

MIASMA



24-HOUR
RPG 2015

INTRODUCTION

Mamoru circled the Oni, keeping his shield up to deflect the savage blows of the demon's large club. This shield wasn't blocking all of the damage, though: he felt himself get shaken with every hit. Worse yet, his strength was slowly leaking away: keeping the heavy shield up took much of his energy. He needed an opening soon...

Then, the demon clutched its club above its head with both hands, ready to land a devastating blow. That was the chance Mamoru had been waiting for! With the demon gearing up for the attack, its right side was open. He rolled to the right and struck the Oni's exposed flank as its club smashed into the crumbling pavement where Mamoru had stood only moments before.

It was not enough. Unexpectedly, the demon followed up with a wide sweep of its club, catching Mamoru's unshielded left side. Mamoru felt his strength leave his body, the dark power of the Miasma flowing over and out of him.

Minutes later, he opened his eyes again. He was back at the base camp, his captain prodding him with the back-end of his lance. "You died there, boy. All of us did. Got too greedy. Get up, we're going to try again to slay that Oni. Let's hope our power is still there when we get back to its lair."

Miasma is a game where you play a samurai, infected by a dark miasma that has held the Imperial Capital in its grip for centuries. In this game, you will wage desperate battles against the monsters that appeared in the wake of the miasma. To stop the monsters from overtaking all of the land, you will become a monster yourself, and commit your body and soul to the fight.

THE COMING OF THE MIASMA

Centuries ago, something went terribly wrong when the Emperor, representative of the divine on Earth, conducted a ritual to ensure a good harvest. Instead of a blessing upon the land, foul and dark miasma emanated. Within moments, the Imperial palace was enveloped by this foul vapor.

Soon, the survivors found themselves attacked by all sorts of monsters: the dark miasma had infected man and animal alike, creating the monstrous Yōkai.

The non-infected were attacked, and those who survived the initial onslaught had to flee the city, leaving everything behind, lucky to escape with their lives.

The miasma expanded more and more, but eventually settled around the capital and the surrounding lands: a blighted, ruined place, where demons and monsters stalk those who dare to trespass. But even outside of that sphere, the influence of the miasma can be found. Occasionally, people become infected with the miasma. A dark, circular mark somewhere on their body betrays their brush with darkness. These people are exiled, and forced to live under the shadow of the capital.

Some of the infected decide to take up arms against the tide of darkness, to protect the home they have been expelled from. There are even some who voluntarily choose to join the fight: it is a stage for bravery and of hard-won victories against the dark.

You play as one of these warriors, who use the miasma's influence to become stronger, to fight back against that which has taken everything from you.

The game is played without dice: not luck, but planning and commitment to those plans, will see you through.

CHARACTERS

Characters in Miasma are warriors, who use the miasma's powers against it, to fight against the Yōkai who threaten the peace of the land, to re-take the capital, but sometimes also for personal gain.

Some seek out companions, to aid each other in battle. Some are loners, preferring to keep to themselves, to incur no debts to others. Some are selfish, preying on those weaker than them.

All of them have to live with the corrupting power of the miasma.

ATTRIBUTES

Characters are defined by five attributes: four that measure the character's physical abilities and one that measures magical aptitude. Attributes have a numerical value from 1 to 50, with 5 being the human average for the physical attributes.

Strength is the measure of raw physical power: how much weight a character can lift. A high strength allows a character to use heavy weapons and deal extra damage with them.

Dexterity is the measure of fine motor skills: how deftly the character can manipulate objects. A high dexterity allows a character to use finesse weapons and deal extra damage with them.

Endurance is the measure of stamina: how long a character can go on without catching their breath. A high endurance allows a character to attack relentlessly.

Vitality is the measure of life power: how much damage a character can take before succumbing to their wounds. A high vitality allows a character to keep on fighting after being hit.

Power is the measure of magic power: how well a character can manipulate the miasma's influence to produce magical effects. A high power allows a character to aid their comrades with healing or to attack monsters with devastating spells.

Level is a measure of the character's might. Increasing a Level allows the character to advance one of their Attributes by 1 point.

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

There are three derived attributes that play a role in combat. Their value is calculated from an Attribute.

Stamina is the pool of energy that a character has at their disposal for things like moving and attacking. The Stamina Pool holds 5 points per point of Endurance.

Life is the pool of energy that a character has at their disposal for taking damage. The Life pool holds 5 points per point of Vitality. If the Life pool reaches 0 points, the character has died.

Essence is a measure of how well the character can keep their personality together under the constant onslaught of the miasma's influence. Initially, the Essence pool holds 5 points. If the Essence pool reaches 0 points, the character has lost themselves and becomes a monster themselves.

Encumbrance is the weight of all armor worn and equipment carried.

THE MIASMA POOL

Every character has a **Miasma Pool**, which initially holds 0 points. By slaying monsters, the character will more and more fall under the influence of the miasma, earning points in the Miasma Pool.

