM spends 4 SB.

Consequences & Endings

Exposed Early *War averted; trade normalizes; reputational damage and personal reckonings.*
Reward: +4 XP each; +1 Tier if applicable; Patron favor (Truth/Justice domains).

Partial Success *Some arrests; tensions linger; roots remain.*

Reward: +2 XP each; mixed consequences; ongoing subplot hooks.

Conspiracy Succeeds *War, economic collapse, and civilian suffering.*

Consequence: -2 XP each; Patron debt (Failure); new enemies.

PCs Fail to Act *Default catastrophe: inter-nation war; Ayokhan trade implosion.*

Consequence: -4 XP each; major Patron debt; campaign-altering fallout.

Character Development

Li Wei *Choose between rigid honor and adaptive pragmatism.*

Growth (Spirit + Insight vs. DV 4):

- **Success:** Integrates pragmatism with honor; becomes mentor.
- **Partial:** Temporary compromise; internal conflict lingers.
- **Miss:** Loses faith; redemption arc seed.

Kage *Decide whether cynicism equals complicity.*

Growth (Presence + Survival vs. DV 3):

- **Success:** Rediscovered purpose; gains honor.
- **Partial:** Selective morality; measured choices.
- **Miss:** Drifts toward antagonist; future redemption hook.

For PCs *Moral calculus; cultural literacy; growth in investigation, diplomacy, or combat.*

Cultural Check (Lore + Insight vs. DV 3):

- **Success:** +1d to Sihai/Nihon/Ayokhan interactions.
- **Partial:** Basic understanding; modest social edge.
- **Miss:** Faux pas; -1 Position on related interactions.

Cultural Notes

Historical Parallels (Fictionalized) *Sihai: ideal vs. governance friction; bureaucracy exploited.*

Nihon: clan politics; duty weaponized pragmatically.

Ayokha: trade hub mediating cultures under pressure.

Champion Conflict *Embodies philosophical differences; shows manipulation of noble intent; personal grudges as levers.*

Ayokhan Cultural Elements *Monsoon Timing: Investigation effectiveness varies with seasonal winds.*

Spirit World: Local nat may aid (Arcana + Spirit vs. DV 4).

Mandala Politics: Multi-faction negotiation with vassal kings and sea-lords.

Adventure Pacing

Sessions 1–2 *Introductions, tensions, first clues.*

Focus: Establish tournament, champions, first conspiracy hints.

Sessions 3–4 *Escalation, sabotage, revelations.*

Focus: Deepen investigation; confront conspirators; champions' relationship deteriorates.

Session 5 *Finale: sting, exposure, or duel; fallout.*

Focus: Climactic confrontation; resolve threads; apply consequences.

GM Notes

Balance *Conspiracy is discoverable but not obvious; champions have legitimate motives; multiple PC victory routes.*

Guideline: Each major clue requires a meaningful test, not passive observation.

Sensitivity *Individuals are culpable, not cultures; showcase virtues across traditions; Ayokha as bridge culture.*

Reminder: Champions embody ideals, not stereotypes.

Agency *Multiple investigative vectors; flexible alliances; consequences drive story.*

Mechanic: Allow temporary, goal-focused faction alliances.

Fate's Edge Integration *Use Position/Effect for major challenges; spend SB for conspiracy complications (1-4 severity); award Boons for clever cultural leverage and moral choices; during downtime, 2 Boons → 1 XP for significant discoveries.*

Monsoon Clock [8] *Tracks seasonal changes affecting the investigation:*

- Seg. 1-2: *Pre-monsoon — dry conditions; easier surveillance.*
- Seg. 3-4: *Early monsoon — activity spikes; shipping disruptions.*
- Seg. 5-6: *Peak monsoon — investigation hindered; indoor focus.*
- Seg. 7-8: *Late monsoon — clearing weather; finale windows open.*

Sample Investigation Encounters

Document Forgery Detection *Lore + Insight vs. DV 4*

Success: Identify false documents; trace to forger.

Partial: Inconsistencies found; more evidence needed.

Miss: Forgeries accepted; investigation misdirected.

Bribe Detection *Insight + Deception vs. DV 3*

Success: Recognize corrupt behavior; gather proof.

Partial: Sense corruption; proof lacking; suspicion rises.

Miss: Become a target; compromised posture.

Shadow Network Tracking *Investigation + Survival vs. DV 4*

Success: Trace routes; identify actors.

Partial: Evidence found; conspirators alerted; time pressure.

Miss: False trail; wasted resources; GM spends 2 SB.

Tournament Combat Guidelines

Phase 1 & 2 Matches *Position: Dominant/Standard (honorable competition). Effect: Limited/Great (style demonstration). Cultural considerations may tilt judging.*

Final Duel *Position: Controlled/Desperate (stakes and manipulation). Effect: Standard/Great (champions at full capability). Audience reactions create environmental factors.*

Conspiracy Intervention *Position shifts with timing/approach; Effect modified by evidence presented; cultural honor stakes influence resolution options.*

The Bridge of Three Echoes (Pilgrimage of Memory and Mercy)

The Bridge of Three Echoes

Premise. Once every century, a spectral bridge appears across the Valley of Silent Ash. Upon it walk the forgotten dead of three nations, seeking closure. Only those who carry truth may cross.

Purpose. Resolve ancient wrongs between Sihai, Nihon, and Ayokha without blades, armies, or scripts of state. A single night on the bridge can calm wars or spark them anew.

Tone. Quiet, solemn, beautiful. The adventure favors reflection, diplomacy, vows, compassion, and the verdict of ancestors.

Structure of Play

The bridge manifests for a single night. Each Act is one crossing:

- *Act I: Lanterns of Regret (Ayokha)*
- *Act II: Blades of Memory (Nihon)*
- *Act III: Scrolls of Truth (Sihai)*

Each act offers:

- *A symbolic ritual*
- *A moral choice with no easy answer*
- *A chance to earn or lose Echo Tokens*

At dawn, the bridge judges the living.

