

TOKYO :OTHERSCAPE



JAPAN SETTING BOOK

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to our Kickstarter backers. Thank you all!**

See the full list of backers at the end of *Metro :Otherscape*.

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CONTENT WARNING

This game contains mild language as well as strong themes of violence, crime, and immorality. Parental guidance is advised.

PRONOUN USE

Where the third person is required, this book refers to characters and players as 'they' and to the MC as 'she'. This is an arbitrary division for the sake of readability; characters, players, and MCs may be of any or no gender.

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An aerial, high-angle view of a dense, futuristic cityscape, likely Tokyo. The city is filled with numerous skyscrapers and buildings of varying heights, some with glowing windows and neon lights. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds. A large, semi-transparent red watermark is overlaid diagonally across the center of the image. The watermark consists of a large 'X' shape formed by two intersecting lines, with a circular symbol containing a stylized 'e' or '3' at the top right. The overall aesthetic is cyberpunk or sci-fi.

CHAPTER 1

// TOKYO MEGACITY

| Setting Information





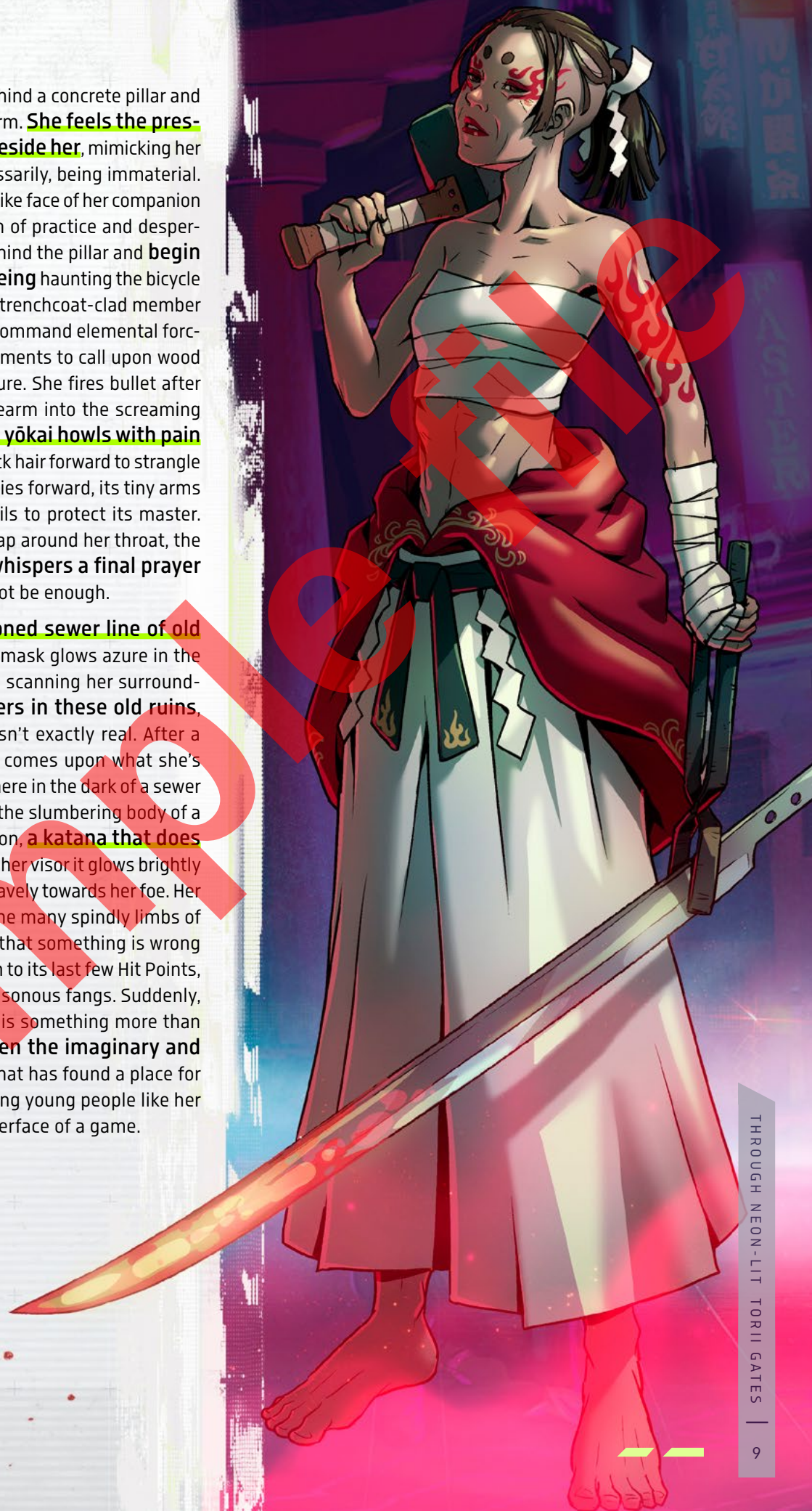
THROUGH NEON-LIT TORII GATES

Acidic rain pours down hard upon a businessman as he slumps to the ground, exhausted, while his wet synthetic hair implants send error messages, demanding maintenance.

He has missed his train, but that is just the beginning of his long list of losses today. His biggest client has left the company along with his hopes of moving up on the corporate ladder. The man knows that **this is the beginning of the end**. Soon everyone at the office will speak of his lack of competence. As the sun sets and **the holos of his smart suit light up** to cast faint light in the rain, he realizes that he is kneeling before an old roadside shrine; its stone contours shielded from the elements by a sturdy plastic enclosure extending from the nearby bus stop structure. He recognizes the **kami depicted on the shrine's side** as a Dōsojin, a spirit of paths and boundaries. He used to pay respect to these shrines, before his job took over his life. And suddenly the businessman feels a warm light emanating from the stone, and realizes that this spirit of liminality and movement is reaching out to him. As lightning flashes around him, **he hears the spirit talking to him**, speaking of a different life that could be his, far from the meeting rooms and micromanagement. Gripping his briefcase, the man rises.