These points can be spent on character advancement to increase the values of the attributes or to power spells.

The Miasma Pool and the ways to use it are explained in a later section.

CHARACTER CREATION

To create a character, players have 24 points to distribute between the attributes. No attribute may be lower than 1, and no starting attribute may be higher than 10. Human average is 5 points in Strength, Dexterity, Endurance and Vitality; and 1 point in Power. Starting characters are no average human, and they have 3 extra points to allocate.

Characters always start out at Level 1.

You also need to think about your character's personality and background: what was their previous life like? How did they become infected with the miasma? What is their personality like? What are their goals now?

The Game Master has the authority to forbid certain backgrounds that do not fit their game.

EQUIPMENT

A warrior lives and dies by his weapons and armor. Equipment plays a big role in the lives of the samurai fighting against the miasma. Investing in the right equipment can make the difference between defeat or success.

This chapter gives a description of the various types of equipment: weapons, armor and shields, and their characteristics. The next chapter, on combat, will show how these characteristics affect the outcome of a fight.

WEAPONS

Weapons come in all varieties: swords, lances, bows, etcetera. Some even prefer to use armored fists against their foes! The fight against the Yōkai requires a careful balance of weapons, tailored to the particular monster you are fighting.

All weapons have the same characteristics:

Minimal Requirements show the minimal Attribute values that your character needs to have to wield the weapon effectively. For instance, heavy two-handed swords require great strength to wield, while a rapier requires a certain minimum of finesse from the wielder to hit.

Base Damage shows the amount of damage (in Life) that a normal hit with that weapon by someone with the minimal required attribute level does.

Scaling shows the amount of *extra* damage that a character with an attribute over the minimal requirement does when hitting with that weapon. For instance, a heavy two-handed sword will do more damage if you put more force behind the swing; hence it scales along with the Strength attribute.

Some weapons have more than one Scaling, each with their own attribute, while some weapons have no scaling at all.

Scaling runs from 0 (no Scaling) to 2.5 (high Scaling).

The formula for calculating the damage of a Weapon for a particular character is (Base damage + (Scaling x (Attribute value – Minimum Required Attribute value))). For a Weapon with a Base Damage of 10, a Minimum Required Strength of 10 that is wielded by a character with a Strength value of 12, the damage is $10 + (1.5 \times (12 - 10)) = 13$.

Weight shows the weight of the weapon¹.

Reach shows what the effective range of the weapon is, measured in hexes. Polearms such as pikes allow hitting enemies at a greater distance. Bows and other missile weapons use Reach to show their range.

Moves enumerates the type of attacks that can be executed with the weapon. For instance, with a pike you can poke or swing, while swords can be thrust or slashed.

¹ Weight is measured in some abstracted unit. No imperial/metric problems!

Special Damage shows the special damage types that the weapon deals, in addition to physical damage. The three special damage types are **Fire**, **Lightning** and **Dark**.

A magical fire sword will, in addition to the normal physical damage of a sword, also deal Fire damage on a successful attack.

Parry show the damage reduction for Physical damage as a *percentage*, when the weapon is used to parry.

ARMOR

A character has five slots for armor: head, body, arms, legs, feet. Armor slots can be left empty, meaning that the character wears no special protection on that spot.

Armor has the following characteristics:

Minimal Requirements show the minimal attribute values that your character needs to have to wear this piece of armor comfortably. Heavy plate mail will require higher strength, while leather will require some dexterity to move around in.

Slot is the armor slot that this armor protects. Helmets on the head, etcetera.

Weight is the weight of the piece of armor.

Resistances show the damage reduction of the armor for Physical, Fire, Lightning and Dark damage types. These are all numerical values.

SHIELDS

Shields provide protection against the blows of the enemy. Some samurai prefer to use a shield, staying close to the enemy and waiting for the right opportunity to strike.

Shields have the following characteristics:

Minimal Requirements show the minimal attribute values that your character needs to have to use this shield effectively. A heavy shield requires great strength, while a small wooden shield might require dexterity to ward off enemy attacks.

Weight is the weight of the shield.

Stability is a measure of how well the shield is constructed and reinforced against blows. Using shields with a high stability allow the character to take more blows without losing too much Endurance.

Resistances show the damage reduction for each type of damage (Physical, Fire, Lightning and Dark). In contrast to armor, these values are *percentages* instead of numerical values.

Shields can not be used with two-handed weapons. Some weapons can be used to attack with a shield, such as thrusting attacks with a polearm. If that is the case, it is mentioned in the description of the move.

EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Here follows some example equipment. Game Masters are encouraged to build their own armories with weapons appropriate to their game.

Short Sword

The short sword is a light-weight weapon. When wielded in the hands of an expert user, a precise strike with a short sword can do as much damage as other, larger weapons.

Minimal Requirements: Strength 3, Dexterity 5

Base Damage: 5

Scaling: Strength 0.5, Dexterity 1.5

Weight: 3

Reach: 1

Moves: Stab, Slash

Parry: 40%

Mace

The mace is little more than a heavy club. Refinement is not a requirement when wielding a mace: the power with which the blows are delivered is much more important.

