

Okoto Travelers' Guide



A Bionicle G2 RPG

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1. Introduction

Greetings, friend. If you're reading this, I'm guessing that you're interested in learning about the island of Okoto. You've come to the right place: I can assure you that you will find no more thorough a document on the subject than the compiled journals of Shellbe of the Water tribe, explorer, archaeologist, naturalist, and adventurer extraordinaire. I have spent my life climbing up every mountain, delving into every ruin, and chasing the sights of every far corner of our island, cataloguing everything I found as I went, and all of it is now in here: Okoto's history, geography, and its myriad of friendly (and often unfriendly) inhabitants and everything there is to know about them. Well, everything I could find, that is, but then this is meant to be a first-hand account, right? And while I can vouch for the accuracy of every scrap of information contained within these pages, I suppose I should acknowledge first that I wasn't alone in gathering it. I wasn't the wisest to set off into the wilderness alone so many years ago; I didn't get very far and it nearly cost me my life twice over. No, only when I gathered with me a group of similarly curious and capable adventuring spirits were we able to make and survive the journeys whose product you are now holding in your hands. So, as matter of introduction, I shall quickly describe to you those without whom this document would likely never have come into being and how I came to meet them.

Actually, not only could he not have written this without us being with him on his journey; we helped him write it from the get-go. He dictated the final version, of course, but I managed to put some of mine and our other companions' lines in here just like this one. – Brel

I find my description as a 'curious' and an 'adventuring' spirit inaccurate. However, I would agree that I am very capable. - Daruth

My Companions

First off, Brel's an old friend of mine. We met when we were but children, and while my gaze was always directed firmly inland towards the mountains that dominate the center of Okoto and its border regions, her eyes were always drawn to the sea. As soon as she was allowed to, she started sailing with small merchant ships on trade routes with the Jungle region to the south of ours. She soon fell into the habit of frequently moving ship, and by the time I met her again, several years later and when I'd just returned barely alive from my first exploratory journey inland, she had sailed around the entire island several times and was working on her own, admittedly humble vessel. Curious to see the other regions, I offered to join in and before long we were on our way north, carrying cargo to a Port Avelen in the Region of Ice during one of the few months of the year when it was not frozen over. Throughout my adventures since, Brel has been my closest companion. No braver than I am, she is at least more capable with a sword and had already gathered a lot of useful info about all the regions of our island through time spent in their ports. Whenever we arrived in a new place, Brel was the first to alert us of potential danger... and point us to the location of the nearest brewery or community hut were festivities were underway.

It was in Port Avelen in the Region of Ice where we met Daruth, a young guard aspiring to joining the Twilight Watch. The Twilight Watch guard the Region of Ice's highest and most hostile mountains,

watching over them from towers and fortresses made from crystal-clear blocks of ice. To become a member of the Twilight Watch, one must prove themselves worthy; upon hearing of my intent to travel all over the island and recognizing that many challenges would be encountered along the way, Daruth asked to join in. After all, what better way to prove your mettle than to survive long, dangerous journeys through areas that few even dare to get close to, never mind cross? Also, given that Brel's boat had become stranded in the harbor after one of the Region of Ice's famous 'flash frosts' had set in, going inland was pretty well our own only option and Daruth proved an excellent guide if rather cold company. He has this code he lives by, you see; it's his interpretation of the values of the Twilight Watch, and it doesn't leave much room for small-talk, comfort, or... personality. The guy's as stoic as they come, but in fight he's the rock whose shield everyone ducks behind.

We eventually joined up with a group of merchants heading south to cross through one of the mountain passes into the Region of Stone. I wouldn't call myself a big fan of the Region of Stone (who would be with so little water around?), but at least it would be warmer than the Region of Ice. My misgivings about the lack of water were proven right when we got lost in its deserts after a sandstorm and water was the first thing that we started to run low on. Through good fortune, we happened upon two other lost souls: Sileth and Rexuse from the Fire tribe. Sileth is an entertainer, a teller of legends and tall tales (which he still insists I do too) traveling from city to city to put on his grand show with the help of Rexuse. Rexuse is one of those lucky few with the elemental spark, able to bend the element of fire to her will and through it produce spectacular displays to back up Sileth's storytelling. The two make quite the dynamic duo on stage, but at the time of our meeting their main contribution to our journey was leading us to an oasis that they had passed not long before. We camped there for a couple of days until a passing herder of the Stone Tribe was able to lead us to an outpost of civilization in the barren desert. By that point, Sileth had already decided to join Brel, Daruth, and me on our journey. He figured that whatever happened to us would make for a great tale to tell around the fire someday, and better yet, he'd be the first to tell it. Of course, him coming along meant that Rexuse did too. Admittedly, I was rather overjoyed at this decision at the time; I'd had my eye on her pretty much since the moment we met, and I'm pleased to say that now, years later, we're actually raising a child together. Anyways, both Sileth and Rexuse made for much more enjoyable company than Daruth did; throughout our journeys from that point on, they regaled us with pretty much every tale and legend in Sileth's repertoire.

He was looking more at me than for a source of water even before we led him and his group to that oasis. Talk about priorities, right? - Nexuse

We stayed and enjoyed the hospitality of the Stone Tribe for quite a while before our journey took us southwards to the Earth region, whose great underground cities Sileth's tales had already been preparing us for. They didn't disappoint, though encounters with several hostile creatures along the way had left us and our equipment reeling. As it turns out, just about everything in the Region of Earth is quite expensive, so we got repairs done by a visitor instead: a smith from the Jungle Tribe named Axon was able to negotiate the use of a forge and patched up our armor, weapons, and other battered kit. He'd come to the Earth Region to perfect his craft but was in need of an escort back to the Jungle region, which we would happily provide if he did equipment maintenance. A deal was made, and Axon joined us as we traveled southwards, across the Region of Fire, and deep into the Region of Jungle. As

it turned out, he did far more than maintenance; by the time we reached his home village of Kuckoo Falls, we all had at least one piece of equipment enhanced with a rune of one form or another and Axon had become a fast friend. So, as we planned our journey onwards, we asked him to come along, which he did.

If I knew what we were going to run into, I would've asked for more payment. An encounter with a Forge Lord is not worth two common widgets per day. Then again, making off with its shield was. - Axon

Our party of six, Brel, Daruth, Sileth, Rexuse, Axon and myself, has since traveled up and down Okoto multiple times. We must've seen every corner of this island, and I can definitely say we charted it in more detail than anyone else has done before us, but no doubt there is still much out there to find. Though Rexuse and I have settled down temporarily to raise our daughter and the other members of our group have all established themselves in their homes as well, others still hear the call of the mountains and the lands beyond the horizon. In fact, I still do, and while I may not get the opportunity to travel as we did back then anytime soon, I have at least been able to compile this volume in the meantime to make sure that those who set out to explore our island will be well informed of what is out there. So read these pages carefully, adventurer-to-be, and you may yet survive what this island has to throw at you.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shellbe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Shellbe of the Water Tribe, explorer, archaeologist, naturalist, and adventurer extraordinaire.

Shellbe, you forgot to add "teller of tall tales" to your already rather exaggerated list of titles. – Brel

And "reckless fool." – Daruth

If he's a reckless fool, what were we for joining him? – Nexuse

Heroes of great courage! – Sileth

Concerning Okotans

Before delving in deeper, I think a short aside concerning, well... us is in order. By “us” I mean the Okotans. Sure, I’d expect you to know the basics of your village, maybe your tribe, but just in case you may not be familiar with the others, here’s the general idea that I got from wandering around on this island for years and meeting lots and lots of people. Okotans, as a rule, don’t really want trouble. True, some of us prepare for it more than others and some would say that I personally have a strong urge to look for it, but in general we like to go about our daily lives calmly and don’t concern ourselves too much with what the guy next door is doing. Unless we think it’s something dangerous, of course.

A strong urge to look for trouble? Shellbe, you practically walk around with a glowing sign inviting it to come to you. – Brel

Pretty much the whole population of the island lives in pretty small villages for reasons that I should make clear when I start talking more about the history of Okoto. Here in the water tribe, we usually build wooden huts on islands, floating wooden huts on water, or suspend wooden huts on posts over swampy ground, though a rather interesting fellow is trying to perfect a design for some kind of underwater stone hut. We’re particularly fond of farming, fishing, and farming fish. Our neighbors to the northwest, the Ice Tribe, are a stoic lot who generally remain holed up high in their mountains in anything from small huts to big fortresses made of ice blocks. They like ice fishing, hunting ice creatures, and building more things out of ice.

We are also quite fond of astronomy. – Daruth

To the south of us is the Region of Jungle, home of the Jungle Tribe and a staggering variety of differently colored birds and other less savory creatures. The Jungle tribe build wooden huts like ours, but they build them high up in the trees and connect them with rickety bridges that only they feel are safe to cross. They also enjoy throwing parties high in the trees and delving into ruins below them because the Region of Jungle is home to many ruins. Together, the regions of Water, Ice, and Jungle make up the western half of our island. The eastern half is taken up by the regions of Stone, Earth, and Fire. The Region of Stone is primarily a wide, moving expanse of sand through which the members of the Stone Tribe somehow drive lots of Mahi and Mukau from one oasis to the next. Less migratory members of the Stone Tribe usually live in stone huts carved into the side of one of their region’s thousands of very similar-looking rock formations. The Region of Earth lies to the south of the Region of Stone and basically looks like someone hit the ground with a giant hammer repeatedly until the entire region resembled a blown-up version of the surface of a pile of gravel, occasionally broken up by all sorts of funky-colored crystals. Understandably unimpressed with the view on the surface, the members of the Earth Tribe generally live in huts that they carve into cave walls underground, where they also mine for lots of valuable materials to trade with their neighbors for more essential items like food and clothing. Lastly, the Region of Fire, well... I think my partner here is more qualified to describe it than I am.

Right. The Region of Fire is surrounded by mountains on both sides, like most regions, but several of those around the Region of Fire are volcanoes. Rivers of lava flow out of them constantly, joining into a great red stream that runs down the center of the

region and gradually cools as it flows towards the shoreline on the south end of the region. The lava keeps the us all plenty hot and it looks beautiful at night, but we make good use of it too. Cooled lava becomes very fertile ground for farming; most visitors expect to find a landscape of only lava and gray and black rocks when they come to the Region of Fire, but we actually grow a lot of crops all year 'round. It's never really winter when you have a river of lava to keep you warm. – Nexuse

Also, they make their huts out of stone and with very big windows because you need that much ventilation when the average daily temperature doesn't drop below "very hot."

There's a couple of generally important positions that the people who you meet may have that are also useful to know about. First off, if a village has a guy or girl wandering about in fancy looking robes or their mask as any runes on it, chances are that they are in charge. They're probably a shaman and, if you don't cause trouble, won't mind helping you if you've got some injuries that you need taken care of. If you're having trouble with one of the metal parts of your body or with your equipment, you'll have to seek out the second most important person in town: the smith. In general, anyone who spends time making things is going to be held in fairly high esteem, so treat them accordingly. Anyone carrying a weapon is probably a guard or a hunter stopping by; both can help if there's trouble, but you don't want to be near them if you're the trouble in question. Like I said at the beginning; Okotans usually don't look for and don't want any trouble.

Anyways, I think that's a good enough quick and dirty introduction to the people of Okoto for you to get by with.

2. History of Okoto

If I launched straight into explaining the geography of our island, I fear I might raise more questions than answers. It's littered with places whose significance would be hard to explain without going over their history first. Thankfully, I am well familiar with the stories of our past and, as a master archaeologist, have been able to add to them several times over my journeys, so I can do more than just give you the "where" regarding the more scenic spots on our island; I can give you the "why" too. In fact, let me start with that; the history of Okoto, or at least as much as we currently know.

"Why" was also a question we frequently raised throughout our journeys regarding his behavior, and just so you know, we rarely got an answer. – Sileth

The Beginning

In the beginning, there was only Shadow... or so the legends say.

Honestly, no one on Okoto could give you a clear answer on how exactly our island, our world came into being, and even I am not going to pretend that I can. I do know, however, that the island and likely the rest of the world is a permanent manifestation of six elements: Fire, Water, Earth, Stone, Jungle, and Ice. I also know that, in the absence of these elements, Shadow appears. This, therefore, what follows is what I think happened.

Shellbe admitting that he doesn't know something for certain is a rarity, and usually it heralds the imminent telling of a pretty outlandish story. Trust me, I've been living with him for a while. – Nexuse

Cue the dramatic background music. – Sileth

The Seed

In the beginning, there was only Shadow, or rather it was the only element ever-present, ruling over all. All the other elements existed in a roiling chaos, flowing through and around each other as streams and wisps fading rapidly in and out of existence. This was the natural state of the universe until a collision between six of the elements produced something different: a small, solid lump composed of Fire, Water, Earth, Stone, Jungle, and Ice in equal parts. This was the seed: the first tangible, permanent object created not from Shadow, but from a combination of other elements. Over time, as more elemental streams and wisps collided with the seed, they became part of it too, adding more of their elements into the mix and making the seed grow larger. After a very, very long time, it had grown large enough to become a world. Our world.

The elements making up the world existed in perfect harmony, but they were not uniformly distributed throughout it. For balance, Fire, the most unstable of the elements, was concentrated in the center and encased in a mantle of stone and ice. This mantle was coated in turn in a layer of earth and water; the water became the oceans and the earth their floor. The fire was difficult to contain, however, and wherever it found weak spots in the stone mantle and earthen crust, it pushed them upwards and through the layer of water. This created the landmasses, and in spots where the fire managed to push completely through the mantle and crust, it created volcanoes. Lastly, Jungle coated the entire seed in

the form of air, thin enough to allow more elements to flow into and add to the growing world. This seed was not the only one to be created, oh no. Similar collisions between elements elsewhere produced similar seeds, with the potential to grow into other worlds vastly different from our own. Some of these seeds were formed of different elements, one of which will be particularly important to our story: Light. Seeds coated in Light became suns and stars: bright beacons that lit up all the void around them, banishing the shadows whenever their rays hit other elements. When such a beacon formed near our world, the stage was set for the appearance of life.

Your characterization of the stars as elemental seeds similar to our world is a fanciful one. They are the spirits of heroes past, ascended to the sky above and looking down upon us. – Daruth

Concerning Life

I'm not sure what to call life, actually. Is it merely a complex interaction of all the elements already present in our world, merely enabled by light? While it is true so far as I can see that life cannot exist without Light, throughout my travels I have seen a number of clearly living creatures that appear to be composed purely of only one or two elements. Did these creatures exist before light reached our world, is life an element of its own, or can it be produced by any interaction between light and another element? For that matter, I've also run into creatures who were tainted, perhaps even produced by Shadow, and we know an entire shadow realm exists. I therefore believe that the power to create life resides with Shadow just as much as it does with Light.

Then again, I could be wrong about this whole elements thing. I mean, it's not like any of us were around to record this stuff. Maybe some strange beings from another world entirely came along a giant lump of rock, made it into a world, and put us all on it just because they felt like it. Food for thought, I guess.