An onmyōji inspector dodges behind a concrete pillar and reloads her bureau-issued sidearm. **She feels the presence of her shikigami spirit beside her**, mimicking her stance and taking cover unnecessarily, being immaterial. The inspector looks into the childlike face of her companion spirit and nods. With speed born of practice and desperation, the pair jump out from behind the pillar and **begin their attack on the strange being** haunting the bicycle parkade. The onmyōji inspector, trenchcoat-clad member of the Bureau of Onmyō able to command elemental forces, performs precise hand movements to call upon wood to give her the flexibility to endure. She fires bullet after enchanted bullet out of her sidearm into the screaming ghost-like entity. **The shrieking yōkai howls with pain** and anger, extending its long black hair forward to strangle the onmyōji, but the shikigami flies forward, its tiny arms grasping at the oily black tendrils to protect its master. As the ghostly hair begins to wrap around her throat, the woman **closes her eyes and whispers a final prayer for aid**. Wood's flexibility may not be enough.

Dropping down into an **abandoned sewer line of old Tokyo**, a teenage girl's gaming mask glows azure in the darkness. She stands up slowly, scanning her surroundings. There are very **real dangers in these old ruins**, but what she's worried about isn't exactly real. After a few minutes of exploration she comes upon what she's seeking – what she's afraid of. There in the dark of a sewer junction, **visible only in AR**, is the slumbering body of a vast spider. She draws her weapon, **a katana that does not exist in meatspace**, but in her visor it glows brightly with power, and walks forward bravely towards her foe. Her sword cleaves cleanly through the many spindly limbs of the monster, yet she **can sense that something is wrong** here. Just as the monster is down to its last few Hit Points, it stabs into her side with its poisonous fangs. Suddenly, she knows all too well that this is something more than just a game – **a hybrid between the imaginary and the magical**. A terrible entity that has found a place for itself down here in the dark, luring young people like her into its clutches through the interface of a game.