Minimal Requirements: Strength 5

Base Damage: 6

Scaling: Strength 1

Weight: 6

Reach: 1

Moves: Smash

Parry: 50%

Halberd

A two-handed polearm. An axe with a long pike mounted on a long shaft. Experienced wielders can swing the halberd around in wide arcs, or deliver a killing overhead swing. Can't be used with shields.

Minimal Requirements: Strength 3, Dexterity 7

Base Damage: 10

Scaling: Strength 1, Dexterity 1.75

Weight: 7

Reach: 3

Moves: Sweep, thrust

Parry: 60%

Chainmail

A coat of interlocking iron rings over a padded cloth vest. Heavy, but provides good protection against Physical blows.

Minimal Requirements: Strength 10

Slot: Body

Weight: 15

Resistances: Physical 10, Fire 5, Lightning 1, Dark 5

Wooden Shield

A round wooden shield, reinforced with a band of metal along the rim. Basic infantry protection.

Minimal Requirements: Strength 3

Stability: 40%

Weight: 4

Resistances: Physical 4, Fire 2, Lightning 3, Dark 2

Steel Shield

A round shield, made of steel. Heavy, but the solid construction offers excellent protection against Physical and Fire damage.

Minimal Requirements: Strength 8

Stability: 75%

Weight: 10

Resistances: Physical 7, Fire 7, Lightning 1, Dark 4

COMBAT

Most of the game will be spent in combat: for the infected, the battle against the Yōkai never stops. In between battles, there is only time to catch your breath before you move on, deeper into the lands surrounding the capital, where the influence of the miasma is stronger and where the monsters are more powerful.

THE GRID

Combat is played out on a hex grid. Every character occupies exactly one hex, making the edge of a hex about half a meter long. Particularly large monsters may occupy more than one hexes, but most will be roughly human-sized and thus occupy only one hex.

Combatants, characters and monsters alike, face in exactly one direction.

Movement follows the grid: it is always from the current hex to an adjacent hex.

TIMING

There are no combat rounds in Miasma. Rather, time moves in **Segments**. A single Segment has a duration of roughly *two seconds*.

ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Actions may cost points from the Stamina Pool and take a certain number of Segments to complete as noted in the description of the action.

Each movement or attack takes up one or more Segments. For instance, a quick stab with a pike requires two segments: one to withdraw the pike and one to thrust it forward.

When a combatant selects an action, they are *committing* to that sequence of events: they are locked into that motion until it is over. Combatants who are not currently locked into a motion may decide to react to those actions...

There are three types of actions in combat: **Movement**, **Defense**, and **Attacking**.

MOVEMENT

There are four types of movement in combat:

Walk is just that: the combatant walks at a normal pace from one hex to another. The speed is one hex per Segment.

Turn allows the combatant to turn to face another direction. The speed is two hexes per Segment, with a minimum of one Segment. (This means that a full turn takes three Segments.)

Duck allows the combatant to duck out of the way of an imminent attack. The roll takes the character three hexes in a straight line in one Segment, for a Stamina loss of 20 plus Encumbrance.

Run takes the character up to five hexes in a straight line in the span of one Segment, for a Stamina cost of 10 plus their Encumbrance *per hex*.

DEFENSE

A character can defend themselves by using a shield or parrying with their weapon.

It is not possible to initiate an attack with a weapon that is being used to parry. It is not possible to attack with most weapon moves when using a shield.

Switching to or from parrying or using a shield takes one Segment.

Characters can move normally when defending.

ATTACKING

A character can attack using one of his Attack Moves. Each Attack Move has its own Stamina cost and takes a certain number of Segments. See the section on Attack Moves for more information on how to build Attack Moves.

Once the Attack Move is selected, the character is locked into that sequence of motions and will complete those motions unless staggered or killed.

GETTING HIT

If an attack hits, the damage in Life and Stamina has to be calculated. Do this for each type of damage that the attack does. If an attack does both Physical and Fire damage, then do the calculations twice: once for the Physical damage, and once for the Fire damage.

Life Damage: Start with the damage value of the Attack Move: this is the damage that the attack would do if the target was not defending themselves and wore no armor.

If the target was defending with a shield or weapon, then deduct the percentage specified in the weapon or shield's Resistance for that type of damage.

Add up the Resistance values of all armor worn by the character for that particular type of damage, and subtract that from the damage that is left.

The remainder is deducted from the character's Life Pool.

Stamina Damage: If the character is defending themselves with a shield, then the shield's Stability rating is deducted from the Physical damage dealt by the Attack Move. The remainder is deducted from the character's Stamina Pool.

If the character is defending themselves with a weapon, then the full Physical damage of the attack is deducted from the character's Stamina Pool.

If the character is not defending, then half of the Physical damage of the Attack Move is deducted from the character's Stamina Pool.