If living creatures like the plants, rahi, and people of this world came into being because the light reached the world, then that would make us creatures of Light. I think that's quite beautiful. – Nexuse

The Elemental Creatures and Umarak

Somewhere along the creation of our world, patron creatures of the six elements appeared: Ikir, Akida, Terak, Ketar, Uxar, and Melum. Maybe they were the created when light first hit the world, or maybe it was something else, but because of their existence I am certain that the careful 'packaging' of the elements in our world is no accident. The creatures are wise, which is why the ancient Okotans made shrines to them, and in their wisdom I believe that they were the ones who decided that the element of Fire should be placed in the core of the world, that the strength of Stone and Ice should be used to contain it, and the more permeable Earth, Water, and Jungle should form the outer layers. By arranging the elements in this way, the creatures created a world in which the elements were in balance and hence one that could not vanish on a whim; the elements making up the world could not just dissociate and vanish into the Shadow around it. By balancing the elements, the creatures created a permanent outpost, a place where Light could be given a chance to create life and challenge Shadow's universal rule over the universe. And since Shadow can create dark, twisted forms of life of

its own, it created one specifically to eliminate this challenge: the creature we know as Umarak the Hunter.

Umarak, legends tell, is a creature born of pure Shadow and, I believe, created to ensure Shadow's hegemony over the universe went unchallenged. His purpose is to capture the elemental creatures of our world, to bind them in Shadow and break their influence over the elements. Without the creatures to hold the elements in balance in the quantity that they are found in our world today, those elements would eventually clash, dissipate, and the world would fall apart because of it. Shadow would engulf the remaining pieces, leaving nothing but a void behind. Thankfully, the creatures are wise and crafty, and have been able to avoid being captured by Umarak so far; Shadow alone could not create a being strong enough to best those created by the other elements combined. I hope Umarak never gets the help he would need to break that stalemate and capture the creatures; the consequences would be catastrophic.

You know, a being of one element being unable to capture creatures created from six even after trying for millennia is the power of Unity at work if I ever saw it. - Sileth

And the world those creatures are keeping in balance is what has given rise to our island of Okoto and, by extension, us. So why did the creatures choose to make this island their home? Well, even before the Great Cataclysm, history tells us that this island always seemed a microcosm of our larger world: a land where all six of the world's elements are manifested strongly but are not out of balance. The six distinct regions of the island, each influenced by one element, made a great home for their creatures, but they were not delineated as strongly then as they are now. The landscape flowed more from one region to the other, whereas now tall, jagged mountain ranges divide them. Echoes of the Okoto that was can still be found in the Mangroves in the south end and in the Silent Land at the north end of my home region, but the events of the Battle of the Mask Makers shook the island to its core and reshaped its whole geography elsewhere. In fact, I can say without a doubt that the Battle of the Maskmakers was the seminal event of our modern history solely because it was the event leading to our greatest disaster, one whose wounds and scars are still clearly visible in the landscape of Okoto today. To unpack everything that led us there, though, I should first cover what happened shortly after Ekimu and Makuta became Okoto's Maskmakers: a series of events known collectively as the rise of the Maskmakers and the invasion of the Skull Raiders.

The Rise of the Maskmakers

Thousands of years ago (no one could tell me exactly how long ago, and ruins have yet to reveal the date), two brothers rose to become the greatest-ever practitioners of their craft. They were smiths, and between them they had advanced the art of maskmaking by producing new masks with powers never seen before. Because their masks were so highly prized, their forge gained a prestige tantamount to that of a temple; people flocked to the city of Zol Uxala in the north of the Region of Jungle to visit the fabled Maskmaker forge and watch as the brothers turned raw ore from the regions of Fire and Earth into the most highly prized possessions of any Okotan. Their masks weren't just worn for protection or to tighten one's connection to their element; no, they became sacred objects of incredible value. And yet the brothers never charged such exorbitant prices for them; their masks were well-made, but no more expensive than what any reasonable smith would ask for them. So, between

their generosity and the quality of the work they produced, both Ekimu and Makuta were celebrated as heroes and became honored leaders of the city of Zol Uxala. In fact, the city became commonly known as the City of the Maskmakers.

Not everything was perfect under the surface, however, for it was always Ekimu's masks that were most highly prized. I don't believe that this was due to them being of that much better quality; all accounts that I've come across describe the brothers as equally skilled. Nor did Ekimu's masks have greater powers than Makuta's; in fact, it was quite the opposite. Makuta was always the one who experimented, pushed the boundary by trying to create new runes and with them masks with newer, ever greater powers. Ekimu didn't make such powerful masks, but he made lots and lots of ordinary but very high-quality ones, and just to boot he made each one a little differently, made them special in his own way. He was the one who most Okotans got their masks from because he made plenty and was happy to sell or even give them away on special occasions. Makuta, by contrast, made fewer masks, but most of them were far more powerful and he was loath to share them.

The Old Makuta

I'd like to stress at this point that, while the brothers' methods were certainly very different, none of this made Makuta the evil that he was to become. His search for ever more powerful masks was, I believe, more borne out of curiosity, a drive to see just what all he could do, not out of a need to become the most powerful being in the universe. Also, when he did share them, many of his masks and their powers became staples for Okotans in certain roles, but only after Ekimu started to produce them in volume; Makuta probably would've become bored very quickly when trying to create the same kind of mask over and over and over again. He was more... intellectually restless than Ekimu, if that makes any sense, and I like to think that the Maskmakers' will to share their masks or lack thereof was at least in part an embodiment of the masks they wore themselves. After all, Ekimu wore the Mask of Creation, so of course he found joy in creating so many masks that he could distribute them so freely. Wearing the Mask of Control, Makuta was always going to be more concerned with exploring what powers he could imbue in, and hence control through a mask than with creating a bunch of those masks for others to use. Still, regardless of the brothers' motives, their different approaches and the skewed receptions that their masks received meant that, once they started, tensions between them could only build.

You like to try and see the best in people, don't you? – Brel

To be fair, "intellectually restless" is probably one of the more flattering descriptions of Shellbe's own personality that I've come across. – Axon

Unfortunately, I must conclude that Shellbe is mistaken here. The Mask of Control was bound to make Makuta evil from the outset, and his pursuit of ever greater mask powers was but the first sign. The mask seeks power, seeks to control power, and power corrupts. – Daruth

Makuta soon grew jealous of how much more adulation his brother received. If the brothers were equally skilled, would it not be fair for them to receive the same praise? At first, this jealousy only served as a drive for Makuta to better himself; he sought to compensate for his masks' comparative lack

of quantity by spending late nights in the forge, crafting mundane but otherwise excellent masks that he could hand out like Ekimu did with his. However, with the reputations of the Maskmakers already entrenched, people would always go for one of Ekimu's masks first, if they could help it. So Makuta changed tactics, inscribing powerful runes on even the lowest-grade masks he made. But handling this power was difficult, and it only took one accident for an enthusiastic wearer of one of these masks to quickly hand it back and ask for one of Ekimu's instead. Makuta exhausted himself in trying to best his brother's craftsmanship in every way, but could never match his brother's personality; their roles were set and they were going to stay that way, and over much blood, sweat, and tears, Makuta's jealousy turned to resentment, his resentment turned to anger, and his anger turned to hate. The Makuta we know now was born in that forge, and it in that forge that he would cement his fate.

I've often wondered what Ekimu thought of all this; surely he must have noticed the change in his brother, the way he pushed himself to work ever harder and increasingly in isolation. By the time the Skull Raiders arrived, chroniclers wrote of a Makuta that always frowned, scowled, scoffed and glared in envy at his brother whenever they were in the same room, a far cry from the good-willed if sometimes aloof young smith that brought joy to every Festival of Masks by showcasing his new masks' powers in great tricks and dazzling displays. However, no account that I have deciphered ever mentioned even a hint of suspicion on Ekimu's part until that fateful day of the last Festival of Masks the island would ever see. If some others noticed a change in Makuta so long before then, why did Ekimu not act on it? Was he caught unaware until the final days, or did he not know what exactly to do about it? As the object of his brother's jealousy, perhaps he felt that he was ill placed to relieve the situation, or maybe he believed that in doing so, he'd have to sacrifice some of his relative popularity; he'd have to share the spotlight with his brother, and I wouldn't blame him for being hesitant in doing so.

Of course you wouldn't; you love attention yourself. - Nexuse

Regardless, the deepening rift between the brothers meant that, when Kulta landed on our shores, the atmosphere in the forge was already tense. The events of the ensuing struggle with the Skull Raiders did nothing to help.

The Invasion of the Skull Raiders

Many of the archaeological discoveries and ruins that I have explored date to the invasion of the Skull Raiders rather than to the Great Cataclysm, especially in my home region. While I believe that the cataclysm is still the greatest disaster that all of Okoto as a whole has ever suffered, for the regions of Stone and Water I'd say the Skull Raiders were worse. Still, in spite of how much digging I've done, I haven't been able to figure out where the Skull Raiders came from; if anyone did, that knowledge is still buried somewhere or has been lost to the ages, and unfortunately the Skull Raiders themselves weren't much for keeping records either. I have been able to piece together a very detailed account of their Invasion, though.

No kidding on the detail; he was sifting through his notes to put this part of the guide together for weeks. He wouldn't admit it, but I think the events of the invasion have recently become of particular concern to him. - Nexuse

The Arrival

The first any Okotan saw of the Skull Raiders was in the appearance of a bizarre vessel on the horizon off of the Region of Water. It was larger than any ship previously seen on Okoto, a warship the likes of which Okoto never had nor ever had a need for. The ship anchored off of one of the larger islands in the Region of Water, a place now known as Kulta's landing: named "Kulta" after the first of them to set foot on our island, though few remember the origin of the name now. He was followed by hundreds more; creatures whose bodies resembled those of Okotans except in that they were considerably taller, and armed with much more formidable weaponry. They called themselves pirates, but we called them Skull Raiders because of these scowling, skull-like masks that they always wore, masks with deep, dark eye sockets and tapered bars like a komodo's teeth that covered their mouths. Their leaders had horns, too; standing over any Okotan, they were beyond terrifying to look at and backed up their fearsome appearance with their actions: legends say that the first words to escape Kulta's mouth as he looked around at this new world were: "all of value shall be ours. The rest will burn."

And burn it did. The Skull Raiders moved fast into the region of water, setting fire to everything that wasn't too soaked to light and sending hundreds of Okotans fleeing into the mountains and neighboring regions. They captured the grand city of Kel Akila, capital of the Region of Water at the time, and plundered its gold. Then they broke it down to the foundations and threw the rubble into Coral Bay just to make a statement: nothing is too strong for us tear down. Before long, that message reached Zol Uxala. Each tribe's Protector was summoned, and more were soon appointed to assist in dealing with the crisis. Before the Protectors could even meet, however, the first of their number fell: Otural, the old Protector of Water who had barely escaped the destruction of Kel Akila, was intercepted and killed by a squadron of the raiders, his body tied to a post and paraded in front of the horde as a terrifying sign of what the depraved raiders were willing to do to any that dared to stand in their way. A replacement was quickly appointed in the person of Owaki, a promising warrior for whom the fight against the raiders was now deeply personal. As the Protectors deliberated on how to fight the invaders, however, the Skull Raiders changed tact: a single, giant horde under Kulta's command had swept through the Region of Water, but they had little appetite for climbing the mountains dominating central Okoto. So, Kulta split his forces in two: he would lead half of them south into the Region of Jungle, while his lieutenant Ihtzul would lead the other half north into the Region of Ice.

A brilliant tactician, but also a degenerate monster on the inside with no morality to speak of, Ihtzul had been the one responsible for the death and subsequent desecration of the body of Otural, which meant that he now had Owaki's target on his back. Not that he would be an easy target, mind you, but from the moment that he learned that Ihtzul was taking a force north, Owaki insisted that he accompany the Protector of Ice, Uganu to mount a defense for the Region of Ice. Their status in Zol Uxala, however, meant that the final decision fell to the Maskmakers instead, who were more concerned with protecting the Region of Jungle from Kulta and his group. After all, the skull raiders had already proven their taste for starting fires, and there was far more to burn in the Region of Jungle than in the Region of Ice. Ekimu therefore argued that all the Protectors, other warriors, evocation wielders, and anyone else capable of and willing to mount a defense should head for the Mangroves, the border between the Regions of Water and Jungle. Kulta, he reasoned, would have to go through the mangroves with all of his forces, and the mangroves placed the advantage decidedly on the

defender's side in any engagement. The other Protectors agreed, and so to the mangroves they went. Owaki's revenge would have to wait.

The Battles of the Mangroves

The first clash between the Skull Raiders and the Protectors in the Mangroves was a short but very intense one; it all happened early in the morning, when thick fog limited visibility and made any large-scale command impossible. Being far more familiar with the terrain, the Protectors and other Okotans claimed a victory in halting Kulta's progress, but in reality they'd done only minor damage to the Skull Raiders. Worse, in showing that Okoto could mount a determined defense unlike anything that the Skull Raiders had encountered in the Region of Water, the Battle of the Mangroves showed Kulta that he was going to have to do more than just point his raiders a certain direction and tell them to smash everything in front of them; he had to formulate a strategy, and this he did. When his forces returned to the mangroves three weeks later, the Okotans had dug in well. However, they weren't facing a bunch of cold, wet, and tired raiders bungling about the swamp; they were facing a well-rested and determined enemy with an armada of small ships able to negotiate the flooded mangroves with ease. The result was catastrophic for the Okotans; holed up in makeshift fortifications on islands of dry ground, they were easily surrounded and overrun by the Skull Raiders in their nimble vessels. The forts were raised and their occupants slaughtered to a man; another brutal display of power to ensure that the Protectors would think twice about standing in front of the Skull Raiders again.

Shellbe, you have as much a talent for exaggeration as you do for digging. Only one fortification out of dozens in the mangroves suffered that fate, and many Okotans escaped. Had events transpired as you describe, surely you wouldn't have found Okotan records of them. – Axon

A lot of members of the Water Tribe were at that battle; I wouldn't be surprised if that's coloring our friend's perception a bit. Then again, this is the one case where I really can't blame him for his inaccuracies; I'd be seriously pissed too if the Skull Raiders had landed in the Region of Fire instead. – Sileth

It was Ekimu who, in the aftermath of the second Battle of the Mangroves, realized that all they needed was time. The Skull Raiders were by no means invulnerable, but to really stand a chance against them in a fight, the Protectors needed the time to gather and equip an army the likes of which Okoto had never seen before. To get that time, though, they needed to make sure that Kulta and the Skull raiders would sit still for a while. Working with his brother in spite of their differences, Makuta proposed a dangerous gamble: to use Zol Uxala as bait. The city was built on a rocky escarpment in the middle of a deep chasm, unassailable from any angle except through a bridge across the chasm on one side. It also housed the greatest collection of wealth on Okoto; a natural lure for the commander whose entire goal was to take everything of value and burn the rest. With few other options, the Protectors and Ekimu agreed to go along with the plan; the survivors of the Second Battle of the Mangroves hurried back to the City of the Maskmakers, but left as many signs as they could think of to alert the Skull Raiders to the existence of vast quantities of wealth in the city. The lure proved irresistible to Kulta; just days after arriving in the city, the Protectors standing on the walls caught sight of the Skull Raider legion approaching on the road to the city. Kulta being Kulta, he ordered a head-on

assault, but the bridge was too narrow to allow enough Skull Raiders through to overwhelm the gate. The city held against the first assault, though only just.

