



*In this shimmering  
Spring day,*

*Ah, with ever  
anxious heart*

*The blossoms  
are falling*



A supplement for the Burning Wheel Fantasy Roleplaying System

*the  
Burning Wheel*

# Genpeitokitsu

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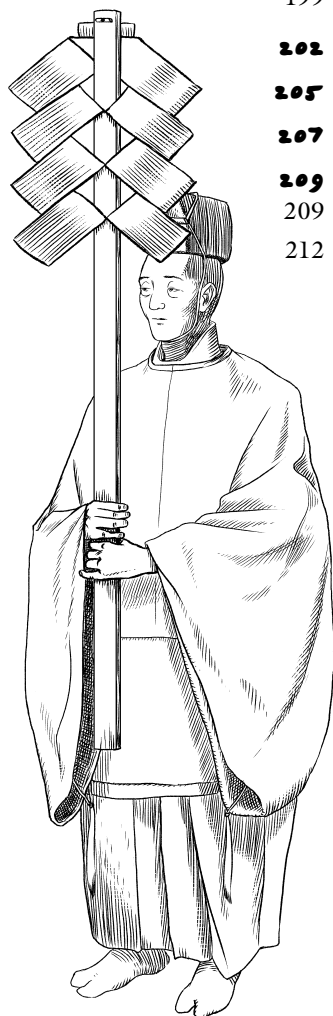
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# Using This Book

This book contains supplementary material for the Burning Wheel fantasy roleplaying system. It details how to use that system to play out stories in Heian era Japan. It is our first “traditional” setting book. It contains an information dump at the beginning and the rules text follows. We here at Burning Wheel HQ thought we’d show you our particular take on a traditional setting book. We certainly learned a lot.

In order to get the most out of this book, you will need to have a copy of the Burning Wheel, the Character Burner and the Monster Burner. Many of the elements contained in this book are referenced to page numbers in those three books. This helps us keep costs down and also keeps everything uniform. I do apologize for the extra look-up time.

Unless otherwise noted, this book obeys all of the standard conventions of Burning Wheel for Artha, Character Burning, Beliefs, Fight!, Range and Cover, etc. Exceptions, and there are many, are noted in the text. If a system is not noted, referenced or described in this book—like Sorcery, for example—assume that it is unavailable in this setting.

One last thing: The Japanese transliterations have been simplified as much as possible. We removed the hyphenation of compound words where we could, and eliminated the diacritics and accents all together. Just pronounce each syllable of the Japanese words individually and quickly and you’ll do fine.

Thanks for your support. Enjoy the book.

*Sho ga nai,*  
—Luke





# Nihon Is Burning

*The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.*

—The Tale of the Heike

In *Nihon*, the twelfth century draws to its zenith and the land stands on the precipice of great change. This is a land of contradictions. In the countryside, provincial warriors possess the power of force and impose the emperor's writ, yet they have no influence over the emperor. In *Heiankyo*, the capital, the emperor is enthroned—a sitting deity, the nominal ruler of Nihon, yet he has little influence over his own court. The font of all these contradictions is the Fujiwara, a noble clan that by tradition provides all of the imperial court's principal advisors and the emperor's principal wives. Tradition gives the Fujiwara great influence, and they are effectively the rulers of Nihon. So it has been for hundreds of years.

Ambition, fired with a sense of injustice, broods in the wilderness. In the south, one provincial clan, the Taira, have grown powerful and confident clearing the land of bandits and pirates. In the north, another provincial clan, the Minamoto, have grown powerful suppressing barbarians and the goblins and demons infesting the mountains. Both great clans are descended from Yamato princes and are kin to the emperor. Each clan is jealous of the other's glory. Yet both clans also resent being ordered around by perfumed Fujiwara nobles of Heiankyo. By every right, the Taira and Minamoto are the equals of the Fujiwara. Moreover, years of constant fighting have given them a sense of honor and pride that none of the soft nobles of Heiankyo could ever understand. Perhaps a warlord ruling all of Nihon with the consent of the emperor, a shogun, could finally supplant the influence of the Fujiwara?

Ambition, attended with a sense of entitlement, sits ready and coiled. In Heiankyo, two brothers—Go-Shirakawa and Sutoku—



## *In this shimmering spring day*

sit as co-emperors. Each, egged on by his Fujiwara wife, believes he should rule alone as the god-emperor. Yet, both will have to wait. Away from the everyday travails of court, the retired emperor, Toba, exerts a calming influence from his monastery on Mt. Hiei. He is the father of both co-emperors, and the sons will stay their dispute while the father lives.

Ambition, resplendent with all its hubris, waxes to its zenith. At the same court, the *Sekkan*, principal advisor to both emperors, and the head of the Fujiwara clan, rests confident that his influence will continue. He is confident his way will be the law no matter which young prince emerges over the other. He is confident the provincial warriors who smell of dung can be kept in check.

That was yesterday. Today, tomorrow, next week or next year, Toba will die. Where will ambition lead Nihon? You decide.

## *The Class Structure of Nihon*

Nihon has a very stratified society. The god-emperors, descended from the sun-goddess Amaterasu, rule. They exert their influence with Nihon's *kami*—god-spirits—to ensure the order and safety of the land and people. The emperors rule from the city of Heiankyo. Sometimes they retire to a monastery on the nearby mountain of Hiei—exerting a similar amount of influence as a sitting emperor, but without any of the complications of court intrigue.



That intrigue is provided by the courtiers of the various noble families who attend the emperor. Chief among these families are the Fujiwara clan. By tradition, the top ministers come from the Fujiwara, and by tradition the emperor's first wife must be Fujiwara. These traditions make the head of the Fujiwara clan a very powerful man indeed. This formal influence has been cultivated into informal webs of power in the capital. Even the most single-minded of emperors finds it difficult to act independently of these webs.

The great warrior houses are descended from the imperial family itself or directly from the deities of Nihon. However, these provincial nobles wield a different kind of power: the power of the horse, the bow and the sword. With the noble stature of their lineage, the provincial warriors have matched a pure devotion to duty with a strict code of honor. Deviation from that code is the deepest shame. Although the







emperor often appoints a direct representative from court to oversee administration of the outlying provinces of Nihon, it is the warlords and their retainers who see to the material protection and the welfare of the people in general.

Physical welfare is the province of the warriors, but spiritual welfare rests in the hands of the powerful Buddhist and Shinto priests. Nihon is a deeply religious land, and its priests shepherd the faithful through the turmoil and suffering of life so that they may be reborn into a better existence.

Merchants, laborers or peasant farmers are fated to serve and live in the role to which they were born. There is almost no mobility between the



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lowest rungs of Nihon's society and the upper tiers. The only way to escape the life your father or mother led is to join a Buddhist monastery or completely rebel and become an outcast.

Some of the outcasts of Nihon are very well tolerated, especially those peasants who find themselves wandering the meres as hermits or mystics. Others are loathed: the fallen *bushi*, the bandits and pirates. Others lurk in obscurity, biding their time to avenge a great wrong.

The artisans are one segment of commoners who enjoy privileges and respect above the merchants, laborers and outcasts. By making the construction of simple tools, like the implements of war, into a high art form, they have earned the protection and patronage of the provincial warriors. Even the court in Heiankyo, obsessed with all things aesthetic, has taken heed. Where the practice of arms is considered a base act beneath the station of a court noble, the creation of arms as a work of art is considered a sublime pursuit. Indeed, at the twilight of Heian Nihon, Emperor Go-Toba invited the greatest swordsmiths of Nihon to teach him their craft, and spent his retirement forging fine blades. Go-Toba was also one of the great *waka* poets of the age. He ordered the creation of the *Shinkokinshu* anthology of poetry and was one of its editors.

## *Politics and Administration*

According to tradition, all power in Nihon is centralized in the godhead of the emperor. Yet a god, especially a mortal one, only has so much time on his hands. At the beginning of the period, administration of the realm was left in the hands of advisors, styled after the Chinese model.

Indeed, as each successive emperor has grown more and more obsessed with pursuit of a refined life of leisure, the Fujiwara have consolidated their hold on the court ministries. They have encouraged the cult of leisure that predominates at the Heiankyo court—to the point where the emperor is now nothing more than a ceremonial figurehead. All important decisions of state are made by the Sekkan and the Great Council of State, which are dominated by the Fujiwara. Thus, these advisory positions have become codified and grown to encompass a vast array of ministries that effect policy.



All power rests on a monopolization of the legitimate use of force. In order to effectively exert control in the provinces from Heiankyo, cadet, or descended, houses of the imperial line were invested with military authority and sent to the provinces to secure the land. To support their endeavors they were given grants of arable state land called *shoen*. In time, these shoen were passed on to children just like the clan name and titles. Although these cadet houses ostensibly answer to the emperor through his great ministers, they represent an altogether separate axis of power due to their distance from the capital, independent revenue base and martial prowess. For many years now, they have answered the call from the Great Council of State without question. Tradition, however, is all that binds them to the council, as no other group in Nihon has such control over the means of force.

In recent years, a third locus of power has emerged. Some Yamato princes have balked at the tether placed on them by their Fujiwara kinsmen. For these princes, the institution of imperial retirement has become an important counterbalance to the direct domination of the Fujiwara regents. Moreover, retired emperors have cultivated an independent power base by associating themselves with the armed monasteries of Mt. Hiei in cloistered rule. Although a retired emperor cannot call upon the Great Council of State to support his edicts, he still possesses all of the dignities of the active emperor, e.g., declaring outlaws and imposing honor debts.

A discussion of these three centers of power and their relationship to lifepaths follows.

## The Regency and the Department of State

### *Sekkan—The Regency*

At the top of the heap is the Sekkan, or Regent. Barring an imperial announcement to the contrary, his word is law. The Sekkan acts as the mouth of the emperor.

Sekkan is a term that collectively refers to the *Sessho* and *Kampaku*. Sessho is the title given to a regent who rules for an imperial minor. Kampaku is the title given to a regent who rules for an adult emperor. To avoid confusion and adding too many lifepaths we use the collective term to refer to the regent.



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### *Daijo-Kan—The Department of State*

The nitty-gritty of actual administration of Nihon is carried out by the Daijo-Kan, or, simply, the Department of State. This department is in turn headed by the Great Council of State. The Great Council of State contains the offices of the prime minister, the *Daijo Daijin*, and the four great councilors, the *Dainagon*. Beneath the Daijo Daijin sit the offices of the Minister of the Left, *Sadaijin*, and the Minister of the Right, *Udaijin*. Under the Dainagon sit offices of three minor councilors, or *Shonagon*. Nominally, the emperor appoints each of these ministers. In actual practice, the Sekkan appoints the ministers of the Department of State. And usually, the Prime Minister, the Daijo Daijin, becomes the Sekkan upon the previous regent's expiration.

### *The Great Council of State*

As head of the Great Council of State, the Daijo Daijin can propose changes to Nihon's code of law, which the emperor, or rather the Sekkan, can approve. His most important source of patronage is his power to appoint courtiers to the post of *Kokushi*, the provincial governors. The Daijo Daijin's most important function, however, is as heir apparent to the post of Sekkan.

### *The Minister of the Left—Sadaijin*

The Minister of the Left directly controls four distinct ministries, each overseen by courtiers that he appoints. They are as follows:

The Ministry of the Center, *Nakatsukasa-sho*. This office is the staff through which information from all the ministries flows to and from the emperor. The ministry is also in charge of determining the precedence of all princesses at the imperial court and for keeping track of the astrological calendar.

The Ministry of Ceremony, *Shikibu-sho*. This office is in charge of determining the precedence of all courtiers at imperial ceremonies and is in charge of appointing the staff of a prince's or princess's household.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs, *Jibu-sho*. This office is in charge of receiving ambassadors from and appointing ambassadors to foreign courts. It is also in charge of legitimizing clan names and approving marriages at court.

The Ministry of People's Affairs, *Minbu-sho*. This office is in charge of taking the census, levying forced labor as a tax, providing funds to



public works projects—such as building roads, bridges and ports—rewarding service with shoen grants and disbursing funds to all the other ministries. Read: the power of the purse.

### *The Minister of the Right—Udaijin*

The Minister of the Right directly controls four distinct ministries, each overseen by courtiers that he appoints. They are as follows:

The Ministry of Military Affairs, *Hyobu-sho*. This office is in charge of calling the provincial clans to military service and subsidizing any call to arms with monetary disbursements. It also subsidizes the manufacture of weapons with imperial grants and is in charge of the postal service.

The Ministry of Justice, *Gyobu-sho*. This office oversees trials for any violations of the legal code and devising punishments for any transgressions of the code. Punishment is usually death or a fine—but there is a rudimentary prison system this ministry oversees.

The Ministry of the Treasury, *Okura-sho*. This office oversees the minting of coin and the collection of taxes—although it has no power over the actual appointment of the tax collectors. The Daijo Daijin holds that power. The ministry also has the power to set price controls and to audit any public accounts.

The Ministry of the Imperial Household, *Kunai-sho*. This ministry oversees the imperial kitchen and breweries. It also oversees the harvest from imperial rice fields, a post that was more important before most shoen were dispersed to the provincial clans.

### *Dainagon*

The great councilors have no control over any ministries. They simply sit on the Great Council in an advisory capacity. The post is usually awarded to courtiers aspiring to one of the greater ministry posts or to older courtiers to confirm their status at court.

### *Shonagon*

The minor councilor post was usually used to recognize a talented courtier who had potential to rise to one of the greater posts. They had little actual say on the Great Council of State.

### *Kokushi*

The Kokushi were provincial governors, appointed by the prime minister, to be the imperial representative in the provinces. The



greatest tool at their disposal was that of tax collection. They exercised no control over clan shoen or military forces. Kokushi were appointed by the Daijo Daijin, but reported to the Udaijin.

### **The Provincial Power Base**

The foundation of the provincial clans' power is their martial prowess. In order to afford to keep arms, however, these families require a sustainable income base. That income is provided by shoen, or agricultural estates, awarded by the imperial court to the provincial clans. Each shoen carries with it a set of interlocking rights and obligations called *shiki*. Approximately half of the extant shoen are held at the leisure of the imperial court and are taxable by the state. The other half of the shoen are held in perpetuity by the great provincial clans and are tax exempt, i.e., all revenue from those lands flow directly to the provincial clans. Indeed, many shoen that were originally awarded on a conditional basis to minor military provincial clans gained tax exempt status when those minor provincial clans transferred their lands and obligations to tax exempt states held by the major clans. The major clans, in turn, awarded the shoen back to these minor houses on a retainer basis. This semi-feudal structure is still evolving in Nihon, but it is the foundation upon which captains and warlords are each sworn to support each other, and the major clan Toryo, with retainers and revenues.

### **Retired or Cloistered Rule, the Insei System**

The *Insei* system, or cloistered rule, is a system by which an emperor retires, relinquishing his obligations to and benefits from the Department of State. A retired emperor, however, is still a living god. He retains his mystical *arabito-gami* abilities. Moreover, he still possesses the power to declare outlaws.

There are actually two forms of retirement. The first is simple retirement to a nice villa. The second is called "cloistered rule." In this case, the retired emperor will often sequester himself at Miidera or Enryakuji monastery. An emperor who does so can count on the fortifications of the local monastery and the *sobei* of the local brotherhood for protection and influence. He can also count on the enmity of the competing monastery which has been cheated out of his edifying presence. Most importantly, he is free from the hectoring of the Sekkan and his functionaries.



The competing abilities of the puppet emperor and retired emperor to declare a clan chieftain outlaw can lead to rather complicated power struggles. The Genpei War, for instance, was preceded by Go-Shirakawa's maneuvering to supplant the Taira from their influence at court. He effectively declared them outlaw. In response, the Taira had their child emperor, Antoku, declare Go-Shirakawa's supporters, the Minamoto, outlaws. In the ensuing power struggle, each clan struggled to crush the other in order to clear the way to coerce an appointment to the office of shogun.

## *The Great Clans of Nihon*

At the center of the changes engulfing Nihon are the great noble clans. Some are part of a tide seeking to redefine the old relationships between the god-court in Heiankyo and the provinces. Other clans, which enjoy unrivaled power from the old ways, stand as a rock, hoping the tide of change will break around them.

The following section describes a handful of the prominent clans of the day and important personages within their ranks.

### **The Yamato**

The Yamato are the immediate imperial family. The emperors are directly descended from the sun goddess, Amaterasu. They are arahitogami, or living gods, and accorded due respect.

#### *Emperor Toba (b. 1103 – d. 1156)*

During his reign, Toba became the old emperor sitting on the mountain. He spent most of his rule as a semi-retired emperor. He conspired with Go-Shirakawa against Sutoku in the Genpei War.

#### *Emperor Go-Shirakawa (b. 1127 – d. 1192)*

The fourth son of Toba. His installation as co-emperor threw the court into an uproar and set the stage for civil war. A consummate schemer, Go-Shirakawa's reign was long, and most of it was spent manipulating the court from "retirement." His hubris led to the emasculation of Heiankyo and the rise of the Shogunate.

#### *Emperor Sutoku (b. 1119 – d. 1164)*

The eldest son of Toba. The installation of his younger brother as a co-emperor was a great affront. When Toba died, the two brothers warred over the spoils. Sutoku lost and spent the rest of his life in exile.



*Emperor Antoku (b. 1178 – d. 1185)*

The most unfortunate of the five puppet emperors to serve during Go-Shirakawa's "retirement." He became a pawn of the Taira during the Genpei War. His Taira grandmother jumped into the ocean clutching the boy emperor to her breast rather than suffer defeat at the hands of the Minamoto at Dan-no-Ura. He, the imperial regalia, including *Kusanagi-no-tsurugi*, the Grass-Cutting Sword, went to the bottom of the ocean.

## The Fujiwara

Prior to the Hogen Rebellion, the Fujiwara were undisputedly the most powerful clan in Nihon. They traditionally provided the first wives, and hence mothers, for all the emperors. Moreover, the Fujiwara held all the important posts in the imperial court, including the post of Sekkan—the chief advisor to the emperor. They are, or were, the power behind the throne.

*Fujiwara no Tadazane (b. 1078 – d. 1162)*

Tadazane was Sekkan during the Hogen Rebellion. He saw his family's traditional authority undermined when his ambitious kinsmen split and chose different sides during the Hogen Rebellion.

*Fujiwara no Tadamachi (b. 1097 – d. 1164)*

Tadamachi was the eldest son of Tadazane: He sought control of the clan when he schemed with Toba to install Go-Shirakawa as co-emperor. His plan to lead the clan never saw fruition, but set his clan down the path to obscurity.

*Fujiwara no Yorinaga (b. 1120 – d. 1156)*

Minister of the Left when the Hogen Rebellion broke out, he sided with Sutoku. His counsel against a night attack at the battle of Heiankyo led to the defeat of the Sutoku faction. He was killed fleeing the battle.

*Fujiwara no Nobuyori (b. ? – d. 1160)*

Minamoto clansmen who sided with Go-Shirakawa were dissatisfied with the division of power in Heiankyo after the Hogen Rebellion. This created an opportunity that Nobuyori seized. He was instrumental in steering the Minamoto into armed resistance during the Heiji Rebellion and was Sekkan for a short time before the Taira retaliated and ended Fujiwara influence at court for good in 1159.





## The Taira

The Taira are one of two great clans descending from the imperial household that rule in the provinces as a warrior caste. They are popularly known as the *Heike*. They have spent generations in the wilderness pacifying the south of bandits and pirates. In doing so, the Heike have developed a keen sense of their own martial prowess and a jealousy toward the exploits of the other great cadet house of the imperial line, the Minamoto.

### *Taira no Tadamasa (b.? – d. 1156)*

Tadamasa sided with Sutoku during the Hogen Rebellion, and was executed after the battle of Heiankyo.

### *Taira no Kiyomori (b. 1118 – d. 1181)*

Head of the Taira clan at the time of the Hogen Rebellion, Kiyomori sided with Go-Shirakawa. Along with Minamoto no Yoshitomo, he defeated Sutoku and the factions of the Taira and Minamoto families that had sided with Sutoku. Division of the spoils in Heiankyo saw Fujiwara power eroded and his own family uplifted. This led to jealousy between the Taira and the Minamoto. The Minamoto believed they didn't receive their fair share of provincial appointments. When the Heiji Rebellion broke out, Kiyomori again sided with Go-Shirakawa and routed the Minamoto. The Fujiwara, who had tried to use the Minamoto as pawns to regain their lost influence at court, were punished by being completely removed from the upper echelons. Kiyomori's daughter became first wife to Emperor Takakura and Kiyomori himself became Sekkan. A year after his grandson Antoku was born, he staged a coup to force Takakura off the throne and place Antoku on the throne. Go-Shirakawa was imprisoned when he tried to intervene. Kiyomori overreached himself and the Minamoto again rebelled. Kiyomori died at the outset of the ensuing Genpei War, and did not witness the utter annihilation of his clan.

### *Taira no Munemori (b. 1147 – d. 1185)*

The last head of the Taira clan, he helped lead his clan to defeat in the Genpei War. Captured at Dan-no-Ura, he was later executed.

### *Taira no Atsumori (b. 1169 – d. 1184)*

This 15-year-old bushi played a mean flute, but wasn't as practiced with the bow. His head was taken by Kumagae no Jirou Naozane at Ichi-no-Tani. Kumagae became a monk after the battle, and the boy's playing can still be heard on the deadest of nights near modern-day Kobe.



*Taira no Tokuko (b. 1155 – d. 1213)*

Married to Emperor Takakura when he was only a child, Taira no Tokuko gave birth to the Emperor Antoku. She was at Dan-no-Ura, but was not as successful as her mother in committing suicide. Pulled by her hair from the ocean with a rake, she survived the battle and the annihilation of her clan. Released by the Minamoto, she spent the next thirty years of her life in a nunnery praying for her fallen kin. Shortly before her death, she was paid a visit by Go-Shirakawa, who was curious as to the fate of his daughter-in-law. She recounted for him the fate of the Taira and he wept.

## The Minamoto

The Minamoto, more commonly known as the Genji, are hardy warriors who live in the north and central portions of Honshu. Many Minamoto have fallen fending off the creatures of the mountains and the barbarians who contest the power of the imperial throne. Like their cousins, the Taira, they have developed a keen sense of their own worth and a jealousy of their martial rivals.

*Minamoto no Tameyoshi (b. 1096 – d. 1156)*

Head of the Minamoto at the time of the Hogen Rebellion, and another one of the unfortunates who sided with Sutoku. He was executed after the Minamoto defeat at Heiankyo in 1156.

*Minamoto no Yoshitomo (b. 1123 – d. 1160)*

Yoshitomo was the son of Tameyoshi. He became head of the clan after Tameyoshi's execution. Although he chose the right side in the Hogen Rebellion, he received little of the spoils. His dissatisfaction made him open to revolt. He led the Heiji Rebellion and lost his head.

*Minamoto no Yoritomo (b. 1147 – d. 1199)*

Yoritomo was a man who combined Taira no Kiyomori's appetite for power with the shrewdness of a fox and the patience of a spider. He was an evil lord who became the first Shogun. In so doing, he wiped out the Taira to the last man and woman, and killed all rivals to his power—even if they were kinsmen and the rivalry was imagined.

*Minamoto no Yoshitsune (b. 1159 – d. 1189)*

Yoshitsune is a figure of legend. He was the first swordsman to slice a falling leaf in half. He defeated the unbeatable giant sohei, Saito Musashibo Benkei, who then became his loyal retainer. He led 100 horsemen down a mountain onto the roof of the Taira fortress at



Ichi-no-Tani, winning the battle there. Upon the order of his brother Yoritomo, he hunted down and destroyed his cousin Yoshinaka, who had challenged Yoritomo for leadership of the Rebellion against the Taira. Yoshitsune was responsible for the final defeat of the Taira at Dan-no-Ura. He was, arguably, the greatest bushi who ever set foot in Nihon. His brother, Yoritomo, grew jealous of him and later sought to have him destroyed. Yoshitsune was ultimately betrayed while fleeing capture and forced to commit *seppuku*.

***Minamoto no Yoshinaka (b. 1154 – d. 1184)***

Kinsman to Yoritomo and Yoshitsune, he took up arms against the Taira in the Genpei War. He, along with his warrior wife Tomoe Gozen, struck some of the first victories against the Taira and seized Heiankyo. His attempt to proclaim himself both leader of the Rebellion and Minamoto clan, after his successes, led to his downfall at the hands of his cousins.

***Tomoe Gozen (b. 1161 – 1184)***

The mother of all fighting babes, Tomoe Gozen was the wife of Yoshinaka. She fought at his side until the bitter end, when he was hunted down by order of his kinsman, Yoritomo. She was beautiful and her athletic build stood in sharp contrast to the pale and pudgy grandees of the imperial court. Whenever a battle was imminent, “Yoshinaka sent her out as his first captain, equipped with strong armor, an oversized sword, and a mighty bow; and she performed more deeds of valor than any of his other warriors.” It was reported that she died the warrior’s death at the Battle of Awazu, though some claim she survived the battle and became a nun.



## The Tachibana

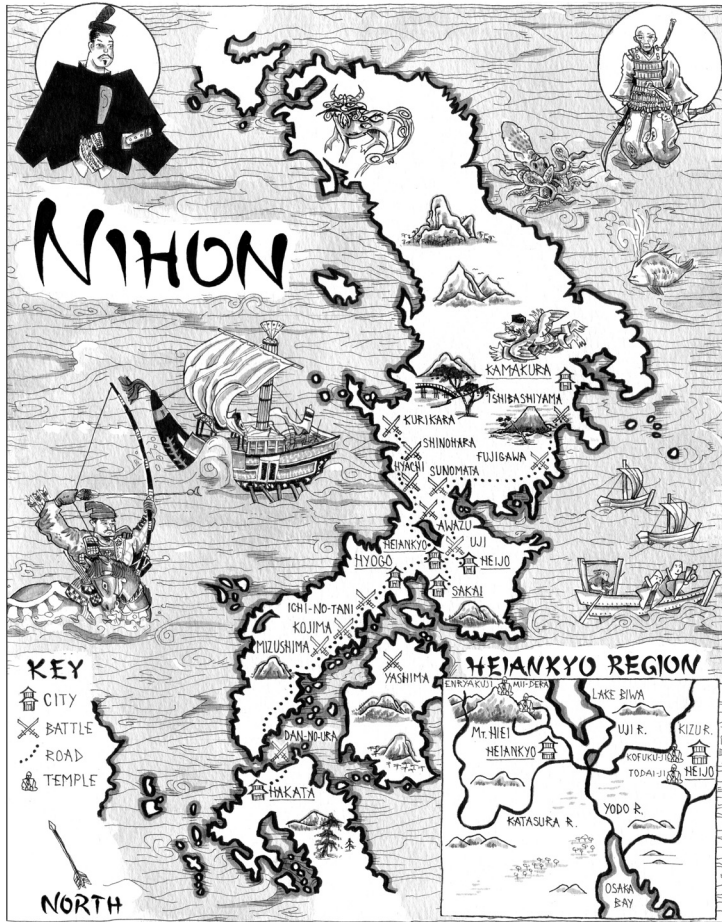
The Tachibana were the least powerful of the cadet branches of the imperial family. They maintained their roots at court and vied with the Fujiwara for power during the Heian era. However, they were never successful in breaking the Fujiwara stranglehold on the top court posts, and were not well positioned to take advantage of the rise of the provincial clans. Nevertheless, they provided the court with a steady stream of minor ministers, provincial governors, and imperial consorts.



## *Timeline of the Later Heian Period*

- 794 The Heian—Peaceful—Era begins with the movement of the capital from Heijo to Heiankyo.
- 806 The Fujiwara begin to dominate the court.
- 1000 The Fujiwara hold on the imperial court is complete. They are able to depose emperors at will. Their dominance is not effectively challenged until 1156.
- 1086 The provincial clans begin to consolidate their power as a military caste.
- 1155 Go-Shirakawa becomes co-emperor. Toba retires. Sutoku declares war on his brother Go-Shirakawa.
- 1156 Toba dies. Sutoku is exiled. The Hogen Rebellion begins and ends in the same year. The two provincial families intervene on both sides of the conflict and become rivals for the spoils. The Fujiwara are diminished.
- 1158 Go-Shirakawa becomes a “retired” emperor. Nijo becomes emperor.
- 1159 The Heiji Rebellion: The Minamoto, in coordination with a faction of the Fujiwara, seize Go-Shirakawa and stage a coup. The coup is short lived and crushed, paving the way for the ascendancy of the Taira. The Fujiwara cease to be a power at court.
- 1165 Nijo dies and Rokujo becomes emperor.
- 1167 Taira no Kiyomori becomes Daijo Daijin.
- 1168 Rokujo dies and Takakura becomes emperor.
- 1171 Kiyomori’s daughter, Taira no Tokuko, becomes first wife to Emperor Takakura.
- 1178 Emperor Antoku is born.
- 1179 Kiyomori forces Takakura off the throne and Antoku on it in his place. Kiyomori becomes Sekkan.
- 1180 The Genpei War begins. Minamoto no Yoritomo leads a rebellion against the Taira. Yoritomo loses the first battle of the rebellion at Ishibashiyami to Oba Kagechika of the Taira.
- 1183 Yoshinaka wins at the battle of Kokura pass and seizes Heiankyo.





- 1184 Yoshinaka is defeated by Yoshitsune at the battle of Awazu. Yoshitsune defeats the Taira at the battle of Ichi-no-Tani.
- 1185 Yoshitsune defeats the Taira at Dan-no-Ura. Go-Toba becomes emperor. Yoritomo establishes the *Bakufu*, the Shogunate, at Kamakura. The Genpei War ends. This is traditionally considered the end of the Heian era and the beginning of the Kamakura.
- 1187 Yoshitsune is outlawed.
- 1189 Yoshitsune commits seppuku after being surrounded at Koromogawa no Tate.



## Religion in Nihon

Religion is central to the life of all people residing in Nihon. It explains how the world works and how it ought to work. It animates the existence of everyone, from the lowliest beggar to the god-emperor himself.

### Shinto

The first religion of Nihon is *Shinto*—the way of the gods. The foundation of Shinto lies with the worship of kami—god-spirits. Kami include a wide range of entities. The sun goddess Amaterasu is a kami, for example, as are the spirits of trees and rice paddies. Also, any person who dies becomes an *ujigami* spirit bearing the name the person held in life.

Shinto is a religion that seeks to mediate the existence of the living with the supernatural. It calls for the living to respect the realm of the dead and supernatural, and it requires the spirit realm to allow the living to proceed in peace. The focus of Shinto is decidedly different than that of most other religions, including Buddhism. It offers no path to salvation or enlightenment, it simply offers a prescription for maximizing one's existence in the here and now by respecting those who have gone before.

In place of an orthodox dogma or complicated belief system, Shinto presents four affirmations that a person should follow to ensure harmony with the spirit world. They are as follows:

- *Respect tradition and the family.* Most spirits that will take an interest in a person's life come from one's own family pantheon. Respecting both tradition and the family propitiates these spirits.
- *Respect nature.* Almost every object, plant and animal contains a sacred spirit. Being close to nature and respectful of its boundaries puts a person in touch and in harmony with the spirit world.
- *Shun impurity; strive for purity.* Certain deeds and actions create ritual impurities that an individual should seek to purge from himself. An impurity can spring from anything that angers the kami and throws the natural world out of balance.
- *Honor festivals.* *Matsuri* are festivals dedicated to kami held throughout the year. To keep the spirit world propitiated, a person must honor these festivals.



These directives seem simple enough, but failure to carry them out can have dire consequences for the living. Neglected kami can hold grudges and work mischief in the living world. On the other hand, a sated spirit may intervene on behalf of the living.

The principal place for the worship and propitiation of spirits is the *jinju*, or shrine. Most shrines are associated with the worship of a local clan or nature spirits. *Daijinja*, or great shrines, are usually associated with the worship of a greater kami, like Amaterasu. Shinto priests and priestesses conduct daily rituals to help keep the community in harmony with the kami. There are more than 800 greater spirits that need to be satisfied, and a much greater number of family and nature spirits.

Perhaps the most important of the functions a shrine fulfills is to register a person's place within the community. Whenever a child is born in Nihon, that child's name is added to a local list at the jinju declaring him or her an *ujiko*, or named child. This clears the path for a smooth transition to the spirit world upon death. Only a person who has been named an *ujiko* can become an *ujigami*—an ancestor spirit. Individuals who die without registration become *mizuko*, or water children. Mizuko are angry spirits who can cause plagues and other serious problems. Each jinju has a shrine dedicated to assuaging their anger.

The major functions of shinto priests are to bless people (in marriages, at festivals and the like), bless locations (to purify them, like when building a new house or other structure), and perform the *Oharai* ceremony of warding off bad or unlucky spirits from people or places, by waving a stick with sacred white strips of paper attached to it.

One of the most important Shinto deities is the emperor himself, who is a living kami. His place in the Shinto pantheon is closely tied to the creation of Nihon itself. The story goes something like this:

### *In the Beginning*

In the beginning, the gods created the first man, Izanagi, and the first woman, Izanami. Izanagi and Izanami created the first island, Onogoro. Naturally, this island was made for one sole purpose. They did that and it was good. Except that their kids were... special. When Izanagi and Izanami went back to the elder gods to ask what went wrong, the elder ones pointed out that Izanami had spoken out of place before Izanagi had made his move. The gods told them to go back and try again, but to make sure Izanami kept her place.



## *In this shimmering spring day*

Upon returning to Onogoro, Izanagi and Izanami cast their deformed children into the sea. They then tried again. The next batch met their parents' approval. These children included several gods and the eight great islands.

Inazami and Izanagi feuded. The dispute resulted in the formation of the cycle of life and death.

Izanagi sought to purify himself after the feud. As he removed portions of his body to cleanse himself, they in turn became gods. His left eye became Amaterasu, the sun. His right eye, Tsukiyomo, became the moon, and his nose, Susanoo, the wind.

Amaterasu begat Osihomimi, Osihomimi begat Ninigi, Ninigi begat Howori, Howori begat Ugaya, and Ugaya begat Iwarebiko, the first emperor.

The point of all of this is to show that the emperor can draw a direct line to the Sun Goddess and the first man, who created the islands of Nihon. He has an impressive lineage from whence his powers, and his position, are derived.

## **Buddhism**

Buddhism has coexisted with Shinto since monks brought it from China centuries ago. It is easy to see why. Shinto offers a system to mediate the present; Buddhism offers a comprehensive system to gain salvation. The two need not compete.



The most important function of the Buddhist priest is dealing with the spirits of the dead. The priest will chant over the body of the dead to help guide the spirit to the afterlife. Buddhist temples large and small are also often near the location of family or regional graveyards. Sometimes, a Buddhist priest will be called in to perform an exorcism if needed (to chant mantras to drive evil spirits away), often alongside a Shinto priest.

The directives of Buddhism are profound. They begin with the dharma, or the teachings of the Buddha that lead to enlightenment. Enlightenment is simply a state of being where the individual breaks free of the cycle of life and death, which is driven by conflict and suffering. In order to reach this transcendent state, a person must shed all worldly desires and attachments that lead to such conflict. The various branches of Buddhism differ on just what constitutes worldly attachment and





how it should be shed. They also differ on how quickly a state of enlightenment can be attained. Two sects are popular in Nihon at this time: *Tendai* and *Shingon*.

Tendai Buddhism is more popular with the Heiankyo nobles, the provincial warrior class and merchants than Shingon. Buddhism's central teaching, that worldly pleasures must be shed in order to attain enlightenment, can cause friction. Interpreted literally, "worldly attachments" as literature and the arts must be shed in favor of an austere existence. Tendai reconciles this by recognizing that the phenomenal world is not separate from dharma, i.e., the world of our experiences is not distinct from enlightenment. Under Tendai, contemplation of poetry, music, art, swordplay, etc. can become contemplation of dharma. Performing an art that other sects might consider a distraction from salvation becomes a path to salvation if it allows a person to escape from strife and from other attachments to this realm.

Tendai is popular with the warrior class because it allows them to more easily synthesize their natural craft and profession with enlightenment than other sects of Buddhism. Patronage from the emperor, and a steady stream of students from the warrior class, have made the four main Tendai monasteries in Nihon the centers of political influence and independent military powers:

- Enryakuji is a monastery on Mt. Hiei near Heiankyo. It is located toward the top of the mountain and was the first Tendai monastery founded in Nihon.
- Miidera is another Tendai monastery on Mt. Hiei. The temple often finds itself in conflict with Enryakuji over appointments. Warriors from Miidera have an odd habit of being appointed to influential positions at Enryakuji. In the past hundred years, Miidera has been burnt to the ground four times by marauding monks from Enryakuji. However, the two monasteries have been known to set aside differences to make common cause against Heijo.
- Kofuku-ji is a Tendai monastery in the city of Heijo.
- Todai-ji is another one of the main Tendai monasteries in Heijo.

When the emperor retired to a monastery, he invariably chose to retreat to Enryakuji or Miidera—they were closer to the capital and allowed



## In this shimmering spring day

him to continue to ply his influence. This caused great consternation among the monasteries of Heijo, as it curtailed their influence on courtly politics.

Shingon Buddhism is centered at the monastery on Mt. Koya and is somewhat popular within the Heiankyo court. According to Shingon, enlightenment is something that can be attained in this lifetime, through meditation and ritual. It focuses on cultivating the innate potential that it recognizes in every individual to attain enlightenment.

### Shugendo

Distinct from Shinto and Buddhism, *Shugendo* is the peasant synthesis of Shinto and Buddhism practiced by mountain ascetics. Like the *sohei* of the major Tendai monasteries, the practitioners of Shugendo, or *yamabushi*, are warriors. Unlike the warrior monks, the *yamabushi* are primarily drawn from the peasant class.

Shugendo rejects Tendai's reconciliation of the phenomenal world with dharma. It also rejects many of the rituals of Shingon. Instead, it concentrates on leading an austere existence to gain enlightenment. *Yamabushi* commune with *kami*, not just to propitiate them and to coexist, but to gain active dharmic guidance. Shugendo's focus on asceticism also means it has no centers of worship—it is a very decentralized sect with no hierarchy nor leaders.



### Confucianism

Confucianism is a school of thought that was pioneered in China in the 6th century BCE. It began to take root in Nihon around the 2nd century BCE and reached its peak of influence during the Heijo period, when the court in Heijo sought to integrate many of Confucianism's concepts on governance with the legal code. Although Confucianism is not as influential in Nihon as it is in China, many of its ideas are taken for granted and mirror popular concepts in Buddhism and Shinto. Confucianism stresses submission to class relationships, filial piety, loyalty from subject to ruler, meritocracy and reciprocity in social relationships. If some of these ideas seem in contradiction to one another, that is because they are. Like any great school of thought, Confucianism is rife with its own paradoxes.





# Sho Ga Nai

A shout broke the stillness of the morning. The governor looked up, his mouth still pursed before the flute, a gesture interrupted before he could even sound a note to begin the day as he liked. His wife sat beside him, her fingers poised over the strings of the *koto* before her. The swish of fabric from the courtyard announced the urgency of his servants. The governor's wife took her place behind the shutters with silent grace; it would be unfitting for any man other than her husband to see her. The screen slid open and a prostrate servant presented a scroll on a platter.

"Governor Tachibana-sama. Word from Heiankyo," the servant said. The governor took the message and grunted. The grunt was a dismissal, but the man did not move. Instead, he cowered, his untrained mind gone blank with fear. A bead of sweat trickled down the temple of the servant; he stood as still as one of the gray stone lanterns that lined the path to the palace.

"Go!" Tachibana barked in frustration. The servant bowed again and again, like a woodpecker pounding a cedar for a morsel of meat and then turned and flew off. Governor Tachibana tore the ribbon from the scroll. His wife, Junko, peeked from behind the shades.

"The Emperor will visit," Governor Tachibana said.

"Here?" Junko's eyes widened for a moment before she regained her poise. "Why would His Majesty travel so far from Heiankyo? Perhaps he needs a respite from court?"

"Nobody comes to this backwater because they want to." The governor put down his flute and walked to the room where his son waited. "Kazuo, get up! It's time you learned to govern. Go find the warlord and order him to come to me. Don't dally with his reprobate son. It will take us years to get that backward accent out of your speech."

"And the priest? He could build a garden for His Majesty to view from his bedchamber," Junko said.



## In this shimmering spring day

“Yes. Send for the priest as well.” Their son, Kazuo, yawned.

“Whatever you say, *chichi*,” Kazuo replied in the country dialect.

“You will not speak like a peasant!” the governor shouted as Kazuo leaped out the door and ran down the road with a brutish gait. The governor shook his head in disgust.

“That backwardness will be purged when we return to Heiankyo,” he muttered. He wrapped himself in a blue robe. “Whatever His Majesty wants, we must provide it. This is our chance to quit this palace of bumpkins and be recalled to the capital, where we belong.”

The governor’s wife gathered the folds of her kimono. She wore twelve layers, each a different color. The first layer was red, and a sensuous glimpse of that fabric stuck out from many folds. The outermost layer of yellow silk was dyed with the images of cherry blossoms to fit the spring season. The clothing was stamped with the crest of the Tachibana, her husband’s clan.

Junko ran her fingers over the crest and contemplated the four petals of the orange flower that made up the design. Four years they had spent in lonely exile. Since they had been sent to govern in the mountain hamlet, Junko was less certain that her kimonos fit the height of fashion. The time had been difficult for her and her husband. The ignorant servants with their hillbilly accents were all so vulgar.



The country palace was a nest of enemies. It was crawling with *mukade*, giant stinging centipedes that lived in the bushes. Only their son, Kazuo, now just 14, had adjusted to the rustic life of the simpletons, much to his parents’ humiliation. They were distressed that Kazuo had celebrated his *genpuku*, his coming-of-age ceremony, in this pitiful hamlet, and not in Heiankyo as he should have.

The Emperor’s visit was their chance to escape. They must impress the Emperor and win high standing for their family at court. Junko ran her hand over the family crest and smiled. “This spring the Tachibana will blossom,” she said. Her husband smiled at the image.