STAMINA IN COMBAT

Over the course of the combat, a character's Stamina Pool will empty because of movement, defending or executing attacks. A character can't undertake an action if they lack the required Stamina points.

Characters regenerate their Stamina Pool when not undertaking an action that costs Stamina. Standing still, turning and walking are all actions that allow for Stamina regeneration.

Characters regain a number of Stamina points equal to their Endurance attribute value. If the character is currently defending with a weapon or shield, then the number of regained Stamina points is halved (rounded down).

When a character's Stamina Pool reaches 0 points, the character is **Staggered**. Staggered characters become unbalanced and can't take any action. Any actions that have been initiated are interrupted, including defending! Being staggered leaves a character wide open for attacks. Staggered characters remain staggered until they have regained 75% of their Stamina Pool (round up). But since they can't undertake any action when Staggered, they regenerate Stamina at their maximum rate.

DEATH

When a character's Life Pool reaches 0, the character has died. But even death does not release the character from the miasma's dark grasp!

Upon death, the character's Miasma Pool empties: all Miasma that has not been integrated in their Essence will flow out of them and pool around at their place of death.

Every time the character dies, their Essence Pool will decrease with 1 point. When the Essence Pool reaches 0, the character has lost their sense of self and surrenders to the miasma's embrace. They turn into a monster themselves, corrupted by the foul influence of the miasma. See the section on the Miasma Pool for more information about how to reset the Essence Pool.

If the Essence Pool remains above 0, then the character has still enough force of will. Through the power of the miasma, their body will be reformed at their most recent resting place. After a few brief minutes, they will regain consciousness.

ATTACK MOVES

When a character attacks, they are executing an Attack Move. An Attack Move is a sequence of actions that the character undertakes in order to deal damage to their foes.

An Attack Move represents the years of combat training the character has accumulated. Through rigorous training, complex movements are drilled into the character's "muscle memory". This is also why it is not possible to stop the Attack Move once it has begun: the careful distribution of weight, the movements of limbs, it has all been "composed" for great efficiency. Stopping halfway would unbalance the character and stagger them, which is why the Attack Move will be completely executed once the character commits to doing so.

ANATOMY OF AN ATTACK MOVE

A fully composed Attack Move has these characteristics:

Time Cost, which is the number of Segments that executing the Attack Move costs;

Stamina Cost, which is the number of Stamina points that executing the Attack Move costs;

Damage (Type), which is the (base) damage per type that the Attack Move deals. For Physical damage, this must be calculated separately for each character and weapon;

Hit Hexes, which is the hexes that are hit with the attack, relative to the executing combatant;

Sequence of Events, which is a narrative of the movements that the character executes for each step of the Attack Move.

THE BASIC ATTACK MOVE

At its most basic, an Attack Move consists of two movements, taking a single Segment each to execute: one move to pull back and then one to strike a number of hexes equal to the Weapon's Reach, in the direction that the character is facing.

With a sword, an overhand slash would consist of raising the sword and then bringing it down into the hex the character is facing. For a spear, a thrust would consist of pulling the spear back and then thrusting it forward, etcetera. Every weapon has a simple attack that takes two Segments to execute.

The basic Attack Move has a Stamina Cost equal to the Weight of the weapon: heavier weapons are harder to handle. The Stamina Cost is deducted from the Stamina Pool at the start of the Attack Move. If the Stamina Pool would drop below 1 after this, the Attack Move can not be executed.

The Damage dealt with the Basic Attack Move is equal to the Base Damage of the weapon, along with the extra Scaling Damage.

As noted, the Hit Hex of the basic Attack Move is the hex that the character is facing. The Sequence of Events might read something like: "Mamoru raises his sword, pointing forward," for the first Sequence, and then "Mamoru slams his sword straight down," for the next Sequence.

The Sequence of Events is especially important when encountering a new type of enemy: careful observation will lead the characters to recognize the various Attack Moves that the enemy has at their disposal.

EXPANDING THE ATTACK MOVE

Attack Moves can be expanded to do more damage or to hit more hexes, at the cost of a larger Time and Stamina Cost.

By spending an additional Segment "winding up", an attacker can put extra force behind an attack at the cost of additional Stamina. Per Segment spent "powering up", the attacker can add a number of Stamina points equal to his Strength or Dexterity attribute to the Stamina cost of the Attack Move. Only Attributes that the weapon has a Scaling for can be used in this manner. Every two Stamina Points added in this manner translate to one additional point of Physical damage.

Additional hexes can be added to the Hit Hexes by spending one additional Segment per hex added. If this is a sweep (for instance, a side-ways slice with a sword), then the Hit Hexes are processed in order: the first Hit Hex that has a defender will receive full damage, and all others only half damage. So, if an attacker executes a left-to-right slice attack with a halberd that covers the three hexes in front of the attacker, the hexes are evaluated from left to right. If there is a defender in the left-most hex, they will receive the full damage of that attack. If there is another defender in the right-most hex, they will receive only half damage of the attack.