Echo Tokens (Core Mechanic)

Echo Tokens

PCs earn or lose Echo Tokens by honoring the dead:

- *Show mercy to a bitter spirit [+1]*
- *Tell a painful truth [+1]*
- *Break a vow [-1]*
- *Spill blood on the bridge [-2]*

At dawn:

3+ Tokens: Spirits grant a Blessing of Peace

1–2 Tokens: The bridge leaves the world unchanged

0 or less: The bridge cracks, releasing ancestral wrath

Clocks

- *Bridge Stability [6] – grows with violence or lies*
- *Spirit Unrest [8] – shrinks with compassion or ritual*
- *Dawn Approaches [10] – the night is short*

Act I: Lanterns of Regret (Ayokha)

Floating lanterns hover in ash-filled fog. Each lantern holds a recorded sorrow—love unspoken, apology unmade, duty abandoned.

Ritual: PCs place a lantern into the river of ash. Its flame brightens or dims depending on their sincerity.

- Heal a grieving spirit [+1 Echo Token]
- Sailor begs forgiveness from drowned crew
- Parent apologizes to a forgotten child
- Romantic rival confesses they saved a life instead of taking it

Set-Piece. A thousand lanterns rise, illuminating spectral tatami pavilions and Ayokhan funeral masks.

Test. PCs must speak a sorrow of their own. Silence counts as fear, not respect.

Act II: Blades of Memory (Nihon)

A silent battlefield of polished stone. The dead are not hostile—they demand acknowledgment.

Ritual: Truth Duel. No blades strike flesh. To “win” is to yield the proud truth you never wished to speak.

Examples:

- A warrior admits they killed for glory, not justice
- A magistrate admits they saved face instead of saving lives
- A monk admits they fled duty and called it enlightenment

Outcome.

- Mutual truth: both sides bow, [+1 Token]
- Refusal to speak: spirits grow restless, [-1 Token]

Set-Piece. Rows of ash-blade swords hum in the wind, each engraved with an unspoken name.

Act III: Scrolls of Truth (Sihai)

A grand pavilion of drifting parchment and calligraphy that writes itself. The spirits seek record, not vengeance.

Ritual: PCs must inscribe a truth on the Eternal Scroll:

- Confess a lineage secret
- Acknowledge a war crime
- Reveal a corruption
- Forgive a historic enemy

Set-Piece. Ink-spirits coil through the air. When a lie is spoken, parchment tears like thunder.

Test. If no one writes truth, the scroll writes judgment instead.

Final Choice: Break or Bless the Bridge

At the last step, three ancestral judges manifest: Ayokhan Mercy, Nihon Honor, Sihai Memory.

PCs must choose:

- Bless the Bridge: swears a binding vow of peace
- Break the Bridge: spirits rise to punish the living
- Rewrite History: one truth is erased or rewritten

Echo Token Result Table:

- 3–5 Tokens → Dawn Blessing (renewed treaties, ancestral gifts)
- 1–2 Tokens → Neutral departure, bittersweet memory
- 0 or fewer → Vengeful spirits pursue PCs beyond the bridge

Patron Hooks

- *Mab: promises peace, demands a price in memory*
- *Inkblade: offers a rewritten scroll—dangerous temptation*
- *Thrydos: grants mercy to warriors who admit their failures*
- *Black Fox: the bridge hides a secret worth stealing*

GM Guidance: Tone

This is not a combat showcase. Use silence as a mechanic. Let players sit in discomfort. Reward vulnerability—characters who speak truth should be mechanically advantaged.

Endings

Peace Ending. The bridge becomes part of living memory; ancestors rest.

Bitter Ending. Some truths are too sharp; one culture departs with permanent scars.

Forbidden Ending. PCs erase a historical truth. History now remembers something that never happened.

NPCs of the Bridge of Three Echoes

Sihai NPCs

Magistrate Shen Liang *Historian-in-exile, gentle and formal. Carries scrolls spilling endless ink.*

- *Truth Feared: Falsified census records to save a starving village.*
- *If Helped: Seal of Lenient Judgment — +1 Position when pleading mercy.*
- *If Silenced: Spirits mark him with invisible ink; PCs can see “coward” across his back.*

Jade Archivist Lian Xu *Keeper of forbidden histories, brilliant and furious.*

- *Truth Feared: A massacre blamed on raiders was ordered internally.*
- *If Helped: PCs gain a True Ledger Fragment to expose corruption later.*
- *If Silenced: Spirits whisper the forbidden truth to an unwilling PC.*

Commander Wei Sun *War hero, loved by the empire, hollow with guilt.*

- *Truth Feared: Civilian deaths reported as bandit casualties.*
- *If Forgiven: Blessing of Gentle Hands — treat one lethal wound as nonlethal.*
- *If Condemned: Silent spirits gather; Unrest +1.*

Nihon NPCs

Poet-Swordsman Akiro *Duelist-philosopher polishing a perfect blade.*

- *Truth Feared: Provoked a duel to steal poetry, not for honor.*

- *If Encouraged: Offers a memory-haiku restoring one spent Echo Token.*
- *If Mocked: Challenges a PC to a Truth Duel.*

Sister Hana *Temple attendant who stole sacred coins to feed orphans.*

- *Truth Feared: Her mercy violated temple law.*
- *If Defended: Hands of Clean Intent — ignore one Corruption tick.*
- *If Condemned: She vanishes; Stability +1.*

Lord Shigure *Samurai-turned-traitor, polite and calm as ice.*

- *Truth Feared: Betrayed his lord for ambition, not justice.*
- *If Convinced: Mask of Honest Silence — reroll one failed Sway per adventure.*
- *If Proud: Becomes a vengeful spirit later.*