The Siege of Zol Uxala

Frustrated, Kulta did what he'd done after the first Battle of the Mangroves: he drew back and came up with a new plan. However, while the problems of the mangroves had been easy for him to solve, Zol Uxala proved truly impregnable, just as Makuta had gambled on. Five times Kulta assaulted the city in different ways, deploying everything from shield walls to giant rolling towers with extendable bridges for crossing the chasm, and every time the Skull Raiders were thrown back from the walls, pushed back across the bridge, or worse sent hurtling down into the chasm, never to be seen again. So, with no other options left, Kulta resorted to a siege to starve the holed-up Okotans out. He did not know that, obscured by the clouds that always filled the chasm, the Okotans had dug vaults and tunnels underneath the city that could store years' worth of food and water and, if necessary, even offered an alternative route in through the mountains of Central Okoto. The residents of the city had the supplies to last for years, and while they were stuck there, so was Kulta. The time the Okotans needed had been secured.

With the city's defenses manned by guards commanded by Makuta and hardened through the three attacks that Kulta had already mounted by that point, the Protectors and Ekimu each headed out through the secret passage to return with all the forces they could muster from the other regions. They traveled from village to village for months, gathering troops as they went. Weapons were forged and distributed to anyone willing to come along and wield them. Training was done on the go with the Protectors themselves. And over the course of over half a year, the small band of warriors that formed around Ekimu and the Protectors grew into a mighty army. When they returned, a little over a year now after Kulta had first laid eyes on the City of the Maskmakers, the lord of the Skull Raiders and his army were still encamped there... and were being surrounded by the Protectors and half the population of the regions they'd traveled through, now armed to the teeth. When the signal was sent up and the combined armies of Okoto came out of the jungle from behind Kulta's forces, the Skull Raiders were utterly unprepared. They were routed, many fell or were pushed into the chasm to their deaths, and the rest were chased around the city and into the mountains of Central Okoto. Kulta lost a full three-quarters of his force that day, ensuring that he wouldn't be a threat to Zol Uxala again anytime soon.

The Protectors and the Maskmakers celebrated the great victory, but they'd still have to do something about Kulta eventually. Worse, though, terrible news soon arrived of what his lieutenant, Ihtzul, had been up to in the north with his troops.

The Scourge Ihtzul

While Kulta's complete fixation on the wealth of the ancient city had proven his army's downfall, up north his lieutenant had been far more successful. Ihtzul and his forces had successfully crossed the Silent Land and demolished the Water and Ice tribes' villages and the city of Kel Melo in the process. Now they faced the Spine: the mountain chain crossing midway through the Region of Ice studded with Ice tribe forts garrisoned by the Twilight Watch. Unlike Kulta, Ihtzul took his time, sending scouts up and down the mountain range to determine the easiest crossing point. Having identified it in Deep

Snow Pass, he sent a small contingent of his force to mount an assault on a fort well to the south of it as a diversion. With the Shadow Watch's attention focused on that fort, Ihtzul pushed the rest of his forces through Deep Snow Pass with only a modicum of resistance. The planes of the howl and with them the whole Region of Ice now lay open to him. However, the incredibly inhospitable nature of the Howl caused him to quickly turn back; the Region of Ice simply wasn't worth raiding or trying to hold, with one possible exception: the City of the Veil.

I would agree with Ihtzul on that point; the even the surface level of the Region of Earth is a more pleasant place to be than the Howl. – Sileth

Located in the mountains where the Region of Ice, Water, and Stone meet, the City of the Veil was heavily fortified and surrounded by redoubts in all the nearby mountains. The largest of these, the fortress of Altitude, was also the sole official gateway to the city, albeit not such a precarious one as the bridge leading into the Zol Uxala. Again, Ihtzul took his time surveying the entire region before formulating a plan of attack... or well, he would've made a plan of attack if he'd been Kulta, but of course he wasn't. Kulta would've thrown everything at Altitude and the City of the Veil ten times over to try and get a hold of their riches, but Ihtzul concluded that he didn't have the manpower to take the city without unacceptable casualties... well, unacceptable casualties on his troops. Instead, he conquered some of the smaller, more isolated forts around the city in a terrifying campaign. He didn't just take these forts: he razed them to the ground, then mounted the bodies of all their unfortunate defenders on stakes which he had planted all over the mountains surrounding the City of the Veil and in clear view of its residents; he wasn't going to take the city, not yet, but he left the defenders holed up inside with no doubt about what would happen if he did. It was through these brutal actions that he first earned the nickname "the Scourge Ihtzul," and no one doubted that at some point his army would be marching into the City of the Veil. But then, stunning everyone, he moved on. I guess he concluded that there was nothing in the Region of Ice worth taking that he was able to take at the time, but then there also was a real prize right next door: the Region of Stone.

In spite of how long ago it happened, this campaign of the Skull Raiders around the City of the Veil is still well remembered by the Twilight Watch. In the fortress of Altitude, a carving of a mountaintop studded with bodies mounted on stakes and the inscription "never again" still reminds us of the sacrifice past members of the Watch made to try and keep the Region of Ice safe. – Daruth

Okay, I may not like the region much personally, but to Ihtzul I do believe that the Region of Stone would've appeared as a prize. You see, while the Skull Raider lieutenant established himself as a specter of doom hovering over the City of the Veil, Ekimu and the Protectors had passed through the Region of Stone, recruiting everyone available to help in the assault on Kulta's forces surrounding Zol Uxala. They reckoned that the mountains and the City of the Veil would stop Ihtzul, would hold his attention in the way that Zol Uxala was keeping Kulta's, but they had reckoned wrong. Never one to fixate on a single goal to the detriment of all others like his master, Ihtzul realized that the Region of Stone had been left as good as undefended. So, having assured that no one in the Region of Ice would sleep soundly or dare to venture far outside their homes for a while, he ordered his forces to cross the mountains completely and head west. What followed was possibly the greatest tragedy for the Okotans during the entire invasion of the Skull Raiders; Ihtzul intended not just to sack and loot

everything in the Region of Stone, but also to bury an entire tribe and everything they owned, and he very nearly succeeded. His forces swept out over the living sands and Monument Plain like a plague, leaving nothing but ruins and the heads of their victims mounted on pikes behind. In a matter of weeks, the numbers of the Stone Tribe were cut in half, and those remaining were holed up in the cities of Dan Solith and Caira Crim.

The Fall of Caira Crim

Caira Crim was the capital of the entire island, a prize even Ihtzul couldn't ignore. While it had no mountains or great chasm to protect it, its high walls and towers were no inconsiderable obstacle. Being on the coast, however, it did have a harbor, and because of this offered both the people stuck in it a way out and Ihtzul a way in. As skull raider units arrived from across the desert and ominously set up camp around Caira Crim, boats loaded with people fleeing the city set off for the Regions of Earth and Ice every day. For nearly a month, the city gradually emptied, the people taking most of their important and valuable possessions with them while Ihtzul sat and waited for backup to arrive. You may wonder what backup he was waiting for; Kulta was still encamped around Zol Uxala, several mountain ranges and two regions away and more interested in that city regardless. No, Ihtzul recognized that while Caira Crim would be expensive to take from land, it was very vulnerable from the sea. He had sent not for the Kulta, but for the Skull Raiders' giant warship. Reports of it sailing around the Region of Ice towards Caira Crim soon halted all ship traffic in that direction. Just out of sight of the city, it anchored and a large segment of Ihtzul's forces went aboard. That night, they sailed for the harbor under the cover of darkness. On the very same day that the forces of Okoto descended on Kulta's raiders around Zol Uxala, marking the end of the Skull Raider leader's march of conquest, Ihtzul's forces assaulted the capital from outside the walls and inside the harbor simultaneously. The Capital city of all Okoto fell in a matter of hours, its more fortunate remaining residents killed and buried under rubble while those less fortunate were tied to posts in Ihtzul's signature manner and carried around like banners by his forces.

News of the devastation Ihtzul had brought on the Stone Region reached Zol Uxala right after Kulta's defeat. Horrified, the Protectors and Maskmakers were faced with a difficult choice: something had to be done about Ihtzul, but Kulta's forces could still come out of the mountains to threaten Zol Uxala again or appear in another region entirely if they weren't taken care of for good; Okoto couldn't afford to leave huge military forces everywhere just waiting for him to show up. Owaki and Ugo, Protectors of Water and Stone, respectively, were determined to head north to avenge the losses their people had already suffered, while Uganu, the Protector of Ice, was anxious to link up with his people and to learn what had happened around the City of the Veil. The decision was made: Ekimu and those three Protectors would lead the majority of the force that they had amassed towards the Region of Stone to deal with Ihtzul, while the Protectors of Fire, Earth, and Jungle would join Makuta and the rest of the army in pursuing Kulta into the mountains.

The Battle of Dan Solrith

Ekimu and his Protectors hurried around the mountains and through the Regions of Earth and Stone to reach the city of Dan Solrith, the last outpost of the Stone tribe and the last spot in the entire region capable of mounting a defense. Thanks to Ekimu's airship, they themselves managed it with time to spare, though most of their force was days behind. Using the airship to map Ihtzul's movements, Ekimu

determined that the Skull Raiders under his command had been split into three groups and were moving to surround Dan Solrith. Carved straight into the side of a canyon, Dan Solrith wasn't a very big city but it was a very secure one. Ihtzul planned on assaulting it with two groups from both sides of the canyon, cutting off any easy means of escape for the residents, while making his third group repel down from the top of the cliffs to infiltrate the city from above. Ekimu and the Protectors knew that their army, though larger than Ihtzul's, could not afford to take on all of the Skull Raider forces descending on Dan Solrith at once. They could, however, mount an ambush on their easternmost division right at the canyon entrance, which is exactly what they did and to great effect. One-third of Ihtzul's army was caught in a vulnerable position with a force four times their size firing down on them; none survived to inform Ihtzul of the destruction of a whole section of his army. Hurrying west after the victory, the Okotan army would reach Dan Solrith around the same time as Ihtzul's remaining forces; the survival of the severely under-garrisoned city depended on them getting there as quickly as possible.

As it happened, Ekimu, the Protectors, and their army reached the city only minutes after Ihtzul's forces did. Having assumed up until that point that the giant dust cloud rising up out of the canyon's east end had been due to his own approaching eastern force, Ihtzul had ordered the assault. He was staggered to find that, rather than watching two Skull Raider armies converge on the city from the east and west, the eastern one had been replaced by an Okotan army racing towards his western force. The two forces clashed head-on before the gates of Dan Solrith, but the with the skull raiders heavily outnumbered the battle quickly turned to the Okotans' favor. The raiders repelling from the cliff onto the city's rooftops were in trouble, too; though their position offered them a great vantage point to fire into the melee breaking out below, they were in turn coming under fire from Ekimu's airship above the battle. Ekimu and the Protectors landed at the very same spot that the repelling Skull Raiders had set off from to face off against the only ones left on the vantage point: Ihtzul himself and a guard composed of some of his best raiders.

Though not as grand in scale as the battle around Zol Uxala, the battle of Dan Solrith was all the more memorable for occurring at three different levels: on the canyon floor in front of the city, a massive force of Okotans was making some progress against a third of Ihtzul's forces, on the rooftops of the city Skull raiders were firing both up at Ekimu's airship and at archers stationed across the canyon, both of whom were firing down on them in return, and above the city on the northwest side of the canyon Ekimu and the Protectors were engaged in a fierce struggle with Ihtzul himself and his personal guard. With all their regions had suffered, Ugo and Owaki pushed the hardest, making their way past the guards engaged with Ekimu and Uganu to go after Ihtzul himself. Wielding a set of bladed weapons fitted with revolving blasters not unlike the elemental ones wielded by the Protectors, Ihtzul was more than a match for them, though. Charging, Ugo unleashed a sandblast into the villain's face with his sandstone blaster, intending to push in right after it. However, the sandblast was just as blinding to him, and he couldn't see that, far from being deterred, Ihtzul was pushing through it and towards him as well. To the horror of Owaki, Ekimu, and Uganu, the sandstone blaster suddenly dropped at Ugo's side as the Protector of Stone was run through by one of Ihtzul's weapons. Ihtzul lifted the weapon and Ugo with it off of the ground, unleashed a magazine's worth of rounds from its blaster into the Protector's face, then swung the blade around his side, sending the lifeless body flying off to his right and into the canyon. Enraged, Owaki unleashed a volley of shots of his own, aiming for Ihtzul's mask

and temporarily stunning him. The Protector of water followed it up by shouting “FOR OTURAL!”, charging forward and planting both spear points of his weapon into Ihtzul’s body. Leveraging all his strength, Owaki pushed on towards the edge of the canyon, and with a final set of water blasts sent Ihtzul careening towards the bottom. Kulta’s lieutenant landed among his troops on the canyon floor, dead on impact. It was the final turning point of the battle; unsettled and without a commander, the Skull Raiders couldn’t put up a fight as the cohesive unit that they had been. One by one, they were cut down, never to hurt an Okotan again.

To this day, Owaki is still hailed as the best Protector the Region of Water has ever had, all for his actions in the Battle of Dan Solrith in the Region of Stone. – Brel

Pursuing Kulta

While the Battle of Dan Solrith was going on, Makuta and Mamuk, Etoku, and Agarak, Protectors of Fire, Earth, and Jungle, respectively, led a still sizable group of Okotans in a mad chase after Kulta and his remaining Skull Raiders high in to Okoto’s central mountains. The Skull Raiders were haggard and low on supplies, but would still put up a fight if they had to. Makuta and company pursued him into the very center of the island, where deep gorges and chasms separated the mountains, and it was in one of these gorges that they caught up with Kulta and his Skull Raiders. Having flown over the mountains in his airship many times, Makuta knew the gorge that they were in to be a dead end and chased Kulta through it deliberately. He also used his airship to get Agarak and a number of other skilled archers and evocation wielders onto the mountains near its end; the end of the gorge would also be the end of Kulta and his Skull Raiders.

And indeed, several days after Ihtzul and his force had been destroyed around Dan Solith (though no one in the mountains was yet aware of it), Kulta and his Skull Raiders were backed into the end of the gorge, facing an Okotan army led by Makuta, Mamuk, and Etoku and about to be fired down upon by Agarak and his company on the high ground. Realizing he had nowhere to turn and unwilling to beg for mercy (not that he would have gotten any if he did), Kulta ordered the Skull Raiders to charge forwards into Makuta’s army; with any luck, perhaps they could break out. They didn’t, but the hail of fire that was unleashed on them did open up a new opportunity: several powerful elemental blasts from the ridgeline above, aimed at the tail end of the Skull Raider force, instead struck the back wall of the gorge and opened up an entrance into a cave beyond. Looking back, Kulta spotted the opportunity, and just before the first Skull Raiders met the Okotans head-on, he ordered all of them to turn about and head for the cave. Under heavy fire, the Skull Raiders turned and did so, disappearing into the cave like water down a drain. Kulta himself was one of the last ones to make it in before a clever evocation wielder of the Stone Tribe by the name of Kerato turned his power onto the mountainside above the gorge. He began pulling out chunk after chunk of it, sending them down towards the last of the Skull Raiders. Agarak, realizing what Kerato was doing, called down to the Okotans in the gorge to back off, to get away from the cave entrance as fast as possible. Makuta gave the order to retreat, letting the final Skull Raiders slip away into the cave. As his force hastily got out of the way, a large section of the mountainside that Kerato had destabilized by tearing chunks out of it collapsed into the end of the gorge, filling it with tons upon tons of rubble, sealing the cave entrance and trapping Kulta and the remaining Skull Raiders within.