CHAINING ATTACK MOVES

Attack Moves can be chained together to create devastating combinations. The basic rules for Attack Moves still have to be followed, but for a chained set of Attack Moves, all of the Segments spent adding additional Stamina or Hit hexes can be "front loaded": the attacker can choose to spend all those Segments at the beginning of the chained Attack Move.

There must be at least one Segment between two chained attacks that deal damage.

Chaining Attack Moves can be really beneficial if the first attack can Stagger the target: all subsequent attacks will then hit for full damage. If multiple attackers execute a chained series of Attack Moves, then this chance is greatly increased.

DESIGNING ATTACK MOVES

Players are encouraged to design their own Attack Moves for their characters. Anybody can swing a sword, but every character should have their own 'signature move' that only they can do.

Think about your character's preferred fighting style: are they slow and heavily armored, taking the enemy's blows easily, retaliating when there is an opening? Or are they a nimble fighter, who ducks out of the way of attacks, strikes and darts out of reach again? Your Attack Moves should reflect the way your character fights.

EXAMPLE

Kenta, who has a Strength score of 12, wields a large mace. The large mace has a Weight of 8, a Minimum Requirement of Strength score of 10 and a Strength Scaling of 1.5. The Base Damage for the large mace is 10.

Kenta wants to design a move to sweep his mace from left to right, hitting the three hexes in front of him. After that, he immediately swings his mace up and smashes it with great force down in the hex in front of him.

The Time Cost for the first Attack Move is four Segments: one for the base movement, two for the additional two Target Hexes and one for the attack itself. The Damage of the attack is of Type Physical, and is his normal Damage for his large mace, which is 13: $10 + (1.5 \times (12 - 10))$. The Stamina Cost is 8 points, equal to the Weight of the mace.

The total Time Cost for the second Attack is again four Segments: one for the base movement, two for pumping twice his Strength attribute into the Stamina Cost for additional damage and one for the attack itself. The Stamina Cost for the second movement is $8 + 2 \times 12 = 32$. The damage dealt with the second Attack is 25: $13 + ((2 \times 12) / 2)$.

The total Time Cost is thus 8 Segments, and the total Stamina Cost is 40 points. If a target takes the full force of the chained Attacks, then that would deal a total of 38 points of Life damage.

Kenta decides to front-load two of the Segments needed for the second movement, which makes the Sequence of Events like this:

Segment 1 to 5: "Kenta plants his feet firmly apart, and slowly rotates his upper body to the left."

Segment 6: "Kenta swings his mace to the right, putting the momentum of his rotating body behind it. He sweeps the mace in a wide arc in front of him."

Segment 7: "Repositioning his weight, Kenta raises his mace above his head, arcing his back."

Segment 8: "Kenta slams his mace down, right in front of him."

Note that once Kenta has committed to these chained Attack Moves, he will execute all these moves in these eight Segments, even if his intended target moves outside of the Hit Hexes.

RANGED WEAPONS

Attacking with ranged weapons such as bows is mostly the same as with melee weapons, except for Hit Hexes. Projectiles from ranged weapons always travel in a straight line up to their Range. Only the first target encountered takes damage. It is also not possible to extend the Range by spending additional Segments preparing for the attack.

AREA ATTACKS

Some monsters can execute devastating attacks that cover a lot of hexes. Again, every second and following hex takes one extra Segment of 'charging up' in advance. Everyone caught in the area that is hit with the attack takes full damage.

THE MIASMA POOL

When the characters defeat monsters, the miasma that created the monster is released. Due to its nature, the miasma always seeks life to attach itself to, and to corrupt it into a monstrosity. The growth of area of the land covered by the miasma is mostly due to this property.

This is modeled by the Miasma Pool. A character's Miasma Pool measures their corruption from the miasma. Each monster has a Miasma Rating, and defeating the monster will release that many Miasma Points. Those points are divided among the characters present and added to their Miasma Pool.

Monsters that have higher Miasma Ratings, are more corrupted by the miasma – and hence more powerful.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

By accepting the miasma's corruption in themselves, characters can learn to become more powerful. They lose a bit of humanity but gain monstrous powers, making them stronger, more agile or more hardy.

If a character spends a few hours in meditation, concentrating on the miasma's effects on themselves, they can spend points in the Miasma Pool to advance a Level. Points that are left over remain in the Miasma Pool. If enough points remain for the next Level, then the character can advance another Level, if the player so desires, and so on.

Going from Level 1 to Level 2 takes 5 points from the Miasma Pool. Every subsequent Level costs 1.5 times the number of points of the previous Level, rounded up. This means Level 2 costs 13 points, Level 3 costs 20, Level 4 costs 30, etcetera.

LOSING THE MIASMA POOL

Upon death, a character loses all points in the Miasma Pool, just like a monster. The miasma will collect at the character's place of death as a swirling cloud of darkness. If the character manages to reach that spot again, the miasma will flow back into them, filling up their Miasma Pool again.