Ayokha NPCs

Widow Ishani *Merchant-queen carrying three lanterns for lost husbands.*

- *Truth Feared: Bribed a captain to sail early; ship sank.*
- *If Admitted: Coin of Clean Trade — advantage when negotiating peace.*
- *If Denied: Lanterns sink; Stability +2.*

Child-Keeper Tavin *Medium holding hands of forgotten children.*

- *Truth Feared: One child lives; Tavin hid him to protect him.*
- *If Revealed: Promise of Gentle Passage — advantage on death saves.*
- *If Forced: Children scatter; Unrest +1.*

The Silent Judge *Ancient Ayokhan spirit of law without mercy.*

- *Demand: Truth and consequence.*
- *If Satisfied: Stability resets; Echo Token +1.*
- *If Defied: Condemns PC, NPC, or culture — canon impact.*

Part III

Supporting Systems & Cultural Material

The Isles of the Dawn Spirit (Nihon)

Nihon — The Isles of the Dawn Spirit

Tagline. A storm-wrecked archipelago of fierce clans, living spirits, and master artisans. Nihon refines many eastern ideas into forms uniquely its own, standing in creative tension with the continental power of Sihai.

Overview (Balanced Framing)

Nihon is contrast made culture: serene moss temples beneath volcanic rims; disciplined warriors amid fractious lordships. The islands absorb, test, and reforge influences (including Sihai's), claiming neither imitation nor isolation but reinterpretation.

Geography Generator (d12)

@p0.8cmP@ d12 Feature

- 1 Four great islands ring an Inland Sea; trade junks tack between shrine-harbors.
- 2 Fire-mountains smolder; ash fertilizes terraced paddies.
- 3 Knife-edged coasts with storm-carved arches; hidden coves host clandestine docks.
- 4 Cedar-clad ridges with mist stairways and bell-lines for avalanches.
- 5 Typhoon corridors marked by stone beacons and wind shrines.
- 6 Pearl banks guarded by reef kami; divers trade with temple fleets.
- 7 Bamboo valleys echoing with practice blades at dawn.
- 8 Black-sand beaches speckled with meteoric iron.
- 9 Sky-bridges of rope and lacquer spanning ravines to fortress towns.
- 10 Volcanic hot springs claimed by monasteries and swordsmiths alike.
- 11 Cliff-temples where drums speak weather omens.
- 12 Lantern-lit fishing villages; storm bells double as invasion alarms.

Polity & Power (d10)

@p0.8cmX@ d10 Detail

- 1 Heavenly Sovereign holds ritual primacy; temples legitimize rule.
- 2 Shōgunate claim contested; generals court temple backing.
- 3 Daimyō league forms non-aggression pact against pirates.
- 4 Sword Monasteries arbitrate disputes with trial bouts.
- 5 Harbor Councils tax trade; share typhoon shelters.
- 6 Clanship Oaths bind ashigaru to rice pledges.
- 7 Smith Guild Compact: one masterpiece per year per forge.
- 8 Spirit-Mediator Shrine licenses exorcists for pay.
- 9 Pirate Amnesty offered for service against foreign raiders.
- 10 Isle Diet convenes; decisions are advisory but symbolically powerful.

Society & Arts (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Custom / Art

- 1 Swordsmithing houses pass secrets by failure journals, not manuals.
- 2 Rustic tea pavilions host ceasefires and spies in equal measure.
- 3 Noh-style masked dramas teach clan history in allegory.
- 4 Pottery kilns revere asymmetry and kiln accident.
- 5 Poetry duels settle slights before blades do.
- 6 Tide calendars are household shrines.
- 7 Tattoo guilds encode loyalty oaths in wave motifs.
- 8 Storm-offering floats carry names of the missing.

Forces & Methods (d10)

@p0.8cmX@ d10 Military Element

- 1 Samurai combined-arms: bow, spear, blade.

- 2 *Ashigaru spear walls with whistle signals.*
- 3 *Shinobi smoke, peppers, false banners.*
- 4 *Matchlocks adopted in volley lines along levees.*
- 5 *Coastal Wokou raid tariffs; sometimes deputized.*
- 6 *Temple Guards duel to arbitrate feuds.*
- 7 *Scout Boats outrun storms by reading bird-lines.*
- 8 *Blade Saints sworn to refuse coin, accept rice.*
- 9 *Armorers field-test lamellar in rain and ash.*
- 10 *Storm Drummers time charges between gusts.*

Trade & Exchange (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Exports / Imports

- 1 *Exports: blades, lacquer, ink; Imports: grain, silk, porcelain.*
- 2 *Sulphur and silver fund harbor walls.*
- 3 *Pirate-chased auctions depress prices (great bargains).*
- 4 *Sihai brokers trade jade for sword commissions.*
- 5 *Ayokhan spices traded for shipwright plans.*
- 6 *Storm insurance scrip issued by shrine treasuries.*
- 7 *Gun barrels proofed in temple pits.*
- 8 *Pilgrim tourism to volcano shrines.*

Spirits & Paths (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Practice

- 1 *Kannagara: offerings to rock, tree, and tide kami.*
- 2 *Empty Self: no-mind training in sword halls.*
- 3 *Ancestral boats set adrift at equinox.*
- 4 *Purity rites before duels; salt circles the ring.*
- 5 *Volcano appeasement dances for ash-safe winds.*
- 6 *Sea-kami ordain fishing limits by lot.*
- 7 *Shrine arbiters stamp contracts with wind-ink.*
- 8 *Zen gardens double as map puzzles for students.*

Relations (Parity Lens, d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Current State

- 1 *With Sihai: competitive emulation; naval patrol standoffs.*
- 2 *With Sihai: scholar exchanges; tariff disputes.*
- 3 *With Ayokha: monsoon ship swaps; dockside duels.*
- 4 *With Ayokha: joint anti-piracy cruises.*
- 5 *Western gun traders under shrine licensing.*
- 6 *Neutral islands serve as truce markets.*
- 7 *Mixed Sihai–Nihon craft guild in a border port.*
- 8 *Disputed lighthouse fees spark legal bout.*