Kazuo ran along the paths to the Warlord’s home. He knew each tree that leaned over the path. A lavender wisteria in full bloom perfumed the air outside. The tiny village of Magome-juku felt like a part of him. Kazuo never understood why his mother cried when they left



Heiankyo. The stuffiness of court life stifled him. When they moved to the countryside his senses awoke. He discovered a friend in Hideki, the son of the Warlord who served his father.

“Kazu-kun, what brings you to our rustic home? Ready to put down Chinese poems and study the sword?” the Warlord teased the son of the aristocracy, but his mood turned grave when Kazuo informed him of the Emperor’s visit.

“I have work to do,” was all he said before he left. Hideki, the warlord’s son, slapped Kazuo on the back, a bit too hard.

“So, we’ll see some courtesans in our village. Perhaps some women will accompany his Excellency. Your poems will come in handy after all.”

“What would you do? Shoot them?” Kazuo reached for Hideki’s bow, but Hideki slapped his hand away and knocked him to the floor.

“How dare you? You’re not even a man,” Kazuo said. He jumped back to his feet and brushed himself off.

“You’re too sensitive. Besides, I have my genpuku this summer and then we’ll both be men, so don’t feel too badly about being knocked down by a boy.” Hideki grinned.

“Even so, I’m the governor’s son.” Kazuo stood up and faced Hideki. Hideki smiled and stared at Kazuo until a grin emerged on his face like the sun from behind a cloud.

“Honor demands that you apologize,” Kazuo said. Though he smiled, he was not joking. Hideki dropped to his knees and bowed with his forehead pressed to the floor.

“Please accept my most humble apology, Kazu-sama,” he said. Kazuo rolled his eyes and snorted.

“Very honorable,” Kazuo said. They both laughed.

“I suppose our fathers will speak of nothing but honor until His Majesty arrives,” Kazuo said.

“Yes. They talk of honor while trying to decide whose side they are on. No doubt the Emperor is coming here to find friends in the wilderness. Life must be getting complicated in Heiankyo,” Hideki said.



## In this shimmering spring day

“Honor should be simple,” Kazuo said.

“If your ambition is only to have honor, then yes, it is. If you want to have honor and something else, then honor becomes tangled in a web of desires,” Hideki said.

“Now that I am a man, I will honor only friendship,” Kazuo said. “That is what matters.”

“You men speak of honor all day long, but I see little of it practiced,” Hideki replied.

“Just so!” Kazuo said. “My father would serve any faction if he thought it would get him back to Heiankyo. He just wants my mother in the latest fashions!” He looked at his friend to see if he’d gone too far by criticizing his own father so harshly. Hideki furrowed his brow and thought for a moment.

“And my father would serve, even if his duties were shameful. Honor becomes an excuse to take the easiest path. They all do it. Follow the bankrupt orders of disloyal schemers in the name of duty, and when you challenge them they just say ‘*sho ga nai*,’ it can’t be helped.” Hideki spat on the ground and tightened the grip on his bow.

“You look like you’re ready to kill somebody,” Kazuo said with a laugh.



Hideki looked him in the eye and then smiled. “I’m always ready to kill somebody.”



“Come, I have to summon the priest,” Kazuo said.

Hideki agreed and the two walked the mountain path to the monastery. The cherry trees full of blossoms painted the mountainside pink and birds sang in their branches.



“If the visit goes well, it will be good for all of us,” Governor Tachibana said. He strolled along the dirt path. The warlord and the priest walked beside him.



“I understand, Tachibana-sama,” the Warlord said. His stride was confident. They walked around a koi pond on the palace grounds to speak privately. Governor Tachibana saw the vulgar swagger in the gait of his country warrior and it irritated him.

“By go well, I mean that when I am recalled to Heiankyo, you could have a friend in the court.”

“A warrior has no need of friendship, Tachibana-sama. My bow is my companion, and duty is my master.”

“Of course it is,” the Governor sighed. From the corner of his eye, he noticed a dragonfly making lazy loops in the air over the pond. The paper-thin wings hummed gently, and the green and blue bug gleamed in the sunshine.

“Just understand that it is your duty to make this visit go well, and that means keeping your bumpkin of a son away from my family. His mannerisms have spread like a disease into my house, and I don’t want His Majesty to have to worry about them spreading into his court.”

The warlord stopped midstride. His knuckles whitened as he tightened his grasp on his brown bow.

“My son...”

“Your son is a brave warrior and full of honor, just like you are, my strong and humble servant. I only ask that you help me keep both our progeny pure. The court has no need of you, and you have no need of the court, but we can be of use to each other. Do you suddenly have a problem doing your duty?”

“I obey without question, Tachibana-sama.” The warlord bowed. The dragonfly did a loop and then dove too close to the surface of the pond. A widening ring rippled out from the spot where the bug flapped on the surface of the water.

“That’s the spirit. Now, Roshi, on to you.” The governor turned to the priest.

“Tachibana-sama, how can I be of service?” The priest bowed, though not deeply.

“Sand,” the Governor said, “and rocks, lots of rocks. You know how it’s done. You arrange it nicely, the way they like in Heiankyo.”



## *In this shimmering spring day*

“The way they like in Heiankyo, Tachibana-sama?”

“Yes, well...” The governor sucked his teeth. “I’m not quite sure how they like it in Heiankyo these days. They used to talk a great deal about imperfection, surfaces, things like that. You know, you’re the priest.”

“A rock garden is not a fashion statement. It is an expression of the dharma, of the timelessness of eternity.”

“Yes, exactly. Can you do it? His Majesty likes this sort of thing.” Governor Tachibana’s question was abrupt. He watched the dragonfly break from the water and flip into the air. It looked for an instant as if it were free of the pond, but its sodden wings were too heavy for flight.

“It would be an honor to assist the Emperor. If only my temple did not require so much of my attention. I have no one to help me maintain the grounds.”

“Your temple.” The governor looked up at the maple branches overhead. The spidery twigs looked like cracks in the sky above them. His gray pants, gathered below the knee, swished against each other in breezy exasperation. “If His Majesty were to find the view from his room to be unrefined, I’m sure you’d hardly notice the effects all the way up there in your temple, so far removed from our concerns. Although you might. You very well might.”

The dragonfly twitched. A carp rose to the surface; its whiskered mouth rolled over the bug. The fish’s wet skin shone like white clouds on an orange sky, and then it was underwater again.



“I will design a garden.” The priest said it as if he had thought of it himself.

Governor Tachibana smiled. He inclined his head as if he were taking a moment to savor the idea in his mind, as if he too had heard it for the first time and were holding it in his head before he responded. It was intended to look scholarly, but it was the affectation of a petty-minded ruler. Finally, he spoke.

“You’ve made an excellent choice. Once we’re through with all this, I’m sure we can find you an eager apprentice to help you in your temple.”





The next week, the village stirred like an ant hill before a storm. The priest directed a team of craftsmen in the palace. They added a room onto the building, laid fresh tatami mats across the floor, and built a window with a view comprised solely of the enclosed rock garden. The governor insisted that the garden be raked and arranged to suit the latest image of perfect beauty, though he was not quite sure what that was.

One day, while the laborers were out finding more perfectly imperfect stones for the priest to arrange, he heard the governor's wife clear her throat from behind a shuttered door.

"Is someone there?" he asked.

"I'm sorry to disturb your contemplation, *sensei*," came the reply. The priest smiled.

"It is no bother. In fact you have helped me tremendously," the priest said.

"I have helped?" Junko asked.

"I was not sure what more this garden needed, but now I have it." The priest stepped closer to the screen.

"And that is?"

"Your voice is the only thing this garden lacks. If only there were a way I could add such beauty to the view. Perhaps if I rake the sand once more and think only of that graceful sound," he said.

"Do you think His Majesty will be pleased?"

"It might work," he said.

"Even my voice is not enough?" Junko asked, sounding disappointed.

"If you could just speak in sight of the garden, bless it with your voice. His Majesty would detect the remnants of such grace in the stones and the sand... and the inevitable return to austerity. He would be delighted. The last instance of beauty before it vanishes, like the persimmon whose ripeness is nearly become rot, is the sweetness of life infused with the sadness of loss."



## *In this shimmering spring day*

Junko sighed and the priest smiled. She peeked out from the shutters and looked down at the weave of the tatami. Her feet whispered across the mat until she was at the window. She leaned over the garden to see the rocks placed in the sand and lost her balance. The priest caught her before she fell, and she cried out in surprise.

“Perfection,” the priest said.



The Emperor arrived at the end of a long procession, like the foam atop a giant wave. The effect of his presence was felt along dirt paths and in the homes of Magome-juku. Children were kept inside, and shops were shuttered, lest anyone cross paths with the strange and powerful figures from Heiankyo. Everyone prepared for an evening festival.

At dusk, glowing paper lanterns swayed in the spring breeze that came down from the mountain. The priest blessed the village and the people gathered to dance for His Majesty. At first, they trembled with fear, but despite their trepidation, they formed a circle and the musicians kneeled beside them. The shrill note of a flute cut into the night air, and then thundering drums boomed. Everyone felt the sound in their bellies and began to dance.

Hideki, Kazuo and their fathers and families formed a circle and performed the traditional Bon Odori. They moved their hands together as if shoveling coal and bent down as if gathering rice. The folk dance had existed as long as anyone could remember, and they had all danced the same steps since they were old enough to walk. They relaxed into the familiar movements, easing themselves into the ceremony like a bather lowering himself into a hot bath. The Emperor stared at the performance as if he were not even there. At first he was bored, but as the emotions of the performers enriched the dance, even he forgot himself and began to smile.

Kazuo saw his father fidget as he tried to make the Emperor comfortable. He ordered more pillows brought from the palace and strutted like a monkey. The Emperor laughed at one of his jokes and the governor gleamed with pride. He stood beside his master with his head inclined like a noble of the court.

The evening was delightful to Kazuo. The dancing made his heart pound in his chest, and the folk music wafted over him like the moonlight that filtered through the trees. He loved this village. He took a break



from the dance and wandered to the side to look into a cherry tree. He reached into the black branches and plucked a blossom. The pink petals were rimmed with a touch of brown. The season was almost past and the sweet flowers were just beginning to wither. Wrinkles lined the limp petals, like the first sign of age around a woman's eyes.

Kazuo knew his time in this village was about to end. A tear stung his eye. Across the way he saw his friend, Hideki, lost for a moment in the dance. Hideki smiled at his father, and then thought better of it and twisted his face into a formal frown. The warlord's eyes flicked around the crowd, making sure that all were secure. He pretended not to see his son's smile, but his eyes smiled back.

The Emperor seemed entranced. After the dancing it was time to eat and drink. Sweet potatoes and eel smoked on the grills, and sake was poured. Kazuo drank with Hideki. The rice wine burned in his throat.

"Kampai!" they shouted, cup after cup. They mumbled drunken words about honor and friendship to each other. When everything had been eaten and all the dances danced, finally His Majesty retired. Hideki's father followed, leaving Kazuo and Hideki drinking sake. The black night was dotted with yellow fireflies. They stood over the dying embers of a grill.

"Your face is redder than the coals!" Hideki teased Kazuo. His own face was flushed from the drink as well. Kazuo smiled a twisted grin and drank another cup. Kazuo put his hand behind Hideki's head and pulled him close.

"You're the best friend I've ever had." The sentence rode a gust of boozy breath. "Even if you do carry a bow like a tradesman carries his tools." Hideki frowned, but it was the kind of frown that showed he was pleased.

"It is so," Hideki replied. "And you are my friend, even if you are a noble who knows nothing of honor."

"If my father is recalled to Heiankyo, I will have to leave," Kazuo said.

"Sho ga nai," Hideki said. It can't be helped. The sake made him emotional and stoic at the same time. Kazuo frowned at this.

"I don't want to leave," Kazuo said. He sucked his teeth. "And I do have honor!"



## *In this shimmering spring day*

“Sho ga nai,” Hideki said again.

“But it can!” Kazuo said. He swallowed another cup of sake and ran away from his friend. Hideki laughed at the sight of his friend stumbling along the path to the palace.



A shriek awoke the palace. Servants hurried in fear. Governor Tachibana sat up on his futon and rubbed his eyes.

“What was that?” He asked. His head pounded from the night before.

“Governor Tachibana-sama,” his servant whispered outside his door. The shoji sliding door opened to reveal his chief servant with an expression of pure terror on his face.

“The Emperor’s garden has been disturbed, Tachibana-sama.”

“What?” Governor Tachibana jumped to his feet. He walked down the corridor to the Emperor’s room. Guards stood outside, but they stepped aside to let him pass.

“I consider this a threat on my life!” the Emperor screamed. As the Emperor shouted, flecks of saliva sprayed across Governor Tachibana’s face. Governor Tachibana looked over the shoulder of his Emperor into the garden. The smooth raked lines of the sand had been trodden across, the rocks were piled in a heap in the corner. The character for ‘shame’ was dug into the sand.



“What is the meaning of this?” The Emperor demanded. Governor Tachibana’s face turned as white as the powder-fine sand in the desecrated garden.

“I will find out, Kami-sama.” The governor dropped to his knees and pressed his forehead into the mat at the Emperor’s feet. Shame pumped from his heart into his entire body, working its way like molten lead up his neck and his head. His face burned against the floor.

“Get out.” The Emperor’s voice was an even, contemptuous whisper. The governor crawled backward, bowing until he was out of sight.

“The warlord, now,” was his first command. “No one is to leave their rooms,” was the second. The servants, the staff, no one could move until the warlord arrived, not even to visit the toilet. The palace was



eerily quiet, except for the hushed conversations of the few servants who were so essential they were allowed to perform their duties. Even the governor's wife was not allowed to leave her quarters, though she begged and threatened her servants; the orders were clear. The tension between the Emperor's servants and the governor's servants made the air hum with fear. The warlord and Hideki arrived together, each carrying a blade and a bow. They'd been told there was trouble, but had no idea what to expect.

"You were to secure this palace, to keep these grounds safe for His Majesty!" Governor Tachibana's shame became violent rage once he had someone else to blame. The warlord winced, and Hideki bowed as deeply as he could. The governor stood inches from the warlord. "Your failure is clear to me, and to His Majesty. Your disgrace will live on in legend. Your family will be outcast. Your name will become a vulgar curse in children's games."

The governor paced in his room, his anger fed upon itself, burning with his own humiliation. "Find the scoundrel who did this." The warlord bowed. The command gave him release from his own despair, something to do. Duty flooded into his soul like water over a parched and cracked riverbed.

The warlord strode the hallways of the palace with Hideki close behind him. The boards under their feet creaked, as they had been designed to do, to prevent anyone from sneaking in at night.

"The entire retinue of the Emperor must have been drunk to sleep through the intruder's footsteps," the warlord said to his son. Hideki nodded. "They will all be outcast for this." The vandalizing of the garden was like a rock thrown into a pond; the rings of shame spread outward until everyone was tainted. Now all were awake, and the creaks underfoot alerted those within their quarters that someone was coming.

The warlord interviewed terrified servants who groveled and gasped. "You are all miserable," the warlord said. Each quivering servant disgusted the warlord more than the last, as he let his own shame fuel his contempt for his inferiors. As the hours passed, the servants had soiled their clothes. These would be banished from the palace regardless of the outcome of the investigation. Hideki noticed that as they approached the wing of the governor's wife, the servants became even more fearful. One could barely speak.



## *In this shimmering spring day*

“I know nothing, sensei.” Junko’s chief servant tried to melt into the tatami floor.

“Useless, all of you,” the warlord said. The woman said nothing, her tears soaked into the mat. The warlord turned to go. He strode to the last door in the corridor, where the governor’s wife lived.

“Please, sensei!” The servant dove at his legs. “Please, don’t go in there.” The woman’s voice was shrill with terror. The warlord raised his sword and kicked the woman away. Her head broke through the shoji screen of the door. Splinters of frame snagged the silk of her kimono. The warlord strode forward to strike the woman.

“Stop!” The voice of the governor’s wife stayed the warlord’s hand. He held his blade over the servant and looked up. The door fell away, revealing the governor’s wife in her room. Her eyes were bright with fear and defiance.

“Enough, Kanoko. You have served me well. He cannot be stopped,” Junko said to her servant. The woman pulled herself from the shattered door and bowed. Her body shook with silent sobs.

“What is this?” The warlord looked at Junko and back at the servant. Then he gazed around the room and realized what the servant had tried to stop him from seeing. The priest stood in the back of the room. “You? What are you doing...” The warlord did not finish his sentence. “An affair. You were caught in this room when the Emperor discovered the garden.”



“You have me, but I’m not who you want,” the priest said. “I had nothing to do with the destruction of that garden.”

“No.” The warlord nodded. He put away his blade. “Get out,” he said to the servant. She looked up at Junko who nodded, and then she left.

“This is an added disgrace to a ruinous day, but I still must find the one who violated the Emperor’s garden,” the warlord said.

“My son did it,” the governor’s wife said.

“Kazuo would never do such a thing,” Hideki said. His father spun around and raised his hand. “You will not speak.”

“I cannot let my friend be slandered...”



“My servant saw him last night. She told me this morning. He thought that if he disgraced us, we would stay in this dusty stable rather than be recalled to Heiankyo, the fool.”

“Your son.” The warlord turned white.

“If you tell the governor that his own son committed this act, he will not be pleased,” said the priest.

“I will not believe it,” Hideki said.

“It is true,” Kazuo’s voice came from behind them. They turned to see him standing in the doorway. “I did not want to leave. I was drunk. I wanted to show Hideki that I stand for something.” His face was puffy from crying.

“How did you get here?” the warlord asked.

“My father sent me to lead you in your investigation. He said it is time I learned to govern.”

“You see? There can be no friendship between a warrior and an aristocrat. They know nothing of honor,” the warlord scolded his son.

“Your single act of drunken childishness has destroyed dozens of lives,” the priest said.

“I just wrote shame in the sand. You have written it across the body of my mother,” Kazuo said. The priest smiled and gestured with open arms, his empty palms facing up.

“Perhaps there is a way we can resolve this.”

“There is nothing to resolve. I will tell Tachibana-sama what has happened,” the warlord said.

“That would be a mistake,” the governor’s wife said. The warlord chewed his lip.

“He would not hear it, and you would be held responsible for everything. He would ask for your life, I’m afraid,” the priest said.

“It is my duty to tell Tachibana-sama the truth,” the warlord said.

“There is another way,” the priest said. He strode toward them.



## *In this shimmering spring day*

“Your son is two weeks from the genpuku. He is not yet a man.”

The warlord considered the priest’s words.

“I understand,” he said. His eyes were hard.

“What does my age have to do with this?” Hideki asked. He looked around, bewildered.

“Silence,” the warlord said. He rubbed his chin and nodded slowly. “So he would not be required to give his life.”

“And I could use the help,” the priest said.

“You would promise to take him into your monastery?”

“He is a little old, but I could use him,” the priest said.

“You just want to cover your crime,” Hideki said. The warlord struck with such speed that the governor’s wife gasped. Hideki sprawled across the floor. He looked up at his father; a trickle of blood seeped from his nose.

“And you would... assist?” the warlord asked the governor’s wife.

“I would explain to my husband that a boy can be rash, and that the sins of the son must not always disgrace the father. You could probably even remain in his service. But don’t think only of your son and yourself. Think of my husband. To spare him from this indignity, that is your duty, even if your own son must bear the burden.”



“Impossible,” Hideki said from the floor. “Kazuo would never engage in this falsehood.” Everyone looked at Kazuo, who had been silent during the deliberation. Kazuo inclined his head so that his eyes did not meet Hideki’s. It looked as if Kazuo was attempting to look thoughtful, the same pose his father often took.

“Sho ga nai,” he said. Hideki’s mouth hung open. He looked at the group; everyone looked thoughtful, like Kazuo, as if they were pondering one of the mysterious facts of existence. Hideki pushed himself into a kneeling position.

“You have it all arranged, don’t you? You have even figured out how this horrible deceit is in fact a thing of beauty, an act of honor and duty.”





“Now, son,” the warlord said in a soft voice.

“I am not your son,” Hideki said. He took out his blade; the metal gleamed in the soft light that filtered through the shoji. The warlord drew his own blade.

“You won’t need that,” Hideki said. He nodded toward his father’s sword. Hideki brought the point of his knife to his belly.

“Son, there is no honor in this,” the warlord’s voice was low, almost gentle.

“I am a warrior, not an apprentice to an adulterous priest.”

“A warrior would not defy his father. If you do this, I cannot assist. I will not take on the shame of this outrage!” the warlord shouted at Hideki.

“I will not spend my life sweeping the floor of a monastery that is built on corruption and lies. I am not afraid of sacrifice, I am not afraid of the truth. May my death stain this palace for a thousand generations!” Hideki gripped the handle of his knife and drove it into his own belly. The tip cut through the cloth of his *yukata* without the slightest tug, and the steel bit into his skin and sliced neatly into the muscle and through the mush of his guts. Hideki gasped in surprise more than pain. He felt the hot wetness of blood seep into his lap. Then came the searing pain. He glanced up at his father, and for an instant the warlord saw fear in his son’s eyes.

They were the same eyes that had watched as he taught his son to fight, to bow, even to urinate standing up so long ago. The pain in his son’s eyes grew, they flashed in excruciation. Hideki’s mouth twitched, his lips twisted as he held back a scream. The warlord brought his own blade down with a whisper. It sliced through neck and bone with a click, and Hideki’s head hit the tatami. His mouth opened and closed like a *koi*, pulled onto the grass, until the eyes glazed and the tongue stuck out. Everyone looked at the headless body still leaking blood. The room was as quiet as the death of a cherry blossom and as still as the surface of the *koi* pond on a windless night. The warlord broke the silence.

“Sho ga nai,” he said.

“Sho ga nai,” the others replied. It can’t be helped.



## *In this shimmering spring day*



Governor Tachibana noticed the steam of his breath that rose from the holes of his flute, the first wisp that signaled the approach of winter. His wife plucked the strings of her koto, and together they played an old song. The last notes still seemed to live in the air when the repose was interrupted by the knock of a servant.

“Tachibana-sama, a message from Heiankyo.” The governor plucked the message and tore off the ribbon. His face hardened as he read the scented parchment.

“The Emperor has not changed his mind. We are never to set foot in Heiankyo again.” Governor Tachibana rolled the scroll back up and retied the ribbon. He gazed upon the grounds at what he now realized would be the view from his room for the rest of his life. Above them, on the mountain, a tendril of smoke rose above the temple.

“That priest spends a lot of time here lately,” he said, still looking out the window.

“With a warlord for an apprentice, the priest has more time to teach,” Junko said. Governor Tachibana grunted.

“It’s about time he remembers who he serves,” Governor Tachibana said. His wife had been more distant since the Emperor left. He wondered if it was because Heiankyo was forever out of their reach now. The time the priest spent in the palace did seem to improve her mood.



“I’m glad he can be useful,” he said. He noticed that a thin skin of ice had formed over the koi pond during the night. “It will be a long winter.”





# Shoshi

Katashi burned a tortoise shell and saw the expedition his lord had planned was inauspicious. He frowned. His counsel, when given, would not be well received. Nevertheless, as onmyoji to the Minamoto clan, it was his duty to risk the displeasure of his lord and tell him what was foretold by the shapes produced by the cracked shell. He rose from his seated position before the fire, poured sand upon the ashes, and made toward the stables, where his lord, Yoshitomo, would be waiting.

No oracular powers were required to perceive the source of his lord's festering discontent. All who attended him knew its source and endured his lashing temper. Yoshitomo had suffered setbacks at court of a gravity sufficient to test the restraint of men infinitely calmer and more detached than himself. The Minamoto lord had fought on the victorious side in the recent war of succession, against forces including his father and younger brother. Now the emperor he helped install paid scant heed to his emissaries. Yoshitomo was denied favor and reward. His requested clemency for his rebellious kinfolk had resulted in the arrival of twin lacquered boxes at his palace, containing the heads of his father and brother.

Katashi hastened to join the hunting party. Cold gripped the morning air; plumes of steam rose from the mouths of horses and men alike. His lord was already astride his ghost-white steed. Stable hands readied Katashi's own mount.

The oracle threw himself into the saddle. Strong and vigorous, he was much younger than most onmyoji. He was also more pleasing to the eye, if one were to judge by the shy laughter of the palace's younger ladies, which followed him about like wisps of fog. Katashi had inherited his post from his father, who lost his life in the rebellion. At the time, he had scarcely been of age, yet insight into the spirit realm flowed truer in his family's blood than in any other's.



## In this shimmering spring day

Yoshitomo barked a question: “So, it is a favorable day for a demon hunt, then?”

The northern lands inhabited by the Minamoto had always been haunted. Their thickly forested ravines housed spirits, witches and *bakemono*. Yoshitomo’s father, Tameyoshi, had honed the fighting prowess of his men by clearing the woods of monsters. That the son now resumed his predecessor’s sport could only be seen as a gesture of belated fealty.

Katashi bowed in abasement. “Great caution is called for, lord.”

“Caution!” Yoshitomo spat into the wind. “What need is there for oracles, when their predictions are so predictable? Caution, caution, caution—it’s all your kind ever advises.” He kicked his horse’s side so that it bolted for the outer gate. Katashi followed, along with a party of thirty archers and escorts.

Were it a retainer’s place to assess the character of his lord, Katashi would have judged Yoshitomo’s wanting, compared with that of his beheaded father. He had shown himself to be rash, heedless, perhaps even churlish. This was Katashi’s own verdict, however, and not that of the spirit world. Thus, gladly, he would never be required to give it.

The hunting party rode until the sun hung low in the sky, yet found neither demon to slay nor ghost to exorcise. Yoshitomo had given the order to return to the castle when a willowy, silver-haired animal appeared on a distant rise. It was a large fox, and it gazed at the assembled hunters with a wise, contemptuous curiosity. In the pink light of the waning sun, one could clearly see that not one, but nine lush tails twitched at the end of its sleek form.

Yoshitomo reached for his bow.

Katashi searched his mind for a way to cry out, to countermand his lord without shame. This was a *kitsune*, a fox who was at once an animal and a *yokai*, or earthly spirit. And a mighty one, too. The nine tails marked a creature who had lived a thousand years and, during that time, achieved great enlightenment. Yoshitomo should not fire upon such a being.

But the lord did fire. The kitsune yelped with surprise as an arrow arced through the air toward him. The august creature had clearly not



expected to be subjected to wanton attack. The arrow hit true. The arrow pierced the kitsune's heart. It stumbled down the hillside and died.

Katashi, aware that his face bore a stricken expression, suppressed all sign of emotion, lest Yoshitomo read on it his silent reproach. The lord ordered the hide be shorn from the creature's flesh so that it might adorn the wall of his audience chamber.



The hide of the kitsune had scarcely been cured and hung when it became known among the ladies of the court that a new concubine was on her way from Heiankyo. Katashi struggled fruitlessly to shield himself from unseemly foreknowledge of this woman and her reputation. Handsome and unattached, the oracle was helpless to avoid the bored flirtations of the lower-ranking women. Their currency in these unwanted exchanges was gossip. And so he heard, several times over, that the newcomer's name was Shoshi, that she was obscurely tied to the overweening Taira clan, and that she was surpassingly homely. The gossips intimated that, for Yoshitomo to want her, she must surely be shockingly adept in the bedchamber. Applying men's logic to the situation, Katashi understood that an association with Shoshi would surely bring needed political advantage.

Shoshi arrived in the gloomy noon light of an overcast day. Katashi attended her arrival, as did the rest of the court. When she stepped from her palanquin, a shocked murmur arose from the assembled ladies. The men, as one, ceased their breathing. Shoshi was far from homely. Her face was a perfect teardrop; her eyes, pools of inexpressible depth. She moved toward Yoshitomo with a hypnotic slowness and bowed deeply before him.

At the sight of her, a burning sensation arose on the back of Katashi's neck. This sensation had arisen before, in the presence of ghosts and demons. Impetuously, he risked dishonor by moving himself from his position in his lord's retinue. With all the circumspection he could muster, he stepped several paces to the left so he could meet the concubine's eyes. She averted her face from his.

Katashi immediately knew what sort of being stood before him.

He glanced at the Minamoto chief. Yoshitomo's features, characteristically transparent, revealed a mixture of infatuation and befuddlement.



## *In this shimmering spring day*

Katashi would have to find certain proof before sharing the truth with his lord.

In the days that followed, Yoshitomo made himself a recluse in his own court, scarcely venturing outside the chambers of his new concubine. Katashi heard his advisors complain, in clucking and worried terms, of his sudden disinterest in clan affairs. The hated Taira had floated certain subtle insinuations at the Imperial Court, and the Minamoto response to these would require painstaking calibration. Yet, when Yoshitomo's gray old men sought audience with him, the lord would speak only of the splendors of Shoshi's thin upper lip, and of the branching blue lines intersecting the whiteness of her inner wrist.

Circumstances in which a male retainer might contrive to casually encounter his lord's favored new concubine were difficult to arrange. Yet, in the weeks that followed, Katashi affected to accidentally cross her path on several occasions. Each time, the back of his neck burned when he looked upon her, and she recoiled from him like a rabbit from a snake. Before meeting her, he would harden his heart against her, remind himself of the danger she posed to his lord and to his clan. Yet, in her presence, he would melt inside and find himself possessed of the urge to clasp his arms around her, to flee his duties, and to make her his.

She was bewitching him, as she had bewitched his lord.



Two moons passed before Katashi came to ruminate on the disparity between the dowdy woman described by the gossiping court ladies, and the actual Shoshi who arrived at the Minamoto gate. He ventured alone along the road to the south, until he came to a place where the underbrush by the side of the trail betrayed signs of recent breakage. He followed a path of trampled vegetation into the woods. There, he found a small scattering of gnawed human bones, and, caught on the branch of a tree, a hank of brocaded silk. Torn from the sleeve of a kimono, it bore a dark brown-red stain: blood.

Dusk settled on the forest as Katashi returned to the Minamoto fortress. During the weeks it had taken him to amass his proof, Yoshitomo had fallen ever deeper into Shoshi's embrace. He had withdrawn from clan business to while his time at her side. Emissaries from the capital, when received at all, waited days for his attention. Yoshitomo, once a zealous guardian of clan coffers, now drained them to lavish upon



Shoshi gifts of silks, jade and ivory. Retinues of proud warriors were detailed to guard these shipments from Heiankyo. News of bandits on the northern reaches of his territory were met with a dismissive wave of his knotted hand.

Arriving back at the castle, Katashi located Yoshitomo's chief attendant, Goro, and informed him that he needed urgently to discuss with their lord an inauspicious omen of paramount magnitude. Yet two full days passed before Goro came to him and, with ill-disguised sadness in his eyes, told him that Yoshitomo was now ready to receive him.

When he stepped into the audience chamber and saw Shoshi seated behind his lord, plucking on the strings of a shamisen, Katashi's heart sank. It fluttered, too: the murderess' beauty had only magnified itself since he had last beheld her. Yoshitomo, by contrast, had diminished in apparent stature. His eyes were dull and hollow. His topknot was askew; his face had seen several days since it last was shaved. He wore his garments loosely; they were spotted with specks of food.

A hypnotic melody emanated from Shoshi's instrument. When she saw Katashi, she broke her rhythm, letting escape a jarring false note.

Katashi noticed that the hide of the nine-tailed fox, which Yoshitomo had been so proud to display, was now absent from the throne room. Not daring to inquire after it, Katashi prostrated himself before his lord. "I bear grave tidings, best communicated in private."

Yoshitomo gestured drunkenly toward his favored concubine. "She and I are two halves of the same soul. What can be said to me, can be said to her."

The oracle strove to repress his revulsion at this display of loose feeling. "Lord, duty compels me to speak an awful truth." He rose slightly, to see that Shoshi had pressed herself fearfully against the wall. "What I have come to say can be seen in her manner, lord. Perhaps she wishes to confess it."

The lord's broad face flushed with fury. He stood, fists balled. "What shame do you bring upon us, sorcerer?"

"Shoshi, who has stolen your heart, is not the Shoshi you bid to come from Heiankyo. That woman's remains, and those of her retinue, lie scattered in the forest near the firefly shrine."



## *In this shimmering spring day*

As if knocked off his feet by Katashi's words, the lord fell back into his chair.

"This woman is not a woman at all," the onmyoji continued, "but a kitsune—a fox woman."

"Are you drunk, Katashi?" bellowed Yoshitomo, fumbling to refill his sake cup.

Katashi pressed his forehead to the floor. "Doubtless she has come to bewitch and destroy you, in revenge for killing the nine-tailed fox. She has stolen your attention, and your wisdom. She means to bankrupt the clan, and bring it low before its enemies."

Yoshitomo sat silent on his wooden throne for what seemed like many minutes. Finally he withdrew his dagger, tossing it onto the floor in front of Katashi's face. "You have displeased me and shamed yourself, oracle. Discharge your debt of honor."

There was no doubting the meaning of his instruction. He meant for Katashi to commit suicide.

Katashi rose to a kneeling position, knife in hand, and prepared to do as his lord commanded. The order came as no surprise. Since the moment of his first suspicions, the oracle had considered it his most likely fate. Yet to have known, and done nothing, would have entailed even greater shame.



As he tightened his grip on the hilt of the tanto, Shoshi burst forth from the corner, wailing and launching herself onto Yoshitomo's back. "No!" she shrieked. A torrent of sudden tears marred the eerie perfection of her features. "Do not let him, Yoshitomo! Never will your hand touch mine, if he is made to spill a drop of his blood."

Katashi tried to plunge the knife into his bowels, but was overcome by his lord's sudden speed. Yoshitomo fell on him, grabbing him and kicking him, until he retreated from the blade.

"I do not know why she pities you," Yoshitomo panted, "but it is her name you bring into disrepute, and if it is mercy she wants, it is mercy she'll get." He spoke the word "mercy" with a sneer; lord and servant alike understood that life with dishonor was a worse sentence than death. "You are instead commanded to leave here immediately, settling under no roof, to wander forever, contemplating your dishonor!"





The oracle staggered, dizzy, from his lord's hall, out through the palace gates, taking nothing with him aside from the garments he wore.

Through her pretense of mercy, the devilish fox-woman had found a greater doom for him than death—a life of unceasing shame.



Katashi punctiliously followed the last instructions he had been given as a Minamoto retainer. He wandered the roads of Nihon, never resting for more than a few days under a single roof. By offering his services as an exorcist, he kept himself clothed and fed. He faced no lack of business: Wars between clans had littered the land with restless ghosts. During this time, he did his best to evade news of the Minamoto, but as the inns were abuzz with talk of court affairs, could not completely escape his old life. The clan had fallen farther into eclipse, no doubt the result of the fox woman's hold on its lord. Katashi turned to drink, vainly attempting to stop himself from reconsidering his final audience with Yoshitomo, trying to find the correct words to pierce the kitsune's bewitchment.

He had been exiled for nearly a year when he first saw that a fox was trailing him. He was on a winding road near the Taira clan territory, not far from a haunted shrine. Its spirits had been improperly propitiated when villagers had relocated it, and Katashi was not entirely certain that he had put them to rest. Curls of fog tugged at his feet. The back of his neck burned. He turned and saw the fox on a rise, above him. It met his eyes, then melted back into the woods.

Two weeks and two days later, he saw it again, on the far shore of a small lake, as he paused to wash his face.

Another week elapsed before the morning when, after a lack of accommodations had forced him to sleep in a bamboo copse, he awoke in his bedroll and found it smelling of fox.

This revelation sent Katashi to the nearest sake house, a place frequented by ruffians and outcasts. There, he traded the last of his coins for the proprietor's cheapest rice wine. The kitsune were punishing him, he reasoned, for his failure to stop Yoshitomo from slaying their elder. They had found him, through their foxy magic, and would keep reminding him of his failings, until he succumbed to madness.



## *In this shimmering spring day*

An ill-clad man, whom Katashi took for a bandit, joined him midway through his binge. When Katashi ran out of money, the man bought for him. The stranger drank prodigiously, but seemed unaffected. Night fell, and the man, who gave his name as Nagao, invited the exorcist to sleep off his sake at his humble cottage in the woods. Katashi, having concluded that the man meant to slit his throat, went dully along. In his inebriated state, he did not stop to ask himself what the bandit, having seen him spend his last coin, thought might be gained by waylaying him. Nagao supported him as he weaved on uncertain legs through the thick pines.

Katashi regained consciousness on the cold ground, in a glade strewn with curiously smooth and rounded stones. As if in a dream, he saw Nagao shed his human skin, become a fox again, and scamper into the surrounding trees. The retreating fox passed a woman, who nodded gratefully to him before he disappeared.

Shoshi came to Katashi, knelt to join him at his side, and brushed his face with her fingertips.

“Ah,” said Katashi, his head pounding with last night’s drink. “You’ve judged, fox-woman, that I’ve suffered enough, and now you’ve come to finish me.” He coughed, feeling the night’s chill in his lungs. “Know this, enchantress: I welcome it.”

She touched her fingers to his mouth, closing it. “You understand nothing, dear Katashi. Even with my kin searching you out, it has taken me months to find you. Do you not see?” Moonlight limned her face; its loveliness struck him like a closed fist. “You have captured my heart, as surely as I captured your master’s.”

Katashi laughed ruefully, at the cruelty of the joke. “I may no longer be the man I was, but I am not yet fool enough to fall for that.”

She lowered her eyes. “Yes, my people are tricksters. But this is no deception.”

He stumbled for the trees, searching for something to steady himself against. “You bewitched me,” Katashi accused, “as you did Yoshitomo.”

“I bewitched only one man,” she said. “The one who slew my nine-tailed lord.”



“And ensorcelled me, for failing to stop him.”

“No,” she said.

Katashi fled into the woods, running until he found the cottage of a hermit monk. The holy man took him in, serenely allowing him to deflect all inquiries into his presence in the wilderness, or his patently distraught state. The oracle left early in the morning, after cutting some firewood in repayment for the monk’s kindness.

For several days thereafter, Katashi wandered aimlessly in the wild lands, feeding himself on fish and berries. The fox’s words troubled him. He’d always been able to see through her before; his spirit-sight had seen to that. Though it was absurd to think it, he could not help believing her when she claimed not to have bewitched him. If she had not, only one other possibility pertained: his love for her, which he had felt from the first moment he saw her, came from within him. It was true.

As there was no one in the woods to see him, it became acceptable to weep.

She found him again, as he stood in a rice paddy, making an offering to the spirit of a boy drowned there. Shoshi had abandoned the rich silks of her previous disguise, adopting peasant’s garb. She waited until he had completed the rite, slipped free of her sandals, and walked through the water to approach him.

Katashi would not look at her. “You bear another woman’s name,” he began.

“It is the name you know me by. That makes it truer than any other.”

“That woman, Shoshi. You murdered her.”

“Yes,” said the fox-woman.

“Your grudge was against my master, yet you slew this harmless woman. And her retinue.”

“Innocents may die, when a debt of honor is collected.”

Katashi nodded. “And what of your vengeance now?”

“Abandoned, to follow you.”



## *In this shimmering spring day*

“Your retinue, they were also foxes?”

“Yes.”

“And they still haunt my master’s court?”

“They have departed, too.”

He left the rice paddy. She followed.



She followed him, too, when he chose to return to the north. Sake house gossip had it that the Minamoto lands were overrun by ghosts and demons. Katashi’s exile had left the clan without a skilled onmyoji. Yoshitomo had gone into seclusion, the rumors said. Clearly, he had made no attempt to find a replacement exorcist.

Katashi saw no better option than to haunt the forests and back roads of Minamoto territory, performing blessings and exorcisms, all the while avoiding contact with his former clan.

The snows were thick by the time he reached his destination. Katashi and Shoshi struggled against the drifts, she a dozen paces behind him.

When two junior warriors in Minamoto regalia appeared on the road before him, Katashi was too tired to hide. They saw who he was and rushed him, beating him with their sheathed swords, since the sharp edges of their blades were too good for him. When he fell, they kicked him. They spat on him and left him to bleed in the snow. To the fox, watching from a fresh-made snow burrow, they paid no heed.

Shoshi dragged him to a cave and tended to his wounds. As they healed, he was sickened by cold. Shoshi fed him a broth made from shore weeds and the bones of fish and pheasants. To give him warmth, she slept draped over him.

One morning, as she wiped chill sweat from his brow, he asked, “Why?”

“To what do you refer?”

“You claim to love me,” he began.

“It is no mere claim.”



“Why? Why would one such as you feel so... about me?”

She lowered her eyes. “Your people prefer to deceive yourselves in such matters. You believe we choose to love. My kind understands. It is no choice. It is a quickening of the blood. A shiver. A heat.”

“And what is it, in particular, about this wretched man?”

The fox woman paused to consider. “The angle of your brows, perhaps. Your certainty. The hard slope of your shoulder blade against the gold brocade of your vestment. Of late, I also see that it is the flecks of yellow jade in the irises of your eyes.”

When the snows melted, Katashi had recovered enough to venture outside her den. He stumbled toward a swollen creek and tried to make out his reflection in its clear, rushing waters. It seemed to him that he had aged a dozen years.

Shoshi appeared behind him, her radiance undimmed.

“I have come to believe you,” Katashi breathed, “when you say your passion for me is true.”

“If only I dared to think that you...” The utterance was impulsive, shameful; Shoshi stopped herself before completing it.

“What I cannot judge, is if your love is a selfless one.”

She looked away from him. “What you are thinking—do not ask it of me. I can refuse you nothing. No matter how it would tear at my own heart.”

“I am forbidden to do it myself. I must have another do it for me.”

She slumped against him. He touched her hand.

“Then,” she replied, “you must return the gift.”

As Katashi’s arm was weakened by his long illness, it was agreed that she would strike first. Having made their arrangement, they spoke no more of it. Shoshi disappeared into the woods and returned with mushrooms and sparrows. She brought him a clay jug of sake without saying where she’d found it. Katashi left it corked; he’d lost his taste for wine. Night came, and they slept, this time on opposite sides of the den.



## *In this shimmering spring day*

They awoke before dawn and moved together down to the creek. Shoshi rolled out a white blanket. They sat cross-legged, facing one another, the gleaming implements of their exchange laid out between them. When the sun's rays first filtered through the pines, Shoshi placed Katashi's dagger in his trembling hand. He thrust it into her abdomen, below the rib cage. Her own tanto already in hand, she toppled into him, duplicating the injury he'd given her.