Reckoning that without food, water, or tools to clear the entrance, the Skull Raiders could not survive inside the cave for long, the Protectors declared that the Skull Raiders had been destroyed and that the island was safe once again. I should add something of my own here, though: I've been to that gorge on my travels, and while I did still see a lot of rubble in there, a lot of it looked like it'd been moved. I didn't see the cave entrance, so I believe the area is still secure, but I don't really have an explanation as to why anything would have moved those stones. Let's hope that it was just some mountain creature looking for a meal, and not something more sinister.

I don't know, it looked pretty secure to me. For someone so ready and willing to face danger by day, you sure worry a lot by night. – Brel

The Aftermath

Celebrations and funerals were held in equal measure over the next month, especially in Dan Solrith and Zol Uxala, the two cities that had borne the greatest burden and that were still standing and populated. Cairra Crim, which Ihtzul had never quite bothered to raze in the way that the cities in the Region of Water had been, soon saw the return of many of its inhabitants, who moved to fix what had been broken and restore the capital to its former glory. For his actions in sealing the last of the Skull Raiders inside of that cave, Kerato was named the new Protector of Stone to replace Ugo. In my home region, the months after the Skull Raiders' defeat saw the founding of Frostwater, some distance south and east of where Kel Melo had been. Owaki himself supervised construction of the new city, though the coming events would ensure that it would never see the glory that Kel Melo and particularly Kel Akila had seen.

As to what became of the Skull Raiders... well, even though they were declared as good as dead at the time, I'm not sure we're actually rid of them. For starters, they left a plague behind, one whose effects weren't to become evident until years afterwards. Also, as I wandered the streets of the Zol Uxala, or rather the ruin that it is today, I caught a glimpse of a strange creature. It wasn't one of the myriad of twisted, plague-wracked rahi that wander through the city in numbers and in open view; no, it was humanoid, and had a stature decidedly like that of the Skull Raiders. It was skeletal in a way that many of the infected rahi are, but I could swear that I that its skull-face wasn't actually its face at all; it looked like a mask of the Skull Raiders. There is no way the Skull Raiders that were driven into the mountains so long ago are still alive today, unless some sinister power has unnaturally extended their livespans. I suppose that's possible, but then again it has been thousands of years. Their invasion has long since passed into history, and ill-recorded history at that before I pieced together this account from scraps all over the island. Most Okotans can't tell you much about the Skull Raiders anymore beyond the fact that they once invaded the island and that we beat them off. They're bogeymen now, their names forgotten and replaced with titles like "Skull Grinder" for Kulta, "Skull Basher" for one of his lieutenants, and "Skull Skopio" for the six-legged creatures some of his "Skull Warriors" rode into battle. Ihtzul's name has been purposely buried like those of so many of his victims; I only found out who he was by delving into the old, mostly collapsed archives of Dan Solrith. Still, having seen this one creature, the possibility of one or more of those bogeymen still existing in the mountains, or worse in the city where Ekimu was laid to rest, is one that sends chills down my spine.

I should point out that, even though we all visited what remains of the City of the Maskmakers at the same time, Shellbe is the only one who claims to have seen this... creature. – Axon

Shellbe, I know that the events of this period in history matter to you in particular, but I think that your fears about the Skull Raiders mean that you make some rather unrealistic assumptions about them. They're gone, honey; Ekimu and Makuta made sure of that. – Nexuse

It may be a rather open-ended conclusion, but that is the best I can write on the Skull Raiders for now. Regardless, their invasion isn't what shaped the Okoto you'll see today. Yes, the year-and-a-half battle between the Okotans and the Skull Raiders had taken a staggering toll on much of the island, but it had left the regions of Fire, Earth, and Ice (the City of the Veil notwithstanding) relatively untouched; the events that followed, having been brewing since long before the Skull Raiders arrived, would take their toll on all the regions. Want to know how Zol Uxala became the ruin that it is today, and why you won't even find Caira Crim on a map anymore? Well, let me tell you about the Battle of the Mask Makers.

The Battle of the Mask Makers

The battle of the Mask makers is the story that cemented Ekimu and Makuta as we know them today, and what made the island what it is today. It happened barely a year after the defeat of the Skull Raiders, but of the two this is the story that every Okotan will be able to tell you. So I'll be brief about it.

After the defeat of the Skull Raiders, most of the credit for the victory went to Ekimu; he was the more popular of the Maskmakers, and he'd been the one to travel up and down Okoto to recruit the troops and who'd led them into battle at both of their major victories: Zol Uxala and Dan Solrith. Needless to say, this didn't sit well with Makuta. After all, he'd been the one who'd suggested using Zol Uxala as an impenetrable defensive location in the first place, he'd been the one to lead the city through nearly a year of siege, and he'd been the one to finally catch up with Kulta and the fleeing Skull Raiders and had ensured that they'd never bother the Okotans again, right? Unfortunately, as reconstruction commenced, Ekimu's position was cemented more strongly than ever, and something... something snapped in Makuta. Maybe it did a long time before, or maybe the aftermath of the Invasion of the Skull Raiders was the final straw, I'm not sure. Regardless, it was shortly after the defeat of the Skull Raiders that Makuta began work on what he believed would be his greatest creation: the abomination that would become known as the Mask of Ultimate Power.

You see, there's a couple of laws regarding mask-making, particularly masks with elemental powers. But the most important, most sacred law was that no two elements should ever be combined in one mask. Makuta had skirted this border before; some of his more powerful masks already manipulated multiple elements indirectly, such as his mask of Plant Growth that through generous application of the element of Jungle could cause plants of any kind to grow extraordinarily rapidly. In pushing this growth to its limit, Makuta found that the plants moved a lot of water indirectly and generated a lot of heat, to the point where inexperienced users of the mask often caused plants to catch fire. True, the masks didn't explicitly contain more than one element, but Makuta was getting very, very close to achieving that, and the consequences could be disastrous, though I must admit that I'm not exactly clear on why

that is. I do know that it's true, though, 'cause the Mask of Ultimate power soon proved it in spectacular fashion.

As a smith who's worked extensively with masks and runes in the past, I should elaborate here: the reason why the elements exist in harmony in our world is because the creatures control them. How they balance the elements on that scale isn't clear, and we definitely haven't figured out how to do it ourselves. When two elements out of the creatures' control meet each other, they usually annihilate each other explosively, taking anything nearby with them and leaving nothing but Shadow behind. Large elemental explosions can even create temporary portals to the Shadow Realm in this manner. Elements under the control of a mask are by definition not under the control of the creatures, meaning that any mask that assumes direct control over two or more elements will always end up annihilating both and possibly opening such portals. This is... let's say undesirable. Of course, the fact that the guy wearing the Mask of Control would seek to control multiple elements at the same time isn't all that surprising in retrospect. – Axon

I should add that evocations don't do that, but only because we can't control two elements at the same time. If I could perform an evocation on two elements at the same time, no doubt they would annihilate in the same way. Rather scary when I think about it. – Nexuse

The Festival of Masks

At the time, the main celebration on the Okotan calendar every year was the Festival of Masks. During the invasion of the Skull Raiders, one Festival of Masks had unfortunately been largely skipped, and the one to be held the year after ended up being only two weeks after the final defeat of the Raiders, a time when Caira Crim was still empty and half in ruins. By the next year, however, much reconstruction had been completed on the capital and the island had at last begun to recover from the damage wrought by the Skull Raiders. To celebrate, the Maskmakers declared that the first true Festival of Masks after the Skull Raiders' defeat would be the greatest the island had ever seen; a week-long series of celebrations in the gloriously rebuilt capital, culminating in the awarding of special masks of power to the heroes of the battles of the year before. Ekimu and Makuta both put all their energy towards the festival's preparation for months on end; Ekimu by crafting the special masks to be handed out and by assisting in the rebuilding of the capital, and Makuta by spending every waking minute working on what he believed would be his masterpiece, the greatest mask ever created.

The festival was, at first, a great success. Based on the numbers I've found, I believe that at least a quarter of the island's population attended, and of course the highlight would be the speech by the Maskmakers themselves before the new masks were to be handed out. As the hour of the speech approached on the final day of the festival, Makuta took the stage early, much to everyone's surprise. They were pleased to see him, sure, but they'd expected Ekimu first and on time. Then Makuta spoke. He went on at length, first thanking everyone for their hard work and talking about how much he'd enjoyed the festival (in spite of the fact that he'd hardly been seen throughout the week). He then started talking about a more serious topic, about how the invasion of the Skull Raiders had broken the

illusions of the past. “We are not alone anymore,” Makuta declared, “and if we are to be ready for when the next such vessel of powerful foes arrives on our shores, we must become powerful ourselves. This is what I have dedicated my life to, to crafting powerful masks that will allow me, will allow us all to stop them on landing. And to that end, I have created this. It is the Mask of Ultimate Power, the strongest I have ever made!” It was at this point that he revealed the Mask of Ultimate Power in all its golden glory. “This mask,” he explained, “is a mask of all elements. It can control all, and it can destroy all who would threaten us. Let me show you how...”

Most descriptions say that his voice darkened, twisted from the moment he put on the mask. Its color changed from royal gold to a deep black; already the element of shadow was taking over as the elements contained within the mask, activated by Makuta putting it on, were clashing with each other. Whatever Makuta said from that point on is mostly described as unintelligible, but somehow, just for a moment, he appeared to have brought the power roiling within the mask under control. He declared something along the lines of “I have the power, all of it,” and tried to use the power of Stone to elevate himself on a pillar. He rose indeed, but quickly lost whatever grasp on the mask’s power he had. At this point, minutes away from when the speeches were originally slated to start, Ekimu arrived. He called out Makuta’s name, but already a deep shadow was beginning to spread from the Mask of Ultimate Power, consuming everything around Makuta and, no doubt, everything within him too. Cracks began to appear on the mask as even it could not contain the power now unleashed from it. Ekimu hurried forward with his hammer; the Protectors, who had been in the crowd up until this point, followed right behind him. Makuta laughed at their approach, but his laugh had changed; it sounded twisted, ominously deeper. The crowd panicked, fleeing in every direction. Reaching the base of the stage, which by then was already being consumed by shadow, Ekimu leapt up and, swinging his hammer with all his might, knocked the mask off of Makuta’s face. The blow proved the final straw for the mask itself, which broke into pieces, unleashing the elements within it in a powerful explosion. Ekimu and the Protectors were blown away with incredible force as within the explosion, in the center of this sphere of elemental annihilation that it generated, Shadow took hold and formed into a portal, a portal to the Shadow Realm.

And that’s why control of the elements should be left only to the elemental creatures.

– Axon

Even small evocations make you nervous, though. – Nexuse

Given what Makuta brought upon the island when trying to control the elements, don’t you get nervous, too? – Axon

The Prophecy of Heroes

The explosion knocked out all the Protectors and flung them all the way over the city walls; the only reason that the landing afterwards didn’t kill them was that they landed in soft sand. They woke up hours later, after sunset. Among them, the damage totaled some battered weapons and broken limbs, but to their astonishment the entire city of Caira Crim had vanished, leaving nothing but a gigantic, smoking crater in its wake. Already the crater was slowly filling with water; one of the Protectors spotted a figure lying in it. It was Ekimu, barely breathing, likely having suffered a far harder landing than they had. The Protectors hurried into the crater to get to him. When they reached the

Maskmaker, they tried to wake him up, to ask him if he was okay and tell him that they had to get out, but his eyes didn't open. Yet he spoke, if only barely. Softly, too low on breath to go above a whisper, he recited what we now know as the prophecy of heroes.

*When times are dark and all hope seems lost,
the Protectors must unite, one from each tribe,
evoke the power of past and future,
and look to the skies for an answer.*

*When the stars align, six comets will bring timeless heroes,
to claim the mask of power and find the Maskmaker.
United, the elements hold the power to defeat evil.
United, but not one.*

They were his last words; unable to wake him, the Protectors hauled him up to the edge of the crater. By the time they got there, Ekimu was breathing no more. The Protectors sent one of their number (legends are fuzzy on which one) to the nearest village to get help and get the word out; one Maskmaker was dead and the other missing, the Protectors were injured, and the entire capital city was... just gone, likely with everyone else in it. While waiting for help to arrive, the other Protectors pieced together what had happened: the portal to the shadow realm had expanded inside the explosion that had knocked them away with such great force, engulfing the entire city. How long the portal remained open for wasn't clear, but when it closed it took the city and everyone else caught inside with it. Other than the Protectors, no one had been left to tell the tale of the greatest single catastrophe to ever befall any Okotan city; even the Skull Raiders never erased a city from the map so completely as the destruction of the Mask of Ultimate Power had done to Caira Crim. For the rest of the island, though, the worst was yet to come.

The Great Cataclysm

The destruction of the Mask of Ultimate Power didn't just open a temporary portal to the Shadow Realm; it sent shockwaves through the entire island, maybe even the entire world. That portal had been a literal hole in the world, a void in which all the elements annihilated each other only to leave shadow behind, and with the shockwaves it was a virtual hammer blow to the equilibrium in which the elements had been held up until that point. The Protectors didn't know it yet, but all around them the elements were becoming restless, triggering a series of random but large-scale and devastating manifestations that would wrack the island of Okoto for the next decade. Agarak, who recorded the events of the Protectors' journey to return Ekimu's body to the city of the Maskmakers, noted the first such manifestation before they'd even made it out of the Region of Stone: for two days straight, as they were crossing Monument Plain, the sky was dark with ash. At first, the Protectors feared that some giant volcano had awakened in the mountains, but no eruption had occurred and after those two days the ash clouds cleared and the desert was baking under a bright sun once again. However, when the Protectors finally reached Zol Uxala in the Region of Jungle, they were even more surprised to find that the normally tropical city was covered in snow, which then melted within hours of their arrival.

The Protectors began to suspect that something wasn't right with the elements, but their first concern was to lay Ekimu to rest, which they did by supervising the construction of a large tomb in the city's

cemetery and placing his body in a sarcophagus within. His mask, as well as the mask of control, had seemingly been lost in the disappearance of Caira Crim, so they put one of his best Protector masks on him instead. After laying the Maskmaker to rest, the Protectors each went back to their own regions, finding that, in Agarak's words: "the usual activity, the hustle and bustle of life had ground to a standstill. An eerie silence seemed to have taken every town and city and its inhabitants; even the creatures of the jungle were remarkably silent. It was as though the entire island was in mourning." They were given little time to grieve, however; not long after returning home, Agarak was horrified to see an ancient, long-dead volcano in the southeast of the Region of Jungle erupt with tremendous fury, burying every town nearby under tons upon tons of rock and ash and starting fires that collectively burned down nearly all the vegetation below the region's southernmost major river. Within days of that eruption, a vicious and dense sandstorm appeared out of thin air in the Region of Ice and raged over the Howl for a month. Similarly bizarre events started happening in all the other regions, too; it was the beginning of what would become known as the Great Cataclysm.

The Great Cataclysm was the most far-reaching consequence of Makuta's actions during that last festival of masks. The weird weather of the first few months after the last Festival of Masks was just the beginning; soon the scale of the manifestations increased to where the entire island was affected. Shortly after the eruption in the Region of Jungle and while the sandstorm in the Region of Ice was still raging, a tremendous earthquake struck and nearly tore the island in half. It opened up cracks through which magma came boiling up to the surface all over the island, starting volcanoes which maintained continuous lava flows in every region that lasted for almost a year. Next, the sea level rose by almost 20 feet overnight, flooding almost half the island including the entirety of the Region of Water, drowning many in their sleep. The water retreated, but not before freezing solid for a while, doing severe damage to everything still flooded at the time. The Region of Earth was then struck by earthquakes that opened up a giant, mile-deep hole in the middle of the region. Another earthquake caused the mountain on which the City of the Veil sat to literally crumble to rubble in minutes, with deaths running in the hundreds as the city's inhabitants didn't even have time to get out before the ground literally opened up beneath them. In the Region of Fire, a mountain collapsed and blocked up a lava river, its rubble becoming a dam behind which the river rapidly grew into a lava lake that swallowed three villages. Disasters like these began to strike often and seemingly at random, and there wasn't anything the Protectors could do about them.