However, if they die again before collecting the miasma they lost, the miasma of their earlier death dissipates.

MIASMA RESURRECTION

The miasma exists to expand its corruption. It is attracted to living things, seeking to enslave them into its service. But when there is no life, it can create monsters out of thin air if the need arises!

The warriors use this property against the miasma itself: by accepting the miasma inside themselves, they 'trick' the miasma to regenerate their bodies when they die. As long as they can retain their Essence, they retain their agency, rising once again to fight the Yōkai again and again.

MIASMA VERSUS ESSENCE

Every moment, the characters feel the constant battle between the chaotic nature of the miasma inside them, and the Essence of their being. Experiencing death is a great shock, no matter how many times it has come for them. At the time of death, the character loses one point of Essence.

Losing Essence models the sentient force of the character slowly slipping from their grasp. With every point of Essence lost, the mind dulls slightly. The balance between the character's personality and the influence of the miasma shifts.

When a character loses their last Essence point, their minds slip into oblivion, forever lost in the chaotic swirling of the miasma. Instead, a monstrous version of the erstwhile warrior rises again, thirsting for the blood of those who still manage to resist the miasma.

When gaining a level, the character reaffirms their purpose and sense of being, accepting the miasma as part of themselves, but as a power they can control. This resets the Essence Pool back to 5 points.

MIASMA AS SOURCE FOR MAGIC

Some spells require the sorcerer to spend points from their Miasma Pool to power the magical effect. Using this technique, the sorcerer taps into their reserves of chaotic, magical power and channels that into the desired effect.

MAGIC

With the coming of the miasma, magic returned to the world. Skillful sorcerers can shape the chaotic energy of the miasma into powerful magic effects.

Magic takes the form of spells. Spells have to be learned one by one from a skilled teacher. A sorcerer can only cast spells that they know.

TWO TYPES OF MAGIC

There are two types of magic available to characters: Shinto and Buddhist magic, each with their own uses and effects.

When a character receives their first spell, they have to choose between the two types: they can only cast spells of the type they chose, not the other.

Shinto Magic is ritualistic, aimed at healing and cleansing. Paradoxically, it was the miasma that allowed the priests to cast actual spells.

Spells in the Shinto tradition are used for healing, protection against injury and warring against monsters.

Buddhist Magic is formulaic. Through meditation and practice, the Buddhist sorcerers have learned to control the miasma inside themselves, and to channel that into magical effects.

Spells in the Buddhist tradition are mostly used for attacking monsters and enhancing attacks.

ANATOMY OF A SPELL

A spell has the following characteristics:

Type, whether the spell is of the Shinto or Buddhist magical tradition;

Power Requirement, the minimal Power Attribute that a character needs to cast this spell. More powerful spells require a higher Power Attribute;

Stamina Cost, the cost in points from the Stamina Pool for casting the spell;

Time Cost, the number of Segments that casting the spell takes;

Number of Uses, the number of times a sorcerer can cast the spell per day;

Effect, a description of the spell's effect;

Miasma Cost, the cost in points from the Miasma Pool to cast the spell;

Damage, the damage and the Type of Damage that an attack spell does to the target;

Scaling, the Scaling for the effect (healing or damage) of the spell, based on the value of the Power Attribute of the caster.

CASTING SPELLS

A character can cast spells that they know at will, up to the number of uses per day mentioned with the spell. Casting a spell requires the character to spend the required number of Segments concentrating: unable to either attack or defend. The required Stamina Cost (and any Miasma Cost, if there is one) is paid in advance. A character can not cast a spell if there are not enough points in the Stamina Pool to pay the Stamina Cost. Likewise with the Miasma Pool and the Miasma Cost, if there is one.

At the end of the last Segment, the magical effect happens.

Here follow some example spells. Game Masters are encouraged to design their own set of spells that best fit their game.

SHINTO SPELLS

Healing

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 3

Stamina Cost: 25

Time Cost: 5

Number of Uses: 3

Effect: At the start of casting, the caster designates a character (which may be himself). That character regains 10 Life Points when the spell is cast.

Scaling: 1.25

Ward

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 5

Stamina Cost: 40

Time Cost: 10

Number of Uses: 1

Effect: This spell wards a circle with a 10 meter radius against incursions by monsters. Very useful when making camp in the blighted lands.

Protection

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 3

Stamina Cost: 10

Time Cost: 2

Number of Uses: 5

Effect: At the start of casting, the caster designates a character (which may be himself). That character only takes half Physical damage for 10 Segments.

Fire Protection

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 4

Stamina Cost: 15

Time Cost: 4

Number of Uses: 3

Effect: At the start of casting, the caster designates a character (which may be himself). That character only takes half Fire damage for 10 Segments.

Lightning Protection

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 4

Stamina Cost: 15

Time Cost: 4

Number of Uses: 3

Effect: At the start of casting, the caster designates a character (which may be himself). That character only takes half Lightning damage for 10 Segments.