Adventure Hooks (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Hook

- 1 *The Broken Sword: a murdered smith; rival clans claim the masterpiece.*
- 2 *Ronin's Code: master betrayed; walk the ash-road for honor.*
- 3 *Ghost of the Fire-Mountain: appease the waking kami or evacuate the valley.*
- 4 *The Black Ship: salvage or secrecy? gunpowder bids escalate.*
- 5 *Audience with the Sovereign: covert message through enemy provinces.*
- 6 *Shrine Storm-Bell stolen; typhoon omens unheeded.*
- 7 *Pirate Amnesty debate turns riotous at harbor court.*
- 8 *Trial by Poetry averts war—unless someone cheats.*

Ayokha — The Monsoon Throne

Ayokha — The Monsoon Throne, River of Heaven

Tagline. A temple-mandala of river, jungle, and sea—Ayokha blends what comes on the monsoon into something unmistakably its own, anchoring trade between Sihai, Nihon, and the West.

Overview

Ayokha measures borders in loyalty, harbors, and wind. A god-king sits at the center; influence radiates through vassal ports, priest-chieftains, and Sea-Lords who ride the seasonal breath of the world.

Geography & Waterworks (d12)

@p0.8cmp12.2cm@ d12 Feature

- 1 *Sona River flood-ladders feeding terrace mosaics.*
- 2 *Jade Coast mangroves hiding stilt markets.*
- 3 *Tide gates carved with celestial calendars.*
- 4 *Delta labyrinths navigated by drum code.*
- 5 *Step-pyramid temples aligned to monsoon stars.*
- 6 *Inland karst spires riddled with spirit caverns.*
- 7 *Bronze gong towers relay harbor warnings.*
- 8 *Batik guild towns with dye canals.*
- 9 *River palaces on barge foundations.*
- 10 *Jungle bridges woven of living roots.*
- 11 *Pearl-silt basins taxed by shell weight.*
- 12 *Cyclone refuges marked by mirrored tiles.*

Mandala of Power (d10)

@p0.8cmX@ d10 Node

- 1 *Devaraja health omens steer policy.*
- 2 *Vassal Kings bid for canal grants.*
- 3 *Priest-Chieftains license jungle rites.*

- 4 *Sea-Lords tithe for storm-writs and letters of marque.*
- 5 *Celestial Bureaucrats set auspicious sailing days.*
- 6 *Astrologer Courts arbitrate trade disputes by star.*
- 7 *Festival Charters open tax-free weeks for pilgrims.*
- 8 *Harbor Syndics standardize weights, seals, and scripts.*
- 9 *River Wardens control floodgates and ferry rights.*
- 10 *Temple Auditors inspect sacred treasures and relic loans.*

Forces & Fleet (d10)

@p0.8cmX@ d10 Military Element

- 1 *Royal Guard in jeweled lamellar (ceremony and steel).*
- 2 *War Elephants break lines; skirmishers screen flanks.*
- 3 *Monsoon Junks with outrigger scouts.*
- 4 *Sea-Lords' boarding crews with javelins and hooks.*
- 5 *Jungle archers versed in toxin governance.*
- 6 *River mines disguised as lotus floats.*
- 7 *Temple Engineers staff floodworks and siege ramps.*
- 8 *Harbor Fire Corps drill for ship blazes.*
- 9 *Astrolabe spotters for long-range semaphore.*
- 10 *Neutral convoy flags sold to foreigners (limited protection).*

Culture & Craft (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Art / Practice

- 1 *Temple bas-reliefs retold with living actors at dusk.*
- 2 *Dance-dramas certify guild oaths before gods and crowds.*
- 3 *Textiles with gold thread denote tide-rights.*
- 4 *Cuisine codified by wind-season: sour for south, spice for west.*
- 5 *River weddings consecrate ferry monopolies.*
- 6 *Pilgrim tattoos serve as toll passes.*
- 7 *Merchant astrology almanacs predict price tides.*
- 8 *Spirit ladders of bells appease nat in storm years.*

Adventure Hooks (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Hook

- 1 *The Silent Monsoon: find the rain's offended spirit.*
- 2 *The Sunken Temple: dive a shifting river maze.*
- 3 *The Spice Captain's Gambit: outrun rivals before the wind turns.*
- 4 *Elephant Arsenal: hold a pass with pachyderm tactics.*
- 5 *The Usurper's Whisper: unmask a court poisoner.*
- 6 *Floodgate Saboteurs threaten harvest tithes.*
- 7 *Star-Taxed Market sparks riot over unlucky day.*
- 8 *Ghost Barge bears unpaid dead to the capital.*

Sihai — The Central Kingdom

Sihai — The Central Kingdom, The Ordered Land

Tagline. *An ancient, populous empire of law, letters, and logistics. Sihai projects influence by system and scale—yet continuously adapts through frontier contact and maritime exchange.*

Overview (Balanced Framing)

Sihai is continuity given institution: examinations, canals, and corps that turn harvest into fleets and scrolls into strategy. Its power often persuades before it conquers—and learns as it persuades.