Awakening, Yoshitomo judged himself clear-headed for the first time in months. A grim fog had lifted from his spirit. Possessed of a sudden energy, it abruptly occurred to him that he ought to hunt for deer on the pine slopes northwest of his fortress. Thus it was that the Minamoto lord himself, attended by his top warlords and captains, discovered his missing concubine and banished onmyoji on the banks of a nameless creek, their arms intertwined. Death kept Shoshi's secret; she retained the womanly form in which she had conceived her love for Katashi.

It did not, however, preserve the spell she had placed upon the Minamoto lord. Gazing upon her lifeless and placid features, Yoshitomo deemed his prior passion for her bewilderingly misplaced. He could but conclude that the warning Katashi issued had been correct. This creature had stolen his will. Her demise had freed him: now he could turn his thoughts back to affairs of state, and his effort to gain for the Minamoto what was owed it.

He ordered that Katashi's body be borne back to the palace, where, after his posthumous reinstatement into the clan, it would be cremated with full honors. To his minions, he delegated the unpleasant task of hewing the witch's body into pieces, so that it might be devoured by scavengers.

No death poem was found by the oracle's side, so Yoshitomo took the liberty of composing one himself. He was at best an indifferent versifier, but he trusted the oracle's spirit would look past its stylistic flaws.

At the funeral, his eye lit on the comely, rounded features of a woman he had not seen before. Afterwards he ascertained her identity: it was the young wife of a junior warrior, recently arrived at court.

The Minamoto lord retreated to his chambers, to lay plans for a fresh dalliance.





# The Clan Burner

Before you dive in and burn up characters for this vivid setting, the players and the GM need to put their heads together and build the core of the conflict. Nihon is about to burst into the fire of a new age—the provincial clans are about to reach critical power, the court is about to fall. The players need to determine where they want to play in this conflict. There are many options and it's vital to discuss a starting point before you begin. That's what the Clan Burner is for.



## Overarching Conflicts

There are six broad archetypes for a Nihon campaign. They are as follows: Court Drama, Bushido, Authority Against Honor, Life During the Troubles, Perilous Adventure and the Rise of the Shogun. Each of these describes an overall feel for the game and a handful of possible situations.



After you've chosen the general direction you want, use one of the specific burners to create a setting and situation for your game.



## The Nail That Sticks Up Is Hammered Down

The group as a whole must agree to one direction and stick to it. One player cannot use the Wars of Religion and the Temple Burner while the others all use the Bushido and Family and Clan Burner, for example. The errant player must bend his will to the group and fastidiously modify his desires and concepts until they blend seamlessly with the group. It is the only polite thing to do.



## Court Drama

Court Dramas involve the imperial court at Heiankyo. These stories encompass high-powered political maneuvering, decadent wealth and poetry recitations.

The Fujiwara rule over the court, but various branches of the imperial families are constantly vying for power. It is a constant quest to put an heir on the imperial throne. To do this, one must give one's daughter to the current emperor or retired emperor as a concubine or wife. And she must bear him a son. There are many such pretenders in the capital. Ensuring that your son is named emperor is a delicate and deadly game. Later in the Heian era, at the height of the intrigue, the Taira clan managed to gain a foothold at court. They first captured the office of Daijo-Daijin and then Sekkan. Without mercy or compunction, they used their power at court to undermine their enemies and benefit their allies.

Use the Family and Clan Burner to set up this type of game.

## Wars of Religion

The Buddhist temples of Mt Hiei and Heijo are deadly rivals. They maintain small, well-trained and well-funded armies of *sohei*—warrior priests. They are forever vying for favor in the capital. Historically, if one temple gained some benefit, appointment or honor over the others, men were dispatched to burn it down in protest or, at the very least, take their grievances to the streets of Heiankyo.

Worse, the emperor often retired to Enryakuji or Miidera. The abbots of these monasteries would then use their proximity to the imperial powers to attempt to gain control over the temples in Heijo. The retired emperor would appoint, say, a Miidera man to a post in Heijo. The monks of Heijo would then take up arms to protest.

The temples were known for these formidable and fanatical fighting forces. The *daimyo* of the warrior clans would often court the abbots to ensure that their *sohei* would fight for the right side when the time came.

Use the Temple Burner to set up this type of game.





## **Bushido**

To be a warrior is to walk the razor's edge of honor and shame. You serve a master whose will you must unquestioningly obey, no matter what he asks of you.

At the close of the Heian era, two great clans were at war—the Taira and the Minamoto. Their wars spanned all of Honshu. Each great clan incessantly struggled to keep the other in check, whether on the field of battle or in dealings with court.

Use the Family and Clan Burner to set up this type of game.

## **Authority Against Honor**

The barriers between court and the warriors were not impermeable. Both sides needed one another. The courtiers often needed the warriors to do their grunt work for them—a wayward or outlaw clan might need to be put down. And, often, undesirable nobles were dispatched from Heiankyo to the provinces to manage estates there. It was an exile, but it also presented the opportunity for the noble to gain allies among the warriors and return to court with a bit more force behind his words.

Use the Family and Clan Burner to set up this type of game.

## **Life During the Troubles**

The Heian era is a difficult one for the common people and artisans of Nihon. The court schemes and the nobles war over who will become emperor, but no one guards the roads at night and bandits waylay even the strong and well-guarded. The watchmen of the city are hopelessly overmatched by the gangs of thugs who roam the dark streets.

Thus, this period is rife with drama: families teetering on the edge of destitution, bled dry by the nobility and the bandits; enterprising merchants selling their wares to the power-hungry warriors, only to be robbed and threatened by the same men when fortune's gone against them; or honest priests trying their best to house and feed the tenants on their lands, all the while threatened by the depredations of warriors, co-religionists and angry spirits alike. There are lots of options.

Use the Family and Clan Burner to set up this type of game.



## Perilous Adventure

Nihon is rife with ghosts, spirits and monsters. Shinto and Buddhist priests are called upon to exorcise spirits and demons who inhabit forlorn places and lost people. Yamabushi meditate in the mountains while battling *tengu* and countless *yokai* who stalk the dark paths. Even the vaunted Minamoto clan must spend precious resources to keep its mountain fastnesses free of goblins and ghouls. Many a young Minamoto warrior has cut his teeth hunting yama-bito!

Use the Perilous Adventure Burner to set up this type of game.

## Family and Clan Burner

Court Drama, Bushido, Authority Against Honor and Life During the Troubles are all very broad conflicts. In order to play the game, we're going to have to narrow the focus more. Regardless of the type of overarching conflict, the family is central to life in Nihon, and is central to these types of conflicts. Use the following questions to flesh out your family and clan and create a situation for them within the conflict.

### Family

How big is your clan? Who is its head? What is your family known for? What is your family's trade, vocation or birthright? Who was your father? Who was your mother? Take an affiliation with your clan, family or household.



### Location

Which province or city does your family come from? What temples are nearby? To which shrine does the family go to make offerings? Are there haunted or mysterious locations near the family home? Are there wastelands or bandit-infested areas? Use the map provided to pick a general location and then add the specific details.

### Allies

Who are your family's traditional allies and friends? Whom can you count on to come to your aid should calamity strike? Does your family have allies in other castes—the warriors, peasants, artisans or priests? Do you have allies at court, at the temples or perhaps among the Shinto



shrines? Do you have allies among the yokai and ghosts? Does your family have a good relationship with the kami? Take a relationship with an ally that reflects this.

### Enemies

Who are your family's traditional enemies? A warrior clan, relatives at court, a local temple, another family, members of your own family, or perhaps ghosts, kami and goblins? What is the root of the enmity? Betrayal? Jealousy? Murder? Theft? When did the enmity begin? How does your family treat its enemies? Are they treated with compassion and kindness, rage and hatred, or indifference and disregard? Are there enemies within the family? Is the family divided and sides drawn up? Take a relationship with an enemy that reflects this.

### Notable Members

Who are the notable living figures in your family? Does your family have any black sheep? Have any members of your family attempted to join another caste—artisan, monastery, court, warrior? Have any members of your family been outcast? Have any members of your family risen to great power? Who are your family's notable ancestors, if any? Take a relationship with a family member.

### Resources

What resources does your family possess, if any? Estates, shoen, armies, workshops, mines, ships and artifacts are all counted as resources. Purchase one of these resources for your character.

### Needs

What does your family need? What does it lack? Does it have ambition and lack power? Does it have resources and lack means to exploit them? Does it lack ambition and have power? Does it have talent but lack direction? Does it lack talent? Write a Belief about something your family needs. Are the needs material? Does it need money, men, weapons, horses? Do not buy these with your resource points.

### Warrior Families

For Provincial Warrior families: Who is your lord? What honorable deed has he done? What shameful act has he committed? Name one honorable deed you or a member of your family has accomplished;



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name one shameful act you or a notable member of your family has undertaken. Write an instinct about these honorable and shameful things. If you're in need of inspiration or examples, consult the Honor and Shame situational tests for advice.

### **The Whirlwind**

Nihon is on the cusp of great change. Its brightest age to date is crumbling quickly to its sordid conclusion. Why is your family caught in the middle of this whirlwind? What small thing has placed them at the crux of these events? Why is it impossible to escape without great struggle and cost?

Right now: Your family's enemies have just committed a great slight against you. What was it? What did it cost your family? What will you do about it? Write a Belief about it.

### **Family and Clan Characters**

Players take on the role of notable members of the family or their immediate family and retainers, and also the family's allies.

When you build your characters, choose lifepaths from the appropriate setting: Provincial Warrior, Imperial Court or Farms and Villages and City. Most of the characters should come from one setting. Allies and enemies of the family may come from other settings. All of your characters are related—brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, cousins, aunts and uncles.



### **Temple Burner**

Use these questions if you're playing under the Wars of Religion conflict. For the record, Shinto priests did not participate in the wars of religion. They are not martial or militant.

#### **Temple**

Where is your temple? Are you a part of Miidera or Enryakuji on Mt Hiei? Or are you a disciple of Kofuku-ji or Todai-ji in Heijo? Are you a part of a smaller, less prominent temple elsewhere on Nihon? If so, where is your temple located?



## Head of Temple

Who is the head of your temple? Who was he appointed by, an emperor, an abbot, a clan chieftain? Is he a kind man? Does he embody the tenets of Tendai? Is he a self-serving man? Is he an ambitious man?

## Temple Resources

How big is your temple? How many monks and priests can it support? Is it a walled and fortified compound? Does your temple have a contingent of sohei? Does the temple control fertile lands? An ancient graveyard? Does it watch over an important town or crossroads? Does your temple possess an important artifact? Include these in your resources.

## Temple Allies

Who are your temple's allies? Are you friendly with other temples? Are you on good terms with the local Shinto jinju? What is your relationship to the local peasantry and provincial warriors?

### *Shoen and Peasantry*

Temples are exempt from taxes by the central government. Therefore, many peasants donate their lands to the temples and allow the abbots to become their landlords. The tithes the abbots collect are often gentler than those of the central government. Does your temple own land? Is that land worked by the local peasants? What is the temple's relationship to those people? Is it friendly and benign? Is the temple a callous and uncaring master? Are tithes high? Is the land fertile?

### *Nobility*

Temples serve the nobility as well as the peasants. If the temple is in Heiankyo, does it serve the Fujiwara? If the temple is in the provinces, does it serve local Taira or Minamoto lords? Does it serve a lesser clan like the Tachibana? What's the relationship with the nobility? Are the temple and the nobles allies against a common foe? Are they at odds over the teachings and practices of Tendai? Is the temple only used by the nobility grudgingly, when in desperate need? Or are the monks and nobility often seen together discussing matters philosophical?

Take a relationship with an ally.

## Rivals and Enemies

Who are your temple's rivals? Is there another temple with whom you compete, like Miidera and Enryakuji? Are you in competition with



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a local daimyo over the shoen? Is there trouble with bandits raiding your lands? Are there rivals or factions within the temple? Is the abbot an evil man? Take a relationship with a rival and enemy. Write a Belief about a rival or enemy.

### **Spirits, Gods and Kami**

Has your temple performed any exorcisms recently? Has your temple exorcised any great or particularly troublesome spirits in the past? What is your temple's relationship to the local kami? Is it on good terms? Do the kami respect the temple? Is there a rivalry? Is there competition?

Does the temple hold special celebrations for particular holidays?

### **Great Artifacts**

Is this temple home to a great artifact or relic? Is it religious or secular in nature? How did the temple come to possess this artifact? What does the relic do? Does the temple guard a horrible power of terrible destruction? Or is the temple home to a benign source of good that flows through its gates? Place this artifact within your temple.

Describe one legend surrounding the artifact—how it may be destroyed, a curse that it bestows, a time when it will fall into evil hands, or how it may be restored and used for good.

### **Mysteries**

Temples are repositories for knowledge, deep thought and philosophical teachings. Is there a scholar or renowned sage currently in residence at the temple? Does the temple possess scrolls—writings of Buddhist sages—which contain vital teachings and profound philosophy? What do those philosophies and teachings encompass? Write a Belief about these mysteries of faith and philosophy.

### **Change Is Upon Us**

Nihon is in great flux. It is a dark time. The people of Nihon revel in their worldly attachments, carnal desires and violent struggles. Your temple is in the midst of one of these struggles. Describe the two sides—your rivals and enemies, or the local lords and peasants, or angry kami and yokai. Will your temple engage the two sides in an attempt to quell the turbulent waters and restore peace? Or is your temple fighting for survival and favor so that it might excel during these uncertain times?



## *The Clan Burner*

This morning, your rivals and enemies have committed some great slight against you. What was it? What did it or will it cost the temple? What can be done about it right now? Write a Belief about this.

### **Characters**

Burn characters using the Buddhist Monastery lifepaths. Characters may also be sympathetic nobility, Shinto priests and peasantry taken from the temple's allies and dependents.

## *Perilous Adventure Burner*

Use the following questions to build a campaign or adventure based on perilous adventure in Nihon.

### **A Great Evil, a Terrible Crime**

An evil deed has been done, a terrible crime committed: a temple has been defiled, a virgin kidnapped, a lord betrayed, a holy artifact stolen. What has happened?

### **Forlorn Places**

Such matters transpire in the shadows and dark, damp corners of Nihon. What forlorn places play host to these awful events? Lonely mountains, abandoned temples, haunted fortresses, scary forests, stark graveyards, dangerous swamps, snow-covered coastlines, etc. Each player should choose a location that interests him.

### **Evil Men**

Who are the evil men involved in this deed? A corrupt abbot, a wicked overlord, wild bandits, a scheming courtier, a brooding sorcerer? What do these evil men hope to gain from their foul ways? Did they commit the foul act themselves, or are they just accomplices to some greater evil? Take a relationship with these evil men.

### **Angry Spirits**

The spirits are angry! They must be propitiated. Who has angered the spirits? What foul act has shaken them from their slumber? What do the spirits haunt: a temple, a fortress, a forlorn road, a remote swamp? How can the spirits be appeased? Yamabushi, Buddhist or Shinto Priest characters should write a Belief about this.



## Foul Demons

There's always a foul demon involved! A kitsune, tengu, kappa or baku, or even a hoard of yama-bito plaguing the mountains. What foul demon is it? Is this demon the mastermind of this evil deed, or is it a pawn of some nefarious man? What is the demon's role in the plot? Did it commit the act? Does it guard the artifact? Is it an assassin sent to murder or an agent sent to kidnap? What's the demon's name? Write a Belief about this demon.

## Unlikely Allies

The heroes will be aided on their journey in unexpected ways. Who might come forth to help them: a kindly hermit, a beautiful princess, a mysterious goblin, a seemingly evil demon, an honorable warlord, a well-meaning courtier, a holy priest or something else? Take a forbidden, romantic or familial relationship with an unlikely ally.

## Lost Artifacts

An item of great quality and power is entangled in this web. Is it implicated in the deed? Who wields it—the Evil Men or the Foul Demons? Or is the item being sought by the ne'er-do-wells? Is the artifact key to thwarting their plans? Must the artifact be stolen from them lest their victory be complete? What is the item? What shape does it take? What powers does it confer?



One of the players should take a mundane version of the artifact. At least one player should take a Belief about the artifact.



## The Binding Thread

The heroes must all share a common philosophy. They must have a common thread that binds them all together. A set of unlikely events has drawn them all together. What happened? What is their common aim? Write a Belief about this common thread.

## The Unlikely Heroes

The characters are a motley crew of heroes—outcasts and wanderers who have left the day to day struggles of Nihon behind them. Each hero must be unique. Each hero must come from a different walk of life and have his own speciality that sets him apart from his companions.

Choose characters from all settings, but especially from the Hagure setting!





## *The Rise of the Shogun*

One cool aspect of this supplement is the historical nature of many of the lifepaths and traits. In fact, the supplement has been designed so that the players may engage in the end of the Heian era and the dawn of the Shogunate age. At the end of the Genpei War, the victorious Minamoto no Yoshitomo solidified his position by forcing the emperor to declare him Shogun. The Minamoto then built a power base in Kamakura and rapidly drew power away from Heiankyo. The emperor and the imperial court never again had the power they had during the Heian era.

It's possible to (loosely) play out this rise to power using the historical information provided. But even more fun, it's possible to change history. The tools have been provided so that the players can take on the roles of the emperor, the empress, the retired emperor, the head of the Fujiwara, and the chiefs of the Taira and Minamoto clans.

Using the traits as written, it is possible for the emperor to force the Taira and Minamoto into opposition with one another. Should they resist, their clan will be declared outlaw. Once a clan is declared outlaw, the real game begins. The only way for them to be reinstated is to force the sitting (or retired) emperor to lift his ban. And once you can command such a favor from the emperor, it's only a small matter to have one's clan chief declared shogun.

No side is favored in this conflict—the warrior clans are considered materially the same, and Honor and Authority are equally powerful in their own element.

Rise of the Shogun games include powerful characters from multiple families, particularly the Fujiwara, Minamoto and Taira. Use these families as the basis for your answers to the following questions, but feel free to make up other families to spice it up. Also, as you answer these questions, be sure to create a balance of power—don't give one family too much weight. If one family has control of the emperor, the retired emperor should be allied with another clan. If the retired emperor is from one branch, his wife should (obviously) be from another family. By creating cross-purposes and entangled loyalties, you'll make it easy to write Beliefs and trigger conflicts.

### **Nerves of Steel**

Are you prepared to topple a government? Are you prepared to be outcast and lose all your privilege and favor? Are you prepared to



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perpetrate a *coup d'etat* and install your family and allies in the new government? Or are you prepared to fight off those enemies who seek to topple the very foundations of heaven and earth?

### **Emperors**

Who is the sitting emperor? Who is the retired emperor? Which family do they belong to? Who installed them?

### **Empresses**

Who is the current empress? What family is she from? Who is her father? Who is her mother? Who is the second wife? What is her family? Who is her father? Who is her mother?

### **Princes**

Does the emperor have any heirs? How many? How old are they? Where are they? Does the retired emperor have any heirs? How many? How old are they? Where are they? How do they serve the court?

### **Princesses**

Does the emperor have any daughters? How many? How old are they? Where are they? Does the retired emperor have any daughters? How many? How old are they? Where are they? Do the daughters have suitors? Who are they? What clan are they from?



### **Concubines**

Who are the emperor's concubines? What families gave their daughters to the court? Are any of the concubines pregnant?

### **Warriors**

Which warrior clan supports the court? Who is the clan chief? Where is his stronghold? Why does he support the court? What does the court grant him? What does the court hold over him?

### **The Department of State**

Who is the Prime Minister? What family is he from? Who is the Minister of the Left? What family is he from? Who is the Minister of the Right? What family is he from? Who holds the position of Sekkan? What family is he from?



## Monasteries

There are four great monasteries near the capital—Miidera, Enryakuji, Kofuku-ji and Todai-ji. In which does the retired emperor reside? Who is the abbot there? The other temples are jealous of that abbot's power. Describe an abbot who is secretly working against the influence of the retired emperor. Describe an abbot who openly works against the retired emperor—he supports the sitting emperor.

## The Spark

Something awful has just transpired. All of the power players are scrambling to take advantage of it. What happened? Was it the unexpected birth of a new heir? The death of the emperor? A rebellion? A clan outlawed? A natural disaster that devastated the tax revenues of a region? Who was the source of the disturbance? What are you going to do about it *right now*? Who's in your way?

## The Cast

In this campaign variant, the players are meant to play the emperor, empress, retired emperor, regent, prime minister and clan chiefs of the powerful warrior clans. It's a high stakes game!

# GMs and the Clan Burner

The role of the GM in the Clan Burner is to ask the questions, but not answer them. Sit down with the group before making characters. Discuss which great conflict is the most interesting. Then go through the questions for the specific burner. Read them aloud and give everyone a chance to discuss them. Two players should take notes, preferably the GM and one other person.

If the group is stuck, make suggestions. But more important, make suggestions that tie all of the various threads together. The players' answers are providing the GM with raw material for the upcoming campaign. The easiest way to make the campaign interesting is to ensure that the relationships and loyalties are entangled. There should be no loose threads—every place and character should be tied to another place or character in another camp. It's the GM's role to take the suggestions of the players and tie them together into a coherent, tangled mess!





# The Paths to Enlightenment

## Choosing Lifepaths

Lifepaths are chosen using the same conventions found in the Character Burner, with one exception. Each lifepath in the Provincial Warrior, Imperial Court, Buddhist Monastery and Jinju settings comes with a special rank title.

### Lifepath Rank Titles

The first time you take the lifepath, the character earns a title like Novice, Junior, Lesser, Low, Third Rank or Minor.

*For example, a character named Katashi whose last lifepath is Bushi and who only took the path once would have the title of "Junior Bushi" Katashi.*

The second time the lifepath is taken, the character earns a title like Middle, Medium or Second Rank.

*So a character who took the Kokushi lifepath twice has the title Middle Kokushi Sakamoto.*

The third time a lifepath is taken, the character advances in rank and earns the benefit of a title like Master, Senior, Major, High, First Rank or Greater.

*A character who has been an abbot for 30 years might have the title of Third Rank Abbot of the Western Compound.*

These titles do not provide a reputation or an affiliation. They only come into play with regard to Etiquette. The player may choose an appropriate title for his character based on his last lifepath and the number of times he took it. If another player fails to address him by his proper title, the aggrieved party may call for an Etiquette test. The title bumbler suffers a +1 Ob to this test!

# Provincial Warrior Setting

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	STAT	LEADS
<b>Born Warrior</b>	5 yrs	15	—	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Buke, Kabane, Taira, Minamoto, Petulant Child				
<b>Provincial Kohai<sup>1</sup></b>	8 yrs	15	+ 1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Kyudo, Riding, Kyuba-no-michi <sup>†</sup> , Literacy, Etiquette				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Bushido (if male) or A Woman's Honor (if female), Loyal				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the character's second lifepath.				
<b>Provincial Maid</b>	8 yrs	20	+ 1 M	Court, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 10 pts: Literacy, Etiquette, Calligraphy, Chinkonto, Butsudo, Musical Instrument, Weaving, Riding, Jujutsu				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: A Woman's Honor				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the character's second lifepath.				
<b>Bushi<sup>2</sup></b>	5 yrs	20	+ 1 M, P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 9 pts: Kenjutsu, Armor Training <sup>†</sup> , Naginata-jutsu, Jujutsu, Singing, Poetry, History, Conspicuous				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: -san, Fearless				
<i>Requirements:</i> Provincial Kohai.				
<b>Senpai Bushi<sup>2</sup></b>	12 yrs	15	+ 1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Calligraphy, Instruction, Warcraft, Persuasion, Intimidation, Chinkonto, Butsudo, Musical Instrument, Observation, Aiki-Jutsu				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Sensei, Cool Headed, Blessed by Tajikara, Yumi-ya, Calm Demeanor				
<i>Requirements:</i> Bushi. Aiki-Jutsu requires the Minamoto trait.				
<b>Captain<sup>2,3</sup></b>	7 yrs	30	+ 1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Command, Intimidation, Artillery, Estate Management, Falconry, Hunting				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: -sama				
<i>Requirements:</i> -san trait.				
<b>Warlord</b>	10 yrs	75	+ 1 M	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Warcraft, Bushi-wise, Village-wise, Fortress-wise Terrain-wise, Mountain-wise, Lowlands-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: -dono, Commander, Pompous, Callous				
<i>Requirements:</i> Captain.				



# Ah, with ever anxious heart

Lady 5 yrs 25 + 1 M Court, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 9 pts: Estate Management, Persuasion, Seduction, Inconspicuous, Husband-Wise, Staff-Wise, Fortress-Wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* Provincial Maid.

Evil Lord<sup>3</sup> 7 yrs 35 +1 M/P Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 7 pts: Intimidation, Command, Estate Management, Falconry, Hunting, Warcraft, Clouds of Arrows-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Shameless, -sama, Sublime Poet

*Requirements:* -san trait.

Matriarch 7 yrs 50 + 1 M Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Ugly Truth, Power-wise, Young Slut-wise, Destruction of the Family That Killed My Father-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* Lady.

Provincial Lord 10 yrs 100 — Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 3 pts: Koku-wise, Fief-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 1 pt: -dono, Regal Bearing, Provincial Lord, Callous

*Requirements:* -sama and Kabane, or the Warlord lifepath, or Petulant Child.

Clan Chieftain 10 yrs 110 — Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 3 pts: Court Intrigue-wise, Rebellion-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 2 pts: Toryo, Worthy of Shogun

*Requirements:* -dono and Kabane traits or Petulant Child.

1: Although rare, there were instances of female Bushi at this time in Japanese history.

Females with the Buke trait may take Provincial Kohai instead of Provincial Maid as their second lifepath.

2: Female characters may not take the required traits for these lifepaths. The trait points may be spent on the optional traits and in the general trait list.

3: Female bushi characters may not advance higher than Captain or Evil Lord. In order to take these paths, players must have chosen the Bushi lifepath. But a female character does not keep the -san or -sama traits once play begins. They are only for figuring requirements during character burning.

† This is a training skill. It costs 2 pts to open and may not be advanced.



# Imperial Court Setting

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	STAT	LEADS
<b>Born Heiankyo Noble</b>	4 yrs	20	—	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Imperial Family, Yamato, Fujiwara, Petulant Child				
<b>Child Emperor</b>	3 yrs	15	—	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: Etiquette; 1 pt: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 4 pts: Child Emperor, Imperial Family, Yamato, Fujiwara, Revered of Nihon, Denka, Crown Prince				
<i>Requirements:</i> This is a special Born lifepath. It must be taken first; it <i>may</i> be taken more than once.				
<b>Court Kohai</b>	9 yrs	30	+ 1 M	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Literacy, Chinese, Rule of Law, Musical Instrument, Poetry, Etiquette, Soothing Platitudes, Persuasion				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Revered of Nihon				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this lifepath must be the second lifepath.				
<b>Courtly Maid</b>	8 yrs	15	+ 1 M	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 9 pts: Persuasion, Literacy, Chinese, Etiquette, Musical Instrument, Poetry, Calligraphy, Butsudo				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Revered of Nihon				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this lifepath must be the second lifepath.				
<b>Courtier</b>	5 yrs	40	+ 1 M	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Observation, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Heiankyo Court-Wise, Gossip-Wise, Falsehood, Intimidation, Seduction				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Haughty				
<i>Requirements:</i> Court Kohai.				
<b>Courtesan</b>	5 yrs	30	+ 1 M	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 12 pts: Seduction, Persuasion, Soothing Platitudes, Falsehood, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Intimidation, Anma Massage, Suitor-wise, Lust-wise, Sex-wise, Erotic Art-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Statuesque				
<i>Requirements:</i> Courtly Maid or Provincial Maid.				
<b>Court Astrologer</b>	5 yrs	15	+1 M	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Astrology, Symbology, Chinkonto, Omen-wise, Zodiac-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<i>Requirements:</i> Court Kohai.				



# Ah, with ever anxious heart

Prince	5 yrs	60	+ 1 M	—
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Falsehood, Oratory, Mama Fujiwara-wise; 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 2 pts: Denka, Crown Prince  
*Requirements:* Court Kohai and Yamato trait or the Petulant Child and Yamato traits.

Princess	5 yrs	50	+ 1 M	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Persuasion, Seduction, Inconspicuous, Husband-Wise, Heiankyo Court-Wise, Philosophy, Chinkonto, Butsudo  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Hime  
*Requirements:* Courtly Maid or Petulant Child and Yamato.

Onmyoji	12 yrs	25	+ 1 M	Hagure
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Onmyodo, Oharai, Origami, Occult-Wise, Demonology  
*Traits:* 2 pts: Odd, Kuzunoha's Child, Second Sight, Sixth Sense, Paths of the Dead  
*Requirements:* Court Astrologer. May not take this path and Prince or Princess.

Shonagon	5 yrs	50	+ 1 M	Hagure
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Rule of Law, Bureaucracy, Rhetoric, Portfolio-wise  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Councilor  
*Requirements:* Courtier.

Kokushi	10 yrs	110	—	Hagure
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*Skills:* 3 pts: Administration, Province-wise  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Provincial Power Base  
*Requirements:* Two Courtier lifepaths or Shonagon

Dainagon	5 yrs	50	—	Hagure
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Ladder Climbing-wise, Office-wise, Knife in the Back-wise; 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Great Councilor  
*Requirements:* Shonagon lifepath, or Kokushi lifepath and Fujiwara trait.

Minister	5 yrs	50	—	—
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Taxation-wise, Koku-wise, Tax Collector-wise; 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Tenacious, Udaijin, Sadaijin  
*Requirements:* Dainagon, Kokushi or Prince.

Daijo Daijin	5 yrs	50	—	—
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Daijin-wise, Ministry-wise, Plot-wise; 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Prime Minister, Imperious Demeanor  
*Requirements:* Minister.

Sekkan	10 yrs	50	—	—
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*Skills:* 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: The Power Behind the Throne  
*Requirements:* Daijo Daijin.





<b>Concubine</b>	5 yrs	50	+ 1 M	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 10 pts: Seduction, Persuasion, Soothing Platitudes, Ugly Truth, Falsehood, Inconspicuous, Heiankyo Court-Wise, Poisons, Seifukujutsu  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Unheeded, Entrancing Beauty, Eye of the Emperor  
*Requirements:* Courtly Maid or Provincial Maid.

<b>Second Wife</b>	5 yrs	100	+ 1 M	—
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Pillow-wise, Garden-wise, Whispered Secrets-wise, Smouldering Glance-wise; 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Chugu, Favorite  
*Requirements:* Princess lifepath.

<b>Empress</b>	5 yrs	110	+ 1 M	—
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Court Hierarchy-wise, Protocol-wise, Second Wife-wise, Small Throne-wise, Emperor's Whims-wise, Affair-wise, Handsome Provincial Lord-wise, Imperial Family-wise; 1 pt: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Kogo, Tender Voice, Fine Boned, Porcelain Skin, Fragrant Lily  
*Requirements:* Princess lifepath and Fujiwara trait.

<b>Emperor</b>	10 yrs	100	+ 1 M	—
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Court Intrigue-wise, Councilor-wise, Governor-wise, Minister-wise, Loyalty-wise; 3 pts: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Daijo Tenno  
*Requirements:* Prince lifepath and Crown Prince trait or Child Emperor.

<b>Retired Emperor</b>	10 yrs	100	+ 1 M	Monastery
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Emperor-wise, Sekkan-wise, Mount Hiei-wise, Plot-wise, Onmyoji-wise; 2 pts: General  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Daijo Hoo  
*Requirements:* Emperor and the Yamato trait or Child Emperor.

## *Buddhist Monastery* *Subsetting*

<u>LIFEPATH</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>RESOURCES</u>	<u>STAT</u>	<u>LEADS</u>
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<b>Monk</b>	5 yrs	5	+ 1 M	Hagure
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Literacy, Butsudo, Meditation, Origami, Persuasion, Chinese, Temple-wise, Elder Priest-wise  
*Traits:* 2 pts: Tonsured, Respectful

<b>Sohei</b>	5 yrs	10	+ 1 M, P	Hagure, Provincial Warrior
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Naginata-jutsu, Armor Training<sup>†</sup>, Kyudo, Field Dressing, Suffering-wise, Rival Monastery-wise  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Enraged Devotion, Fearless



# Ah, with ever anxious heart

<b>Ama</b>	10 yrs	20	+ 1 M	Hagure
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**Skills:** 7 pts: Noble Truth-wise, Ancient History, Painting, Poetry, Suasion, Ugly Truth, Seifukujutsu

**Traits:** 2 pts: So, Serene

**Requirements:** Monk. Must be female.

<b>Temple Priest</b>	5 yrs	5	+ 1 M	Hagure
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**Skills:** 7 pts: Suasion, Symbology, Religious History, Joubutsu, Wheel of Life-wise, Temptation-wise

**Traits:** 2 pts: So, Wise Aphorisms

**Requirements:** Monk.

<b>Wandering Priest</b>	5 yrs	7	+1 M/P	Hagure, City, Village
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Begging, Streetwise, Bojutsu, Alms-wise

**Traits:** 1 pt: So, Dirty Feet, Savvy

**Requirements:** Monk.

<b>Holy Teacher</b>	7 yrs	5	+1 M	Hagure
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**Skills:** 6 pts: Butsudo, Poetry, Instruction, Warcraft, Seifukujutsu, Student-wise, Sutra-wise

**Traits:** 1 pt: Arrogant, Stubborn, Charismatic, Stoic

**Requirements:** Temple Priest.

<b>Sage</b>	10 yrs	5	+1 M	Hagure, City
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**Skills:** 8 pts: Composition, Poetry, History, Obscure History, Rule of Law, Rhetoric, Folklore

**Traits:** 1 pt: Eccentric, Aura of Holiness

**Requirements:** Holy Teacher, Zasu or two Temple Priest lifepaths.

<b>Zasu</b>	10 yrs	50	+ 1 M/P	Hagure
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**Skills:** 8 pts: Administration, Oratory, Intimidation, Estate Management, Warcraft, Shifting Alliance-wise, Retired Emperor-wise

**Traits:** 2 pts: Abbot, Imperial Pest

**Requirements:** Temple Priest and either Born Warrior or Born Heiankyo Noble.

† This is a training skill. It costs 2 pts to open and may not be advanced.



# Jinju Setting

**LIFEPATH      TIME   RESOURCES   STAT   LEADS**

**Born Shinshoku**      5 yrs      10      —      —

*Skills:* 3 pts: General

*Traits:* 2 pts: Shinko, Albino

**Miko**      13 yrs      30      +1 M      Hagure

*Skills:* 9 pts: Literacy, Dance, Chinkonto, Butsudo, Chinese, Kami-no-Michi, Oharai, Occult-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Respect for the Kami, Paths of the Dead

*Requirements:* If chosen, this path must be the second lifepath. Character must be female.

**Novice Kannushi**      8 yrs      15      + 1 M/P      Hagure

*Skills:* 6 pts: Literacy, Chinkonto, Butsudo, Etiquette, Chinese

*Traits:* 2 pts: Disciple of the Shinto, Respectful, Respect for the Kami

*Requirements:* If taken, this must be second lifepath, or character must have Master Artisan or Renowned Artisan.

**Gon-Negi**      5 yrs      20      + 1 M/P      Hagure

*Skills:* 6 pts: Omikuji, Religious History, Meditation, Oharai, Soothing Platitudes

*Traits:* 1 pt: Junior Priest

*Requirements:* Novice Kannushi.

**Negi**      10 yrs      15      + 1 M/P      Hagure

*Skills:* 5 pts: Suasion, Tithe-wise, Kami-no-Michi

*Traits:* 1 pt: Kugyo

*Requirements:* Gon-Negi.

**Gon-Guji**      10 yrs      30      +1 M      Hagure

*Skills:* 5 pts: Oratory, Administration, Five Elements-wise, Spirit Broom-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 1 pt: Executive High Priest, Master of the Jinju, Cool Headed

*Requirements:* Negi.

**Shrine Mother**      10 yrs      30      +1 M      Hagure

*Skills:* 9 pts: Omikuji, Joubutsu, Soothing Platitudes, Intimidation, Hell-wise, Demons-wise, Price-wise, Retribution-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 2 pts: Entrancing Beauty, Touched by Ame no Minakanushi

*Requirements:* Miko.

**Guji**      10 yrs      50      +1 M      Hagure

*Skills:* 6 pts: Ugly Truth, Retribution-wise, Circle-wise, Purification-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 1 pt: Fearless, Master of the Daijinja

*Requirements:* Gon-Guji.



# Farms and Villages Setting

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	STAT	LEADS
<b>Born Heimin</b>	8 yrs	3	—	Hagure, Monastery, Jinju
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: —				
<b>Kid</b>	4 yrs	3	+1 P	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Trouble-wise, Throwing, Inconspicuous				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Bad Egg, Good for Nothing, Fleet of Foot				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen (it's certainly not required), Kid must be the second lifepath chosen and may only be taken once.				
<b>Idiot</b>	10 yrs	4	—	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Ugly Truth, Origami				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Problems, Drunk, Abused, Handicapped				
<b>Farmer</b>	8 yrs	5	+1 P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Farming, Mending, Animal Husbandry, Weaving, Cooking, Sewing, Firebuilding, Sing				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Hoarding				
<b>Midwife</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Animal Husbandry, Herbalism, Midwifery, Omen-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Bedside Manner				
<i>Requirements:</i> Midwife requires any female gender-specific LP or Farmer.				
<b>Augur</b>	5 yrs	10	+1 M	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Astrology, Chinkonto, Joubutsu, Falsehood, Ugly Truth, Omen-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Disturbed, Dreamer, Touch of Ages				
<i>Requirements:</i> Augur requires any female gender-specific LP.				
<b>Lazy Stayabout</b>	7 yrs	3	—	Hagure, Monastery, Jinju
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Lazy-wise, Peasant-wise, Wife-wise, Work-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: A Little Fat				
<b>Conscript</b>	1 yr	4	—	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Foraging, Battle-wise, Rumor-wise, Baggage Train-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Flee from Battle				
<b>Pilgrim</b>	4 yrs	4	—	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Religious Rumor-wise, Road-wise, Shrine-wise, Alms-wise, Relic-wise, Butsudo, Chinkonto				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Road Weary, Alms-Taker				



## Lifepaths

<b>Groom</b>	4 yrs	7	—	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Animal Husbandry, Riding, Mending, Horse-wise, Road-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<b>Runner</b>	4 yrs	6	+1 P	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Streetwise, Inconspicuous				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Skinny, Fleet of Foot				
<b>Sailor</b>	5 yrs	5	+1 P	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Rigging, Knots, Brawling, Mending, Sing, Fishing				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Superstitious, Sea Legs				
<b>Laborer</b>	4 yrs	4	+1 P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Ditch Digging				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Calloused, Starved, Broken, Hardened, Numb				
<b>Apprentice</b>	7 yrs	7	+1 P	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Mending, Blacksmith, Carpentry, Potter, Cooper				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor				
<b>Fisherman</b>	6 yrs	5	+1 P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Fishing, Rigging, Knots, Mending, Cooking, Boatwright				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Superstitious				
<b>Shepherd</b>	4 yrs	4	+1 P	Hagure, Jinju
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Animal Husbandry, Sing, Climbing, Flute				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cry Wolf				
<b>Woodcutter</b>	5 yrs	5	+1 P	Hagure
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Firebuilding, Mending, Foraging, Orienteering, Tree-wise, Tree Cutting				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<b>Hunter</b>	5 yrs	6	+1 M, P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Hunting, Tracking, Stealthy, Cooking, Orienteering				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<b>Trapper</b>	5 yrs	8	+1 M, P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Trapper, Stealthy, Tracking, Cooking, Hagglng, Taxidermy				
<i>Traits:</i> —				
<b>Peddler</b>	5 yrs	10	+1 M	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Mending, Sing, Hagglng, Candlemaker, Persuasion, Inconspicuous, Falsehood				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Odd, Blank Stare, Glib, Eidetic Memory				
<b>Serving Wench</b>	3 yrs	5	+1 M	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Soothing Platitudes, Ugly Truth, Customer-wise, Sleight of Hand				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: <i>Either:</i> Extremely Bitter <i>and</i> Ugly <i>or</i> Drop Dead Gorgeous <i>and</i> Buxom				



# Ah, with ever anxious heart

**Clerk**                    4 yrs                    9                    —                    City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 4 pts: Bureaucracy, Literacy  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Cramped Hands, Meticulous

**Shopkeeper**            6 yrs                    15                    —                    City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Hagglng, Accounting, Observation, Merchant-wise  
*Traits:* 1 pt: —

**Country Wife**            10 yrs                    5                    +1 M, P            City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 2 pts: Child-Rearing, Cooking; also, see Requirements  
*Traits:* 1 pt: —  
*Requirements:* A player who takes the Country Wife lifepath may also choose her husband's lifepath from the Farms and Villages setting and may choose from his skills: She gets half of his skill points, rounded down. She also receives half of her husband's resource points.

**Head of Household**    15 yrs                    20                    +1 M            City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 6 pts: Carpentry, Hunting, Hagglng, Almanac  
*Traits:* 2 pts: —  
*Requirements:* A character must have 3 LPs minimum to choose Head of Household.

**Elder**                    15 yrs                    5                    +1 M            Hagure, Jinju

*Skills:* 6 pts: Observation, Persuasion, Ugly Truth, Peasant-wise, Local History  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Crotchety  
*Requirements:* In order to take the Elder LP, the character must have at least four LPs and start the game over 50 years old.

**Watchman**              3 yrs                    7                    +1 P            City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 4 pts: Village-wise, Bushi-wise, Lantern-wise, Criminal-wise, Time-wise, Bojutsu  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Watchful

**Taskmaster**              6 yrs                    15                    —                    City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Intimidation, Brawling, Sing, Conspicuous  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Hard-Hearted, Mean, Barker, Booming Voice  
*Requirements:* May not be the character's second or third lifepath.

**Miller**                    7 yrs                    15                    —                    Hagure

*Skills:* 7 pts: Miller, Mending, Carpentry, Harvest-wise, Old Mill-wise, Grindstone-wise  
*Traits:* —  
*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

**Hosteler**                    6 yrs                    15                    —                    City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Cooking, Mending, Accounting, Soothing Platitudes, Guest-wise  
*Traits:* 1 pt: Fixed Smile, Gossip  
*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.