Dark Protection

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 4

Stamina Cost: 15

Time Cost: 4

Number of Uses: 3

Effect: At the start of casting, the caster designates a character (which may be himself). That character only takes half Dark damage for 10 Segments.

Grand Healing

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 10

Stamina Cost: 50

Time Cost: 10

Number of Uses: 1

Effect: When the spell is cast, every ally of the caster within 10 meter regains 20 Life Points.

Scaling: 1.5

Reaffirm

Type: Shinto

Power Requirement: 15

Stamina Cost: 10

Time Cost: 30

Number of Uses: 1

Miasma Cost: 10

Effect: At the start of casting, the caster designates a character (which may be himself). That character is reaffirmed in their sentience and personality, and resets their Essence Pool back to 10 points.

BUDDHIST SPELLS

Fire Bolt

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 5

Stamina Cost: 15

Time Cost: 3

Number of Uses: 10

Effect: Flings a bolt of fire in a straight line with a Range of 30 hexes.

Damage: 5 Fire

Scaling: 1.25

Fire Ball

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 10

Stamina Cost: 20

Time Cost: 9

Number of Uses: 5

Effect: Flings a large ball of fire in a straight line with a Range of 30 hexes.

Damage: 15 Fire

Scaling: 1.5

Lightning Bolt

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 5

Stamina Cost: 15

Time Cost: 3

Number of Uses: 10

Effect: Flings a bolt of lightning in a straight line with a Range of 30 hexes.

Damage: 5 Lightning

Scaling: 1.25

Lightning Ball

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 10

Stamina Cost: 20

Time Cost: 9

Number of Uses: 5

Effect: Flings a large ball of lightning in a straight line with a Range of 30 hexes.

Damage: 15 Lightning

Scaling: 1.5

Dark Bolt

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 5

Stamina Cost: 15

Time Cost: 3

Number of Uses: 10

Effect: Flings a bolt of dark energy in a straight line with a Range of 30 hexes.

Damage: 5 Dark

Scaling: 1.25

Dark Ball

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 10

Stamina Cost: 20

Time Cost: 9

Number of Uses: 5

Effect: Flings a large ball of dark energy in a straight line with a Range of 30 hexes.

Damage: 15 Dark

Scaling: 1.5

Fire Sword

Type: Buddhist

Power Requirement: 7

Stamina Cost: 10

Time Cost: 4

Number of Uses: 2

Effect: Enshrouds a weapon with magic fire, for a duration of 30 Segments. Each attack with that weapon now does additional Fire damage.

Damage: 5 Fire

Scaling: 2

MONSTERS

The corrupting influence of the miasma gave rise to the emergence of the Yōkai: animal or plant life that has been twisted and turned into something grotesque.

Game Masters are encouraged to design their own monsters that fit with the themes of their game and the locations the characters will visit.

As an example, we detail the Kappa, a turtle-like water spirit.

THE KAPPA

The Kappa resembles a turtle, with the paws of a frog and the head of a monkey. It has a turtle shell on its back, effectively shielding it from attacks from behind. It has webbed claws and a beak filled with sharp fangs.

Being water spirits, they can stay under water indefinitely and can swim swiftly. They are encountered at the banks of rivers and in swamps.

CHARACTERISTICS

Miasma Value: 20

Stamina Pool: 80

Life Pool: 50

Resistances: Physical 5, Fire 1, Lightning 2, Dark 7

Special: The shell on its back is to be considered as a shield, with a Stability of 50%. When the Kappa is attacked directly from behind, the shell offers an *additional* Physical Resistance of 5.

ATTACK MOVES

Claw

Time Cost: 2 Segments

Stamina Cost: 5

Damage: 10 Physical

Hit Hexes: 1, in front

Sequence of Events:

Segment 1: "The Kappa raises its right claw."

Segment 2: "The Kappa brings its raised claw down."

Double Claw

Time Cost: 4 Segments

Stamina Cost: 10

Damage: 20 Physical

Hit Hexes: 1, in front

Sequence of Events:

Segment 1-3: "The Kappa raises its claws."

Segment 4: "The Kappa brings both claws down."

Double Claw Sweep

Time Cost: 8 Segments

Stamina Cost: 10

Damage: 2 times 10 Physical

Hit Hexes: 3, in front. Once from right to left, then from left to right.

Sequence of Events:

Segment 1-5: "The Kappa raises its right claw and turns its torso to the right."

Segment 6: "The Kappa swings its claw from right to left, turning its torso to the left."

Segment 7: "The Kappa raises its left claw."

Segment 8: "The Kappa swings its claw from left to right."

Back flip

Time Cost: 3 Segments

Stamina Cost: 10

Damage: 15

Hit Hexes: 1, directly behind

Sequence of Events:

Segment 1-2: "The Kappa hunches forward, covering itself with its shell."

Segment 3: "The Kappa jumps up and slams its shield into the ground behind it."



Running Miasma

This chapter contains some advice for Game Masters who seek to run a game of Miasma for their players.