20XX 東京へようこそ WELCOME TO TOKYO 20XX

Tokyo is the quintessential *:Otherscape* Megacity. The people of Tokyo have long been standing on the cutting edge of technology, while at the same time remaining connected to their mythology and history. With *:Otherscape's* focus on the nuanced interactions between the Noise and the Mythoi, Tokyo serves as the perfect backdrop for cyberpunk stories in which myths come to life.

:Otherscape kicks off at an undetermined point, any number of decades or even centuries from now. This book is not a future history of Japan, but an imagined tapestry upon which the MC and the crew could work together to define your own Tokyo, with idiosyncrasies unique to your own stories.

Don't fret about how soon we'll have cyborgs, androids, or hyper-realistic VR. If a technology is cool and feels right for your fictional version of Tokyo – include it. If it seems

plausible that an imaginary chain of events could take this Megacity in a particular dystopian direction that helps you tell mythic cyberpunk stories – go for it.

THE LITTLE GODS THAT NEVER LEFT

Lurking in every abandoned building and under every roadside shrine are the spirits many thought were just myths. The Mythoi of Japan never truly receded into the shadows in the modern age. Japanese culture has – in parts – remained reverent to the myriad deities and supernatural beings of Shinto, Buddhism, and other religions, even if in ritual alone. Thanks to this, Tokyo is now an overt playground for kami (gods) large and small, the strange phenomena of the yōkai, the hauntings of yūrei (ghosts) and akuma (Buddhist demons), and many, many other Mythoi, that have now returned to play a frontline role in shaping the destiny of the Megacity. They are not met with the respect they deserve, however. In all of the Noise, the revered past is considered by millions as nothing but yet another cultural artifact to be consumed, and many once-revered shrines and temples have been lying in ruins for years.

HARDWARE HAVEN

The near-future of Tokyo is one both improved and ruined by increasing industrialization, mechanization, and technology-fuelled ecological disasters. Everything is automated, everyone is connected. Fed by millenia of intricate artisanship with incredible and sometimes all-consuming attention to detail, the last century has put Japan at the forefront of hardware design, even as manufacturing gradually trickled offshore. From popular personal vehicles to household robotics, from VR gear to exoskeletons, Tokyo is now a hotbed of hard tech ingenuity. Reverence for craft and well-made artifacts is ingrained in local culture, compounded by the fact that in Japanese folklore any item can become a Source if it exists long enough, a phenomenon known as tsukumogami (page 19). This unmatched quality has professionals from all over the world flocking to Tokyo, digitally or in person, to purchase the finest meatspace-crafted hardware. The top market for rare or illicit hardware of any kind is the fabled and nefarious **Ghost Market** (page 159), an AR/VR pop-up cybermarket superimposed on a different meatspace location every night.

EMERGENCY-POWERED CITY-STATE

Japan was the first to mass-utilize nanotech, and the first to get burned by it in a disaster that quite literally reshaped the nation. Dubbing the government response inadequate, Tokyo itself took over all aspects of governance and expanded westwards aggressively while becoming the new *de facto* regime. The Nano-butai (page 25) gained almost limitless jurisdiction that they retain even now, long after the disaster has been contained. This power was quickly siphoned by corrupt officials into unholy covenants with the already-in-league corporate zaibatsus (page 26) and Yakuza crime syndicates (page 27), further subjecting the local population to the unchecked rule of modern-day shoguns and daimyos.

ANGRY SEAS OF NANITES

Throughout history, Japan has seen its share of natural and man-made disasters, and unfortunately climate change and unchecked tech developments have not made things any better. Earthquakes, tsunami, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons batter Tokyo more frequently than ever before, whether due to measurable ecological impact or the resurfacing of furious sea gods and monsters. Quarantined pockets of nanites from the days of the great disaster dot the Megacity, but especially in the adjacent mountainous wilderness, where entire scavenging tribes of displaced and contaminated refugees have re-established ancient

lifestyles and resumed worship of forgotten kami of disease. Worse yet, the yōkai and other kami have come to inhabit and corrupt these disaster zones and nanite clouds.