## Lifepaths

**Sandal Maker**      8 yrs      20      —      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 4 pts: Sandal Making, Sandal-wise, Leather-wise, Knots-wise

*Traits:*—

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

**Farrier**      5 yrs      12      —      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 4 pts: Blacksmith, Animal Husbandry, Horse-wise, Haggling

*Traits:* 1 pt: A Bit Deaf

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

**Launderer**      6 yrs      10      —      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 3 pts: Stain-wise, Mud-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Mind Numbing Work, Back-Breaking Labor

**Herbalist**      7 yrs      16      —      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Seifukujutsu, Herbalism, Anatomy, Village-wise, Gossip-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Agreeable, Seemingly Concerned

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

**Brewer**      8 yrs      15      —      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Brewer, Miller, Rice-wise, Sake-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Reeks of Alcohol

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

**Apiarist**      8 yrs      20      +1 M      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 4 pts: Insect Husbandry, Carpentry, Firebuilding, Honey-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Stung Once (Once), Beespeaker

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

**Mining Engineer**      8 yrs      15      +1 M      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 5 pts: Prospecting, Engineer, Ore-wise, Rock-wise, Command

*Traits:* 1 pt: Grim, Agoraphobic, Deep Sense

*Requirements:* Journeyman.

**Merchant**      7 yrs      30      +1 M      City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 6 pts: Accounting, Persuasion, Falsehood, Haggling, Wholesale-wise, Landlord-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Distracted

*Requirements:* Accountant or Shopkeeper.



# City Setting

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	STAT	LEADS
<b>City Born</b>	12 yrs	10	—	Artisan, Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<b>Urchin</b>	2 yrs	4	—	Hagure, Village, Jinju
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Inconspicuous, Falsehood, Streetwise, Stealthy				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Sickly, Fleet of Foot, Unheeded				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the character's second lifepath.				
<b>Runner</b>	3 yrs	7	+1 P	Village, Artisan
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Streetwise, Inconspicuous				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<b>Beggar</b>	5 yrs	4	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: City-wise, Watchman-wise, Wealth-wise, Inconspicuous, Persuasion, Falsehood				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Lame, Downtrodden, Hurt, Broken				
<b>Laborer</b>	4 yrs	4	+1 P	Artisan, Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Ditch Digging, Hauling				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Drunk, Back-Breaking Labor				
<b>Kugutsu</b>	3 yrs	5	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 9 pts: Kugutsu, Persuasion, Sing, Falsehood, Conspicuous, Sleight of Hand, Musical Instrument, Hunting				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Colorful, Smelly, Other Life				
<b>Performer</b>	4 yrs	5	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Sengaku, Sarugaku, Dance, Stage-wise, Crowd-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Eccentric, Other Life				
<b>Courier</b>	4 yrs	8	+1 M	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Riding, Streetwise, Country-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<b>Pilgrim</b>	2 yrs	3	+1 M	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Religious Diatribe, City-wise, Shrine-wise, Butsudo, Chinkonto				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Tall Tale Teller, Stinky				
<b>Groom</b>	4 yrs	5	+1 P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Road-wise, Riding, Animal Husbandry, Mending, City-wise, Traveler-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> —				





<b>City Peddler</b>	5 yrs	10	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Mending, Sing, Hagglng, Candlemaker, Persuasion, Inconspicuous, Falsehood				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: The Story				
<b>Tinkerer</b>	7 yrs	8	+1 M	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Mending, Scavenging, Junk-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: —				
<b>Seamstress</b>	5 yrs	10	—	Village, Jinju
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Tailor, Sewing, Embroidery, Clothing-wise, Fashion-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Fretful, Sharp Dresser				
<i>Requirements:</i> Must be female.				
<b>Coal Man</b>	4 yrs	5	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Firebuilding, Streetwise, Charcoal-wise, Hagglng				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Hacking Cough				
<b>Coin Clipper</b>	6 yrs	15	+1 M	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Streetwise, Forgery, Falsehood, Intimidation, Counterfeiting, Coin-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Light Sleeper				
<b>Pickpocket</b>	4 yrs	8	+1 P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Inconspicuous, Streetwise, Sleight of Hand				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Plain Face				
<b>Street Thug</b>	3 yrs	5	+1 P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Brawling, Intimidation, Streetwise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cruel, Street Smart				
<b>Criminal</b>	5 yrs	10	+1 M/P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Inconspicuous, Streetwise, Intimidation, Brawling, Climbing				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Cynical, Poker Face, Rainman, Alert				
<i>Requirements:</i> This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.				
<b>Confidence Man</b>	4 yrs	12	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Falsehood, Inconspicuous, Disguise, Persuasion				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: —				
<i>Requirements:</i> This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.				
<b>Masseur</b>	5 yrs	7	+1 M	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Anma Massage, Seifukujutsu, Muscle-wise, Bone-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 3 pts: Blind				
<b>Sailor</b>	5 yrs	5	+1 P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Rigging, Knots, Brawling, Mending, Sing, Gambling				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Superstitious, Sea Legs				



## Ah, with ever anxious heart

Barkeep	5 yrs	15	—	Village
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Drink-wise, Drunk-wise, Persuasion

*Traits:* 1 pt: Good Listener

Kohai	4 yrs	5	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 11 pts: Literacy, Philosophy, Geometry Training†, Rule of Law, History, Symbology, Anatomy, Inconspicuous, Streetwise, City-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: —

*Requirements:* If chosen, this must be the character's second lifepath.

Baker	6 yrs	10	—	Village
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Baking, Cooking, Bread-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Floury

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

Shopkeeper	6 yrs	16	+1 M	Village
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Customer-wise, Supplier-wise, Hagglng, Accounting, Observation

*Traits:* —

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

Cooper	6 yrs	12	—	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Cooper, Drinking, Carpentry, Wax-wise, Trouble-wise, Coffin-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Sore Back, Drunk

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

City Wife	6 yrs	5	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 2 pts: Child-Rearing, Husband-wise; also, see note below

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* A player who takes the City Wife lifepath may also choose her husband's lifepath from the City setting. The City Wife may choose from her husband's skills—she gets half of his skill points, rounded down—and she gets one quarter of her husband's Resources.

Chigo	5 yrs	15	—	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Fashion-wise, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Soothing Platitudes

*Traits:* 2 pts: Chigo, Flamboyant, Comely, Sharp Dresser

Clerk	4 yrs	9	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Bureaucracy, Accounting, Bribe-wise, Paperwork-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* Kohai.

Painter	5 yrs	5	+1 M/P	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Painting, Illuminations, Paint-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Odd, Perspective, Keen Sight

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.



<b>Composer</b>	4 yrs	5	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Music Composition, Poetry, Sing, Musical Instrument

*Traits:* 2 pts: Esoteric, Remote

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

<b>Scribe</b>	7 yrs	10	+1 M	Village, Jinju
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Calligraphy, Illuminations, Cartography, Scroll-wise, Scholar-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Near-Sighted, Cramped Hands

*Requirements:* Kohai.

<b>Moneylender</b>	8 yrs	20	—	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Accounting, Hagglng, Currency-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Penny-wise

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

<b>Accountant</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M	Village
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Accounting, Bureaucracy, Chops-wise, Records-wise

*Traits:* —

*Requirements:* Kohai.

<b>Scholar</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Research, History, Butsudo, Symbology, Instruction, Illuminations, Chinese, Ancient Languages

*Traits:* 1 pt: Know It All, Bookworm

*Requirements:* Scribe, Composer, Elder, Physician or Magnate

<b>Physician</b>	5 yrs	15	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 8 pts: Herbalism, Seifukujutsu, Anatomy, Research, Soothing Platitudes, Herbalist-wise, Joints-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* Kohai.

<b>Banker</b>	10 yrs	60	—	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Accounting, Administration, Currency-wise; 2 pts: General

*Traits:* —

*Requirements:* Accountant, Moneylender or Merchant.

<b>Merchant</b>	6 yrs	30	+1 M	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Accounting, Hagglng, Supplier-wise, Lord-wise, Peasant-wise

*Traits:* —

<b>Magnate</b>	12 yrs	75	+1 M	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Administration, Merchant-wise, Court-wise, Commodities-wise, Pirates-wise, Bandit-wise; 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 2 pts: Self-Satisfied, Greedy, Affinity for Business

*Requirements:* Master Artisan, Master Craftsman, Merchant, Banker, Jeweler or Armorer.

† This is a training skill. It costs 2 pts to open and may not be advanced.



# Artisan Setting

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	STAT	LEADS
Born to the Art	5 yrs	10	—	City, Monastery, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Tradition				
Young Apprentice	5 yrs	10	+ 1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery, Jinju
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Literacy, Soothing Platitudes, Begging, Shop-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Respectful				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Apprentice	5 yrs	10	+1 M/P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Mending, Carving, Knots, Weaving, Cooper, Craftsman-wise, Artisan-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Concentration, Back-Breaking Labor				
Togi	5 yrs	10	—	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Polishing, Kantei, Mending, Rust-wise, Blood Stain-wise, Edge-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 3 pts: Daydreamer				
<i>Requirements:</i> Young Apprentice.				
Tailor	5 yrs	12	—	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Tailor, Weaving, Embroidery, Clothing-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Frillery				
<i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice.				
Cloth Dyer	5 yrs	20	+1 M	City, Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Cloth Dyeing, Dye Manufacture, Accounting, Hagglng, Fabric-wise, Mineral-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Many-Colored Hands				
<i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice.				
Sculptor	5 yrs	8	+1 M/P	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 10 pts: Sculpture, Mason, Carpentry, Carving, Tools-wise, Wood-wise, Stone-wise, Buddha-wise, Kami-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Passionate				
<i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice.				
Jeweler	9 yrs	20	—	Hagure, Village
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Jeweler, Lapidary, Appraisal, Hagglng, Falsehood, Jade-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> —				
<i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice.				
Koshirae Maker	10 yrs	15	+ 1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Carpenter, Engraving, Kantei, Calligraphy, Customer-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pts: —				
<i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice.				



<b>Journeyman</b>	6 yrs	15	+1 M/P	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Haggling, Lacquer Training<sup>†</sup>, Appraisal, Carpentry, Potter, Blacksmith, Geometry Training<sup>†</sup>

*Traits:* 1 pt: Made Man

*Requirements:* Apprentice.

<b>Haikanko</b>	7 yrs	20	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Waterworks, Engineer, Aqueduct-wise, Fountain-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Damp

*Requirements:* Journeyman.

<b>Engraver</b>	7 yrs	15	+1 P	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Engraving, Etching, Jargon, Sutra-wise

*Traits:* —

*Requirements:* Journeyman.

<b>Swordsmith</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Weaponsmith, Clay-wise, Coal-wise, Steel-wise, Ore-wise, Chinkonto, Butsudo

*Traits:* 2 pts: Signature Hada

*Requirements:* Journeyman and the Tradition trait.

<b>Fletcher</b>	5 yrs	10	—	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Fletcher, Arrow-wise, Kyudo

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* Journeyman and the Tradition trait.

<b>Bowyer</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Bowyer, Wood-wise, Bone-wise, Tension-wise, Chinkonto, Butsudo

*Traits:* 2 pts: —

*Requirements:* Journeyman and the Tradition trait.

<b>Arrowhead Maker</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Arrowhead Smith, Clay-wise, Coal-wise, Steel-wise, Ore-wise, Chinkonto, Butsudo

*Traits:* 2 pts: —

*Requirements:* Journeyman and the Tradition trait.

<b>Armorer</b>	10 yrs	15	+1 M/P	Hagure, Monastery
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Armorer, Cloth-wise, Armor-wise, Heraldry, Calligraphy, Chinkonto, Butsudo

*Traits:* 2 pts: Diligent

*Requirements:* Journeyman and the Tradition trait.

<b>Engineer</b>	10 yrs	45	+1 M	Hagure, Village
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Jargon, Mason, Engineer, Architect

*Traits:* 1 pt: Self-Confident

*Requirements:* Journeyman.



## Ah, with ever anxious heart

**Master Craftsman** 10 yrs 45 +1 M, P City, Hagure, Monastery

*Skills:* 6 pts: Etching, Persuasion, Court-wise, Craftsman-wise, Artisan-wise, Materials-wise, Tools-wise; 3 pts: General

*Traits:* 2 pts: Perfectionist, Early Riser, Stubborn, Healthy, Ambitious, Charismatic

*Requirements:* Journeyman.

**Master Artisan** 10 yrs 35 — Hagure, Monastery, Jinju

*Skills:* 5 pts: Client-wise, Art-wise, Imperial Court-wise, Provincial Court-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Named Artisan

*Requirements:* Swordsmith, Arrowhead Maker or Bowyer.

**Renowned Artist** 10 yrs 25 +1 M Hagure, Monastery, Jinju

*Skills:* 1 pt: General

*Traits:* 2 pts: Master

*Requirements:* Master Craftsman or Master Artisan.

† This is a training skill. It costs 2 pts to open and may not be advanced.

## Hagure Subsetting

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	STAT	LEADS
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Serving Girl	3 yrs	15	+1 M	—
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Patron-Wise, Village-Wise, City-Wise, Bushi-Wise, Bandit-wise, Heiankyo Court-Wise, Pirate-Wise, Foreigner-Wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Youthful Looks, Aura of Innocence

*Requirements:* Must be female.

Whore	2 yrs	15	+1 M	—
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Hagging, Seduction, Soothing Platitudes, Falsehood, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Intimidation

*Traits:* 2 pts: Jaded

Butcher	6 yrs	15	—	—
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Butchery, Cooking, Guts-wise, Carcass-wise, Anatomy

*Traits:* 2 pts: Prominent Scar, Thick Skin, Stinky, Muttering

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.

Tanner	8 yrs	20	—	—
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Tanner, Saddlery, Tailor, Embroidery, Mending, Mount-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: —

*Requirements:* This lifepath may not be the character's second lifepath.



<b>Duelist</b>	4 yrs	8	+ 1 P	—
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Two-Fisted Fighting Training<sup>†</sup>, Streetwise, Hagglng, Conspicuous, Baiting-wise, Origami

*Traits:* 1 pt: Mercenary, Cold-Blooded, Fearless

*Requirements:* Kenjutsu skill.

<b>Fallen Bushi</b>	5 yrs	5	+ 1 M/P	—
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Clan Secret-Wise, Ugly truth, Inconspicuous, Intimidation

*Traits:* 3 pts: No Face, Thousand-Yard Stare, Yojimbo

*Requirements:* -san trait.

<b>Ronin</b>	5 yrs	10	+ 1 M/P	—
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*Skills:* 6 pts: Inconspicuous, Mercenary-wise, Stealthy, Observation, Warcraft

*Traits:* 2 pts: Sworn to Vengeance, Driven

*Requirements:* -san trait. Must be the last lifepath taken.

<b>Yamabushi</b>	10 yrs	10	+ 1 M/P	—
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Mountain-Wise, Naginata-jutsu, Shugendo, Foraging, Seifukujutsu, Meditation, Chinkonto, Butsudo

*Traits:* 1 pt: Tough

<b>Bandit</b>	5 yrs	10	+ 1 P	—
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*Skills:* 10 pts: Sojutsu, Crossbow, Brawling, Observation, Skirmish Tactics Training<sup>†</sup>, Mountain-wise, Lowland-wise, Forest-wise, Night Ambush-wise, Foolish Noble-wise, Peasant-Wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: —

<b>Bandit Chieftain</b>	7 yrs	30	+ 1 M/P	—
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*Skills:* 8 pts: Intimidation, Extortion, Persuasion, Interrogation, Conspicuous, Riding, Bandit-Wise, Gambling

*Traits:* 1 pt: Baleful Stare

*Requirements:* Bandit.

<b>Pirate</b>	5 yrs	5	+ 1 P	—
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Rigging, Port-Wise, Brawling, Knots, Rowing, Kyudo

*Traits:* 1 pt: Sea Legs

<b>Pirate Captain</b>	5 yrs	10	+ 1 P	—
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Navigation, Weather-wise, Intimidation, Oratory, Interrogation, Conspicuous, Pirate-Wise, Loot-Wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Salty

*Requirements:* Pirate.

<b>Blind Hermit</b>	10 yrs	5	+ 1 M/P	—
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*Skills:* 9 pts: Meditation, Begging, Foraging, Survival, Mountain-wise, Anma Massage, Persuasion, People-wise

*Traits:* 3 pts: Blind, Nose of the Pig

*Requirements:* Born Heimim. Must be second lifepath.



*Ah, with ever anxious heart*

Blind Swordsman 10 yrs 5 + 1 M/P —

*Skills:* 7 pts: Kenjutsu, Blind Fighting, Brawling, Intimidation, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous

*Traits:* 2 pts: Ear of the Fox, Zatoichi

*Requirements:* Blind Hermit or Masseur.

Witch 12 yrs 50 + 1 M —

*Skills:* 8 pts: Joubutsu, Onmyodo, Occult-Wise, Literacy, Symbology, Foraging, Survival

*Traits:* 1 pt: Witch, Entrancing Beauty

*Requirements:* Must be female. May not be second lifepath.

† This is a training skill. It costs 2 pts to open and may not be advanced.

## Stat Pools

Refer to the Stat Pools by Age for Man on page 148 of the Character Burner.







# Karma

All of the traits for the setting have been provided in this book. You may spend trait points on any trait in the list, as per the usual restrictions. You may not purchase traits from other books or settings unless they are referenced in this list. (This restriction does not apply to trait votes in the game.) Some traits that have been modified slightly from their Burning Wheel origins have been redescribed and listed here. Use the descriptions in this book over those of any other book for this setting.

Character traits are listed in **heavy black**. They obey the standard Burning Wheel mechanics for character traits.

Referenced traits are listed in **gray** so as to easily identify them when perusing the trait list.



## Nihon-Specific Traits

**A Bit Deaf** *Dt* 1 pt

+1 Ob to all auditory-related Perception and Observation tests.

**A Little Fat** *Char* 1 pt

**Abused** *Dt* 2 pts

+1 to Hesitation from Intimidation and Fear.

**Abbot** *Dt* 7 pts

This trait grants a 3D reputation within a particular monastery as the abbot of said institution.

**Affinity for Business** *Dt* 3 pts

+1D to Resources for business transactions.

**Agoraphobic** *Dt* 1 pt

Fear of open spaces. Must make a Steel test when emerging from an enclosed space—a building, a forest—to a wide open space like a field or a broad avenue.



**Agreeable**

*Char* 1 pt

**Albino** *Dt* 2 pts

This character is inhabited by a kami. He gets +1D to Kami-no-Michi, but has a 1D infamous reputation as an Albino in all Circles except the Jinju. This reputation must be used above any other reputation when the Albino's bizarre nature can be seen.

**Alert** *Dt* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 269

**Alms-Taker** *Dt* 3 pts

+1D to Begging when begging for alms or food.

**Ambitious** *Dt* 1 pt

Add +1 to starting Shame.

**Arrogant** *Char* 1 pt

**Artist's Eye** *C-O* 2 pts

Call-on for Appraisal when assessing the value, worth or veracity of a piece associated with your art form.

**Artisan** *C-O* 3 pts

Call-on for one craftsman or artisan skill of the player's choice. Please choose before play begins.

**Aura of Innocence** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 270.

**Back-Breaking**

**Labor** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 151.

**Bad Egg** *Dt* 2 pts

1D infamous reputation as a bad egg in a village of the player's choice.

**Baleful Stare** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 51.

**Barker**

*Char* 1 pt

**Bedside Manner** *C-O* 3 pts

Call-on for Child-Rearing, Falsehood and Soothing Platitudes when dealing with the sick and convalescing.

**Beespeaker** *Dt* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 151.

**Blank Stare** *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 271.

**Blessed by Tajikara** *Dt* 2 pts

When you walk, your right arm drags behind you on the floor. Your gangly arm makes you a freak. You suffer +1 Ob to all Circles tests. Fortunately, your arm also allows you to sustain a greater pull on your bow. Increase the IMS of any bow shot by +1 or increase the VA by 1. Decide before you release.

**Blind** *Dt* 4 pts

This character is blind—he cannot see. He may not make sight-based tests—to read, to identify colors or see patterns, for example. He may not take the Literacy or Observation skills. All tests that require vision—nearly everything—are at +2 Ob. He may learn craftsman and medicinal skills by substituting vision with his hearing and touch. Increase his aptitude for learning these skills by two. Once learned, do not apply the +2 Ob Blind penalty.

**Bookworm** *Dt* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 271.

**Booming Voice** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 272.



**Broken** Dt 2 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 152.

**Buke** Dt 3 pts  
The Buke trait identifies the character as member of a clan that has the right to bear sword and bow. Choose your clan and take a 1D affiliation with it. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

**Bushido** Dt 5 pts  
Bushido is, simply, the Way of the Warrior. It is an unwritten code that stresses absolute loyalty to one's master. Every warrior, no matter how powerful, has a master—culminating with the emperor. This trait opens the Honor and Shame emotional attributes.

**Buxom** Char 1 pt

**Callous** Char 1 pt

**Calloused** Char 1 pt

**Charismatic** C-O 2 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 272.

**Chigo** Char 1 pt

**Child Emperor** Dt 10 pts  
This trait denotes that the character was named emperor while he was a toddler—between three and six years old. The Child Emperor must take a relationship with the Sekkan and his own mother. The Sekkan and the child's mother may always use Authority against him in a Duel of Wits. The Child Emperor may not refuse a Duel of Wits with the Sekkan until he has turned 18.

**Chugu** Dt 3 pts  
The Second Wife's life can be difficult—caught between the empress and the emperor's latest favorite concubine, while jockeying for favor with the other second wives. If this character deposes another courtly rival, the player earns a Persona point over and above any other artha she would gain in the task.

**Cold-Blooded** Dt 3 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 273.

**Colorful** Char 1 pt

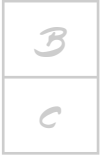
**Comely** Char 1 pt

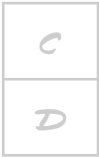
**Commander** Dt 3 pts  
This trait grants a 1D affiliation with a fighting force of bushi. The player must name his force—Watch Guards of the North Gate, or Provincial Police of Awazu, for example. Otherwise, the trait counts as a character trait. This affiliation compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

**Cool Headed** Dt 2 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 273.

**Concentration** Dt 2 pts  
When working *patiently*, this character may add +2D to his skill instead of +1D. Increase hesitation by +1 whenever the character is surprised while at his labors.

**Councilor** Dt 3 pts  
This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Shonagon, Kokushi and Dainagon—the emperor's





councilors. This trait compounds with other appropriate courtly affiliations.

**Cramped Hands** Dt 1 pt

Cramps strike at the worst time. The player or GM may invoke a +1 Ob penalty at an inopportune time.

**Crotchety** *Char 1 pt*

**Crown Prince** Dt 5 pts

This character is in line for the throne. He has been named heir and will soon take the position of emperor. This character may take a free relationship with his father or his mother. Only one of them must be emperor or empress.

**Cruel** *Char 1 pt*

**Cry Wolf** *Char 1 pt*

**Cynical** *Char 1 pt*

**Daijo Hoo** Dt 8 pts

The retired emperor cloisters himself on Mt. Hiei with the monks. The retired emperor may impose Honor Debts on clan chieftains; he wields the *Arahitogami* emotional attribute, but with advantages. Although the cloistered emperor doesn't have the same command over the resources of Nihon as the sitting emperor, he is independent of Fujiwara scheming. Thus, he may refuse any Duel of Wits he so chooses, regardless of his opponent's traits. Also, a life of contemplation on Mt. Hiei puts the retired emperor more in contact with his ancestors—add 1D to Arahitogami. Choose whether you have retired to Miidera or Enryakuji. In addition to

all of that, the retired emperor may name an heir from the crown princes to become emperor. Once the ritual of state is performed, that character earns the Daijo Tenno trait. And, of course, he may elevate a young princeling to crown prince: He may grant a character with the Denka trait the Crown Prince trait.

**Daijo Tenno** Dt 15 pts

Daijo Tenno means, roughly, “the sitting emperor.” The emperor can declare a clan outlaw, as described in the Honor chapter under the Rebellion chapter, or grant any character the Outlaw trait (on page 161 of the Character Burner. The character must divide his Resources and possessions in half). The emperor may also impose honor debts as described in the Honor and Shame section. In addition to all of that, the emperor may name an heir from the crown princes to become emperor. Once the ritual of state is performed, that character earns the Daijo Tenno trait. And, of course, he may elevate a young princeling to crown prince: He may grant a character with the Denka trait the Crown Prince trait. Lastly, this trait opens the *Arahitogami* emotional attribute.

**Damp** *Char 1 pt*

**Daydreamer** Dt 1 pt

Increase hesitation from surprise by 1.

**Deep Sense** Dt 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 52.



**Denka** Dt 7 pts

This trait marks the individual as a direct heir to the imperial throne. The Yamato princes are divine, and hence untouchable. In order to threaten, attack or restrain a Denka, the character must first pass a Steel test at +7 Ob to hesitation.

**Diligent** Char 1 pt

**Dirty Feet** Char 1 pt

**Disciple of the Shinto** Dt 3 pts

The novice may take a free relationship with his mentor.

**Distracted** Dt 2 pts

Character may only practice for hours equal to twice his Will and is at +1 Ob to any test made under distracting conditions.

**Disturbed** Char 1 pt

**-dono** Dt 3 pts

“Dono” is an honorific attached to the end of a character’s name that denotes his rank as a greater daimyo. He is the lord of several lesser daimyo and a shoen encompassing vast tracts of land, a province and/or a large castle. This trait allows the player to impose an Honor Debt on any vassals underneath him.

**Downtrodden** Char 1 pt

**Dreamer** Dt 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 274.

**Driven** C-O 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 274.

**Drop Dead**

**Gorgeous** Dt 3 pts

+1D to Seduction tests when the character leverages his obvious good looks.

**Drunk** Dt 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 275.

**Ear of the Fox** Dt 3 pts

A fox can hear his opponents coming from a considerable distance. +1D to initial positioning in melee fights.

**Early Riser** Char 1 pt

**Eccentric** Char 1 pt

**Eidetic Memory** Dt 4 pts

See the Character Burner, page 275.

**Entrancing Beauty** C-O 4 pts

Call-on for Seduction and Soothing Platitudes. In addition, if the character falls in love with a character whom he has seduced or soothed, the player earns a Persona point.

**Enraged Devotion** Dt 8 pts

This grants +1D to any martial or physical stat or skill when defending the rights of your monastery. It also grants a 1D affiliation with a Buddhist monastery. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

**Esoteric** Dt 3 pts

The Esoteric artist may add +1D to any social skill test when making reference to obscure art or artists. This trait may only be used once per Duel of Wits.



## Ah, with ever anxious heart



### Executive

#### High Priest *Dt* 5 pts

This character may take for free, as part of his Resources, a jinju, or Shinto temple. It counts as an estate for the purposes of property. However, it does not count toward factoring his Resources exponent. Please indicate in which province the temple is located.

#### Extremely Bitter *Char* 1 pt

#### Eye of the Emperor *Dt* 4 pts

The concubine may use her Authority against the Emperor in a Duel of Wits so long as she at least FoRKs in Seduction or Soothing Platitudes. However, the Emperor likes to keep watch on his favored concubine. Anyone trying to track this character down through the Circles gains a +1D advantage.

#### Favorite *Dt* 5 pts

The second wife may take a free relationship with the emperor.

#### Fearless *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 276.

#### Kuzunoha's Child *Dt* 4 pts

The player may choose any one trait, except Spirit Nature, Corpse Bound or Amulet Bound, from any monster listed in the Hyakki-Yakou on page 173.

#### Fixed Smile *Char* 1 pt

#### Flamboyant *Char* 1 pt

#### Flee from Battle *Dt* 2 pts

Add +1 to hesitation for Steel tests made in or leading up to a fight.

#### Fleet of Foot *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 276.

#### Floury *Char* 1 pt

#### Fretful *Char* 1 pt

#### Frippery *Char* 1 pt

#### Fujiwara *Dt* 6 pts

The Fujiwara are perhaps the most powerful clan in the history of Nihon: They provide the first wives, and hence mothers, for all the emperors. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Fujiwara clan, and a 1D reputation at court as a member of the powerful ruling caste. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations and reputations. Also, the Fujiwara may take the Hubris character trait for free if they so desire.

#### Glib *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 277.

#### Good for Nothing *Dt* 2 pts

Increase Shame by 1. Otherwise, it acts as a character trait.

#### Good Listener *Dt* 3 pts

Add +1D to Persuasion if the player has his character stop and listen to the other side before offering a response. Characters with this trait may also make their Points in a Duel of Wits last, regardless of any other speaking order.

#### Gossip *C-O* 2 pts

Call-on for Gossip-wise or Rumor-wise.



**Greedy** Dt 2 pts  
Grant the magnate player a bonus Persona point if he ever deprives another individual of wealth, security or happiness for his own gain or enrichment.

**Grim** Char 1 pt

**Hacking Cough** Dt 2 pts  
+1 Ob to Stealthy and Inconspicuous due to that damn hacking cough!

**Handicapped** Dt 2 pts  
Subtract two points from the character's starting physical pool. Cap one stat at exponent 2.

**Hardened** Dt 3 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 153.

**Hard-Hearted** Dt 10 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 153.

**Haughty** Char 1 pt

**Healthy** C-O 2 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 278.

**Hero** C-O 4 pts  
Call-on for one physical stat, one weapon skill, Oratory or Command. Pick one. Player may choose which ability is affected at any time after play has begun. Once chosen, the trait is fixed to that ability.

**Hime** Dt 5 pts  
Hime are the princesses of the Heiankyo court. Hime are divine and untouchable. If a character wishes to threaten or harm a Hime, he must pass a Steel test with an obstacle penalty equal to the Hime's Will exponent.

**Hoarding** C-O 3 pts  
Hoarding is a call-on for Resources when trying to acquire materials or items that the peasantry shouldn't really have—food in a famine, weapons during a war, etc. It only works in the peasant's home village.

**Hubris** Char 1 pt

**Hurt** Char 1 pt

**Imperial Family** Dt 5 pts  
The imperial family is a vast, sprawling network of cousins, uncles and aunts. Characters with the Imperial Family trait are part of that patrimony. They are courtiers in and petitioners of the court at Heiankyo. The player may take an 8 pt relationship for free to represent his familial ties at court.

**Imperial Pest** Dt 3 pts  
This trait allows the Zasu to use his Circles in the Imperial Court and Provincial Warrior settings.

**Imperious Demeanor** C-O 2 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 153.

**Inclined to Courtly Pleasures** Dt 1 pt  
If the Taira could supplant the Fujiwara, they would usher in an era of unprecedented culture and magnificence. They would put paid to all the snobs looking down at them from the imperial court. Reduce aptitude for social skills by 1. Increase aptitude for learning new martial skills by 1.





**Jaded** *Char* 1 pt

**Junior Priest** *Dt* 3 pts

The Gon-Negi are the junior priests of the Shinto Jinju. They become acquainted with the temple's staff and the worshippers who come there to offer prayers. The player may take a free minor relationship with either one of the temple staff or with a patron from the surrounding community.

**Kabane** *Dt* 3 pts

The Kabane are holders or heirs to one of the major hereditary titles in Nihon. These titles were conferred on either *kobetsu*, descendants of the imperial line, or *shinbetsu*, descendants of the gods. This trait is the necessary prerequisite to becoming a provincial lord or clan chieftain; it counts as a 1D reputation among warriors and commoners.

**Keen Sight** *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 83.

**Know It All** *Char* 1 pt

**Kogo** *Dt* 10 pts

This trait grants +3 successes to any body of argument in a Duel of Wits with the emperor—not the retired emperor. Also, this trait prevents the emperor from refusing a Duel of Wits with the empress. And the empress can argue with the emperor wherever she damn well pleases (although arguing in front of the court is still considered bad form and is at least usually done in verse). Also, it's worth noting that this

trait and traits like it are bonuses conferred in addition to bonuses from Authority.

**Kugyo** *Dt* 3 pts

Kugyo is the path of ascetic discipline. Add +1D to any Kamino-Michi tests due to your pure and disciplined lifestyle.

**Lame** *Dt* 1 pt

See the Character Burner, page 279.

**Light Sleeper** *Dt* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 280.

**Loyal** *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 281.

**Lugubrious** *Char* 1 pt

**Made Man** *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 155.

**Many-Colored Hands** *Char* 1 pt

**Master** *Dt* 5 pts

The proficiency of this artist is such that he can call upon his ancestors to revel in and empower his work. If the character has the Chinkonto and Butsudo skills at an exponent equal to a craftsman or artisan skill, that craftsman or artisan skill counts as Enchanting.

**Master of the Daijinja** *Dt* 3 pts

The Master of the Daijinja is the high priest of a major Shinto shrine. This trait expands Circles into the imperial court. Being the high priest of one of the major Shinto temples carries both imperial favor





and scrutiny. You must purchase Master of the Jinju before taking this trait.

**Master of the Jinju** *Dt* 10 pts

This trait marks the individual as the head priest of a Shinto shrine. The trait grants a 2D affiliation with a shrine and a 2D regional reputation as a Shinto head priest. Also, the character's Circles are expanded to include Farms and Villages, and the City settings. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations and reputations.

**Mean** *Char* 1 pt

**Mercenary** *Dt* 2 pts

This trait adds +1 to the character's starting Shame. It is shameful to have once been a great warrior and now sell your sword for money!

**Meticulous** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 281.

**Minamoto** *Dt* 5 pts

The Minamoto are one of the two great provincial clans descended from the imperial household. They are also colloquially known as the Genji. Replace the 1D affiliation from the Buke trait with a 1D affiliation with the Genji. In addition, the player may take *Mountain Warrior* and *Sworn Enemy of the Heike* for free if he so chooses. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

**Mind-Numbing Work** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 155.

**Mountain Warrior** *Dt* 3 pts

Fighting for generations against the rebels and beasts of the northern mountains has hardened the Minamoto men. Add 1D to any positioning tests in mountain terrain. Also, this rigor has coarsened their social fiber: +1 Ob for all Circles tests involving any non-provincial noble LPs.

**Muttering** *Char* 1 pt

**Named Artisan** *Dt* 8 pts

This man has mastered his craft and is sought after by warrior and noble alike. Add +3D to a Haggling test or +3 successes to the body of argument in any Duel of Wits surrounding craftsmanship.

**Near-Sighted** *Dt* 1 pt

See the Character Burner, page 155.

**No Face** *Dt* 6 pts

Your attachment to this world is strong. You have committed unspeakable crimes to keep your life intact and turned your back on the white kimono and tanto. You are dead to your warrior peers and your name is cursed when it is mentioned in the dojo. When this trait is earned, a number of things happen: The Honor exponent drops to zero. Erase any tests toward advancement. Advance Shame one exponent and toss out any existing tests. Take a 2D infamous reputation with all characters with lifepaths in the Provincial Warrior and Imperial Court settings. If the character has standing reputations in those settings, those reputations are turned to infamous instead of taking reputations. Reduce warrior



## Ah, with ever anxious heart



affiliations by 1D. Relationships with your superiors, lord and family turn hostile unless they too take the No Face trait (choose now!). And erase any standing honor debts.

### Nose of the Pig *Dt* 3 pts

A pig can sniff out just about anything. Smell-based Perception acts as Observation.

### Numb *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 156.

### Odd *Char* 1 pt

### Other Life *Dt* 2 pts

Performers always have two sides of their lives—their troupe on one side and a job or occupation that sustains them on the other. This character may take a free minor relationship with someone outside his performance circles.

### Outlaw *Dt* 5 pts

Gaining the disfavor of the court has its price. Outlaws are saddled with a 3D infamous reputation with the emperor, his family and all of his allies. Also, if awarded in play, the character and all of his vassals must make an immediate lifestyle maintenance test. All debt are called due.

### Passionate *Char* 1 pt

### Paths of the Dead *Dt* 5 pts

Onmyodo and Miko may use their knowledge and magic to call upon the dead and speak with them. The Paths of the Dead trait expands the Circles of the Onmyodo and the Miko. It allows the character to use his Circles to bring ghosts into the

game. He may use the attribute as per the standard rules—using his lifepaths for Circles, etc.—but the characters he finds are ghosts! See the Paths of the Dead heading of the Kami section.

### Patient *Char* 1 pt

### Penny-wise *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 156.

### Perfectionist *Char* 1 pt

### Perspective *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 156.

### Petulant Child *Char* 1 pt

This is a special character trait that indicates the character is beginning the game as a child. The character may not be older than 15 years at the start of the game. If the character begins the game at 16 years or older, he loses this trait and any benefit it confers—like the ability to jump to Clan Chieftain for your second lifepath.

### Plain Faced *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 283.

### Poker Face *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 283.

### Pompous *Char* 1 pt

### Possessed *Dt* 5 pts

The Possessed trait merges the spirit of a demon or a dead character with the body and soul of a living character. The possessed character must change one Belief to that of the spirit. He also takes on one identifying trait from the demon or ghost (except Spirit Nature). The player retains control of his



character: If he fulfills the spirit's Belief, he earns a Deeds point. He may earn Fate from the Belief by playing into it as well. If he changes the Belief, he remains possessed, but loses access to the Deeds point. This is a fun trait to play. Enjoy it!

**The Power Behind**

**the Throne** *Dt* 10 pts

Sekkan is the office of the regent. There are two types of regents: Sessho, who assisted either a child emperor or empress before his coming of age, and Kampaku, who was a chief advisor for the emperor. Both officers were first secretary and regents for adult emperors. The two were collectively known as Sekkan. Therefore, the Sekkan is the de facto ruler of Nihon. Oft times he reduces the emperor to mere puppet status. This trait adds a +6 success bonus to any body of argument in a Duel of Wits with the emperor—*not the retired emperor*. The emperor cannot refuse a Duel of Wits with the Sekkan. The Sekkan *may not* ask for a Duel of Wits with the emperor in public or in front of the court. This bonus does not apply to the Sekkan if the emperor manages to corner him into a public Duel of Wits. The Sekkan may also appoint the First Wife and grant a female character the Kogo trait.

Also, Power Behind the Throne is the only way for a *warrior* to gain the Authority trait. This trait must be voted on through play. If so earned, the character earns an Authority exponent of 1.

**Prime Minister** *Dt* 7 pts

If Daijo Daijin was the last lifepath, the Prime Minister may appoint any character to the post of Kokushi—a provincial governor. If the character accepts, he immediately earns the Provincial Power Base trait. Otherwise, the former prime minister may take a free second in command relationship with a Kokushi who is still loyal to him.

**Problems** *Dt* 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 157.

**Prominent Scar** *Char* 1 pt

**Provincial Lord** *Dt* 3 pts

The provincial lord maintains land and men for his clan chieftain. If the player takes a relationship with his lord, he gets a free 1D affiliation with his own household—this includes soldiers, retainers, staff, etc. This trait compounds with all applicable and appropriate affiliations.

**Provincial Power Base** *Dt* 5 pts

Doing a tour away from the court in the provinces has its advantages. Gain a 1D affiliation with a provincial warrior clan. Your Circles is expanded to the Provincial Warriors as well. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

**Rainman** *Dt* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 284.

**Reeks of Alcohol** *Char* 1 pt

**Regal Bearing** *Char* 1 pt

**Remote** *Char* 1 pt





**Respect for the Kami** *Char* 1 pt

**Respectful** *Char* 1 pt

**Revered of Nihon** *Dt* 4 pts

Tradition and religion have elevated the senior and junior clans of Heiankyo to exalted positions in Nihon. This trait opens the Authority emotional attribute.

**Road Weary** *Char* 1 pt

**-sama** *Dt* 3 pts

“Sama” is an honorific attached to the end of a warrior’s name. It marks him as a lower daimyo. He commands the respect and loyalty of a company of bushi and presides over a shoen encompassing a village, valley and/or small castle. This trait allows the player to impose an Honor Debt on any retainers with the *-san* trait who are affiliated with him.

**-san** *Dt* 4 pts

“San” is an honorific attached to the end of a warrior’s name. It marks him as the lowest rung of the warrior’s ladder—the retainer of a particular lord and bound to him as an attendant. This trait grants a free relationship with a character one station above your last lifepath, e.g., someone who ended with the Captain lifepath would get a free relationship with a Warlord. That relationship then counts as your lord in the game. His superior may impose honor debts on the character should his Honor and Shame reach an imbalance.

**Sadaijin** *Dt* 5 pts

The Sadaijin is the Minister of the Left. He controls the Ministry of the Center, the Ministry of Ceremony, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of People’s Affairs. This trait grants the character the power to appoint ministers in these various ministries. If Minister was the character’s last lifepath, the player may give *another character* a 1D affiliation with one of the four ministries under his control as he sees fit during play. The receiving player does not have to make a Resources test for the new affiliation. If Minister was not the character’s last lifepath, this trait grants +1D to starting Resources.

**Savvy** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 157.

**Sea Legs** *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 157.

**Second Sight** *Dt* 4 pts

See the Character Burner, page 285.

**Seemingly**

**Concerned** *Dt* 3 pts

This character gains +1 success to his body of argument for situations in which he at least pretends to be concerned about the other side’s plight.

**Self-Confident** *Char* 1 pt

**Self-Satisfied** *Char* 1 pt

**Sensei** *Dt* 6 pts

This character is an experienced warrior that all the other bushi look up to as a teacher. Counts as a 1D reputation with all warriors and



adds + 1D to starting Honor. This reputation compounds with other warrior reputations.

**Serene** *Char* 1 pt

**Shameless** *Dt* 3 pts  
Your shameless deeds have stained your soul. +2 to starting Shame.

**Sharp Dresser** *Char* 1 pt

**Shinko** *Dt* 5 pts  
The Shinko trait indicates that this character has special influence with the kami of Nihon. Shinko allows the character to use the various magical abilities described in the Kami-no-Michi skill.

**Shogun** *Dt* 12 pts

The Shogun and his Bakufu government is the law, the new law. A player with this trait cannot be declared outlaw, may impose honor debts on any player possessing the -san trait, and is immune to any trait-based penalties in a Duel of Wits. He may also establish a Bakufu government, with a 3D affiliation, which has the powers reserved for the Ministry of the Right and Left. This trait cannot be bought, and a starting player may not possess it. In order to be voted for the Shogun trait, a player must possess the Toryo trait, the Worthy of Shogun trait, be declared outlaw, and then be named Shogun by the current sitting emperor(s) and retired emperor in Nihon. In other words, you must win a civil war to be named Shogun.