Types of Games

Miasma can be played in a wide variety of styles. It can be played as a straight-up dark fantasy combat game, with the characters moving from fight to fight, encountering more and more powerful enemies as they penetrate deeper into the blighted lands of the imperial capital.

But it can also be played as an exploration game, with the characters seeking to uncover the mysteries of the miasma and how it came to infect the world. Perhaps they are seeking for a cure for their own infection?

It can also be played as a game with tragic, misunderstood heroes, who are the only ones who can withstand an unrelenting tide of darkness, protecting a world that has discarded them by becoming like the very monsters that attack them, clinging to the last remnants of their humanity.

Building the World

The setting of the game is intentionally left vague, leaving the Game Master enough room to create their own stories. To get you started on thinking about the various mysteries, here is a list of things that you might want to answer:

What is the nature of the miasma? Is it like a natural force, like a forest fire that consumes all in its path, or is it sentient, actively moving to corrupt the whole world? Or is the miasma itself non-sentient, but is it directed from behind the scenes by a sentient being?

How did the miasma get here? What happened to unleash the miasma? Was its release an accident, or intentional? Why?

Can the miasma be stopped? Is there a way to stop the flow of the miasma, and to cleanse the capital of its corruption? What needs to be done to do that?

How does one become infected? Some characters might volunteer for infection and combat at the front lines in the fight against the miasma, but others got infected by accident. Is it an accident, or can people be infected through some secret process? Is it used to get rid of troublemakers and misfits?

Where will the characters go? The blighted lands around and in the capital are diverse. Will the characters travel through dark forests and meet the monsters based on the wildlife there? Will they travel through deserted villages, where only those who lost their mind lurk in the shadows, ready to attack anyone that comes near? Will they travel through the capital itself, its grand avenues and palaces, or its slums where bandits corrupted by the miasma prey on the weak?

Who do the characters meet? There are others traveling the blighted lands around the capital: some are warriors like themselves, but others might have their own reasons to make that dangerous trip. Are they infected? How do they react to the characters? Will they help, or hinder the group's mission?

Because there are no Attributes that are used for social situations, you should encourage the players to narrate their characters' actions and base the reaction of the NPCs they meet on that.

BUILDING THE OPPOSITION

An enjoyable game of Miasma will feature hard-won victories against powerful foes. Designing the right opposition for the characters is a key requirement for this. If the foes are too easily defeated, then the tension of the setting is diminished. But if the foes are too powerful, then the lack of progress will frustrate your players. A few deaths are not a problem: the game is designed to allow for that. Even a Total Party Kill is not the end of the game, as long as the characters retain some of their Essence.

Try to design foes with interesting Attack Moves that the characters can react to in a tactical manner. Adding a mix of different types of enemies in a single arena is a good way to spice things up.

You can also add environmental hazards to the arenas. A lightning strike creating a crevice running through a plaza, islands in a pond of cold, deep water or a steep mountain side will restrict the characters' movements and force them to come up with new tactics.

Monsters with magical powers add another layer of threat to the fights. A huge fire-breathing dragon will make the characters wish they had invested in some fire-resistant armor. A fast-moving apparition that casts spells that do Dark damage from a distance might shake a group of melee characters up. There is no limit to the types of enemies you can design: use your imagination!

Also, note that the miasma resurrection not only works on the characters: monsters might regenerate over time as well, cutting off escape routes for fleeing characters!

Or perhaps they encounter a group of comrades that they interacted with before. Maybe they have rescued them from a losing fight? Suppose they now have lost their Essence, forcing the characters to fight their erstwhile comrades to the death!

BUILDING THE EQUIPMENT

Perhaps the characters can find special equipment: magic swords that deal additional Fire damage, a fan that defends against Lighting damage when wielded as a shield, or scrolls detailing lost spells? Perhaps they can loot the bodies of fallen monsters for any special weapons or armor?

Creating some signature equipment will make your game feel unique for your players. What if they look up to a more powerful warrior who has a special sword, and then later find a monster wielding that same sword?

Since the characters can rise far above the human maximum Attributes, the weapons designed for battle against the monsters do not have to conform to real-world standards. A samurai with super-human Strength could wield a huge sword that a normal person could not even lift. Be inventive!

BUILDING THE MAGIC

You can create the spells that you would like your characters to use, or even let the players propose spells.

It is good to think about the role of magic beforehand: are all characters warriors and is none of them capable of magic? Is magic something that can be purchased from traveling priests? Are there groups of sorcerers that you could hire to aid you in a fight?

BUILDING THE ENDING

What is waiting for the characters at the end of their journey? An epic fight, or the final clue to a mystery? Considering an ending to your game will make it easier to keep the narrative flowing and on track.

"Miasma" was written by Hein Ragas for the 2015 edition of RPGGeek's 24 hour RPG Contest.

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Both found at "The Kuniyoshi Project" website (<http://www.kuniyoshiproject.com/>) .