Tribes tried to adapt, of course. After the flooding, new houses in the Region of Water were built high on poles to still remain above water during a flood, and in the Region of Earth the new giant pit was quickly turned into the biggest mine the island had ever seen. However, strange manifestations continued to plague the island. That pit filled with lava for several months at one point, rendering it unusable as a mine for years afterwards. Worse than lost profits, though, was the death toll; each of these freak disasters seemed to take at least a village or two with it, and when one struck a city, whole chunks of a tribe's population could be wiped out in a matter of minutes. Fearing for their lives, many Okotans began leaving the remaining cities in droves at the first sign of trouble and scattered to build new homes for themselves wherever they felt safest. Two years after Ekimu was entombed in Zol Uxala, the City of the Maskmakers was abandoned entirely tremors were felt in the ground below it. Fearful that a sizable earthquake would send the entire city and everyone in it plummeting into the chasm, people left with their families and scattered into the jungle heading to what villages remained

or, in many cases, founding new ones in locations that appeared relatively impregnable to what disasters they expected to come next.

Similar things happened to nearly every other city on the island; these days, I can only think of two cities from the time before Great Cataclysm that are still inhabited: Dan Solrith, which the Protector of Stone refused to abandon even after part of the canyon that it sits in literally closed up overnight, and Utama in the Region of Fire, which by being built on a giant slab of obsidian glass lying in the middle of an otherwise ashen plain was always going to be pretty hard for any remotely natural disaster to affect. All the other remaining ancient cities, no matter their size or glory, were abandoned or destroyed outright and are little more than ruins today. However, even scattering into small groups all over their respective regions did little to provide any sense of safety to the Okotans; they were still just as likely to die in whatever disaster struck their region next, but by dispersing widely at least they could ensure that the death toll of any individual manifestation wouldn't amount to half a tribe. Stories of small villages that met their ends overnight in any of all manner of disasters constantly circulated, and the population as a whole became infected with a kind of pessimistic fatalism; no one ever expected to make it to the next day. Many even came to believe that what was happening was the end of the world, that the destabilizing of the elemental balance of the world would eventually lead to the world dissipating entirely, leaving nothing but the void of Shadow to consume them. Hope, it appeared, was hard to come by.

Fortunately, while devastating to the nth degree, the Great Cataclysm wasn't the end of the world. The elements did eventually return to their natural equilibrium, though they left behind a completely different Okoto. Volcanic activity and manifestations of Earth and Stone had produced mountain ranges that sharply divided the regions of the island and made travel between them as good as impossible. The population of the island as a whole was estimated to be less than a tenth of what it had been before the Skull Raiders arrived just over a decade before. Accurate estimates were impossible to come by, though, as the scattering of the tribes into countless small communities throughout all the regions and the lack of roads connecting them meant that even the Protectors had no idea how many people they were ostensibly protecting anymore. Matters weren't helped by the fact that the events of the Great Cataclysm had put the fear of the elements in many; even the slightest unexpected change in weather would send people running for their huts, fearing that some elemental disaster was on the way, the whole art of wielding evocations practically vanished from the island as anyone even attempting to control the elements in the slightest manner was believed to run the risk of destabilizing things even more. These fears would last for a very, very long time, helped along by the occasional natural disaster; it had taken a decade to truly break the hope and spirit of Okoto, and it would take generations before our people really found their feet again, generations during which the knowledge and history of the world that was before was largely lost to time.

Okoto Now

The Okoto that me and my companions have spent half our lives traveling across is still the one shaped by the Great Cataclysm. We still have no cities that could compare to those that legends tell us we once had, cities whose ruins are continually being reclaimed by the elements themselves. We have no airships like those of the Maskmakers, no great way of traveling between regions over land (though small boats are now commonly being used) without traveling through miles of dangerous, wild

territory. Compared to what legends tell us it was, Okoto now is a more dangerous, but also relatively simple place, and at least it is also a peaceful one. Yes, the wild lands beyond the borders of towns can contain many dangerous creatures, but the island itself isn't trying to kill us anymore and neither are invaders from other lands. Most exciting to me, though, is that in all of the regions a genuine re-awakening is beginning to take hold (perhaps helped somewhat by the journey my companions and I undertook). Archaeologists and explorers are delving into the ruins that the Great Cataclysm left behind, unearthing all manner of material and information that was thought forever lost. A group of merchants in the Region of Earth was talking about constructing a giant ring road to connect all the regions of the island overland to facilitate trade; such a road would've made my travels a heck of a lot easier. Here in the region of water, Brel is leading a project to reconstruct an ancient, quite large vessel in an effort to rediscover much of the art of shipbuilding. Okoto, having been nearly broken by the Skull Raiders and the Great Cataclysm, looks to be on a slow but steady recovery.

The vessel is actually modeled on depictions you found of the ship of the Skull Raiders. Unfortunately, since it was still in Caira Crim around the Festival of Masks, the real one is probably in the Shadow Realm with the rest of the city. – Brel

However, my journeys have also uncovered signs that not all is well. Recently, small rahi known as skull spiders have started to appear in ever-greater numbers. We're not sure what they do or where they're from, but they didn't get their name for nothing: their bodies oddly resemble the masks worn by the Skull Raiders so many years ago. They are anything but friendly. The ruins of many ancient cities are becoming infested with them as well as a host of other unsavory creatures, some of whom don't actually seem... alive in the way the you or I are. I've started to call these creatures "skeletaloids," as they often look like little more than walking skeletons of other creatures with varying amounts of flesh still attached. No creature I know could live in a condition like that, and I think that the plague brought by the Skull Raiders so long ago might be responsible. I just hope that it's not also keeping the Skull Raiders alive underground, though my recent sighting in Zol Uxala (which definitely hosts the greatest number of skeletaloids of any of the ruins that I've visited) is making me rather worried in that regard... In fact, I'd rather like to actually make a trip back there again sometime to investigate further.

...and I'd rather you not. We have a daughter to take care of, remember? – Rexuse

3. Regions of Okoto

So, now that you know all that has transpired on our island (or rather, all I have found to have transpired so far), I guess I should move on to what you'll actually be exploring: the regions of Okoto. As you might have guessed by this point, there are six, each particularly influenced by one of the six elements that make up the world in the sense that each region's element is always present in a particularly large quantity there. This of course has profound effects on everything, but especially on the creatures and the people that live there. Want to find a giant fire-breathing lizard? You'll be looking for the Region of Fire. Want to see or hear a ridiculous variety of birds and the noises they make? You'll want to travel to the Region of Jungle. Looking for warm and fuzzy creatures? Region of Ice, but don't expect any warmth from the Okotan residents.

We do not need warmth from ourselves. We have fireplaces for that. – Daruth

Don't you ever have problems with your home melting or something? – Axon

The fireplace is made of stone for that reason. – Daruth

Regardless, if you look at a map of Okoto (one of which I have helpfully drawn up for you and included on the following page), you might notice that there's rather a lot of mountains on it. I've already talked about how they got there, so if you're curious on that please see "Great Cataclysm" above. In practice, though, the mountains do a pretty good job of deterring any less determined travelers from, well, traveling. They're full of unsavory creatures and uneven ground that isn't fun to traverse, rather like the entire Region of Earth. They're also far from the only terrain features that the Great Cataclysm so generously bestowed on us; just about every region has a major landmark or two that appeared as a result of some bizarre elemental disaster. There's also lots of ruins of the old cities about for the same reason, which often happen to be full of not very savory creatures of their own. There's lots of good stuff in them if you can get past those creatures though, which is why I would consider them highly recommended travel destinations.

Remember what I told you about your habit of inviting danger? – Brel

Now, such generic descriptions of what you're likely to come across in traveling across Okoto may not be quite satisfactory to you if you're going to put your life on the line. I get that, and so over these next few pages I'm going to delve into a little more detail. I'll give you a rundown of each region and the notable locations that I've come across, be they natural features, ruins, or towns with actual people in them. You may of course stumble onto more noteworthy things along the way. If you do, I would ask that you do not hold me responsible for your lack of preparedness to enter them. I'd be hard pressed to provide any useful info about places I haven't visited or read about.

Yet you have no problem speculating at great length about events that you were not present for. – Sileth

And you do? – Nexuse

The island of

OKOTO



G. Hebbe

The Region of Water

Let's start with my home region, the Region of Water. Counter to its name, we do actually have a decent amount of dry land as well, but there's also many rivers, lakes, marshes, and the largest bay on the island. To get around, it's often more useful to have a boat than to have a cart, and consequently many of us have boats. We like to think of ourselves as clever, friendly, and charming, particularly compared to our neighbors to the north; if you don't mind getting wet, the Region of Water's a great place to visit.

Geographically, the region can be separated into two distinct parts: the lowlands and the islands. Lowlands make up the majority of the region in the form of the Delta, the Mangroves, and the Silent Land. Flooded regularly or even permanently in some parts, the lowlands can about as easier to traverse on foot or by boat, depending on the season. They quite effectively blur the line between land and water in this manner. The islands, meanwhile, are larger rock formations adorned with spectacular cliffs, arches, and half-flooded caves. They're difficult to navigate, but there are some beaches and paths onto the islands that allow them to play host to a number of fishing towns.



1. **Frostwater**: The capital of the Region of Water and historical home of the Protector of Water, Frostwater was built shortly after the defeat of the Skull Raiders and managed to survive the Great Cataclysm mostly intact. Situated on relatively dry ground at the joining of two cold meltwater rivers from the Silent Land, it's also the northernmost major settlement that you'll find in the region. Frostwater is generally a quiet, peaceful place, its wooden huts and larger structures well protected from the storms of the coastline and the frequent flooding of much of the rest of the region. It's a great place to live if you don't mind it being a bit boring most of the time.

2. **Akida's Shrine:** Akida is the elemental creature of water, worshipped in ancient times like the other creatures. Worship declined during the Great Cataclysm as people lost faith that the creatures would be able to save the world from the elemental devastation brought by Makuta, but the creatures at least managed to save their shrines from the worst of the cataclysm and the world did return to balance. Located in a beautiful, bright blue lake at the center of its island, the shrine has gained more visitors as of late.
3. **Coral Bay:** The largest bay on the island of Okoto, Coral Bay is a great diving spot and home to a wild variety of fish and other sea creatures. Since it is sheltered from the ocean by several islands, it tends to remain pretty calm even during a big storm, which is why it's also become the site where the new, experimental underwater huts are being constructed.
4. **Kel Akila:** This isn't so much Kel Akila nowadays as the site of where it used to stand. A memorial was put up to this, the first city taken by the Skull Raiders and also the one they most thoroughly eliminated from the map. Today, the remains of Kel Akila lie in pieces in Coral Bay. Few bother to even visit the place now, as it's quite far out of the way of most other notable locations.
5. **The Delta:** A system of rivers and lakes in generally low-lying land, the Delta floods frequently but is incredibly fertile because of it. There's lots of farming communities here, growing both crops and maintaining large schools of fish in the lakes to as natural fish farms.
6. **The Silent Land:** Geographically and politically, this area belongs to the Region of Ice as much as it does to the Region of Water and its climate is a combination of the two. In the Silent Land, a large ice sheet from the mountains in the Region of Ice melts in part and meets low-lying, marshy ground like that of the Delta to create a kind of snow bog, punctuated by small regions of elevated and sparsely vegetated land that form islands in the floating snow. Being both cold and wet, the Silent Land is not generally seen as a nice place to live by neither the Water nor the Ice tribe and is even shunned by most rahi. Other than some exceptionally hardy vegetation, little lives in this place: it lies abandoned in the eerie silence that gives it its name.
7. **Kel Melo:** I'm pretty sure this city's name means "Deep Snow" in the ancient Okotan tongue, and that's an appropriate name given that it lies smack-dab in the middle of the Silent Land. This city was sacked completely by the Skull Raiders and never returned to afterwards. Its ruins rise from the silent land as the only major landmark in the area, and those of a more fearless disposition use it as a resting point when traveling between the Regions of Water and Ice over land, but generally if you're going to do that it's recommended to travel by boat instead. Kel Melo hasn't been overrun by skull spiders and other cursed creatures to the same degree as most other ruins that I've come across have been, but it's not exactly a welcoming place either; cold, empty, and overgrown with all manner of Silent Land vegetation.
8. **The Mangroves:** The border between the Regions of Water and Jungle is a geographical combination of the two. Usually flooded, the mangroves consist of a dense forest of specialized trees with roots that branch out well above the ground and branches that form a patchy canopy above. Frequently covered with dense fog, the Mangroves are difficult to navigate but are a very fertile fishing ground. The Mangroves are home to several small Water and Jungle Tribe settlements.
9. **Kulta's Landing:** The spot where the Skull Raiders first arrived on our island is a natural deep harbor, a perfect place for trade vessels to dock and transfer their goods to smaller boats

capable of venturing far into the Region of Water. As such, with trade picking up, Kulta's Landing plays host to a rapidly growing Water Tribe village of the same name. It's also the place that I've chosen to make my home, since the ships coming and going bring interesting news from all over the island. It's probably the center of activity for the whole region right now, in spite of its location on one of the islands rather than on the mainland. In fact, compared to peaceful, quiet Frostwater and the myriad of smaller rural villages that dot the Delta and the Mangroves, Kulta's Landing is starting to look more like a miniature version of any pre-cataclysm city. Perhaps one day, it will become a trade hub of a scale able to rival old Kel Akila.

The Region of Ice

With temperatures that rarely rise above freezing and a landscape that consists of little more than snow, mountains, and snow on mountains, the Region of Ice is not my favorite to visit. It's a place where any distance is multiplied by the lack of features or variety of its landscape, where everything seems farther away than it really is. The people who live there are hardy but also distant and aloof, and they stick mostly to the mountains and the coast. In the mountains, great fortresses built from blocks of ice dot the landscape, redoubts that protected the region from enemies for millennia but are now occupied more because of habit and because they are a ready shelter than due to any practical need for such impressive defensive structures. Nowadays, the enemy in the Region of Ice isn't a foe coming from outside; it is the region's climate and native creatures themselves that pose the greatest hazard to any intrepid traveler.



1. Port Avelen: Avelen, according to legend, was the first Protector of the Ice Tribe and gained her title during a time when the Ice Tribe was at war with the Water Tribe. I know, hard to imagine now, but war it was. Thanks to Avelen, the Ice Tribe won the war and the Water Tribe was forced to pay a

yearly tribute of food and other materials to the Ice Tribe. However, since no one was particularly excited about bringing these materials up through the Silent Land, Avelen decided to found a harbor so that they could be brought in by boat. There were few suitable locations, but she eventually settled on a small, natural alcove among the rough cliffs that make up most of the Region of Ice's shores and built a small harbor that soon became known as Port Avelen. Port Avelen is one of the few sizable Ice Tribe settlements not located in the mountains, and in addition to being the region's primary trade port (in spite of being iced in for several months each year) it has also developed a ship-building tradition of its own that has led to the creation of a pretty sizable fishing fleet. It became the capital of the Region of Ice and the seat of the Protector of Ice after the disastrous loss of the City of the Veil during the Great Cataclysm.