**Sickly** *Dt* 2 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 286.

**Signature Hada** *Dt* 5 pts

This swordsmith is known for the hard, cutting blades he forges. His signature is manifested in the distinctive undulating grain pattern he leaves along the cutting edge of all his blades during tempering. This trait grants a 1D reputation as a skilled swordsmith. Also, it expands the character's Circles into the Provincial Warrior setting.

**Sixth Sense** *Dt* 5 pts  
-3 Hesitation from surprise or fear.

**Skinny** *Char* 1 pt

**Smelly** *Char* 1 pt

**So** *Dt* 3 pts

The So trait grants a 1D affiliation with a monastery like Enryakuji or Miidera at Mt. Hiei, or Kofuku-ji or Todai-ji in Heijo or another lesser-known temple. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations. In addition, the monk must include two of the following three doctrines in his Beliefs: All things are internally enlightened; shed all worldly pleasures and attachments; the phenomenal world is not distinct from dharma, i.e., poetry and art are a path to enlightenment.

**Sore Back** *Char* 1 pt

**Statuesque** *Char* 1 pt

**Starved** *Char* 1 pt

**Stinky** *Char* 1 pt

**Stoic** *Dt* 3 pts  
See the Character Burner, page 287.





**The Story** C-O 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 157.

**Street Smart** C-O 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 287.

**Stubborn** Dt 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 287.

**Stung Once (Once)** Char 1 pt

**Sublime Poet** C-O 2 pts

Being an evil lord isn't all that it's cracked up to be. Between gouging out the eyeballs of a deceased rival's son, and explaining his principled stand against the universe to a naïve foe, the evil lord must find time to compose beautiful verse to keep his liege in good humor. Call-on for all poetry tests.

**Superstitious** Char 1 pt

**Sworn Enemy of the Genji** Dt 10 pts

This character has sworn an eternal oath of enmity against the Genji clan and all its descendents (aka the Minamoto). This character is a member of the legendary Heike clan. When this character challenges a Genji clansman to a Duel of Wits, the Genji benefits from the Enmity Clause. And when a Genji character challenges this Heike character to a Duel of Wits, the Heike clansman benefits from the Enmity Clause in turn (+4 successes to your body of argument!).

This trait also grants a 1D infamous reputation among the Genji.

**Sworn Enemy of the Heike** Dt 10 pts

This character has sworn an eternal oath of enmity against the Heike clan and all its descendents (aka the Taira). This character is a member of the massive Genji clan. When this character challenges a Heike clansman to a Duel of Wits, the Heike benefits from the Enmity Clause. And when a Heike character challenges this Genji character to a Duel of Wits, the Genji clansman benefits from the Enmity Clause in turn (+4 successes to your body of argument!).

This trait also grants a 1D infamous reputation among the Heike.

**Sworn to Vengeance** Dt 5 pts

A ronin with the Sworn to Vengeance trait gains an extra belief that must be connected to somehow avenging his late lord's death. Until the oath is fulfilled, Honor and Shame may only be applied to tests in pursuit of the oath. Honor cannot be advanced. When the oath is fulfilled all Honor tests incurred up until that point are applied at once. Once the vow is fulfilled the ronin becomes the vassal of the current holder of the fief and the 4th Belief slot is removed.

**Taira** Dt 4 pts

The Taira are one of the two great provincial clans descended from the imperial household. They are colloquially known as the Heike. Replace the 1D affiliation from the Buke trait with a 1D affiliation with the *Heike*. In addition, the player may take the *Inclined to*



*Courtly Pleasures* and *Sworn Enemy of the Genji* traits for free if he so chooses. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

**Tall Tale Teller** Dt 3 pts

See the Character Burner, page 158.

**Tenacious** Dt 4 pts

See the Character Burner, page 287.

**Thick Skinned** Dt 1 pt

See the Character Burner, page 287.

**Thousand-Yard**

**Stare** Dt 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 288.

**Tonsured** Dt 5 pts

Buddhist tonsure involves ritually shaving the head and face and maintaining the clean look for as long as the character sustains his vows. Once tonsure is taken, the character must sever his attachment to worldly things. Namely, he cannot have affiliations outside the church and cannot maintain relations with family and lovers. All familial and romantic relationships count as *forbidden* in character burning. The player only earns the discount for forbidden relationships, not romantic and familial.

**Toryo** Dt 5 pts

A Toryo is a clan chieftain who can trace his lineage to the imperial throne or a god. Toryo hold sway over vast portions of Nihon—which are typically named for his clan. This trait allows the player to impose an honor debt on anyone bearing his clan name, from the most minor bushi to the greatest warlord.

There is no direct affiliation or relationship necessary to impose the honor debt. See the Honor and Shame rules for the details of honor debts. The Toryo trait also allows the character to name his heirs and successors and grant characters the title of bushi, captain, warlord and provincial warlord. Granting a title also grants the first trait listed on each lifepath.

**Touch of Ages** Dt 7 pts

See the Character Burner, page 288.

**Touched by Ame no**

**Minakanushi** Dt 5 pts

The Master of the August Center of Heaven has taken notice of the devotion of the shrine mother and protects her by interceding on her behalf with her guardian kami. In order to threaten or harm this character, the offending character must first pass a Steel test at an obstacle penalty equal to the Shrine Mother's Will exponent.

**Tough** Dt 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 289.

**Tradition** Dt 5 pts

This character was born into a family of artisans whose name and reputation rests on the quality of their craft. This trait grants a 1D reputation as a specific type of craftsman or artisan and a 1D affiliation with an artisan clan. Pick one before the game begins. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations and reputations.



# Ah, with ever anxious heart



## Udaijin *Dt* 3 pts

The Udaijin is the Minister of the Right. He controls the Ministry of Military Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Treasury, and the Ministry of the Imperial Household. This trait grants the character the power to appoint ministers in these various ministries. If Minister was the character's last lifepath, the player may give *another character* a 1D affiliation with one of the four ministries under his control as he sees fit. The receiving player does not have to make a Resources test for the new affiliation. If Minister was not the character's last lifepath, this trait grants him a free bodyguard. Burn a character from the provincial warrior setting who has two fewer lifepaths than the Udaijin.

## Ugly *Char* 1 pt

## Unheeded *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 159.



## Watchful *Dt* 2 pts

-1 hesitation from surprise.

## Wise Aphorisms *C-O* 2 pts

See the Character Burner, page 86.

## Witch *Dt* 2 pts

This character has a 1D infamous reputation as a witch. It comes into effect whenever she openly shows her face.

## A Woman's Honor *Dt* 5 pts

The noblewomen of the provinces are as committed to honor as their male kin. Tradition and religion means that this commitment is manifested in different ways. The

Woman's Honor trait opens the Honor and Shame emotional attributes for women. Instead of taking a relationship with a lord through a subsequent *-san* trait, a woman gets a free relationship with a male to whom she is now honor bound. That person may be a father, a brother, a husband, or a lover. If the woman's Honor attribute falls behind Shame, the effects of the imbalance are borne by the man to whom she is bound. If the man to whom the woman is honor bound dies violently (this includes seppuku committed on her behalf) the woman may immediately take the Sworn to Vengeance trait against the offending killer.

## Worthy of Shogun *Dt* 5 pts

This trait is the necessary prerequisite to being named shogun by the emperor. No character can assume the mantle of shogun without first being worthy.

## Yamato *Dt* 3 pts

The Yamato are the imperial family proper—emperor, princes and princesses. This trait counts as 1D affiliation with the Yamato clan. It is a necessary prerequisite to becoming an imperial prince. This trait compounds with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

## Yojimbo *Dt* 5 pts

Yojimbo are ronin who make their way in the world working as a hired sword. This trait is for the most cunning of them. It grants +1D to any test in which the Yojimbo is trying to play two sides against one another.





**Youthful Looks** Char 1 pt

**Yumi-ya** Dt 12 pts

Your father was a great bow master of Nihon. He placed a bow in your hand before you could even walk, and taught you to be one with the bow and arrow. You have perfect form. When aiming in Fight!, your Kyudo skill counts as open-ended. When aiming in Range and Cover, each aiming die counts double. Also, you may aim for an additional action in both Fight! and Range and Cover.

**Zatoichi** Dt 8 pts

So impressed, amazed and terrified are the blind swordsman's opponents, they lose all tactical sense. If ever a group wishes to engage the swordsman in Fight!, each individual must pass a Steel test. Failure indicates that fighter is stunned by the blind swordsman's prowess and forgets to help his companions—he may not help any of his companions in any tests for the duration of this engagement. Attackers who fail a Steel tests count as hesitating according to the standard rules. The blind swordsman may determine starting fight distance and then spend his actions dispatching his dumbfounded opponents. Characters who pass their Steel tests may attack in a group and help each other via the standard rules.

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# The Way

All of the skills needed to play in this setting are either provided here with a description or are referenced. You may not take skills from other Burning Wheel books or settings that are not specifically referenced in this book.

General points may be spent on any skill in this list.

Wises are listed in **heavy black**. They obey the standard Burning Wheel mechanics for wises.

Referenced skills are listed in **gray** so as to easily identify them when perusing the skill list.

## *Nihon-Specific Skills*

**Accounting** *Per*

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See the Character Burner, page 226.

**Administration** *Per*

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See the Character Burner, page 227.

### **Affair-wise**

**Aiki-Jutsu** *Agi*

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Aiki-Jutsu is the Minamoto house martial art. This skill is an unarmed fighting art. The character may use all martial actions via this skill. Refer to the Boxing skill on page 232 of the Character Burner. You must have the Minamoto trait in order to purchase this skill in character burning.

**FoRKS:** Jujutsu, Brawling

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** No.

**Almanac** *Per*

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See the Character Burner, page 227.

### **Alms-wise**

**Anatomy** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 227.

**Ancient Languages** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 227.

**Animal Husbandry** Will  
See the Character Burner, page 227.

**Anma Massage** Agility  
Anma massage uses kneading, deep tissue penetration and percussion techniques in order to invigorate the client. This skill can be used as Field Dressing to alleviate pain from non-puncture and non-slash wounds. It may also be linked into nearly any test requiring physical action—so long as there is time for a massage first. See below for obstacles.

**FoRKs:** Seifukujutsu  
**Obstacles:** Realigning the chi of a character who is about to complete/confront a Belief in the next scene, Ob 2. Realigning the chi of a character who is on the path of accomplishing a Belief, Ob 3. Realigning the chi of a character who is having trouble engaging his Beliefs, Ob 4.

**Skill Type:** Medicinal  
**Tools:** No.

**Appraisal** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 227.

**Aqueduct-wise**

**Architect** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 228.

**Armor Training** Pow/Spd  
See the Character Burner, page 228.

**Armor-wise**

**Arrowhead Smith** Per/Agi  
Both weaponsmiths and warriors in the Heian era took their arrowheads very seriously. This skill allows the character to manufacture a variety of arrowheads. See below for the obstacles. See the Burning Wheel, page 260 for the stats of the arrows.

**FoRKs:** Weaponsmith  
**Obstacles:** Hunting heads, Ob 1. Bodkins, Ob 2. Leaf Heads, Ob 3. Barbed, Ob 4. Frog Crotch, Ob 4. Well-balanced heads (+1D), +2 Ob.  
**Skill Type:** Craftsman  
**Tools:** Yes.

**Arrow-wise**

**Artillery** Per/Agi  
The Heian era was the last period in which siege crossbow artillery was used in Nihon. Siege Crossbows do damage as a heavy crossbow (BW pg. 259-260). They must be mounted on a tripod and therefore, they may only use the Perception Maintain action in Range and Cover. They may not be used in Fight! They fire with a +1 Ob penalty to hit. A fortress (purchased as *property*) will have a handful of these devices for defense. They are an Ob 5 Resources test to acquire in play.

**FoRKs:** Warcraft, Kyudo  
**Skill Type:** Military  
**Tools:** Yes, a siege crossbow.

**Artisan-wise**

**Astrology** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 163.

**Aura Reading** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 229.





**Baggage Train-wise**

**Baiting-wise**

**Baking** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 230.

**Bandit-wise**

**Battle-wise**

**Begging** Will

See the Character Burner, page 230.

**Blacksmith** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 231.

**Blind Fighting** Will/Per

This special skill requires dedicated and extensive training. It allows a blind character to fight effectively unarmed or with a knife, sword or club. Blind Fighting may be used to make positioning tests in Fight! in place of Speed. If the skill is used to position instead of the stat, then the character does not suffer the +2 Ob penalty for blindness or the +1 Ob penalty for moving quickly for that volley. Blind Fighting may not be used for Run Screaming positioning.

**FoRKs:** Seifukujutsu, Observation

**Skill Type:** Special.

**Tools:** No.

**Boatwright** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 231.

**Bojutsu** Agi

The way of the staff. Staves are lengths of flexible wood about as tall as the monk. This skill also allows the character to use kumade or kanabo. They may be used as clubs

or as spears, but without the VA. Bojutsu also allows the staff-wielder to throw his weapon like a javelin. Throwing a staff like this incurs a +1 Ob penalty. The damage is the same, but without the VA.

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** Yes, a staff or suitable stick.

**Bone-wise**

**Bowyer** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 232.

**Brawling** Agi

See the Character Burner, page 232.

**Bread-wise**

**Brewer** Per

See the Character Burner, page 232.

**Bribe-wise**

**Buddha-wise**

**Bureaucracy** Will

See the Character Burner, page 233.

**Bushi-wise**

**Butchery** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 233.

**Butsudo** Will

Butsudo is Buddhist doctrine. In addition to the various tenets of the religion, this skill teaches the practitioner sutras to placate spirits of the dead and prayers to ward off angry demons.

**FoRKs:** Chinkonto, Joubutsu, Onmyodo

**Obstacle:** Chants and prayers to hold demons and angry spirits at bay: Obstacle is equal to the oni or



spirit's Will. If successful, the spirit must pass a Steel test or hesitate before the chanter. Add the margin of success from the Butsudo test to the hesitation obstacle. In order to make this test, the chanting character must have prayer beads or a shakujo staff in one hand and his other hand must be in ritual posture. He may not hold anything else or take any other action aside from chanting the sutras. He may walk slowly, but usually the prayers are spoken while stationary. If anyone takes a hostile action against the spirit, then the spell is broken. Additional obstacles: Common popular beliefs, Ob 1. Reciting religious passages, Ob 2. Funeral rites for the recently deceased, Ob 3.

**Skill Type:** School of Thought

**Tools:** Yes, prayer beads.

**Calligraphy** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 233.

**Candlemaker** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 233.

**Carcass-wise**

**Carpentry** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 233.

**Cartography** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 234.

**Carving** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 234.

**Charcoal-wise**

**Child-Rearing** *Will*

See the Character Burner, page 234.

**Chinese** *Per*

Courtiers are all fluent in Chinese—it is the language of the imperial court. Characters with this skill may communicate with one another. Characters without this skill cannot understand these communications. Players whose characters do not have the skill may not use or act on knowledge from a Chinese language conversation. In order for this effect to work at the table, the speaking player must *clearly* indicate to all that he is speaking in Chinese and not Japanese. If not clearly indicated, he's considered to have slipped into Japanese. How vulgar.

**Obstacles:** Characters who are ignorant of the speaker's intent may test Perception (at double obstacle) to decipher the meaning of the Chinese speaker. Characters with Chinese may attempt to obscure their conversation from other Chinese speakers by using verse and odd forms of speech. Make a Chinese versus test between the speaker and the character whom he's attempting to deceive.

**Skill Type:** Academic

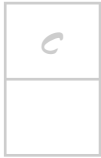
**Tools:** No.

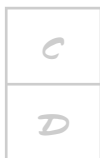
**Chinkonto** *Per*

Chinkonto literally means "Way of Spiritual Practice." It is the Shinto equivalent of the Doctrine skill. In addition to the simple tenets of Shinto, the skill teaches the practitioner chants and prayers to speak when threatened by angry kami. These chants and prayers can protect the practitioner from any ill the kami would do him.

**FORKS:** Oharai

**Obstacle:** The obstacle is equal to the kami's Strength. Success





subdues the spirit temporarily—one test may be made before the spirit reawakens to wreak further havoc.

Failure causes the spirit to harm or hinder the chanter immediately.

**Skill Type:** School of Thought

**Tools:** No.

**Chops-wise**

**Circle-wise**

**City-wise**

**Clan Secret-Wise**

**Clay-wise**

**Climbing** Spd  
See the Character Burner, page 234.

**Cloth Dyeing** Per/Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 235.

**Clothing-wise**

**Cloth-wise**

**Clouds of Arrows-wise**

**Coal-wise**

**Coffin-wise**

**Coin-wise**

**Command** Will  
See the Character Burner, page 235.

**Commodities-wise**

**Composition** Will/Per  
See the Character Burner, page 235.

**Conspicuous** Will  
See the Character Burner, page 236.

**Cooking** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 236.

**Cooper** Per/Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 236.

**Councilor-wise**

**Counterfeiting** Per/Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 236.

**Country Fair-wise**

**Country-wise**

**Court Hierarchy-wise**

**Court Intrigue-wise**

**Court Petition-wise**

**Court-wise**

**Craftsman-wise**

**Criminal-wise**

**Crossbow** Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 237.

**Currency-wise**

**Customer-wise**

**Daijin-wise**

**Demonology** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 237.

**Demons-wise**

**Destruction of the Family  
That Killed My Father-wise**

**Disguise** Per/Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 238.



**Ditch Digging** *Pow*  
See the Character Burner, page 238.

**Drinking** *Forte*  
See the Character Burner, page 238.

**Drink-wise**

**Drunk-wise**

**Dye Manufacture** *Per/Agi*  
See the Character Burner, page 238.

**Embroidery** *Per/Agi*  
See the Character Burner, page 239.

**Emperor's Whims-wise**

**Emperor-wise**

**Engineering** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 239.

**Engraving** *Agility*  
See the Character Burner, page 239.

**Erotic Art-wise**

**Estate Management** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 239.

**Etching** *Agility*  
See the Character Burner, page 240.

**Etiquette** *Will/Per*

Proper etiquette is supremely important to the nobles and warriors of Nihon. When in a noble or imperial court, a player whose character is of a higher rank or station may challenge the etiquette of another petitioner.

**Obstacle:** Make a versus test between the two characters. The winner

gains a one time +1D advantage against his opponent in matters of etiquette or position. He may also set the level of language appropriate to their interaction. See the Etiquette chapter. Also, if another player should fail to address a warrior, noble or courtier by his proper title and honorific, then that player suffers a +1 Ob penalty to the Etiquette test. Also, anyone who is misaddressed, regardless of rank or station, may call for an Etiquette test. See the Etiquette chapter for more.

**Forks:** Conspicuous

**Skill Type:** Social

**Tools:** No.

**Extortion** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 240.

**Fabric-wise**

**Falconry** *Will/Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 240.

**Falsehood** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 240.

**Farming** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 241.

**Fashion-wise**

**Fief-wise**

**Field Dressing** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 241.

**Firebuilding** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 241.

**Fishing** *Per/Agi*  
See the Character Burner, page 241.

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**Five Elements-wise**

**Fletcher** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 242.

**Flute** Will/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 252,  
Musical Instrument.

**Folklore** Per

See the Character Burner, page 242.

**Foolish Noble-wise**

**Foraging** Per

See the Character Burner, page 242.

**Foreigner-wise**

**Forest-wise**

**Forgery** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 243.

**Fortess-wise**

**Fountain-wise**

**Gambling** Will/Per

See the Character Burner, page 244.

**Garden-wise**

**Geometry Training** Per

See the Character Burner, page 244.

**Gossip-wise**

**Governor-wise**

**Grindstone-wise**

**Guest-wise**

**Guts-wise**

**Haggling** Will

See the Character Burner, page 244.

**Handsome  
Provincial Lord-wise**

**Harvest-wise**

**Hauling** Will/Power

See the Character Burner, page 245.

**Heiankyo Court-Wise**

**Hell-wise**

**Heraldry** Per

See the Character Burner, page 245.

**Herbalism** Per

See the Character Burner, page 245.

**Herbalist-wise**

**History** Per

See the Character Burner, page 245.

**Honey-wise**

**Horse-wise**

**Hunting** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 246.

**Husband-wise**

**Illuminations** Agi

See the Character Burner, page 246.

**Imperial Family-wise**

**Inconspicuous** Will

See the Character Burner, page 246.





**Insect Husbandry** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 227, Animal Husbandry.

**Instruction** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 246.

**Interrogation** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 247.

**Intimidation** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 247.

**Jade-wise**

**Jargon** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 248.

**Jeweler** *Per/Agi*  
See the Character Burner, page 248.

**Joints-wise**

**Joubutsu** *Per*  
Joubutsu literally means “to make a spirit placated so that it vanishes and leaves the world.” The skill grants the character the ability to find, speak with, and, hopefully, placate spirits of the dead and onidemons. Joubutsu requires rigorous prayer and chanting from the priest. He also must have prayer beads or a shakujo staff. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended.

**FoRKS:** Butsudo, Onmyodo

**Obstacles:** Detecting the hidden presence of spirits or demons: obstacle is 10 minus the Will of the creature (this detection defeats Stealthy or Spirit Unseen). Speaking with the dead or demons, Ob 2. To placate the dead and send them on

to their final resting place, the priest must engage them in a Duel of Wits. Joubutsu is the dueling skill for the priest. The spirit may use any of the standard social skills. A priest may force a Duel of Wits by performing a ritual to bring the demon or spirit before him. The obstacle is equal to the spirit’s Will. Failure allows the spirit to walk away from the Duel of Wits and/or possess the priest. See the rules for Possession in the Kami chapter.

**Skill Type:** Sorcerous

**Tools:** Yes, prayer beads or a shakujo staff.

**Jujutsu** *Agility*

Yawara, Tekoi, Sumai and Kumi-Uchi are ancient forms of Japanese wrestling, grappling and unarmed fighting. They have been grouped here under the common modern title of Jujutsu for simplicity’s sake. The player may take his skill as Jujutsu or any of the specific names above. This skill is designed to defeat armed and armored opponents when unarmed. This skill allows the character to use all martial actions except Great Strike and Feint. Characters with this skill may use Jujutsu in place of Power for Charges, Locks, and Pushes. They may also perform the Counter-Lock and Counter-Push actions. These operate the same as the Counterstrike action, except rather than strike, the character Locks or Pushes.

**FoRKS:** Brawling, Aiki-Jutsu

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** No.

**Junk-wise**

**Kami-wise**





**Kami-no-Michi** *Will/Per*

Literally, “the Way of the Spirit Gods.” Kami-no-Michi is the province of Shinto priests who have been marked with the Shinko trait. Using this skill, the priests may say prayers and perform rituals that call on the powers of the kami. They may listen to kami, placate angry kami, ask for good luck, help with the harvest and even summon rain or storms. Kami-no-Michi rituals and prayers are long and involved. The priest must have a prayer stick and clean, folded white paper. If a priest should touch a dead animal or human, all Kami-no-Michi tests suffer a +2 Ob penalty until he is purified by Oharai. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended.

**FoRKs:** Chinkonto

**Obstacle:** Listen to why the kami are angry or content, Ob 1. Ask for good luck (+1D to the next test), Ob 3. Link to any peasant type skill, obstacle equal to test. Summon rain, Ob 6 (as in the Rainstorm spell on page 183 of the Character Burner). Summon storms: use the Natural Effect scale on page 214 of the Burning Wheel; obstacle is equal to desired effect. This effect *always* angers the kami of a Strength equal to natural effect summoned. Placating a kami requires the priest engage the spirit in a Duel of Wits. However, forcing an unwilling kami into a Duel of Wits requires a Kami-no-Michi test equal to the kami’s Strength. If successful, the spirit must engage in a Duel of Wits. Margin of success adds to the priest’s body of argument. If failed, the spirit may harm the priest or simply

refuse the duel. The priest may use Suasion or Kami-no-Michi as his main dueling skill in the duel.

**Skill Type:** Sorcerous

**Tools:** Yes, gohei.

**Kantei** *Per*

The skill of evaluating and appraising swords. In addition to determining the value (aka the Resources obstacle) for swords, Kantei may also be used to determine the blessed, magical or enchanted properties of a sword.

**FoRKs:** Appraisal, Metallurgy, Swordsmith

**Obstacles:** 5 minus the Tradition trait-based reputation of the swordsmith, plus +1 Ob for every century of age, plus +1 Ob if the sword is lightly damaged or dirty, +2 Ob if the sword is heavily damaged or rusted. The obstacle for determining an enchantment is 10 minus the obstacle of the enchantment.

**Skill Type:** Artisan

**Tools:** No.

**Kenjutsu** *Agility*

Kenjutsu is the way of the sword. This skill allows the warrior to use any type of sword, dagger or knife (tanto, odachi, mino tachi, etc.) in combat. It otherwise acts as the Sword skill in Burning Wheel.

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** Yes, a sword or knife!

**Knife in the Back-wise**

**Knots** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 248.

**Knots-wise**



**Koku-wise**

**Kugutsu** Will

Kugutsu is the art of puppet theater. Subjects include swordplay, wrestling and short dramas (of the puppets, not the puppeteers). Kugutsu is a low art and practiced by dubious men and their prostitute wives.

**Obstacles:** A simple puppet, Ob 1. A simple martial performance, Ob 2. A complex puppet, Ob 3. A drama, Ob equals the mean Will of the audience.

**Skill Type:** Special

**Tools:** Yes, puppets and carving tools.

**Kyuba-no-michi** Perception

The way of the horse and bow. This is a training skill that allows the character to use a bow and sword from a mount as per the Mounted Combat for bowmen rules on page 247 of the Burning Wheel (i.e., not that Mounted Combat Training for knights).

**Skill Type:** Martial Training

**Tools:** No.

**Kyudo** Per/Agi

The way of the bow. A skill that allows the user to fire any and all bows, including daikyū and hankyū.

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** A bow.

**Lacquer Training** Per/Agi

Coating a finished product with a soft gloss lacquer, be it on chopsticks or armor, is an art common to nearly all craftsman in Nihon. This training skill allows the artist to coat his work so that it is resistant

to water, alcohol and heat. The training also allows the character to harvest and manufacture lacquer.

**Skill Type:** Craftsman Training

**Tools:** Yes.

**Ladder Climbing-wise**

**Landlord-wise**

**Lantern-wise**

**Lapidary** Per

See the Character Burner, page 249.

**Lazy-wise**

**Leather-wise**

**Literacy** Per

Literature and poetry flourish in this age. In order to be able to enjoy the fruits of these arts, a student must study the alphabets and learn the proper forms for the words.

**Skill Type:** Academic

**Tools:** No.

**Local History** Per

See the Character Burner, page 245, History.

**Loot-Wise**

**Lord-wise**

**Lowlands-wise**

**Loyalty-wise**

**Lust-wise**

**Mama Fujiwara-wise**

**Mason** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 250.

**Materials-wise**

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**Meditation** Will  
See the Character Burner, page 250.

**Mending** Per/Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 251.

**Mercenary-wise**

**Merchant-wise**

**Midwifery** Will/Per  
See the Character Burner, page 251.

**Miller** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 251.

**Mineral-wise**

**Minister-wise**

**Ministry-wise**

**Misogi** Will/Forte

Misogi is a form of ritual purification, in which the user chants, dances and then places himself beneath a waterfall. He then prays to the kami of the waterfall to purify him: "Harae-tamae-Kiyome-tamae-rokon-sho-jo!" This purification can be used to remove curses and to aid in spiritual endeavors. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended.

**Obstacle:** The obstacle for the Misogi ritual to cure illness is equal to the penalty the illness applies. Obstacle to remove a curse is equal to the Will of the cursing demon. Misogi may also be used as a Linked test to any test if the character can perform the lengthy misogi ritual under the waterfall. Successful linked Misogi tests grant +2D instead of +1D.

**Skill Type:** School of Thought

**Tools:** No, but waterfall yes!

**Monastic Ritual** Will  
See the Character Burner, page 165.

**Mount Hiei-wise**

**Mountain-wise**

**Mount-wise**

**Music Composition** Will/Per  
See the Character Burner, page 252.

**Musical Instrument** Will/Agi  
See the Character Burner, page 252.

**Naginata-jutsu** Agi/Power

The way of the glaive. Naginata-jutsu allows the user to use a polearm in combat. Naginata have different stats than standard Burning Wheel polearms. Please consult the Weapons chapter.

**FoRKs:** Sojutsu

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** A big stick or a naginata!

**Navigation** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 252.

**Night Ambush-wise**

**Noble Truth-wise**

**Observation** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 253.

**Occult-Wise**

**Office-wise**

**Oharai** Will/Per

Oharai is a ritual purification that removes sin, impurity, illness and curses from the body. It may be used as a linked test to any test, if the character takes time to perform



the ritual and purify himself beforehand. To alleviate illness and curses, the priest may chant over the victims and pass them through a ritual circle. In addition, the priest may purify an area so that he may better commune with the kami. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended. See below for obstacles.

**ForKs:** Butsudo, Chinkonto, Onmyodo

**Obstacle:** Ritual test obstacles are the obstacle of the test being linked to. Obstacle for curing illness is 1 plus the obstacle/die penalty of the illness. Obstacle to remove curses like Hindrance or the taint of having touched a dead thing is 1 plus the obstacle penalty of the hindrance. Obstacle to remove demonic possession is equal to the Will of the demon. For purifying an area for kami, the player may set his own obstacle. Meeting the obstacle grants advantage dice equal to the obstacle for his next Kami-no-Michi or Onmyodo test in that place.

**Skill Type:** Sorcerous

**Tools:** Yes, gohei. See the Resources list.

**Old Mill-wise**

**Omen-wise**

**Omikuji** *Per*

Omikuji is the art of Shinto divination. The petitioner comes forth and writes his name upon a clean strip of white paper. The Shinto priest then prays to the kami to divine the petitioner's fate. If successful, the Shinto priest may change one of the petitioning character's Beliefs to anything he

sees fit. Obviously, while not an offensive or aggressive ability, it is powerful nonetheless. If a character can be made to seek out a Shinto priest's help, the priest can perhaps cure him of his evil ways. If the character fulfills the conditions of the new Belief, he earns a Deeds point. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended. This skill requires the Shinko trait to use.

**ForKs:** Onmyodo, Chinkonto

**Obstacle:** Obstacle is equal to either 10 minus the trait point cost of the target's most expensive trait, or 10 minus the value of the highest combination of Circles+affiliation +reputation.

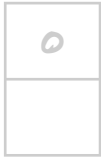
**Skill Type:** School of Thought

**Tools:** Yes, a writing tool kit.

**Onmyodo** *Will/Per*

Onmyodo combines the arts of geomancy, deception and demon summoning. This skill may be used as the Architecture, Almanac, Animal Husbandry and Earth-wise skills. Onmyodo may also be used as a magical Inconspicuous skill. The onmyoji tricks his pursuers into thinking that he is an inanimate object. Onmyodo may be used to summon shikigami—little oni demons—to serve the sorcerer. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended.

**Obstacles:** Linked test obstacles are equal to the test they are being linked to. Obstacles for Inconspicuous are as the standard skill. Shikigami are little demonic servants. They come in the form of small animals (nothing bigger than a dog), but with a demonic telltale—glowing red eyes, a strange mark, etc. All





shikigami have the Spirit Unseen trait/ability and may communicate with the Onmyoji telepathically. Obstacle to summon a Shikigami is 1 plus the creature's Will. If the Shikigami dies, it becomes an angry kami that haunts the sorcerer! See the Shikigami section of the Kami chapter for more. Failure for any Onmyodo test indicates the magic trick has angered the local kami. See the Kami chapter.

**FoRKS:** Origami, Butsudo, Chinkonto

**Skill Type:** Sorcerous

**Tools:** Yes, Onmyodo tools.

### Onmyoji-wise

**Oratory** Will

See the Character Burner, page 253.

### Ore-wise

**Orienteering** Per

See the Character Burner, page 253.

**Origami** Agi

Origami is the art of paper folding.

**Skill Type:** Special

**Tools:** Yes, paper.

**Painting** Will/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 254.

### Paint-wise

### Paperwork-wise

### Patron-wise

### Peasant-wise

### People-wise

**Persuasion** Will

See the Character Burner, page 254.

**Philosophy** Will/Per

See the Character Burner, page 254.

### Pillow-wise

### Pirates-wise

### Plot-wise

**Poetry** Will

See the Character Burner, page 255.

**Poisons** Per

See the Character Burner, page 255.

**Polishing** Per/Agi

The art and practice of sword polishing. This is a revered profession!

**FoRKS:** Kantei, Swordsmith

**Obstacles:** Keeping a sword clean and in fighting trim, Ob 1. Restoring a blade after a short bout or restoring 1 VA, Ob 2. Restoring a blade after many bouts or restoring balance (removing the +1 Ob penalty), Ob 3. Restoring a blade that's been left to the weather, Ob 4. Restoring a sword that has been badly damaged (reduced Power), Ob 5.

**Skill Type:** Artisan

**Tools:** Yes

### Portfolio-wise

### Port-Wise

**Potter** Per/Agi

See the Character Burner, page 256.

### Power-wise

### Price-wise

**Prospecting** Per

See the Character Burner, page 256.



**Protocol-wise**

**Province-wise**

**Purification-wise**

**Rebellion-wise**

**Records-wise**

**Relic-wise**

**Religious Diatribe** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 166.

**Religious History** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 245, History.

**Religious Rumor-wise**

**Research** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 257.

**Retired Emperor-wise**

**Retribution-wise**

**Rhetoric** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 257.

**Rice-wise**

**Riding** *Will*  
See the Character Burner, page 257.

**Rigging** *Agi/Spd*  
See the Character Burner, page 257.

**Rival Monastery-wise**

**Road-wise**

**Rock-wise**

**Rowing Training** *Power*  
See the Character Burner, page 257.

**Rule of Law** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 258.

**Rumor-wise**

**Saddlery** *Per/Agi*  
See the Character Burner, page 258.

**Sake-wise**

**Sandal Making** *Per/Agi*  
The sandal maker is a vital member of the community. Nearly everyone in Nihon wears sandals—called *zori*—of some variety.

**Obstacles:** Simple straw and leather sandals, Ob 1. Fashionable sandals, Ob 2. Durable sandals, Ob 3. Durable fashionable sandals, Ob 4.

**Skill Type:** Craftsman  
**Tools:** Yes.

**Sandal-wise**

**Sangaku** *Agi/Spd*  
Sangaku is a performance art involving acrobatics, juggling, pantomime and comic performance.

**FORKS:** Sangaku may not be FoRKeD into combat, you low life.

**Skill Type:** Physical  
**Tools:** No.

**Sarugaku** *Will*  
Sarugaku is the art of melodramatic and comedic performance. It is a common and base art, designed to entertain the people. It is unsuitable for the rarefied tastes at court.

**Skill Type:** Artist  
**Tools:** No.

**Scavenging** *Per*  
See the Character Burner, page 258.

**Scholar-wise**

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### Scroll-wise

#### Sculpture *Wil/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 258.

### Second Wife-wise

#### Seduction *Will*

See the Character Burner, page 259.

#### Seifukujutsu *Will/Agi*

Seifukujutsu is a healing art that uses herbalism, bone-setting and acupressure to restore the injured and sick to health.

**FoRKs:** Anma Massage

**Obstacles:** Use obstacles as Apothecary, Herbalism and Field Dressing

**Skill Type:** Medicinal

**Tools:** Yes.

### Sekkan-wise

#### Sewing *Agility*

See the Character Burner, page 259.

### Sex-wise

### Shifting Alliance-wise

### Shop-wise

### Shrine-wise

#### Shugendo *Fortz*

Shugendo is the synthesis of a handful of disparate traditions: It draws from Buddhist convictions, a Shinto outlook, and the rigors of an ascetic warrior cult. This skill may be used as the Survival skill (Character Burner, page 263) in mountainous regions. It may also be used to ward against kami, spirits and demons as described under the

Butsudo and Chinkonto skills. And it may be used like the Joubutsu skill to detect the presence of hidden demons or spirits. This skill is considered magical, therefore all tests are open-ended.

**FoRKs:** Butsudo, Chinkonto

**Obstacles:** As per the referenced skills.

**Skill Type:** Special

**Tools:** No.

#### Sing *Will*

See the Character Burner, page 260.

#### Skirmish Tactics *Will/Per*

See the Character Burner, page 260.

#### Sleight of Hand *Agility*

See the Character Burner, page 261.

### Small Throne-wise

### Smoldering Glance-wise

#### Sojutsu *Agility*

Sojutsu is “the way of the spear” (or yari). Sojutsu allows the user to wield a spear in combat. Yari are considered base and beneath a warrior of status. Any warrior with honor who wields a spear suffers an infamous reputation among warriors and the court until such a time as he proves himself and his weapon in an honorable fashion.

**Skill Type:** Martial

**Tools:** A long, pointy stick.

#### Soothing Platitudes *Will*

See the Character Burner, page 261.

### Spirit Broom-wise

#### Stealthy *Speed*

See the Character Burner, page 262.





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**Steel-wise**

**Stone-wise**

**Streetwise** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 263.

**Suasion** Will  
See the Character Burner, page 263.

**Suffering-wise**

**Suitor-wise**

**Supplier-wise**

**Survival** Will/Per  
See the Character Burner, page 263.

**Sutra-wise**

**Swordsmith** Will/Agility

The art of sword making is a young and fast-improving school. Even now, great families are forming around traditional lines of thought, while trying to innovate new forms.

**FoRKs:** Weaponsmith.

**Obstacles:** Tanto, Ob 1. Odachi, Ob 3. Tachi, Ob 4. Mino Tachi, Ob 5. Well-balanced (+1D), +2 Ob.

**Skill Type:** Craftsman

**Tools:** Yes.

**Symbology** Per  
See the Character Burner, page 264.

**Tailor** Per/Agility  
See the Character Burner, page 264.



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**Tanner** \_\_\_\_\_ *Per* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 264.

**Tax Collector-wise**

**Taxation-wise**

**Taxidermy** \_\_\_\_\_ *Per* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 265.

**Temptation-wise**

**Tension-wise**

**Terrain-wise**

**Throwing** \_\_\_\_\_ *Agi* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 265.

**Time-wise**

**Tithe-wise**

**Tools-wise**

**Tracking** \_\_\_\_\_ *Per* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 266.

**Trapper** \_\_\_\_\_ *Per/Agi* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 266.

**Traveler-wise**

**Tree Cutting** \_\_\_\_\_ *Per/Power* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 266.

**Tree-wise**

**Trouble-wise**

**Two-Fisted Fighting**

**Training** \_\_\_\_\_ *Agi* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 266.

**Ugly Truth** \_\_\_\_\_ *Per* \_\_\_\_\_

See the Character Burner, page 267.

**Village-wise**

**Warcraft** \_\_\_\_\_ *Will/Per* \_\_\_\_\_

Conducting your vassals and clansman in battle requires more than simply knowing how to ride, shoot and fight. One must have a sense of the bigger picture—a sense of the movements and needs of thousands of men and horses. Warcraft encompasses tactics, logistics, and strategy on the battlefield in Nihon.

**FoRKs:** Command

**Obstacles:** May be used instead of Perception for Maintaining in Range and Cover. Causes a double obstacle penalty to the opposition if they attempt to Close with Speed. You may only be helped by other characters with Warcraft. However, any of your subordinates on the battlefield who do not have Warcraft may opt to allow you, their commander, to position them. They don't give you any helping dice, their maneuver is chosen by you, and their success or failure is dependent on the Warcraft roll, not their own skills or stats.

**Skill Type:** Military

**Tools:** No.

**Watchman-wise**



**Waterworks** *Per/Agi*

Using specially treated woods and smooth stone pipes, Haikanko build fountains, pools and aqueducts for the wealthy and elite at the capital.

**FORKS:** Engineering, Carpentry, Mason

**Obstacles:** Simple waterways, Ob 1. Waterfalls or cascades, Ob 2. Fountain, Ob 3. Irrigation, Ob 4.

**Skill Type:** Artisan

**Tools:** Yes



**Wax-wise**

**Wealth-wise**

**Weaponsmith** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 267.

**Weather-wise**

**Weaving** *Per/Agi*

See the Character Burner, page 267.

**Wheel of Life-wise**

**Whispered Secrets-wise**

**Wholesale-wise**

**Wife-wise**

**Wood-wise**

**Work-wise**

**Young Slut-wise**





# Resources

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Clothes	1
Traveling Gear	1
Sandals	1
Warrior's Kit	See Below
Arms	See Below
Missiles	See Below
Armor	See Below
Tower Shield	7
Mino Tachi	80
Named Tachi	200
Gokahu-Yumi	100
Azusa-Yumi	125
Shakujo	10
Prayer Beads	2
Gohei	5
Riding Horse	6
Warhorse	12
Ship	20
Silk Kimono	5
Court Finery	15
Oharai Kit	10
Painted Scrolls	10
Hiogi	60
Skill Tool Kit	8
Workshop	20
Property	See Below
Shoen	See Below

**Warrior's Kit**— For ease of use, we've assembled some standard groups of gear for warriors in the Heian era: These are only available to characters who have taken the lifepaths appropriate to the kits.

Warrior	Kit Cost	Kit
Poor Bushi	35 rps	Arms: tanto, tachi. Missiles: hankyu. Armor: o-yoroi.
Bushi	50 rps	Arms: tanto, tachi, naginata or odachi. Missiles: hankyu plus three special heads. Armor: o-yoroi. Warhorse.
Senpai Bushi	60 rps	Arms: tanto, tachi, naginata or odachi. Missiles: daikyu plus three special heads. Armor: o-yoroi. Warhorse.
Common Sohei	20 rps	Arms: tanto, tachi, naginata. Armor: do-maru.
Noble Sohei	75 rps	Arms: tanto, tachi, naginata. Missiles: superior quality hankyu plus three special heads. Armor: o-yoroi. Warhorse.
Ronin	35 rps	Arms: tanto, tachi. Missiles: hankyu. Armor: o-yoroi.
Bandit	33 rps	Arms: kumade and yari or odachi. Missiles: crossbow and bo-shuriken/throwing spikes. Armor: do-maru.
Watchman	15 rps	Arms: bo. Armor: boiled leather.
Itinerant Monk	10 rps	Arms: Shakujo

These kits are not mandatory and they do not provide a discount. They're merely a convenience! Players may custom-build their kits using the individual costs below.

