



LAND OF THE CRANE

CURRENCY

The crane is the standard unit of currency in the Land of the Crane. It is hand-stamped on *washi*, a thick paper made from plant fiber, using woodblocks and indelible black and red inks. Each crane features the Mikado's *mon*, the flying crane, along with the kanji for "Aono," the Mikado's family name. Around the outside of each square crane is a thick black line and thin, decorative red line.

Each crane is hand-crafted by artisans in the capital city of Ito and distributed throughout the empire by the Mikado's army. The flow of currency is regulated by the Minister of Currency, an influential position in the Mikado's court. The Minister and his advisors set the amount of currency in circulation each year based on the previous year's rice production. Each *koku*, a volume of rice sufficient to feed one person for one year, equates to five cranes, and the Minister is responsible for keeping this valuation stable.

Because each crane bears the seal of the Mikado, and is therefore considered sacred, intentional desecration of a crane is considered a crime, usually punished by imprisonment. The only acceptable

method of destruction for a crane is by burning it in a consecrated fire.

As each crane is crafted from *washi*, they are quite durable. They can survive prolonged immersion in water, and can be scrubbed clean if soiled. In fact, some cranes have survived to their one-hundredth birthday, and become *tsukumogami*, the living spirits of inanimate objects.

Despite the reverence commanded by the crane, forgery is fairly common. Creating a convincing copy of a crane doesn't require a great deal of artistic skill, and with the average peasant only earning a few cranes per year, the temptation is often overwhelming. Hundreds of forgers are put to death each year.

USING THIS WEB ENHANCEMENT

For best results, print the following page on thin cardstock or thick paper. Cut out each crane along the thin grey lines, and then crumple each a few times to give them a worn look.



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LAND OF THE CRANE CURRENCY

by David Garrett

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