Geography & Works (d12)

@p0.8cm@ d12 Feature

- 1 *Sihon River basin: levees, fish-ladders, terrace miles.*
- 2 *Himadri passes with beacon towers and tea hostels.*
- 3 *Grand canals moving rice, troops, and poets.*
- 4 *Deep seaports with foreign quarters and coin-mints.*
- 5 *Altan Plains forts facing steppe cavalry.*
- 6 *Jade quarries sworn to ancestral cults.*
- 7 *Paper towns where mills sing like rain.*
- 8 *Salt pans governed by imperial stewards.*
- 9 *“Sky-Spine” snowmelt reservoirs feeding clockwork gates.*
- 10 *Silk districts with mulberry oaths.*
- 11 *Porcelain kilns planned on geomantic lines.*
- 12 *Maritime colonies ruled by mixed councils.*

Mandate & Bureaucracy (d10)

@p0.8cmX@ d10 Mechanism

- 1 *Mandate of Heaven: disasters prompt audits and reforms.*
- 2 *Exam Halls: anonymous scripts, public rankings.*
- 3 *Censorate: roaming inspectors with seal-breaking powers.*
- 4 *Salt-Iron Monopolies: fund fleets and roads.*
- 5 *Canal Corps: corvée mitigated by meal guarantees.*
- 6 *Frontier Commands: civilian-military joint rule.*
- 7 *Ancestral Temples: civic rites as tax calendars.*
- 8 *Merchant Boards: issue credit scrip and dispute letters.*
- 9 *Scholar-General: strategy treatises guide deployments.*
- 10 *Maritime Code: convoy law for the Hintara and Nasan.*

Forces & Methods (d10)

@p0.8cmX@ d10 Military Element

- 1 Mass infantry with crossbows and shield carts.
- 2 Riverine marines trained for lock combat.
- 3 Warrior Monks: shock teams and bodyguards.
- 4 Siege math schools attached to armies.
- 5 Cavalry auxiliaries recruited from steppe allies.
- 6 Fire-lance arsenals in coastal forts.
- 7 Navy junks as floating bastions with tower rigs.
- 8 Intelligence couriers on poetry circuits.
- 9 Logistics priests bless storehouses and ration ledgers.
- 10 Border scouts mapping by star and water-chant.

Society, Letters & Table (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Culture

- 1 Way of Harmony: physicians/astrologers balance humors and seasons.
- 2 Path of Duty: etiquette courts arbitrate insults into reparations.
- 3 Inner Reflection: quiet halls open to commoners at dusk.
- 4 Family registers entwine tax and ancestor rites.
- 5 Tea guilds sponsor river poetry contests.
- 6 Jade carvers hold "silent auctions" by gesture.
- 7 Porcelain painters encode border news in patterns.
- 8 Canal operas celebrate engineers as folk heroes.

Trade & Currency (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Flow

- 1 Exports: silk, porcelain, tea, paper; Imports: horses, gems, grain.
- 2 Silk Route convoys insured by temple bonds.
- 3 Coastal colonies mint bilingual coin.
- 4 Price edicts issued by flood forecast.
- 5 Joint ventures with Nihon smiths in neutral ports.
- 6 Ayokhan spice quotas swap for canal timber rights.
- 7 Examination stipends tied to harvest shares.
- 8 Merchant huizi (notes) accepted across three realms.

Relations (Parity Lens, d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Current State

- 1 With Nihon: naval exercises and joint anti-piracy patrols.
- 2 With Nihon: exam scholars tour sword monasteries.
- 3 With Ayokha: convoy calendars aligned to monsoon charts.
- 4 With Ayokha: harbor law harmonization talks.
- 5 With steppe states: hostage exchange for peace seasons.

- 6 With westerners: limited concessions, strict tariff boards.**
- 7 Tri-realm craft symposium on steel and ceramics.**
- 8 Lighthouse standardization summit averts wrecks.**

Adventure Hooks (d8)

@p0.8cmX@ d8 Hook

- 1 Failed Exam conspiracy reaches into the Censorate.**
- 2 Lost Legion standard haunts a Himadri pass.**
- 3 Tea and Poison at a coastal etiquette court.**
- 4 Monkey King's Tomb maps hidden in opera costumes.**
- 5 Colony's Cry: hold a mixed-port against a warlord's fleet.**
- 6 Canal breach sabotage during flood season.**
- 7 Jade tax revolt mediated by ancestor-oracle.**
- 8 Maritime code forged—or broken—at a tri-realm summit.**

Crowd Mood Track [6]

- 0–2 Curious admiration; cheers, ritual silence, respectful onlookers.**
- 3–4 Partisan chants; thrown petals; accusations of bias; reporters swarm.**
- 5 Projectiles, panic, scuffles; Position –1 on all social checks in the ring.**
- 6 Riot or stampede: duel halted, collateral harm; Political Tensions +2.**

Influencing the Crowd:

- **Respectful bow, ritual, poetic challenge: Crowd –1**
- **Public mercy or restraint: Crowd –1**
- **Brutality, insults, cheating, sacred bloodshed: Crowd +1**

Honor & Pragmatism Tokens

Characters may earn:

- **Honor Tokens for restraint, mercy, proper etiquette, protecting civilians.**
- **Pragmatism Tokens for decisive action, clever shortcuts, bold risk-taking.**

Spend 1 Token to:

- **Improve Position by +1 or**
- **Cancel a single SB spend**

If spent in public before the wrong audience, increase Crowd Mood +1.

Chain-of-Custody Evidence

Each item of physical evidence has a Custody Clock [4]. Write each handler's name per segment.

If all segments filled: evidence is clean and admissible.

If gaps exist: conspirators challenge legitimacy; DV +2 to present in court.

PCs may seal evidence with shrine-wax. Breaking a seal without a judge present:

- **Evidence becomes inadmissible**
- **Lose 1 Bell from the Seven Bell Court**

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The Seven Bell Court

A neutral Ayokhan judiciary that evaluates evidence, disputes, and rulings. PCs may earn Bells for:

- **Respectful testimony or proper ritual**
- **Clear evidence with unbroken custody**
- **Public acts of mercy or restraint**

3 Bells allows PCs to overturn any one corrupt decision or expose a falsified verdict.

Disrespect, falsified claims, or broken seals remove Bells.

Monsoon Clock [8]

Tracks seasonal weather affecting investigation and duels.