**Arms**— Poor Quality Arms, 5 rps. Run of the Mill Arms, 10 rps. Superior Quality Arms, 40 rps. Arms can include *tachi* and *tanto*, *yari*, *naginata*, *odachi* or *kumade*. If Superior Quality arms are taken, only *one* element of the arms is of special quality. The rest are run of the mill. If Poor Quality arms are taken, all arms are poor quality.

**Missiles**—Bo-shuriken (throwing *spikes*), 3 rps. Hankyu (hunting bow), 5 rps. Crossbow, 10 rps. Daikyu (great bow), 15 rps. Included in the costs of these weapons are enough missiles to adequately outfit the character (about 8 to 12). Special arrowheads are not included and cost extra resource points. They cost 1 rp per special head type—take as many of each head as you like. Rules for special arrowheads are given in the Weapons chapter of this book. Poor Quality Missiles cost



half the resource points cost rounded up. They are all base Ob 2 to hit. Superior Quality Missiles cost three times the base amount. Superior quality missile weapons grant the character a +1D bonus balance die. This is added to his skill every time he takes a shot.

**Armor**— Boiled leather and quilting, 5 rps. Do Maru, 10 rps (plated leather equivalent, see the Weapons and Armor section). O-Yoroi, 20 rps (chainmail equivalent, see the Weapons and Armor section). Superior Quality armor costs double the run of the mill cost. Poor Quality armor costs half the run of the mill cost.

**Tower Shield**— Duels of archery are common in the Heian era, and warfare is decided by masses of bowmen raining their deadly darts down on enemy warriors. A smart and well-prepared warrior has his servants bring a tower shield to conceal and protect him during battle. Tower shields provide one level of cover in Range and Cover so long as the character holds the position. If a Close, Withdraw or Speed-based Maintain is scripted, the shield is abandoned. These may not be used in Fight!

**Shakujo**— A shakujo is a particular Buddhist staff. It has an ornate metal top consisting of three large loops. Two of the loops contain from one to three rings each. The jingling of the staff's rings is used to identify the bearer as a Buddhist monk. The number of rings can determine the status of the user, though most shakujo have six rings, which represent the six states of existence.

**Gohei**—a simple, clean, carved wooden staff bearing unadorned strips of folded white paper. It's integral to Shinto rituals.

**Oharai Kit**—The rope, water, paper, brushes and incense necessary to perform the Oharai ritual.

**Property**— A leaky shack on a hill in the woods, 1 rp. A small cottage on the outskirts of town, 4 rps. A house or "cottage industry" like a weaver, 10 rps. A small business, 20 rps. Moderate-sized business, 30 rps. Manor or estate, 40 rps.\* Successful small business, a large business, a keep, 60 rps.\* A fortress or moderate-sized estate, 75 rps.\* A castle with attendant town, a large estate, 90 rps.\* A walled manor in Heiankyo, 105 rps.\* *Property obviously counts as property when factoring Resources.*

\* Note that only Provincial Warriors, Buddhist Monks, Shinto Priests, members of the Imperial Court, merchants, magnates and artisans may spend more than 40 rps on property. Other characters simply may not own that degree of property (unless otherwise specified).



The property purchase comes with appropriate and attendant staff, buildings and accoutrements. It does not provide the character with other free purchases from the Resources list.

**Shoen**— Reclaimed shoen, 10 rps. Inherited shoen, 15 rps. Shoen are divisions of land and rice paddies. Shoen may be purchased in multiples. Shoen count as property when factoring Resources.

**Riding Mount**— A horse, pony, camel and so forth can be bought with this choice. Basic riding horse stats follow: **Stats:** Pe: B3(4), Wi: B2, Ag: B2, Sp: B6, Po: B6, Fo: B6. **Attributes:** He: B4, St: B3, Re: B4, MW: B12. **Hesitation:** 8. **Skills:** Rider Training, Foraging B2. **Traits:** Castrati, Docile, Obedient, Proud, plus Long-Limbed, Keen Hearing, Hooved, Ungulate. The Mount Burner, available at [www.burningwheel.com/wiki](http://www.burningwheel.com/wiki) as a free downloadable pdf, contains many stats for mounts.

**Warhorse**— A warhorse is trained to carry its master into battle. Basic warhorse stats: Pe: B3(4), Wi: B2, Ag: B4, Sp: B6, Po: B7, Fo: B7. **Attributes:** He: B5, St: B7, Re: B4, MW: B13. **Hesitation:** 5 (Fearless and Determined). **Skills:** Rider Training, Mounted Combat Training, Armor Training, Formation Fighting Training, Intimidation B2, Brawling B3, Foraging B2. **Traits:** Level-Headed, Loyal, Determined, Fearless, Aggressive plus Long-Limbed, Keen Hearing, Hooved, Ungulate. The Mount Burner, available at [www.burningwheel.com/wiki](http://www.burningwheel.com/wiki) as a free downloadable pdf, contains many stats for mounts.

**Ship**— Most ships were small, simple affairs that used oars and single, square-rigged masts. They were quite common and used for commerce, transport and warfare.

**Hiogi**— Hiogi are the fans worn by aristocrats in Nihon. They may only be worn by those with the Born Heiankyo Noble LP or -dono trait. If fluttered ostentatiously, it adds 1D to body of argument in the Duel of Wits.

**Mino Tachi**— Mino Tachi are superior-quality tachi that have also been blessed by a Shinto priest, a Buddhist monk and prayed for by a master craftsman as they were forged. They are light in the hand and proof against spirits—spirit weapons.

**Named Tachi**— These are famed blades forged by the Mino Ryu. They are blessed by a Shinto priest. They are weapons made to be wielded by famous warriors in desperate contests. All Named Tachi are spirit



*Ah, with ever anxious heart*

weapons and may affect creatures with the Spirit Nature trait. The weapon must be named. If named, roll a die to find out the Shinto blessing on the blade: 1-2— Quick Blade (*fast* weapon), 3— Blood Drinker (+2D to Kenjutsu skill, double 6s on those two dice always equal superb hit), 4— Spinning Blade (+1D to all positioning tests, a 6 on that die automatically win positioning), 5-6— Balanced (+1D to Kenjutsu skill). A Named Tachi may only be purchased by a character whose last lifepath is in the Provincial Warrior setting.

**Gokahu-Yumi**—Gokahu-Yumi are heirloom *hankyu* that have been passed down through the family for generations. They count as superior quality, and all arrows fired from them count as spirit weapons. Gokahu-Yumi may only be purchased by a character whose last lifepath is in the Provincial Warrior setting.

**Azusa-Yumi**—The Azusa-Yumi are mighty spirit-fighting weapons. They are superior quality *daikyu*. All arrows fired from them count as spirit weapons. The Azusa-Yumi adds +2D to Joubutsu, Oharai, Butsudo and Chinkonto when exorcising or placating spirits, oni and kami. The bonus can benefit the wielder of the bow, or any worthy person in his presence. This may only be purchased by a character whose last lifepath is in the Provincial Warrior setting.







# Emotional Attributes

There are four emotional attributes (see page 230 of the Burning Wheel) at play in Nihon: Honor, Shame, Authority and Arahitogami. Honor and Shame are the two warring impulses of the provincial warriors. They are the heart of the *bushido* code. Authority is possessed by the godlike members of the imperial court. Arahitogami is reserved solely for those who take up the mantle of emperor. It represents their connection to the spirits and the gods.



## Honor

In Nihon, the true warriors adhere to a code called bushido—the way of the warrior. Being a warrior is a paradox. The greatest tenet of bushido is loyalty—loyalty to your lord. One does not choose his lord and, in the service of his lord, a bushi may bring shame to his own internal code of conduct and his family. But to be a true warrior one must subsume one's self, one's own interests, even the interests of one's soul, to stand by one's lord. There is an old and profound proverb that is taught to the young warrior even before he can grip a bow:

*"Who is the better warrior: The one who fights against his evil lord, or the one who serves an evil lord unto death?"*

*"The one who serves without question."*

The Honor emotional attribute is a measure of a warrior's adherence to the bushido code, the respect that this adherence generates among his peers and how that discipline enhances his inner strength.



## Starting Honor

In order to start with Honor, the character must have the Bushido trait. Honor is an attribute like Grief, and is rated with its own exponent. The starting Honor exponent is B1. Answer the following questions to determine bonuses or penalties to that exponent.

Add +1 Honor for each of the following traits: -san, -sama, Sensei, -dono and Toryo.

Read the following questions aloud to the warrior players:

Do you consider yourself an honorable man? If so, increase Honor by 1.

If your lord ordered you to undertake a difficult and arduous task, would you cheerfully accept? If so, increase Honor by 1.

If your lord ordered you to commit an unjust act—murder, theft, deceit—would you undertake the task? If so, increase Honor by 1.

If your lord ordered you to divorce your wife so that he could marry her, would you obey? If so, increase Honor by 1.

If your lord ordered you to execute your own father, would you obey? If so, increase Honor by 1.

If your lord ordered you to commit suicide due to an *infraction* of etiquette, would you obey? If so, increase Honor by 1.

Are you a wicked or cruel man? Will you murder at the slightest provocation? If so, decrease starting Honor by 1.

Honor may never start higher than exponent 9. You may not start with a gray-shade Honor.

## Using Honor

Honor is a standard to which a character must measure up. But it may be tested and manipulated to gain benefit.

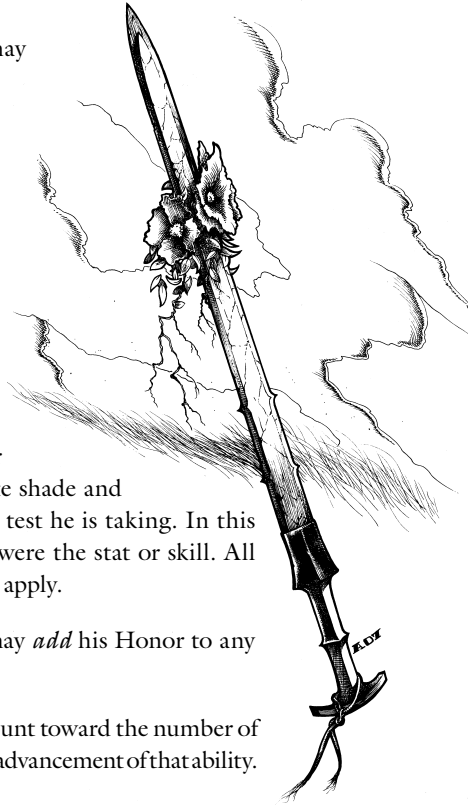
### *Inner Strength: Honor and Artha*

Fate, Persona and Deeds points may be used to tap into the inner strength granted by Honor. However, in order to do so, the majority of the players at the table must agree that the task to be performed is indeed honorable.



## Emotional Attributes

- For one Fate point, a warrior may call upon the honorable spirits of his ancestors to help him. Honor may then *help* any stat or skill test, whether one of the character's own abilities or a comrade's. Help gives 1D for exponent 4 or lower, 2D for exponent 5 and higher. The help is consider to be from an outside force, like his ancestor's spirits. This bonus is in addition to standard FoRKs and help.
- For one Persona point, a warrior may *substitute* his Honor attribute shade and exponent for a skill or stat in any test he is taking. In this case, the attribute counts as if it were the stat or skill. All other normal testing conventions apply.
- For one Deeds point, a warrior may *add* his Honor to any skill or stat test he is taking.



Honor dice added to a skill or stat *do* count toward the number of dice rolled for determining difficulty for advancement of that ability.

### *Injury and Honor*

Injury does not reduce a character's Honor attribute.

## Advancing Honor

When a player uses his Honor to help or substitute, he records a test for advancing the attribute as per the standard advancement mechanics. Compare the obstacle of the test to the exponent of the Honor to determine the type of test taken.

### *Situational Tests for Honor*

In addition to those tests, Honor uses a strict and rigorous situational test system. Any time the character is confronted with the conditions of a situational test and comports himself in a manner befitting the conditions of Honorable behavior, he earns the appropriate test. Multiple tests may be earned for a single situation.

Honor advances like a skill—routine tests count for exponent 4 and lower, and do not count for exponent 5 and higher.



## Situational Honor Tests

### *Obstacle 1*

Cleanliness—a bushi must be clean, orderly and well dressed at all times. Humility—a bushi must be humble in the face of his betters.

### *Obstacle 2*

Piety—a bushi exhibits piety to Buddha. Ancestor worship—a bushi pays homage and burns incense for his elders on all of the proper days. Obedience—a bushi must obey his lord and his representatives without hesitation and without question.

### *Obstacle 3*

Virtuousness—a bushi must resist temptation and lust and lead a virtuous life.

### *Obstacle 4*

Courage—a bushi must be brave in the face of death. (This test is earned for passing Steel tests without hesitation and for earning the MVP or Workhorse artha award for brave actions.) Donation—worldly attachments bind the soul to the mortal world. Bushi who give away their earthly possessions (via an Ob 4 Resources test, pass or fail) earn Honor.

### *Obstacle 5*

Honesty and truthfulness—a bushi must be honest in all of his dealings, even in the face of humiliation or punishment. Donation—worldly attachments bind the soul to the mortal world. Bushi who give away their earthly possessions (via an Ob 5 Resources test, pass or fail) earn Honor.

### *Obstacle 6*

Sacrifice—protecting or defending those unable to defend themselves. Donation—worldly attachments bind the soul to the mortal world. Bushi who give away their earthly possessions (Resources Ob 6) earn Honor. Excellence—a bushi must excel in culture, craft and art in order to deepen his soul. Attaining an exponent 6 skill in Poetry, Meditation, Butsudo, Chinkonto, Painting, Composition, Kyudo or a Musical Instrument earns an Ob 6 test for advancing Honor.

### *Obstacle 7*

In order to attain true Honor, and ultimately nirvana, a bushi must give away all that he owns. Resources valued at Ob 7 freely given to those in need earns Honor. Excellence—a bushi must excel in culture,



## *Emotional Attributes*

craft and art in order to deepen his soul. Attaining an exponent 7 skill in Poetry, Meditation, Butsudo, Chinkonto, Painting, Composition, Kyudo or a Musical Instrument earns an Ob 7 test for advancing Honor.

### *Obstacle 8*

Excellence—a bushi must excel in culture, craft and art in order to deepen his soul. Attaining an exponent 8 skill in Poetry, Meditation, Butsudo, Chinkonto, Painting, Composition, Kyudo or a Musical Instrument earns an Ob 8 test for advancing Honor.



*Obstacle 9*

Asceticism—ultimately, a bushi must forsake ties to his property, his family, his heirloom weapons and even society. This is earned when a bushi gives away his property, severs ties to his relationships and leaves behind his old reputation. Enlightenment—being voted for a unique trait due to a heroic or amazing act in play.

*Obstacle 10*

Self-sacrifice—suffering a Mortal Wound in service of your lord is the greatest expression of Honor.

## Honor and Shame

Honor and Shame are closely intertwined. It is almost impossible to have one without the other. If ever Shame exceeds Honor, an Honor Debt is incurred. See the honor debt section below for more.

## Shame

Shame is an emotional attribute that plagues all characters with the Bushido trait. Shame is complicated and acts on many levels. If Honor can be compared with the keen edge of a bushi's blade, Shame represents the dulling of the sword's sharpness. It comes from failure to act in the interests, and at the command, of one's lord. This is the most basic level of shame and the easiest to ascertain.

Shame also arises from failing the memory of one's ancestors. Anything a bushi does to bring disrepute to his family name is acting in a shameful manner.

There is also the shame that comes from failing one's own soul. This is Shame at its most complicated. Every bushi is attuned to the teachings of the Buddha and the dharmic cycle of suffering and rebirth. Every bushi is also aware of the demands of the Buddha, and the requirements to gain enlightenment and to end this cycle. Every action that leads a bushi farther away from inner enlightenment and reinforces the dharmic cycle—surrender to passions like ambition and lust—contributes to the shame of a bushi's soul. This is the hardest level of Shame to avoid. Indeed, many acts that are required by a bushi's fidelity to his lord and family are done so at the cost of his soul. Avoiding shame on one level can very easily produce shame on another.



## *Emotional Attributes*

Although shameful acts contravene Honor, they can, nevertheless, be a source of power. We have all witnessed people with no self-respect doing the most unspeakable things. Tapping into one's Shame can be a liberating, if ultimately empty, experience.

### **Starting Shame**

All characters with the Bushido trait start with a B1 Shame. Shame is an attribute like Faith and is rated with its own exponent. Answer the following questions to determine bonuses or penalties to that exponent.

Add +1 Shame for each of the following traits: Ambitious, Mercenary, No Face, -san, -sama, -dono, and Toryo.

Read the following questions aloud to your warrior players:

Have you ever disobeyed your lord? If so, increase Shame by 1.

Have you slain another bushi in a duel? If so, increase Shame by 1.

If you have ever participated in a great battle, increase Shame by 1.

If your lord ordered you to commit an unjust act—murder, theft, deceit—would you undertake the task? If so, increase Shame by 1.

If your lord is rapacious and murderous, would you serve him unflinchingly? If so, increase Shame by 1.

If your lord ordered you to divorce your wife so that he could marry her, would you obey? If so, increase Shame by 1.

If your lord ordered you to execute your own father, would you obey? If so, increase Shame by 1.

If your lord ordered you to commit suicide in order to reduce the stain of shame you had placed on him with your actions, would you obey? If so, decrease starting Shame by 1.

Do you slaughter innocents, drink their blood and eat their babies? If so, increase Shame by 1.

Shame may never start higher than exponent 9. You may not start with a gray-shade Shame.



## Using Shame

Shame, like Honor, is a measure of the character's behavior in the game. It is an inverse of the Honor code. It may be tapped with artha in order to commit shameful, lustful, murderous acts!

### *Burning Desire: Shame and Artha*

Artha may only be spent to tap Shame when the character is performing shameful acts. If the majority of the group at the table deems the act shameful, dishonorable or heinous, then the artha may be spent!

- For one Fate point, a warrior may call upon the shameful spirits of his ancestors to help him. Shame may then *help* any stat or skill test, whether one of the character's own abilities or a comrade's. Help gives 1D for exponent 4 or lower, 2D for exponent 5 and higher. The help is consider to be from an outside force, like his ancestor's spirits. This bonus is in addition to standard FoRKs and help.
- For one Persona point a warrior may *substitute* his Shame for any skill or stat in any test.
- For one Deeds point a warrior may *add* his Shame exponent to any skill or stat test.

Shame dice added to a skill or stat *do* count toward the number of dice rolled for determining difficulty for advancement of that ability.



### *Injury and Shame*

Injury does not reduce a character's Shame attribute.



## Advancing Shame

When a player uses his Shame to help or substitute, he records a test for advancement toward the attribute as per the standard advancement mechanics. Compare the obstacle of the test to the exponent of the Shame to determine the type of test taken. In this case, the attribute counts as if it were the stat or skill. All other normal testing conventions apply.

### *Situational Tests for Shame*

In addition to those tests, Shame uses a strict and rigorous situational test system. Any time the character is confronted with the conditions





## *Emotional Attributes*

of a situational test and comports himself in a manner befitting the conditions of Shameful behavior, he earns the appropriate test. Multiple tests may be earned for a single situation.

Shame advances like a skill—routine tests count for exponent 4 and lower, and do not count for exponent 5 and higher.

### **Situational Shame Tests**

#### *Obstacle 1*

Lust—coveting a woman you cannot have; succumbing to lust with a woman who is not your wife. Drunkenness—drinking to the point of excess.

#### *Obstacle 2*

Gluttony—eating to excess. Greed—taking more than your share or ensuring that others do not get as much as you do. Contentiousness—to question your lord or superior.

#### *Obstacle 3*

Violence—acting in a violent manner: striking another person or even intimidating with the threat of violence. Trespass—entering another bushi's land without his consent (monasteries, too!).

#### *Obstacle 4*

Materialism—outfitting yourself or your household with ornate, fine or fancy goods, foods, weapons and armor. Fearfulness—failing a Steel test.

#### *Obstacle 5*

Murder—killing another person. Vanity—having any one stat advance to a rank higher than any one of your lord's. Shame—allowing a friend, vassal or ally to take the No Face trait.

#### *Obstacle 6*

Rape—forcing yourself on another man or woman. Scheming—privately or openly plotting against other bushi.

#### *Obstacle 7*

Cowardice—failing a Steel test while in service of your lord or surviving a battle in which your lord or superior was slain or in which your side was defeated. Negligence—disregarding an order, request or expectation of your lord. Vanity—advancing any one of your stats two higher than a corresponding stat of your lord.



**Obstacle 8**

Pillage—raiding from farms, villages, castles and towns. To cause suffering—to cause misery and suffering in others through your direct action or inaction.

**Obstacle 9**

Ambition—to aspire to greater rank, power or wealth. Mass murder—slaughtering peasantry or retreating or surrendered soldiers.

**Obstacle 10**

Disobedience—direct disobedience of your lord.

## Exponent 10 Shame

Once a warrior's Shame has reached exponent 10, he has come to the end of his path. He must chart a new course. He may erase the shameful stain of his deeds by honorably committing suicide (see Seppuku below), or he may rebel (see Rebellion below).

## Honor Debt

Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism share one thing in common: the notion that imbalance is to be avoided if at all possible. Imbalance is a blemish; moreover, internal imbalance is an indication that a warrior has fallen from the path to enlightenment. When the Shame exponent is higher than the Honor exponent, a warrior's lord may impose an honor debt. If the lord does not impose an honor debt on his wayward vassal, the lord must take a test toward advancing his own Shame. The obstacle for that test is equal to the vassal's Shame.

A character in honor debt must swear one oath of honor to his lord for each 1D of discrepancy between Shame and Honor. A character with a 2D difference must take on two oaths. A character with a 3D difference must take on three oaths. A character with a 4D difference is in serious trouble. See Seppuku, below. The character and the lord may negotiate what each oath is, but usually they should be a perilous errands or services of some kind. For example, *I will protect the Lady Shikubu's life with my own.*

An oath sworn must be written as a Belief for the character. It replaces one of the character's current Beliefs. The player may decide which one it replaces.



## *Emotional Attributes*

As play progresses and the situation evolves, oaths may be adapted and modified to suit the current situation, but they must abide by the spirit of the original oath. The GM is the final arbiter of this process.

Oaths may not be substituted or completely changed until they are fulfilled *and* Honor advances so there is no longer a disparity.

### **You Need a Lord to Get an Honor Debt**

To get an Honor Debt you need a lord in the first place. Every warrior with the -san, -sama or -dono traits has a superior lord. The toryo's lord is the emperor and/or retired emperor.

#### *What About the Provincial Kohai?*

Although kohai have the Bushido trait, they lack the -san trait and concomitant relationship with a lord. Any time a kohai's conduct produces an imbalance between Honor and Shame, the ensuing oath must be sworn by his father or another male with whom he has a relationship. This means a lord can earn Shame from the errant acts of the children of his vassals.

## **Seppuku**

If a character has more oaths to swear than he has Belief slots, there is only one way to clear his name and regain honor. He must commit seppuku; his lord may demand that he perform ritual suicide.

Seppuku is suicide committed to avert some great dishonor. It can be carried out in an elaborate ceremony, where the bushi is allowed to don a white kimono, compose a suicide poem, and have a second, a *kaishaku*, assist with the suicide. When done in ritual, the bushi slits his belly with a tanto. At the first sign of discomfort, the kaishaku is allowed to behead the bushi with his sword. It is also sometimes expedient to carry out seppuku in the heat of battle. In this case, poetry and formalities are dispensed with and the bushi is allowed to commit suicide in any manner necessary.

When faced with a demand for seppuku, a player may do one of two things: be a good sport and carry it out, or resist and become a rebel! If a character goes through with seppuku in a manner befitting a warrior, his next character starts with an extra Deeds point. The group may decide if the death was a worthy one. And the suicide, in this case, may be suicide committed amidst a sublime ceremony complete with a really cool suicide poem, or a suicide hastily committed in the heat of battle



## Ah, with ever anxious heart

in spectacular fashion. Walking around the parapets openly and getting lit up like a porcupine with hundreds of arrows or a self-decapitation while riding into battle will do.

### Rebellion

If the player decides to have his character resist seppuku, he must understand that he is standing up against the weight of tradition and spitting in the face of honor!

Resistance costs 1 Persona point and requires that the character pass a Shame test. The obstacle is equal to his Honor exponent. Artha may be spent on the roll as usual. Shame and Honor may not be used.

A character who successfully resists earns the No Face trait unless he is a Clan Chieftain.

#### *Rebel Clan Chieftains*

Clan chieftains are different from you and me. The only persons who can demand an honor debt from a clan chieftain are the emperor and the retired emperor. If a clan chieftain refuses seppuku from the emperor or retired emperor, instead of earning the No Face trait, he and his entire clan are declared *Outlaw*. The chieftain and anyone bearing his clan name immediately earn a 3D infamous reputation as rebels with the emperor, his family and all of their allies. In addition, the chieftain and all of his lord-vassals must immediately pass a lifestyle maintenance test. All debts become immediately due and you are cut off from various streams of revenue.

Outlaw status is only removed when a new emperor succeeds to the throne and pardons the rebels or if the offending chieftain is named shogun by the emperor.

In history, when a minor chieftain refused seppuku, he and his clan were crushed. Great clan chieftains, like those of the Taira or Minamoto, who refused the imperial honor debt, launched the whole country into civil war.

### What About a Vassal Whose Lord Dies?

If a lord dies naturally, the vassal becomes the retainer of whomever inherits the *shoen*, or fief.



## Emotional Attributes

If a lord dies violently, and his fief is seized by someone outside the clan, any of his retainers may elect to become ronin and take the *Sworn to Vengeance* trait.

A ronin with the Sworn to Vengeance trait gains an extra belief that must be connected to avenging his late lord's death.

*Torinaga-sama killed my lord dishonorably; I will eat his liver in front of his concubine.*

Until the oath is fulfilled, Honor and Shame may only be applied to tests in pursuit of the oath. Honor cannot be advanced. When the oath is fulfilled all Honor tests incurred up until that point are applied at once. Once the vow is fulfilled the ronin becomes the vassal of the current holder of the fief. Make sure it is not your lord's killer!

### Starting Honor Debt

Players will often begin the game with a character whose Shame is higher than his Honor. The player and GM should discuss the matter. They can work together to come up with Beliefs that satisfy the honor debt to the lord, or the GM can opt to not apply the honor debt and take the Shame tests for the lord. Both options have weight. The first puts the character into action immediately. The second places the lord in jeopardy of advancing his Shame.

## A Woman's Honor

The noblewomen of the provinces are as committed to Honor as their male kin. Tradition and religion means that this commitment is manifested in different ways. The *Woman's Honor* trait opens the Honor and Shame emotional attributes for women. Instead of taking a relationship with a lord through a subsequent -san trait, a woman gets a free relationship with a male to whom she is now honor-bound. That person may be a father, a brother, a husband or a lover. If the woman's Honor attribute falls behind Shame, then the man to whom she is bound must swear the oath to alleviate the debt. If the man to whom the woman is honor-bound dies violently (this includes seppuku committed on her behalf) the woman may immediately take the Sworn to Vengeance trait against the offending killer.



# Authority

The aristocrats of Heiankyo rule all of Nihon. These families are not soldiers or wealthy merchant princes. Indeed, they look down on all who indulge in such mean feats. In Heiankyo, tradition and religion bequeath a mythical authority upon the ruling class. Tradition states that these men and women are destined to rule. Religion states they are unto gods and wield mystic power. It is through this authority that they maintain their grip on the heart of Nihon.

Authority is an emotional attribute possessed by members of the imperial court. It is different from Honor and Shame.

## The Weight of Authority

In order to refuse a Duel of Wits, anyone without the Authority attribute must pass a Steel test at an obstacle penalty equal to the Authority-bearing character's Authority exponent. Authority-bearing characters may refuse a Duel of Wits with one another as per the standard rules, or as required by their traits.

All parties may escalate to violence after said Duel of Wits, as per the standard rules if they feel it would benefit their aims.

## Authority and Artha

- For one Fate point, the Authority emotional attribute may be used to *help* any body of argument roll in a Duel of Wits against a commoner or warrior, whether it's his own ability or a comrade's. Help gives 1D for exponent 4 or lower, 2D for exponent 5 and higher. This is in addition to standard FoRKs and help.
- For one Persona point, the Authority exponent may be added (don't roll) to the body of argument in a Duel of Wits against a commoner or warrior.
- For one Deeds point, the Authority exponent may be added as dice to any Oratory, Persuasion, Command or Intimidation roll involving a commoner or a warrior.

Authority dice added to a skill or stat *do* count toward the number of dice rolled for determining difficulty for advancement.



## Starting Authority

Authority is something that you are born with and then increase through rank. Unlike the muddled and angst-ridden affairs of honor and shame, Authority is a very simple and direct matter. In order to gain the Authority emotional attribute at B0, the character must have the Revered of Nihon or the Power Behind the Throne traits.

Add +1 to Authority for each of the following traits: Yamato, Fujiwara, Denka, Crown Prince, Hime, Councilor, Great Councilor, Udaijin, Sadaijin, Prime Minister, The Power Behind the Throne, Eye of the Emperor, Second Wife, Tenno and Daijo Tenno.

Authority may not start above exponent 9. You may not start with a gray-shade Authority.

## Advancing Authority

Authority does not advance via tests like Honor and Shame. It increases as the rank of the character increases.

The Authority exponent increases by one when an affiliation rank is raised in the course of play. Authority exponent also advances when a non-infamous, court-based reputation rank is increased.

### *Losing Authority*

Authority is decreased when affiliations are lost—remove dice equal to the rank of the affiliation from the Authority exponent. Authority is also decreased if a court- or provincial warrior-based reputation is turned to infamous in the course of play. Lastly, the Authority exponent is decreased if any of the Authority bonus traits are voted off in play, one point per trait voted off.

## Arahitogami

Arahitogami means “a god who is a human being.” It is a very simple concept: The emperor is a divine entity, invested with power from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. This gives the emperor special sway with the other Shinto spirits and deities. (How do you think Nihon was able to engineer two typhoons in a row for the Mongols?)

### Arahitogami and Artha

This power is much simpler than the applications of Honor and Shame:



## *Ah, with ever anxious heart*

For one Fate point, the emperor may *help any* Kami-no-Michi test with his Arahitogami.

For one Persona point, the emperor may *add* his Arahitogami exponent to any body of argument (do not roll) in a Duel of Wits. This is cumulative with Authority if the conditions are right.

For one Deeds point, the emperor may *double* his Arahitogami and *add* it to *any* Kami-no-Michi test taking place in his presence or at a favored shrine (if the emperor himself is deep in prayer).

### **Starting Arahitogami**

The Arahitogami exponent is equal to the emperor's Will exponent plus 1D for the Daijo Hoo trait. It also takes the shade of his Will.

### **Advancing Arahitogami**

Arahitogami advances as the emperor's Will advances.

## *Artha and Emotional Attributes*

Players may use the standard artha rules in this setting. The options are presented here as additions to the basic mechanics.







# Etiquette

The etiquette of language in Nihon is delicate and complex. In order to navigate the social structure of the various classes and castes, one must speak carefully and deliberately. When in doubt, speaking most formally is always the best road to take.

The material provided here is mostly for color and fun, but also to lay the groundwork for lots of Etiquette tests due to improper address.

## *Proper Address*

It is proper to address a person by his title or his clan or family name. An honorific is attached to the end of the title or name. It is only permissible to refer to someone by their given name if they are a close relative or dear friend.

## **Family and Clan Names**

Examples of clan names include: Minamoto, Taira, Fujiwara, Tachibana and Reizei Genji. See the Clans of Nihon appendix for a list of about 50 clans of the era.

## **Given Names**

Examples of given names include: Anzu, Ayame, Kisho, Kita, Shimari, Shina, Shinichi, Shizuka. For a more complete list of given names, see the Names appendix in the back of the book.



# ***Titles and Honorifics***

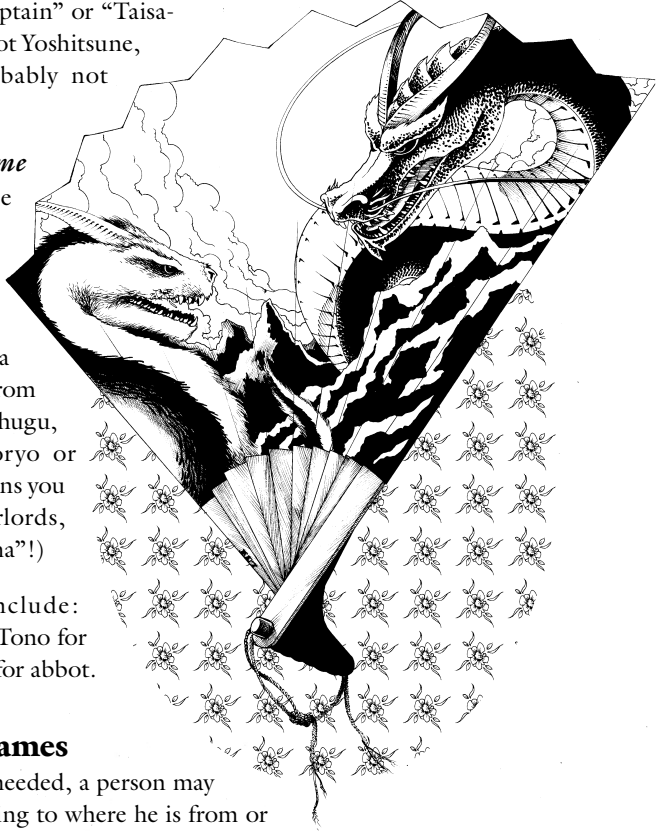
## **Titles**

It is common to address a person using his occupation or title, rather than by his name. So, for example, Captain Yoshitsune of the Minamoto would be called “Captain” or “Taisa-sama” by his men. Not Yoshitsune, not Yoshi and probably not Minamoto-sama.

### ***Titles in the Game***

It is permissible to use the last lifepath of the character as his title in the game, unless he has a special title trait from the lifepaths like Chugu, Daijo Tenno, Toryo or similar. (That means you can call evil warlords, “Evil Warlord-sama”!)

Other titles include: Taisa for captain, Tono for general and Zasu for abbot.



## **Place Names**

If differentiation is needed, a person may be addressed according to where he is from or where he holds lands. If there are two captains, one from Yashima and one from Kamakura, they could both be called Taisa-sama or individually be called Yashima-sama or Kamakura-sama.

## **Honorifics**

Honorifics are terms of respect added to the end of a name or title. They are most often added to names when speaking among members of the same group, whereas names are used when speaking to members outside the group.



Honorifics are attached to the family name or to the position or title of the subject. They are not attached to given names.

### *-san, -sama, -dono*

In the warrior culture, honorifics are assigned by rank: -san to bushi, -sama to captains and -dono to commanders and warlords. The honorific comes at the end of the family name, “Taira-dono,” or title, “Taisa-sama.”

### *-kun and -chan*

-kun is a term of familiarity used when referring to someone of lesser station whom you hold in fond regard. It can be used ironically or sincerely. -chan is a term of endearment added to first names of children, girls and dear friends.

### *Senpai and Kohai*

Students refer to their seniors as *senpai*. Seniors refer to their junior students as *kohai*.

### *Sensei*

Sensei is a form of address for teachers or expert practitioners of a particular field. It follows the family name: *Takahashi-sensei*, for example.

## Language

Language in Nihon is not a simple affair. There are four basic forms of address (and even more dependent forms): plain language, polite language, respectful language and humble language. Plain language is the most informal level. It is only used with close relatives or perhaps when drunk. Polite language is used in general company. (There are even three levels of polite language: plain, polite and formal.) It is always best to err on the side of polite and formal. Respectful language is used when referring to one's superiors. In general, humble language is used when describing one's actions, or the actions of a person in one's in-group, to others, such as customers in business. Humble language tends to imply that one's actions are taking place in order to assist the other person.

### Language of Etiquette

The winner of a versus Etiquette test may set the level of language appropriate for this interaction. Choose plain, polite, respectful or humble.



## *The blossoms are falling*

Plain language can be used to discuss any topic except the health, well-being, mental state of, or concern for, a superior. Plain language is the language of jokes, camaraderie, insults and threats.

Polite language is the default mode for the people of Nihon. It is assumed that all characters are using polite language unless otherwise specified. Etiquette test ties result in polite language being used.

Respectful language is used when speaking to one's superiors. When using respectful language, the player may not refer to himself or his own needs. The player also may not curse, utter profanities or speak in anger or in harsh tones.

Humble language is to make clear that the speaker is attempting to aid or help the recipient of the speech. When using humble language, the speaker cannot claim credit for an action, boast or brag, or speak in anger.

### **Rank and Authority**

If a character is of higher rank than you, or has a higher Authority, you may not set the language level to plain. In fact, you may only reduce the acceptable formality of language if you are of equal or higher rank or Authority than your opponent. Otherwise, if you are of lesser rank, the minimum language level is polite, and that may only be increased to respectful or humble.



### **Breaking the Rules**

If a player breaks the etiquette for the current language, he suffers a +2 Ob to whatever social skill test he is roleplaying. If a player completely breaks the rules and ignores all etiquette, his character must pass a Steel test (versus Wonderment). Failure indicates he hesitates instead of delivering his action or test.

### **Verse**

Instead of setting a language level at plain, polite, respectful or humble, a character who wins an Etiquette versus test may set the language level at "verse." Any Duel of Wits performed must then use the Duel of Verse rules in the Poetry chapter.



## *Bowing*

From the Prime Minister to a first rank bushi to a common peasant, bowing is common to all walks of life in Nihon. It is a polite social gesture, a sign of respect for one's station.

Bowing can also be used to express emotion: humility, gratitude, sincerity and remorse.

Nearly all bows come from the waist. 15 degrees from the waist is the least formal. A 30 degree bow is considered very formal. The back remains straight and the arms and hands remain at the side for men, and held together in front of the legs for girls and women.

A bow typically lasts for just a heartbeat, but longer bows, for two or three heartbeats, demonstrate deeper gratitude and respect.

When someone bows to you, it is customary to bow in return. If a bow is returned with deep gratitude or respect, it is customary to bow again. This can lead to a series of bows.

An inferior is expected to bow with respect and formality to his superiors. A superior may bow to his dependents and charges, but it is not required of him. A simple nod or inclination of the head is often enough to acknowledge the respect of an inferior.

When one encounters a particularly holy person—like an abbot—or a person far above one's station, it is proper to sink to one's knees and touch one's forehead to the ground.

Players are not expected to bow to one another, but they should describe their characters giving the proper respect. Failure to indicate a proper bow in roleplay is grounds for an Etiquette test. Deliberately neglecting or refusing to bow incurs a +2 Ob on your next Etiquette test—a simple Etiquette challenge (see the Etiquette skill description), positioning in a martial challenge (see the Feats of Valor chapter) or an Etiquette test to determine the level of language in a Duel of Wits.





# Poetry

Poetry played a huge part in courtly life in Heian-era Nihon. The *waka* form of poems was the most prominent.

In court, poetry composition contests were common. Some were formal, planned affairs in which competitors brought written verse to the affair. The poems were then read aloud by a lector and scored by a judge on various criteria like content, adherence to form and quality. The other type of contest was extemporaneous. Participants were given topics to include in a poem and had to compose a piece in their head on the spot and recite it.

Obviously this lends itself to exciting game play!

## Waka Form

Waka do not rhyme and do not have lines in their native form. By necessity, the English versions we compose will use lines. But don't rhyme! It is considered a fault. Instead, waka have "units." A unit is a concise poetic concept: There are two main forms of waka: *tanka*, short form, and *choka*, long form.

## Tanka

Tanka are short-form poems that follow a 5/7/5-7/7 structure. For simplicity's sake of reproducing them in English in your games, that's five lines. The first has five syllables, the second has seven, and the third has five. The last two lines have seven syllables each. The following is a tanka translated from Japanese. You'll note that the English translation doesn't follow the syllable or line breaks described above:

In this shimmering spring day,  
Ah, with ever anxious heart  
The blossoms are falling

—Kokinshu 57, Ki no Tomonori

## Choka

Choka are longer in form than tanka. Choka use a 5/7-5/7-5/7/7 structure: Two groups of two lines, each following the five syllable to seven syllable structure, ending with a grouping of three lines with a five syllable, seven syllable and seven syllable structure. Choka can be even longer, in fact. The 5/7 phrase can be repeated for as long as the poet can sustain his beautiful imagery and form, but it always ends with the 5/7/7 phrase.

By the jeweled cord  
Of Unebi mountain,  
At Kashiwara  
Since the Sage-king's reign  
Have been born  
A line of gods,  
As the hemlock tree  
E'er lasting;  
The land  
They ruled, yet one  
Sky-filling  
Yamato abandoned and  
The blue-black clays  
Of Heijo mountain passed through  
How did you  
Feel then, my lord?  
Far from heaven  
In the country,  
Yet in rock-running  
Ômi Province,  
At Sasanami,  
From the palace of Ôtsu  
The land  
You ruled;  
An emperor,  
A very god,  
Your great palace  
Stood here, I heard;  
Your great hall  
Stood here, they say, but  
Spring's grasses  
Now grow thickly;  
The mist rises,



## *The blossoms are falling*

Hazing spring sunshine:  
Your many stoned  
Palace's place:  
A sad sight, indeed.

— A poem composed by Hitomaro, Lord Kakinomoto, when he passed by the ruined capital at Ōmi as part of the *Manyōshū*.

### **Transliteration**

The transliterated Japanese waka don't equate perfectly with that structure when written or spoken in English. The title poem for this book is a tanka. In English it reads differently than the unit and phrase structure described above. I recommend that you don't worry too much about the exact form of the waka. Just write with their spirit in mind.