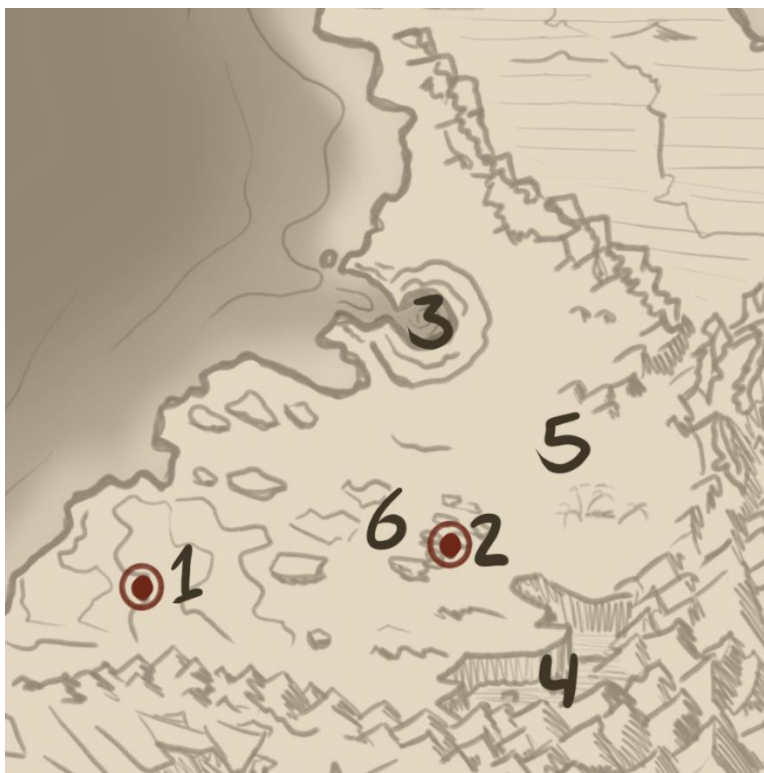
2. **Melum's Shrine:** Melum is the elemental creature of Ice, and his shrine is located in the foothills of the Spine, leading into the Howl. It's one of the few usable landmarks along the way from Deep Snow Pass to Port Avelen, and 'landmark' has also been its primary role for thousands of years. The Ice Tribe's members may admire and aspire to match the qualities of wisdom, emotional control, and stern judgement that Melum is said to embody, but they rarely feel the need to visit his shrine.
3. **Altitude:** Altitude is one of the oldest buildings on Okoto still standing, a giant fortress of Ice that once served as the gateway to the City of the Veil. It survived the city's destruction almost unscathed and has remained the nerve-center of the Twilight Watch due to its strategic location on the crossing of the Spine and the border mountains between the Regions of Stone and Ice. Surrounded by nearly impassable mountains on all sides, it is the steadfast symbol of the unyielding will of the Ice Tribe.
4. **The Howl:** The land between the coast, the Spine, and the border mountains between the Regions of Stone and Ice is known as the Howl. It is a seemingly endless, flat wasteland of deep snow, frozen lakes, occasional patches of tough vegetation, and covered in many places by a series of glaciers that gradually slide down from the mountain and over the desolate landscape. The Howl is constantly swept by fierce howling winds, which gave the region its name. Settlements in the Howl are small, few and far between, and usually subsist on ice fishing in one of the frozen lakes or by hunting what rahi call the region home.
5. **The Precipice:** Most of the glaciers that flow across the Howl do so in a north-western direction, eventually reaching the northeastern coastline of the region. This coast is known as the Precipice; it consists of cliffs over 200 feet high, over which the glaciers slowly slide until an overhanging chunk of Ice grows large and heavy enough to break off and fall into the water below. Due to the danger of falling ice, ships usually give the Precipice a wide berth, and approaching it over the glaciers from land is not advisable. The precipice is an impressive sight, but best observed from a distance.
6. **The Gate:** The Gate is the larger and most well defended of the passes that provide access into the Region of Ice overland. A wide gorge that cuts straight through the border mountains between the Regions of Stone and Ice, the Gate is overlooked by forts garrisoned by the Twilight watch on both sides and opens onto the unforgiving terrain of the Howl. In ancient times, it offered the Ice Tribe a relatively easy and well-defined route to Cairn Crim, the capital, but nowadays only the occasional merchant willing to brave the region's weather for profit passes through.
7. **The Spine:** The spine is a mountain chain that cuts right across the Region of Ice, dividing the howl to the northwest from the Silent Land to the southeast. Like the border mountains, it is studded

with Twilight Watch fortifications, some now long-abandoned as the Silent Land itself proved a more than capable barrier to enemy movement ahead of the Spine.

8. **Deep Snow Pass:** Similar to but smaller than the Gate, Deep Snow Pass is the easiest spot to cross the Spine if for some reason you choose to head to the Region of Ice through the Silent Land. Like the Gate, it is flanked by forts on both sides, though they are not generously garrisoned in the way that they were before the Great Cataclysm.

The Region of Stone

Arid in the extreme, the Region of Stone is a large desert whose constantly shifting sands are littered with rock formations, some oases, and lots of ruins. The temperature difference between this and the Region of Ice is truly staggering; only the Region of Fire gets hotter, and they literally have a river of lava flowing through the entire region. Due to the scarcity of food and water and how widely those resources are dispersed over the expanses of the their region, many Okotans of the Stone Tribe lead nomadic lives, driving herds of Mahi, Mukau, or rarely Dikapi across the desert in a constant search for the next source of water and patch of vegetation. Permanent settlements do spring up around large oases among rock formations that provide at least some shade.



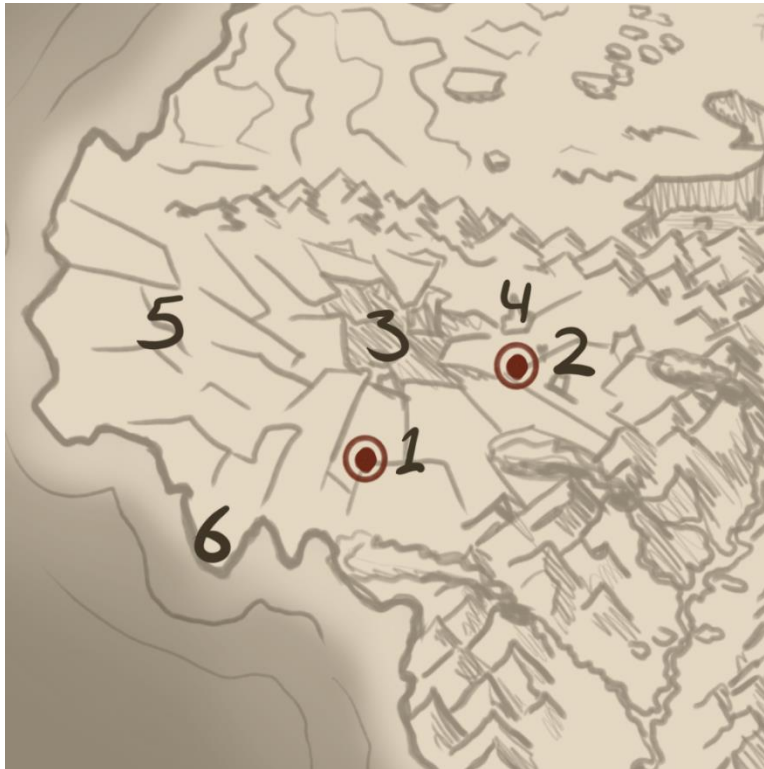
1. **Dan Solrith:** Oddly enough, the capital of one of the most sun-scorched regions of Okoto is named “without sun.” It’s called this because the people who founded it cleverly carved it into the shaded side of a canyon, meaning that even on the hottest days Dan Solrith remains a relatively cool and comfortable place to be. It’s definitely a place of faded glory, though; one of only two ancient cities that the Great Cataclysm failed to claim, it nevertheless came close to destruction twice and many of its deeper parts collapsed and have never been cleared. That

unfortunately includes the city's archives, though I did do some digging when I was there and I believe that the current Protector of Stone intends to clear the whole city. I hope he succeeds: who knows treasures are buried in there?

2. **Ketar's Shrine**: The elemental creature of Stone's shrine is located close to the border between the Living Sands and Monument plain, and some of the Stone Tribe say that it is this location that allows Ketar to stop the Living Sands from moving west and swallowing the rest of the region. It's a regular pilgrimage site for the migratory members of the Stone Tribe, who particularly revere Ketar for being tough and adaptable, key traits that one must have to survive in the desert.
3. **The Great Crater**: The former location of Cairia Crim, once capital of all Okoto, is now the Great Crater. Having slowly filled with water, it resembles an almost perfectly circular inland bay, connected to the larger bay that once gave the capital city its name; mixing with the desert sands, the water was often an orange-red color and "Cairia Crim" means something along the lines of "red coast" or "red bay." The water in the great crater is still of the deep, orange-red color, and it has fueled the growth of what resembles a coastal oasis around it.
4. **The Sunken Land**: A prominent scar of the Great Cataclysm, the Sunken Land is exactly what you'd expect from the name: it's a region of foothills of Okoto's central mountains that, in a giant elemental manifestation, literally sunk deep into the ground. Surrounded by cliffs several hundred feet tall on all sides, the lowest parts of the Sunken Land are actually below sea level. The ruins of two ancient cities whose names I have yet to find are located in the Sunken Land, and they are infested with a large number of skeletoid rahi that I have no desire to tangle with.
5. **The Living Sands**: Covering most of the north and north-eastern parts of the Region of Stone, the living sands are named as such because the giant sand dunes of the area are always slowly moving with the wind. Frequent sandstorms can alter their layout more radically and in a very short period of time, which means that trying to make a reliable map of the area is as good as impossible. Nothing is permanent in the Living Sands.
6. **Monument Plain**: Dominating the center and south-eastern parts of the Region of Stone, Monument Plain is named for the giant rock formations and canyons that scar its landscape. Several large oases located among these features have given rise to permanent settlements, and in the past even to cities such as Dan Solrith. Members of the Stone Tribe that live in these settlements typically carve their homes into the side of the rock formations.

The Region of Earth

Of all the Regions of Okoto, the Region of Earth suffered the worst through the Great Cataclysm. It's a region where the land itself was broken and overturned, but in the process made to reveal its riches: minerals and gemstones of all kinds are mined relatively close to the surface and in great quantities, allowing the Tribe to trade for everything that the ravaged Region of Earth can't provide them with. And that's basically everything apart from minerals; few plants have gained much of a foothold on the surface and most of the surviving Rahi are burrowing creatures that aren't easy to hunt, for food or otherwise. Water runs in small streams above and below ground, but there are no major rivers. It's just a shattered landscape studded with valuable but inedible things, so it's no surprise that the majority of the Earth tribe lives underground in an extensive network of caves and tunnels that can get you through most of the region without ever having to negotiate the surface.



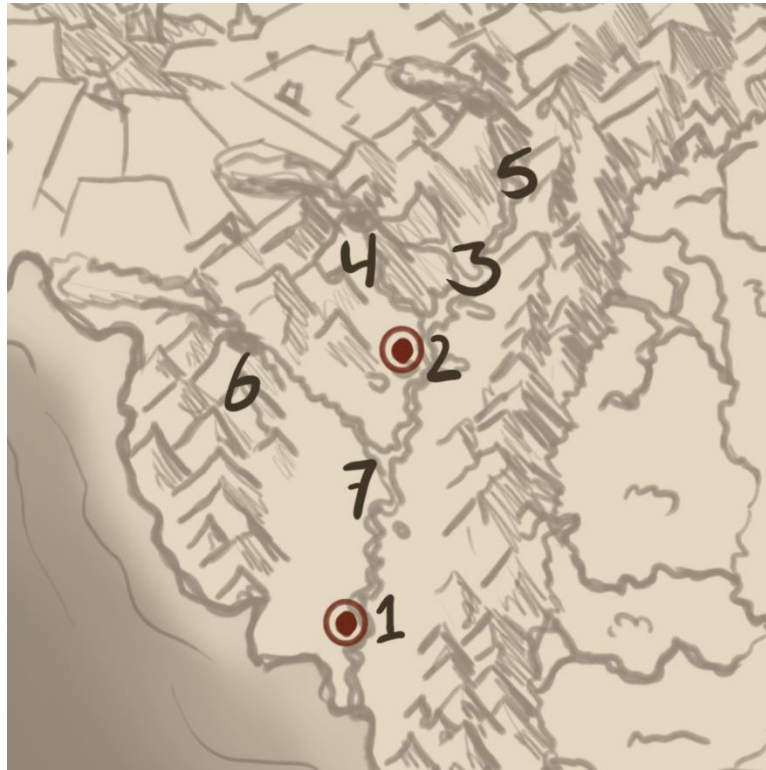
1. Crystal Gorge: The capital of the Region of Earth and its largest settlement is Crystal Gorge, named mostly for its location. Located in a gorge (surprise surprise) that branches out from the region's dominant geographical feature, the Pit, the city is a rather impressive sight to behold. Homes carved from stone line both walls of the gorge, connected by bridges and situated among a set of gigantic, deep purple crystal formations that give off a faint, constant light. It's also the home of the Protector of Earth. On the surface, a large and relatively intact clearing amidst the rubble that makes up the rest of the region plays host to the Forum of Lights, a giant marketplace where miners trade all manner of valuable, glittering minerals brought up from below for food, water, and other supplies not easily cultivated in the Region of Earth and are brought in by merchants coming back from the other regions.

2. **Terak's Shrine:** Unlike in other regions of Okoto, in the Region of Earth reverence of the region's patron elemental creature never really waned. If anything, the fact that the creature's shrine appeared to be the only part of the region not affected by the Great Cataclysm caused many to gather around it. Though most have moved out into the region again since then, a small and dedicated community still resides by the shrine and has done a remarkable job in preserving it.
3. **The Pit:** The first feature that you'll see on any map of the Region of Earth is the Pit, an area not unlike the sunken land in the Region of Stone but far, far deeper. The pit appeared early on in the Great Cataclysm and suffered elemental disasters of all kinds over the next decade, from being flooded repeatedly (once with lava) to playing temporary home to an unnatural cyclone. However, the Pit remains, has been cleared, and is now the hub of the greatest mining system on the island of Okoto. Gemstones, iron ore, and even gold can be mined in significant quantities with only a pickaxe, and by digging tunnels radiating out from the Pit the Earth Tribe has hit incredible veins that have still not been exhausted even after over a thousand years of mining.
4. **Field of Glass:** The aftermath of volcanic eruptions and elemental upheaval that characterizes the eastern part of the Region of Earth is best embodied in the Field of Glass. The surface is covered in a layer of sharp, gleaming pieces of volcanic glass and gemstones, making it impossible to traverse except by flying over. "Glasswalkers," members of the Earth Tribe who make their living searching the area for particularly large or valuable gemstones, regularly venture into it all the same, but for other travelers the Field of Glass is best avoided.
5. **Aru Calamita:** The aptly named Disaster Plain was once the location of three great Earth Tribe cities. As the name suggests, disaster struck during the Great Cataclysm when a giant gorge opened up and swallowed two of the cities whole, then was closed up by a giant earthquake that leveled the third city. For years afterwards, the area was believed to be cursed and abandoned entirely. Lacking the obvious riches near the surface of much of the rest of the Region of Earth, Aru Calamita rarely sees visitors of any kind. The ruins of the third city are still out there somewhere, though, and I intend on finding them someday.
6. **Guide Rock:** A key navigational point, Guide Rock is a large outcrop on the coast of the Region of Earth upon which members of the Earth Tribe have constructed a tower topped by an incredibly big lightstone. The lightstone can be seen from miles out and even from the eastern shoreline of the Region of Fire, making it an excellent navigational aid for merchant ships trying to get to the Region of Earth. A harbor town has grown up in the shadow of the rock, becoming the gateway into the Region of Earth for goods of all kinds.