1–2: Dry — stealth easier; outdoor surveillance +1d

3–4: Squalls — ranged attacks –1d; rooftops provide cover

5–6: Peak Monsoon — travel DV +1; evidence may wash away

7–8: Clearing — crowds return; ideal time for public confrontation

Truth Duel (Non-Lethal Resolution)

If both champions accept mediation, replace lethal combat with a Three-Round Skills Duel:

- **Form: Display mastery (Melee, Acrobatics, Discipline)**
- **Spirit: Withstand insult or provocation (Resolve, Sway, Meditation)**
- **Intent: Defend one's cause (Speechcraft, Honor, Logic)**

Win any 2 of 3 to avert war while preserving face and the legitimacy of the tournament.

Riot-Stop Setpiece

When Crowd Mood = 5 or 6, PCs may attempt a culturally resonant display:

- *Sihai: Tea ceremony of de-escalation*
- *Nihon: Poetry exchange before blades*
- *Ayokha: Bell procession invoking peace*

Presence + Insight vs. DV 4:

- *Success: Crowd Mood -2, PCs gain 1 Bell*
- *Partial: Crowd Mood -1, conspirators exploit distraction*
- *Miss: Riot worsens; Tournament Integrity +1*

Judges' Scorecards

Each formal duel is evaluated by an Ayokhan panel. After each major exchange or round:

		0.95@I—c—c—c@ Category	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points
Form	Sloppy, reckless	Competent	Exemplary technique, discipline		
Spirit	Cruelty, dishonor	Restraint	Mercy, respect, cultural resonance		
Intent	Selfish motive	Neutral duty	Protection of others, justice		

At duel's end:

- *Highest total earns the judges' ruling.*
- *A fighter may lose physically yet win socially and avert humiliation.*
- *PCs may influence one category per scene via ritual, oath, or testimony.*

If judges are bribed or pressured, increase Tournament Integrity +1. Exposing tampering grants PCs +1 Bell from the Seven Bell Court.

Official Tournament Scorecard

Match:

Competitor A:

Date:

Competitor B:

@I—c—c—c—c@ Round Form Spirit Intent Total

A 1 -- -- -- --

B 1 -- -- -- --

A 2 -- -- -- --

B 2 -- -- -- --

A 3 -- -- -- --

B 3 -- -- -- --

Final Totals:

Competitor A: ----

Competitor B: ----

*Appendix: Cultural Sensitivity & Best Practices This adventure is inspired by the philosophies, aesthetics, and martial traditions of East and Southeast Asia. While the cultures pre-

sented here are fictional, they draw from real-world analogues. This appendix provides guidance for respectful, conscientious presentation at the table.

Core Design Principles

- *Celebration, not exploitation. Cultural elements are sources of wisdom, beauty, and complex philosophy—not exotic spectacle.*
- *Individuals act, cultures do not. Corruption, conspiracy, or villainy are the choices of specific people, not entire nations.*
- *Multiple truths can coexist. Sihai, Nihon, and Ayokha each possess internally coherent philosophies worthy of respect; none is presented as inferior or “primitive.”*
- *Differences produce story, not stereotypes. Philosophical tension drives narrative without reducing cultures to caricature.*

Guidance for GMs

When presenting culturally inspired characters, customs, or beliefs, prioritize:

- *Respectful tone – No mocking accents, no comedic stereotypes.*
- *Cultural nuance – Show internal disagreement: traditionalists, pragmatists, reformers, skeptics.*
- *Agency – Every NPC (even commoners) has opinions, priorities, and personal stakes.*
- *Avoid monoliths – No culture speaks with one voice; factions interpret tradition differently.*

A simple GM mantra:

“Portray dignity, curiosity, and complexity.”

Language, Ritual, and Names

Names, honorifics, and ceremonial acts should be:

- *Evocative but not appropriated directly from real-language templates*
- *Consistent within each culture’s logic (Sihai -*i* bureaucratic/formal; Nihon -*i* ritual precision; Ayokha -*i* syncretic sacred cyclicity)*
- *Used respectfully without parody or exaggerated stereotypes*

Optional Tool: If players are unfamiliar with honorifics or rituals, treat them as invitations—explain their meaning rather than turning them into obstacles or “gotchas.”

Historical Inspiration

While this adventure draws inspiration from:

- *Imperial examination systems and ancestor veneration*
 - *Samurai ethics and ritualized martial arts*
 - *Monsoon-driven maritime trade networks*
 - *Temple cosmology and spirit veneration*
- ... all cultural elements are intentionally fictionalized to avoid misrepresenting any real-world tradition. The goal is homage, not imitation.*

Cultural Evolution in Play

Cultures change. To reinforce authenticity:

- *Allow characters to challenge tradition from within*

- *Show generational differences in belief*
- *Let cultural exchange influence customs and technology*

For example:

- *A Sihai scholar fascinated by Ayokhan dance*
- *A Nihon ronin studying Sihai philosophy*
- *Ayokhan monks debating merchant influence on ritual purity*

Small details like these highlight cultural dynamism without disrespect.

Player Engagement & Consent

If the table is unfamiliar with these cultural spaces:

- *Offer a Session Zero to align tone and expectations*
- *Use a Lines/Veils/X-Card framework for comfort*
- *Allow players to ask cultural questions without embarrassment*

A respectful table should always feel safe saying:

“I’m not sure—can you explain that part?”

Recommended Reading (Optional)

Not required for play, but helpful for tone and cultural appreciation:

- *The Book of Five Rings (strategy, discipline)*
- *Tao Te Ching (balance, paradox, non-coercive ethics)*
- *The Ramayana and Mahabharata (epic duty, sacred duty)*
- *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms (statecraft, loyalty, consequence)*

These are not canonical to the setting—just inspiration for respectful tone.

Final Note

This module approaches cultural worldbuilding with humility and admiration. If at any point a player feels uncomfortable, confused, or concerned, the correct response is simple:

Pause, listen, adjust, continue with respect.