EVERYTHING IS GAME

One of the Megacity's biggest industries is sheer Noise in the form of gaming. From mind-numbing hyper-casual games played in AR with little more than the flick of an eyelid or one's pinky to seizure-inducing platformers and high-octane shooters with professional leagues streaming to global audiences and impossibly immersive VR RPGs that are indistinguishable from real life – it's all made here, laced with that touch of genius that Japanese game visionaries have always had. But as thrill-seeking gamers keep craving higher stakes amid countless "casuals" who sink into a fantasy they never want to leave, the boundaries between life and play are rapidly pixelating and blurring, with deadly results – while being paraded and advertised by the corps as being better than life itself.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK FOR?

Tokyo is a Megacity setting book for *Otherscape* that provides everything you need to jump right into the game without having to put together your own setting. Within these pages you'll find an extrapolation of what Tokyo could become in a sci-fi near future, with a big cybernetic eye aimed towards how the various cultural elements of Japan might look like in an increasingly supernatural setting. Here we explore what might happen if the kami, gods, and monsters of Japanese legend were to exist alongside corporate warlords, nanotech disasters, and Yakuza gangs.

The point of this book is to do the bulk of the heavy lifting for you, whether you're an MC or a player. This means we provide cultural and baseline setting guides (in this chapter), useful player options (see Chapter 2), Challenges and Power Sets of supernatural threats from Japanese mythology in their cyberpunk versions (see Chapter 3), detailed operations of Key Players running the Tokyo Megacity (see Chapter 4), and finally a host of fun jobs to send your crews on (see Chapter 5).

But this book is not exhaustive. Tokyo is a sprawling Megacity with an untold number of stories and details waiting to be explored and invented. Make this rain-drenched, neon-lit, place your own. If you've got a cool idea, add it to your Tokyo!

BUREAUCRATIC ONMYŌJI AND OTAKU SAMURAI

When the yōkai strike from the shadows, somebody's got to lay their life on the line to protect Tokyo's citizens. The government office for dealing with the supernatural, the **Bureau of Onmyō** (page 151), raises its head after many years of being pushed to the sidelines. It rapidly gains momentum and power, albeit not nearly enough to handle the explosion of Source-related crimes in the Megacity. Zaibatsus deploy their heartless black ops teams for surgical power grabs in the old districts, seeking to exploit Relics and active Thin Place shrines. The largely-discarded and Source-rich district of Old Tokyo has become a new battleground for those who are paying attention to the Mythoi comeback. A grassroots movement of nerdy samurai wannabes, the self-dubbed "**Neo-Samurai**" (page 177), are the only remaining line of defense for these sacred places, but whether they can live by the code of their honorable namesakes remains to be seen.

ROBOTS & MECHS

Owing to its place as a leader in robotics, the Tokyo Megacity has become home to millions of robotic units, from manufacturing machines to domestic "waifu" or "husbando"

substitutes. While most of these are insentient machines driven by basic code or weak AIs that only simulate a mind, many are powered by increasingly self-aware AIs or become hosts for rogue AIs who seek to experience meatspace and the self-definition that comes with a localized body. To add to that, robotics are widely used in well-funded operations in construction, corporate warfare, and yōkai extermination, sparking a race for better, bigger, and stronger mechas which is bleeding over into street culture, such as the **Kumo Crawler Races** (page 234).

PLAYING ELSEWHERE IN JAPAN

This book combines Tokyo-specific locations and Mythoi with elements of the greater Japanese culture. You can use most of the information here to set your Megacity elsewhere in Japan, whether as a counterforce to the encroaching and self-governed Tokyo Megacity described in this book or as part of a completely alternative timeline and focus for your series. However, you may wish to replace some of the Tokyo-specific content with local legends hailing from your chosen Japanese city or region.