The Region of Fire

The Region of Fire is characterized by two things: incredible heat and a pervasive smell of sulfur lingering in the air. Both are caused by the region's numerous volcanoes, the three largest of which constantly spew out streams of lava that join in a great river of molten rock that flows all the way through the region from north to south. Ash in the air makes the sky grey by day and pitch-black by night, but light is provided in plenty by the great river of lava. In spite of having to tolerate all this, the members of the Fire Tribe that I've met have all been very nice, amiable people (granted, I've pretty much got to say that since I do live with one), and they've done much to keep their history alive in the form of great tales to be told and performed on stage by the best performers you'll find on Okoto. Still,

for all the great tales and people, I can't help but feel that they have chosen one incredibly dangerous place to live in.



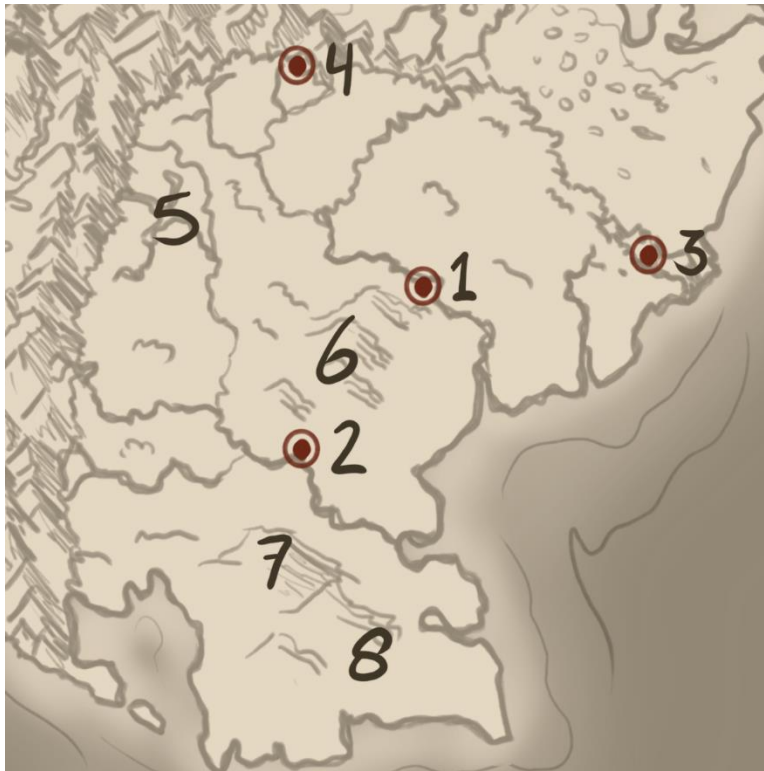
1. **Ultama:** The only city to survive the Great Cataclysm almost entirely intact, and the only one besides Dan Solith from that time that is still inhabited, Ultama sits perched on a giant slab of obsidian glass and impervious to the dangers and disasters that repeatedly claimed the land around it. The city is an architectural monument, its walls intricately carved with symbols of the ancient Okotan language and its skyline crowned by a great palace tower that now serves as home to both the Protector of Fire and the High Priest of Ultama, head shaman for the entire Fire Tribe. Though the area around the city is largely (and surprisingly) agricultural, the city itself is home to the greatest forges and smiths you'll find anywhere on Okoto, supplied by materials brought out of the Region of Earth through Guide Rock.
2. **Ikir's Shrine:** The bird-like elemental creature of fire's shrine is located, rather foolishly I believe, inside one of the magma-filled hills that surround the Cauldron. The High Priest of Ultama makes a yearly pilgrimage there, and on the whole the tribe holds their elemental creature in very high regard and the temple has been well maintained because of it. I wouldn't volunteer for the job of cleaning it, though; the temple contains a giant lava lake.
3. **Lake of Light:** The largest lava lake in the Region of Fire is the Lake of Light, formed in the shadow of the Cauldron and Ikna Gina by lava streams from both major volcanoes and some smaller ones besides, this long, snaking lake is rumored to be where the magma entities originate. Its lava is siphoned to fuel the forges of a number of smiths who've set up around the lake, and some limited mining is even done on its northeast side to supplement the ores brought in from the Region of Earth with ones from the Region of Fire itself.

4. **The Cauldron:** The largest volcano currently active on Okoto is aptly named the Cauldron. At its top, a bubbling lava lake sends clouds of toxic gas and ash high into the air to come down and disperse over both the Regions of Fire and Earth. Though impressive, it does not have a record of erupting violently and hence a number of villages exist in its foothills and some ways up the mountainside.
5. **Ikna Gina:** Ancient Okotan for “Source of Fire,” Ikna Gina is an ancient volcano that has been continuously erupting at least since the time of the Great Cataclysm. It’s lava flows from Ikna Gina that primarily fuel the Lake of Light, and as it also marks the northernmost point of the Region of Fire and is the volcano closest to the center of the island, Ikna Gina also holds a special place in the Fire Tribe’s own mythology: they believe that eruptions from Ikna Gina were responsible for the creation of the island on the surface of the world. Whether this is true is anyone’s guess, but it appears quite clear that Ikna Gina will continue to supply the Region of Fire with its fire for a very long time to come.
6. **Mt. Agleth:** Sileth once told me that “Agleth” means “beacon,” and that describes the role that Mt. Agleth has played to the Region of Fire for the last few hundred years perfectly. The most unpredictable of the three main volcanoes of the Region of Fire, Mt. Agleth constantly spews ash clouds but occasionally erupts more violently too. Either way, its location close to the coastline of Okoto makes it a supremely recognizable landmark, and the fire on top of it is as much a beacon to vessels heading for the Region of Fire as the great lightstone of Guide Rock is for the Region of Earth.
7. **Iknaru:** The Iknaru is a wide, flat plain that makes up much of the southern half of the Region of Fire. Frequently flooded with lava in Mt. Agleth’s more violent eruptions and by the termination of the great river of lava flowing all the way from the Lake of Light in the north, the entirety of the Iknaru effectively becomes new land at least once every ten years. This makes it extremely fertile; as soon as the streams of lava cool or redirect elsewhere, Fire Tribe farmers bring in water from the coastline and start growing new crops. They have perfected this system to such a degree that, in addition to feeding their own tribe, they provide fully three-quarters of the food traded for by the Earth Tribe.

The Region of Jungle

The sixth and final region, though one of the most historically significant on Okoto, is the Region of Jungle. In area, it just edges out the Region of Stone as the largest region of the island. It’s thick jungles contain a density of food, wildlife, and ancient ruins unmatched anywhere else on the island, including the most significant ruin of all: Zol Uxala, the city of the Mask Makers. The Region of Jungle suffered much during the Great Cataclysm, but unlike in the Region of Earth, the land recovered quickly and spectacularly. The same could be said for its people; the Jungle tribe are a curious lot and were probably the first to start seriously delving into the ancient ruins of their region to figure out what was down there. They also throw parties like no one else; while the Great Cataclysm pretty much put an end to it elsewhere, the Festival of Masks is still celebrated annually in the Region of Jungle. It’s probably in part because of this that, while the greatest armorers and toolsmiths of Okoto can be found in the Region of Fire, the greatest maskmakers reside in the Region of Jungle.

I’ll take that as a compliment to my abilities. – Axon



1. **Highreach:** The capital of the Region of Jungle, home of the Protector of Jungle and the Treestridders (their equivalent of the Twilight Watch), and probably the most awe-inspiring city on Okoto that doesn't date back to before the Great Cataclysm, Highreach is impressive for two things. One: it was built over and around a jungle-covered canyon, hardly a friendly place for building or living in, and two: somehow over five-hundred people thought it was a good idea to move there in spite of reason one. Okay, I'm joking: the place really is quite something. Wooden huts constructed around the trunks of giant jungle trees connected by rope bridges make up the upper level of the city, while more homes have been carved into the sides of the canyon to provide safe workspaces for smiths and maskmakers. The whole place was named Highreach for the giant stone spire that was produced by one elemental manifestation during the Great Cataclysm and now serves as a three-hundred foot tall lookout point with the Protector of Jungle's home on top. Better hope you're not afraid of heights...
2. **Uxar's Shrine:** Located on the banks of the Region of Jungle's largest river and deep inside of the local mountain range (the divide), Uxar's shrine was thought lost for many years along with so many other ancient cities and towns in the Region of Jungle. Our group was actually the one to re-discover the place, and a number of enthusiastic archaeologists are busy trying to restore it now.
3. **Temple of Time:** Honestly, this is a place I couldn't tell you much about. I've been there, yes, but it's not as big or impressive a temple as I was expecting and its only noteworthy feature that I could discern was that its design incorporated a giant pendulum. Rumor tells that it is the location of the fabled Mask of Time, an artifact that far predates the rise of the Maskmakers, but I couldn't find that either. The Protectors believe that it will have a role to play in Ekimu's prophecy of heroes, but I'll believe that when I see it. A nice place, sure, but a weird one.

4. **Zol Uxala:** The ancient City of the Maskmakers is no less impressive as a ruin as legends tell it was in life. Time may have cracked the paving stones of the streets and allowed jungle plants of all sorts to invade it, but Zol Uxala is still perched on the great stone plateau, rising out of a chasm through which a constant tide of steam flows. I don't know of any other place on Okoto that has such a sense of history about it; Dan Solrith and Utama come close, but if you really want to see the majesty of the Okoto that was, you'll find it here. Unfortunately, it's also overrun with skull spiders nowadays and most of the Rahi that live there are infected, twisted, skeletoids versions of their past selves, so while Zol Uxala is still impressive for a distance, I doubt that we'll be able to get in and restore the city to its full glory anytime soon.
5. **The High Lake:** An elevated lake whose waters are clear as crystal, the High Lake has no tributary and no outlet, its water is perfectly still and yet it never spoils. I have no explanation for why, but the Okotans living nearby claim that the lake has mystical healing powers, or even that at its bottom Uxar built a new shrine after the old one was destroyed. My discovery of Uxar's Shrine far to the southeast rather undercuts those claims, but all agree that there is something off about the lake. It's currently high on my list of mysteries to try and solve.
6. **The Divide:** The Region of Jungle's own mountain range, the mountains of the Divide are almost as tall as those literally dividing all the other regions and are covered in thick jungle from top to bottom. The Divide got its name from being as good as impassable even in ancient times, always separating the Region of Jungle's coastline from the interior. Nowadays, it functions as much as a barrier north to south as it always has east to west as the main population center of the Jungle Region, Highreach, is currently separated by the Divide from a key point of interest to the south in Uxar's Shrine.
7. **Vulture Peaks:** The southern extension of the Divide, the Vulture peaks are named for one particularly nasty brand of bird that can be commonly found in them. One of them is also a volcano, though it has lain apparently dormant ever since the Great Cataclysm. Its eruption during that time and the subsequent fires pretty much wiped out all Okotan villages on the south of the river on which Uxar's temple lies, however, and while the Jungle has recovered, no Okotans have really moved back into it.
8. **The Deepwild:** The region south and east of the Vulture Peaks, including the peaks themselves, has become known as the Deepwild. It contains the ruins of numerous ancient cities and towns, some of which you can even see from the coastline, but until very recently it was an area utterly avoided by the Okotans. Containing the thickest jungles that you'll find anywhere on the island, the Deepwild has spent thousands of years effectively as a breeding ground for the most dangerous creatures the jungle has to offer. Enter with care, and if you can, with friends to watch your back.

4. Creatures of Okoto

And so, having covered Okoto's history and geography, I think it's high time I got to its current residents. I have encountered a wild menagerie of Rahi and other things from all over the island, and being the naturalist that I am, I have started to group them into categories. I should mention the great help that my companions were in this regard; without them to draw the attention of the more hostile creatures as I studied them, I would never have been able to take my time to observe their more aggressive behaviors in detail and to catalogue their actions and abilities.

Thanks for the mention, but if you think that I'm going to stand between you and a boney wasp again, you're mistaken. – Sileth

The Character and Creature Categorization System

In an effort to present my findings more clearly, I have found it necessary to come up with some standardized way to organize all the information that I have gathered about all these creatures. To that end, I have created the Character and Creature Categorization System, or CCCS for short. CCCS organizes all the information about a creature into a standardized table, an example of which I have provided here with descriptions of what each part of the table is for.

<u>Creature Name</u>					
<i>Creature Size and Type</i>					Level (XP)
AC:					
HP:					
Speed:					
STR	AGI	RES	INT	COG	CHA
()	()	()	()	()	()
Skills:					
Senses:					
Languages:					
Features:					
Actions:					

Creature Name

This one should be self-explanatory, I believe. This is what I have called the creature in question, unless it already had a name.

Creature Size

My first attempt of categorizing creatures was focused on their size, since bigger creatures are generally more powerful and dangerous than smaller ones. Since providing a full description of the creature's exact dimensions and body shape proved impractical, I have instead sized creatures on a scale from "Tiny" to "Gargantuan" and included the following table to describe what volume creatures of these size categories can be expected to occupy. Now, I did it based on cubes because most creatures fit fairly well in a cube, but obviously there are exceptions. Still, this should help you estimate just how big of a creature I'm talking about. For reference, I consider Okotans to be of medium size.

Table 4.1 – Size Categories

Size Category	Space Occupied
Tiny	1ft cube or smaller
Small	2.5ft cube
Medium	5ft cube
Large	10ft cube
Huge	15ft cube
Gargantuan	20ft cube or larger

Creature Type

While I originally expected to encounter rahi, I have happened upon a large number of creatures that do not easily fit that description but definitely are not Okotans either. To account for the differences, I have come up with the following creature types:

- **Elementals:** Creatures composed almost purely of one element tend not to require nourishment of the same kind that Rahi do, and their behavior can be positively mystifying. Some appear to be little more than weirdly behaving manifestations of an element, while others are considerably larger and more dangerous. I have grouped these creatures under the heading of “elementals.”
- **Monstrosities:** Monstrosities are creatures that I think were tampered with somehow, mutated or otherwise. Basically, if I encounter a bunch of regular arachnids one day and later happen upon a larger, skeletal arachnid that seems to share most of its physique with the smaller ones, then I suspect something’s going on. Personally, I blame the plague that the Skull Raiders brought to our island for this; near as I can tell, ever since their invasion and the subsequent Great Cataclysm, weird mutant versions of normal rahi have started showing up in ruins and other areas far from civilization. I started to label these creatures as “skeletaloids” initially due to their rather boney appearance, but after recognizing a significant schism among these creatures I decided to group those that weren’t quite boney enough in their own category: monstrosities. Most monstrosities are significantly larger and more aggressive than their normal counterparts, so approach them with caution.