### **Waka Topics**

Waka topics can encompass nearly anything, but they tend to focus on travel, family, seasons, longing, love, beauty and cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms in spring were, in fact, something of an obsession of the age. Violence and war are seriously frowned upon in waka topics and can be cause for disadvantage if the GM deems the topic inappropriate.

## *Poetic Feats*



Characters may challenge each other to a formal written contest of poetry. The player who issues the challenge may indicate what topics the poems must include. It is not necessary to write an actual waka. Each player need only describe what his poem contains. There can be as many players as you want in the competition.

Have each player test Poetry plus FoRKs from Literacy, Composition and other academic skills that can be related to the topics. It's a big poetry versus test. The winner is the character with the most successes.

Count the winner's successes as the obstacle for a test for advancement for the losers. Count the second highest successes as the obstacle for the winner's test toward advancement.





## Poetic Reputation

If a player composed a particularly beautiful and powerful verse, he is eligible for a reputation vote at the end of the session. He may be voted for a 1D reputation relating to his poem, or may be voted for an increase in an extant reputation.

If a player composed a particular piece of doggerel garbage, the group may vote him for an infamous reputation instead.

## But I Wrote a Poem

If a player actually writes a poem for this contest that contains the topics and is a reasonable facsimile of a waka, he gains a +2D advantage to the Poetry test.

## Duels of Verse

Use the Duel of Wits rules to run an extemporaneous poetry competition. In this case, it is a contest between two characters with the audience listening and judging them on the merits of their verse and delivery.

## Statement of Purpose

Statement of purpose can be as simple as “to prove I am a better poet,” or, “I will humiliate you in front of the court and force you to withdraw your petition,” or, “I wish the beautiful Noriko would fall in love with me because of my skills in poetry.” Basically, anything within reason goes here. The poetry becomes a veil for a powerful subtext.

Poetry allows members of the court to discuss matters that could be shameful, embarrassing or even dangerous to one’s health. Poetic verse can thus be used to circumvent the restrictions of the etiquette of language.

## Dueling Skills

Poetry is used for the Obfuscate, Point and Rebuttal actions. Ugly Truth may be used for Dismiss and Incite. Seduction and Soothing Platitudes are used for Feint.

Etiquette, Conspicuous, Sarugaku, Seduction, Soothing Platitudes and Ugly Truth may be used as FoRKs. Topical academic or school of thought skills may be used for FoRKs as well.



## *The blossoms are falling*

### **Body of Argument**

Body of argument is generated from Poetry plus applicable social skill FoRKs if you're trying to manipulate someone. If you're trying to win an actual poetic contest, test Poetry plus applicable FoRKs from academic and school of thought skills.

#### *Compromise*

Duels of Verse obey the same conventions for compromise due to loss of body of argument points as a standard Duel of Wits.

### **It's Poetry**

Each maneuver must be its own separate poem. The player does not have to recite extemporaneous poetry. He may describe the content of the poem or the metaphors contained therein.

If the player does manage to compose and recite a reasonable waka-style poem off the top of his head, he gains a +2D advantage for that maneuver.

### **The Audience**

A contest of poetic skill must have an audience. It cannot be conducted privately between two parties. It must have at least one other person there to witness the genius. Preferably, audiences consist of a dozen or more courtiers, all listening eagerly to the turn of phrase.



Audiences in the Duel of Verse are bound to the winner's statement of purpose and the loser's compromise. They believe these things to be true and right.





# Feats of Valor

The Fight! and Range and Cover rules in Burning Wheel are used with the following variants in Nihon: Feats, Challenges and the infamous Back Sword Block.

## Feats

Battle in the age of Nihon is not merely about defeating an opponent. It is about conducting oneself nobly, with great honor and dignity in a contest of equals against an esteemed foe. Battle is a matter of honor and shame, not just in victory and defeat, but in the act and the manner of conduct.

Therefore, it is commonplace for bushi to present their opponents and enemies with the opportunity to prove their prowess and valor on the field. Doing so earns both sides honor and glory.

## Presenting a Feat

A character with Honor may present his opponents with a feat that they must accomplish lest they lose face. The presentation may not be made while fighting is taking place. It must be made during a lull in the fighting—before or after an exchange is scripted. No test is necessary to present the feat. The player merely states his intent and the nature of the feat. The presenting player may not choose who specifically takes up the challenge. He may only name a group of his opponents—an army, a clan or whatever's appropriate.

*For example, Thor's men have been routed and are fleeing on their ships. Thor describes a Taira woman on the deck of one of the retreating ships. She extends her white fan out at arm's length, offering a target and feat of valor for any warrior who will accept.*

## Nature of the Feat

The feat must be an act of physical or martial prowess: a remarkable bow shot, an incredible sword trick, a dangerous ride, etc.



## The blossoms are falling

### Feat Obstacles

The presenter of the challenge may set the obstacle of the feat as he sees fit, from Ob 1 to Ob 10.

*Thor sets the obstacle for the challenge at 6. This will require a heroic effort!*

### Feat Artha

The bushi who presents the challenge earns a *Fate* point. If the feat is successfully undertaken, the presenter earns a *Persona* point, too.

### Feats of Honor

The presenter of the feat earns an Honor test equal to the obstacle of the feat.

*The Taira wife, who possesses A Woman's Honor, earns an Ob 6 Honor test for presenting such a difficult challenge.*

The character who takes up the feat earns an Honor test equal to the obstacle if he is successful. If he fails the test, he earns an Ob 3 Honor test for nobly attempting such an impossible task.

*Pete's character, a Minamoto archer named Nasu no Yoichi, accepts the challenge. He successfully hits the fan, knocking it into the water!*

*His character earns an Ob 6 Honor test for advancement. Both sides cheer!*



### Feats of Shame

The presenter of the feat earns a Shame test equal to 10 minus the obstacle of the feat.

*The samurai wife earns an Ob 4 Shame test for presenting the challenge. She also earns a Persona point, because Pete successfully accomplished the feat.*

The character who undertakes the feat earns no Shame!

### Refusing or Declining a Feat

If the feat is declined or refused, the declining *side* earns a Shame test equal to the obstacle of the feat. All characters present on that side earn the test!



## Reputations of Prowess, Valor, Honor and Shame

The warrior who undertakes a feat is eligible for a reputation vote at the end of the *session*. If the obstacle of the test was 1-4, it's a 1D reputation. If the obstacle of the test was 5-7, it's a 2D reputation. If the obstacle of the test was 8-10, then it's a 3D reputation.

The reputation can be famous or infamous. It's up to the group to decide exactly what it is—it is the risk the valiant warrior takes. His name might ring out, or it may lay in infamy.

*At the end of the session, Thor and the rest of the players vote to give Pete's character a 2D reputation as the Most Famous Archer of the Minamoto.*

## Cheering and Jeering

Any player who jeers at, lays a hex on or otherwise exhibits shameful behavior during the challenge earns an Ob 5 Shame test for advancement.

# Challenges

During the Heian era, battle was not an affair of generals, strategy, logistics, units and tactics. Battle was an affair of honor. Even during massed engagements, individual warriors sought out suitable opponents to engage in order to prove that they too were honorable men, worthy of the bow and sword.

In game terms, *initial positioning* on the field of battle against warriors with the Honor attribute is a matter of honor, not physical strength or mental acuity. After initial positioning, use the standard positioning rules.

## Issuing a Challenge

Any unengaged bushi may issue a challenge to any other unengaged bushi on the battlefield. Issuing a challenge is done before exchanges are scripted. Challenges are issued in both Fight! and Range and Cover.

Pick your target and issue a challenge. Make a versus test using the Etiquette, Conspicuous or Intimidation skills. This test counts exactly like an initial positioning test—the winner may agree to the duel and declare the starting fighting distance. Do not use weapon length or Reflexes bonuses. Ties go either to the GM to decide or they start at



## *The blossoms are falling*

Outside Striking Distance. Alternately, if the target wins, he may rebuff his challenger and move on to a more worthy opponent. See the Sting of Failure below.

### *Successful Challenge*

If a challenge is successfully issued—you beat your intended target in the versus test—then you and your opponent may only fight one another. You may not engage or position against any other opponents until one of you is incapacitated, locked up, hesitating for more than one exchange or dead.

### *More than One Challenge*

If a warrior receives more than one challenge at once, he only has to accept one opponent—the opponent with the highest amount of successes. The other challenge-issuing opponent is not engaged, but he may move on to other challenges. If the rolls of two challengers are tied against each other (but not their opponent), decide who gets to accept the challenge in order of the highest Honor exponent, then rank, then age, then familial position.

### *Etiquette vs Conspicuous*

Etiquette is used in close quarters conditions like Fight! Conspicuous is used in Range and Cover. Intimidation may be used in close quarters as well, but using this skill to position for a challenge incurs a Shame test equal to your Intimidation exponent.

### *The Sting of Failure*

If you issue a challenge and are ignored by your opponent—you fail the versus test—then you must take an Ob 2 Shame test.

## **Shameful Initial Positioning**

Using the standard Speed and Perception-based initial positioning rules against another opponent with Honor is considered dishonorable. It incurs a Shame test equal to the Honor of your opponent.

If someone dishonorably positions against you in a Fight! or Range and Cover, you have two options: take a Shame test yourself and position with your stats, or forgo initial positioning and maintain your honor.

## **Shameful Intervention**

Interfering in an ongoing duel earns a Shame test equal to the Honor of your opponent for yourself and all of the characters on your side.



## Victory

If you defeat your opponent in battle, you earn an Honor test equal to his Honor exponent.

## Defeat

If you are defeated in battle, you earn a Shame test equal to your opponent's Shame.

## Bushi-wise

During the lull between exchanges, before challenges are issued, players may make Bushi-wise or other appropriate wise tests in order to locate honorable opponents among the enemy. Use the standard wise obstacles, but the higher the character's Honor and reputations, the lower the obstacle for the test.

# Back Sword Block

The Block action is slightly different in Nihon. If a Block is played against a Strike action, and the Block action wins by one or more successes, the Block damages the attacker's sword or naginata.

The first successful Block notches the opponent's sword—reduce VA by 1. If the weapon had no VA to start with, then the weapon is simply notched. Mark a notch next to your sword. Count yourself lucky.

A second Block either reduces VA by another step or, if there's no VA, imposes +1 Ob penalty to Strike and Great Strike with the weapon. It is effectively rendered Poor Quality. Mark it on the weapon sheet next to your sword.

A third Block reduces Power by 1. Each subsequent Block after the third also reduces Power by 1. If Power is reduced to 0, the sword is snapped and broken. It's junk.

## Repair

*Togi*—sword polishers—can repair the damage done to swords in this way. See the Polishing skill for obstacles.





# Weapons and Armor

Melee Weapon Type	Power	Add	Weapon Speed	VA	Striking Distance
<b>Poor Quality</b>					
Kumade/Kanabo	2	2	Slow	—	Short
Yari	2	2	Fast	—	Longer
<b>Run of the Mill</b>					
Kumade/Kanabo	2	2	Fast	1	Short
Bo/Shakujo	2	2	Fast	—	Longer
Yari	2	2	Fast	1	Longest
Tanto	1	1	Fast	—	Shortest
Tachi	3	2	Slow	—	Long
Odachi	4	2	Unwieldy	1	Longer
Naginata	3	2	Slow	1	Longer
<b>Superior Quality</b>					
Tachi	3	2	Slow	1	Long
Mino Tachi	3	2	Slow	1	Long
<b>Special</b>					
Named Tachi	3	2	Slow	2	Long

## Weapon Notes

Kumade are clubs, spiked or otherwise. Yari are spears. Tanto are long knives. Tachi are long single-edged swords. Odachi are two-handed, single-edged swords. Naginata are polearms.

At this time in Japanese history, the yari was considered a coward's weapon. It did not really become popular among the bushi until



## Weapons and Armor

after the Mongol invasions. Visibly carrying a Yari with a knowledge of Sojutsu at exponent 4 or below imposes an Ob 2 penalty for any Circles tests involving anyone from the Provincial Warrior setting.

The ubiquitous katana has not yet been invented. The wakizashi has not yet been invented—and in any event it was rarely worn in battle, the tanto was.

Ownership of a weapon in general is reserved to the nobility of Nihon. Anyone bearing a weapon and who does not appear to be a Bushi, Ronin, Heiankyo Noble, Monk or Yamabushi, suffers a +3 Ob penalty to Circles tests in the Artisan, Imperial Court and Provincial Warrior settings. This is a great potential failure result for Inconspicuous tests.

## Spirit Weapons

A spirit weapon is imbued with special power so that it can fight powerful and intangible enemies. Creatures with the Spirit Nature trait (Monster Burner, page 336) cannot be harmed by mortal weapons. Spirit weapons can hurt them. Use the standard IMS/Shade rules for attacking these creatures with these weapons.

## Missile Weapons

Hankyu				Crossbow					
DoE:	1-2	3-4	5-6	DoE:	1-2	3-4	5-6		
I:	B4	M: B7	S: B10	VA 1	I:	B4	M: B8	S: B11	VA 2
Actions: Reload and Acquire, 5.				Actions: Reload and Acquire, 17.					
Daikyu				Bo-shuriken					
DoE:	1-2	3-4	5-6	DoE:	1-2	3-5	6		
I:	B4	M: B8	S: B12	VA 2	Weapon Power: +0		VA -		
Actions: Reload and Acquire, 7.				Actions: Draw and Acquire, 3.					

## Missile Weapon Ranges

Hankyu	1D	2D	100 paces
Crossbow	2D	3D	125 paces
Daikyu	2D	4D	300 paces
Bo-Shuriken	1D	1D	10 paces



## Special Arrowheads

Arrowhead	Damage	VA	Die of Fate	Obstacle Penalties
Hunting Head	—	—	—	—
Bodkin Head	-1 IMS	+1 VA	—	—
Leaf Head	+1 IMS	-1 VA	—	—
Frog Crotch	+1 IMS	-1 VA	+1 DoF	+1 Ob
Blunt Head	-1 IMS	-1 VA	-1 DoF	—
Fire Arrow*	-1 IMS	-1 VA	—	+1 Ob
Barbed Tip†	—	—	—	—

\* Roll the Die of Fate to set objects on fire. For wooden structures a roll of 1 sets them on fire. For brush grass and thatching, 1-2. Flames do a B9 to structures every 10 exchanges of Fight! or Range and Cover.

† The character takes an additional Mark result hit if the barbed arrow is improperly removed. It is an Ob 4 Field Dressing or Ob 3 Surgery test to remove a barbed arrow properly.



# Armor

## Boiled Leather and Quilting

Peasant rebels and bandits might cobble together armor like this to offer some protection in battle. Warriors would never be caught fighting in something like this. It provides 1D to the arms and legs and 2D to the chest.

## Do Maru

Do maru is a relatively new technological development. It's light and maneuverable, but offers reasonable protection. Do maru is most often seen on the backs of low-ranking bushi or clever bandits. It provides 3D protection to the head and arms, 4D to the chest and 2D for the legs.

### *Do Maru Clumsy Weight Penalties*

Do Maru incurs a +1 Ob penalty for the breastplate for Stealthy and Swimming, +1 Ob to Perception/Observation for the helmet, +1 Ob for Agility tests, Throwing and Kyudo for the arms, and no Speed penalties for the leggings.

## O-Yoroi

O-yoroi means "great armor." This is the heavy armor common to all samurai. It provides 4D of protection to the head and arms, 5D to the chest and 4D to the legs.

### *O-Yoroi Clumsy Weight Penalties*

O-yoroi incurs a +2 Ob penalty for the breastplate for Stealthy and Swimming, +2 Ob to Perception/Observation for the helmet, +2 Ob for Agility tests, and Throwing and Kyudo for the arms. -1D Speed penalties for the leggings or +1 Ob to Speed and Speed-based tests for half-leggings (that'd just be the skirt plates and not the leg greaves).

## The Right Sleeve

It was a common practice of the age to wear the right sleeve, the *kote*, unarmored. This allowed the bow to be used with greater ease. If this is done, the bushi does not suffer the clumsy weight penalties for the arms. However, his right arm is then only protected by 1D from his *sode*.





# Kami

Nihon is alive with spirits, ghosts, demons and gods. There are a bewildering array of them, ranging from the spirits of fields and streams, to twisted demons, to the beautiful goddess of the sun, Amaterasu.

The people of Nihon interact with these entities through their daily lives and more directly via the Chinkonto, Kami-no-Michi, Oharai, Misogi, Joubutsu, Butsudo and Shugendo skills. In their daily interactions, the people strive to placate and please the spirits so that they will provide bounty and will not become angered.

Should the spirits become angered, Shinto and Buddhist priests must be summoned to chant sutras, make offerings and convince the spirits that all is right in the world.

Japanese mythology is many-hued and contains myriad classifications of creatures. In order to keep things simple, I've divided the kami into three broad categories: kami, ghosts and oni.

When running games set in Nihon, it's vital to engage with the spirit world. Kami, ghosts and oni are always at the fringes of human life, and once sin, cruelty and incompetence rear their heads among the people, kami take center stage—these impurities anger them and lead them to punish or torment the people until they are placated.

## Kami

Kami are the spirits of the land, animals and weather of Nihon: wind, thunder, trees, grass, waterfalls, mountains, rivers, rocks, rice paddies, snowfall, rain, typhoons, floods, lightning and volcanoes.

Kami are fickle in their behavior. They are dual-natured: They can be benign and helpful or they can be angry and hurtful.

## *Kami, Ghosts and Oni*

When kami are benign and helpful, all is right with the world: there are no storms, no earthquakes, no droughts, no plagues. When kami are angry, all manner of things go awry. Thick mists blanket the land, crops are blighted, rivers overflow, houses catch fire; people fall ill, or are hurt and possessed.

### **Strength**

Kami have one stat and one trait: Strength and Spirit Nature (see the Monster Burner, page 336). A kami's Strength determines both how old it is and how potent it will be when it manifests through its medium. Strength ranges from exponent 1 to 10. The kami of a stone might be Strength 2, the kami of a tree might be Strength 4, the kami of a temple might be Strength 6, the kami of a lake or bay might be Strength 8 and the kami of a mountain or typhoon might be Strength 10. Whenever the spirit is tasked to accomplish something, use its Strength dice for the test. Strength dice are always open-ended.

### **Domain and Medium**

A domain is a conceptual geographic location in which a spirit exists. A domain can be a house, a field, a river, a hill, a mountain, a storm, a lake, a sea, etc. A spirit's medium is the element or object by which it manifests in its domain. A medium is a specific thing: a rock, a branch, a door, a gravestone, a cold current, a wind in the shutters, etc.

Kami can only manifest in their domain and through an appropriate medium. For example, a kami of a bonfire will never splash water on a character's face. A kami of a storm will not cause a drought and will not appear indoors.

### **Kami-no-Michi**

The Kami-no-Michi skill is used to interact with kami. Most often, the Shinto priest spends his efforts making sure kami remain peaceful and placating those that have become angry. On rare occasions, a Shinto priest will anger the kami themselves and ask for rain or storms to aid him in his purpose.





## **Ghosts**

Ghosts are spirit representations of dead people. They retain much of their human personality, the skills they held in life and the knowledge they possessed.

There are two kinds of ghosts: sanctified ghosts whose bodies have been properly burned and buried by Buddhist priests, and the restless dead who have not been properly sent on to heaven.

Sanctified ghosts pose no danger to the people of Nihon. They are where they belong. Occasionally, a miko or onmyoji will call a ghost back to speak with them, but that's the extent of their presence.

Restless dead are created any time a man or woman is slain and not given proper burial rites. The dead take on ethereal, ghostly or hideous forms, depending on their conduct in life. They are often angry at the circumstances of their death and seek to torment the living for their disrespect.

## **Oni**

Oni are strange and twisted beasts that stalk Nihon, terrorizing its peaceful denizens and punishing the wicked. Oni have their own monstrous stats, attributes, traits and skills. There are a handful of Oni described in the Bestiary. And, unless otherwise specified, Oni are always considered to be angry.



## *Angry Spirits*

Spirits at peace are no threat and are, in fact, mostly invisible to the human eye. They operate behind the scenes, making sure that nature takes its course. Angry spirits use their powers to torment all in their domain. This section describes how to make spirits mad and what angry spirits do.

### **Angering Spirits**

#### *Kami*

Kami are angered through a variety of conditions: when the Kami-no-Michi and Onmyodo skills are misused (i.e., tests are failed), if the players fail a Farming or Animal Husbandry test or if destruction or blight is brought to the lands or communities of Nihon—a village burned, a field fouled, a river dammed, etc. The Strength of the angered spirit is equal to the margin of failure for failed tests, or, in the case of destruction, equal to the severity of the waste on a scale of 1-10. The GM can make the call.

#### *Ghosts*

Spirits of ancestors and ghosts of the dead become angry under a the following conditions: Ancestral spirits become angry when their progeny fail to make offerings on the proper days—weddings, funerals, births, before important events in general, after good fortune—and when they feel that their progeny have betrayed the values of their clan.

Any time a person dies—from illness, murder, on the field of battle, etc.—and the proper Butsudo funeral rites are not performed, they stalk the earth as a ghost. Most ghosts are harmless. Haunting places with their loss, loneliness and sadness, they simply bring a chill to the air or a creepy feeling to those who travel at night alone. Certain ghosts become something more, though. People who had a deep attachment to life—the greedy, the willful, the deeply loved—have a very difficult time going quietly on. When this type of character dies in Nihon, the GM should make him a ghost! Use the Gaki traits in the Bestiary or the guidelines below.

Ghosts lose their “Human” trait (which every human character in Burning Wheel is assumed to have), and become Spirit Nature. The GM must take one of their character or die traits—the trait that defined their attachment to life—and transform it into their



## The blossoms are falling

ghostly nature. The trait becomes a hideous parody of the former life: Characters who were Greedy become Hungry for Rice or Cake or Sake or whatever; characters who were Murderous become Blood Drinking, etc. The trait is worth at least 5 points. It allows the ghost to affect the material world in a way that relates to the new twisted trait. Once the GM has assigned the dead their trait, he should begin the tormenting! See the Powers of the Angry Spirits below.

The only way to be rid of angry ghosts forever is to call them forth and beg them to leave via the Joubutsu trait and a Duel of Wits.

### *Angry Oni*

As mentioned above, oni are always ready to channel their anger at the people and communities of Nihon. Oni should be statted up as monsters. They have their own abilities and their own Beliefs and Instincts. See the Hyakki-Yakou for examples!

## Powers of the Angry Spirits

### *Reveal—Kami*

Kami have any Wise appropriate to the domain and medium. The exponent is equal to the spirit's Strength. This roll is open-ended. They may present information in the form of signs and symbols. This is usually done so as to demonstrate why the kami is angry! It might show that your wife is having an affair, or where your neighbor's gold is buried (so you'll steal it and cause enmity between you two), or reveal that your rivals have moved the boundary markers on your borders (so as to cause a war).



### *Reveal Unto Me This Fact—Ghosts and Oni*

Ghosts and oni may, of course, communicate established game facts: how they were killed, who killed them, what needs to be done to banish them or lay them to rest. There's no roll made for this.

### *Like an Ox—Kami*

Spirits may perform a physical stat-based task. This includes Locks, Throws and Pushes, but not Strikes or anything causing direct harm (that falls under the Harm ability described below). Use the Strength of the kami as a proxy for any ability for the test. This roll is open ended.

### *Hindrance—Kami*

Kami may hinder everyone in their domain (or within reasonable reach/purview of their domain—a tree can snag people walking near it, for example). Such hindrance causes an obstacle penalty to all





## *Kami, Ghosts and Oni*

physical actions or Perception-based actions (whatever's appropriate to the idiom), including positioning and actions in Fight! and Range and Cover. Strength 1-3 spirits impose a +1 Ob penalty; Strength 4-5 spirits impose a +2 Ob penalty; Strength 6-7 impose +3 Ob; Strength 8-9 for +4 Ob; Strength 10 for +5 Ob.

### *Help—Kami, Ghosts and Oni*

Spirits may help a character with a skill (or stat) test appropriate to the domain and medium. Angry kami would help wicked men to make the problem worse. Help as per the standard rules. Use the Strength as the spirit's skill or stat exponent: Spirits of Strength 1-4 provide 1D of help, Strength 5-8 provide 2D of help, Strength 9 or higher provide 3D of help.

### *Harm—Kami and Ghosts*

Spirits may harm a character, object or structure. Such an attack must manifest within the spirit domain and medium: rock falls, falling branches, lightning strikes or bursts of flame, for example. The Power of such an attack is equal to the spirit Strength plus the idiomatic material of the attack: stone is Power +1, flame is Power +2, lightning is Power +3. Factor the damage just like a melee weapon. Roll the Die of Fate like a bow to determine if the hit does Incidental, Mark or Superb damage. Spirits can attack whenever appropriate in the story.

### *Possession—Ghosts and Oni*

Spirits of the dead may attempt to possess a character on a failed Joubutsu test to force a Duel of Wits. Oni and ghosts may use possession as part of a Duel of Wits victory or major compromise. Possession grants a new trait: Possessed. Possession can be driven out by Oharai or by fulfilling the terms of the possession. An oni who opts to possess a character loses access to its demon body for the term of the possession—it disappears in a wisp of black smoke!

### **Possessed** *Dt* 5 pts

The Possessed trait merges the spirit of a demon or a dead character with the body and soul of a living character. The possessed character must change one Belief to that of the spirit's design. He also takes on one identifying trait from the demon or ghost (not Spirit Nature, though). The player retains control of his character: If he fulfills the spirit's Belief, he earns a Deeds point. He may earn Fate from the Belief by playing into it as well. If he changes the Belief, he remains possessed (and suffers a +3 Ob impurity), but loses access to the Deeds point. Once the Belief is fulfilled (and the Deeds point earned), the spirit leaves the body of the possessed. The special trait goes with the spirit. This is a fun trait to play. Enjoy it!



## Offerings

Anyone may make offerings to the spirits to help placate them. Offerings must be appropriate to the spirit: wine, food, incense, harvest or animals sacrificed, etc.

An offering requires a Resources test equal to the Strength of the kami or Will of the ghost or oni to be placated. Success grants +1D to the Kami-no-Michi or Joubutsu test. Failure causes Resources to be taxed, of course. There is no Gift of Kindness for an offering.

### Daily Offerings

Offerings are part of lifestyle maintenance tests. A failed Resources test for lifestyle maintenance indicates the family has angered its ancestors with its misuse of the family's coffers. See Powers of Angry Spirits above!

## Impurities

If a person is impure when trying to treat with the spirits, he puts himself in great peril. A character is rendered impure if he is *ill*, has *touched dead flesh (including meat)* or *killed*, walked the *Paths of the Dead*, or is, or was recently, *possessed*. A character remains impure from any of those stimuli until he is purified by Misogi or Oharai.

- Touched dead animal flesh, + 1 Ob
- Touched a corpse or killed, +2 Ob
- Walked the Paths of the Dead or is/was possessed, + 3 Ob

The impurity penalty affects Oharai, Joubutsu, Kami-no-Michi and Shugendo tests. In the case of Kami-no-Michi and Joubutsu, the test applies to standard tests and tests for body of argument. It doesn't apply to every roll in the Duel of Wits.

Anyone who is *attending or practicing* a ritual and who is impure puts the above penalty on the ritual. Penalties are cumulative for multiple offenses. This penalty doesn't apply for the subject of the ritual. The penalty is cumulative for multiple impure persons attending or practicing.



### **Making the Impure Pure**

Impurities are driven out via the Oharai or Misogi ritual. See the individual skill descriptions for the details.

### **Exceptions to the Rule**

Buddhist priests do not suffer impurity penalties for praying over the dead. So long as they are praying, they do not suffer impurity while they handle the dead, either.

## *Paths of the Dead*

Onmyoji and Miko may use their knowledge and magic to call upon the dead and speak with them. The Paths of the Dead trait expands the Circles of the Onmyoji and the Miko.

The Paths of the Dead trait allows the character to use his Circles to bring ghosts into the game. He may use the attribute as per the standard rules—using his lifepaths for Circles, etc.—but the characters he finds are ghosts! In addition to the standard Circles obstacles, use the following modifications:

#### *Restless and Unhallowed Dead, +1 Ob*

Ghosts that were not properly buried incur a +1 Ob penalty to the Circles test.

#### *Sanctified Dead, +2 Ob*

Dead that have had the proper funeral rites are a +2 Ob penalty to call forth.

### **Reputations and Affiliations with the Dead**

Characters with the Paths of the Dead trait may start the game with reputations and affiliations with the dead and the underworld. They may earn reputations in game. They may purchase affiliations through the standard invitation by making offerings of the appropriate obstacle.

### **Enmity Clause Means Angry Spirit or Demon!**

If the test is failed and the GM chooses to invoke the Enmity Clause, the spirit that appears is either angry or a demon, or the proper spirit appears, but brings with it another, more dangerous (and angrier!) entity.



## Impure

Using the Paths of the Dead trait to make Circles tests with the dead renders the character impure as per the Impurity rules described above.

# Shikigami

Onmyoji treat with minor oni and spirits known as shikigami. They are little demonic servants. They come in the form of small animals (nothing bigger than a dog) with demonic telltales—glowing red eyes, a strange mark, etc.—and little oni demons.

## Onmyodo and Origami

In order to summon a shikigami, the onmyoji must create a folded-paper representation of the entity. This is typically done via the Onmyodo skill. Origami can be used as a FoRK or a linked test.

## Shikigami Abilities

All shikigami have the Spirit Unseen, Silent Voice and Telltale traits. If an animal shikigami is summoned, use the appropriate stats listed in the Monster Burner Creature Codex: Pete's Farm and Pete's Wild World of Discovery, pages 300-304. The obstacle to summon these creatures is 1 plus the animal's Will exponent.

If an oni shikigami is summoned, use the stats for the Lesser Imp on page 299 of the Monster Burner. Add Spirit Unseen, Silent Voice and Telltale. It is an Ob 5 Onmyodo test to summon this creature.



## Shikigami Duration

Shikigami will stay with the onmyoji for the remainder of the session of play in which they were summoned. Thereafter, the onmyoji must exert his will and make offerings for the shikigami to remain at his side.

### *Shikigami Offerings*

The onmyoji must feed and placate his spirit servants. This requires a Resources test at the beginning of each session. The obstacle starts at 0, + 1 Ob for each animal shikigami, +2 Ob for each oni shikigami. Success indicates the shikigami have accepted the gifts. Exceeding the obstacle grants +1D to the Will test to keep the shikigami under his control. Failure indicates +1 Ob to the Will test to maintain control of the shikigami.



## Kami, Ghosts and Oni

### *Shikigami Control*

After the first session in which a shikigami was summoned, the onmyoji must exert his will to control the creatures and keep them in his service. Make the control test at the beginning of the session. Test Will. The obstacle of the test is 0: +1 Ob for each animal shikigami currently under his control, +2 Ob for each oni shikigami.

Failure indicates the shikigami flee the onmyoji. Margin of failure of 1 indicates an animal is lost. Margin of failure of 2 indicates an oni is lost. If no oni are present, then two animals are lost. Margin of failure of three indicates an animal and oni is lost, or three animals. And so on.

### Shikigami Death

If a Shikigami dies, it becomes an angry kami and haunts the sorcerer! The Strength of the angry kami is equal to 1 plus the Will of the shikigami. In the case of shikigami oni, the Strength is G3.

These angry kami follow the onmyoji about and pester him at every opportunity. They can be temporarily stayed with the Chinkonto skill, but only permanently driven away by a Shinto priest with the Kami-no-Michi skill.

### Special Shikigami Traits

#### **Silent Voice** *Dt* 5 pts

The shikigami can speak directly into the minds of characters in his presence. He cannot “read minds” or transmit vast stores of knowledge. Communication is as speech, but telepathically.

#### **Spirit Unseen** *Dt* 9 pts

Spirit Unseen is described on page 336 of the Monster Burner. I wanted to clarify here: It’s not invisibility. It acts to benefit the Stealthy skill and hinder Observation attempts against the character or monster. If detected, or if overt, not-stealthy action is taken—like attacking someone—the spirit is clearly visible to everyone.





# Hyakki-yakou

Hyakki-yakou means “100 Demons March in the Night.” Imagine a horrible, shambling formation of demons and beasts, marching in the moonlight to some bizarre end.

This chapter contains 10 demons, goblins and spirits with which you can torment your players’ characters or come to their aid.

## Descriptions

The descriptions of the monsters include a hook, Beliefs, Instincts, traits, stats, attributes, PTGS, skills, weapons, armor, special skills and special traits. Hooks give suggestions on how to incorporate the creature into your game. Special skills and traits are abilities that are unique to the monster. These are not available in the skill or trait list. Any other traits or skills are described either in this book, the Character Burner or the Monster Burner.



## Making Monsters

All of these monsters were made by Thor and Dro using the Monster Burner. These monsters didn’t spring raw from the imagination, though. Research is vital to getting the feel of historical/mythological creatures right. Once you’ve done a little research, work on the hook for the critter. How will the creature be used in your game? What is this thing going to do in your game and how is it going to make life interesting for the player characters? Build the numbers and Beliefs around the hook.

Don’t forget to consider the monster’s weaknesses. Even very powerful monsters have them, and it makes them more interesting.



# Ama-no-Jaku

A wicked oni of contrariness and perversity

## Hook

*Ama-no-jaku* is a wicked oni, existing to torment and frustrate people. It looks into a person's heart for his darkest desires and inspires him to perform evil deeds. A favorite tactic is to kidnap and devour a member of a family, wearing the person's flayed skin to take his or her shape. It then provokes the surviving family to tear itself apart.

## Beliefs

People disgust me. I will bring about their downfall.

This world is nothing but suffering and misery. I will make others understand this.

The greatest pleasure is watching a family disintegrate from within. I will create pleasure for myself.

## Instincts

1: Kill the purest of heart for their skin. 2: Say the opposite of what others say. 3: Do the opposite of what others do.

## Ama-no-Jaku Stats and Attributes

Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	Hea	Ste	Ref	MW	Res	Cir
B4	G4	B4	B5	B5	B5	B6	B5	B5	B10	B4	B3
Speed Multiplier: x3.5				Hesitation: 6							
Superficial			Light		Midi		Severe		Traumatic		Mortal
○ B3			○ B6		○ B8		○ B9		○ B10		○ B11



## The blossoms are falling

### Traits

Character  
Telltale  
Misshapen  
Oni Head  
Perverse

Die Traits  
Celestial Sight  
Slashing Claws  
Diminutive Stature  
Dissent Parasite  
Doppelganger

Die Traits  
Leathery Skin  
Spirit Nature  
Scheming  
Unctuous

### Skills

Falsehood B6, Poisonous Platitudes B7, Persuasion B4, Bargaining B5, Inconspicuous B4, Aura Reading G6, Darkest Desires-wise G5, Secrets-wise G4, Brawling B4, Butchery B6

### Weapons and Armor

Claws— B3, B6, B9, Add 2, VA 1, Fast, Short

Oni Fangs— B4, B8, B12, Add 2, VA 1, Slow, Shortest

Leathery Skin— Leather armor equivalent (may not be damaged).  
Head and arms (1D), torso (2D).

### Special Ama-no-Jaku Traits

Telltale *Char*

If you look closely, you'll see that the Ama-no-Jaku's skin is peeling. In fact, if you dig your fingers in and pull, its whole face will come off. It wears the flesh of its victims as masks!





# *Baku*

Strange dream devourer and warder against illness



## **Hook**

Originally hailing from China, the *Baku* is an exceedingly strange creature—with the body of a bear, the trunk and tusks of an elephant, the eyes of a rhinoceros, the legs of a tiger, the tail of an ox and a brown and yellow spotted coat—that dwells in the mountains of the south and sustains itself on iron and copper. The *Baku* is best known for its ability to eat bad dreams and visions, and also to ward off wicked spirits.

In your game, perhaps someone is suffering from terrible dreams or visions (a character with the Nightmares trait or something similar). The players' characters would have to quest for the *Baku*'s name, which would then be painted on the afflicted person's pillow. Before sleeping, the afflicted person would have to call three times upon the *Baku*, which would then come forth to eat the person's nightmares or visions.

Alternatively, the *Baku*'s pelt can be used to ward off pestilence. If plague is spreading in the lands in which the characters live, they might seek out the *Baku* to win its pelt. Hung prominently in a village, town



## The blossoms are falling

or city, the Baku's pelt will provide a ward against kami, ghosts and oni that spread disease and wickedness. In times of plague, possession of such a pelt may ward off the disease, only to bring a savage attack of men seeking the pelt for their own homes.

### Beliefs

Those who suffer from terrible dreams and visions are my charges. I will aid them if they call me.

Men who seek me while waking are seeking my death. If I can't avoid them, I will kill them one by one.

Wicked spirits are an offense to the gods. I will drive them off.

### Instincts

1: Sniff out copper and iron. 2: Come when called by a dreamer. 3: Hide from waking men.

### Baku Stats and Attributes

<u>Wi</u>	<u>Pe</u>	<u>Ag</u>	<u>Sp</u>	<u>Po</u>	<u>Fo</u>	<u>Hea</u>	<u>Ste</u>	<u>Ref</u>	<u>MW</u>	<u>Res</u>	<u>Cir</u>
B4	B6	B4	B6	B8	G7	B7	B6	B5	B14	B0	B3

Speed Multiplier: x6 Hesitation: 6

<u>Superficial</u>	<u>Light</u>	<u>Midi</u>	<u>Severe</u>	<u>Traumatic</u>	<u>Mortal</u>
○ B4	○ B8	○ B11	○ B12	○ B13	○ B14



### Traits

Character  
Ursine Body  
Ox Tail  
Spotted Coat

Die Traits  
Legs of the Tiger  
Massive Stature  
Deep Fur  
Tusks  
Slashing Claws  
Massive Stature  
Dream Devourer

Die Traits  
Rhinoceros Eyes  
Ore Eater  
Healing Aura  
Named  
Trunk  
Spirit Nature  
Spirit Nose  
Spirit Ears

### Skills

Brawling B6, Foraging B5, Stealthy B5, Man-wise B4, Metal-wise B4, Dream-wise B4, Wickedness-wise B4, Pestilence-wise B4, Mountain-wise B4, Nature of All Things B5, Oharai G7



## Weapons and Trunks and Tusks

**Claws**— B5, B9, B13, VA 1, Add 2, Fast, Long (due to Massive Stature)

**Trunk**— B4, B8, B12, VA -, Add 2, Fast, Longest (due to Massive Stature)

**Tusks**— B5, B9, B13, VA 1, Add 2, Slow, Short (due to Massive Stature)

## Special Baku Traits

### Rhinoceros Eyes *Dt*

The Baku relies more on its keen senses of hearing and smell. Its vision is poor. +2 Ob to all Perception tests involving sight.

### Legs of the Tiger *Dt*

The Baku's powerful feline legs give it a speed multiplier of x6.

### Dream Devourer *Dt*

When the Baku is called three times by name by a person afflicted with bad dreams and visions, or spirits that give them, the Baku can travel instantly to the location of the person (while that person is sleeping) to devour the dream. The Dream Devourer trait gives the Baku the ability to remove the Dreamer trait (or similar traits, like Nightmares).

### Ore Eater *Dt*

The Baku sustains itself by seeking out and eating copper and iron. This trait allows the Baku to seek out these metals with its Perception, and also grants it the ability to ingest and digest them.

### Healing Aura *Dt*

When killed and properly skinned (requiring an Ob 3 Butcher, Tanning or Taxidermy test), the Baku's pelt becomes a fetish with a healing aura. When wrapped around a person, it counts as a 7 success Oharai test for curing illness or removing curses and demonic possession. In addition, when hung from the gate of a village, town or city, any kami, ghosts and oni of wicked intent must pass an Ob 5 Will or Strength test in order to enter.



# Gaki

Undead spirit of hunger

## Hook

A *gaki* is a hungry ghost, the spirit of a jealous, greedy or impious person that has been cursed with insatiable hunger for a strange or humiliating substance or object as a result of their sins in life. One type of *gaki*, the *jikiniki*, has a gnawing hunger for human corpses, which it will seek out and devour at night. They often loot such corpses as well, using the valuables accumulated to bribe local officials to leave them in peace. Villages can be plagued with *gaki* if the proper funerary services are not observed, or if the proper rituals to placate *gaki* are not performed or are improperly performed.

In your game, *gaki* could be responsible for a strange curse or malady plaguing your village or lands. An exorcist may be required to drive off the filthy spirits. Could a *jikiniki* be responsible for a local official's sudden wealth? And what if someone dear to you has become a *gaki* in death? To what lengths would you go to free them from the terrible curse?

## Beliefs

I am a monster and deserve only torment, but the hunger burns. I will do anything to sate myself.

The priests must not drive me away, for how will I satisfy my hunger? I must keep the local officials bribed.

I cannot allow myself to be discovered. If they won't be bribed, I will kill to protect my secret.

## Instincts

1: Seek the object of my hunger. 2: Always take a tiny bite when I think no one is looking. 3: Wait until the daylight world sleeps, and then hunt!



## Traits

Character	Character	Die Traits
Emaciated	Constricted Throat	Corpse Bound
Moldering	Pitiable	Nocturnal
Bulging Stomach	Self-Hatred	Insatiable Hunger
Tiny Mouth	Telltale	

*Optional:* Shapeshifter, to take the guise of its old human form by day

## Gaki Stats and Attributes

<u>Wi</u>	<u>Pe</u>	<u>Ag</u>	<u>Sp</u>	<u>Po</u>	<u>Fo</u>	<u>Hea</u>	<u>Ste</u>	<u>Ref</u>	<u>MW</u>	<u>Res</u>	<u>Cir</u>
B3	B4	B4	B4	B5	B6	B3	B4	B4	B11	B4	B1
<i>Speed Multiplier: x3.5</i>				<i>Hesitation: 7</i>							
<u>Superficial</u>			<u>Light</u>	<u>Midi</u>	<u>Severe</u>	<u>Traumatic</u>			<u>Mortal</u>		
○B4			○B7	○B8	○B9	○B10			○B11		

## Skills

Scavenging B4, Inconspicuous B4, Stealthy B6, Climbing B4, Intimidation B4, Brawling B4, Falsehood B4, Hagglng B4, Food-wise B5, Bribe-wise B3, Loot-wise B3, Sob Story-wise B3

## Weapons

**Grasping Hands**— B3, B5, B7, VA –, Add 2, Fast, Shortest

## Special Gaki Traits

### Insatiable Hunger *Dt*

A gaki is a hungry ghost that has been cursed with an insatiable hunger for a particular substance or object. It is typically something repugnant, like corpses or feces, but could be virtually anything, no matter how bizarre. Possibilities include: swords, court ladies' hair, the color of eyes, people's shadows, blood, a man's height, small children, years of a person's life, gold, etc. Pick one for your gaki. The gaki will pursue the object of its insatiable hunger relentlessly, hating itself for doing so but unable to stop. It suffers terrible hunger pangs whenever not in the act of consuming the thing for which it lusts. Whatever the object is, the gaki can consume it, though its tiny mouth and constricted throat mean that it can only consume a little bit at a time. Gaki may always do Surface damage to the material object of their hunger, or, if the hunger is for something more metaphorical, they may apply a relevant character trait—like Missing a Year, Shorter or Shadowless—to the victim of their tiny bites.