The goal is storytelling that honors the philosophical beauty, ritual depth, and human drama that inspired these cultures.

Equipment for Contemplative Adventures The following items demonstrate how the TAGS system handles equipment that is both practical and symbolic. These tools are ideal for adventures focused on memory, mercy, negotiation, or moral choice. Each item is presented with clear TAG interactions and narrative intent.

Signature Items

The Bridge-Walker's Staff

A walking staff carved from wood that grew on sacred ground.

TAGS: [WARD] [MEMORY] [STABILITY]

Carved with spiraling prayers in three scripts, this staff comforts wandering spirits and grants confidence to those who cross uncertain paths.

Mechanical Effects:

- +1d to Survival and Insight when navigating spiritual realms.

WARD vs. Cap 2 against malevolent spirits.

MEMORY : Ask one question per scene about a location's history (GM answers honestly).

STABILITY : +1 Position when crossing precarious or shifting terrain.

The Truth-Teller's Mirror

A polished bronze mirror that reflects intention rather than appearance.

TAGS: [REVEAL] [PURIFY] [BIND]

Ancient Ayokhan craftsmanship; in its surface, hearts show more clearly than faces.

Mechanical Effects:

REVEAL : Truth vs. DV 3 to expose deception or hidden motives.

PURIFY : Remove [CURSE] or [CORRUPTION] from minor objects or afflictions.

BIND : Two willing parties may swear a truth-oath; resisting breaks the binding.

The Mercy-Bearer's Bowl

A wooden bowl that never empties when compassion is sincere.

TAGS: [HEAL] [CLEANSE] [SHARE]

Food or drink shared from this bowl eases hunger and burdens of the heart.

Mechanical Effects:

HEAL : Recover minor Harm or a light Condition once per scene.

CLEANSE : Remove one level of [FEAR] or [SHAME].

SHARE : Any beneficial effect may be distributed among multiple recipients.

Weapons of Philosophical Weight

Meteor Hammer of Remembrance

A chain and weight forged from fallen stars; each link bears a name.

TAGS: [BIND] [FORCE] [MEMORY] [AREA]

Each life the wielder protects is engraved into the chain, strengthening its purpose.

Mechanical Effects:

FORCE + [AREA]: Sweep attack vs. multiple foes (Harm 1 each).

BIND : May restrain a target. Breaking the restraint requires resisting the emotional bond (DV 3, or DV 4 if the wielder invokes a named life).

MEMORY : After 10 lives are consciously protected, the weapon gains +1 Effect.

- *Backlash: Breaking an unjust bond causes Harm 1 to the wielder; the chain grows heavier.*

The Scholar's Quill of Truth

Ink flows only for honest words.

TAGS: [SCRIBE] [REVEAL] [BIND] [WARD]

Mechanical Effects:

SCRIBE : Records written with this quill gain [WARD] vs. alteration.

REVEAL : Hidden clauses or lost text become visible when traced.

BIND : Contracts written are magically enforceable if witnessed.

- **Limitation:** Cannot write deliberate falsehoods; the nib locks.

The Diplomat's Fan of Seasons

What was, what is, and what might be.

TAGS: [VEIL] [REVEAL] [SANCTIFY] [COMMAND]

Mechanical Effects:

VEIL : Obscures the wielder's intentions during negotiation.

REVEAL : Shows one plausible outcome of the current debate.

SANCTIFY : Creates neutral ground acceptable to all parties present.

COMMAND : Once per scene, issue an order consistent with the revealed truth.

Ritual Tools

The Bridge Lantern

A floating light that guides lost souls home.

TAGS: [GUIDE] [PURIFY] [MARK] [WARD]

Mechanical Effects:

GUIDE : Always points toward a designated destination.

PURIFY : Cleanses minor spiritual corruption in the area.

MARK : Place a beacon visible only to spirits and mediums.

WARD : Protects a small area from malevolent spirits (DV = user's Spirit).

Scroll of Unwritten Truths

Records what was never spoken.

TAGS: [SCRIBE] [REVEAL] [BIND] [DISPEL]

Mechanical Effects:

SCRIBE : Records any witnessed event with perfect accuracy.

REVEAL : Shows hidden truth or perspective within the record.

BIND : Truths become immutable within the scope of the scroll.

DISPEL : Counters illusion or false memory tied to the record.

Cultural Adornments

Three-Culture Prayer Beads

One strand in harmony: Sihai, Nihon, Ayokha.

TAGS: [WARD] [HEAL] [GUIDE] [SANCTIFY]

Mechanical Effects:

WARD : Advantage vs. spiritual threats of the three cultures.

HEAL : Recover 1 Fatigue or minor Harm via meditation.

GUIDE : +1d to cross-cultural understanding or etiquette.

SANCTIFY : Creates neutral ground acceptable to all three traditions.

Memory Keeper's Robe

Threads woven with emotional weight.

TAGS: [WARD] [MEMORY] [VEIL] [PURIFY]

Mechanical Effects:

WARD : Protects the wearer from [FEAR] or [DESPAIR].

MEMORY : Recall exact words or emotions from preserved moments.

VEIL : Conceals the wearer's present emotional state.

PURIFY : Remove one level of [CORRUPTION] or [CURSE] by sacrificing a memory woven into the garment.

Utility Items

Compass of Consequences

Points toward choices of greatest moral weight.

TAGS: [GUIDE] [REVEAL] [COMMAND] [BIND]

Mechanical Effects:

GUIDE : Always indicates the path with greatest consequence.

REVEAL : Shows likely outcomes of following or ignoring guidance.

COMMAND : Compels acknowledgement of moral implications.

BIND : Ignoring the compass knowingly causes [CORRUPTION].

Cup of Shared Burden

Suffering shared becomes suffering lessened.

TAGS: [HEAL] [SHARE] [BIND] [PURIFY]

Mechanical Effects:

HEAL : Distribute Harm or Fatigue among willing participants.