Better yet, I would suggest avoiding them altogether. – Nexuse

- **Okotans:** I was very surprised to find some creatures, particularly around the ancient ruins, who shared many traits with me and my companions and yet who were... changed in some ways. They definitely weren’t Okotans, but some were close enough that I felt it appropriate to call them that.
- **Rahi:** From the tiny Palooku to the giant Komodo, rahi are the natural creatures of our world. I didn’t so much discover most of these creatures, but I was the first to catalogue them with my CCCS system.
- **Skeletaloids:** Skeletaloids are those creatures that have been twisted by the Skull Raider plague beyond recognition; I couldn’t tell you what most of these this once were, and some of them were changed so long ago that by now we might as well consider them a separate species by themselves. All skeletaloids share one thing in common, though; they don’t seem to need to eat, drink, sleep or do much of anything to, well, stay alive. I fear that somehow these creatures

have been tainted by Shadow; maybe they sustain themselves on it, or worse, on Light. Either way, while not all these creatures are hostile on sight, I'd highly recommend keeping a wide distance.

Armor Class and Hitpoints

If you're busy fighting a creature, these are some things that I suggest you keep in mind. For lack of a better way to concisely describe how tough various creatures were, I started assigning numbers to them based on how many times Daruth had to hit them to get them to either back off or to kill them outright. Armor Class, abbreviated for the sake of keeping the table free of clutter to AC, describes roughly how hard it was to get an effective hit in on a creature. Hitpoint, abbreviated to HP for the same reason, describes how many hits that I judged to be effective it took to down these creatures.

Speed

One thing that I have been able to observe very accurately is movement speed, mostly by being chased by and watching others be chased by a large variety of creatures. Since traditional units of speed seemed not to quite adequately describe movement speed in the short, aggressive bursts that I observed, I instead noted down the distance that creatures can be expected to cover in about five seconds.

Ability Scores

I devised ability scores as a way to adequately describe the apparent physical and mental characteristics of a creature without having to go into more detail than I could easily fit in a chart. For each creature, I assigned a number to each of six core qualities: Strength (STR), Agility (AGI), Resilience (RES), Intelligence (INT), Cognition (COG), and Charisma (CHA). Were I to grade the average Okotan on the same scale for each of these scores that I did the creatures, I think I would rate them around a score of six for all of them. To make comparison to this reference point easier, I also noted ability score modifiers in parentheses with each score: a negative modifier means that the creature is worse in this ability than the average Okotan, a positive one means that they are better, and a score of zero means that I consider them neither better or worse.

Skills

Unfortunately, I found that my system of ability scores did not always adequately describe the abilities of the creatures I encountered. Thankfully, such events were rare enough that I could simply note them individually without cluttering the chart too much. I assigned numbers to various activities based on roughly how much higher I would consider the creature's ability score modifier to be when ascertaining their ability to perform that particular activity.

Senses

Derived from the Cognition score but noted separately for quick reference, I also use this space to describe any special senses that a creature might have that you should be aware of. This includes creatures that can see very well in the dark, those that can feel movements in the ground and, most terrifyingly, creatures that seemed able to see me and my companions without any eyes at all.

Languages

Probably not a part of the table that you'll have to pay attention to often, but if I found that a certain creature could speak or at least understand spoken words to any degree, I made note of it here.

Features

After grouping creatures' capabilities into ability scores, mods, and individual skills, I still found that there were some abilities out there that I just could not adequately describe through any standardized system. At a loss for a better way to describe them, I just listed these abilities separately as features. Some will likely not matter too much to you if you encounter them, but others could be a big problem for you, so review this section carefully if you believe that you might be about to run into one of these creatures.

Actions

While I did my best to ascertain what all the creatures that I catalogued could do, I often found that they found some courses of action highly preferable over others. For hostile creatures, this included attacking by various methods, so I noted their methods of attack and any other notable common actions that I would not expect an Okotan to regularly perform here.

A note on Teluli

Before I give to you my descriptions of many of these creatures, I should make note of an individual without whom this list would be a lot shorter. I've already mentioned the companions that joined me when we journeyed towards the ancient city, but there is one who went there several years before us and who endeavored to do the same thing that I ended up doing: I'm talking about Teluli.

As we were preparing our expedition into the ruins of Zol Uxala (then known only to us as the City of the Maskmakers), I was approached by the Protector of Jungle, who handed me a small, old-looking notebook and stated that it contained information that I should be aware of before entering the city. The notebook had once belonged to a boy who called himself Teluli the Chronicler and who had made it his mission to explore the ancient city and all that was in it. He took highly detailed notes as he went, survived a number of harrowing encounters, and eventually even made it up to the Maskmakers' Forge. Much of the information about the creatures that roam the ancient city came from him first, though I made the effort to confirm it myself whenever possible.

Unfortunately, the Protector of Jungle had not gotten the notebook from Teluli himself; he had found it in the jungle not far from the entrance of the ancient city. The last entry in the notebook explained: while on his way to the forge, Teluli had been attacked by skeletoid creatures he called Plague Bats, carriers of the plague that I am increasingly certain arrived on the island first with the Skull Raiders. Though Teluli managed to beat the bats off and enter the forge, he was injured and infected with the plague. Rather than spread it back to his village, he elected to stay in the City of the Maskmakers and left his journal specifically by the entrance for the next visitor to find. Were it not for his notes, I suspect several of us would have met a similar fate.

So as you read through these pages, remember the sacrifice of Teluli the Chronicler, without whom I probably wouldn't be around to write this for you today.

Creature List

Bearded Califa



Large Rahi Level 6 (300 XP)

AC: 10

HP: 36

Speed: 18ft

STR	AGI	RES	INT	COG	CHA
14(+4)	6(0)	12(+3)	1(-3)	6(0)	4(-1)

Skills: Athletics +2, Endurance +2

Senses: Passive Perception 7

Languages: none

Features:

Charge: When the Bearded Califa moves more than half its movement speed in a straight line and hits a foe with an attack at the end of that line, that foe must make a DC 11 Athletics check. If they fail, they fall prone and take 6 additional damage.

Long March: The Bearded Califa gains exhaustion points from extended marches half as quickly as normal.

Actions:

Gore: melee weapon attack, +6 to attack roll, 4d4+6 damage on a hit

Kick: melee weapon attack, +6 to attack roll, 4d4+6 damage on a hit

The bearded Califa, named after its stringy purple chin hair, is a hulking beast with massive horns, powerful hooves, and a jutting jaw. The mighty Rahi keep to themselves, grazing along the mountainsides, and are wildly defensive, but not very provocative.

From Teluli’s notes:

“Past the flowery meadow and a short distance further up the mountain, I discovered a large pack of grazing beasts. The Bearded Califa are similar to the Okoto Mukau, a common herd Rahi in the Region of Stone, but are much more powerful and wild. I carefully approached an outlier of the pack, but was quick to retreat when it charged toward me. They are quick to strike, but only if you intrude upon their space.

I spent the rest of the day watching from a distance, studying their behavior. Fights broke out willy-nilly between some of the larger Califa, but tended to last only a few seconds before the weaker ones fell back. As you can guess, the Bearded Califa fight by swinging their massive blue horns, and by kicking with all four legs. It’s truly a sight to behold, watching such mighty beasts deliver such powerful blows.

Another thing I caught on to was the importance of the Califa’s beard. A longer beard seems to represent greater authority within the herd, and the Califa with the longest beards are almost never engaged in fights. Interestingly, when the Califa with the longest beard was attacked by a rowdy member of the herd, many of the other Califa nearby stepped in to defend it. It’s appears that the oldest Califa are the most respected of all.”

Blazing Coyote



Medium Rahi Level 2 (100 XP)

AC: 8

HP: 20

Speed: 24ft

STR	AGI	RES	INT	COG	CHA
8(+1)	8(+1)	10(+2)	4(-1)	8(+1)	3(-2)

Skills: Athletics +1, Perception+1

Senses: Passive Perception 9, Darkvision 60ft

Languages: none

Features:

Attunement(Fire): The Blazing Coyote has the Fire elemental type. It has resistance to Fire damage and Vulnerability to water Damage.

Actions:

Bite: melee Fire weapon attack, +1 to attack roll, 2d6+1 Fire damage on a hit

Blazing Coyotes get along with no one, not even each other. They are scrawny, low-profile Rahi, but exude flame all over their body, making them appear much larger than they actually are. Their primary method of attack involves slashing with their massive claws, and fights amongst themselves are all too frequent.

From Teluli's notes:

"One of the Rahi which calls this quarry home is the Blazing Coyote, a difficult, hardy beast which bathes its surroundings in heat and flame. Villagers from the Region of Fire are known to be hot-headed, and I expect this creature would be right at home there. Angry, rowdy, combative, and above all, hot, the Blazing Coyotes are impossible to get along with, and I wouldn't risk my life to enter that pit of fire where they dwell.

I spent some time studying their lifestyle before wandering further along the quarry, and I can say, they don't do much. They don't seem at home here. They may not be the nicest Rahi, but I wish I could ship them off to the Region of Fire to live a happier life. Methods of attack involve slashing with their claws, and methods of play involve brutal wrestling and chasing. I imagine that they would burn to the touch as well, a useful tool when hunting prey."

Blossom Fox



Small Rahi Level ½ (25 XP)

AC: 7

HP: 12

Speed: 24ft

STR	AGI	RES	INT	COG	CHA
3(-2)	10(+1)	6(0)	4(-1)	7(0)	6(0)

Skills: Acrobatics +1

Senses: Passive Perception 7

Languages: none

Features:

Actions:

Bite: *melee weapon attack, -1 to hit, 1d6-2 damage on a hit*

A playful mountainous-variant of the Magma Fox, Blossom Foxes are common in fields of flowers along the mountain stretch.

From Teluli's Notes:

"My first day in the mountains went well. Upon wandering into a rippled field of flowers, I was greeted by a small, excited Rahi, one much like the Oko Kani back at home. At first, it seemed timid, and I was skeptical that it would be friendly. But, unintimidated by its petite size, I approached it cautiously, and indicated that I was friendly. Stricken with joy, the Blossom Fox - as I have called it, due to its striking resemblance to the Magma Fox - began dancing in the flowers, eagerly inviting me to explore the colorful meadow. Blossom Foxes love a good petting, and bode well for my trip through the mountains."

Boar



Gore: *melee weapon attack, +6 to hit, 4d6+4 damage on a hit*

Boar inhabit the caves and forests in the Region of Ice. Due to their thick skin, heavy weight, and powerful tusks, the beasts are extremely threatening to villagers and other Rahi. They are known to charge at their opponents, swinging their tusks wildly and smashing everything in their path.

Large Rahi Level 6 (300 XP)

AC: 10

HP: 48

Speed: 18ft

STR	AGI	RES	INT	COG	CHA
14(+4)	6(0)	10(+2)	2(-2)	8(+1)	1(-3)

Skills: Athletics +2, Endurance +2

Senses: Passive Perception 8, Blindsight 10ft

Languages: none

Features:

Charge: *When the Boar moves more than half its movement speed in a straight line and hits an enemy with an attack at the end of that line, that foe must make a DC 11 Athletics check. If they fail, they fall prone and take 6 additional damage.*

Dasher: *The Boar can take the Dash action as a bonus action on each of its turns.*

Actions:

Boorig

Medium Rahi Level ½ (25 XP)

AC: 8

HP: 12

Speed: 18ft

STR	AGI	RES	INT	COG	CHA
8(+1)	6(0)	10(+2)	2(-2)	6(0)	4(-1)

Skills: none

Senses: Passive Perception 7

Languages: none

Features:

Actions:

Tackle: *melee weapon attack, +2 to hit, 1d6+1 damage on a hit*

Boorig are smaller cousins of the Boar that are commonly kept as farm animals throughout Okoto.

Creature Features

The creatures that I have come across in my travels have lots of interesting abilities, and as a naturalist, I have always been eager to explore those abilities, to figure out how they work. To that end, I've compiled a list of all the interesting and unique abilities that the creatures that I've come across have. Some, no doubt, were given to them courtesy of their own connection with the elements, while others are just the result of their anatomy.

List of Features

Unique abilities of creatures in the Bestiary, as well as those of Okotans, are modeled through features. For reference, this is an alphabetical list of all creature features currently present in Legends of Okoto.

- **Acrobat**: This creature's Agility score increases by 1.
- **Airborne(x)**: This creature has a (x)ft flying speed.
- **Amphibious**: This creature can breathe both air and water.
- **Attunement(element)**: This creature has the elemental type of the element listed with the feature's title.
- **Blindsight(x)**: This creature has blindsight out to a range of x feet, or increases the range of its blindsight by x/2 feet if it already had it from another source.
- **Burrower(x)**: This creature has a (x)ft burrowing speed.
- **Burst of Speed**: This creature can take the Dash action as a bonus action on each of its turns.
- **Camouflage**: This creature gains advantage on Stealth checks when it does not move during its turn.
- **Charge(x)**: When this creature moves more than half its movement speed in a straight line and hits an enemy with an attack at the end of that line, that foe must make a DC(x) Athletics check. If they fail, they fall prone and take additional damage equal to the creature's challenge rating.
- **Chillproof**: This creature does not gain exhaustion points solely from exposure to natural but extremely low ambient temperatures, and takes no damage from failing Endurance checks made to endure cold inclement weather.
- **Climber(x)**: This creature has a (x)ft climbing speed.
- **Darkvision(x)**: This creature has darkvision out to a range of x feet, or increases the range of its darkvision by x/2 feet if it already had it from another source.
- **Domesticated**: Animal handling checks made to interact with this creature gain advantage.
- **Extended Leap**: This creature's maximum jumping distance is doubled.
- **Hardy**: Your Resilience score increases by 1.
- **Heatproof**: This creature does not gain exhaustion points solely from exposure to natural but extremely high ambient temperatures, and takes no damage from failing Endurance checks made to endure hot inclement weather.
- **Hold Breath**: This creature can hold its breath a number of minutes equal to its Resilience score without suffocating.
- **Hover(x)**: This creature has a (x)ft hover speed.
- **Keen Senses**: This creature's Cognition score increases by 1.
- **Long March**: This creature gains exhaustion points from extended marches half as quickly as normal.
- **Multiattack**: This creature can make [attack combination] whenever it takes the Attack action on its turn.
- **Natural Armor(x)**: This creature's AC score increases by x.
- **Natural Athlete**: This creature's Strength score increases by 1.
- **Natural Burrower**: This creature has a burrowing speed equal to half its walking speed.
- **Natural Climber**: This creature has a climbing speed equal to its walking speed.
- **Natural Swimmer**: This creature has a swimming speed equal to its walking speed.
- **Problem Solver**: This creature's Intelligence score increases by 1.
- **Resistance(types)**: This creature has resistance to damage of the types listed in the title.

- Soft Landing: This creature has resistance to falling damage.
- Storied Legacy: This creature's Charisma score increases by 1.
- Sure Footed: This creature ignores the effects of difficult terrain due to rough, extremely uneven, or slippery ground.
- Swimmer(x): This creature has a (x)ft swimming speed.
- Tremorsense(x): This creature has tremorsense out to a range of x feet, or increases the range of its tremorsense by $x/2$ feet if it already had it from another source.
- Undead: This creature does not need to eat, drink, breathe, or sleep to survive.
- Water Breather: This creature can only breathe in water.

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Scorpion_Strike (TTV Message Boards)

History of Okoto

Regions of Okoto

Final Composition

Dragon_Ben (TTV Message Boards)

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Creature MOCs and Descriptions

The Character of Teluli