### Telltale *Dt*

Shapeshifting gaki have the telltale of a tiny mouth and high-pitched voice.



# Haku-Taku

A wise, benevolent prophetic guardian of spirit herbal medicine



## Hook

There have been two well-known encounters with the haku-taku in legend. The first to encounter the haku-taku was the legendary Yellow Emperor of the mainland. The haku-taku, calling itself Bai Ze, related to the august emperor the descriptions and habits of all 11,520 types of supernatural creature, and how to exorcise and overcome them. By the emperor's order, the haku-taku's wisdom was recorded in a great tome known as the Bai Ze Tu. The book has sadly been lost to time, though fragments can still be found here and there in other texts. The haku-taku appeared a second time in Nihon, on Mount Tateyama in the Toyama Prefecture. It predicted a deadly plague and warned the



people to use its image as a talisman to ward off the disease. Ever since, the haku-taku has been worshipped as the guardian spirit of herbal medicine in Toyama Prefecture.

In your game, the haku-taku can be sought to answer questions about how to defeat or summon any spirit, to deliver a prophecy, or to ward off plague. It may well demand the characters perform a task or obtain some rare and valuable bit of knowledge in exchange for its aid, especially if the characters have not sought it in gravest need.

### Beliefs

My role is to aid mankind, but not to cozen. I will only grant my knowledge to the worthiest of men.

Worth knows no caste or station, honor or shame. I have no patience for any who claim otherwise.

Mortal men are largely foolish, short-sighted and violent. I will remain hidden from them lest they destroy me in their ignorance.

### Instincts

1: Test seekers before they find me. 2: If attacked, go Unseen. 3: If lied to, leave.

### Haku-taku Stats and Attributes

<u>Wi</u>	<u>Pe</u>	<u>Ag</u>	<u>Sp</u>	<u>Po</u>	<u>Fo</u>	<u>Hea</u>	<u>Ste</u>	<u>Ref</u>	<u>MW</u>	<u>Res</u>	<u>Cir</u>
B6	G8 (9)	B3	B4	B8	B7	B8	B9	B6	B12	B6	B3
<i>Speed Multiplier: x3.5</i>			<i>Hesitation: 4</i>								
<u>Superficial</u>			<u>Light</u>		<u>Midi</u>		<u>Severe</u>		<u>Traumatic</u>		<u>Mortal</u>
○ B4			○ B8		○ B10		○ B11		○ B12		○ B13

### Skills

Seifukujutsu G8, Aura Reading G5, Demonology G6, Folklore G4, Hagglng B5, Herbalism G6, Instruction B5, Intimidation B4, Obscure History G4, Rhetoric G4, Butsudo B4, Chinkonto G5, Oharai B5, Yokai-wise G7, Disease-wise G5, Attack-wise G4, Future-wise G5, Haunting-wise G4



## Traits

Character	Die Traits
Bovine Form	Hooved
Human Head	Nine Eyes
Prophetic	Six Horns
Serene	Immortal
Wise	Piercing Gaze
	Spirit Unseen
	Large Ears

## Weapons and Armor

**Hooves**— B5, B9, B13, VA 1, Add 2, Slow, Short

**Horns**— (Charge) B4, B8, B12, VA -, Add 2, Slow, Shortest

**Horns**— (Headbutt) B5, B10, B15, VA -, Add 2, Slow, Shortest

**Six Horns**— Plated Leather for head (3D) and torso (4D)

## Special Haku-taku Traits

**Nine Eyes** Dt

The haku-taku has two normal human eyes, plus a third eye on its forehead. It also has three eyes on each of its flanks. Its nine eyes grant the haku-taku the Celestial Sight trait. In addition, it receives +1D to Perception when using its Celestial Sight as Observation to spot Stealthy characters.

**Six Horns** Dt

The haku-taku has two horns on its head, like a steer, and also two horns on each flank. The horns count as plated leather equivalent armor for the head and torso, though they may fail and break. On a Charge, the horns can be used to Strike in addition to the normal Charge, and add +1D to the Charge action. The horns can also be used as a +2 Power weapon for a headbutt Strike on the Inside.





# Hari-Onago

A barb-haired ghoulish woman

## Hook

A vengeful ghoulish woman of a scorned woman whose thirst for revenge has turned her into a ravaging beast, Hari-Onago eternally pursues the flesh of men. She haunts the crossroads and disrupts trade. Left unchecked, she could

slowly choke the economic life of an entire prefecture. It is a fairly trivial matter for a trained warrior to kill her, but her Dual Nature means that she will return again and again, and she will make her killer the first object of her vengeance. To stop her once and for all, one needs to find the comb that holds her spirit. And that, surely, will require unearthing the mystery of her death.



## Beliefs

The flesh of men is sweet and I hunger.

Scornful men led to my death and I will make them pay.

The best way to a man's heart is through his woman. I shall kill the wife of a devoted husband, assume her identity, torment him and ruin him.

## Instincts

1: When I see a man, laugh! 2: If a man laughs at me, attack! 3: Hunt the busy crossroads.



# The blossoms are falling

## Traits

Character  
Beautiful  
Buxom  
Man Eater

Call-On  
Cruel Strength (Power)

Die Traits  
Amulet-Bound (Hair comb)  
Barbed Prehensile Hair  
Dual Nature  
Hideous Laugh

## Hari-Onago Stats and Attributes

Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	Hea	Ste	Ref	MW	Res	Cir
B5	B4	B4	B4	B6	B5	B6	B9	B4	B11	B4	B3

Speed Multiplier: x3.5      Hesitation: 5

Superficial	Light	Midi	Severe	Traumatic	Mortal
○B3	○B2	○B7	○B9	○B10	○B11

## Skills

Intimidate B8, Brawling B5, Conspicuous B4, Seduction B4, Tracking B5, Road-wise B4, Laugh-wise B4, Man-wise B3, Vengeance-wise B4

## Weapons

**Barbed Hair**— B4, B7, B10, Add 2, Fast, VA 1, Longer. +2D to Lock.

## Special Hari-Onago Traits

### Hideous Laugh *Dt*

When Hari-Onago encounters a young man on the road, she laughs at him. Test her Intimidation versus the Will of any characters present. If the Intimidation test is successful, her victims must make a Steel test. Margin of success on the Hari-Onago's Intimidation test adds to the hesitation obstacle of the victim. If the Steel test is failed, the victim must laugh back at her. And, of course, if someone laughs at her, she drops her terrible hair and attacks!

### Barbed Prehensile Hair *Dt*

Hari-Onago has extremely long hair, and each hair ends in a viciously sharp hooked barb. The barbs are +1 Power, Add 2, VA 1, Fast, Longer. Her hair grants her +2D to attempts to Lock her opponents. In addition, she may Lock opponents at Optimal Striking Distance with no penalty and opponents in Lunging Distance with only +1 Ob. Furthermore, a Lock may be attempted on any and all opponents in optimal or lunging striking distance simultaneously.





## *Kitsune*

A trickster fox

### Hook

Kitsune are common subjects in Nihon's folklore. Highly intelligent, and with magical powers and wisdom that increase with age, kitsune live closely with human beings. They have the ability to take human form at will, and do so often, whether to trick others, or to take the role of guardian, friend or wife.

Kitsune do not present much of a threat physically, but they are incredibly clever and knowledgeable. A kitsune with mischief in its heart can wreak havoc in a household or town through seduction, illusion or possession. *Nogitsune*—mischievous—kitsune delight in leading travelers astray by



## The blossoms are falling

using their Kitsune-bi like a will o' the wisp, seducing the unwary, stealing food, humiliating the prideful, or taking elaborate vengeance for real or imagined slights. A Nogitsune is likely to begin plaguing a household, village or town as a result of a failed lifestyle maintenance test, indicating the spirits have been angered.

On the other hand, common is the story of the perfect, beautiful wife revealed to be a *Myobu* fox by a suspicious husband, only to flee forever into the night, leaving behind a lovelorn husband and sometimes children. Should a lord pine for his lost love, his retainers could find themselves in the unfortunate position of having to seek a powerful and cunning fox that does not wish to be found.

### Nogitsune Beliefs

The prideful offend me. I will make them plead for mercy from my tricks.

Life rewards the intelligent and the quick. Men will provide all I need or desire, whether they realize it or not.

That uppity *Myobu* Fox-wife is a disgrace to us all. I will trick her husband into casting her out.

### Nogitsune Instincts

1: Lead travelers astray with my Kitsune-bi. 2: If caught, flee. 3: Always stop to devour tofu.



### Myobu Beliefs

I am a messenger of Inari. I will protect those who revere Inari properly, giving them aid in times of turmoil.

My lord knows not that I am a Fox. I will prevent him from learning my secret.

That filthy *Nogitsune* brings misery and discord to all. I will drive him from the fields.

### Myobu Instincts

1: If discovered to be a fox, flee forever. 2: Always keep tails hidden. 3: Always stop to devour tofu.



## Kitsune Stats and Attributes

Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	Hea	Ste	Ref	MW	Res	Cir
B5	B6/7	B5	B5	B3	B3	B5	B6	B5	B9	B3	B3
Speed Multiplier: x3.5				Hesitation: 5 /7 against dogs							
Superficial			Light	Midi	Severe	Traumatic			Mortal		
○B2			○B4	○B6	○B7	○B8			○B9		

## Skills

Kitsune-bi (Fox-fire) G7, Kitsunetsuki (Fox possession) G6, Butsudo B3, Chinkonto B3, Falsehood B7, Persuasion B5, Seduction B6, Savage Attack B5, Stealthy B4, Hunting B3, Omikuji G5, Smoldering Glance-wise B3, Kami-wise B5, Lust-wise B4, Affair-wise B3, Mischief-wise B6, Knowledge of Events Far and Wide-wise B6

## Traits

### Character

Vulpine Form  
Clever  
Luxurious Gold Fur or  
Luxurious White Fur  
Telltale (fox tails)  
Myobu or Nogitsune

### Call-On

Graceful (Speed and social)

### Die Traits

Nine-Tailed  
Keen Smell  
Fangs  
Keen Hearing  
Shapeshifter  
Spirit Unseen  
Phobia (Dogs)

## Weapons and Armor

Fangs— B2, B4, B6, VA 0, Add 2, Slow, Shortest

## Special Kitsune Traits

### Nine-Tailed

*Dt*

Foxes who reach 50 or 100 years of age have become wise and have learned enough magic to take human form. As a sign of seniority, long-lived foxes gain an extra tail with each passing century, until they possess a total of nine, a sign of great power and cleverness. The Nine-Tailed trait (alternatively One-Tailed, Three-Tailed, Five-Tailed or Seven-Tailed for less powerful Kitsune) gives the fox access to the Kitsune-bi and Kitsunetsuki skills.

### Myobu

*Char*

Myobu are benevolent, celestial kitsune who serve as the messengers of the Shinto rice deity Inari. Myobu have radiant white fur. They work to ward off evil and are often petitioned to intervene by local people, especially against troublesome or malicious Nogitsune. Fox-wives and other kitsune who inhabit Samurai households are considered Myobu.



## The blossoms are falling

### Nogitsune *Char*

---

Nogitsune are common field foxes. Almost always mischievous, they are sometimes malicious and malevolent. Nogitsune delight in playing tricks on proud samurai, greedy merchants and boastful common folk, and any who evince overweening pride or who might have slighted them. More sadistic Nogitsune heap their abuse on poor tradesmen, farmers or devout monks.

## Special Kitsune Skills

### Kitsune-bi *Will/Per*

---

Kitsune-bi, or Fox-fire, is the Kitsune's magical art of illusion. To create an illusion, the kitsune rolls Kitsune-bi plus any applicable FoRKs versus the victim's Perception. The roll is open-ended. Failure simply indicates the illusion blows away in a puff of smoke at the most inopportune moment for the kitsune.

**FoRKs:** Falsehood, Mischief-wise

**Skill Type:** Sorcerous

**Tools:** No.

### Kitsunetsuki *Will/Per*

---

Kitsunetsuki, or fox possession, is a fox magic through which kitsune possess people and force them to do strange or terrible things. The victim is normally a young woman, whom the kitsune enters beneath her fingernails or through her breasts. Those possessed often exhibit signs of madness: running naked through the streets, frothing at the mouth, yelping like a fox, and gluttonously devouring all sorts of tofu dishes (a favorite of kitsune). Test Kitsunetsuki against an obstacle equal to the target character's Will. If successful, the fox has possessed its target. This is different than the Possessed trait—it's much more destructive. The fox may issue seemingly mundane suggestions which the character must enact: "You should eat all of the tofu before it's all gone." Or, "He's a handsome young man, you should flirt with him." Once the fox has successfully possessed a person, the fox may continue to issue new suggestions until it voluntarily chooses to leave the body of its victim or it is driven out with exorcism. The Kitsunetsuki roll is open-ended. Failure indicates the kitsune has been caught attempting to enter its victim's body.

**FoRKs:** Persuasion, Seduction, Mischief-wise

**Skill Type:** Sorcerous

**Tools:** No.



# *Oni-ni-Kanabo*

A demonic ogre

## **Hook**

Oni are spirits of wind and thunder. They can be found tormenting sinners in hell, but much prefer to lurk in mountains or distant countries, menacing people far and near while riding upon clouds. It is a rare oni that would not be pleased at the prospect of having a man to put in his pot. Oni are a force of nature, brutal and direct. They terrorize and extort villages and temples in the mountains and sometimes even venture farther afield for man-flesh, especially if it is a monk that has fallen from the path. Their lust for the flesh of men is perhaps only exceeded by their lust for wine and riches. It is not uncommon for an oni to play with its food, interrogating its victims for the location of their hidden treasures.



In your game, an oni could be terrorizing your village's lands, and your lord's bushi are off fighting a war. Or perhaps the oni has captured someone important to your lord or you, but is keeping him or her from the pot while they're put to the question. You'll have to mount a rescue mission. Or perhaps a more powerful spirit or demon has left the oni to guard an important treasure or relic.

## **Beliefs**

Fallen monks have the sweetest taste. I will tempt them from the path and crunch their bones.

The shrieks of villagers make a beautiful music. I will find the village where the cries of terror carry the most dulcet tones.

I like it here. Anyone who tries to send me back to hell will be sent back in my stead!



## Instincts

1: Seek man-flesh to devour. 2: Drink to excess. 3: Find out where they keep their riches before cooking them in my pot.

## Traits

### Character

Red Skin  
(sometimes blue or black)  
Man Eater

### Call-On

Dreadful (Interrogation)  
Brutal (Intimidation)

### Die Traits

Massive Stature  
Tearing Claws  
Horns  
Piercing Fangs  
Celestial Sight  
Leathery Skin  
Earth Blood  
Fearless  
Cloud Flight  
Thunderclap  
Phobia (soy beans)

## Oni-ni-Kanabo Stats and Attributes

Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	Hea	Ste	Ref	MW	Res	Cir
B4	B4	B4	B5	G7	B8	B8	B9	B4	B15	B3	B2

Speed Multiplier: x3.5      Hesitation: 3/6 surprise/8 soybeans

Superficial	Light	Midi	Severe	Traumatic	Mortal
○ B5	○ B9	○ B12	○ B13	○ B14	○ B5

## Skills

Butsudo B4, Drinking B5, Extortion B4, Intimidation B7, Aura Reading B5, Jujutsu B5, Bojutsu B5, Interrogation B5, Persuasion B3, Hell-wise B4, Temptation-wise B3, Mountain-wise B3

## Weapons and Armor

**Kanabo** (Power 2 studded, iron club/staff)— I B6, M B11, S B16, VA 3, Add 2, Slow, Long. Weapon breaks if no successes are generated. Use the Bojutsu skill.

**Tearing Claws**— +1 Power to unarmed attack on Locked opponent. I B5, M B10, S B15, Add 2, VA 1, Fast, Short. Use Jujutsu.

**Fangs**— I B5, M B10, S B15, Add 2, VA 1, Fast, Short. Use Jujutsu.

**Horns**— On Charge: I B5, M B9, S B13, Add 2, VA 1, Special, Short. Headbutt: Incidental B6, Mark B11, Superb B16, VA 1, Add 2, Slow, Short.





**Leathery skin**— 1D of protection for the limbs. 2D to the torso. Horns offer 3D to protection to the head, but may break.

## Gear

Kanabo, tiger-skin *fundoshi* (loincloth)

## Special Oni Traits

### Cloud Flight *Dt*

---

Oni can form a chariot of clouds upon which they can fly. It takes two actions to form a cloud and take flight. Speed multiplier: x14. The oni may cause its cloud to hover in place or dash about. Maintaining the cloud requires concentration. The oni may not perform any physical actions other than movement and Thunderclap while in flight.

### Thunderclap *Dt*

---

As a spirit of wind and thunder, the oni can bring those weapons to bear against its enemies. While in flight, the oni may bring its hands together and cause a thunderclap to erupt and deafen those around him. Test the oni's Will against an Ob 2. If successful, all those in his presence suffer +1 Ob for two scenes. Thunderclap requires 1 action in Fight! and counts as a Longest weapon. Victims may test Forte against Ob 3 to shrug off the effects. Meeting the obstacle reduces the time to one scene.



# Sagari

Hanging horse head demon

## Hook

A *sagari* is the ghost of a horse slain near or under a tree and afraid to pass on. It appears as a disembodied horse's head, dangling from the branches of nettle trees by its mane like a grisly flower. In the wake of a large battle, especially if the dead were not properly laid to rest, the trees can blossom with *sagari*, whinnying their ghostly cries of fear and rage. *Sagari* can make forests terrible and frightening places to travel, and merchants will avoid routes that pass through their domains, fearing there is truth to the stories that those who encounter *sagari* fall ill. Rumors of forests of *sagari* after a battle can devastate a region.

But the brave or the foolish sometimes seek these terrible ghosts out purposefully, for they are caught between this world and the next and can sometimes be used as a medium to speak with ghosts trapped in hell. They have a special connection with the spirits of their former riders, though the relationship can be a contentious one, as it led to the *sagari*'s death. A *sagari* given this opportunity will frequently use it to possess its petitioner, thus earning a chance to experience life once more.

## Beliefs

I can hear the screams of the dead in hell. I will do everything in my power to avoid going there.

My master led me to my death. I will increase his suffering whenever able.

I will curse those who pass under my tree and thus bring forth a priest to possess.

## Instincts

1: If a mortal approaches my tree, give it the Voice of Doom. 2: If a priest fails a Joubutsu test, possess him. 3: Resist any attempts to allow the dead to speak through me.



## Traits

<b>Character</b>	<b>Call-On</b>	<b>Die Traits</b>
Disembodied Ghostly	Dreadful (Intimidation)	Demon Horse Mane
Horse Head		Ghost Tongue
Chilling Presence		Voice of Doom
		Paths of the Dead

## Sagari Stats and Attributes

<b>Wi</b>	<b>Pe</b>	<b>Ag</b>	<b>Sp</b>	<b>Po</b>	<b>Fo</b>	<b>Hea</b>	<b>Ste</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>MW</b>	<b>Res</b>	<b>Cir</b>
B5	B5	B4	B2	B2	B8	B6	B6	B3	B11	-	B2
<i>Speed Multiplier: x3.5</i>				<i>Hesitation: 3</i>							
<b>Superficial</b>			<b>Light</b>		<b>Midi</b>		<b>Severe</b>		<b>Traumatic</b>		<b>Mortal</b>
○B5			○B7		○B8		○B9		○B10		○B11

## Skills

Joubutsu B5, Human-wise B3, Fate-wise B4, Your Ancestor's Misdeeds-wise B4, Dark Secrets-wise B5, Intimidation B6, Demon World-wise B5, Brawling B4, Oratory B4

## Weapons

**Demon Horse Mane**—B2, B4, B6, VA 1, Add 2, Slow, Long. +1D to Lock

## Special Sagari Traits

### Demon Horse Mane

This yokai uses its mane as a means of transportation, swinging itself from tree to tree. If needed, the demon mane can also be used as a weapon, striking opponents with hair as hard as bamboo. Power 2, Add 2, Slow, VA -, Long. The hair also grants a +1D advantage to Lock.

### Paths of the Dead *Dt* 5 pts

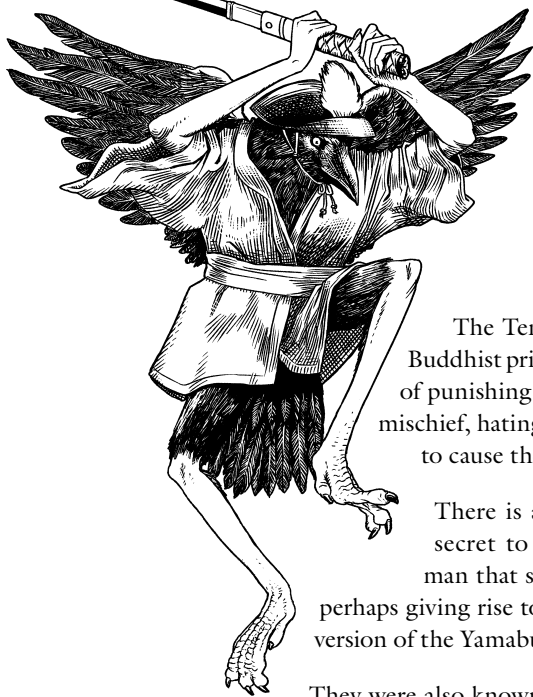
Sagari may use their knowledge and magic to call upon the dead and speak with them. The Paths of the Dead trait expands the Circles into the realm of ghosts. See the Paths of the Dead heading of the Kami section. The sagari has a 2D affiliation with and a 1D reputation among the dead.

### Voice of Doom *Dt*

When threatened, intimidated or not paid proper respect sagari will start whinnying and screaming in the language of the ghosts. This unearthly spectacle freezes one's blood in his veins and make him shiver constantly. Everyone in the demon's presence must make a Steel test at +3 Ob. If a character fails, he gains the Shivering trait, which imposes +1 Ob to all Steel tests until the curse is removed.



*The blossoms are falling*



## Tengu

A crow-man trickster and yamabushi sword master who hates rigid hierarchies and loves to lead Buddhist priests and samurai astray

### Hook

The Tengu were known for tormenting Buddhist priests, kidnapping children (as part of punishing prideful folk), generally causing mischief, hating rigid establishments and trying to cause the downfall of strict regimes.

There is a legend that a Tengu gave the secret to fighting the shogunate to the man that started the first peasant uprising, perhaps giving rise to the legend of the ninja, likely a version of the Yamabushi shugenja.

They were also known as sword masters without peer. It was Sojobo, king of the Tengu, who found the young Minamoto no Yoshitsune—after Taira no Kiyomori assassinated his father and exiled the boy to be a monk on Mount Kurama—and taught him swordsmanship so that he might bring vengeance upon the Taira. It is no coincidence that the boy grew to be the greatest bushi to ever live.



In your game, the Tengu could take on several roles: They could be the mighty backbone of a peasant uprising your provincial warriors must put down, a path to vengeance against your clan's powerful enemies, a sword master that could allow a character to reach unparalleled heights in the martial arts, or a teacher that could give a peasant secret arts to fight against the tyranny of his masters. But whichever role the Tengu take, they are fickle. Take care lest they turn their considerable powers against you!

### Beliefs

Foolish Buddhist priests and boastful bushi deserve indignity and humiliation. I will manipulate them into abandoning the Way and going astray.



Rigid establishments and strict regimes are evil. I will bring about their downfall.

Skill is loved by the gods. I will trick a worthy student, whether peasant or lord, into seeking my instruction.

### Instincts

1: Seduce priests in the form of a local woman. 2: Always be sympathetic to suffering peasants. 3: Nest in tall pines.

### Traits

<b>Character</b>	<b>Call-On</b>	<b>Die Traits</b>
Corvus-Headed	Fine Bones (Speed, Kenjutsu)	Crow Wings
Feathered	Charming (Persuasion)	Beaked
Arrogant		Talons
Impolite		Dual-Natured
Wise		Woodland Ear
Trickster		Bottomless Stomach
Buddhist or Shintoist		Gullible
		Fine Bones (+1 Ob recovery)

*Optional:* Doppelganger (Telltale: Reddish Face and Unusually Long Nose)

### Tengu Stats and Attributes

<u>Wi</u>	<u>Pe</u>	<u>Ag</u>	<u>Sp</u>	<u>Po</u>	<u>Fo</u>	<u>Hea</u>	<u>Ste</u>	<u>Ref</u>	<u>MW</u>	<u>Res</u>	<u>Cir</u>
B5	B4(5)	G6	G5	B3	B4	B5	B7	B6	B9	B2	B2
<i>Speed Multiplier: x3.5, x14 from his wings!</i>								<i>Hesitation: 5</i>			

<u>Superficial</u>	<u>Light</u>	<u>Midi</u>	<u>Severe</u>	<u>Traumatic</u>	<u>Mortal</u>
○B3	○B5	○B6	○B7	○B8	○B9

### Affiliations and Reputations

- Affiliation with a Tengu Murder (2D)
- Infamous Reputation as a Devious Trickster in the Countryside (2D)
- Unparalleled Yamabushi Sword master in the Mountains (1D)

### Skills

Armor Training, Precision Training, Shugendo B6, Jujutsu G4, Bojutsu G5, Kenjutsu G6, Butsudo B3, Chinkonto B3, Ugly Truth B3, Falsehood B5, Persuasion B3, Stealthy G4, Instruction B3, Philosophy B4, Seduction B3, Observation B3, Meditation B4, Corrupt Priest-wise B5, Sword wise B3, Worthy Student-wise B2, Mischief-wise B5, Lechery-wise B3, Political Meddling-wise B3, Rigid Hierarchy-wise B3



## Gear

Do-maru, tachi, shakujo, yamabushi clothes and *tokin* hat, *geta*, haneuchiwa (a magical fan), sake

## Weapons and Armor

**Beak**—B2, B4, B6. Fast, Add 2, VA 0, Shortest. May Lock and Strike with no Power bonus

**Talons**—B3, B5, B7. Fast, Add 2, VA 2, Fast, Shortest

**Tachi**—B5, B9, B12. Slow, Add 2, VA 0, Long.

**Shakujo**—B3, B5, B7. Fast, Add 2, VA 0, Longer.

**Do-Maru**—Head and arms (3D), torso (4D).

## Special Tengu Traits

**Gullible** *Dt*

-2D to Tengu's body of argument when defending against a Duel of Wits to trick the Tengu.

**Telltale** *Dt*

When the Tengu takes the form of a man, he keeps the following telltales: Reddish Face and Unusually Long Nose.

## Special Tengu Artifact

**Haneuchiwa**

The Haneuchiwa is a magical fan possessed by Tengu. By waving it at a person, a Tengu can lengthen that person's nose to any size he desires. This grants the target a nose-centered character trait of the Tengu's choosing. He can also summon storms and control winds. To summon rain, he needs only to wave the fan under his chin. Clouds gather and rain falls. Once rain is summoned, he may wave the fan about and kick up great winds. Light winds cause +2 Ob to all activities in the rain. Hurricane winds count as a 8D Throw action against a target of the Tengu's choosing. Hurricane winds also count as a weapon with an IMS of B4, B8, B12 *for the purposes of attacking inanimate structures only*. Using the fan correctly requires the bearer to make an Agility test: Ob 1 for nose lengthening, Ob 2 for rain, Ob 3 for light winds, Ob 4 for hurricane winds. It requires actions equal to twice the obstacle to use the fan in Range and Cover or Fight! The fan positions with 3D in Range and Cover and has a range of 300 paces.



# *Yama-Bito*

Murderous mountain goblin

## Hook

*Yama-bito* are goblins that lurk in the mountains of Nihon. It is believed the first *yama-bito* were created in a time of famine, when poor villages abandoned their elderly in the mountains for lack of food. Resembling a poor old man or woman, these yokai often appear to travelers in the mountains—often as hermits scratching out an existence in a dilapidated hut—giving them a sob story and earning the travelers’ pity. The *yama-bito* earns the travelers’ trust, often by offering to let them rest in its meager accommodations. Then it murders and devours its hapless victims. Other times, it offers to guide travelers who have become lost: It will guide them to a dangerous part of the mountain, where a trap has been laid by the *yama-bito* ahead of time. The travelers are killed and the *yama-bito* can then feed upon them at its leisure.

*Yama-bito* pose as solitary hermits, but it is not uncommon for packs of them to live in close proximity. If a *yama-bito* begins to use Howl of Doom, it is surely summoning others. Few travelers survive the onslaught of ravening yokai that follows.

In your game, perhaps the player characters have been asked to escort an important person through *yama-bito*-infested mountains. Or maybe a well-known traveler has disappeared while making a pilgrimage to a shrine. *Yama-bito* also love to lure children into the wilderness, bringing them to their huts to fatten them for a feast; as an added benefit, desperate searchers trying to find the child are easy to waylay. A hungry *yama-bito* is also an excellent consequence to a failed Orienteering or similar test in the mountains.

## Beliefs

The people of the village deserve horror beyond imagining. I will devour their children and then the adults.

The bushi of the Minamoto hunt us, but I will teach them it is we who rule these mountains.

Travelers in my mountains are dullards and fools. I will trick them before I eat them.



# The blossoms are falling

## Instincts

1: Hide and assess. 2: Poison my claws. 3: If they trick me, Howl for the others!

## Traits

**Character**  
 Unkempt  
 Wild Eyed  
 Voracious  
 Ugly  
 Man Eater

**Call-On**  
 Cruel Strength (Power)  
 Padded Feet (Stealthy)  
 The Story (Falsehood)  
 Iron Stomach (Forte)

**Die Traits**  
 Diminutive Stature  
 Rending Claws  
 Credulous  
 Howl of Doom  
 Impossibly Wide Mouth  
 Sight of the Owl  
 Uncanny Climber  
 Tough  
 Pack Hunter

*Optional: Doppelganger (Telltale: Viciously Clawed Hands)*

## Yama-Bito Stats and Attributes

Wi Pe Ag Sp Po Fo Hea Ste Ref MW Res Cir  
 B4 B5 B4 B5 B5 B6 B5 B8 B4 B11 B1 B2  
*Speed Multiplier: x3 Hesitation: 6 (3 for pain, murder, fear or violence)*

Superficial Light Midi Severe Traumatic Mortal  
 ○B4 ○B7 ○B9 ○B10 ○B11 ○B12

## Skills

Begging B4, Brawling B5, Child Rearing B3, Climbing B6, Cooking B3, Falsehood B3, Herbalism B4, Intimidation B4, Orienteering B4, Poisons B5, Stealthy B5, Throwing B4, Tracking B4, Trapper B5, Terrain-wise B3, Village-wise B3, Minamoto Mountain Warrior-wise B4, Mountain-wise B5

## Gear

Tattered Clothes, Leaky Hovel, Cooking Tools, Herbalism Tools, Trapping Tools, 3 doses of Virulent Venom (Monster Burner, page 342), Rocks

## Weapons

**Rending Claws**— B3, B7, B10, VA 1, Add 2, Fast, Shortest

**Bite**— B4, B8, B12, VA 2, Add 2, Fast, Shortest





## Special Yama-bito Traits

### **Credulous** *Dt*

---

Yama-bito love to trick others, but they in turn are susceptible to cunning travelers. The Yama-bito suffers +2 Ob to its body of argument roll if its opponent's statement of purpose encompasses tricking the Yama-bito.

### **Impossibly Wide Mouth** *Dt*

---

The Yama-bito has a mouth that stretches across the entire lower part of its face, allowing it to take massive, tearing bites out of its victims. The Yama-bito's mouth counts as: Pow +3, Add 2, VA 2, Fast, Shortest weapon; may Lock and Strike on the same action.

### **Uncanny Climber** *Dt*

---

Yama-bito can climb and scabble up rock and scree, even sheer faces, with uncanny agility. +2D to Climbing when using such surfaces. The Yama-bito does not need tools to Climb. In addition, in a mountainous environment where its opponents are close to rock faces and such, the Yama-bito may use Climbing rather than Speed to Position in Fight!





# Clans of Nihon

Imperial Line (Yamato)			
Cadet/Branch Clans			
Minamoto	Taira	Fujiwara	Tachibana

## *Subsidiary Branches of the Imperial Cadet Clans*

Branch Name	Great Ancestor	Notes
☀ Minamoto Branch—also known as Genji ☀		
Daigo Genji	60th Emperor Daigo	
Go-Daigo Genji	96th Emperor Go-Daigo	
Go-Fukakusa Genji	89th Emperor Go-Fukakusa	
Go-Nijo Genji	94th Emperor Go-Nijo	
Go-Saga Genji	88th Emperor Go-Saga	
Go-Sanjo Genji	71st Emperor Go-Sanjo	
Go-Shirakawa Genji	77th Emperor Go-Shirakawa	
Juntoku Genji	84th Emperor Juntoku	
Kameyama Genji	90th Emperor Kameyama	
Kazan Genji	65th Emperor Kazan	
Koko Genji	58th Emperor Koko	
Murakami Genji	62nd Emperor Murakami	
Montoku Genji	55th Emperor Montoku	
Nimmyo Genji	54th Emperor Nimmyo	
Ogimachi Genji	106th Emperor Ogimachi	
Reizei Genji	63rd Emperor Reizei	
Saga Genji	52nd Emperor Saga	
Sanjo Genji	67th Emperor Sanjo	
Seiwa Genji	56th Emperor Seiwa	Origin of many samurai clans.
Kawachi Genji	Minamoto no Yorinobu	Also known as Genke. Origin of Hitachi Genji, Ishikawa Genji and Kai Genji.
Settsu Genji	Minamoto no Yorimitsu	Origin of Tada Genji, Mino Genji and Shinano Genji.
Yamato Genji	Minamoto no Yorichika	
Uda Genji	59th Emperor Uda	Origin of Omi Genji.
Yozei Genji	57th Emperor Yozei	

*Subsidiary Branches of the Imperial Cadet Clans*

Branch Name	Great Ancestor	Notes
 Taira Branch—also known as Heike 		
Kammu Heike	50th Emperor Kammu	Famous for Taira no Masakado.
Bando Heike	Taira no Yoshifumi	
Ise Heike	Taira no Korehira	Famous for Taira no Kiyomori.
Koko Heike	58th Emperor Koko	
Montoku Heike	55th Emperor Montoku	
Nimmyo Heike	54th Emperor Nimmyo	
<b>Fujiwara Branch</b>		
Fujiwara Hokke	Fujiwara no Fusasaki	Northern family
Fujiwara Kyoke	Fujiwara no Maro	
Fujiwara Nanke	Fujiwara no Muchimaro	Southern family
Fujiwara Shikike	Fujiwara no Umakai	
Oshi Fujiwara	Fujiwara no Hidesato	Northern clan
<b>Tachibana Branch</b>		
No subsidiary branches descended from the Tachibana		
<b>Independent and Non-Imperial Cadet Clans</b>		
Abe	Obi no Mikoto, 1st son of Emperor Kogen	No direct relation to the Abe clan of Oshi.
Imbe	The kami Futodama	
Hashiji	The kami Nomi no Sukune	
Ki	—	Famous for Ki no Tsurayuki.
Mononobe	The kami Nigihayamhimikoto	Famous for Mononobe no Moriya.
Nakatomi	The kami Ame-no-Koyane; origin of Fujiwara clan	
O	Kamuyaimiminomikoto, son of Emperor Jimmu	
Ochi	Mononobe clan	
Oe	Hashiji clan	
Otomo	Amenooshihinomikoto; no direct relation to the immigrant Otomo clan	Famous for Otomo no Yakamochi.
Sugawara	Hashiji clan	famous for Sugawara no Michizane.
Soga	—	Famous for Soga no Umako.



*The blossoms are falling*

<i>Subsidiary Branches of the Imperial Cadet Clans</i>		
Branch Name	Great Ancestor	Notes
<b>Immigrant Clans</b>		
Hata	Yuzuki no Kimi from Baekje	
Kawachi no Aya		
Kawachi no Fumi	Wani from Baekje	
Koremune	Hata clan	
Kudara no Konikishi	King Uija of Baekje	
Okura		
Otomo	Chinese immigrants	No direct relation to the native Otomo clan.
Yamato no Fumi		





# Nipponese Names

## A

Ai  
Aiko  
Akako  
Akina  
Akira  
Akiyama  
Ami  
Amida  
Anzu  
Ayame  
Azarni

## B

Botan

## C

Chika  
Chizu  
Cho

## D

Dai  
Daichi  
Daiki  
Daisuke

## E

Etsu

## F

Fudo  
Fujita

## G

Gendou  
Giichi  
Gin

## H

Haru  
Haruka  
Haruko  
Hide  
Hiroko  
Hiroshi  
Hisa  
Hoshi  
Hao

## I

Iku  
Ima  
Ishi  
Izanami

## J

Jiro  
Jun

## K

Kaede  
Kagami  
Kaito  
Kameko  
Kanaye  
Kano

Kazuki  
Kazuya  
Kei  
Keiko  
Kenji  
Kenta  
Kichi  
Kiku  
Kin  
Kisho  
Kita  
Kiyoko  
Kiyoshi  
Kohana  
Koko  
Kohei  
Kyoko

## M

Machi  
Machiko  
Maiko  
Maki  
Makiko  
Mamiko  
Mamoru  
Mariko  
Masa  
Masakazu  
Masako  
Matsu  
Mayako  
Mayoko

Mayuko  
Michi  
Michiko  
Midori  
Mihoko  
Mika  
Miki  
Minako  
Mine  
Misako  
Mitsuko  
Miyoko  
Momoko  
Mura  
Mutsuko

## N

Nahoko  
Nami  
Namiko  
Nanako  
Naoko  
Nara  
Natsuko  
Nayoko  
Nori  
Noriko  
Nozomi  
Nyoko

## R


Rai  
Raidon



## The blossoms are falling

Rei	Shoko	Yoshiko
Reiko	Shuichi	Yoshimitsu
Ren	Shunichi	Yoshiyuki
Rieko	Sorano	Yua
Rikako	Suma	Yukako
Riku	Sumi	Yuki
Rinako		Yukiko
Rini	<b>T</b>	Yukio
Risako	Tadako	Yumako
Ritsuko	Taka	Yumi
Ronin	Takai	Yumiko
Rumiko	Takako	Yuri
Ruri	Takara	Yuriko
Ryoichi	Taku	Yutaka
Ryoko	Tama	Yutsuko
Ryozo	Tamiko	Yu
Ryu	Tanaka	Yudai
Ryuichi	Tani	Yuta

### S

Saburou	Taro	Yuto
Sachi	Tokiko	
Sachiko	Tomi	
Saeko	Tomiko	
Sakiko	Tora	
Sakuko	Toyo	
Sakura	Tsubaki	
Sakurako	Tsuzu	

### U

Sanako	Ujio	
Saori	Umeko	
Satoko	Usagi	
Sayoko	Uyeda	

### Y

Seiichi	Yachi	
Senichi	Yasu	
Shigekazu	Yasuo	
Shika	Yayoi	
Shima	Yogi	
Shimari	Yoko	
Shina	Yori	
Shinichi	Yoshi	
Shizuka	Yoshifumi	
Shoichi		





# Designer's Notes

This supplement is meant to provide players with the idea of Japan in the mid-twelfth century. We've tried melding the myths of the time with some degree of historical accuracy to provide what we hope is a compelling game world that diverges from the standard Western caricature of feudal Japan.

As such, there are no super-cutting katanas, black-clad ninjas, tea ceremonies, sword ryu, geishas, oiran or ashigaru in the game. All of those things came much later in Japanese history. Instead, we took our inspiration from the *Tale of the Heike*. That gave us an era when two very different value systems were coming into competition with one another.

This clash is epitomized by the struggle between a highly centralized, decadent, imperial court in Heiankyo that values poetry and refined living, against the rising influence of the warriors in the provinces who value individual martial prowess, sacrifice and absolute loyalty. We tried to reflect these different approaches to life with the new emotional attributes, Authority and Honor/Shame. They are, in fact, the focus of this game.

Using this supplement, players can “go big” and play out the struggle between and within the imperial court and the provincial warrior clans for control of Nihon. Or players can “go small” and play out a standard small-party adventure with a novel eastern flavor.

We have tried to avoid including settings and lifepaths that are not supported by the historical or mythological record of the time. Still, some anachronisms did make it into the game. For example, the vengeful Ronin is really a literary construct of Edo-period Japan—but we decided the texture that lifepath offered for Honor/Shame was too good to cut.



## *The blossoms are falling*

There were also cases where we were compelled to simplify or make apocryphal additions to the “historical” settings for the sake of game play. For example, in actuality there were differing levels of imperial retirement in Nihon. More importantly, retired rule was distinct from the institution of cloistered rule. For the sake of simplicity we have conflated all of those potentially different lifepaths into one. On that note we described Go-Shirakawa and Sutoku as co-emperors, when in actuality they were not; one of them was a retired emperor while Toba was a retired emperor. Confusing? That’s why we simplified things. While we didn’t find any direct evidence of Shinto “shrine mothers,” we did find evidence of Shinto priestesses. Our shrine mother is an embellishment of that concept.

Finally, as you will see from the bibliography, we have drawn heavily from online secondary sources to research this game. None of us would dare to call ourselves an expert on Japanese history, religion, or culture. We simply strove to make something that hits close to the mark and is different and fun. Enjoy.

—Rich and Luke







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