SHARE : Beneficial effects spread across those drinking together.

BIND : Creates temporary empathic link (shared emotion or pain).

PURIFY : Remove [CURSE] or [POISON] by sharing it among willing participants.

Talisman of Open Bargains
Negotiation without deception.
TAGS: [REVEAL] [WARD] [BIND]
Mechanical Effects:
REVEAL : Hidden motives and unfair terms become apparent.
WARD : Protects both parties from manipulation or coercion.
BIND : Agreements made in good faith are honored by spirits of commerce.

Knife of Quiet Release
Cuts bonds of suffering, not flesh.
TAGS: [DISPEL] [PURIFY] [RELEASE]
Mechanical Effects:
DISPEL : Ends unwanted spiritual ties or parasitic spirits.
PURIFY : Removes lingering emotional poison (shame, guilt, obsession).
RELEASE : A person may willingly sever a vow or burden; if unjust, backlash causes Fatigue 1.

TAGS System Notes

These items demonstrate the core strengths of TAG-based gear:

- **Purpose over power:** Items matter because of narrative weight.
- **Mechanical clarity:** Each TAG defines what the item can do.
- **Cultural authenticity:** Effects reflect philosophical values.
- **Elegant limits:** Backlash, corruption, and sacrifice prevent abuse.

Item Quick Reference

@I I X@ Item TAGS At-a-Glance Use

Bridge-Walker's Staff [WARD][MEMORY][STABILITY] +1d Survival/Insight in spirit realms; Cap 2 ward vs. spirits; ask 1 true history Q/scene; +1 Position on precarious crossings.

Truth-Teller's Mirror [REVEAL][PURIFY][BIND] DV 3 reveal deception/intent; remove minor [Curse]/[Corruption]; forge truth-oath between willing parties.

Mercy-Bearer's Bowl [HEAL][CLEANSE][SHARE] Heal minor Harm/Condition 1/scene; remove one level of [Fear] or [Shame]; share any beneficial effect.

Meteor Hammer of Remembrance [BIND][FORCE][MEMORY][AREA] Sweep (Harm 1) vs. many; restrain via bonds (DV 3/4); +1 Effect after 10 lives saved; backlash Harm 1 when breaking unjust bonds.

Scholar's Quill of Truth [SCRIBE][REVEAL][BIND][WARD] Records gain [WARD]; reveal hidden/erased text; witnessed contracts become enforceable; refuses falsehoods.

Diplomat's Fan of Seasons [VEIL][REVEAL][SANCTIFY][COMMAND] Veil intent; show one plausible outcome; create neutral ground; once/scene issue order consistent with revealed truth.

Bridge Lantern [GUIDE][PURIFY][MARK][WARD] Always guides to set destination; cleanse minor spiritual taint; set spirit-visible beacon; ward area (DV = user's Spirit).

Scroll of Unwritten Truths [SCRIBE][REVEAL][BIND][DISPEL] Perfectly record events; reveal hidden truth in the record; fix truths within scope; dispel illusions tied to it.

Three-Culture Prayer Beads [WARD][HEAL][GUIDE][SANCTIFY] Edge vs. tri-cultural spirit threats; recover 1 Fatigue/Harm via meditation; +1d cross-cultural rolls; neutral ground for all three.

Memory Keeper's Robe [WARD][MEMORY][VEIL][PURIFY] Ward vs. [Fear]/[Despair]; recall words/emotions; veil current affect; purge [Corruption]/[Curse] by sacrificing a stored memory.

Compass of Consequences [GUIDE][REVEAL][COMMAND][BIND] Points to highest-consequence path; reveal likely outcomes; force moral acknowledgement; ignoring knowingly inflicts [Corruption].

Cup of Shared Burden [HEAL][SHARE][BIND][PURIFY] Split Harm/Fatigue among the willing; share boons; temporary empathic link; dilute [Curse]/[Poison] among participants.

Talisman of Open Bargains [REVEAL][WARD][BIND] Reveal hidden motives/terms; ward against coercion; bind fair agreements by commerce spirits.

Knife of Quiet Release [DISPEL][PURIFY][RELEASE] Sever parasitic/spiritual ties; purge emotional toxins; willingly end vows/burdens (unjust release causes Fatigue 1).

TAG Legend

- [WARD] — Protects, deflects, or resists hostile spiritual/mental forces. Often sets DV or Cap.
- [MEMORY] — Recalls, records, or reveals past intent/context; may ask setting-true questions.
- [STABILITY] — Improves footing, balance, and composure; commonly grants Position.
- [REVEAL] — Exposes truth, intent, or hidden states; often rolled vs. DV.
- [PURIFY] — Removes taint, minor corruption, curses, or emotional toxins.
- [BIND] — Creates oaths, restraints, empathic links, or enforceable contracts.
- [HEAL] — Recovers minor Harm, Conditions, or Fatigue within scene limits.
- [CLEANSE] — Eases specific afflictions: [Fear], [Shame], similar.
- [SHARE] — Distributes effects across willing targets; merges burdens/benefits.
- [FORCE] — Direct physical impact; adds Harm or leverage in contested actions.
- [AREA] — Affects multiple targets or a zone; pair with other tags for scope.
- [VEIL] — Obscures intent, aura, or presence; counters basic detection.
- [SANCTIFY] — Establishes neutral/sacred ground; suspends hostile influence.
- [COMMAND] — Issues binding directives aligned with ritual, truth, or mandate.
- [GUIDE] — Points toward destinations, truths, or consequential choices.
- [MARK] — Creates beacons, traces, or claim-signs seen by specified senses.
- [SCRIBE] — Writes immutable records or reveals/anchors textual truth.
- [DISPEL] — Ends illusions, false memories, or parasitic bonds.
- [RELEASE] — Cleanly severs vows, bindings, or suffering ties (often with cost).